



**Committee-Prosperous
Communities**

12 September 2017

Subject: Consultation on Future Garden Waste Service

Report by:

Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To propose a period of consultation with
residents around the future delivery of the
garden waste service.

**RECOMMENDATION(S): To approve a comprehensive consultation
exercise with regard to introducing a subscription based garden waste
collection service.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Under current legislation the Council has a legal duty to collect garden waste from its residents, it may charge in order to recover costs for providing this service.

A consultation exercise is not required constitutionally, however should the Council fail to consult there would be some risk of challenge and ultimately Judicial Review if it is established that this level of service change is something which the Council would normally consult on.

Financial: FIN/73/18

The cost of the consultation exercise will be contained within existing resources.

There is an assumption within the Medium Term Financial Plan that £502k income will be generated through a subscription-based Garden Waste service from 2018/19. This will contribute to funding reductions and our future sustainability.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications anticipated as a result of this consultation.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: An Equalities Impact Assessment is being formulated and forms part of the consultation process.

Risk Assessment : Risk/Mitigating action

- Failure to deliver consultation material to all residents-*use of experienced operational staff*
- Residents lack opportunity to discuss/respond-*organisation of consultation events*
- Inability to compile results due to response rate-*additional resource identified*
- Negative response from residents-*comprehensive consultation documents explaining reasons for service change*

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

None

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Executive Summary

1.01 Since 2013/14 West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) has delivered £3.4m of savings and efficiencies to meet the cost of growth and Government funding reductions. In 2015/16, the Government announced it will continue to reduce the Revenue Support Grant to WLDC from £2.5m to nil by 2019/20. To ensure that services have continued, WLDC has embarked on a strategy of increased efficiency and income generation whilst continuing to deliver quality services. WLDC currently has three projects in train that are designed to deliver £1.8m of additional revenues but they are not without risk. This strategy ensures WLDC stays within the Government cap of Council Tax of 2% or £5 (per average Band D property) whichever is the higher.

1.02 A report outlining options for future delivery options of the Garden Waste Service (GWS) is due at Prosperous Communities Committee in December. To help inform that report, it is proposed that a comprehensive consultation exercise be undertaken, the proposed structure of this consultation is outlined below.

1.03 A comprehensive consultation exercise is proposed in order that Members can consider residents views when making a decision about implementing a subscription based service.

2. Background

2.01 WLDC remains the only two-tier Lincolnshire District Council not to charge for garden waste collections, although North Lincs, a unitary council, do provide a free service. A charge did exist in West Lindsey following the introduction of wheeled bins in the early 2000's, however the service was limited to specific areas and was eventually phased out following the introduction of free green for all (apart from 2000 access restricted properties) which was part of the Triple Bin Scheme roll out in 2009.

2.02 This paper is designed to inform Members about the current and proposed service, provide a comparison with other Lincolnshire authorities and will then go on to propose a full consultation process.

3. Current Service

3.01 The current GWS (Garden Waste Service) entitles all residents to one free garden waste wheeled bin which is emptied fortnightly between the beginning of April and the end of November.

3.02 The exceptions to this are two thousand or so householders in the South West Ward of Gainsborough and a number of other remote properties around the District which the freighters cannot currently access, these residents do not receive the service.

3.03 Residents can have additional bins if they wish, this is a subscription service which costs £30 per year and currently has 1820 subscribers.

3.04 Garden waste rounds mirror the residual and recycling collection rounds and apart from a few exceptions bins are collected on the same day.

3.05 Following a decision by Members in July 2012, the service is currently suspended between the end of November and the beginning of April.

3.06 In 2016/17, operatives collected almost 12,000 tonnes of garden waste which accounted for well over half of the 51.5% recycling rate achieved last year.

3.07 Neither WLDC as the Waste Collection Authority or Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) as the Waste Disposal Authority achieve any income from the sale of this material, in fact the WDA pays a 'per tonne' gate fee to dispose of it.

3.08 The cost of the current service is £770k, this is becoming increasingly unsustainable as the District grows, a pattern which is set to continue.

4. Proposed Service

4.01 Under the Controlled Waste Regulations (2012) and Environmental Protection Act (1990), it is statutory for WLDC to arrange collection of garden waste, but a charge for collection can be made.

4.02 There is often debate around whether WLDC could choose to stop collecting garden waste and take the cost of service as a saving. At March 2016, there were just 18 authorities which did not provide a garden waste service. These tend to be inner-London authorities where there is little demand, however others including South Holland and Bassetlaw have since introduced a charged service in the last financial year.

4.03 Another common argument is that the cost of the service should be added to Council Tax bills. The current cost of service for collection of garden waste is £770k, if this amount was to be shared between householders in the District it would represent a significant rise in Council Tax. This in turn would result in the requirement to have a referendum and if the cost of this referendum was to be included it would ultimately result in a rise in Council Tax of 15% for the average Band D property.

4.04 If a subscription based service was to be introduced it is important residents should be engaged in helping to shape the service and it is proposed that their views be sought through a comprehensive consultation process.

5. Benchmarking

5.01 Desktop research has revealed that 53% of local authorities in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) currently charge an annual fee for kerbside garden waste collections, more are considering introducing a charge for this service in coming years. Chart 1 shows the percentage of LAs which charge for garden waste collections

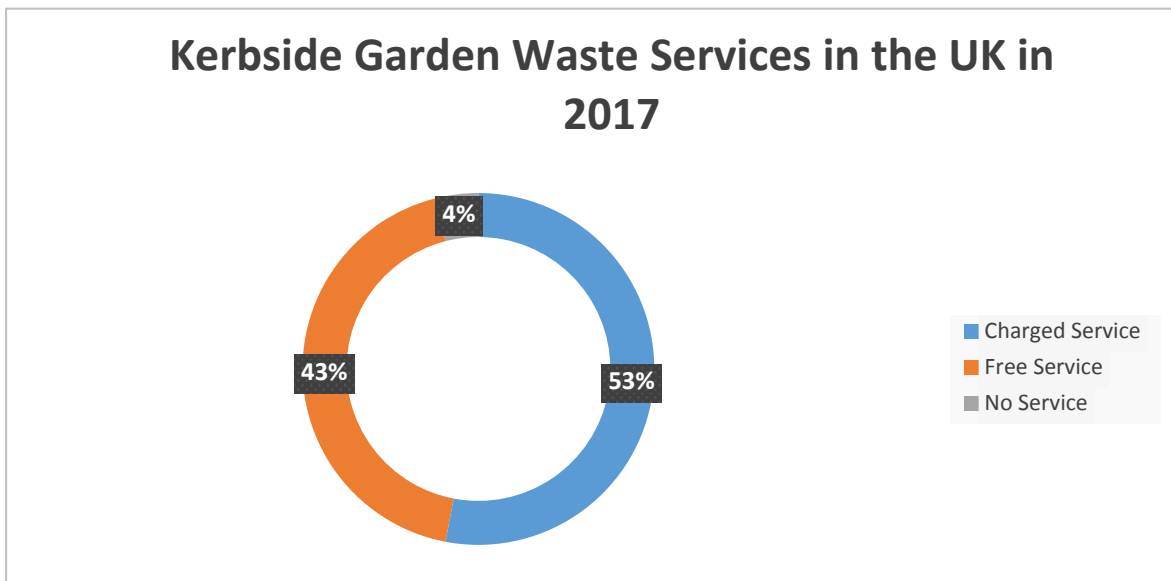


Chart 1: Kerbside Garden Waste Services (2016)

5.02 Findings show that the introduction of annual garden bin fees has recently seen a steep increase, as Council's look for ways to cope with ever-tightening budgets. The number of Local Authorities charging for the service has more than doubled in just five years. In 2016/17, 47 LAs; the highest amount ever in one year introduced a charge. Chart 2 shows the cumulative number of LAs which have introduced the charge over the last few years.

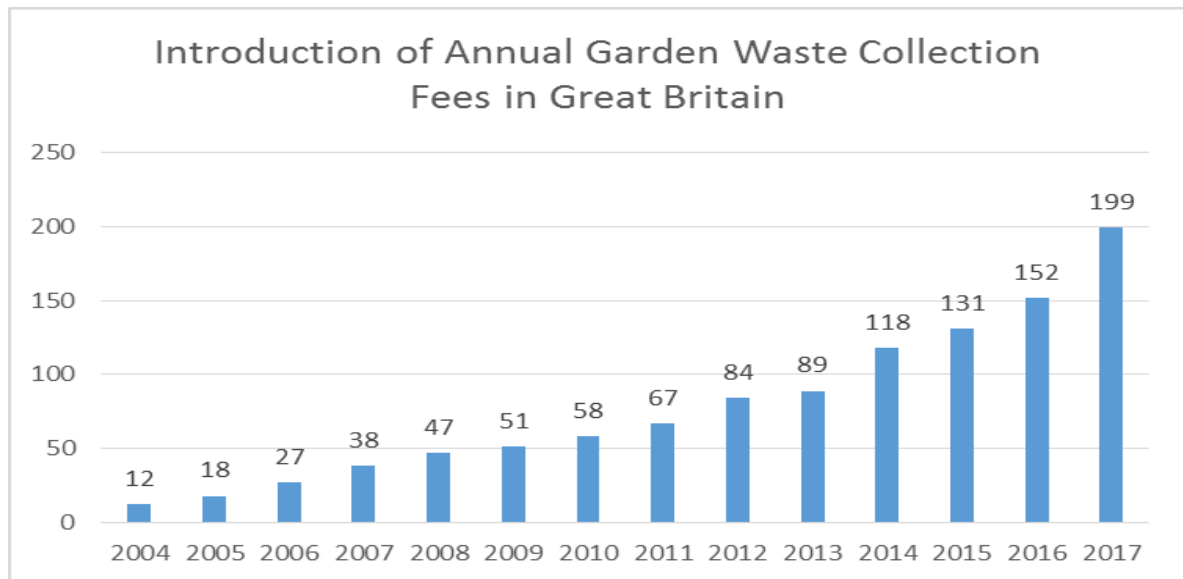


Chart 2: Increase in LA's charging for garden waste (2017)

5.03 Every other authority in Lincolnshire now charges for garden waste. Most have charged for this service for a number of years, Boston and South Holland have been the most recent authorities to introduce a subscription.

6. Benefits and Risks

6.01 Introducing a charged service could bring a number of benefits;

- a) Significant income
- b) Helps secure the medium term financial future of the Council
- c) Potential efficiency savings
- d) Introduces a user pays ethos
- e) An equitable service, currently some residents such as those in SWW could be perceived as funding the service

6.02 There are a number of risks;

- a) **Reduction in recycling rate**-the average reduction in the recycling rate for those authorities who charge is 2.7%. If this was replicated in West Lindsey the recycling rate could potentially dip below the legislative target of 50% by 2020, but would remain the highest in Lincolnshire.
- b) **Reputational damage**-this would be mitigated by using a 'lessons learned' approach from other authorities. Also, Operational Services have much experience in delivering significant service change whilst maintaining satisfaction levels. A comprehensive Implementation and Communications Plan would be required.
- c) **Increased Household Waste Recycling Centre costs**-the burden of these would fall on LCC as the Waste Disposal Authority.
- d) **Pressure on Energy from Waste facility capacity**-a solution to capacity issues at this facility is being undertaken as part of a refresh of

7. Fly-Tipping

7.01 There is a perception that introducing a charge for garden waste collection increases fly-tipping, although there is no convincing evidence to suggest this is true. In fact, the data shown in the table below shows a significant increase in fly-tipping in West Lindsey during 2014/15, whilst neighbours who do charge have shown a decrease. There are numerous factors which contribute to levels of fly-tipping, garden waste charging is just a small part of the equation.

7.02 Table 1 shows the number of fly-tipping incidents in some neighbouring authorities in recent years, highlighted numbers indicate the year when a charge for garden waste was introduced in that authority.

Authority	Number of incidents					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
North Kesteven	846	811	957	863	978	1019
South Kesteven	679	372	752	930		
East Lindsey	1447	1786	2053	1620	1504	1126
CoLC	885	934	1050	1258		
West Lindsey	722	764	638	1043	1477	983

Table 1: Fly-tipping incidents

7.03 The Council is investing in resources to tackle fly-tipping, including use of effective prevention and enforcement techniques such as additional signage and using mobile CCTV cameras.

8. Consultation

8.01 The purpose of this proposed consultation is to:

- Inform local residents and other interested stakeholders about the proposed garden waste service changes and developments.
- Provide appropriate information to explain the proposals, different options and the drivers and rationale behind them.
- Engage, seek views and gather opinion on the proposed subscription garden waste service and the proposals within it.
- Identify any issues and gather information that will assist with the introduction and future delivery of the service.
- Explore the suitability of potential options with service users and seek other solutions and ideas concerning the way the council provides a self-funding garden waste service.
- Gain a fuller understanding of the likely impact that the proposed charges could have on service users.

- Undertake a fully compliant consultation that satisfies the council's policies and consultation duties.
- Provide decision makers with information to assist them in making informed decisions about the future of the garden waste service.

8.02 Consultation information including FAQ's will be delivered to all residents along with their annual collection calendars. Officers feel it important to provide information to explain the proposals, different options and the drivers and rationale behind them to encourage 'deliberative consultation'. This is where residents consider the information behind a proposal before making a decision. It is hoped that the inclusion of more detailed information will reduce concerns and some of the calls to our Customer Services staff.

8.03 A dedicated resource from Customer Services will be freed up to deal with residents' enquiries about the consultation, senior operational managers will also be available for support.

8.04 In order to engage and inform as many people as possible, this consultation will be widely promoted making use of media releases, briefings and social media. There will be opinion pieces from the Leader of the Council and /or the Chair of the Prosperous Communities urging people to tell us what they think through these channels.

8.05 As well as this, we will write to Parish & Town councils, WLDC Councillors, environmental groups, local voluntary and community organisations, LCC and other interested parties. There will be opinion pieces from the Leader of the Council and /or the Chair of the Prosperous Communities urging people to tell us what they think.

8.06 Residents will be encouraged to respond online where possible and the consultation will be supported by a dedicated area on the WLDC website where the consultation documents and FAQs will be available to download and an online questionnaire will be provided. The landing page on the WLDC website will promote the consultation and encourage residents to take part. The FAQs will be updated throughout the consultation period as questions from the public come in.

8.07 Information has already been presented to the disability network group and their comments will be incorporated into the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for this proposal. The EIA will be published on the website for comment throughout the consultation period.

8.08 Officers will do as much as they can to do face to face consultation and gather qualitative feedback by giving presentations to local area forums, outlining the proposals and answering questions from those in attendance.

8.09 In order to continue to engage Members throughout the process, it is proposed that a number of internal Member consultations take place over the

autumn, including an all Member seminar prior to reporting findings back to in December 2017.

8.10 The public consultation will be designed in-house, delivered through the most efficient means to all properties in West Lindsey. In total, it is expected to cost less than £2K to complete.

8.11 Whilst paying heed to data protection requirements, residents will be encouraged to provide email contact details so that they can be kept informed of future developments around the garden waste collection service.

8.12 The consultation and potential implementation will be supported by a full communications and marketing plan.

9. Timeline

9.01 The timeline for the consultation and future Committee process is shown below;

Public Consultation 17 Sept – 01 December 2017

Member Consultation September- December 2017 (dates to be arranged)

Final approval December 2017

Subscriptions become available end of December 2017

Service, if approved, commences April 2018