

URGENCY ITEMS - MINUTE OF DECISION

Delegation arrangements for dealing with matters of urgency

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution provides that Chief Officers may take urgent decisions if they are of the opinion that circumstances exist which make it necessary for action to be taken by the Council prior to the time when such action could be approved through normal Council Procedures. They shall, where practicable, first consult with the Leader and Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) and the Opposition Spokesperson of the appropriate committee.

Subject: Garden recycling Fees and Charges

Appropriate Committee: Leisure and Environment

Purpose of Report

To expedite the decision on fee level setting for garden recycling ensuring a key system changes can take place.

Background

Every year the charge for Garden Recycling collections are varied to reflect the changes in collection costs and other factors. This year (2021/22) the fee was dropped from £35 to £30 to reflect the service issues and cancellations experienced by customers resulting from the impact of the pandemic in the 2020/21 period. If we ran to our original medium term financial planning the fees would be £38 in the 2022/23 period.

Time Frame

In order to ensure the roll over for next year's pricing runs smoothly we need to confirm the new fees as soon as possible. If we wait for the committee cycle, it will be too late to perform essential testing and preparation on the required software and other systems for the 2022/23 period.

Proposal

The fee for the service has not risen in 3 years and in fact fell last year as noted above. The service cannot continue to operate economically with the existing £30 funding level so we are proposing that the fees are restored to the pre-pandemic level of £35.

We would ideally like to charge slightly more to £38 to reflect the increases in costs to deliver the service (in line with medium term financial planning); however, this would be an increase of nearly 27% over last year's charge. We have seen a rise in over 1000 subscriptions to the service in this financial year, which has also improved our recycling rates, and we hope to turn this uptick in subscriptions into sustained growth. These new customers could perceive that the fee had increased significantly beyond this year's rate of £30 and a sudden increase in the charge beyond the proposed £35 would potentially result in a loss of customers. An increase could be considered next year.

In short we feel this returned to last year fee level would still bring income into the service whilst supporting our community plan objective to maintain and potentially increase recycling performance.

Finance Comments (FIN21-22/460)

In the Medium Term Financial Plan, the 2022/23 income budget is £659,570, based on a fee of £38, and 17,357 bin numbers. The current draft for 2022/23 has stayed at this until the fee has been agreed.

If the £35 price is agreed, the loss of budgeted income would be £52,070. However, the current number of bins collected has increased to 18,452. Income at £35, and 18,452 bins is £645,820. Therefore, using revised bin numbers at a lower price would reduce the draft income budget by £13,750.

Recommendation

That the increase of the garden recycling collection fee to £35 for the 2022/23 financial year is approved so that essential system changes and testing can be implemented as soon as possible.

Equalities Implications

N/A

Decision

Approved by councillors Lloyd and Jackson. Watching brief

Reason for Decision

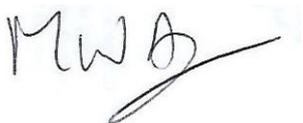
Members Consulted:

David Lloyd - Response received 11/01/2022

Roger Jackson - Response received 17/01/2022

Donna Cumberlidge - Consultation sent 07/01/2022

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MWA', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date 17/01/2022