

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.

Given the current emergency in respect of the Covid 19 pandemic and the decision taken to suspend committee meetings while social distancing measures continue, the urgency decision provision under Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution has been widened to extend the consultation to include the Leaders of all the political groups on the Council.

Subject: Reinstatement of Garden Recycling Services

Appropriate Committee: Leisure & Environment and Policy & Finance

Details of Item (including reason(s) for use of urgency procedure):

On 23 March 2020 the Government imposed restrictions on working patterns and instigated a number of preventative measures including physical distancing. As a result of these measures the Environmental Services Team was forced to undertake a number of preventative actions and suspend all but essential services. Since then the team has been working to restore services and reallocate departmental resources in new ways.

Refuse collection vehicle cabs are just under 2m wide and normally accommodate 3 people; due to the distancing restrictions and in accordance with industry guidance this has been reduced to 2. Our team has responded admirably to the challenge and almost all front line services have been restored. This has been achieved by doubling the number of collection vehicles on most rounds.

The only service that we have been unable to re-instate is garden recycling. All of our collection vehicles are now dedicated to our essential services (residual, recycling and clinical wastes) and our other two 'paid for' services of bulky and trade waste collections.

Since the cessation of the service, officers have been working to try and find solutions that will allow us to reinstate the service but more importantly protect our staff. A number of collection solutions have been used by other local authorities, including private cars; vans and mini buses. All are either unsuitable because of the size of the district, the setup of the rounds with finish points a long way from start points or quite frankly too risky to health. Having taken the time to embed completely new ways of working and allow our staff "get to grips" with completely new rounds we are in a position to make slight alterations, take staff from other areas of the business and utilise one of our spare trucks together with 2 additional hired vehicles to make the garden recycling collections viable.

We propose that the garden recycling service is restored, although this will involve an ongoing cost. The existing garden recycling collection vehicles have been allocated to core services and until the distancing rules are relaxed it won't be possible to release them.

We have evaluated our existing arrangements and we can utilise one of our spare vehicles in the short term but we will need to hire an additional 2 vehicles. The staffing for these rounds will come from other areas of the service as well as new staff that have been recently introduced.

Members will be aware that subscribers to the service have already paid for the 2020/21 financial year and reinstating the service will ensure that we do not need to refund all of the monies already taken or be in a position where we have to offer free services or huge discounts next year. Currently the council is informing residents that subscribers who remain with us will be discounted next year according to how many collections were missed. Therefore the more time goes by without a service the more discount will be required and a bigger under recovery for the next financial year will be realised. In addition members will also be aware of the public feeling over this service postponement as well as the amount of fly tipped garden waste and complaints about fires. Add to that the loss in recycling percentage and the weight of residual bins where residents are placing some of their garden waste/recycling and the impact can be truly seen.

Based on the assumptions above, the service will require £2,150 per week. This consists of vehicle hire of £1,700 per week, and £450 per week for additional staffing costs, (£15 per day for additional payment during the pandemic alterations). There will be an impact on the cost of fuel and maintenance but these costs have been accounted for elsewhere within the current budget. Currently the projected income for Garden Recycling is £68,000 under recovered. Some of this is due to the pandemic. If the social distancing requirements continue for the remainder of this financial year, the full year cost will be £93,170 (assuming the service restarts 1st June). For this to continue for 6 months, to the end of November, the cost will be £55,900. There is not sufficient current budget to cover these additional costs.

The Council's Reserves are sufficient to cover the additional costs highlighted above, if agreed. Financial Services have checked the figures and confirmed this.

Decision

To reinstate the garden recycling service with the funding to come from Council's reserves.

Members Consulted:

Cllr. David Lloyd – Leader of the Council and Chairman of P & F Committee
Cllr. Keith Girling – Deputy Leader of the Council and Vice Chairman of P & F Committee
Cllr. Paul Peacock – Leader of the Labour Group
Cllr. Peter Harris – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Cllr. Gill Dawn – Leader of the Independent Group
Cllr. Roger Jackson – Chair of L & E Committee
Cllr. Neill Mison – Vice Chair of L & E Committee
Cllr. Yvonne Woodhead – Opposition Spokesperson of L & E Committee

Signed:

Matthew Finch

Director - Communities & Environment



Date 22 May 2020