

CABINET

14 JANUARY 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GARDEN WASTE CHARGE 2025/2026

REPORT OF: Service Director – Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Recycling and Waste Management

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For Cabinet to agree the level of garden waste charge for the subscription period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The charge can be considered in relation to charges by other Local Authorities, increases in the cost of providing the service and encouraging home composting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet approve the garden waste subscription charge for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026, at £55.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure the Council's garden waste service is financially sustainable, in line with the priorities of the Council and of the Shared waste service.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. To agree an alternative charge for the period, however this is not recommended.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Executive Member for Waste and Recycling has been consulted and the proposed level of charge was also discussed at budget workshops for both the administration and opposition groups in November 2024.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 15 November 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. East Herts Council (EHC) and North Herts Council (North Herts) entered into a Shared Service arrangement in 2017 and a joint contract was let which commenced in May 2018.
- 7.2. The current service covers the requirements for the collection of waste and recycling from approximately 124,000 households and over 1,920 commercial customers as well as street cleansing services across East and North Hertfordshire.
- 7.3. North Herts Council introduced a subscription service for collection of garden waste in 2018. Unlike household waste and recycling, there is no legal requirement to collect garden waste and councils can charge for collections. Not all properties in North Herts require a garden waste collection service, as they either do not have a garden or compost their garden waste. Introducing a charge means that only households that choose to use the service will pay. Around two-thirds of local authorities in England and Wales charge for garden waste collection.
- 7.4. Approximately 32,000 households are signed up to the service. Garden waste customers have historically paid an annual charge for their subscription, however in February 2023, the Council agreed to a one-off charge of £49 for an 18 month period from October 2023 to March 2025. This was so that the council could bring its subscription renewal period back to when it was intended to start from, which is better aligned to the gardening seasons. It also brings it in line with East Herts Council, with both having a 1 April subscription renewal date from 2025.
- 7.5. The Council operates a half price concession for its garden waste subscription service to households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, with the current charge being £24.50.
- 7.6. The new subscription year starts on 1 April 2025 and therefore the level of charge needs to be agreed by Cabinet in advance, (which has responsibility for setting fees and charges) so that households can start to sign up for the new subscription year from February.
- 7.7. Although the dates of the subscription periods are now aligned, both councils can act independently in setting their own garden waste charges.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. In Hertfordshire, currently only Stevenage and Hertsmere do not have a chargeable garden waste service, however Hertsmere are introducing one from April 2025. Stevenage cannot charge for garden waste collections as they currently collect food and garden waste together.
- 8.2. The North Herts current charge is amongst the lowest across Hertfordshire. The current charges for each authority can be found below. It is anticipated that several of these will see significant increases in 2025/26.

Broxbourne	£49
East Herts	£49
Dacorum	£50
North Herts	£49

St Albans	£63
Three Rivers	£65
Watford	£55
Welwyn Hatfield	£55

- 8.3 In July 2024, North and East Herts Councils awarded a new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to Veolia, which commences in May 2025. As has been referenced in previous reports, contract costs will be higher than under the previous contract. The costs for the collection of garden waste will rise by around 42% based on current year prices, (with a further inflationary increase to be applied in May) and therefore this should be a key consideration when making a decision on the appropriate level of garden waste charge for 2025/26. The collection cost is just one component of the total cost of the service. There are also costs of collecting and reconciling payments, bin hangers managing the collection contract, communications about waste services and (over time) the cost of replacement and repairs to bins. The overhead costs linked to all the above will also be considered when setting a charge.
- 8.4 As we will also be providing a concessionary discount, overall the cost of that discount will be contributed to by those that are paying the full cost of the service.
- 8.5 As well as considering costs, the charge can also be set to encourage home composting. This has environmental benefits (e.g. avoiding the transporting of garden waste) over the garden waste collection service.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 45(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 imposes a duty on councils to arrange for the collection of household waste (save in prescribed circumstances). There is no obligation on councils to collect garden waste.
- 9.2 Section 45(3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states “no charge shall be made for the collection of *household* waste except in cases prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State”. However, Section 45(4) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, allows for councils to charge a reasonable charge for the collection and disposal of non-household waste, which would include garden waste.
- 9.3 Section 4 of Schedule 1 of the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 states that charges may be made for the collection of garden waste.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Council’s financial forecasts are currently based on an annual charge of £49 for 2025/26. Assuming the sign-up rate continues at 32,000 households, the additional income from increasing the charge by £6 (to £55) would be around £192,000. A small 2% drop-off in the sign-up rate would reduce the additional income to around £150k. This additional income will contribute towards the additional costs of the garden waste collection service (including collection costs, other direct costs and overheads).

- 10.2. The overall costs of the waste collection and street cleansing service will be reviewed as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. The budget process for 2024/25 has already added a significant increase in costs, in relation to the revenue cost of capital for the investment in the new vehicles. With that addition, it is forecast that the costs will be broadly in line with the current projected budget.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. Any increase in charges may have an impact on residents' ability or desire to pay for the garden waste service. This will affect the income generated and the contribution that this makes towards the costs of the service. Whilst some costs, (especially the collection costs paid to the contractor) will vary directly with the number of sign-ups, some are more fixed.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. As the garden waste charge relates to a household rather than an individual, the Council has previously agreed to apply a concessionary rate to those households that qualify for the council tax reduction scheme. The concessionary discount will continue to apply, as a 50% reduction on any increase.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. The collection of garden waste requires the use of non-electric large collection vehicles. Subject to cost, the intention is to minimise the environmental impact by using Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to replace some (or all) of the diesel usage. The charging for garden waste collection may encourage some residents to compost their garden waste which then reduces some of fuel emissions and has environmental benefits such as those relating to soil health.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no human resource implications as a result of this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 None

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None