

CABINET

20 January 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GARDEN WASTE CHARGE 2026/2027

REPORT OF: Director – Environment

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Environment

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For Cabinet to agree the level of garden waste charge for the subscription period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027. 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 2026 – 31 March 2027, at £57.

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 the increase proposed is broadly in line with inflation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Executive Member for Environment and Executive Member for Resources have been consulted.

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 17 October 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. East Herts Council (EHC) and North Herts Council entered into a Shared Service arrangement in 2017. 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.
- 7.2. 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 unless households opt in to the service and agree to pay. 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. 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.
- 7.3. Approximately 30,000 households in North Herts are currently signed up to the service. The current charge is £55 for one bin to be collected fortnightly (except for 2 weeks just after Christmas), with the subscription period running from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.
- 7.4. 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 £27.50.
- 7.5. The new subscription year starts on 1 April 2026 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.
- 7.6. Although the dates of the subscription periods are now aligned across North and East Herts Councils, both councils can act independently in setting their own garden waste charges.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. In Hertfordshire, currently only Stevenage does not have a chargeable garden waste service. Stevenage cannot charge for garden waste collections as they currently collect food and garden waste together (although they will be collecting separately from 2026).
- 8.2. The current charges for each Hertfordshire authority can be found below. The North Herts charge is among the lowest in Hertfordshire and is lower than in East Herts. These are charges for 2025/26 and therefore likely to increase in the new financial year.

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| East Herts | £59 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | £60 |
| Hertsmere | £50 |
| Three Rivers | £70 |
| St Albans | £66 |
| Dacorum | £50 |
| Broxbourne | £49 DD / £53 one off payment |
| Watford | £60 |

- 8.3 In July 2024, North and East Herts Councils awarded a new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to Veolia, which commenced in May 2025. The collection cost is just one component of the total cost of the service. There are also costs of collecting and reconciling payments, managing the collection contract, communications about waste services and the cost of replacement and repairs to bins. The overhead costs linked to all the above should 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.
- 8.6 As per paragraph 2.1, it is recommended to increase the annual subscription charge for 2026/27 to £57 from £55. The concessionary rate would be £28.50.

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. There is no definition within the Act or associated Regulations as to what amounts to a ‘reasonable charge’ nor how that is to be calculated.
- 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.
- 9.4 The Local Authorities (Functions & Responsibilities) Regulations 2000 provides that the setting of fees and charges which relate to approvals, consents, licences, permits and registrations which are not the responsibility of an executive of the authority (e.g. fees under the licensing or planning regimes) cannot be a function of the executive (i.e. Cabinet). Decisions in relation to waste and waste management are executive functions and therefore it is for the Cabinet to make decisions as to any fees/charges that can lawfully be levied.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Inflation in the waste contract is based on a basket of indicators, made up of pay, fuel and general inflation. This is based on indicator values in December, which are not yet available, but it is estimated that the total could be around 5%. The Council's costs of administering the service will be mainly linked to pay inflation. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy assumes that these will increase by 3%, although that is dependent on negotiations with the Unions. It seems preferable to have a charge that is a whole number. The increase to £57 is equivalent to 3.6%.

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. The environmental impact of collection is mitigated by using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to replace all of the diesel usage, reducing emissions by approximately 90%. Charging for garden waste collection may also encourage some residents to compost their garden waste, which then reduces some 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