



Spatial Planning and Environment

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Spatial Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Title of report:	Chargeable Garden Waste Service	
Date:	8 th November 2022	
Report on behalf of:	Cllr Graham Barrett, Portfolio Holder for Environment	
Part:	I	
If Part II, reason:	N/A	
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Usage Maps Appendix 2 - High Level Implementation Plan Appendix 3 – Subs Communication Strategy Appendix 4 – Implementation Costs Appendix 5 – Permi-serv process Appendix 6 – Draft Terms and Conditions	
Background papers:	N/A	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:		

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
Wards affected	ALL
Purpose of the report:	1. To set out the rationale for the chargeable garden waste proposals for member consideration.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That the following proposals are noted prior to consideration by Cabinet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual subscription scheme for garden waste collection (2.4.1.4) • The communication plan (2.6.1) • The recommended proposal “B” (3.0)

Period for post policy/project review:	N/A
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1, Executive Summary

Council budgets across the country have been under considerable pressure over the past few years, mainly due to austerity measures introduced nationally, but these have been further exacerbated by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dacorum Borough Council is therefore continuing to review all its services in order to ensure they are, either provided in the most efficient way possible, or generate income where appropriate, and it is within this context that the garden waste collection service is being reviewed.

In 2019, PlanB Management Consultants carried out an audit of Depot Based Services and functions to identify potential efficiencies and opportunities, and this is leading to business-as-usual processes and systems and optimise route collections being updated. Part of this audit also identified opportunities to introduce a chargeable garden waste service.

This paper sets out the details of this proposal, and includes information about the current business operations and the way that these can be adapted to meet needs, with the intention of still providing a discretionary service but one which generates income to avoid service reductions in other parts of the Council. The proposal is to introduce a paid service for all garden waste from March 2023, when the garden waste service re-commences after the winter break.

2. Background

2.1 Introduction

The Council is facing significant financial and environmental pressures in the medium term. The continued reductions in grant funding from central government mean that the Council must consider a number of options to close its budget deficit in future years. This situation has been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, leading to increased capital and project costs, as well as a predicted national pay award that is likely to be at a cost of £1925 per employee per annum within each Authority across the Country.

The option, which is being considered here, is to introduce a chargeable garden waste service to help the Council reduce the costs of this service provision. This would also result in potentially more environmentally friendly ways of dealing with garden waste, including home composting.

The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service, not a statutory service – i.e. it is a service which does not need to be provided by the Council.

2.2 Current Operation

Currently, a green bin for garden waste is provided free to all residents and is collected for free on a fortnightly basis. Green bins are collected between the months of March and November, and collections stop between December to February.

55,861 households have one green bin and, 1079 households have an additional green bin. This equates to over 56,940 bins distributed across Dacorum. This represents a Council capital investment of around £1.423 million (based on £25 per bin).

There is a charge for subsequent bins of £25 per bin, and an additional £60 per annum collection per additional bin (<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/environment-street-care/recycling-refuse-waste/household-waste-recycling/green-wheeled-bin/additional-garden-waste-subscription-service>). Any person subscribing to this additional subscription is provided a sticker with a unique serial code that goes on to the additional bin to indicate that it is paid for and to be collected. There is no limit on the number of additional bins that can be provided.

Currently, Dacorum Borough Council does not offer any concessions or discounts to this subscription element of the service. Additionally, the Council does not provide a garden waste collection from flats and other multiple occupancy properties (future proposals will not change this approach).

The cost of providing the current service is approximately £1.375m per annum, based on staffing, vehicles, on costs and capital costs around bin provision. £64,740 of this is recovered through second and third green bins subscriptions.

Appendix 1 sets out service usage for the 9 months period of the year, with increased take up from June to November in particular.

2.3 Neighbouring and National Picture

In 2012, it was estimated that a third of Councils operated a chargeable green waste service¹ By 2019, this figure had risen to 65% of Local Authorities². Within Hertfordshire, 8 out of 10 Boroughs now charge for garden waste, with St Albans moving to the scheme in 2021 along with East Hertfordshire.

A common theme across Authorities moving to a chargeable service is that it is considered fairer to offer a paid service for those who want it, rather than add to everyone's Council Tax bill whether they use it or not.

There are various charging schemes across the Country, and charges range from £25 to £100 per annum for the collection of garden waste. The table below sets out the current situation in Hertfordshire:

Council	Direct Debit	Card	Concessionary Charges
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¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-18580191>

² [Free garden waste collections must be fully funded, councils warn | ITV News](#)

	Per Annum	Per Week	Per Annum	Per Week	Per Annum	Per Week	Notes
Broxbourne	£34	£0.65	£42	£0.81	N/A	N/A	
Welwyn	£40	£0.77	£40	£0.77	N/A	N/A	
North Herts	£40	£0.77	£40	£0.77	£20	£0.38	Council Tax reduction scheme
Three Rivers	£50	£0.96	£50	£0.96	£42	£0.81	Council related benefits. 50% charge only if subscribe for last 6 months
Watford	£40	£0.77	£40	£0.77	£35	£0.67	Council related benefits
St Albans	£45	£0.87	£45	£0.87	£35	£0.67	Council related benefits. Second and subsequent bins are £50 per year
East Herts	£49	£0.94	£49	£0.94	N/A	N/A	
Hertsmere	Cannot charge at moment as garden and food waste mixed in same bin						
Stevenage	Cannot charge at moment as garden and food waste mixed in same bin						

Note "Council related benefits" typically include; income support, housing benefit/council tax support, job seekers allowance, guaranteed pension credit, employment and suppose allowance, incapacity benefit and universal credit.

Of these Councils, a number also charge for the provision and delivery of a garden waste bin if one is not already in place. For example, East Herts charge £35 for this service, and then a £49 subscription. In the case of all Councils, the bin remains the property of the Council.

2.4 Charging Proposals

2.4.1 Charging Options

Garden waste is a discretionary service that the Council has the ability to charge for, as it falls outside the mandatory collection regime that Councils are subject to. The Local Government Act 2003 allows charging on a cost recovery basis; therefore any charging regime must be directly linked to costs incurred.

Taking into account this requirement, the following options have been considered:

2.4.1.1 Increase Council Tax to cover increasing costs

Pressure is on Local Authorities to provide essential and statutory services, and any increase in Council Tax will be aimed towards this provision. As a discretionary service, it is therefore essential to make garden collection self-financing to help protect other essential services.

With increasing pressures on statutory services, it would not be value for money to increase Council Tax to cover a discretionary service, especially when the means to charge to recover costs exists.

2.4.1.2 Only seek to charge certain Council Tax Bands

This works on the basis that those premises that would need /use a garden waste service fall within certain Council Tax bands.

Our current banding breakdown is:

Council Tax Band	Properties
A	1232

B	8217
C	20299
D	15949
E	9253
F	5714
G	5105
H	814

Unfortunately, only broad assumptions can be made around the types of premises within each, being:

- Bands E-H are almost certainly houses
- Bands A-B are almost certainly flats.

Over half are in bands C-D, and could easily be either. Charging on such a general basis risks a discretionary service being charged against a person /premise that will not use the service. This would be contrary to the Local Government Act 2003 in relation to cost recovery.

2.4.1.3 Charge all properties a flat fee

Using data from the work carried out as part of the Route Optimisation programme, it is feasible that work can be carried out to understand who currently receives a garden waste collection. But again, this is not an exact science and is likely to lead to a charge being administered for a discretionary service, on a cost recovery basis, against persons who do not actually use the service or want to use the service.

Evidence also suggests that those who are provided with the means to dispose of garden waste free, via the green bin, may not actually be using the service as it currently stands. This is supported by findings of other Authorities, including North Devon, who estimated that only a third of the district actually used their green bins for garden waste, so two out of three homes either hadn't put them out, or had put them out practically empty. This incurs cost that can be avoided, rather than continue to provide a service to all regardless.

2.4.1.4 Subscription Option

This is the recommended approach. Details are set out below:

- Introduce a chargeable garden waste service from 27th February 2023 to align with the re-start of the green waste collection.
- The annual charge for the service will be £45.00 per wheeled bin (£0.87 per week). Additional bins will be charged at £45, to ensure consistency. These charges are generally in line with those in place elsewhere in Hertfordshire, including neighbouring authorities such as St Albans.
- A £10 discount will be offered to those residents who are in receipt of benefits. For the first bin, the charge would therefore be £35 per annum (£0.67 per week).
- These charges will be added to the Council's Fees and Charges Schedule.
- The payment terms will be a single annual subscription fee payable in advance and non-refundable.
- The service will continue to run for a 9 month cycle, which will allow staff capacity to be directed into other services to assist, including consideration of extra work around aspects such as Christmas tree recycling. This will aid in reducing any additional costs of the "pool" of covering staff to cover sickness, leave and other absence.
- Bins will be emptied on a fortnightly basis throughout the 9 month period.
- Households will be able to use their existing bin(s). If residents do not currently have adequate bin provision, they may purchase new bins (as appropriate) for a one-off cost in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges Schedule. Residents who do not sign up to the scheme will keep the bin

and may use it for other means but, should they sign up later, the bin must be free from all contamination.

- Residents who require the service will need to 'opt-in' on an annual basis. They will receive a branded sticker/tag each year so that the crews are aware of the bins to be emptied.
- To minimise impact on residents in terms of collections during the introduction of the scheme, collection days will remain in line with the current regime (e.g. if green bin currently collected every 2 weeks on a Tuesday, the paid for subscription bin will also be collected every 2 weeks on a Tuesday)
- The intention is that all green waste routes will continue to operate as is during the period February to end of November 2023, meaning every road is covered and, as new subscriptions are added, these will be picked up without any need to re-route rounds.
- June 2023 will see a move towards a new route optimisation for all refuse streams, with a "wave" approach (all resources will hit an area together to ensure all relevant bins are collected). While the day of collection may change for some people, bins will still be collected on the same schedule (e.g. residual and green one week, recycling the next). An initial assessment of the green waste subscriptions will be made at this point to determine if levels are such that some vehicles can be removed.
- The intention is then to work on re-routing options from December 2023, when a full period of subscription will have taken place and an assessment has taken place of how many vehicles /crews will be needed to efficiently operate the service. This then allows the new routes to be communicated with residents when they (re-)sign up for the following year, and provide additional savings to the Council.
- When an application for the service is received, residents will receive the branded sticker/tag for display on each bin confirming their entitlement to the service for that year.
- In the event that the resident moves property, the service will be transferrable within the Dacorum Borough Council area (after advising the Council of the address change) or to the new occupier.
- The Council will promote discounted home composting and implement a strict policy of no garden waste in the grey bin, with any persistent contamination breaches resulting in the non-collection of grey bins.
- The Council will work closely with Hertfordshire County Council and Herts Waste Partnership to minimise the amount of garden waste sent to landfill

2.5 Projected income and annual running costs

A number of predictions can be made based on current households and from an evidence base garnered from those Authorities who have introduced charging. The baseline used by most Councils in terms of estimated initial participation rate is 30%, which then allows incremental increases to be built in going forward. For the purposes of this paper, the table on the following page sets out the different subscription rates as well as working on a £45, £50 and £55 subscription rate (the concessionary rate staying static).

Number of households (Excluding flats) projection for 2022-23	55,851
Target participation % (based on PlanB estimates and Hertfordshire)	30%

Participation Rate	10%		20%		30%		40%		50%	
	Payment	CR ³	Payment	CR	Payment	CR	Payment	CR	Payment	CR
Proposed charge (per bin per annum)	£45	£35	£45	£35	£45	£35	£45	£35	£45	£35
Projected take up for each charge rate	94%	6%	94%	6%	94%	6%	94%	6%	94%	6%
Participation number (30%)	5250	335	10500	670	15750	1005	21000	1340	26250	1676
Projected income	£236,250	£11,729	£472,499	£23,457	£708,749	£35,186	£944,999	£46,915	£1,181,249	£58,644
Annual Admin costs (@15%) inc ICT, transactions,	£35,437	£1,759	£70,875	£3,519	£106,312	£5,278	£141,750	£7,037	£177,187	£8,797
	£200,812	£9,969	£401,625	£19,939	£602,437	£29,908	£803,249	£39,878	£1,004,061	£49,847
Total Net Income	£210,782		£421,563		£632,345		£843,127		£1,053,908	
£50 subscription	£233,094		£466,189		£699,283		£932,378		£1,165,472	
£55 subscription	£255,407		£510,814		£766,221		£1,021,629		£1,277,036	
Vehicles Needed	1		2		2		3		4	
Current vehicles: c5 - therefore savings will be made from this aspect, but decreasing as participation increases. A participation rate of >60% will require additional investment										

The disposal cost for garden waste is not included as (1) Hertfordshire County Council has a duty to pay for the disposal and is not allowed to pass on the cost and (2) the disposal authority (Hertfordshire County Council) is not allowed to make a profit.

Previous modelling by PlanB, (2018), showed cost recovery is at its highest at a subscription rate of £55 however it is considered that this may well limit participation by not being sufficiently accessible to all residents. This is of importance when considering already increasing costs faced by residents due to the cost of living impact.

Subscription charges below £40 are unlikely to be optimal as the increase in participation does not lead to an increase in revenue because of increased operational costs.

An assumption around second bins that would remain, in terms of cost and subscription that people currently paying would continue to do so based on the evidence they are willing to do so already. The income generation from this is not included in the overall calculation as this is already picked up in current budgets.

Estimations in 2019 by PlanB, showed that a move to a chargeable service is likely to also impact the number of garden waste collection rounds currently being provided. This will be factored in from December 2023 once there is an evidence base in place to inform decisions. The Council does not want to be in a position whereby vehicles are withdrawn on an expectation of a certain take up level, only to have to re-introduce if this is exceeded. By doing this work from December 2023, there will be a high confidence level in terms of take up, as evidence from other Authorities show there is little movement year on year in terms of subscription numbers.

2.6 Implementation Approach and Costs

³ CR – Concessionary Rate (this is kept the same for all equations)

A decision to implement the charging scheme when the garden waste service resumes at the end of February has been plotted out in the implementation plan in Appendix 2, showing both a November and December Cabinet approval route. The timelines can be adjusted to fit any implementation date decided, although consideration must be given to when the service is running (e.g. starting the process in June, with a November go live date is likely to fail as the service stops in December until February).

2.6.1 Communications

Key to the implementation is communications, and a clear communication campaign will be put in place. This will set out the rationale for moving to such a scheme, based on the backdrop of the Council's finances and equity of approach. Such a campaign will also look to learn from the introduction of similar schemes in other Authorities across Hertfordshire.

A frequently asked questions document will be developed and added to the website, and will be kept up to date, to enable customer queries to be directed and answered.

Communications is a significant part of delivering this change to the Garden Waste service. The communications plan is targeted at: Council Members, Town and Parish Councils, Residents/public (external), Pressure groups, Council staff (internal), Press/media.

Communications Objectives: To promote awareness of the new green waste collection charge; to manage messaging from this new charge; and to introduce the paid service for all garden waste starting from the end of February 2023. Key dates for this Communications Plan: 8 November – SPEOSC, 15 November – Cabinet, 16 November – Commence communications plan, January/February 2023 – Commence marketing plan.

These are the recommended key messages:

- From February 2023, the Council's garden waste service is changing. The garden waste collection will be by paid subscription only.
- You will need to sign up to the new opt in paid subscription service to continue to have your garden waste collected.
- We know lots of residents value the Council collecting their garden waste, so we have provided the subscription service for those people who want to keep the service.
- Nearly two thirds of councils in England charge for this service and, with a large budget gap to fill, sadly we can no longer continue to offer it without making a subscription charge. The garden waste subscription charge will go towards covering the direct costs of delivering this service. The charge will also help to protect other vital services including the fortnightly refuse and recycling collections and weekly food waste collections.
- Locally most Hertfordshire Councils charge to collect garden waste, including St Albans, Watford, Three Rivers, North Herts, Broxbourne and Welwyn Hatfield councils
- Under the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012, we are able to charge for the separate collection of domestic garden waste.
- We offer a discount for those residents receiving Council Tax Reduction benefit.
- You will still have the option to pay for an additional garden waste bin(s) or bags on similar terms to the current scheme.

Home composting will be promoted and facilitated for those residents who do not wish to subscribe to the garden waste collection service. This will be achieved by the further promotion of the already established Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) home composting scheme. The HWP has teamed up with GetComposting.com to provide multi buy deals on home compost bins and other green products, including kitchen food waste caddy liners. Full details of the scheme can be found on the HWP website.

In terms of projected costs, these are set out below:

Area	Cost
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Communication Campaign	£30,000
ICT changes to include website update and on line payment options	£50,000
Project Management to implement	£5,000
Customer Service Capacity	£10,000
	£95,000

These costs above are one off implementation costs, absorbed within the first year. A further breakdown is given in **Appendix 4**.

2.6.2 Technology

The ICT changes incorporates the upgrade of the Bartec system to enable a resident web page to back office /in cab Bartec system including payments. This costs £10,000 to set up but provides a “personalisation” for the customer so that when they log in they will see: a calendar of their collections; how many bins they have; and an option to report missed bins through this system. It also allows expansion to incorporate bulk waste collection requests, as well as other options. Due to the system being linked to the in-cab devices, it also allows live information from the crews to be updated on the calendar, for instance why a bin has not been collected (e.g. contamination). An ongoing cost of c£12,000 is required but is easily offset by the service income.

In line with this, Permi-serv offer a web-to-resident option that works in conjunction with Bartec, meaning that, once a resident signs up, then the data can be provided to Permi-serv who will send out the relevant letter, terms and conditions and sticker for a cost of £1.25 (including postage). For 50% subscription, it would cost the Council approximately £35,000 but weighed against the cost of funding it in house it provides clear cost efficiencies. The process is seen in **Appendix 5**.

2.6.3 Customer Services

Consideration must also be given to potential increase in customer service interactions resulting from the introduction of the subscription scheme. A cost of £10,000 has been accounted for to put in place a full-time member of staff to sit within the CSU for 3 months to handle any calls /interactions.

2.7 Impact on Councils’ Recycling Performance

Three Rivers District Council has successfully introduced and run a similar subscription scheme for some time, without any perceivable impact on their top performing status. Additionally, the latest published figures, for the top 10 performing recycling councils, show that only two do not charge for separately collected garden waste. St Albans, on introducing the chargeable scheme in 2021, remained consistent in terms of their recycling rates around 63%.

The recent introduction of a chargeable scheme in Haringey evidenced that the scheme led to 4% garden waste being found within the residual waste stream. The clear marketing of what can go into each bin, especially in terms of recycling, will be part of the communications strategy to help further educate around recycling.

3. Options and alternatives considered

In relation to the recommendation in this report, the main options include:

A. Continue with the current garden waste collection regime

- Garden waste is a discretionary service, currently with limited means to recover any costs. The result is operating costs having to come directly from Council budgets, meaning less funding available for the provision of other vital services.
- The Council is facing a MTFS budgetary gap in 2022 to 2025, requiring the Council to, either decrease costs or increase income, or face potential detrimental impacts on statutory duties. The garden waste service, as it currently stands, offers no benefit to this funding challenge.
- It is therefore no longer viable to continue with a free discretionary service in the absence of alternative options.

B. Introduce a chargeable subscription scheme from March 2023 (recommended)

- The proposal is set out above, including the cost benefit of moving to such a scheme
- Such a move allows a discretionary service to continue for the benefit of those who want to use it, but not to the detriment of those who do not.
- The projected reduction in costs, and increase in income, meets all the criteria around business efficiency when looking to balance budgets year on year going forward. It provides a significant income input at a time when the Council is limited in options to address cost of living costs as well as an impending national pay award
- Experience of other Councils, including those in Hertfordshire, show no evidence of detrimental impact on the environment or recycling rates
- The charging regime has been set out to be in line with neighbouring boroughs but does not prevent a decision being made to increase / decrease such fees and add further concessions if desired.
- The introduction in March 2023 ties in with the re-starting of the service after the winter break.

C. Stop Garden Waste Collections

- Garden waste is a discretionary service, and there is no legal obligation on the Council to carry it out
- This would save costs due to removal of vehicles and staffing around providing this service but would also remove any income generation element. It therefore only meets one aspect of business efficiency in terms of reducing costs /maximising income
- This also limits the Council in terms of future options. While there is a risk that the Government may eventually stop the ability to charge for garden waste, this comes with lobbying around extra funding for Councils to cover lost income. Stopping the service at this time prevents such discussions going forward for Dacorum.

4. Consultation

The above recommendations have not been subject to public consultation. This is on the basis that there is no statutory duty to consult and the Council can demonstrate that it has acted fairly because:

- The Council faces a challenging financial position and that it will have to generate additional income to protect services;
- The chargeable service will be optional, and the practical alternative is the stopping of the service completely due to it being discretionary;
- Alternative options for the disposal of Green Waste are available and reasonable, including use of the two Civic Amenity Sites and home composting
- The £45 annual fee is reasonable, equating to less than 90 pence per week; and
- Those residents on local Council benefits will be eligible for a discount

It is vital though that the communication strategy is launched at the earliest opportunity following formal Cabinet decision to inform residents of the upcoming changes, to provide opportunities to get information out and ensure proactive in getting answers to early questions.

5. Financial and value for money implications:

The current contract cost of providing a garden waste collection service is over £1m per year. This does not include Council costs such as capital charges for the bins purchased to date.

The introduction of a chargeable garden waste service is projected to generate an income return of just over £600k in year one. This does not take into account service savings from operating a reduced service. Increased yield is expected as the scheme progresses, with the aim of a 40% sign up by year 3

resulting in a projected income of around £900,000. These figures do not take into account 2nd and 3rd bin subscriptions, which are in the main accounted for already as part of the service.

6. Legal Implications

Local Authorities have a legal obligation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to collect only household waste. The Council is permitted to charge for discretionary services by virtue of Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. It is also permissible to have different charges for different people; however, the annual income must not exceed the actual cost of the service.

The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 allows a charge to be made for the collection of household garden waste.

7. Risks

Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No (part of service risk register)

The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below. N/A

The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
<p>Key Stakeholders</p> <p>Residents do not understand and accept the need for changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear communication strategy to outline the need for change ▪ Set out budget benefit compared to alternatives for residents (e.g. keeping services, limiting council tax increases, only pay if need service) 	
<p>Financial</p> <p>Income target is not achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 30% is set based on experience of other councils ▪ System are in part in place to run a subscription service ▪ Likely underestimation of potential savings from moving to a chargeable service ▪ Savings will be realised by reducing the rounds currently in place, so can compensate any loss of take up. 	
<p>Legislation</p> <p>Central Government change or remove powers to allow the collection of garden waste at charge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is part of the Government consultation that went out in 2021, but no decision made and current economic climate unlikely to lead to change ▪ Substantial lobbying by Local Authorities and bodies around this, especially on back of increasing costs. ▪ Unlikely due to Government having to change funding to Local Authorities to compensate for loss of income ▪ If do introduce, likely Government funding to cover loss of income. If no income being garnered, then DBC will be more at risk 	
<p>Recycling Rates</p> <p>2035 target of 65% could be adversely affected by charging for garden waste</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No evidence to show any detriment amongst those who have carried this out ▪ At last check, 8 out of 10 top recycling councils charge for garden waste ▪ Alternative options will be presented as part of the communication package, including composting 	
<p>Environment</p> <p>Increase in fly tipping to avoid paying the subscription</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No evidence to show any detriment amongst those who have carried this out ▪ Alternative options will be presented as part of the communication package, including composting ▪ Alternative routes to recycle to be presented including local recycling centres 	

<p>Implementation</p> <p>Delay in implementation leading to start after March 2023, meaning hybrid free then paid for service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear scheme to get in place to meet deadlines ▪ Automation of key aspects to minimize in service risks due to capacity 	
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8. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

A full Community Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as Appendix 7.

Human Rights – there are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report

Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”), the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has to have ‘due regard’ to (i) eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (ii) advancing equality of opportunity between those with a relevant protected characteristic and those without; and (iii) fostering good relations between those who have a relevant protected characteristic and those without.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but to a limited extent.

9. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

As covered above, the charging of garden waste has limited impact on recycling rates, as well as detriment to the environment. It does instead encourage alternative means of disposal.

For example, an increase in home composting which is the most environmentally friendly way of dealing with garden waste. It is widely acknowledged that well-managed compost heaps provide microclimates for minibeasts and produce a healthy clean mulch or fertiliser for the garden, which helps to return vital nutrients to the soil.

10. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

The work around implementation will look to ensure no detrimental impact on staff from moving to a chargeable service. The initial launch will continue the current collection regime already (2 weekly, with current locations), though not collecting every bin (only stickered).

Working with PlanB, the impact of this and the number of vehicles /route optimisation will be assessed. The initial assessment will take place in June 2023, in line with the route optimisation implementation, with a further assessment in December 2023 when the service breaks for winter and there will be full key season subscription data in place.

11. Conclusion

Garden waste is discretionary and costs the Council over a £1m per year with limited (2nd bin) returns. Experience of other Councils clearly shows the estimates of a 30% take up, at a £45 charge, is realistic and feasible. The reduction of vehicles will lead to further savings that can be set out clearly once implementation is in place and full figures become available. It is therefore reasonable to assume a first year return of **£632,336 per annum**, considering implementation costs, with a review built in to determine further costs savings once round data is available following implementation.

12. Next steps

- To progress the report to Cabinet for approval in November 2022, for an end of February 2023 launch.
- To approve the implementation spend to automate the systems from resident to back office, as well as web-to-resident.
- To approve the temporary increase in CSU capacity to handle any increased customer interactions.