

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Environment and Highways Cabinet Board

16 February 2017

Report of the Head of Streetcare

M. Roberts

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Review of Kerbside Collection of Garden Waste

Purpose of Report

- 1 To review the kerbside collection of garden waste.

Executive Summary

- 2 Garden waste is currently collected in 'single use' plastic bags and it is proposed to implement changes to reduce costs.

Background

- 3 The Council's Waste Strategy as considered by Cabinet in April 2015 is generally aligned to Welsh Government's (WG) Collections Blueprint. The blueprint is WG's preferred service configuration for the household collection of waste and recycling which advocates, amongst other things, the collection of all recyclable waste where practical using reusable or returnable containers.
- 4 With specific reference to garden waste, the blueprint also recommends such waste is collected once a fortnight and that charges are applied for its collection, as provided for under the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012.
- 5 In addition, the WLGA published a report in July 2016 which provides an overview of Welsh Councils that are charging for waste collection services and recommends that 'local authorities should consider introducing a charge for garden waste collections to cover the costs of collection'. The data the WLGA had gathered indicated that the net cost per household had reduced for the

majority of authorities that ceased free garden waste collections and introduced a charge, with one authority having achieved a net income.

Current Position in NPT

- 6 This Council currently collects green waste free of charge in 'single use' plastic bags. Whilst the collection of garden waste has previously been undertaken on a weekly basis, this is progressively being changed to fortnightly as part of the roll out of the Council's 'Recycle+' service (alongside the collection of plastics being increased from fortnightly to weekly).
- 7 The Recycle+ service uses reusable bags and boxes for the collection of recyclate, and soon the use of clear 'single use' sacks will be restricted to garden waste collection only. There are sustainability issues concerning the use of 'single use' sacks which are also costly, and they can also be difficult to fill with hedge cuttings and the like. In 2015/16 over £330,000 was spent on 'single use' sacks for the collection of garden waste and other recyclables. It is not clear at this point what the level of expenditure will fall to when Recycle+ has been completely rolled out.

Options for Consideration

- 8 As far as non-compliance with WG's collections blueprint is concerned, there are two primary issues to be reviewed, that is, the receptacle by which garden waste is collected and whether there should be any associated charging, including the mechanism on how any charging is made. The two issues however cannot entirely be considered in isolation. There is also the period over which garden waste collections are made and there are two options, i.e. all year round as existing, or service provision over a more restricted or 'seasonal' period linked to the growing season.
- 9 The vast majority of garden waste which totalled over 4,300 tonnes in 2015/16 is collected from the beginning of March to the end of November with only a very small proportion collected, circa 150 tonnes, in the winter months from December to the end of February, (see table below). If green waste was not separately collected and composted in this period, it would mean the extra capacity that would be available on the split bodied refuse

collection vehicles, normally used to collect garden waste, could be used to collect any extra refuse presented by households over the Christmas and New Year period in line with the Environment and Highways Cabinet Board Report of the 28th January 2016 regarding side waste restrictions.

2015/16	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
tonnes	560	481	767	672	556	608	408	155	79	37	35	163	4,522

- 10 In summary therefore,
The options available for collection receptacles are:

- Single use sacks
- Re-usable bags
- Wheelie bins

The options for charging are:

- No charge
- Charging for the receptacles only
- Charging for the service
- Combination of the above

Each option could potentially be delivered all year round or on a more restricted basis, however operational issues should also be considered.

- 11 Considering operational issues, and an underlying need to make savings, the realistic service configurations are:

Option 1: The provision of chargeable single use coloured sacks.

Option 2: The provision of reusable sacks and free/chargeable collection.

Option 3: The provision of wheeled bins on a chargeable basis

- 12 Option 1 (The provision of chargeable single use coloured sacks);

This would be a similar collection as per existing collection method, however there would be charges for the provision and collection of the sacks.

It is estimated that the cost for the provision and collection of single use coloured plastic sacks would be approximately £2.50 for a roll of 50 bags with a capacity of each bag being 70 litres.

Positives

This option could be introduced and generate income, it could also suit a seasonal collection model (as residents would in all likelihood not use purchased bags for anything other than for their intended use).

Negatives

Such an approach does not meet the requirements of the WG's collection blueprint and if there is a low take up of the service this may have a detrimental effect on tonnages collected and therefore a detrimental effect on WG targets. The likely destination of green waste no longer collected would also need to be questioned and there may be a potential increase in fly tipping reports if charges are introduced albeit evidence from other local authorities suggests this has not become an issue. The supply of rolls of bags would however have to be administered.

13 Option 2: The use of reusable sacks and free/chargeable collection

This option has been introduced by various Welsh authorities with differing service charges. The following are some example of these:

Example 1: Bridgend Council - £27.00 annual charge for two reusable hessian sacks collected fortnightly from beginning of April to end of October. Sacks purchased are valid for one year only.

Example 2: Monmouthshire Council - £14.00 annual subscription/permit for each reusable sack, permits need to be renewed annually and attached to bags. Weekly collection for twelve months a year.

Example 3: Swansea Council - two reusable hessian sacks provided free to each household and collected fortnightly for twelve months a year. Additional sacks can be purchased at £1.50 for a weighted sack or £0.75 for an un-weighted sack. No subscription/renewal fee is required.

Positives

- Examples 1 and 2 would generate an income from the sale of reusable sacks after initial purchase costs in the first year. Information received from another Council has indicated income in excess of £170,000 per annum might be possible.
- Example 3 (Swansea model) would not generate an income, but would deliver savings by reducing on-going revenue expenditure on plastic bags after initial purchase costs of reusable sacks in the first year.
- Reusable bags are in line with Welsh Government's Collection Blueprint, therefore they can be purchased from funding achieved through the Collaborative Change Programme (CCP).
- Reusable bags take up less space than wheeled bins and can be easily stored by residents during the Winter months if they are not being used.
- Reusable sacks are easier to fill than 'single use' plastic bags.
- There is currently grant money available to purchase reusable sacks.

Negatives

- Possible negative public reaction, particularly to ongoing collection charges, which could lower participation levels and the Council's overall recycling rate. However, this is likely to be minimal with example 3, with greater risks associated with examples 1 and 2 (which utilise a similar collection charge per bag). There would also be a higher level of annual administration under examples 1 and 2.

It is noted that it would not be sustainable to provide an endless number of free replacement reusable sacks to each household as any revenue savings made by replacing the use of single use plastic bags would then not be realised.

Based on the experience in Swansea it is envisaged that Example 3, combined with the 'side waste restriction' policy and enforcement would not result in having a detrimental effect on recycling and composting figures.

14 Option 3 (The provision of wheeled bins on a chargeable basis)

Householders would be required to pay an annual subscription for the provision and collection of a wheelie bin(s) and two examples are provided below.

Example 1: Pembrokeshire Council collect garden waste on a seasonal basis from March to November with a charge of £41.50 per bin/annum, collections on a fortnightly basis.

Example 2: Carmarthenshire Council recently introduced a service to collect garden waste on a seasonal basis from April to October and charge £48 per bin/annum.

Positives

- The proposal would generate an income from the rental of bins. Information received from other Councils has indicated income of £200,000 per annum is possible
- Is in line with Welsh Government's Collection Blueprint

Negatives

- There would be much higher capital costs associated with the introduction of a wheeled bin collection. Current purchase costs for one wheeled bin is approximately £14.00, the implications of which mean that the relatively higher costs to provide this service would need to be passed on to residents as seen in the schemes introduced in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. Delivery of bins is also much more costly.
- Any negative public reaction to charges would possibly lower participation levels.
- Likely negative impact on Council's overall recycling rate.
- Garden bins could be misused as refuse bins, or vice versa refuse bins could be used for garden waste to avoid charges.
- An alternative container option (e.g. bags) would be required for properties which are not suitable for wheelie bins.
- Bin storage issues for householders during collections and when no service provided.

Way Forward

- 15 Based on all of the above, it is proposed the Council should adopt a service model based on Option 2 Example 3, but with the service provided on a seasonal basis from the 1st March to 30th November. In the interim period from December and February, it is proposed that any green waste collected would not be sent for composting so additional capacity can be used for refuse collections, particularly over the Christmas period when there is additional waste. This will also assist in maintaining satisfactory weight distribution within the collecting vehicles during periods of low green waste quantities.
- 16 The annual costs for the provision of the kerbside recycling service, which includes garden waste collections, is principally funded out of the Environment and Sustainable Development (ESD) Grant. The provision of the grant underpins the wider goals and priorities contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; which places a duty on the Council to deliver its services in a sustainable way and demonstrate that the following sustainability principles have been considered:
- (i) Involvement and Collaboration - Whilst a trial of options would normally be suggested, on this occasion the various options have been introduced in other Welsh authorities and officers have taken these into consideration in writing this report. This Council also had a recent trial with dry recycling collection methods where stackable boxes and a reusable bag trial resulted in the reusable bag being the preferred option. It is suggested therefore that a trial of options is not deemed a necessity on this occasion.
 - (ii) Long Term – The proposal helps promote the wider aims of the national waste strategy for Wales ‘Towards Zero Waste’. The reusable sacks are easier for residents to fill than plastic bags and provide a more sustainable, longer term option than expensive ‘through away’ plastic bags. It will help reduce overall the consumption of energy and natural resources in the provision of receptacles and by collecting less garden waste whilst ensuring the collection vehicles are used to their most efficient capacity during winter months when less garden waste is produced.

- (iii) Integration – The proposal further aligns the Council services with the recommendations in WG collections blueprint and is similar to the service provided in Swansea which is our largest neighbouring local authority.
- (iv) Prevention – The waste hierarchy contained in WG Waste Strategy for Wales promotes reducing waste as the top priority for the management of waste. The proposed service encourages residents to home compost and reduces the amount of green waste collected and transported for treatment. It also reduces the environmental and economic impact of providing ‘single use’ or ‘through away’ plastic bags.

Financial Impact

- 17 The Council was recently successful in attaining grant funding under the Collaborative Change Programme (CCP) from the Welsh Government to the value of £688,840 for the completion of the Recycle + roll out, and £244,400 is available for the purchase of reusable sacks required for garden waste.
- 18 Reduced revenue budget expenditure on the purchase of single use plastic bags of over £100,000 per annum is anticipated.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 19 Screening Assessments have been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessments it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Workforce Impact

- 20 Minor impact. The new reusable sacks will be emptied into a pannier or ‘slave’ bin mounted on the back of the collection vehicles.

Legal Impact

- 21 No impact

Risk Management

- 22 The proposed change more closely aligns the collection service to WG's Collections Blueprint, thereby increasing certainty of securing future funding under the Environment and Sustainable Development (ESD) grant.
- 23 Introducing an element of charging for what is a non-statutory function that the Council has no duty to provide, which is in line with WG guidelines, is preferable to cuts in other service areas and further reduces potential reputational risks associated with changes to other statutory collection/disposal services.

Sustainable Development

- 24 Introduction of the service will ensure greater certainty in the volume of garden waste presented at the kerbside and will help optimise the collection rounds, thereby increasing the efficiency of the collections fleet.
- 25 Further reduces the environmental impact from the use of single use plastic bags.
- 26 The on-going collection and management of both recyclable and compostable material throughout the County Borough, in line with the latest WG guidelines, helps promote a circular green economy and contributes to delivering the wider aims of the national waste strategy for Wales 'Towards Zero Waste'. In turn it will help deliver 'one planet' living with respect to Welsh consumption of energy and natural resources, and have a positive impact with respect to climate change.

Consultation

- 27 No consultation is proposed for the reasons given in the report that trials are not necessary.

Recommendations

28 It is recommended that:

- (i) Members approve the introduction of service delivery in line with Option 2, i.e. the provision of reusable bags for green waste collections, with free collection from March to November inclusive. Any green waste collected outside that period will not be composted. Each household will be provided with two free reusable garden waste sacks.
- (ii) Charges of £2.50 per sack are introduced for householders who require additional or replacement reusable garden waste sacks.
- (iii) Efficiency savings are used to offset pressures in the Waste budget.
- (iv) That the effectiveness of the Council's strategy with respect to achieving the future statutory 70% recycling target, including this action and those previously approved such as the roll out of kerbside recycling by April 2017, be reviewed in a report to be presented to Members towards the end of 2017/2018.

Reason for Proposed Decision(s)

29 To further align the Council's waste collection services with the Welsh Government's Collections Blueprint, to make the service more sustainable and reduce costs.

Implementation of Decision

30 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

31 None

List of Background Papers

- 32 Environment and Highways Cabinet Board, 23rd April 2015, Waste Strategy Update
- 33 Environment and Highways Cabinet Board Report, 28th January 2016, Side Waste Policy
- 34 Environment and Highways Cabinet Board Report, 14th April 2016, Recycling Trial
- 35 WLGA, Waste Improvement Programme, Benchmarking Fees and Charges for Waste Services
- 36 The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012
- 37 Municipal Sector Plan Part 1, Towards Zero Waste, Collections Blueprint
- 38 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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