

GARDEN WASTE REVIEW OF OPTIONS

Head of Service/Contact:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	No
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	None
Other available papers (not attached):	None

Report summary

This report provides a high-level review of the garden waste service and options for consideration going forward.

Recommendation (s)

- (1) That the Committee authorises officers to explore opportunities to improve the garden waste service as outlined in this report.**

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 Garden waste recycling is a key part of the Council's overall recycling effort in support of its Corporate Plan objective to keeping our borough clean and green.

2 Background

- 2.1 Garden waste recycling was introduced in 2006. It grew rapidly in the early years before maturing and stabilising. Key statistics are

2.1.1 We now have around 11,700 subscribers.

2.1.2 When the service was young we measured its penetration into our total houses each month. But as the service has matured and stabilised we have only twice returned to this measure, in 2011 and 2014. On both occasions we found that our penetration into total houses (about a third of houses use the service) was the second highest in Surrey, behind Guildford Borough Council.

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2.1.3 Since launch in 2006 we have collected some 44,600 tonnes of garden waste for recycling. Garden waste collected for recycling now accounts for 16% of our total collected household waste. Weather significantly affects the actual amount collected each year, but our subscription level is such that we have collected well over 4,000 tonnes in each of the last six years.

2.2 So the service is successful and we have made no significant changes to it since we introduced Direct Debit payments in 2013/14.

3 Proposals

3.1 Officers propose to consider various aspects of the service. Some other councils operate in different ways, and IT developments – notably plans for a new CRM system – may offer new opportunities.

3.2 Areas for particular consideration are:

3.2.1 **Subscription fee structures:** Epsom & Ewell's fees are around the Surrey average level. But some other councils charge in different ways, such as fees to buy bins (as opposed to the fee for the collection service itself); discounts for additional bins; renewals discounts, same price for Direct Debit as for other payment methods.

3.2.2 **Payment methods:** Some councils do not offer Direct Debit. Others offer Direct Debit only.

3.2.3 **Subscription management:** Some councils control subscriptions by providing 'licences' (rather like the old Road Fund Licence, with a different colour every year to check you've paid). Others use electronic systems to check if a subscription is current, or to instruct the collection of an unpaid bin.

3.2.4 **CRM management:** ITC officers are working closely with service officers to procure enhanced functionality in our new CRM system. We envision a system able to automatically check reports and requests against subscription records (e.g. missed bin reports/requests for new bins). Currently, this must be done manually. The new system will also aim to integrate currently-separate Direct Debit processes, and could help implement subscription management strategies such as in 3.2.3, above.

3.3 There may be advantages and disadvantages to the various approaches used across some other councils. We seek to understand opportunities for new ways of working in marketing, finance, technology and efficiency, which might be of benefit to the Council and garden waste subscribers.

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- 3.4 In the meantime, in the spring officers will survey garden waste bins. Any residents who present bins without a current subscription will be invited to pay, or have the bin removed.
- 3.5 Consequently, officers propose to follow this high-level report with a more detailed summary of proposals in 2019 once research – including the tender process for the new CRM and the bin survey – has taken place.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 Officers will undertake a cost/benefit analysis of any proposals that would involve financial commitment – such as the electronic control of bin collections or the provision of bin ‘licences’.
- 4.2 Officers will seek opportunities through the new CRM to link collections, customer reports and subscriptions, and subscription data to more efficiently manage the service.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding that our service is already mature and successful, officers will consider new payment structures, or other activities, that may encourage more residents to use the service.
- 4.4 **Chief Finance Officer’s comments:** measures taken to increase efficiency of the service and maximise subscription collection rates are welcomed to ensure that income generated by the service covers costs. Any budget required to fund new initiatives has yet to be identified, and finance staff will work with the service to analyse any proposals brought forward.

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 None.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer’s comments:** None for the purposes of this report

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 As above, we may learn methods to encourage more recycling.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 Officers will seek information from our fellow councils within the Surrey Waste Partnership.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 The Council’s garden waste service is mature, successful and well-liked by residents. This project is designed to understand opportunities for improvement where pertinent.

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- 8.2 However, it should be noted that the government recently published its new waste strategy 'Our Waste, Our Resources: a Strategy for England'. The strategy states that government will "consult on the provision of free garden waste collections for households with gardens." When planning the garden waste service, the Council decided that a free service would be undesirable for a number of reasons, not least because those households that do not produce garden waste (e.g. that do not have gardens or that compost at home) would effectively subsidise those that do (there is, of course, no such thing as a free collection, which would have to be paid for within Council Tax). An enforced move to 'free' collections would have significant negative impacts to the Council and residents, and would render this project null and void. Officers will prepare a Council response to the public consultation when it is published in late January. 'Free' garden waste collections are unlikely to be welcomed by any Surrey Council.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Committee authorises officers to explore opportunities to improve the garden waste service as outlined in this report.

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);