

Cherwell District Council

Executive

7 November 2022

Garden Waste Charges for 2023/24

Report of Assistant Director Environmental Services

This report is public

Purpose of report

To set the garden waste collection charges for 2023/24

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To Launch the Garden Waste Subscription service for 2023/24 from 01 December 2022.
- 1.2 To Implement the revised prices as set out in Appendix 1.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Chargeable garden waste was launched from 01 March 2022. This service was launched alongside separate weekly food waste collections. This was a big change for residents who had been used to free garden waste collections since 2003/04
- 2.2 Since launch, over 40,000 properties (out of 70,000) properties have signed up for chargeable garden waste. In addition, more than 5200 have signed up for 2 or more brown bins. Up to the end of September some £1.66 million of income has been received
- 2.3 The original plan had an estimate of around £1.4 million being received, with the new separate weekly food waste collection service costing around £850-900k. The net contribution from this change was forecast at around £500k/year
- 2.4 To maximise take up in 2023/24 it is intended that garden waste bookings for 2023/24 open on 01 December 2022. Before the scheme opens in December the charges for the coming year need to be set. Hence the revised charges need to be approved prior to the budget which is set in February 2023

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 This Council was the last council to commence charging for garden waste in Oxfordshire. There are no councils nearby which offer free garden waste and the chargeable garden waste service commenced in Spring 2022. It has been well received by residents as the take up rate has been high with new subscriptions still being 10 per day at the start of October.
- 3.2 The charges for 2022/23 were set at £40 with an 'early bird' discount. For those who signed up before the end of February 2022 the 'early bird' charge was set at £36/year. 67% of properties which have signed up for garden waste, signed up prior to the end of February. Hence the 'early bird' discount proved very attractive to residents with this high take up rate.
- 3.3 For those who ordered a second garden waste licence, a £30 charge was made. The expectation was less than 1000 properties would take up this offer. However, clearly this option is proving more popular than anticipated, with more than 5000 choosing this option.
- 3.4 The strategy on pricing was to bring in maximum income by getting high participation through a good value price level. From extensive research, looking at around 50 councils, going significantly higher reduced overall income. For instance, this Council has achieved 57% participation, whereas in Vale of White Horse, where prices are higher, participation is much lower around 40%. This lower participation leads to lower overall income. The overall charges made by this Council were much lower than surrounding councils with the exception of West Oxfordshire District Council, who were marginally cheaper.
- 3.5 The challenge in 2023/24 is to set a price level which accounts for much higher fuel prices and raised labour costs but also makes the offer still attractive to residents. By keeping prices constant the likely overall contribution will fall and it will be more difficult to raise prices in following years. By raising prices too much, overall income will fall as residents do not renew licences in financially challenging times
- 3.6 The pricing decision is sensitive but could have a significant impact on the overall budget if prices are not increased. The view that prices should remain unchanged could have a £135k negative impact on the overall budget for the Council

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The garden waste subscription will be launched on 01 December to give residents certainty on prices in 2023/24 and to smooth demand for licences over a reasonable period.

5.0 Consultation

Corporate Leadership Team

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Launch the garden waste subscription service for 2023/24 from a later date with revised prices. This was been rejected as it compresses timescales and makes administration of the process more difficult & mistakes are more likely.

Option 2: Launch the garden waste subscription service for 2023/24 with unchanged prices. This has been rejected due to the rising costs of service delivery, especially fuel costs.

Option 3: Launch the garden waste subscription service for 2023/24 with higher prices than set out. This has been rejected as subscriptions are likely to fall resulting in less overall income

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The chargeable garden waste service is a large income stream to the council and offsets the costs of service delivery. The financial implications of increasing the proposed new charges as outlined in para 3.6 will be incorporated into the budget for 2023/24 if approved.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 The fees & charges of the Council for 2023/24 need to be approved so they are in place for the opening of the scheme in December

Comments checked by:

Helen Lolos, Legal Services Team Leader, 07801 400941

Risk Implications

- 7.3 The garden waste collection service is a used by a large number of residents and consequently it is high profile front line service. It is important that changes are well managed to minimise risk of damage to reputation. Any related risks will be managed through the service operational risk and escalated to the leadership risk register as and when necessary.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Interim Assistant Director Customer Focus 01295 221556
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Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 In line with our Equalities and Inclusion Framework guidelines an equalities impact assessment has been completed as part of the revision and proposal of changes on the fees and charges for garden waste.

Comments checked by:

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Sustainability Implications

- 7.5 The garden waste collected is taken to be composted at a nearby composting site with the compost created used on surrounding fields

Comments checked by:

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: Yes

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder Cleaner & Greener Communities

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 Proposed Charges for 2023/24

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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