

Cherwell District Council

Executive

6 November 2023

Garden Waste Charges for 2024/25

Report of Assistant Director Environmental Services

This report is public

Purpose of report

To set the garden waste collection charges for 2024/25

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To approve a single Garden Waste Subscription charge (appendix 1) for 2024/25 effective from 4 December 2023.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The chargeable garden waste service was launched from 01 March 2022. The service has successfully run for two years with a high take up from residents. Since launch, each year, over 40,000 properties (out of more than 70,000 properties) have subscribed to the service.
- 2.2 The current charges for garden waste are set at a level well below the level most local authorities charge. In Oxford City in 2023/04 the subscription charge is £75. In South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse the charge for 2023/04 was £60/year. In Stratford upon Avon the 2023/04 charge is £44/year and West Oxfordshire the charge is £45/year.
- 2.3 To maximise take up in 2024/25 it is intended that garden waste bookings for 2023/24 open on 04 December 2023. 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 2024

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. The service has been well received by residents as the take up rate has been high.

- 3.2 The charges for 2022/23 were set at £42/year.
- 3.3 It is proposed to make the following changes to the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25. To charge £49/year for all garden waste subscription in 2024/25.
- 3.4 The strategy on pricing is 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 2024/25 is to set a price level which accounts for 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.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The new garden waste subscription fee for 2024/25 will come into effect from 4 December 2023 to give residents certainty on prices in 2024/25 and to smooth demand for licences over a reasonable period.

5.0 Consultation

CLT considered the report & supported the proposed prices.

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: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 from a later date with revised prices. This has been rejected as it compresses timescales and makes administration of the process more difficult.

Option 2: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 with unchanged prices. This has been rejected due to the rising costs of service delivery, especially fuel costs.

Option 3: Implement the garden waste subscription service for 2024/25 with higher prices than set out. This has been rejected as subscriptions are likely to fall resulting in less overall income to the Council.

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 proposed new charges are to be put into the budget for 2024/25, forecast to generate additional income of £0.190m compared to current Medium Term Financial Strategy plans.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 The fees and charges for the Council's Garden Waste Service for 2023/24 need to be approved so they are in place for the opening of the scheme in December 2023

Comments checked by:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director for Law & Governance,
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Risk Implications

- 7.3 The garden waste collection service is used by a large number of residents and consequently it is high profile front line service, there is a risk to the delivery of this service if fees are not increased in line with inflation and rising prices, as per paragraph 6.1 There are no risk implications directly arising from this proposal. 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, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 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 fully composted at a nearby composting site with the compost created used on surrounding fields
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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision Yes

Financial Threshold Met: Yes

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener Communities

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 Proposed Charges for 2024/25

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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