

Present: Councillor Claire Rylott (Chairman), Councillor Lina Savickiene (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Richard Austin BEM, Neil Drayton, Paul Gleeson, David Middleton, Ralph Pryke and David Scoot.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Callum Butler

In attendance:

Officers –

Assistant Director - Regulatory, Assistant Director - Neighbourhood Services, Operations Manager and Democratic Services Officer

## **26 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were tabled by Councillor Alison Austin with Councillor Richard Austin substituting.

Apologies for absence were tabled by Councillor Mike Gilbert with Councillor Paul Gleeson substituting.

Further apologies were tabled by Councillors Anton Dani and Patsie Marson.

## **27 MINUTES**

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting as agreed by the committee.

## **28 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were tabled.

## **29 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions.

## **30 WASTE FEES AND CHARGES**

The Portfolio Holder presented the report supported by the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services and the Council's Operations Manager. Committee were advised that the operating costs for waste services had increased significantly and were no longer being met due to increases in fuel, employee costs and the cost of vehicle maintenance/replacement. The charges for the kerbside garden waste collection service had not increased for 3 years.

The report proposed to increase the 2024/25 charges for garden waste collection to £50 for the first bin and £30 for subsequent bins, to meet increases in costs and in doing so, support the cost of service provision and to ensure that non-users were not subsidising the service. The increase would further meet the full cost recovery in the service delivery and ensure that the service was not subsidised. The proposed raise would support the Council's medium term financial plan by identifying service efficiencies, provide additional revenue and strengthen the Council's financial position to help maintain a balanced budget.

The review of garden waste collection fees in particular needed to be undertaken at the current time, to enable a sufficient lead in time to allow the charges to be implemented for collections in 2024/25. The charges had not been reviewed for some time and no longer reflected the cost of providing the service due to extensive inflationary pressures which were well documented.

Committee deliberation followed which is collated and included:

Responding to a question seeking confirmation of the cost of the service over the previous 12 month period, the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services confirmed that the service currently cost the Council an additional £3k per annum, but looking at subsequent years it was estimated the shortfall would be £100k due to increasing costs in vehicles, running costs and staffing.

Referencing the report tabled, a member requested that the final Cabinet report include a detailed breakdown of all the costs and projected costs of for the service, to ensure Cabinet would be able to make a fully informed decision.

A request was made for a greater encouragement by the Council to its residents to compost their waste, with a request for some promotional material to go out in hard copy with the Council Tax. Reference was made to a previous scheme which provided residents with a composter, and whilst it was recognised that the scheme was no longer in existence, the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services advised that consideration would be given to any other potential schemes.

On questioning the take up of the service by the foreign nationals within the town and the information that was provided to them, a member was advised that whilst the routing of the service was identifiable, identification of the occupants on the route using the service, could not be identified. Confirmation was provided that all advertising issued to all nationalities was produced in pictorial format for ease of understanding.

In response to a query which sought the uptake percentage of the service against the other waste service collections, the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services advised that it was approximately one quarter of the households. Moving forward, members were advised that with the increasing development within the town there was an expectation of an increase in uptake as the new builds became occupied. Concern was noted that the increase in the rate would need to be monitored to ensure that any drop off in uptake was identified. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the proposed new rate had factored in a 5% reduction in take up of the service, but agreed the need to monitor the uptake after the initial implementation phase, and should the uptake figures reduce more than expected, then the decision on the increase would need to be re-visited.

A member sought clarification on the position of the other Council's within the partnership and was advised that both East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council had not yet implemented rises, but that both were looking to do so. The Portfolio Holder further confirmed that with the Government having confirmed the decision not to subsidise the service, many Council were now looking at their charging structures and having looked at Council's nationwide, who had already implemented increases, he had noted that the levels varied with some doubling their charges, other increasing up to £20 and also some with similar increases as suggested within the report.

The Chairman asked if the service was open to any abuse by non-paying residents, as such abuse had happened historically. The Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services advised that when a vehicle approached a property, the I.T system on board provided confirmation of the address where payment had been made, and the sticker on the bin itself provided a further point of confirmation for the crew. The service was working well, but if there were I.T issues in a specific area and the system in the cab crashed, then the stickers were the only point of reference to confirm the householder had paid. If the team were made aware of any abuse then action was taken but members were assured that the crews were very vigilant.

Further comments included suggestions to place some form of advertising of the service at the entrance to the Household Waste Recycling site at the approach to the site was subject to significant fly tipping of garden waste, which was a cost to the Council to remove. Introducing a three weekly collection to cover the cost of the fortnightly collection and a further suggestion to offer an incentive alongside the increase in cost, of potentially an additional two collections to the schedule at either the start or finish of the collection year. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that any changes to facilitate such an increase in the collection round would be subject to a further increase, to the charges proposed.

Overall members supported the increases proposed and agreed that only households who used the service should pay for it. There was agreement that the Council should not subsidise the service as that would result in a cost to residents who did not use it.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the Environment and Performance Committee recommend to Cabinet, that Cabinet approve an increase in Garden Waste Fees to £50 for the first bin and £30 for subsequent bins, with effect from 1 January 2024.

**31 WORK PROGRAMME**

Noted by the committee.

The Meeting Closed at 7.15 pm