Report to Scrutiny Commission

Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement

Date of Commission meeting: 9th March 2015

Garden Waste Service Update Report

Report of the Director of Local Services and Enforcement

Leicester City Council

Useful information

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- Report version number plus Code No from Report Tracking Database:

Suggested content

1. Purpose of report

To provide an update report regarding the garden waste collection service launched in March 2014.

2. Summary

This report provides a progress update on the first year of the garden waste collection service and an outline of planned activities and expectations for year two of the service in 2015.

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission previously received a report relating to this matter on 4th December 2013.

The new garden waste collection service is available to households in Leicester. The new service is an optional subscription based service, requiring households to opt-in to the service if they wish to sign up. Customers are provided with a 240 litre green wheeled bin in which to place garden waste (e.g. leaves, prunings, twigs, grass cuttings) and receive a fortnightly collection.

Collections are carried out by Leicester City Council's (LCC) contractor Biffa Leicester, with all administration and marketing of the service conducted by the LCC Waste Management team.

The service is expected to achieve (as planned) a break even position in 2014/15 and current work is focussed on achieving revenue generation at the end of the 2015 service year.

3. Recommendations

To note the progress on the launch and operation of the garden waste service in 2014 and the planned developments for 2015.

4. Report/Supporting information including options considered:

Summary of the first year of service

The Council decided on 4th December 2013 to launch a new garden waste collection service to households in Leicester.

The new service is an optional subscription based service, requiring households to opt-in to the service if they wish to sign up. Customers are provided with a 240 litre green wheeled bin in which to place garden waste (e.g. leaves, prunings, twigs, grass cuttings) and receive a fortnightly collection. Subscriptions operate on a rolling annual basis and collections operate between March and October (inclusive).

Collections are carried out by Leicester City Council's contractor Biffa Leicester, with all management, administration and marketing of the service conducted by the LCC Waste Management team.

A successful promotional discount campaign was run from late December 2013 to 31st April 2014 to encourage customers to sign up to the service – customers applying to the service before the 31st April 2014 were able to obtain a £10 discount on the annual service cost of £30, meaning they paid for year one £20. After this time, customers signing up were charged £30 per year. Over three quarters of customers signing up in 2014 did so during the promotional offer.

The Garden Waste Service was one of the first services to strongly encourage online sign up, rather than signpost customer's to phone the call centre to make payment. In 2014, 64% of sign-ups were made online using a debit/credit card, with the remainder made by cheque or via the customer service and call centres.

A higher than anticipated number of customers signed up to the service in the first year, with 3,998 customers joining in 2014 – it was modelled that approximately 3,250 customers would join in the first year.

Outline of planned development for the service in 2015

The renewal process has begun for 2015 to invoice those customers who joined the service in 2014, inviting them to resubscribe for another year. This year an annual direct debit option will be available, which will be an enhanced payment option that offers greater convenience for customers. As annual subscriptions are offered on an annual rolling basis, invoicing is an ongoing process. At this stage, it is currently too early to know how many existing customers will resubscribe to the service.

A new customer database and online payments portal has recently been launched to streamline administrative processes and provide a robust system in which to handle the renewals process.

The following provides proposals for a communications campaign to encourage further customer sign up in 2015:

Planned Communications	**Timeline**
Advertising of the service at the new Gypsum Close Household Waste Recycling Centre	April
A5 flyer promoting the service to be distributed with Council Tax flyers	Late February – Early March
Press Release	March
Updates on the Council Website and via social media	January - April

The proposed communications utilise a variety of media to target LCC's audiences to best maximise their impact and provide value for money. Experience has shown from 2014 that the inclusion of a flyer with council tax bills leads to the greatest sign up to the service. It is therefore proposed to repeat this to maximise impact and engagement with residents.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

An annual charge of £30 per household is in place, with charges for additional bins at £20 per bin. Bin purchase and marketing costs for the service are funded from the Government's Weekly Collection Support Fund.

The service is expected to achieve a break even position in 2014/15 largely covering its direct operating costs, even with running a very successful promotional offer at a discounted annual charge of £20 per household, and is expected to cover these costs in 2015/16 with a further increase in customer numbers. The costs are variable because they are dependent on customer numbers and therefore the number of vehicles required to service those customers also varies.

Amin Girach, Accountant (Tel: 37 4088)

5.2 Legal implications

Section 45 (3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that no charge shall be made for the collection of household waste except in cases prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State; and in any of those cases –

(a) The duty to arrange for the collection of the waste shall not arise until a person who controls the waste requests the authority to collect it; and
(b) The authority may recover a reasonable charge for the collection of the waste

from the person who made the request.

The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 which came in to force on the 6th April 2012 provides that a Local Authority can charge for the collection of household garden waste.

Katherine Jamieson, Solicitor (Tel: 37 1452)

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

The Garden Waste Service collected almost 900 tonnes of garden waste in 2015 all of which was composted locally in Leicestershire. We do not expect there to be huge benefits relating to city wide carbon levels, however, as the service expands further it is anticipated that less garden waste will be placed in black bins to be processed by the city council's ball mill.

As waste does not currently form part of the carbon footprint calculations for the city council's own operations, there will be no impact on these emission levels.

Louise Buckley, Graduate Project Officer (Climate Change), (Tel: 37 2293)

5.4 Equalities Implications

This report provides a progress update on the first year of the garden waste collection service and an outline of planned activities and expectations for year two of the service in 2015.

The design of information in the proposed communications campaign to encourage further customer sign up in 2015 needs to be accessible (in keeping with corporate communications standards) to meet the wide range of needs of those resident's interested in the scheme.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer (Tel: 37 4148)

5.5 Other Implications

There are no other implications to be considered.

6. Background information and other papers:

Not applicable

7. Summary of appendices:

Not applicable

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a "key decision"?

Not applicable

10. If a key decision please explain reason