

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2014
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Environmental Protection and Enhancement
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Notice of Motion – Garden Waste
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr David Topping, Environment

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### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1. Council resolved at its meeting on 12 December 2013 that a motion concerning the criticism of the recent decision made in relation to the extension of the garden waste winter closedown period be referred to Cabinet. This report facilitates Council's referral.
- 1.2. The extension of, the garden waste winter close down period was a strategic decision taken by the Council in accordance with a variety of service improvement measures identified for the service within the Council's Major Change Programme. Consideration was given to improvements that would both improve the effectiveness of the service whilst at the same time making a significant contribution to improving our environment. Annual data collected by the service confirmed that the garden waste collected in the winter months was significantly less than the other months in the year, resulting in the Council's fleet of vehicles emptying predominantly empty bins for the majority of users. Currently, more than a third of councils in England are charging their residents for collecting garden waste with a significant number now considering introducing charges in the future. The decision taken by the Council to extend the close down period was in preference to introducing a charge for the service. The closure period has helped to deliver a financial saving whilst at the same time reducing the Council's carbon footprint due to the reduced vehicles in operation. During the early stages of introduction, the Council increased the Customer Services personnel to assist the residents with any concerns. The issues and concerns were reviewed and helped influence the proactive measures taken to further re-assure residents why the changes were needed, along with the short-term concessions promoted by the Portfolio Holder for Environment. The most significant being, the announcement that for a short period of time garden waste could be deposited within their black bin. This action was positively received by residents and the local media. The Portfolio Holder has also committed

to arranging a review of the benefits of the extension period once the service recommences and the full benefits are realised.

### **Recommendation**

- 2.1. That Cabinet consider and refute the merits of the motion presented ("This Council is critical of the recent decisions made concerning the collection of recyclable garden waste"). Responding to the merits of the change, in preference to other alternative service improvement options.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 To enable Cabinet to consider the matter raised in the motion, and to propose further actions in relation to the next garden waste suspension period in 2014/15.

### **4. Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All wards

### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All Ward Members

### **6.0 Policy Implications**

- 6.1 The Council's three-year plan budget principles – "We will ensure that those who provide services, whether in-house or externally, give real value for money".
- 6.2 The Council's Business Plan identifies efficiency savings linked to Waste Management services (Priority 6. Redefining the Council's role in core place-based services - 6.4: Determine future delivery model for waste management services).

### **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 In order to meet stringent financial targets the Council has detailed cost savings across all council services as part of the 3-year business plan. Within Waste Services, target savings of £2.5m have been identified over this period.
- 7.2 The full savings summary, detailed modeling and analysis was contained within appendices to the June 2013 Cabinet report.
- 7.3 The financial savings associated with the extended suspension of the garden waste service were initially identified within the June 2013 report and then further refined as more detailed work was undertaken as part of the service efficiency project. The full saving will be

confirmed once the service is reinstated and all benefits/costs can be determined.

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The Council currently collects the waste from residential properties and uses private facilities to dispose of the green waste collected. Contained within the disposal contract are conditions that give the Council the right to require a change to the terms of the Contract.
- 8.2 Extending the period of garden waste non-collection from 6 weeks to 17 weeks impacted on the payments made to the service provider. In the report to Cabinet in June 2013, this was considered and acknowledged. It is expected that further benefits will be realised when the existing arrangement is renewed as part of the long term waste disposal procurement project.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

- 9.1 There were a number of risks associated with the extended suspension of the garden waste service and these are detailed along with mitigating actions as a part of the Project governance. However, those listed below represent the highest profile risks.
- 9.2 Early and continued engagement with trade unions and the existing workforce leading up to and during the suspension period was essential to successfully delivering the outcomes of the review.
- 9.3 It was anticipated that the extended suspension period for the service would have reputational challenges for the Council. In recognition of this, a detailed communications plan was developed and implemented. The plan focused upon communicating in advance the planned changes and taking a pro-active approach to dealing with individual enquiries received. Complaints peaked during the first three weeks of introducing. Overall the communications plan was deemed successful, with less than 3% complaints/enquiries generated from the total number of properties served by the service.
- 9.4 Notwithstanding the actions identified in 9.3 above, the service acted upon advice received from Communications, Media and Customer Services, informing residents prior to implementation of the changes and when they were due to take place from. The Council also organised additional Customer Services personnel to take feedback and complaints from the public which was reviewed during the period leading up to and following the garden waste suspension. The data collected during this period, helped influence the pro-active measures taken to further re-assure residents why the changes were needed along with the short-term concessions promoted by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, allowing a temporary relief, giving residents the opportunity to utilise space within their black bin to take any surplus

green waste during the early part of December 2013. This action was positively received by residents and the local media. The Portfolio Holder has also committed to arranging a review of the benefits of the suspension period once the service re-commences and the full benefits are realised.

## **10. Background and Options**

- 10.1 A motion titled "Garden Waste" was proposed to Council at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2013, by Councillor David Brickhill and seconded by Councillor A Moran.
- 10.2 The content of the motion was as follows:

"This Council is critical of the recent decisions made concerning the collection of recyclable garden waste."
- 10.3 In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules within the Constitution, Council resolved that the matter stand referred to Cabinet.
- 10.4 Full details of the background to the savings proposal associated with the extended suspension period, and other efficiency projects, can be found in the June 2013 Cabinet papers and its associated appendices.
- 10.5 From the review of options surrounding efficiencies within the garden waste service, it was identified that the Council could either extend the suspension period or introduce a chargeable garden waste service.
- 10.6 Extending the suspension period enabled reduced agency costs and lower fleet costs as vehicles could be off-hired for a longer period of time and the need for agency staff was greatly reduced.
- 10.7 By introducing a chargeable garden waste service, the main disadvantage was the negative impact it would have on the Council's recycling rate as garden waste accounts for half of the recycling rate. It could also have led to significant reputational damage for the Council.

## **11.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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