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**Report to Special Council**

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**Date of Meeting: 16 January 2020**

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**Subject: Garden Waste Permit Scheme**

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**Report by: Strategic Director (Place)**

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**1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. This purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the progress made towards the introduction of charges for collection of domestic garden waste from March 2020.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- a) It is recommended that the Council notes the contents of this report and the ongoing cross-service work to implement the garden waste permit scheme.
- b) Agrees to set an initial annual charge at £36 per bin which will be included in the Council's Register of Charges and notes that any proposed future increases will be subject to Council approval on an annual basis as part of the budget process which reviews the Register of Charges.
- c) Notes that, following consultation in line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, that HRA will cover the costs of permits for those tenants who currently have a brown bin or wish to have one. Tenants who do not wish to participate and have no obligation to maintain greenspace can request not to receive a permit and have their brown bin removed.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1. Clackmannanshire Council currently provides a garden waste recycling service to approximately 22,000 properties. This service allows householders to recycle grass cuttings, weeds, shrub cuttings, hedge trimmings, flowers, plants, leaves and twigs via a kerbside collection using a brown wheelie bin. The service is provided between March and November.
- 3.2. The total tonnage of garden waste collected in Clackmannanshire in 2018 was around 3,500t.

- 3.3. The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 introduced a requirement on local authorities to provide householders with collection services for dry recyclable waste and food waste. The collection of garden waste is, however, not a statutory service that Clackmannanshire Council has to provide to householders. Under the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992, local authorities can levy a charge for the collection of certain types of household waste, including garden waste.
- 3.4. Charging for garden waste is common practice in England and Wales with over 50% of councils charging for this service. In Scotland, a number of councils have now introduced a charge, including Angus, Dundee City, Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross. A number of other Scottish councils have intimated they are considering adopting this practice. One authority, Scottish Borders, elected to discontinue garden waste collections in 2014, and instead promote home composting, disposal at Household Waste Recycling Centres or the use of private collection companies.
- 3.5. Over the last few months, a cross service working group has been developing the strategy covering service logistics, planning, charging methods, permitting, auditing and control. A list of frequently asked questions will also be developed to provide more information to specific queries and this will be posted on the Council's Website.
- 3.6. Officers have considered similar schemes in other local authorities and have chosen to develop a very similar model to that developed and successfully implemented in Perth & Kinross.
- 3.7. Angus Council's take-up figure during the first year of operation was 46% of applicable households, while Perth & Kinross indicated a take-up figure of 54% during the first year. The financial model for Clackmannanshire is based on an estimated take-up rate of between 30% to 50%.

#### **4.0 Considerations**

- 4.1. As part of the budget savings process in March 2019 it was agreed that Clackmannanshire Council would introduce a charge for the collection of garden waste to achieve a cost saving of £130k. The Council committed to introducing this Permit Scheme for garden waste collections commencing March 2020 rather than ceasing the service altogether.
- 4.2. The Service has developed a delivery model based on a full cost recovery approach, as per current best practice.
- 4.3. The financial benefit to the Council from the implementation of the Permit Scheme is dependant on the take-up to the scheme. A cost benefit of £130k will be achieved at a household take-up rate of around thirty percent which would achieve the budgeted saving. However a fifty percent take-up rate would result in a cost benefit of around £290k.

- 4.4. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken in relation to those other Authorities who are currently providing or initiating garden waste permit schemes. The permit fee of £36 is in line with the benchmark and will enable full cost recovery to be achieved at the forecast take-up rate of fifty percent.
- 4.5. There will be a significant additional administration burden during the introduction phase. The financial model supports provision of an additional 1.5 FTE staff for a six month period to assist within the Contact Centre.
- 4.6. As part of the HRA budget 2019/20 approval, it was noted that the Housing service would *“hold formal consultation with tenants in accordance with the 2001 Act, and seek their views as to whether the HRA budget would pay for garden waste permits for those tenants who require to make use of the service”*. The Housing service consulted with over 10% of its tenant base and 85% agreed with this proposal.
- 4.7. The cost of permits for Council tenants is therefore being covered by the Housing Revenue account which is supported by their rent payments. Housing Officers have engaged with all Council tenants and offered the opportunity to ‘opt out’ for those who no longer require the service. Those Council tenants who have not yet engaged with Council officers will be automatically provided with a permit.
- 4.8. Consultation has also taken place with Ochilview, Paragon and Kingdom Housing associations. The information obtained to date indicates it is unlikely they will subsidise their tenants’ access to the scheme.

#### Proposed Scheme

- 4.9. The scheme is open to any resident who wishes to utilise the garden waste collection service, including those living in flatted developments. It is recognised flatted developments may involve bin and cost sharing arrangements.
- 4.10. Letters will be sent to all households approximately 2 months prior to the start of the charging period. This letter will advise people of how to register for the service, how to make payment, what to do if they have multiple bins (maximum 2) and how they can arrange for bins to be removed if they do not wish to participate.
- 4.11. This communication will be reinforced by a comprehensive social media campaign, information on the Council’s website and local newspapers.
- 4.12. Householders will be encouraged to register online wherever possible and staff at various Council offices will be able to assist householders who do not have internet access at home. Payment can be made over the phone or via the secure website using their debit or credit card. Payment can be made in person at council offices – locations and full details will be specified in letters sent to residents.

- 4.13. Once payment has been received, householders will receive notification of their registration to the scheme within 21 working days. The registration documents will include a sticker (permit) which includes the address of the registered property and detailed Terms & Conditions associated with the service. The sticker will be placed on the bin by the householder and will indicate to the collection crew that the address is included in the scheme. Only those bins displaying a valid sticker will be emptied.
- 4.14. Householders will be able to sign up at any point during the charging period, but there will be no part year reductions for householders who sign up at a later date.
- 4.15. The frequency of collections will not change. It is proposed to continue to operate every three weeks throughout the year from March to November inclusive. Collection details will be advertised on the council website where calendars will be available to download.
- 4.16. Householders who do not sign up for the scheme will be encouraged to dispose of garden waste free of charge at Forthbank Household Waste Recycling Centre. Information will also be provided on the Council website to encourage home composting.
- 4.17. Further details about the reason why the scheme is being introduced, how it will operate and details on how to order a home composting bin will be displayed on the council website. A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) will be created to provide more information to specific queries. Participants will be provided with clear guidance on where to place their permit on the brown bin.

#### Enforcement

- 4.18. Information hangers, placed onto the handle of bins by the waste operatives, will be used to inform households of contamination within any of the recycling bins and to explain what material is acceptable. Garden waste placed into the residual waste bins would result in an increase in tonnage (currently through landfill) at a potentially significant cost.
- 4.19. To minimise the likely impact of garden waste finding its way into the residual waste stream following the introduction of a charge, the use of information hangers will be extended to identify garden waste as a contaminant within the residual waste bin, instructing that this waste should be disposed of via the brown bin service, through home composting or free of charge at Forthbank Household Waste Recycling Centre. Garden waste or residual waste presented in sacks alongside the residual bin or garden waste bin will not be collected. These measures will be widely communicated to householders at the outset of the scheme implementation.
- 4.20. The assisted pull-out/collection service will be retained for eligible residents who purchase a garden waste permit.

## 5.0 Sustainability Implications

- 5.1. This model will ensure delivery of a sustainable garden waste collection service for Clackmannanshire residents. The self funding scheme should not be affected by further financial pressures on Council budgets going forward.
- 5.2. Contamination of other waste streams has been considered and factored into the financial model. Case studies have been undertaken and contamination of up to 10% is forecast in the first year. The Service will focus on reducing this annually.
- 5.3. Only on request will brown bins be removed for storage and future use/management at Forthbank Household Waste and Recycling Centre.
- 5.4. The Council will keep the Garden Waste Service under review to maximise its benefits to local residents and in meeting any additional requirements in terms of Climate Change, Customer Satisfaction, Service improvements, and changes in legislation.

## 6.0 Resource Implications

### 6.1. *Financial Details*

- 6.2. The proposed scheme is based on an estimated take-up of the service of between 30% to 50%, and levying an annual charge of £36 per bin for three weekly collection taking place between March and November each year. This would enable the Service to achieve a cost benefit of between £130k to £290k. Take-up of around 48% is required to achieve full cost recovery.
- 6.3. Staffing, communication and IT costs, including those costs associated with setting up the scheme have been factored into the financial model.
- 6.4. The upfront costs of implementing the scheme in financial year 2019/20 will be met from the existing Waste Services revenue budget.
- 6.5. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

### 6.6. *Staffing*

- 6.7. Additional administration support of 1.5 FTE for 6 months is required to support the implementation of the scheme. This will involve advertising 1 FTE position and distributing the remaining hours between existing part-time staff.

### 6.8. *Communications*

- 6.9. A defined communications strategy covering the proposed changes to the garden waste service has been developed.

## 7.0 Exempt Reports

- 7.1. Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

## 8.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

### (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

- Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all
- Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life
- Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential
- Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

### (2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

## 9.0 Equalities Impact

9.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes  This is contained within the Business Case

## 10.0 Legality

10.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

## 11.0 Appendices

11.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

None

## 12.0 Background Papers

12.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes  (please list the documents below) No

**Author(s)**

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**Approved by**

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