

CABINET MEMBER DECISION MEETING FOR TRANSPORT, WASTE AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

4TH DECEMBER 2024

Cabinet Member: Cllr. Edward Thomas	Portfolio: Transport, Waste and Infrastructure	
GARDEN WASTE CHARGES FOR 2025/2026 SEASON		
Purpose: This report is to sanction the proposed garden waste charges for the 2025/2026 garden waste collection season.		
Recommendations / key decisions required: For the reasons set out and contained within this report, the service seeks approval to proceed with the proposed garden waste service charges for 2025/2026 season ahead of the final budget consultation and full council meeting in early 2025 which will sanction the full budget setting for the Authority for 2025/2026 fiscal year.		
Reasons: The garden waste collection service is carried out between the months of March and November each year. In preparation for the next garden waste season i.e. March 2025 - November 2025 the price for the service is set in accordance with the financial process and in line with the yearly charging digest procedure which feeds into the overall financial position of the local authority for the upcoming financial year, scrutinised through consultation and the political process. However, the timing of the garden waste service in terms of season commencement in March each year, does not lend itself to the financial timeline for budget setting regarding the final sign off timeline of the full budget setting. For the service to prepare and notify customers of the upcoming arrangements and charges the garden waste service opens to customers in January every year to prepare for service demand, delivery and collection of bins. Processing of subscription payments and confirmation of continuation of custom or new customer requirements and consequently the charge for the upcoming season needs to be sanctioned sooner and ahead of January 2025.		
Name of Head of Service: Daniel W John	Designation Head of Environmental Infrastructure	E Mail Address: Dwjohn@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Report Author: Geinor Lewis Strategic Waste and Circular Economy Manager	E Mail Address: Gmlewis@carmarthenshire.gov.uk	

Declaration of Personal Interest (if any):

None

Dispensation Granted to Make Decision (if any):

N/A

DECISION MADE:

Signed:

DATE: _____

CABINET MEMBER

The following section will be completed by the Democratic Services Officer in attendance at the meeting

Recommendation of Officer adopted	YES / NO
Recommendation of the Officer was adopted subject to the amendment(s) and reason(s) specified:	
Reason(s) why the Officer's recommendation was not adopted:	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CABINET MEMBER DECISION MEETING FOR
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GARDEN WASTE CHARGES FOR 2025/2026

The Council offers a fortnightly, subscription-based kerbside garden waste collection service. Operated by four vehicles with drivers and loaders, the service provides wheeled bins or hessian sacks for restricted access, assisted collection or health and safety considerations which depicts sacks to be required. Running from early March to late November, the service averages 19 collections per season.

Existing customers are notified of the charges in January each year, and the service opens to new customers in February. This schedule ensures payments and allows time for bin delivery and processing before the service starts in early March.

To avoid service disruptions, a decision on the charges for the next fiscal year is required in December. This allows the Debtor section to process the charges, manage payments, and confirm receipt of costs to service in a timely manner, ensuring customers are added to collection rounds for March.

Adhering to this timeline maintains operational efficiency and meets customer expectations, ensuring the service remains reliable and accessible.

The review of the 2024/2025 garden waste service data indicates some critical trends and insights into customer engagement and operational efficiency.

Customer Base and Subscriptions

- Total Customers at end of season: 12,745
- New Customers: 1,377
- Cancellations: 7% of the customer base from 2023/2024

Operational overview

- Payment Timeliness: All existing customers wishing to proceed with their subscription paid ahead of the season start, suggesting affordability at the current rate.
- Direct Debit Subscriptions: 2.5% of customers use this payment method.

Customer Satisfaction

- A survey conducted in autumn 2024 revealed that a proportion of direct debit customers chose this option due to affordability, allowing them to access the service with smaller payments throughout the season.
- The absence of this payment option could potentially create a barrier for some residents to access the service.

Overall, while the service saw an influx of new customers, the cancellations and payment method preferences provide valuable insights for future operational strategies and customer retention efforts.

Residual waste analysis shows that organic material from domestic gardens is still being included within black bags. Higher garden waste fees may increase this trend.

Loss of customers will negatively impact Carmarthenshire's recycling rate. This financial year and in subsequent years, the statutory recycling target is 70%, with garden waste contributing to recycling performance.

Therefore, the proposal to keep the current operational service charge the same as 2024/2025 and not apply the 3% validation to garden waste charges this year, similar to last year in order to keep our customer base consistent.

The charges are;

- £58.83 if paid by Direct Debit (DD)
- £53.00 if paid in full which includes a 10% full payment discount.

Direct Debit provisions will be available between March and July. We have extended this period by one month this year to allow direct debit customers to spread their payments equally and ahead of the service start in early March rather than April commencement of DD payments. Closure of the direct debit payment availability will remain in July, similar to subsequent years as the benefit of direct debit will become negligible from August onwards due to the service finishing in November.

The service has encountered difficulties in retrieving bins from some of the 7% of customers who cancelled, despite multiple attempts and communication with residents. The collection costs on average £29.17 per attempt. Despite planning the collection while the resources are in the area, multiple attempts to collect bins without success have incurred significant costs for the authority. The expenses related to these attempted retrievals have amounted to approximately £10,000 this year, which is disproportionate to the unit price of the bins.

As a result, the service proposes to charge for any new garden waste bin from 2025/2026 amending the terms and conditions of service to reflect this. The charge of the bin will be £19 which is the unit price and manufacturer cost per bin to the authority. This will result in the customer purchasing the bin from the Authority and no requirement on service to retrieve the bin if the customer intends to cancel the service. This will result in a decrease in service costs of retrieving the bins.

The service also proposes a 10% discount on service charge for any subsequent bin purchases above the initial bin. The service has several residents who have a need for additional bins and 285 customers have between 2 and 5 bins per household. As we are already attending the property to service the first bin subsequent garden waste collections in other Council issued bins at the property will be charged at a 10% discount.

This may encourage others who may need a further bin to obtain subsequent bins rather than using the residual bags to dispose of the surplus that cannot fit within the initial garden waste bin.

Therefore, subsequent bin charges of over one bin per property at a 10% discount will be;

- £53 for direct debit customers
- £47.70 for full payment option

The service will also introduce an online form via Firmstep in conjunction with ICT service for the renewal and new customer confirmation to the subscription service. The form will allow customers at their leisure to confirm that they wish to continue with the service, pay and/ or request an increase in bin provision and for any new customers to apply in January 2024 ahead of the service commencing in March 2025.

The form will reduce the need to send paper invoices and allow customers to pay online, over the phone or through the usual cash desk facilities. This will reduce the need to print 12,745 invoices, reducing printing and postage costs. The form will be open from January allowing residents to have more time to prepare to confirm and pay for the service before it starts in March 2025. We will communicate this change by emailing to the large proportion of residents that have chosen to receive electronic communication and for the first year, relay changes to the small proportion of residents who receive hard copy letter correspondence, so they have the information in the means in which they have asked to be communicated.

Therefore, as a result the service has taken a view to retain current customer base, expand and gain new customers and to ensure that garden waste is recycled in the correct manner and contribute in using the separate collection service, supporting the overall recycling figure.

As a result of the proposals outlined and the rational set out in this report we seek the sanctioning of;

- 2025/2026 service charges to remain at;
 - ✓ £58.83 if paid by Direct Debit
 - ✓ £53.00 if paid in full which includes a 10% full payment discount
- Charge £19 for any new bin issued in 2025/2026 season
- Subsequent bin charges of over one bin per property at a 10% discount which will be;
 - ✓ £53 for direct debit customers
 - ✓ £47.70 for full payment option

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

NO

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: D. John

Head of Environmental Infrastructure

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Bio-diversity & Climate Change
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: D John

Head of Environmental Infrastructure

1. Scrutiny Committee - NA
2. Local Member(s) - NA
3. Community / Town Council - NA
4. Relevant Partners - NA
5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations - Na

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

NONE