

Discretionary Waste Charges Scrutiny Review

Introduction to Discretionary Charging

1. In the current economic and funding climate City of York Council (CYC) needs to achieve budget efficiencies and savings year on year. CYC is facing challenging financial circumstances requiring a fundamental consideration of service delivery.
2. An ongoing review of waste services is being carried out to develop options for future service delivery. We are looking at different ways to make all services more cost effective. A key area for further investigation is that of discretionary charges for various waste related services.
3. Local authorities have powers to charge for a wide range of services. Many of these powers derive from legislation that applies to specific service areas. The Local Government Act 2003 also provides the ability to charge for discretionary services. For waste related activities, the list of discretionary services includes green waste collection, bulky waste collection and some elements of household waste recycling centres operations.
4. Historically where discretionary services have been provided free there may be high levels of public concern and opposition to the introduction of charges. Residents may consider that these services should be provided through their Council Tax and not be subject to a separate additional charge.
5. The main factor that determines the impact of charges on service use is the price sensitivity of current and potential service users. People have different levels of price sensitivity for different services, influenced by:
 - Ability to pay - how charges relate to an individual's level of disposable income.
 - Perceptions of value for money - whether charges are judged to provide value for money for the level of service being offered and influenced by the extent to which a service is deemed a necessity.
 - Availability of alternatives - whether the same or similar services can be obtained from other public, private or voluntary sector providers at lower cost or with greater value.

6. CYC already charges householders for a number of discretionary waste services but there is further scope to extend the range and level of charges made as evidenced in this report.

Charging Schemes Operating Nationally

7. Garden Waste Collection - In setting a charge for the collection of garden waste a decision has to be made as to whether it should:
- Be relatively nominal to encourage maximum diversion of garden waste from the residual stream.
 - Cover the cost of collection to make this cost neutral to the authority.
 - Cover the cost of collection and treatment to deter additional arisings and make the full service cost neutral.
8. More than a third of councils across England charge to collect garden waste. Taking into account the range of factors influencing charging policy it is not therefore surprising that charges for the service vary greatly:
- **Richmondshire District Council** - Charge £17 a year for a 140 litre bin collected fortnightly from March to November (21 collections). Additional bins are charged at £12 per year.
 - **Kingston Council, London** - Charges £75 per year for a 240 litre bin collected fortnightly (only break in service is over Christmas and New Year period). Maximum of 3 bins per household. For householders generating less garden waste there is a biodegradable bag scheme available. Charge is £27 for a roll of 10 x 60 litre bags.
 - **CYC** - From September 2013 every household included in green waste collection service is able to have one 180 litre bin emptied fortnightly from April to October. Householders with more green waste bins must join the additional bin subscription service to ensure their extra containers are emptied. All additional green bins are subject to an annual charge which is currently £35 per bin.
9. Bulky Waste Collection - Many councils have an incremental fee scale, with a minimum charge for one or more items and an additional charge per item or banded number of items. Banded fees are relatively simple

to administer, but may lead to residents including items just to get rid of them cheaply, so the fee is not an effective deterrent to arisings. Some local authorities choose to provide service through their residual waste collection infrastructure whilst others deliver a completely separate collection service.

10. Examples of different bulky waste collection schemes are:

- **Test Valley Borough Council** - Charges householders £20.50 for one item or £37.00 for multiple items (maximum of 4 items). Free collections will be given for households who receive Council Tax Support (excluding single person discount). A maximum of two collections per year, four items per collection.
- **South Kesteven District Council** - Charges £11.00 for the first item and £5.00 each for all other items.
- **CYC** - Standard charge is £36.75 for the removal of up to 10 bulky items per collection. There are no concessionary rates available.

11. Household Waste Recycling Centres - An increasing number of local authorities are implementing charges for householders disposing of waste at household waste recycling centres. The majority of charges relate to specific waste types (particularly DIY project waste) but some local authorities are also charging an entrance fee for householders using sites.

12. Examples of different charging schemes being used at household waste recycling centres are:

- **London Borough of Hillingdon** - Householders bringing larger quantities of building/DIY waste are required to pay the full trade waste rate for disposing of these materials. Current full trade waste rate is £150 per tonne with a minimum charge of £15 for up to 100 kg. Larger quantities can be defined as anything over 2/3 small bags of building waste. Chargeable materials include bricks, hard core and glass; tiles and other roofing materials; plasterboard doors and window frames; bathroom suites, kitchen units and worktops; sheds and fence panels; asphalt, tarmac and asbestos, wooden items, timber and pallets.
- **Norfolk County Council** - DIY waste is accepted at all Norfolk's main recycling centres but is restricted to one large item or one 80-litre bag per household per week. For example, one door, a bath tub, a toilet

or one fence panel. Or one 80-litre sack of tiles, bricks or cement. For people who want to dispose of larger amounts of DIY waste they can use a 'Pay-as-you-throw' service, available at eight main recycling centres plus eight other sites. This is likely to be a cheaper alternative to hiring a skip for small to medium sized DIY projects. Charges per visit range from £30 for a car (including estates) up to £68 for a Transit van.

- **Somerset Waste Partnership** - This is a local authority team that manages waste services on behalf of six local authorities. There are sixteen recycling centres in Somerset. Fourteen are Recycling Centres which are free to enter, and two are Community Recycling Sites with an entry fee of £2 per vehicle per visit.
- **CYC** - In July 2013 charges were introduced for householders disposing of brick/rubble (van or trailer with up to 500kg - £21.00 per visit / normal family car with up to 250kg - £11.00 per visit), plasterboard (£5.50 per sheet or bag), bonded asbestos (£11.00 per sheet up to 50kg / £5.50 per bag) and gas bottles (various charges dependent of size of item). Facility for the disposal of these materials and items is only available at the Hazel Court site. Non York residents are not allowed to use the Towthorpe site but can take waste to Hazel Court for a charge of £10 per visit.

Other Discretionary Waste Services

13. In addition to the main use of discretionary charges identified in this report there are a number of other service areas that could be considered in a review of charging policy. These services include:
 - Commercial waste collection including service provided to schools and charitable organisations
 - Trade waste disposal at household waste recycling centres including service provided to charitable organisations & landlords/letting agents
 - Clinical waste collection
 - Provision of waste containers
 - Hazardous wastes including chemicals