

Report of the Assistant Director of City and Environmental Services

Response to Petition – Extending Garden Waste Collections

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to respond to the petition received that is asking for garden waste collections to be extended through the winter period.
2. The petition is attached as Appendix 1 for information.

Background

3. Since October 2005, the City of York Council (CYC) has carried out separate garden waste collections to eligible properties across York, starting with 60,000 properties and now grown to more than 66,000. There are, however, around 19,000 properties that do not have any garden waste collection. These are in areas where the main method of refuse collection is by sack, and where bins would not be suitable, or are in areas where the properties do not have gardens. From the outset, these collections took place on a fortnightly basis throughout the year.
4. Starting in winter 2011, Members agreed to move the collections from fortnightly to every four weeks during the winter period. This was done to meet budget reductions while maintaining the service free to all eligible properties during the busy spring and summer period. During the summer, an average of 327 tonnes of garden waste is collected per week. During the winter period this average dropped to 115 tonnes per week. However, the cost to collect remained the same.
5. The collection of garden waste is not a statutory service. Local authorities have powers to charge for a wide range of discretionary services. Many of these powers derive from legislation that applies to

specific service areas. Under the existing Controlled Waste Regulations (CWR) 2012 (came into force on 1 April 2012), the Waste Collection Authority (WCA) can make a charge for the collection of garden waste. This was also the case with the regulations they replaced (CWR 1992). However, when statutory recycling and composting targets applied to WCAs, many local authorities chose to offer this service 'free' to its residents and thereby maximise the amount of garden waste collected and boost recycling performance to help meet statutory targets. CYC has not introduced any separate charge for the standard collection service. Between the 1 April 2012, when the Controlled Waste Regulations came into force, and 31 March 2014, 149 local Councils introduced a charge for their garden waste service and more Councils are considering introducing a charge.

6. In a Cabinet report dated 2nd April 2013 Members agreed, based on the low tonnage collected, to suspend the service completely during the winter months to help meet budget savings targets. This service change was implemented in late October / early November 2013. The service is now, to all intents and purpose, a seasonal service carried out between the start of April and the end of October each year.
7. At the same time, the basic service was standardised as 1 x 180 litre green wheeled bin collected fortnightly during the April to October collection season. Residents were given the opportunity to have additional garden waste bins emptied from their property for an annual charge of £35 per bin. This subscription scheme only operates during the normal collection period (over the spring and summer) and has attracted a little over 1,500 subscribers.
8. Several residents complained to the Council about the suspension of the service and the fact that autumn and winter waste was not being collected. There was also a fear that the waste normally collected during the winter would be lost to landfill.
9. However, when collections resumed in April 2014, there was a greater amount of garden waste picked up over the first 6 weeks than in the same period the previous year (2,920 tonnes in 2014 compared to 1,660 tonnes in 2013). Garden waste taken to household waste recycling centres also increased whilst the collection service was suspended over the winter (910 tonnes in 2013/2014 compared to 460 tonnes in 2012/2013). This total amount of garden waste accounted for the majority of what would normally be expected to be collected during the

winter months. The amount of waste sent to landfill also did not increase.

10. This suggests that those residents who would generally use the service during the winter had used their bins for storing garden waste and had presented it for collection once collections resumed in the spring. Some householders also decided to take garden waste to household waste recycling centres rather than storing it over the winter period whilst the collection service was suspended.

Options

11. In response to the petition, there are two options available to the Council. These are:
 - a. To maintain the current spring and summer only collections,
 - b. To reinstate winter garden waste collections

Analysis of Options

12. The Council made the decision to suspend the garden waste collections in order to meet reducing levels of budget funding available to the service and to maintain its other front line waste services.
13. Should the Council decide to reinstate winter garden waste collections from November to March, then budget would need to be secured from the General Fund in order to fund it.
14. The Council would also need to decide at what frequency winter garden collections from November to March would be reinstated:
 - i. either four weekly, as they were at the time of suspension,
 - ii. or fortnightly, as they were when they were first introduced.
15. The annual budget required for option i., above, would be £167K
16. The annual budget required for option ii., above, would be 334K

17. From waste tonnages data it appears that those residents who would generally use the service during the winter did not send their waste to landfill, via their grey bin, but stored it and presented it for collection in April/May, when collections resumed or took it to household waste recycling centres instead. Therefore, based on evidence already gathered, there is no significant benefit to our overall recycling rate in reinstating the winter garden waste collections.
18. By far the best way of dealing with garden waste is for residents to compost at home. The Council will continue to promote home composting as the most environmentally friendly option and provide advice and guidance to existing and prospective home composters.

Recommendations

19. The Cabinet Member is recommended to:
 - i. Note receipt and the content of the petition.
 - ii. Maintain the current collection arrangements (no winter collections)

Reason: To protect front line waste services and to ensure that the service operates as efficiently as possible.

Contact Details

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**Report
 Approved**

Wards Affected: All **All**

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Appendix 1 – copy of petition received.

Abbreviations

City of York Council (CYC)

Controlled Waste Regulations (CWR)

Waste Collection Authority (WCA)