

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	2 December 2025
Report of:	Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Decision Report: Garden Waste update

Subject of Report

1. To meet the City's outcomes around the environment and maximising reuse and recycling to support a circular economy, the Council operates a garden waste subscription service.
2. The Council introduced a fully chargeable garden waste subscription service in August 2024. The subscription fee was introduced at £46.50 and increased to £49 per year for 2025 to cover increases in costs to the services and to bring in line with the rest of North Yorkshire with whom the Council share disposal arrangements. It is proposed, given inflationary increases and impact on the service delivery cost of the service, that the fee is set at £52 per year for 2026 to further offset the cost for the delivery of the service.

Benefits and Challenges

Benefits

- In economically challenging times, charging for a garden waste subscription service would secure the continuation of a much-valued service to residents.
- The income generated from the subscriptions should seek to cover the costs of operating the garden waste service.
- Providing a stable funding base for the service enables the foundation for extending to additional properties across the city making it more equitable. Previously garden waste service was not offered to all households across the city as previously when not

chargeable the operational rounds were over capacity, however Waste Services are looking at opportunities to expand the offer of garden waste collections following the Bags to Bins scheme, new build properties and reassessing established areas to see if garden waste collections can be offered safely and efficiently.

- Whilst it is recognised that a subscription-based service means an increased cost to residents, there is a 50% discount for residents who are receive Council Tax support.
- Complementary services, such as home composting are supported. 185 compost bins were provided in the last 12 months to residents, this is cost neutral to the service.
- Aligning costs with North Yorkshire Council provides equity for residents across the wider region.

Challenges:

- The necessary increases in costs of the service are passed onto subscribers, but will be mitigated by expanding the service across the City. There is a balance to be struck in terms of growing the service and providing an affordable fee and covering the cost of the service.
- The service isn't currently offered to every resident, so it is important that the fee is set at a level that matches the service cost and that the service is extended more widely across the City.

Policy Basis for Decision

3. Equalities and Human Rights – Equality of opportunity – At this current time the garden waste service is not available to all households and the fact that some properties remain on a bagged waste service means we cannot provide garden waste collections to these properties.
4. Affordability – Whilst imposing a charge for garden waste collections may have some negative impacts for those on a low income there are environmentally friendly, cost effective and free alternatives to subscribing to a garden waste collection service such as home composting and/or disposal at a household waste recycling centre;
5. Climate – Environment and the climate emergency – Providing a garden waste service ensures recyclable waste doesn't end up in residual bins, and as collected as a separate stream garden waste collected in York is locally recycled into PAS100 certified compost. Reducing the mileage and making the service more efficient through

optimising collection routes and rounds will have benefits for the environment and carbon and other emissions will be reduced.

Financial Strategy Implications

6. Based on the subscription fee in 2025 of £49 per year, income in financial year 2025/26 is forecast to be £1,929k, assuming that the circa 40,000 residents who are currently subscribed, subscribe again next year.
7. There were originally 66,000 residents who had access to a free garden waste service before the fully charged scheme was introduced in 2024. Work is ongoing to identify the 26,000 residents who had access to a garden waste collection before the fully charged scheme to see if there is a desire for those residents to subscribe. Investigations are also underway to identify residents who have not historically had access to any collection service.
8. The waste optimisation work, agreed in January 2024 and to be implemented in the next 12 months will rebalance rounds and open up opportunities for new subscribers.
9. The current cost of the service is £2,103k, this covers collection and disposal costs. This means there is currently a circa £175k gap between the delivery of the service, and the revenue income and wider service budgets subsidise this difference.
10. An increase in the subscription fee to £52 per year is proposed as this would generate circa £120k (providing all subscribers re-subscribe). With the work to increase subscriptions ongoing this will close the gap between the income and cost and also align with North Yorkshire.

Recommendation and Reasons

11. The Executive are recommended to:

Note the content of the report and agree to increase garden waste subscription service at a fee of £52 per permit with the 50% discount to remain for those in receipt of Council Tax support.

Reason: To set the subscription fee for 2026 to enable sustainability in the service.

Background

Service Background

12. The separate kerbside collection of garden waste commenced in York in 2005. When the kerbside garden waste service was introduced in 2005, the Council did not offer it to some terraced areas mainly due to inadequate storage for containers, properties on bagged collections or areas not being accessible for vehicles to undertake collections.
13. In April 2013, following a period of public consultation, Cabinet approved a charge for 'additional garden bins' only. Residents were entitled to free collection of their first garden bin, whilst additional bins were charged at £35 each. This charge increased annually, reaching £46.50 per bin for the 2024 garden waste season.
14. Before this scheme was replaced with the new fully chargeable garden waste subscription scheme, the 'additional bin scheme' had 1,433 subscriptions in the 2024 season and generated £60,961.50 in income. All administration of the scheme, including letters and labels were produced in house. The scheme closed in May 2024.
15. Until July 2024, the garden waste service was provided free of charge to approximately 66,000 households across the city. Collections were undertaken on a fortnightly basis (for a 40 week season) across the city and residents could present multiple green wheelie bins for collection (the majority of green bins are 180 litre bins; however, there are a number of 240 litre bins in circulation across the city that date back to pre-local government reorganisation in 1996 which when replaced due to damage or fatigue will be replaced with 180 litre bins).
16. The decision to implement a fully chargeable garden waste subscription scheme was taken by Executive in January 2024 and agreed at full Council, as part of the budget process, in February 2024. The collection of garden waste is not a statutory service under the 'Controlled Waste Regulations 2012', therefore local authorities do not have to provide a garden waste collection and the service is not directly included in the Council Tax bill.
17. Executive approved the introduction of an annual garden waste subscription scheme with a fee of £46.50 in 2024 which aligned to the cost of the chargeable second garden bin cost when the first

garden bin was free. Executive also approved a 50% discount for residents in receipt of Council Tax Support. Delegated authority was given to the Director of Transport, Environment and Planning and in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, to use the Waste Reserve and take all steps necessary to procure, award, and enter into contracts to deliver and effectively implement the new service.

18. Executive also approved, as a one-off, a free collection of garden waste bins from those households not wishing to subscribe to the new garden waste collection service and this has been managed through a registration process. Circa 1300 households registered for the take back offer and this will happen at the end of November 2025.
19. As part of the budget process for 2025/26, there was an increase in the fee for the Garden Waste Subscription scheme for the 2026 season to £49 per permit. This was to mitigate increases in costs due to inflation and to align with charges in North Yorkshire, which the Council share disposal arrangements with.
20. As of October 2025, there are circa 40,000 subscribers to the Garden Waste subscription scheme. This brings in an income to the Council of £1.9m per annum.
21. In recent years, the Council has not been able to offer garden waste collections to new housing developments (e.g. parts of Germany Beck, Langley Gate development, etc.) as there was no capacity on the operational rounds to take on these additional collections.
22. Since January 2025, all new housing developments with completed streets are now offered garden waste collections should the household choose to pay for the service. These streets are added periodically as they are complete, and rounds adjusted to ensure efficient collections. In 2025 270 new dwellings were able to subscribe to garden waste collections.
23. In 2025 during the Bags to Bins project communications, these properties were able to complete a survey to register their interest in subscribing to garden waste collections. Of the circa 6000 properties communicated to, there were 128 valid responses to register interest in joining the subscription.

Table below:

	Micklegate	Guildhall	Clifton	Fishergate	Total	
Total Request for service	60	20	32	16	128	
Number of Streets required	31	10	16	8	65	

24. Through the response numbers mentioned in paragraph 24, officers in Waste Services have identified 331 established properties in total that are eligible for garden waste subscription and the service will be offered in 2026.
25. There are challenges with existing properties, such as large, terraced areas with no storage for bins or there is no vehicle access and the garden waste service will be difficult to offer to either at all, or residents may have to accept unconventional methods of presentations and collections if operationally viable. Note, garden waste can only be collected in bins and not bagged.
26. Waste Services forecast that there will be a further circa 300 new build properties the service could be offered to throughout 2026. However, the service must ensure that rounds remain efficient and environmentally friendly.
27. Properties are still able to register an interest in subscribing to the garden waste service and Waste Services will assess suitability <https://www.york.gov.uk/consultations#gwssinterest>

Consultation Analysis

28. Officers have discussed garden waste charging and any proposed increased charges with colleagues at North Yorkshire Council (NYC). In October 2025 NYC increased their garden waste charge per permit to £52 for 2026.
29. A large proportion of local authorities nationally charge for garden waste collections and disposal and these vary, with some opting to charge up to £85 per bin.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

30. Below are the options for proposed cost increases (assumes all permits at full cost but the Council Tax discount would remain):

a) No costs increase

This would mean no additional income for the service to offset operational costs.

b) Increase £1

This would be an additional circa £40k income

c) Increase £1.50

This would be an additional circa £60k income

d) Increase £2.50

This would be an additional circa £80k income

e) Increase £3.00

This would be an additional circa £120k income

Organisational Impact and Implications

31. Below are the implications for this subject:

- **Financial:** Fees and charges raised by the Council are reviewed on an annual basis as part of the budget setting process. The recommended fee will generate increased income to balance the Council's budget for 2026/27. Without this increase in income (£120k), the cost of the garden waste service would need to be met from savings elsewhere.
- **Human Resources (HR):** There are no HR implications.
- **Legal:** The general rule is that local authorities cannot charge for the collection of household waste (section 45(3), Environmental Protection Act 1990). However, there are exceptions where they may charge for collection of household waste set out in paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/811) ('Controlled Waste Regulations 2012'). The collection of garden waste is included in the list under paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012. Local authorities therefore do not legally have to collect garden waste, but it is a service they can choose to provide. Local authorities can also recover the costs of providing discretionary

services such as these under section 93(1) of the Local Government Act 2023, however (per the rules set out under section 93(3) of the Act) they cannot make a profit.

- **Procurement:** There are no implications.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** There are no implications.
- **Environment and Climate action:** The amount of garden waste composted as part of the Council's operation may reduce. However, the garden waste not collected from the kerbside would either be composted at home, taken to a household waste recycling centre (HWRC) and composted.
- **Affordability:** If residents do not wish or cannot afford to subscribe then there are other alternatives which are available for the free disposal of garden waste (e.g. home composting and/or disposal at a household waste recycling centre).
- **Equalities and Human Rights:** There are alternatives available to households (e.g. free options such as home composting or taking materials to a household waste recycling centre or even spreading cost through sharing a subscription with a neighbour).
- **Data Protection and Privacy:** The completion of data protection impact assessment (DPIA) screening questions evidenced there would be no processing of personal data, special categories of personal data or criminal offence data processed, so there is no requirement to complete a DPIA
- **Communications:** Clear and proactive communication will be essential to ensure residents understand the reasons for the proposed subscription fee increase, the benefits of the service, and the available discounts for those in receipt of Council Tax support. Messaging should emphasise the environmental advantages of diverting garden waste from residual bins, the alignment with regional charges with North Yorkshire Council, and the ongoing work to expand service coverage across the city. It will also be important to highlight complementary options such as home composting and recycling centre disposal, to reassure residents who may be concerned about affordability. Effective communications, including timely updates, accessible information, and targeted engagement with affected communities, will help manage expectations and help reduce potential issues for residents.
- **Economy:** There are no implications.

Risks and Mitigations

32. The risk of not increasing the garden waste subscription fee would be that the gap between operating costs and income would remain the same and likely increase in the next 12 months considering natural inflation and anticipated local authority pay award.
33. This would contribute to the overall increasing council budget gap which continues to be a challenge for the authority.
34. By increasing the garden waste permit cost by the maximum option of £3 per permit, a large proportion of the operating costs would be covered. The annual subscription would also be in keeping with NYC garden waste charges.

Wards Impacted

35. All wards are impacted by the decisions contained within the report.

Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

Author

Name:	Dave Atkinson
Job Title:	Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services
Service Area:	Waste Services
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	11 November 2025

Co-author

Name:	Ian Hoult
Job Title:	Head of Environmental Services
Service Area:	Waste Services
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	11 November 2025

Background papers

Waste Services – Service developments

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MID=13934#AI66728>

Finalised Discount Charges 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=74781&optionId=0>

Amendment of Waste Policy for Garden Waste Subscription Service

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=73442&optionId=0>

Garden Waste Collections: Review of Implementation of Charging Arrangements – Economy, Place, Access, and Transport Scrutiny Committee January 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1063&MID=14752#AI69779>

Annexes

Equalities Impact Assessment