



Cabinet Member(s) Delegated Decision

Title	Proposal to increase the charge for household garden waste collection
Date of Decision	25 March 2024
Report of	Councillor Alan Schneiderman Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change
Wards	All
Key/ Non-Key	Non-Key
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Subject to call-in	No
Appendices	Appendix A – Consultation Report Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)
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Summary

The council proposes to increase the charges for the non-statutory garden waste collection service, to support the operation of the service and other environmental services. The report includes the outcomes of the public consultation on this proposal.

The consultation received 2,439 responses. At least 2,093 (85.8%) of these responses are from current service users.

Decisions

- 1. To authorise officers to implement the proposed changes (as set out in paragraph 1.7) to the charges for garden waste collection service which commences in May 2024.**
- 2. To authorise officers to implement a process to provide residents with a rebate where they qualify for this on the basis of receiving Council Tax Support at Band 1.**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 On 6 February 2024 the Cabinet approved a consultation on a proposal to increase the Garden Waste fee. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change, in consultation with the Chief Officer for Customer & Place, were to consider the consultation responses and equality impact assessment and make a decision regarding the proposed fee.
- 1.2 We know that keeping Barnet's environment clean and well maintained is one of the best ways we can support residents to enjoy a good quality of life, and that the many services we deliver are valued by local people. Local authorities are legally required to set a balanced budget every year. A crucial element of this is ensuring a council is meeting the costs of the services they provide
- 1.3 The council also needs to identify ways to continually invest in the services our residents value the most.
- 1.4 The council currently provides a fortnightly non-statutory collection of garden waste as part of a chargeable opt-in service. The costs of providing the service include collection vehicles, collection crews, fuel, vehicle maintenance, and transport and treatment costs for the garden waste that is collected. These service delivery costs have all risen in recent years.
- 1.5 The garden waste charge has not been increased since its introduction in 2020. Increasing the charge for garden waste collections is one of the proposals that will ensure service delivery costs are covered, help balance the budget and ensure that the current environmental services offer can be sustained.
- 1.6 For residents claiming Council Tax benefit (in Income Band 1 as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme), a concessionary rate would be applied.
- 1.7 The council is proposing to:
 - Increase the current annual garden waste collection charge from £70.00 to £97.00 per annum. This is an increase of £27.00 per year, which would equate to an additional charge of around 52p per week extra (or £2.25 per month).
 - For residents claiming Council Tax Benefit in Income Band 1, as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme, it is proposed to apply concessionary rate by freezing the current garden waste collection charge at £70.00.
- 1.8 The council conducted a public consultation to inform a final decision, and this ran from 14 February to 15 March 2024. At least 85.8% of those who responded were current service users.

- 1.9 The consultation results reflected a response against the proposal to increase charges, with 92.74% of respondents tending to oppose or strongly opposing an increase in charges. 4.18% of respondents tended to support or strongly supported an increase, with 3.08% of respondents neither supporting nor opposing an increase (or being unsure).
- 1.10 Regarding the proposal for a discounted charged for residents in receipt of Council Tax Support at band 1 level, 27.64% of respondents opposed a concessionary rate and 38.77% of respondents supported a concessionary rate.
- 1.11 Of those stating that they currently use the service, 62.97%, said that they would not pay an increased charge and would not continue to use the service, and 24.51% said that they would consider paying the increased charge and continue to use the service.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Do Nothing

This option was considered but not recommended as it would not facilitate the Council being able to fully cover service delivery costs or support other environment functions.

3. Post Decision Implementation

- 3.1 The arrangements for residents to sign up for the chargeable service will be implemented in May 2024. This will include communications by email to residents that are subscribed to the current years' service where they have provided email addresses, by letter to those that have not provided an email address and communications via the council website, social media and e-newsletters.
- 3.2 The revised charges would be shown on the online webform for subscriptions with information on how residents in receipt of Council Tax Support Band 1 can apply for a rebate to reduce their costs back to the current charge of £70 (for the first bin).
- 3.3 Any applications for this rebate will be checked against Council Tax Support records and the residents informed of the outcome.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

4.1 Corporate Plan

4.2 Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

The council will monitor the levels of subscriptions to next years' service which starts in May 2024.

- 4.3 **Sustainability** - There is the potential for a reduction in the tonnage of garden waste collected for composting. Where residents choose not to join the chargeable service and take their garden waste to the Reuse and Recycling Centre, this will still support the achievement of the Council's recycling targets in line with Council's Corporate Plan aims 2023-26. Home composting bins are already promoted and are available at a discounted rate to Barnet residents. Where residents choose to compost at home, this will not support the achievement of the Council's recycling targets but is the most environmentally beneficial method of dealing with garden waste.

- 4.4 **IT** – There are currently good systems in place for the service.

- 4.5 **Property** – There would be no property implications.

4.6 Corporate Parenting

There are no corporate parenting implications.

4.7 Risk Management

If charges are increased, there is a risk that the income generated through this service reduces, rather than increasing. This would negatively affect the council's budgets for the operation of the service, and any potential opportunity to support other environmental services.

4.8 Insight

The council has assessed the number of households signing up for the service since charges were introduced in 2020. The level of subscriptions is among the highest in London, based on the data available to the council.

The London Borough of Enfield has recently raised its charges to £100 per bin.

4.9 Social Value

There are no social value implications.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

Finance and value for money

Staffing costs

Staffing costs have increased by at least 19% since the chargeable service was launched in 2020.

Waste Treatment costs

Garden waste treatment costs have increased by 44% when comparing the costs for 2020/21 per tonne against the costs for 2023/24.

Garden waste sticker provision

The price for the service that prints and issues permit stickers to subscribers has increased by 13%.

Potential Reinvestment into Environmental Services

Any surplus from the charges will support the provision of environmental services such as street cleanliness.

Procurement – A procurement exercise has been carried out to engage a bin sticker supplier with supporting web based system, as the current contract for this service expires during March 2024.

Staffing – It is not anticipated that there would be any implications on permanent staff.

IT – There is an ongoing requirement for an online system for residents to join the chargeable service and make payment.

Property – There are no property implications.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

6.1 The revised Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 set out what charges local authorities can make for waste collection and waste disposal. Under these

regulations local authorities can make charges for the collection of garden waste from households.

6.2 Cabinet on 6 February 2024, agreed a key decision as part of the recommendations of the Business Planning 2024-2030 report, recommendation 11 and Approved consultation on an increased Garden Waste fee and delegated to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change in consultation with the Chief Officer for Customer & Place to consider the consultation responses and equality impact assessment and make a decision regarding the fee. The appropriate authorisation document is therefore via this Cabinet Member Delegated Powers Report in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive as Chief Officer for Customer & Place.

7. Consultation

7.1 The council conducted a public consultation to inform a decision, and this ran from 14 February to 15 March 2024.

Summary of consultation

7.2 Summary of method:

- The consultation consisted of an online questionnaire published on engage.barnet.gov.uk together with information detailing the background to the proposal.
- Paper copies were also available by request
- The consultation went live on the Engage Barnet website from 14 Feb 24 to 15 March 2024. Posters were also displayed in LBB Libraries.
- It was also in the Week Ahead newsletter – publicised to Members each week throughout the consultation period.
- Details of the consultation were carried in the 21 February, 28 February, 6 March, and 13 March editions of the e-Barnet newsletter.

7.3 Response to the consultation:

- a total of 2,439 questionnaires were completed online via engage.barnet.gov.uk
- there were no written responses received via paper copy of the questionnaire.

7.4 The full consultation report, which includes analysis of responses in relation to key demographics and protected characteristic groups is available at appendix A.

Summary of key findings

7.5 The key findings from the consultation are outlined below, in relation to each of the questions in the consultation:

- **The majority of respondents oppose an increase in charges** (92.74%, 2,262 out of 2,439 respondents), (82.9%, 2,022 out of 2,439 respondents strongly oppose, and 9.84%, 240 out of 2,439 respondents tend to oppose).
- **A minority of respondents supported an increase in charges** (4.18%, 102 out of 2,439 respondents), (1.39%, 34 out of 2,439 respondents strongly support, and 2.79%, 68 out of 2,439 respondents tend to support).

- **A minority of residents neither supported nor opposed an increase in charge or were unsure** (3.08%, 75 out of 2439 respondents), (2.75%, 67 out of 2,439 respondents neither support nor oppose, and 0.33%, 8 out of 2,439 respondents don't know / not sure)
- **Where respondents opposed and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 2,099 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question.
 - 62.2% said that the service should be cheaper or free
 - 9.1% stated that they could not pay an increased charge due to the cost of living
 - 6.7% felt that an increase in charges would lead to more flytipping
 - 5% felt there would be a negative environmental impact, and mental health impacts.
- **Where respondents supported and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 81 out of 2,439 gave a response to this question.
 - 45.5% said that they would accept an increase as this was an important service for them
 - 21.6% acknowledged the council's budgets pressures and therefore accepted the idea of an increase in charges
 - 10.2% accepted the idea of an increase but noted that the increase proposed is high
 - 9.1% accepted the idea of an increase but were concerned about the possible environmental impacts such as flytipping
- **27.64% of respondents opposed a concessionary rate** being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70 (27.64%, 623 out of 2,254 respondents), (18.81%, 424 out of 2,254 respondents strongly oppose, and 8.83%, 199 out of 2,254 respondents tend to oppose).
- **38.77% of respondents supported a concessionary rate** being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit - freezing the current charge at £70 (38.77%, 874 out of 2,254 respondents), (21.25%, 479 out of 2,254 respondents strongly support, and 17.52%, 395 out of 2,254 respondents tend to support).
- **Where respondents opposed a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 546 gave a response to this question.
 - 41.7% said that all users of the service should pay the same charge
 - 25.5% said that they did not want to subsidise a discount for other users of the service
 - 12.4% said that the service should be free or cheaper
 - 9.5% were concerned that any discount scheme would be open to abuse.
- **Where respondents supported a concessionary rate being applied for residents claiming Council Tax Benefit and gave reasons for their answer**, their comments included the following points. Of those who responded to the consultation, 690 gave a response to this question.
 - 66.4% said that the service should be kept as affordable as possible for those facing cost of living challenges and on lower incomes
 - 10.7% stated that pensioners should be able to access the service at a discounted rate

- 8.3% stated that all residents eligible for Council Tax Support should be offered a discounted rate
- 6.4% felt that the proposed increase was fair.

➤ **When asked if the annual subscription charge increased, which of four statements would apply to them:**

- 5.29%, (118 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, and would not start using the service
- 0.94%, (21 out of 2,232) respondents said that they don't currently use the service, but would consider using the service in future
- 62.97%, (1,546 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, but would not pay an increased charge and would not continue to use the service
- 24.51%, (547 out of 2,232) respondents said that they do currently use the service, and would consider paying the increased charge and continue to use the service

➤ **When asked if they would not use the service if the charge was increased, how would they deal with their garden waste**

- 26.86%, (444 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would take their garden waste to the Reuse & Recycling Centre, Summers Lane
- 15.12%, (250 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would compost their garden waste at home
- 14.34%, (237 out of 1,653) respondents said that they would share a neighbour's garden waste bin
- 43.68%, (722 out of 1,653) respondents answered "other", and these written responses included the following points:
 - 28.3% were unsure what they would do with their garden waste
 - 21.4% said they would place garden waste in their refuse bins, some were aware that this is not permitted
 - 16% said that they would burn their garden waste
 - 8.2% said that they would fly tip/dump their garden waste in public spaces
 - The remainder of responses related to negative comments, sharing bins with neighbours, or paying a gardener to take the waste away.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Cabinet has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

Summary of Equalities Impact Assessment

The Equalities Impact Assessment involves consideration of the data available in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity and religious belief. This information is presented below, alongside data from the responses to the consultation.

Age

The population of Barnet is slightly older than the London population with a greater proportion of the population aged 60 and over. Compared to England, the Barnet population is generally greater in the ages 0 to 49. (JSNA - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

What did people tell us

Respondents aged 55 and above were more likely to support the proposal for an increase in charges and younger age groups were more likely to oppose. Younger age groups tended to oppose the proposal for a concessionary charge more than older groups.

Disability

49,679 residents are disabled under the Equality Act (Census 2021)

What did people tell us

91.8% of respondents who stated they have a disability said they oppose the proposal on charges, compared with 92.7% of all respondents saying they oppose. There was no significant difference in support for a concessionary charge between those with a disability and those without a disability.

Gender Reassignment

2,550 residents identify with a sex different to their sex registered at birth (Census 2021)

What did people tell us

The consultation data does not show any significant findings based on gender reassignment with only 8 such responses. 100% of these respondents opposed the proposals.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

The total percentage of those married is 47%. (Census 2021)

What did people tell us

There were no significant differences in responses across the different marital status groups, other than that those widowed were less likely to oppose the charging proposal and more likely to support a concessionary charge.

Pregnancy and Maternity**What did people tell us**

There were no significant differences in responses across the different groups.

Race/ Ethnicity

Barnet's population is diverse, with an overall Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population of 48%. This diversity is more pronounced in children and young people – there are more children from BAME groups in the 0 – 9 age group than there are white children. (JSNA).

What did people tell us

Opposition to the proposals on increased charges was slightly higher for Asian, Black and mixed race/ethnicity groups than for white British and white other groups. Opposition to the proposals for a concessionary charge among both white British and white other groups is lower than for other minoritised groups.

Religion and Belief

Residents that described themselves as having “No religion” had the largest increase in Barnet from Census 2011 to Census 2021 with 20.2% of Barnet's population identifying as having no religion, which is an increase of 4.1% from 2011. Those that resided in Barnet and described themselves as “Christian” decreased by 4.7% vs the 2011 Census. Those that described themselves as “Jewish” made up 14.5% of the population in Barnet; this is 12.9% more than the London average of 1.7%.

What did people tell us

Minoritised religious groups tended to oppose an increase in charges more than other groups.

Sex

There is a marginally higher female population (50.4%) than male population (49.6%). (JSNA)

What did people tell us 93.2% of males opposed. They were slightly more likely to oppose the proposals than female respondents of whom 91.3% opposed.

Sexual orientation

In Barnet, about 270,000 residents (87.3%) identified themselves as straight or heterosexual, 8,633 residents (2.8%) identified with an LGB+ orientation (gay or lesbian, bisexual, or other sexual orientation, as categorised by the Office of National Statistics). About 30,000 residents (9.9%) did not answer the question. (Census 2021)

What did people tell us Gay, lesbian, bisexual and other groups were more likely to oppose an increase in charges and a concessionary rate.

Ward respondent lives in

What did people tell us

Respondents from West Finchley ward (44 respondents) were the least likely to oppose an increase in charges with 84.1% opposing. Respondents from Colindale South (16 respondents), Cricklewood (18 respondents), Edgwarebury (53 respondents), West Hendon (20 respondents) and Edgware (206 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

Respondents from West Finchley ward (13.6% - 44 respondents), and Golders Green (14.8% - 61 respondents) were the least likely to oppose a concessionary rate. Respondents from Childs Hill ward (40.5% - 42 respondents), Hendon (39.8% - 93 respondents), and Burnt Oak (39.4% 33 respondents) were the most likely to oppose.

Receipt of benefits:

As at May 2022 there were 11,650 out of work benefits claimants, and 34,949 Universal Credit claimants. (JSNA)

What did people tell us

93.9% (33 respondents) of Council Tax Support recipients opposed the charges. 94.2% (52 respondents) of all those in receipt of benefits opposed. 92.5% of those not in receipt of benefits opposed. There was no significant difference between the responses from those receiving and not receiving benefits.

9.4% of Council Tax Support recipients (32 respondents) opposed the concessionary rate. 78% of Council Tax Support recipients strongly or tend to support the concession. 19.6% of all in receipt of benefits (51 respondents) opposed, and 60.8% supported the proposal. Of those not receiving benefits 27.3% opposed, and 38.7% supported the proposal.

Employment status:

The number of people who are in employment (either as an employee, self-employed, in government employment and training programmes or an unpaid family worker) and are of working age (16-64), has been gradually rising in Barnet over the last few years which has been consistently lower than London and England averages; in 2019/20 75.1% of the working age

population in Barnet were in employment, equal to London's average, but lower than England's average (76.2%). (JSNA)

What did people tell us

94% of those employed (as an employee, self-employed, part time) opposed an increase in charges. 91.3% of those unemployed and available for work opposed. 90.3% of those permanently sick or with a disability, not in work, and wholly retired opposed.

25.8% of those employed opposed a concessionary rate. 26.1% of those unemployed and available for work (23 respondents) opposed. 26.63% of those permanently sick or with a disability, not in work, and wholly retired opposed.

Mitigation

For residents claiming Council Tax benefit (in Income Band 1 as outlined in the Council Tax Support Scheme), a concessionary rate would be applied. Also the service will accept shared applications for subscriptions should affordability be an issue.

9. Background Papers

9.1 Cabinet 6 February 2024, item 10:

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1010&MIId=11436&Ver=4>