



Environment Committee

15 November 2021

Title	Chargeable Garden Waste Update
Report of	Chairman of Environment Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	None
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Summary

This report provides an update on the progress to date of the chargeable Garden Waste Service, which became chargeable from 9 May 2020, and is now in its second year of service.

The Environment Committee approved a recommendation to introduce a chargeable garden waste service in January 2020 as part of its Reduction & Recycling Plan to support the London Environment Strategy.

The service has been very well received since it was first communicated in February 2020. In its first year (2020/21) the service had a take up rate of 56.37% and generated an income of £2.88M, and currently in the second year (2021/22) there has been a take up rate 58.84% and an income of £3.02M. In the first year of the service 42,277 stickers were sold, in the second year 44,129 stickers have been sold to date. This puts the London Borough of Barnet at the highest take up rate in London based on the information available.

The income generated from subscriptions in year one also allowed the council to continue investment to enhance the service originally made in 2019/20. This was subsequently increased by a further £600k in 2021/22. The service has also enabled the delivery of £800k MTFS savings in 2020/21, and £1.3M in 2021/22.

The amount of garden waste presented for collection per participating household has increased since the service was introduced, demonstrating that those residents that have signed up for the service are making full use of the service.

The Street Scene service captured and reviewed customers' sign-up data from the first year of the service to develop more efficient and effective processes and communications for the second year. This proved to be very effective, with the equivalent of the whole of the first year's total sign-ups being achieved in July 2021, approximately two months into the second year's service. The service also made full use of data and improved systems to enable proactive engagement with customers, such as providing targeted email reminders to residents ahead of their next collections and notification of winter pause dates for the service to those customers that provided their email contact details and permission to contact them.

Officers Recommendations

1. The Environment Committee note the contents of this report.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Chairman of the Environment Committee requested that a report be submitted to the Committee providing an update on the implementation and progress of the Council's new chargeable garden waste collection service after its first year of operation.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the progress to date of the chargeable Garden Waste Service, which was introduced from 9 May 2020.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 There are no alternative recommendations.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Year 1 – planning and implementation of service

4.1.1 Communications

- 4.1.2 During the first year of the service a wide range of communications were issued from February 2020 to all residents about the new subscribed service to maximise the level of take up by reaching as many households as possible. The launch had originally been planned for 6 April 2020 but was delayed by one month due to the initial impact of the COVID 19 pandemic. All communications deadlines were met. Communications included:

- A press release
- A leaflet delivered to all residents
- Postcard delivered to all residents
- A social media campaign
- High street posters
- A voice recorded message used on the Customer Support telephone service
- An article in Barnet First
- Barnet First e-newsletter

- Communities Together Network e-newsletter
- An article in Barnet Homes magazine “At Home”
- Website updates
- An advert in Barnet Times
- Emailed information to charities, organisations including allotment groups, and Friends of Parks groups, the school circular, private managing agents
- An update provided to all Members.
- My Account - dashboard banner and email to My Account subscribers

4.1.3 Internal staff communications were also used in promoting the scheme given that a significant number of council staff are Barnet residents.

4.1.4 A webform was created and uploaded onto the Council website to allow residents to arrange to sign up and pay for the service online using a debit/credit card. A telephone sign-up option was also offered for those residents who did not wish to or could not access the online payment system. A cheque payment mechanism was also in place to ensure the service was as accessible to as many customers as possible.

4.1.5 Coloured self-adhesive stickers were despatched to customers following successful payment. Residents were required to stick them to the bins and identify them to the collection crews. A cut-off date was set for payments to enable customers to receive the first collection of the service year.

4.1.6 Use of data, systems and business intelligence

4.1.7 The Street Scene service put in place strong project management plans, resources and systems to plan for and deliver the service successfully. In the run up to the go live of the service the collection vehicle rounds needed to be reconfigured to match customer demand and location of subscribed households. Through the use of emerging subscription data and using tools such as Power BI the service was able to reconfigure the collection vehicle rounds in line with the number and location of residents participating in the service on a weekly basis to ensure that a more efficient operational service was being provided. This involved close working with supervisors and experienced drivers to ensure that there was sufficient vehicle and crew resourcing, and sufficient contingencies in place. All relevant staff were also briefed in order to respond effectively to any customer queries or complaints, and these were minimal.

4.1.8 Subscriptions and income

4.1.9 The data for subscription stickers sold and the income generated in the first year of the service is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Stickers sold in year 1 of service (2020/21)

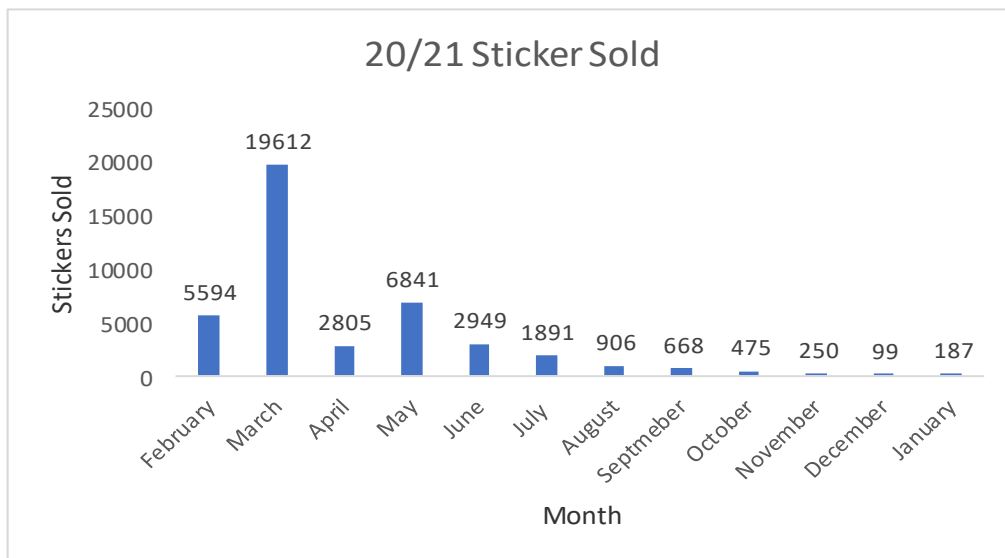
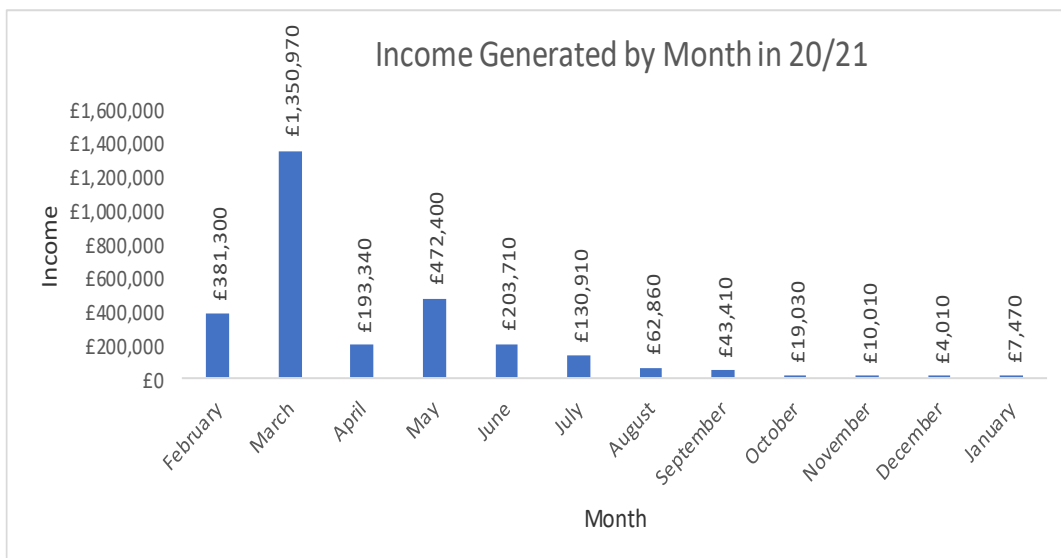


Figure 2: Income generated by month in 2020/21



4.1.10 The report to Environment Committee of 20 January 2020 noted that if there was a take up rate of 30% of previous users at a charge of £70 per bin, this would generate an income of £1,575,000. This would equate to 22,500 bins in Barnet, which would result in an income of £1,575,000.

4.1.11 Subscriptions in the first year of the service exceeded this scenario with a take up rate of 56.37%, being 42,277 bins, which is the highest amongst the London Boroughs based on the information available to the council.

4.1.12 Income generated from subscriptions exceeded this scenario and totalled £2,879,420 in the first year.

4.1.13 In the first year, there were peaks in subscription in March and May 2020, with the initial peak linked to the originally planned launch of the service in April 2020 which was then delayed to May due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

4.1.14 The cost to set up communications and back office staff resources for the first service year was £185,525. There are other costs associated with the service such as vehicle maintenance and staffing.

4.1.15 Street Scene proactively provided fortnightly collection day reminder emails which have been well received by customers using the service. To facilitate this, customers were encouraged to provide their email address and permission to contact them when signing up to the service and 92% did so. As a result, the service was able to provide specific collection day reminders to customers in either half of the fortnightly collection schedule, and provide other targeted communications such as reminders regarding their collection arrangements as part of the annual winter pause to the service. Targeted sign up emails were made possible in year 2 of the service as a result of this approach.

4.1.16 Policy

4.1.17 Policy was developed in relation to garden waste bins that were no longer required by residents who chose not to sign up to the chargeable service. This included allowing residents to keep their bins or arrange for the collection and reuse of the bins in an appropriate manner.

4.1.18 Autumn special offer

4.1.19 The council promoted a reduced charge for a part-year service in the first year of the service ("autumn special offer"). Residents were able to sign up in the autumn to receive up to 11 fortnightly collections, for a reduced price of £40 for the first bin and £30 for any additional bins. The service utilised data on the level of stickers sold over time to inform a decision on whether and when to make available the offer of a reduced charge that was proportionate to the number of collections left within the remainder of the service year. This would also enable residents to benefit from collections for the remainder of the service year, for example those who moved into the borough part-way during the year. The offer was promoted through bin stickers which were deployed on bins not displaying a subscription sticker in areas where business intelligence and crew observation suggested a lower level of subscriptions to the service, and online methods. Following communications on the autumn offer the data indicated an increase in subscriptions, and there continued to be sign ups to the service up until subscriptions began for the next service year. There were 1,051 additional stickers sold in year 1 as part of the special offer, with the majority then subscribing for the full year thereafter and this suggests that the communications approach was effective.

4.2 Year 2 – further improvements to service

4.2.1 Communications and use of data, systems & business intelligence

4.2.2 Following the successful implementation of the first year's service Street Scene were able to deliver some further improvements for the second year. The service has made full use of the emerging sign up data, using analytical tools such as Power BI.

Through the improved use of data, the service was able to deliver targeted communications and promotion of the service and maximise the cost-effectiveness of its communications. In summary this includes:

- Promotion of the second years' service focused on targeted online communications to 92% of residents who supplied an email address previously as part of the first years' service.
- The council provided an instant link for residents to subscribe again within the emails sent, improving the customer journey. This reduced communications costs and improved the ease with which customers could sign up to the service. Letters were sent to those residents that could not or did not provide an email address.
- Advance notice to sign up for the next years' service was provided to year one's subscribers in advance of the end of that years' service, as part of fortnightly email collection day reminders.
- The council was able to identify addresses from year one that were yet to subscribe in year two and issue targeted email reminders to these residents to ensure that they signed up in time for the start of the service. As a result, more residents signed up early to the second year of service and would therefore have been able to maximise the number of collections they receive during the service year.
- High levels of renewal were achieved in year two, and 89.34% of year two subscriptions have taken place online.
- Autumn offers of reduced charges for a part-year service were informed by analysis of the numbers of subscribers joining the service over time.
- Business intelligence gathered informed the level of support staff that were required to continue to offer subscriptions by phone to those residents that could not or chose not to sign up online.

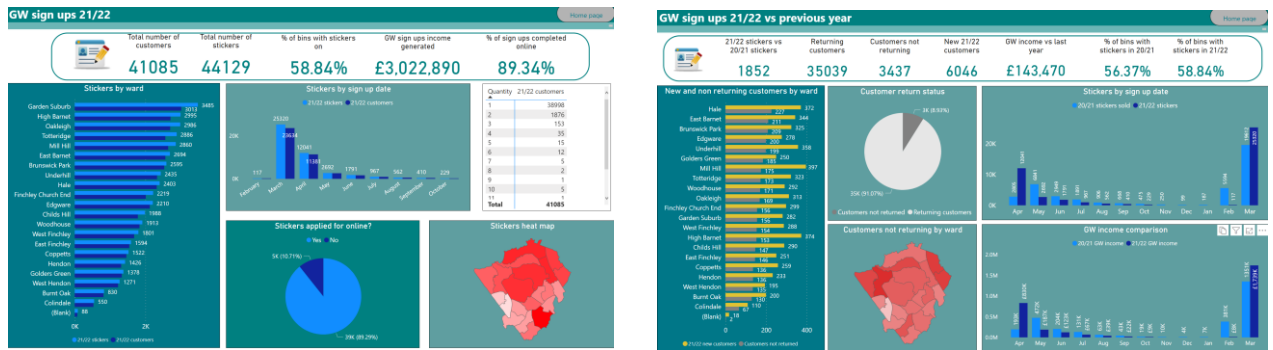
4.2.3 As well as targeted communications, other communications that were used to reach first time non-subscribers included:

- Website updates
- Press release
- An article in Barnet First Magazine
- Leaflet to all households
- A direct mail letter sent to residents that had previously subscribed but who did not provide their email address.
- Promotional messaging as part of fortnightly collection day email reminder
- Social Media Campaign
- Barnet First e-newsletter
- Communities Together Network e-newsletter
- An article in Barnet Homes magazine "At Home"

- Call centre voice recorded message
- Email to allotment groups and private managing agents.

4.2.4 Subscriptions and income

4.2.5 The use of Power BI dashboards as shown below enabled regular tracking and comparison of subscriptions between year one and year two. The dashboard allowed regular analysis of subscription information and for the output of mail lists of potential customers. The benefit of this analysis and targeted approach can be seen in the take up between years. In year one the majority of the stickers sold came in the first four months with a total of 82.4% of stickers sold in this period. Subsequently in year 2, the majority of sign-ups came in the first 2 months and the Council has already surpassed last year's take up rate and currently stands at 58.84% (44,129 stickers).



The data also allowed for the continued monitoring of round level data to ensure capacities could be monitored and adjusted to account for demand and tonnages collected.

4.2.6 The data for subscription stickers sold and the income generated in the second year of the service is shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Stickers sold in year 2 of service to date (2021/22)

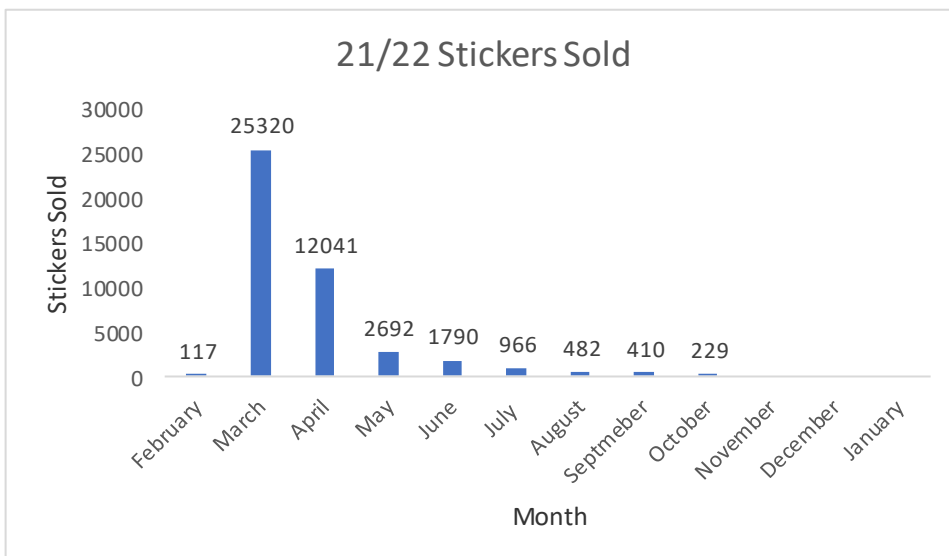
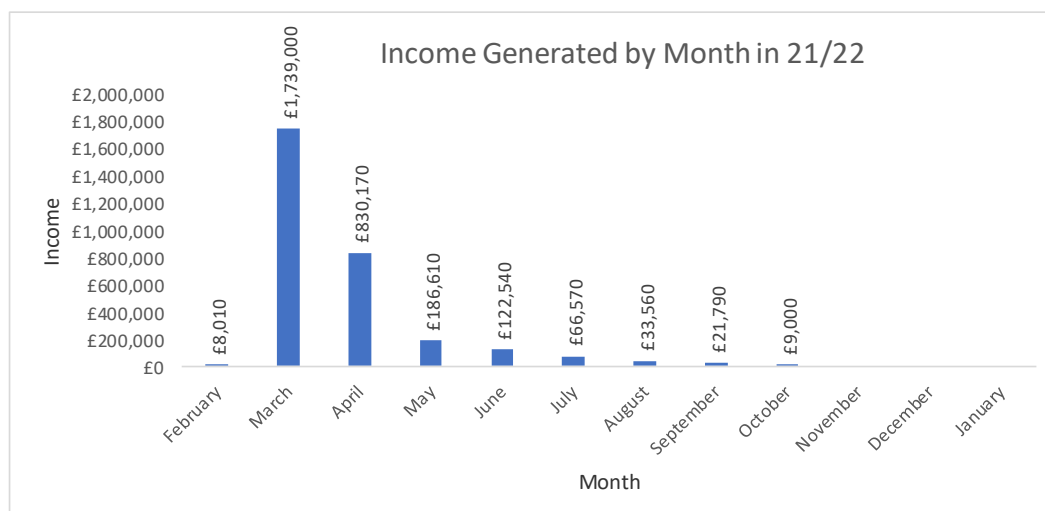


Figure 4: Income generated by month in 2021/22 (to date)



4.2.7 The take up rate for the second year of the service surpassed first year's rate and achieved the same level of service users and income by the beginning of July 2021. The take up rate thus far is 58.84%, with £3.02M income generated to date. An income of £3,000,000 was achieved by early September 2021.

4.2.8 The cost to set up communications and back office staff for the second year is currently projected to be £140,757, a potential reduction of £44,768 against the previous year.

4.2.9 The second year's data shows that the vast majority of subscribers to date joined before the launch of the service in May 2021, suggesting that the use of business intelligence and targeted email promotion to engage with customers and provide an easier customer journey was effective.

4.2.10 Policy

4.2.11 Further policy was introduced to allow Barnet Council to remove garden waste bins that have been abandoned by residents. Returned bins if in good state of repair are cleaned and reused as replacements for bins that are damaged during collections or have gone missing. So far including those that have been paid for, approximately 300 bins have been removed.

4.2.12 Autumn special offer

4.2.13 The council again promoted a reduced charge for a part-year service in the second year of the service ("autumn offer"). There were 1,051 additional stickers sold in year 1, of these subscribers 818 (77.8%) have signed up for the full year's service in year 2, suggesting satisfaction with the service. There have been 450 subscriptions in the first month since the launch of the autumn offer.

4.3 Other key information

4.3.1 Year on year comparison data

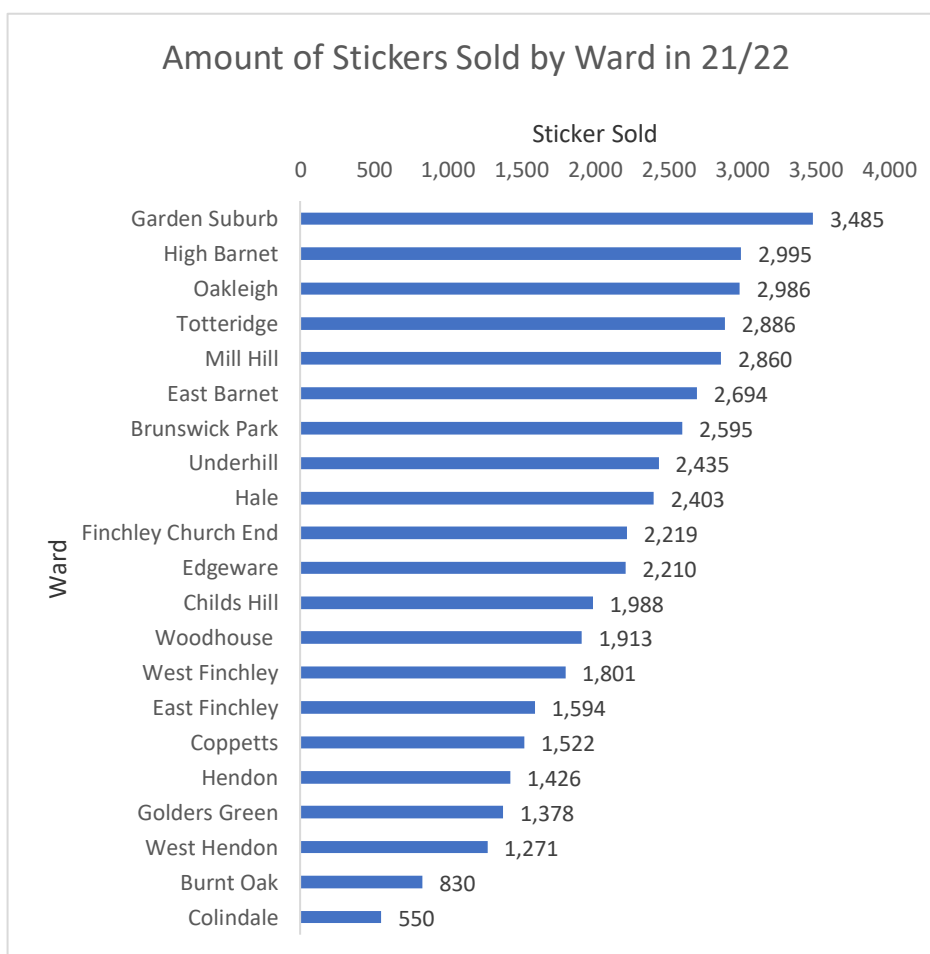
4.3.2 The table below summarises key outcomes data for the service.

	2020/21 (year 1)	2021/22 (year 2 to 25 October)
Bin stickers issued	42,277	44,129
Take up rate (based on assumed 75,000 bins in use prior to chargeable service)	56.37%	58.84%
Income	£2,879,420	£3,022,890

4.3.3 Subscriptions by ward

4.3.4 The graph below shows the distribution of subscribers for the second year of the service by ward (see Figure 5). The wards with the highest level of subscribers to the service are: Garden Suburb, High Barnet, Oakleigh, Totteridge and Mill Hill, with the lowest subscribers being Hendon, Golders Green, West Hendon, Burnt Oak and Colindale.

Figure 5: Stickers sold by ward

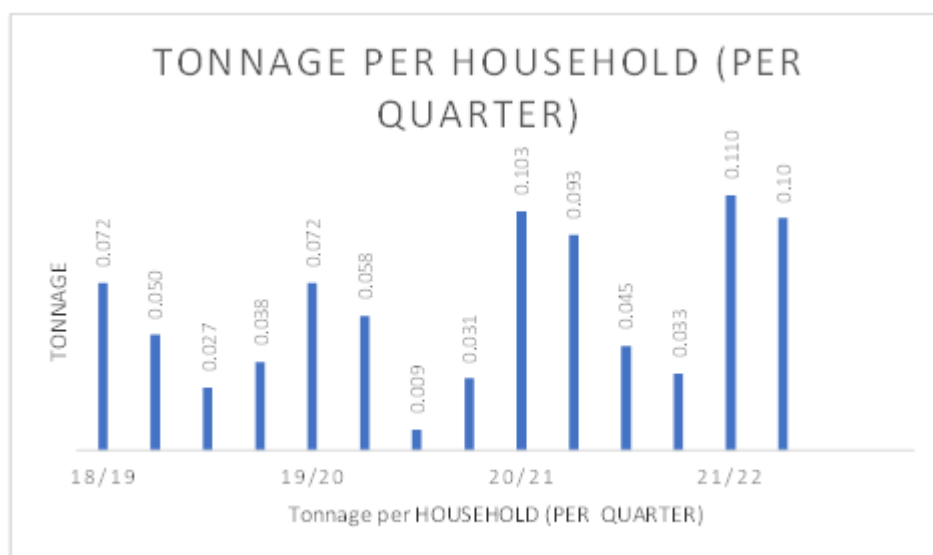


4.3.5 The Council has seen an increase in the uptake of residents using the service across all wards over the two years.

4.3.6 Garden waste tonnages

4.3.7 An analysis of the tonnages of garden waste collected has been carried out, comparing tonnage before and after charges were introduced (see Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Average quarterly tonnage per participating household

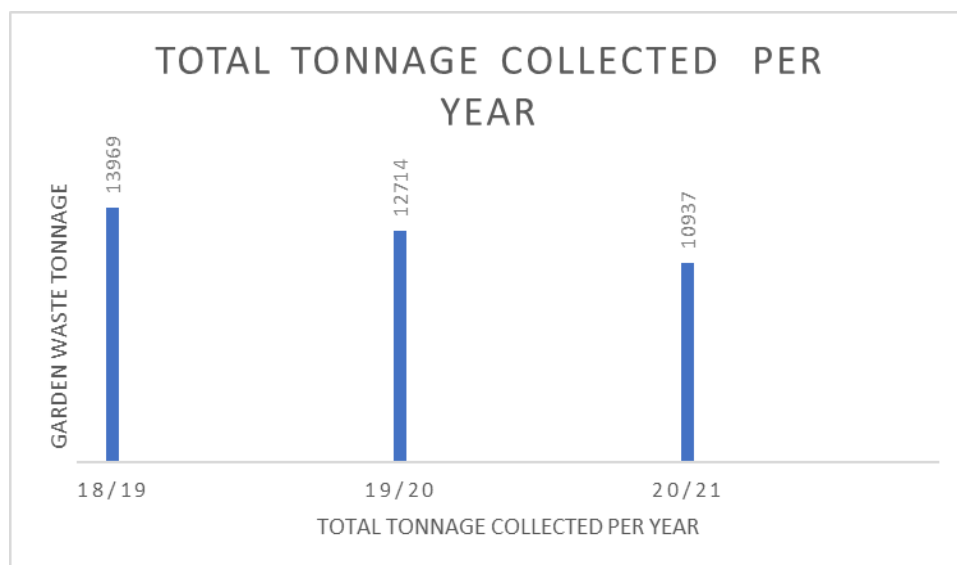


4.3.8 Figure 6 above shows the average tonnages collected per participating household per year. From 2020/21 onwards the service was offered as a subscribed service. The tonnage per participating household has increased from 0.047 tonnes (47 kilograms) in 2018/19 to 0.068 tonnes (68 kilograms) in 2020/21. The first quarter of the current service year has produced the highest tonnage per participating household at 0.110 tonnes (110 kilograms) per household and the 2021/22 figures show an improving trend.

4.3.9 The quarterly data shown is based on the service year (ie. quarter 1 includes May, June, July). The year 2018/19 had a full year of the service, the year 2019/20 had a reduced service as there was a longer winter pause due to remedial works at Oakleigh Depot, and a suspension of service in April due to the Covid 19 outbreak. This will have reduced tonnages for that year.

4.3.10 Figure 7 below shows the total annual tonnages collected. This shows that 78.3% of the 2018/19 garden waste tonnage is now being collected.

Figure 7: Total garden waste tonnage collected per year.



4.3.11 The North London Waste Authority have advised that they have not observed any increase in garden waste in the residual waste stream. There has not been any notable increase in garden waste collected as flytipping. An analysis of garden waste tonnage taken to the Reuse & Recycling centre (RRC) at Summers Lane has shown a slight reduction between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The reduction in tonnage collected from households appears not to have resulted in diversion of the material to residual waste, flytipping or the RRC, and could potentially be the result of changes in the amount of garden waste that is generated annually in line with variations in weather conditions. The council will continue to monitor tonnage trends going forward.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 The report to Environment Committee in January 2020 noted the potential for a reduction in the percentage of household waste recycled, compost or reused. Based on the available information, the amount of garden waste collected is similar to that previously collected when the service was not chargeable. Analysis suggests that those residents that have signed up to the service are those making fuller use of the service.

5.1.2 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. Home composting bins were promoted as part of the communications campaign, these 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.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 Finance and value for money – The key financial costs for providing the service include the collection vehicles, fuel, crew costs, maintenance, insurance, Customer Support Group call centre staff, purchase of stickers to identify paid for bins, and extensive communications to ensure that all residents are provided with all the necessary information on garden waste charges. The report to Environment Committee on 20 January 2020 on the introduction of charges noted that assuming a charge of £70 was introduced from April 6, a take up rate of 30% would generate £1,575,000. The actual take up rate and income has significantly exceeded this.
- 5.2.2 The income generated from subscriptions in year one also allowed the council to continue a £500k investment to enhance services originally made in 2019/20. This was subsequently increased by a further £600k in 2021/22 to £1.1M.
- 5.2.3 Procurement – a service provider was procured to produce and deliver bin identification stickers.
- 5.2.4 Staffing – as anticipated, there have not been any implications on permanent staff. The rollout of the chargeable service has been achieved through the reallocation of frontline staff, additional support from existing back office staff, and the recruitment of one additional staff member.
- 5.2.5 IT – an online system for residents to join the chargeable service and make payment. was facilitated through close working between Street Scene and the Customer Support Group (CSG).
- 5.2.6 Property – There were no property implications.
- 5.2.7 Sustainability – Garden waste is not collected in refuse and recycling bins and therefore, the options of taking part in the chargeable service, taking the garden waste to the Reuse and Recycling Centre, and composting at home all promote the sustainable management of this waste stream.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 Below is the list of legal and constitutional references which enabled the Council to introduce the chargeable garden waste service.
- 5.3.2 Section 45(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states:
- (1) It shall be the duty of each waste collection authority—
 - (a) to arrange for the collection of household waste in its area except waste—
 - (i) which is situated at a place which in the opinion of the authority is so isolated or inaccessible that the cost of collecting it would be unreasonably high, and
 - (ii) as to which the authority is satisfied that adequate arrangements for its disposal have been or can reasonably be expected to be made by a person who controls the waste;
 - (b) if requested by the occupier of premises in its area to collect any commercial waste from the premises, to arrange for the collection of the waste.

Section 45(3b) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states:

(3) No charge shall be made for the collection of household waste except in cases prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State; and in any of those cases—
(a) the duty to arrange for the collection of the waste shall not arise until a person who controls the waste requests the authority to collect it; and
(b) the authority may recover a reasonable charge for the collection of the waste from the person who made the request.

Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states:

Where a waste collection authority has a duty by virtue of section 45(1)(a) above to arrange for the collection of household waste from any premises, the authority may, by notice served on him, require the occupier to place the waste for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified.

The kind and number of the receptacles required under subsection (1) above to be used shall be such only as are reasonable but, subject to that, separate receptacles or compartments of receptacles may be required to be used for waste which is to be recycled and waste which is not dry recyclable waste, any dry waste stream, food waste, or any other waste which is to be recycled.

- 5.3.3 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.
- 5.3.4 In February 2019 the Government issued three consultations. The consultations were linked to the Government's proposals to implement the national Resources and Waste Strategy.
- 5.3.5 The second consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England closed on 4 July 2021, and in its response the council noted that Local Authorities should retain the ability to charge for garden waste collection services and that there had not been an issue with garden waste appearing in the refuse waste stream as a result of charging.
- 5.3.6 The Environment Bill has passed from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, it is anticipated that this may be transposed into legislation during 2022.
- 5.3.7 The London Environment Strategy encourages the collection of garden waste, but does not prevent or discourage London Borough Councils from charging.
- 5.3.8 Council Constitution (Article 7, Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships) sets out the responsible body and their functions. For the Environment Committee its function is:

Responsibility for all borough-wide or cross-constituency matters relating to the street scene including, parking, road safety, lighting, street cleaning, transport, waste, waterways, refuse, recycling, allotments, parks, trees, crematoria and mortuary, trading standards and environmental health.

Section 355(1)(a) of the GLA Act requires each of the waste collection authorities in Greater London (of which Barnet is one), in exercising any function under Part II of the

Environmental Protection Act 1990, to act “in general conformity” with the provisions of the London Environment Strategy (“the Strategy”) dealing with municipal waste management.

5.4 Insight

5.4.1 The use of business intelligence and data is set out in detail in section 4 of this report.

5.5 Social Value

5.5.1 There are no social value implications.

5.6 Risk Management

5.6.1 A risk register was prepared and regularly reviewed. The risks include; failure to deliver bin stickers, failure to engage with and communicate effectively to residents, failure to deliver the required savings and COVID-19. These risks are being mitigated through appropriate planning of procurement and communications activity.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity

5.7.1 A full Equalities Impact assessment was prepared for the Environment Committee meeting of 20 January 2020, to inform a decision on charging. This has been updated in September 2020 and October 2021.

5.8 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 There are no corporate parenting implications

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 A public consultation ran for six weeks from 10 October to 22 November 2019 and the outcomes of this were considered at the Environment Committee meeting of 20 January 2020.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

6.1 The introduction of the chargeable service has enabled the council to identify the number and location of service users, so that collection crew and vehicles resources can be targeted as needed, resulting in a more operationally efficient garden waste service. On average there has been a reduction of four vehicle collection days per fortnight, resulting in an estimated reduction of 10.3 tonnes of CO² per year.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Environment Committee January 2020 Garden Waste Collections - Introduction of Charges
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=695&MId=9909&Ver=4>
