

1. Garden Waste Subscription Service – Outcome of Public Consultation

- 1.1. At their meeting in May 2024, Cabinet considered a report on the introduction of a subscription based garden waste collection service. This report recognised the on-going financial pressures being faced by the Council, with a reduction in its core funding from central Government of £6.4 million (equivalent to 78%) since 2011/12. This, combined with an annual cost of the service of £1.1 million, previous advice from the external auditors and the need to explore options for further savings led to the principle of charging being approved.
- 1.2. It was also resolved to launch a public consultation, attached as Appendix 1, to help shape the service, with questions regarding the level of charges, concessions, participation and fairness. This consultation ran for a period of six weeks, from 8th July to 16th August 2024, and attracted 2,067 responses.
- 1.3. In summary, the main findings are as follows:

Question 1 & Question 2

Does your household have a garden?



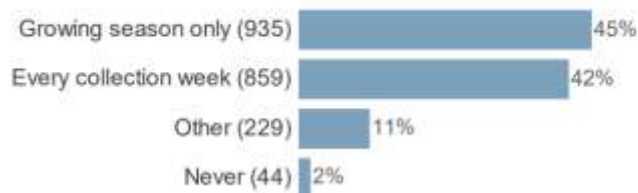
Does your household currently have a brown wheelie bin?



- 1.4. From a total of 2,067 respondents, 99% had a property with a garden and all of these had an existing brown wheelie bin.

Question 3

How often do you put your brown bin out for collection?

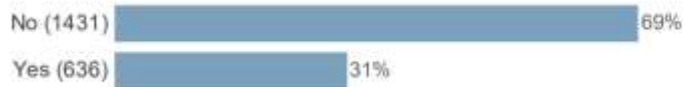


- 1.5. In terms of using the service throughout the year, only 42% of respondents use the service on each collection week, with 45% presenting their bins during the growing season only. As expected, this demonstrates a reduction in demand for the service during the winter months. A significant number of respondents indicated that their presentation habits are related to how full their bin is rather than simply presenting it on every collection week.

Question 4

The cost of providing a garden waste collection service exceeds £1 million each year.

To pay for this, we believe it is fairer to charge only those households who wish to use the service. Do you agree with this? (The cost of providing a garden waste collection service e...)



- 1.6. This question highlighted the annual cost of providing a service (circa £1.1 million) and sought to obtain views on whether it is fairer to only charge those households who wish to use the service. However, when reviewing the additional comment boxes throughout the consultation, there is a general trend objecting to the principle of charging. Therefore, it is possible a number of respondents have used this question to object to the principle of charging which may have skewed the results.

Question 5

Across Staffordshire, the average price for a garden waste subscription is £40 per year.

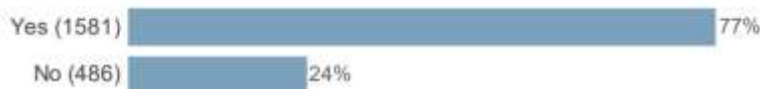
Which of the following is the fairest charge for the service? (Across Staffordshire, the average price for a garden wast...)



- 1.7. Across the other Staffordshire Authorities, the average price for a subscription during the last financial year was £40.01 per bin. When comparing the Council's CIPFA nearest neighbour group, the average price was £45.71 per bin. Therefore, the consultation offered three options at £40, £45 and £50 per bin and sought views on the fairest charge for the service. A significant majority of 97% responded with the lowest option of £40.

Question 6

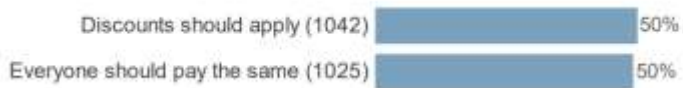
Do you consider households should be able to subscribe for more than one brown wheelie bin? (Do you consider households should be able to subscribe fo...)



- 1.8. Most Councils allow their residents to pay a subscription for more than one bin to support those with larger gardens. The responses indicated a significant majority of 76% (figure above is rounded up) who agreed with this approach. Historically, additional bins have been provided to households at a one-off cost of £40 to cover the cost of the bin, administration and delivery. It is proposed, in addition to the annual subscription charge, this one-off cost of £40 for the provision of an additional bin will continue, with a cap at three bins.

Question 7

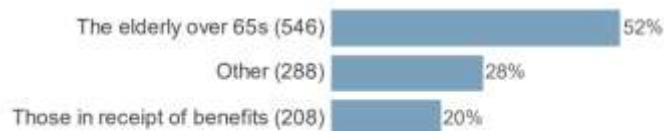
Do you consider everyone who chooses to opt into this subscription service should pay or should discounts be given to certain groups? (Do you consider everyone who chooses to opt into this sub...)



- 1.9. In terms of offering concessions/discounts to certain groups, the consultation responses were divided equally, with 50% suggesting concessions should be offered and the remaining 50% considering everyone should pay the same.
- 1.10. For those that supported concessions, the groups are detailed below. For the other category a number of respondents used this as an opportunity to express their objection to the principle of charging.

Question 8

If you consider discounts/concessions should apply, which groups should receive these? (If you consider discounts/concessions should apply, which...)



- 1.11. It is worth considering that concessions will create an additional administrative layer in order to be able to assess applications and would require additional resources/funding and further IT development. For this reason, most Councils adopt a single rate which supports an on-line automated payment route requiring no subsequent assessment.

Question 9

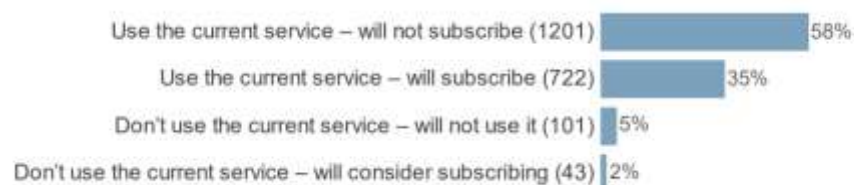
Do you currently receive an assisted collection for your brown bin? (Do you currently receive an assisted collection for your ...)



- 1.12. Of the respondents, only 3% currently receive an assisted collection for their garden waste. It is proposed these will continue for those who subscribe to the service.

Question 10

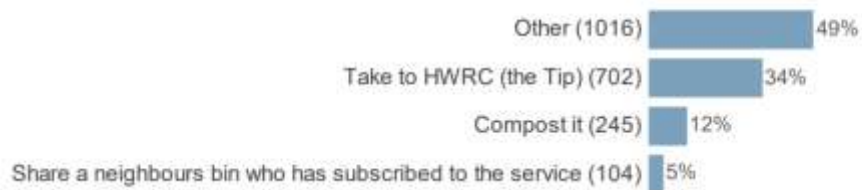
When the subscription charge is introduced, which of the following would apply to you? (When the subscription charge is introduced, which of the ...)



- 1.13. When asked about whether they would subscribe to a chargeable service, 35% of respondents said they would subscribe. Based on information from other Councils, the May-24 Cabinet report indicated a potential participation rate of 45% should a £40 subscription rate be introduced. They also indicated that participation rates tend to increase over time as households who may initially choose not to subscribe do so at a later date when they have better assessed their requirements.

Question 11

If you don't use the service, how will you deal with your garden waste (If you don't use the service, how would you deal with you...)



- 1.14. The consultation also sought views on how residents would deal with their garden waste should they decide not to subscribe. The responses indicated 34% would use a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), 12% would home compost and 5% would look to share a neighbour's bin who had subscribed. A figure of 49% stated they would deal with the waste in another way, with responses including a combination of the above, the use of their grey bin and fly tipping. Clearly, the latter is an offence and anyone who chooses to break the law will run the risk of receiving a considerable fine. In addition, Councils who have already introduced a chargeable service have advised they experienced no increase in garden waste related fly tipping as a consequence of introducing charges.
- 1.15. Staffordshire County Council is responsible for the disposal/treatment of waste collected in the grey bins. They have previously supported Staffordshire district councils on the introduction of charges and do not object to the principle. They have also indicated that, historically, they experienced a minimal increase in the level of garden waste from district areas that introduced a subscription service.