
Subject:	GARDEN WASTE CONTAINERISATION PROJECT
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 5 December 2022
Report of:	Roger Wragg, Head of Commercial Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Nick Kenton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To seek approval to progress a project to containerise garden waste collections (in wheeled-bins).

- Recommendation:**
- i) To withdraw the use of garden waste sacks and replace them with wheeled bins in the interests of the Health & Safety of the refuse collection contractor's workforce.
 - ii) To authorise the Head of Commercial Services to finalise and approve the attached draft Garden Waste Service Terms & Conditions.
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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council's existing garden waste collection service is based on the presentation of reusable sacks for the containment of the garden waste. The collection crews are exposed to increased risk of musculo-skeletal injuries when these sacks exceed the maximum permitted weight of 20kg. This report recommends the replacement of these sacks with a wheeled-bin instead, together with recommendations for fees, and revised terms & conditions for the service. It is proposed to utilise the Green Redeem funding, currently held in earmarked reserves, to purchase the initial supply of wheeled bins for free supply to 2023/24 subscribers in order to facilitate this transition.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Garden waste is categorised by environmental legislation as household waste for which a Waste Collection Authority (WCA) may levy a collection charge. DDC, in common with many other WCAs, provides a chargeable garden waste collection service to residents. Recognising the Climate Emergency, the emissions from operating these large diesel-powered vehicles would be better avoided by residents home-composting, however, the garden waste collection service does provide a significant contribution to the Council's recycling rate.
- 2.2 The service is currently predicated on residents using reusable sacks (that subscribers have the option to purchase from the Council if they choose), to present their garden waste - up to 6 bags per collection, each to be a maximum weight of 20kg. This latter, however, is difficult to monitor and enforce (without a member of staff checking every sack presented) and leads to the risk that collection crews regularly have to lift sacks well beyond the safe weight, increasing the likelihood of musculo-skeletal injuries. It is, therefore, necessary to convert the garden waste collection service to utilise wheeled-bins, in common with other WCAs in Kent, and widely across England. The maximum weight of bin that can be lifted is 100Kg.

- 2.3 There are currently approximately 9,650 subscribers to the garden waste collection service. Assuming all existing subscribers continue with the new service, the project would require the purchase of at least 10,000 wheeled bins, together with a reserve of say, 2,500–5,000 further bins, to allow for a possible increase in subscriptions. It is proposed to fund the purchase of these bins using the historic “Green Redeem” funding secured from central government in 2014-15.

3. **Containerisation Proposal**

- 3.1 It is proposed to make the conversion from collecting sacks to bins at the start of the 2023/24 service year (i.e. with effect from Monday 3rd April 2023), with (re)subscriptions open during January and February 2023, and a dedicated bin delivery operation (with specialist contractor) taking place during March 2023. The final Garden Waste Terms & Conditions would apply to new subscriptions.
- 3.2 A parallel workstream is also focussing on establishing suitable integrations between Veolia’s management software and the Council’s payment software, so that telephone payments can be reinstated. This is to complement the current and commonplace preference by the Council for residents to use the (more cost-effective) online payment procedure.
- 3.3 Veolia will also need to affix the necessary bin lifting equipment to the current garden waste collection vehicles. This equipment was purchased as part of the vehicle procurement but it is to be fabricated on demand, and fabrication will take approximately 8-weeks. Fitting the equipment to the vehicles only takes a matter of days, but it will be necessary to coordinate this with the container replacement to ensure continuity of service.
- 3.4 It should be noted that it is possible that not all residents will be able to receive the new garden waste collection service, as some properties will not be safely accessible by the collection vehicle (which is necessarily of a larger size due to the bin-lifting equipment, and the crews should only be pulling wheeled bins approx. 15m and on level ground). This is stated in the updated 2023/24 Garden Waste Service Terms & Conditions, and where this situation occurs, the council will not be able to offer an alternative service, and subscription refunds will be provided.
- 3.5 There is no common approach with bin charging across the Kent authorities, some charging for all bins, others providing bins as part of the subscription (but in some cases then charging for the bins for second or further subscriptions at the same address). In 2014-15 the DDC/FHDC partnership was awarded discretionary funding by central government to promote recycling. With the onset of the COVID pandemic this money was not spent, and has been retained. It is proposed to now utilise DDC’s share of that funding, c.£360k, to purchase the garden waste bins, and provide one free bin to each property subscribing to the service. Again reflecting the climate impacts of running this service, and to keep the bin procurement within budget, it is proposed that residents taking multiple subscription be charged for the supply of second and further bins, at a rate similar to that charged by our contract partners FHDC, this being £31.50 per bin for 2022/23 (plus inflationary increase for 2023/24).

4. **Identification of Options**

- 4.1 Option 1 - Do nothing and retain the existing bag collection service.
- 4.2 Option 2 – Introduce a wheeled bin service, providing a 240L wheeled-bin to subscribers and incorporate an increase in the annual subscription from £52.50 to £57.50 in line with inflation.
- 4.3 Option 3 – Introduce a wheeled-bin service, providing an alternative size wheeled bin (e.g 140L or 240L) and charge alternative subscription prices.

5. Evaluation of Options

- 5.1 Option 1 - This option is not recommended, as replacing garden waste sacks with wheeled bins is necessary to address health & safety concerns, and to comply with industry best practice.
- 5.2 Option 2 – This is the recommended option. A 240L wheeled-bin is most typically utilised for such services (being the size of bin that residents can generally accommodate on their property, provides adequate capacity, is widely available, and also is less likely to be overloaded such that it exceeds the 100kg safe lifting weight). It is therefore proposed to adopt this size of bin for the Council’s garden waste service and to provide one bin to each subscriber when the new service is implemented.
- 5.3 The current DDC annual subscription fee is £52.50 for a year-round service utilising reusable sacks. It is proposed that the 2023/24 subscription, utilising 240L wheeled-bins, includes an inflationary increase in the annual subscription rate (subject to approval of the fees and charges report in January 2023). This will reflect the inflationary increase incorporated in the contract for green waste collection to protect the Council’s budget position.
- 5.4 Option 3 – Variations of the recommended options could be progressed, utilising alternative sized bins or varying the proposed subscription rate. Assessment has been made of the most appropriate size bin and subscription fee level and form option 2 above. This option is not recommended.

6. Resource Implications

6.1 DDC staff time to:

- manage project
- procure bins and delivery service
- produce and issue communications material
- manage subscriptions.

6.2 It is forecast that cost of implementing the wheeled-bin service will be:

Project Costs	£
Purchase of 10,000 x 240L bins (average unit cost from ESPO framework = £23.46 for a green bin)	234,600
Distribution of 10,000 x 240L bins	30,000
Communications	10,000
Fitting of bin-lifting gear to 2x GW RCVs	5,000
Total cost	279,600

6.3 It is proposed to utilise the Green Redeem funding, currently held within the Periodic Operations earmarked reserve, to finance the set-up costs of the containerisation service.

- 6.4 The current service cost is c.£330k for the year and is forecast to increase in line with inflation from 2023, at c.£360k pa. If current subscription charges are also inflated then there is no adverse impact from the project on the revenue budget, providing the number of subscribers remains at the current level.
- 6.5 After the Year 1 introductory supply of a free wheeled-bin for the renewed garden waste service it would be anticipated that subscribers are required to purchase a wheeled-bin, with a recommended minimum cost replicating FHDC's 2022/23 charge at £31.50 plus inflation for 2023/24. As the use of DDC-supplied garden waste sacks is optional under the current service, and the use of a supplied bin will be obligatory with the renewed service, there is additional revenue from the sale of bins to new subscribers (assuming not all subscribers currently purchase 6x sacks from the Council).

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The best environmental option for managing garden waste is for it to be home composted, this saves having to transport this natural material anywhere, and also allows the compost to be used as a nutrient in the garden that it came from. However, some residents may be practically unable or unwilling to choose this approach.
- 7.2 Another alternative is for residents to take their garden waste to a Household Waste Recycling Centre, of which there are three in the DDC area - meaning most residents have access to one in under 10 miles from their home. In addition, as private car users are increasingly purchasing electric vehicles, this choice offers an opportunity to reduce transport emissions. The garden waste collected at the HWRCs is then bulk-hauled by lorry to the composting facility in Capel-le-Ferne.
- 7.3 Garden waste collections undertaken via the Council's service are done using 26 Tonne Refuse Collection Vehicles, which are Euro 6 compliant. These vehicles visit the subscribers' properties across the Council's area once per fortnight, and then direct-deliver the collected garden waste to the composting facility located in Capel-le-Ferne (meaning that sometimes the vehicles are collecting from the north of the district, and then driving to the disposal point in the south of the district).
- 7.4 Garden waste collected by the local councils, either from the doorstep or via the HWRCs, is processed at an industrial scale facility located on a farm in Capel-le-Ferne. The garden waste is "windrow composted" (a process typically taking approximately 16 weeks), and the resulting compost is supplied to local agricultural properties.

8. Corporate Implications

- 8.1 Comment from the Head of Finance & Investment (linked to the MTFP): The Head of Finance and Investment has been consulted on this report and has no further comments to add. (HL)
- 8.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make. (BD)
- 8.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report regarding the containerisation of garden waste does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149> .
- 8.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Proposed 2023-24 Garden Waste Service Terms & Conditions

Appendix 2 - EqIA

10. **Background Papers**

Contact Officer: Ian Dudding, Waste Services Manager