

8 July 2020

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Rosa Tanfield & Rory Doyle
Title	Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority	☎	507855
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's Covid-19 Recovery Programme has prioritised the need to immediately identify new sources of income to meet the significant saving requirements set out in the budget strategy agreed at Cabinet in June, arising from increased costs and loss of income across a wide range of service areas. Furthermore, the current waste and recycling operating model carries risks in relation to staff wellbeing and a lack of service resilience to external factors, exacerbated during the Covid-19 crisis and ongoing restrictions.
- 1.2 This report presents proposals to generate income through a subscription Garden Waste charging model - 'Garden Club', which would include the introduction of wheeled bins, to safeguard the wellbeing of frontline staff handling garden waste.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To introduce an optional subscription service for garden waste collection, using wheeled bins to support staff wellbeing for suitable properties, and cease free collections of garden waste, to help meet the Council's savings requirements post Covid-19.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation the procurement of the appropriate number of wheeled bins, equipment and other capital expenditure as outlined in this paper.
- 2.3 To approve the inclusion of £1.149m in the 2020/21 Capital Programme for wheeled bin purchase (£909,450) and vehicle adaptations (£240,000) as set out in Section 9 of this report.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Retain the current garden waste collection service. To continue as per the existing operating model. This will increase the Medium-Term Financial Forecast pressure in 2022/23 by a further £1.050m and this option provides no additional income or efficiency opportunities. The Council will accept the limited ability to improve performance and retain current levels of risk associated with staff wellbeing, financial sustainability, and service resilience to external factors such as Covid-19.

- 3.2 Stop the collection of garden waste for all residents. Garden waste collection is a non-statutory service. Stopping the service would reduce expenditure by approximately £1m and will contribute to balancing the Medium-Term Financial Forecast. However, the Council will see a decrease in the recorded amount of recycling that the Borough produces, as residents look to either dispose of the garden waste within residual waste (black bags/bins) ending in landfill; an increased risk of fly tipping; and or an increased level of garden waste taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centres. It will also not provide any additional income opportunity and there may be increased revenue costs required to manage any increase in fly-tipped waste.
- 3.3 Provide a Garden Waste Collection Service. As set out in the report, but with no additional offers, services or added value. This option would be to provide a simple chargeable garden waste collection service only, for those wishing to use the service, which would be renewable annually, as set out in this report.

4 Background

- 4.1 The UK's waste hierarchy sets out five steps for dealing with waste ranked according to environmental impact. Waste prevention (reduction), which offers the best outcomes for the environment, is at the top of the hierarchy followed by re-use and then recycling. The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 create a legal requirement for Councils to take account of the waste hierarchy.
- 4.2 In addition to these environmental imperatives, Colchester Borough Council, like many local authorities faces a serious financial situation. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, June Cabinet approved a revised Medium-Term Financial Forecast which sets out a £3.187m budget gap in 2021/2022. It is imperative that the Council continues to facilitate better waste reduction and improves recycling in ways that are financially sustainable in the longer term.
- 4.3 Under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Colchester Borough Council is classed as a Waste Collection Authority, and as such, under section 45(1) has a statutory duty to collect household waste from all domestic properties within its administrative area. Under Section 46(4) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council has specific powers to stipulate:
- The size and type of the collection receptacle(s)
 - Where the receptacle(s) must be placed for the purpose of collection and emptying
 - The materials or items which may or may not be placed within the receptacle(s)
- 4.4 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service not a statutory service.

5 Impact of the previous waste strategy

- 5.1 In December 2016 Cabinet agreed a new Waste Strategy and a series of changes to the way in which the Borough collects waste and recycling. The decisions taken included the introduction of wheeled bin collections for specific areas of the Borough with one wheeled bin for residual waste and a second optional bin for garden waste.
- 5.2 The changes introduced created two principal methods of collection:

- Wheeled bin collections for specific areas of the Borough; one for residual waste (180 litre) collected fortnightly and a second optional bin for garden waste (240 litre) also collected fortnightly. Residents were able to opt out of having the second bin for garden waste if they had no requirement for garden waste to be collected.
- Residual waste in all other areas collected in black sacks, 3 sacks fortnightly. The size of black sacks limited to 60 litres, so that three equates to 180 litres. Garden waste collected in white sacks, on alternate weeks. White sacks for garden waste provided free of charge with a limit of 4 sacks throughout the year to match the capacity of a 240-litre wheeled bin.

5.3 Wheeled bins were introduced to the following wards in June 2017 after consultation with ward members:

- Mile End
- Greenstead
- Old Heath & The Hythe (excluding The Hythe and Rowhedge)
- Shrub End – particularly the Garrison areas.
- Stanway
- Berechurch

5.4 The changes resulted in 11,932 properties receiving wheeled bin collections in June 2017. Since that date a further 1,007 properties have been added to that number, so the current total is 12,939 properties. 12,241 wheeled bin properties currently opt for a garden waste collection. The additional properties added are mostly new build properties in Mile End.

5.5 57,556 properties in the Borough are still receiving refuse collections using black sacks and garden waste using reusable bags. Over the last 3 years of delivering the revised Waste Strategy, the following issues can be evidenced and summarised:

Issue	Impact
Staff sickness levels	Crews that work on black sacks/garden waste bags have higher level of sickness (11 days per FTE) as a result of Musculoskeletal Injury than those working on wheel bin rounds (8 days per FTE)
Missed bins	Analysis of the levels of missed bins from both forms of collection identify that it is higher on sack rounds than on wheeled bins (e.g. refuse wheeled bin produced 8.21% of reported missed bins but represent 18.35% of the population.)
Health and safety issues	Research has consistently proven that the level of musculoskeletal injuries associated with using wheeled bins are lower.

6. Impact of Covid-19

6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to sustain waste and recycling collections as a result of a significant reduction in staff numbers and the requirement to mitigate the risk of infection spreading throughout the workforce.

6.2 Ahead of and during the lock down period there was a requirement for stringent social distancing measures and so a number of changes were made to the delivery of services, including the pausing and altering of some services.

- 6.3 Refuse and recycling collections have posed a challenge because over 100 staff start work from the Shrub End Depot at the same time of day and then need to sit in very close proximity in collection vehicles. Numerous additional measures have been put in place to protect and support staff members during this period; from the staggering of start times, adapting crewing out areas and providing additional protective equipment.
- 6.4 Despite these measures the service had to be adapted and some recycling collection frequencies reduced. Government guidance on workplace social distancing has required the avoidance of crowding and minimisation of opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres between individuals. This is not possible with a fully manned refuse collection vehicle which requires a driver and 2 or 3 loaders to deliver the normal service. During the peak of the outbreak, to run a full service would have exposed our staff to an unacceptable risk to their health which is why crews in vehicles were reduced and recycling collection frequencies reduced.
- 6.5 From week commencing 22 June 2020, all services, except for textile collection, have been operating and residents are able to place out their waste and recycling material as per their original calendars.
- 6.6 This period of significant and fast operational changes has enabled the team to review and assess services, along with testing alternative models of delivery. It is clear that any measures that can be taken to simplify the operational model for the service would improve service resilience and staff wellbeing.
- 6.7 As set out in the Budget Strategy report elsewhere on the Agenda, the Council's finances are coming under extreme pressure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is expected that there will be a significant use of one-off reserves of up to £8.350m in 20/21 and 21/22. Losses are also forecast in funding from Business Rates, Council Tax as well as from income earning facilities such as Sport and Leisure, Car Parking, Museums etc. The following table sets out the Medium-Term Financial Forecast reported to June 2020 Cabinet.

Revised MTFF (£m)	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Service costs	23.877	31.202	24.089	24.299	24.589
Covid Impacts	10.112	-7.978	-1.417	-0.700	0.000
Business rates	-5.885	-4.913	-4.956	-5.000	-4.544
Council tax	-12.448	-11.146	-13.029	-13.748	-14.508
Other funding	-6.925	-2.945	-2.940	-2.944	-2.944
Use of reserves	-8.731	-1.033	1.625	1.250	1.250
Savings to find	0.000	3.187	3.372	3.157	3.843

7. New Proposal for Managing Garden Waste

- 7.1 Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the services delivered by the Council, this has also been an opportunity to review, evaluate and gain better insight into service delivery, to focus on priorities and ascertain the true value of the services. The review in relation to garden waste aimed to achieve:
- Improve the health and wellbeing of residents
 - Reduce the environmental impact across the whole of Colchester

- Enable residents to be proud of Colchester and its Council

7.2 In order to achieve these aims, the proposal work towards the following objectives and principles:

- *Colchester is an attractive place to live and visit*
 - Improve customer access to services online
 - Job done right first time and without duplication
 - Optimise systems and technology effectively
 - Improve performance management
 - Develop opportunities to promote Colchester and its green spaces
 - Provide opportunities for communities to be involved in their local areas
- *The Council can adapt to housing growth*
 - Good reporting and monitoring of the services to inform decision making and investment
- *The Council has capacity and resilience*
 - Build financial sustainability
 - Develop income generation to ensure core costs are balanced
- *Staff are healthy, well and engaged*
 - Protect and support the health and welfare of staff
- *The Service is more energy efficient and contributes to reducing climate impact*
 - Enable residents have greater ownership of their waste
 - Enable residents have options in how they manage their waste

8. Garden Waste Collection

8.1 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service that does not need to be provided by the Council. It is proposed that the Council provides an 'opt in' paid for subscription service for the collection of garden waste. This is seen as a sensible alternative to providing the free service, and one which is provided by most (reportedly 65%) UK local authorities. Crucially, this would create a significant and sustainable new revenue stream that will contribute towards future investment in our services, as well as contributing to the savings required to balance the Council's post-Covid budget. Without this proposal, the Council will need to find significant additional savings from other Council services and quite possibly curtail or cease the service offered in any case. Unlike other UK local authorities, it is proposed that the Council provides a value-added subscription service, as described further in the report.

8.2 With the implementation of the new service residents will have the following choices:

- **Opt in to the new garden waste collection service (Garden Club).** Residents joining at launch will pay £25 in Season 1 and renewal of their annual subscription in Season 2 (April 2021) for a full year will be £50 (equivalent £1 per week). Residents joining after launch will pay a fee depending on which time of year they join as set out in 8.7 below.
- **Join Garden Club with a neighbour.** Residents can join garden club with a neighbour(s) and share the costs. The bin/s will be collected from the kerbside of the registered property and the registered property will be able to enjoy the additional benefits being offered by the Garden Club, sharing these with their neighbour(s).

- **Compost at home with a subsidised composter.** The Council has joined with Love Essex and getcomposting.com to be able to offer Colchester residents access to specially priced environmental products, where a garden composter is a little as £9.50, or cheaper if purchasing two. The products are made from 100% percent recycled plastic, including plastics collected by Councils, as well as industrial waste such as old gas pipes, old wheeled bins and car bumpers.
- **Setting up a community composting scheme.** There are currently no known community composting schemes in Colchester, however it is proposed that a grant fund could be developed, and working with the Community Engagement team, develop the opportunity for groups to set up a community composting scheme. Additionally, the Love Essex Fund, offers microgrants of up to £500, to help organisations and individuals to support residents in reducing their household waste. The next round of funding will be in Autumn 2020.
- **Take waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centres**
- **Pay to dispose of the garden waste privately**

8.3 Given the range of alternative options available to residents and financial savings the Council is required to make, it is proposed that, in introducing the subscription service, the current free collection of garden waste will cease.

8.4 Unlike other Council-run chargeable garden waste collection services which charge solely for a collection service, Colchester residents could opt to join the 'Garden Club' (working title). The Garden Club membership will entitle the household to:

- Garden waste collected on a fortnightly basis
- Garden Club Member exclusive offers, such as:
 - Invitation to talks and demonstrations by specialists such as Park Rangers, Landscape Designers, Tree Officers.
 - Seeds and gardening starter packs
 - Exclusive invitations to planting or project openings/launches,
 - Garden Club Member only events
 - Membership of the new Garden Club Facebook group
 - Preview/pre-booking, before public release for:
 - e.g. 'Trees for Years' or other special events
 - Special offers in association with private sector organisations, such as local garden centres (and other offers/deals as can be negotiated).
 - Regular newsletters providing seasonal advice

8.5 In order for this service to be successful, it is essential that the processes and systems are clear and simple to provide a seamless service. The following sets out a summary of the main elements of the proposed Garden Club service.

8.6 **Launch** - To support the launch of the new service in October 2020, it is proposed that a special one-off price is offered to residents of **£25**. This will include both the set-up fee and membership until March 2021. Residents will be able to sign up to an expression of interest as part of the communication and marketing campaign that is being developed and then officially sign up from September 2020, through to the end of March 2021 (Season 1).

- 8.7 **New customers (after launch)** - Residents wishing to join at Season 2 for April 2021 will be required to pay a 'one off' half price set-up fee of **£12.50** (to purchase and deliver the bin to the property) and they will pay a membership fee relevant to the period in which they sign up as set out below. Residents wishing to join after this period, will then be required to pay a 'one off' set up fee of **£25**:

Sign up between:	Cost
Beginning April – end June	£50 membership fee
Beginning July – end September	£37.50 membership fee
Beginning October – end December	£25 membership fee
Beginning January – end March	£12.50 membership fee

- 8.8 **Existing Garden Club Members** - Garden Club members will be required to renew their membership annually (**£50**). Residents will be contacted throughout February and March to encourage them to renew ahead of the start of the new year in April.
- 8.9 Residents may opt to have more than one garden waste bin, at an additional **£50** per annum per bin (plus **£12.50** cost of supplying the extra bins, if all additional bins are ordered at the same time).
- 8.10 Benchmarking across other local authorities has been carried out and the results are provided in Appendix A. This demonstrates that the costs set out are comparable with those in nearby authorities.
- 8.11 It is proposed that the sign up and renewal process will be completed online, with support provided by the Customer Services Centre as required. All communications to the customer will be via the email address registered at sign up, including the membership offers and deals set out above.
- 8.12 A form of staged payment will be made available to those customers requiring it, from April 2021.
- 8.13 Residents in receipt of certain benefits will be entitled to a reduction in the sign-up fee from April 2021, making the sign-up fee **£7.25** initially and **£12.50** (half price) if signing up beyond April 2021.
- 8.14 **Use of wheeled bins** - The previous introduction of wheeled bins to certain areas of the Borough has provided valuable data to help develop proposals. Implementing wheeled bin collections for garden waste through this project will help improve staff wellbeing and performance. However, there are some areas of the Borough where it may not be practical or suitable for wheeled bins. These areas would need to be retained on a garden sack collection service (either compostable or reusable sacks, that will be supplied as part of the Garden Club membership). The criteria used to determine whether a property is suitable for a wheeled bin are:
- Properties situated on a steep slope may not be suitable
 - Properties accessed by several steps may not be suitable
 - Properties where storage of wheeled bins prevent access to the boundary or safe presentation for bin collections may not be suitable (for example terraced houses directly fronting the street)
- 8.15 **Garden waste collection** - Collection days in Season 1 (October 2020 to March 2021) will remain the same but will be reviewed. Any changes to collection days will be communicated to households that subscribe from the beginning of the new Season. Bins

will be emptied on a fortnightly basis; 25 collections across 50 weeks of the year excluding 2 weeks at Christmas/New Year.

- 8.16 Customers who already have a wheeled bin for garden waste, will be issued with a sticker to be placed on the bin to indicate that they are signed up. Customers who do not have a wheeled bin for garden waste will have one delivered. It may not be a new bin, but it will have been checked and cleaned prior to delivery. The Council may choose to collect existing wheeled garden waste bins from those properties that have not signed up to the service. These would then be cleaned and reissued to customers who have signed up.
- 8.17 Garden waste will only be taken if it is presented in the bin i.e. 'side waste' will not be taken.
- 8.18 The volume and tonnage of garden waste collection is varied depending on time of year and how much rain there is. There are generally increased loads from the start of the growing season in April through to late October after the leaves have fallen. The following table shows totals (kg) collected each calendar year.

Year	Kerbside green waste total (kg)
2018	9,609,540
2017	9,889,140
2016	9,175,640
2015	8,804,100

- 8.19 Following the changes to the service during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the re-introduction of the collection service, the crews have completed two collection cycles since. The weights are set out in the table below, but it should be noted that the first cycle is not representative of the usual amounts collected per cycle (i.e. 2 weeks).

Cycle	Totals (Kg)
1	1,276,040
2	578,120

- 8.20 Based on feedback from other authorities, it is projected that:
- 50% of all residents with a free Garden Waste collection today will want to subscribe – this would result in around 35,000 customers for Colchester (estimated over the next three seasons)
 - 25% of the current Garden Waste will be Composted either at home or via an ECC Recycling Centre
 - 25% of Garden Waste will likely end up in the Black Wheeled Bin

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The proposals for the introduction of the Garden Club include a range of financial implications, including one-off and ongoing costs, and a requirement for capital investment.

9.2 Revenue Implications

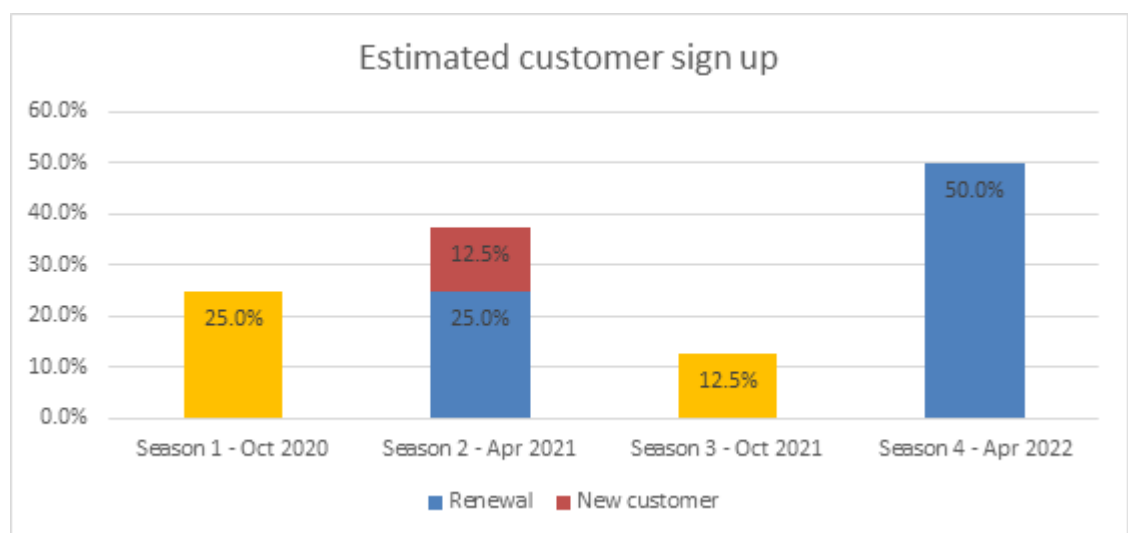
- 9.3 The ongoing revenue implications of the changes set out in this paper primarily revolve around income, supplies & services costs and financing costs.

- 9.4 To deliver sustainable changes, there are additional ongoing costs associated with resource to process financial reconciliation, staged payments, administration, delivery of compostable or reusable bags and contact support for the Garden Club. There is a saving in relation to the purchasing and distribution of re-useable garden sacks.
- 9.5 To deliver the changes there will be several one-off revenue costs incurred. These will include:
- Systems and support development (including online and digital systems)
 - Project support and management
 - Communications and marketing campaign
 - Dedicated Neighbourhood Wardens who will be required as additional temporary resources to accommodate the project requirements.
- 9.6 Any one-off costs of implementation incurred will be met from the Garden Club service income in the year. One-off costs are forecasted at £307,000 in 2020/21 and £118,000 in 2021/22.

9.7 **Garden Waste income**

- 9.8 Income has been estimated with take-up achieving a membership of 50% of all eligible residents by October 2021, renewing in April 2022, in a staged approach. The modelling has been based on the following assumptions and represented in the table below:

- **Season 1** (October 2020): 25% (17,600) of eligible residents will sign up to the new service at £25 (for 6 months)
- **Season 2** (April 2021): Existing members will renew at £50. An additional 12.5% (8,800) new residents signing up for the year (Half price £12.50 sign up and membership fee at £50) (for 12 months)
- **Season 3** (October 2021): An additional 12.5% (8,800) eligible residents will sign up to the new service at £25 sign up and membership fee at £25 (for 6 months).
- **Season 4** (April 2022): All Members (representing 50%) will renew at £50 membership fee



Yellow indicates those customers paying 6 months service

- 9.9 Following new customers signing up in Season 1, 2 and 3, it is expected that 50% of eligible residents will have signed up and will be renewing regularly. As a result, income is forecast to be higher comparably in 2020/21 and 2021/22 than in 2022/23, as there will be

no new customers paying the set-up fee from 2022/23. From 2022/23, the forecast assumes income will be stable at circa £1.6m.

- 9.10 In anticipation that a concession option will be developed, an allowance for this has been made.
- 9.11 The Council currently receives £287,000 of green credit claim income. Forecasting has allowed for a reduction of 50%, however it is not expected that the reduction will be this significant on the basis of the feedback and experience of other local authorities.
- 9.12 The following table sets out the estimated revenue implications of the proposals contained within this report.

Table of Revenue Implications			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Revenue implications	£000s	£000s	£000s
Recurring Expenditure			
Financial reconciliation and stage payment processing	18	46	48
Delivery services	1	1	1
Customer Contact Centre and administration processing	88	153	156
Print and communications	42	76	88
Saving of purchase of hessian sacks	(13)	(27)	(27)
Purchasing of compostable sacks	27	54	54
Financing costs (Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest)	29	154	154
Total expenditure	192	457	474
Income			
Garden Club Membership income (net of concessions)	(991)	(1,845)	(1,625)
Recycling credit income (reduced from non-take up)	72	144	144
Total income	(919)	(1,701)	(1,481)
One-off costs			
Systems development and support	103	14	-
Project Management	72	31	-
Operations & Comms	132	73	-
Total one-off costs	307	118	-
Overall Net Revenue Impact	(420)	(1,126)	(1,007)

9.13 Capital Implications

- 9.14 The capital expenditure requirements of the proposals will include the costs of the purchase of bins and an additional vehicle. It is estimated that this will require capital expenditure of circa £1,149,000 as set out in the table below. The modelling in this report

assumes a 50% take up of eligible residents to the Garden Club (and thus requiring wheeled bins for garden waste), the proposal sets out 60% take up within the capital programme to ensure sufficient resources are approved by Cabinet, should they be required.

Capital Requirements			
Item		Unit Cost (£)	Total (£)
Purchase of bins	Allowing for 60% take up of residents (42,300) requiring a garden waste bin	21.50	0.909m
Adaption of existing fleet	8 vehicles	0.030m	0.240m
Total Capital Provision			1.149m

10. Timetable for service changes

Date	Action
29 June	Scrutiny Panel papers published, proactive comms
30 June	Cabinet papers published
7 July 2020	Scrutiny Panel special meeting (tbc)
8 July 2020	Cabinet decision – press release announcing consultation
July/August 2020	Online ‘expression of interest’ launch for residents
August 2020	Communication and marketing campaign launched
September 2020	Garden Club sign up launched – Season 1
October 2020	Commencement of Garden Club service – Season 1
April 2021	Commencement of Garden Club Service – Season 2

11. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 11.1 A detailed [Equality Impact Assessment](#) has been completed to establish the implications of introducing the services as outlined. The outcome of the assessment demonstrates that there will be limited impact for residents, apart from certain households on a low income.
- 11.2 This impact will be mitigated by introducing a concessionary fee for set up costs and a phased payment method for new customers joining mid-year. In addition, there are multiple alternative options for residents opting not to subscribe to the service.
- 11.3 The Council will continue to support residents who may have difficulty accessing our services, by way of assisted collection schemes and/or direct support from officers, where necessary.
- 11.4 Not all residents benefit from the current garden waste collection service. Fundamentally, the proposal to charge a subscription fee ensures that income is generated from users of the service, rather than the cost being met from the general Council Taxpayer. As a minimum, charges will be reviewed annually as part of the budget and service planning

process. Residents may continue to dispose of garden waste free of charge at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) operated by Essex County Council.

12. Strategic Plan References

12.1 The proposals specifically support the Strategic Plan 2018-21

Responsibility

- The Garden Club promotes responsible citizenship by encouraging residents to get involved in their communities and to identify solutions to local issues through either sharing the service or exploring community composting.
- The proposal in this paper is fundamentally designed to encourage re-use and recycling to reduce waste to landfill

Opportunity

- The Garden Club is an example of an initiative to help residents live healthier lives, and the introduction of wheeled bins for garden waste will support our staff to do so, many of whom are residents

13. Consultation

- 13.1 The Council's Covid-19 Recovery Programme has intensified the need to immediately identify new sources of income to meet the significant budget pressure as set out in the budget strategy agreed at Cabinet in June and set out elsewhere in this report. The current waste and recycling operating model also creates risks to the Council in relation to staff wellbeing and the lack of service resilience to external factors as set out in this report.
- 13.2 This paper will be subjected to pre-scrutiny at the Council's Scrutiny Panel meeting on 7 July 2020 and the Panel's recommendations will be made available to Cabinet in considering this report.
- 13.3 An online 'expression of interest' programme will be launched throughout July and August enabling residents to register to receive more information about the service and to express an interest for signing up. This will provide an opportunity for officers to gain customer insight to further inform the service design and delivery, and gauge potential uptake.

14. Publicity Considerations

- 14.1 The waste and recycling service serves every household every week and changes will need to be clearly communicated. Given the level of change we need to use many different communication mechanisms to make sure every household hears about and understands the changes. A full communications plan, as outlined below, will be developed and put in place.
- 14.2 The main roll-out of the Garden Club communications strategy will start in September 2020. This will be for the promotion of the Garden Club and the main objective is to encourage residents to subscribe to the service via the website, although there will be substantial messaging around encouraging those that do not want to sign-up, to compost at home.
- 14.3 In September, a Garden Club leaflet will be distributed to all households in the borough that currently receive a garden waste kerbside collection (around 70,500 properties). This will be supported with messaging on a variety of channels including the creation of a

promotional video, digital advertising on Facebook, a vinyl banner on the fencing at the Shrub End Recycling Centre, e-newsletter articles, social media posts, press releases and internal communications.

- 14.4 On a resident's penultimate free collection day in September, a large 'luggage' tag will be attached to their garden waste sack or wheelie bin. This tag will let the resident know that it almost their last free collection and contain a strong call to action to take up a Garden Club Subscription.
- 14.5 On sign up to the Garden Club, members will receive a digital 'Welcome to the Garden Club' leaflet.
- 14.6 The vehicle livery on vehicles will be updated for ongoing promotion of the service.
- 14.7 For consistency of message, all artworks would have a matching look and feel and encourage online sign-up.
- 14.8 Previous changes in the waste service give a set of lessons learned about which methods of communication are most effective and these will be reflected in the communications plan.
- 14.9 Although there is likely to be initial public concern about the introduction of a paid for subscription service, experience from other Councils demonstrates that public concern dissipates soon after introduction. Concern can also be mitigated by clearly communicating the improvements overall to customer journeys. Residents who opt to subscribe to the discretionary element of the service will have access to additional benefits promoted to Garden Club members including, access to events, tutorials, retail vouchers/offers etc.
- 14.10 Colchester will be the only local authority in Essex offering additional benefits to residents as part of a 'paid for' collection.

15. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 15.1 Residents homes and their local environment are a key determinant of health. A high performing waste and recycling service contributes to and positively influences perceptions of place and the local environment.
- 15.2 Improving health and wellbeing in communities is a key priority for the Council. Garden Club will act as an enabler and encourage residents to explore nature and green open spaces. This links to existing campaigns delivered by the Council with and alongside community partners including the Woodland Project, #ParksAtHome and Grow you Own at Home.

16. Health and Safety Implications

- 16.1 A full review of Health and Safety requirements as a result of any changes to the waste service will be undertaken to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation. This will include specific training for waste staff in new equipment required specifically bin lifting equipment.
- 16.2 Research has consistently proven that the level of musculoskeletal injuries associated with using wheeled bins are lower and levels of sickness amongst staff on existing wheeled bin collection routes are on average 3 days lower per FTE.

17. Risk Management Implication

- 17.1 Take up of the Garden Club subscription service is difficult to project accurately and is a risk factor but experience from other local authorities who have implemented similar changes suggests that the scheme will be popular. As such there is a confidence in the projections (50% participation rate) set out in this paper and that these are realistic and achievable.

Risks	Mitigation
Reputational Damage from residents and ward councillor complaints	Garden waste charging is normal for 65% of councils and not charging would mean £1m more would need to be found from other services, if possible, with potentially more difficult consequences. Member briefings will help everyone understand and communicate the reasons for the decision.
Environment Bill is enacted and requires garden waste collections	The Bill passed its second reading in early March has been delayed but may not prohibit charging. If so, and if enacted, this new burden would need to be funded. Unlikely to take effect within MTFF period.
Residents do not receive information about the changes.	Dedicated communications campaign with commercially savvy marketing
Low income households are disadvantaged	Scheme is optional of course but a concession on the sign-up fee will be made possible. In addition, a form of staged payment will be made available for those unable to make a one-off annual payment.
Increased vehicle movements and fuel consumption	With approximately 50% of households estimated to join the Garden Club, overall vehicle mileage is likely to be similar. Light EV Fleet procurement underway and heavy fleet Replacement (mid 2020s) will be zero tailpipe emissions.
Staff do not get behind the change	An important driver for these proposals is employee wellbeing and our staff engagement suggests this will be popular.
Reintroduction of stringent social distancing measures	<p>It will be essential that the Garden Club service is delivered as best it can, as it will be a paid service. As it is estimated that the number of customers who sign up to the service will be phased, the risk of not delivering the service will be low, as capacity will be available within the current levels.</p> <p>Officers will continue to implement learning from the previous pandemic response, control measures to protect staff maintained as per waste industry guidance.</p>
Supply requirements affected by future spike in infection rates and any subsequent lockdown measures at key points in	Officers will implement learning from the previous pandemic response, control measures to protect staff maintained as per waste industry guidance.

the timeline (October 2020 and Spring 2021).	<p>Early, clear and robust communications to the public about the effect on the delivery at key points will be undertaken</p> <p>There will be robust project management through the Waste & Recycling Project Board and subsidiary specialist and operational working groups.</p>
Income is not sufficient to cover service costs	<p>Expenditure has been modelled on an uptake of 35k households generating £1.75m gross income.</p> <p>Quarterly and monthly data of uptake and income will be closely and carefully monitored.</p> <p>Budget management will separate the service from the rest of the Service budget, in order that the expenditure and income can be monitored carefully.</p>
<p>Reduction in recycling rate</p> <p>Increased amount of garden waste disposed of at Household Waste & Recycling Centres</p> <p>Increased amount of garden waste fly-tipped across the Borough</p> <p>Increased amount of residual waste and associated disposal costs</p>	<p>Recycling rates will be monitored closely and alternative methods to improve CBCs recycling may need to be implemented</p> <p>Service enhancements will be supported by comprehensive communications campaign to engage with residents and the local media, communicating the service and charges to encourage residents to register.</p>
Customer Services/Web not able to accommodate the demand for application and payments.	Customer Services and Digital Services teams have been involved from early planning, processes requirements have been specified and agreed.

18. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 18.1 The Council's environment and sustainability ambitions set out clear steps to reduce carbon emissions and reduce waste in the Borough (e.g. through reduced fleet emissions associated with discretionary waste collection and by increasing composting at source).
- 18.2 It is anticipated that these service changes and the enhanced promotion of home composting through Garden Club tutorials and events will see the amount of green waste collected reduce. This is line with evidence from several Boroughs where chargeable garden waste schemes have already been introduced. This generally shows that whilst some garden waste tonnage might be 'lost', significant negative impact on the recycling rate is unlikely.
- 18.3 The existing free garden waste collection draws in material that could be composted at home, meaning that the total amount of waste collected is inflated. Whilst free garden

waste services are an 'easy' way to increase recycling rates, there is no environmental benefit, as the extra material needs to be moved and processed, creating additional environmental impacts. In line with the waste hierarchy it is better to avoid the need for this waste to be collected and treated in the first place.

Appendix A

LA	2020/21	
	Garden Waste Charge	Method of collection
Basildon	£0	Weekly - 240L standard or 180L available With food waste
Babergh/Mid Suffolk	£5 set up cost £52.50 per year	Wheeled bins only
Braintree	£0	240L fortnightly wheeled bin
Brentwood	£52.50 per year for hire of garden bin £3.26 for a roll of 10 garden sacks	1.240 litre bins & biodegradable sacks (rolls of ten)
Castle Point	£6.20 for 20 sacks or £33 for a 240 l bin	Weekly collection with no winter break - bin or sacks
Chelmsford	£0	Fortnightly collection - 240L standard
Harlow	£42.00 p/a + £30 set up fee for new customers only. Ad-hoc now only accepting compostable sacks purchased @ £19.00 for roll of 20.	Fortnightly bin or sacks
Ipswich	£0	Fortnightly
Maldon	£25 set up cost £46.00 online or direct debit.	March – November, fortnightly Dec – Feb suspend for 2 weeks following Christmas 240 L Wheeled Bin only not all properties eligible
Southend	£0	240L or sacks
Tendring	£75 for the first year (includes £25 set up fee) £50 per year thereafter	Fortnightly with 2-week Christmas break Wheeled bin only
Thurrock	£0; but charge for wheelie bin replacements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £36 for a new wheeled bin • £18.50 for a new wheeled bin if you are aged 60 or over • £18.50 for a new wheeled bin if you receive certain 	Weekly

	benefits – proof of entitlement will be needed	
Uttlesford	£46 for online and cash/cheque payments, £40 for Direct Debits and a 25% reduction if in receipt of LCTS. New customers also required to pay £22.50 for a garden waste bin	Bin (bi-weekly with a break of 4/5 weeks over the Christmas period)) Wheeled bins only
West Suffolk	£42 per year	26 collections year Wheeled bins only