

**19 August 2020**

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director Environment</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Rory Doyle</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Final Report of the Waste &amp; Recycling Task &amp; Finish Group</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>		

## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group following the work it has undertaken between 13<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to review waste service costs and implications. It makes a number of recommendations to Cabinet as set out below.

## **2. Recommended Decisions**

- 2.1 The Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- (a) Explore introduction of a garden waste collection annual membership fee to enable the frequency of garden waste collections to be maintained
- (b) Any proposal should not include the Garden Club element and instead investment be made in marketing and promotion of a charged for service
- (c) Any proposal should not include a start-up fee.
- (d) Introduce wheeled bins for garden waste in Ward areas that currently have wheeled bins for black sack waste and build a roll out programme for the rest of the borough in those areas that are suitable for wheeled bins while working with local Ward councillors.
- (e) Continue to undertake an assertive recruitment programme to reduce reliance on agency staff moving forward.

- 2.2 In the light of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations contained at 2.1 above, Cabinet is invited to reconsider the recommendations contained in the report submitted to Cabinet on 8 July 2020 attached at Appendix 1.

- 2.3 In addition Group members wish Cabinet to recognise:

- the considerable detail on operational matters that officers supplied to the Group to help with their deliberations
- the willingness of the 3 crew members who answered questions and assisted members to draw out new lines of enquiry
- the offer from Portfolio Holder of Resources made during the first T&F Group to lead two Budget Workshops for all members to attend and receive detailed information on current budget position and possibilities for closing the budget gap

- the offer of the PFH for Resources to work with a representation of members across the chamber to look at options for balancing the budget, while working in parallel to Cabinet decisions.

### **3. Alternative Options**

3.1 No alternative options are proposed.

### **4. Background Information**

4.1 At its meeting on 8 July 2020 Cabinet considered a report entitled “Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority” which is attached at Appendix 1. This report had been the subject of pre-scrutiny by the Scrutiny Panel on 7 July 2020 which had made several recommendations to Cabinet. In the light of these recommendations, Cabinet agreed to withdraw the recommendations contained in the report at that meeting and resolved that:

- (i) A pause be taken on the proposal to introduce changes to the garden waste collection service;
- (ii) A cross-party Task and Finish Group be set up to review waste service costs and implications and to include representatives of all party groups;
- (iii) Ward councillors be consulted on any proposed changes to the use of wheelie bins and specifically as to the identification of geographical areas where wheelie bin usage would or would not be appropriate.
- (iv) Further exploration be made of the five-point response to Budget Recovery agreed at the June Scrutiny Panel meeting, including the forensic understanding of statutory and non-statutory service provision by the Council;
- (v) Cabinet continue to lobby central government for a long-term financial settlement for the benefit of this Council's finances and its residents.

4.2 The Task and Finish Group was established and met for the first time on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Membership of the Group was:

- Cllr Bourne - Chair
- Cllr Chuah
- Cllr Goacher
- Cllr Higgins
- Cllr Lissimore
- Cllr Gerard Oxford
- Cllr Whitehead
- Cllr Wood

4.3 Two further meetings of the Task and Finish Group took place. (3 August 2020 and 10 August 2020).

4.4 The initial scoping stage identified three elements to focus on:

- to consider the overall range of costs, issues and opportunities facing the Waste and Recycling service, including the Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority project, the Council's 20/21 budget strategy, service resilience, staff wellbeing, sustainability and climate commitments.
- To review the proposal to cease free collections and introduce an optional,

subscription-based garden waste collection service, considering comments made at the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 7 July 2020 and Cabinet meeting on 8 July 2020.

- To agree whether the proposed service should go ahead as described and explore what amendments or alternative options might be necessary, making recommendations for Cabinet to consider at a special meeting during week beginning 10 August 2020.

- 4.5 In summary the Group discussed in year and subsequent year budget implications for:
- introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste
  - retain current service and not charge, and
  - a sliding scale of charges based on various levels of fee.
- 4.6 Other options were also considered, including retaining a free garden waste collection service but with a reduction to a four weekly cycle or by providing the service for the 'growing season' only. The Group were unwilling to recommend a reduction of frequency in the garden waste collection service.
- 4.7 The Group received evidence to show that CBC is a top performing council for reducing waste to landfill (a top environmental priority) and a top performing council for rates of recycling. The information provided also set out that CBC is able to maintain this top performance while being a low council tax area, when compared with similar boroughs across England.
- 4.8 The Group also received information on the complexity of the operating model for waste and recycling collections in Colchester and how subsequently this makes any changes challenging to manage. In addition other operational matters were explored including:
- operational issues around use of agency workers
  - the 2017 introduction of RouteSmart software to facilitate the planning of routes and the use of data to inform this process, and improve performance
  - fleet requirements
  - income stream reduction from recyclates as a result of volatile global markets
  - evidence from three waste crew members on the physical impact of lifting sacks
- 4.9 The Group agreed that decisions that the Council has to make to either increase charges, or consider reduction in some services, or a combination of both in order to deliver a balanced budget will be extremely challenging and agreed the recommendations set out in this report on that basis.

## **5. Task and Finish Group Conclusions**

- 5.1. The conclusions are set out in this report's recommendations.

## **6. Strategic Plan References**

- 6.1. As detailed in the 8 July 2020 Cabinet report

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1. The Task and Finish Group recommended that further consultation be undertaken

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. The revised Medium Term Financial Forecast reported to July 2020 Cabinet assumed new income generation of £0.500m in 2020/21 and a further £0.550m in 2021/22.

- 8.2. Work is continuing on the 2021/22 budget and 2021/22 to 2024/25 Medium Term Financial forecast in accordance with the approved Budget Strategy. This will include work on further options for a charged-for garden waste service.
- 8.3. Against budget gaps of £3.187m 21/22 and equivalent gaps in later years not to proceed with garden waste charges will increase the challenge of finding alternative savings.
- 8.4. Progress on the 2021/22 budget and 2021/22 to 2024/25 Medium Term Financial forecast will be reported to October 2020 Cabinet.
9. **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Publicity, Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Health and Safety, Risk Management, Environmental and Sustainability Implications**
- 9.1. As detailed in the 8 July 2020 Cabinet report

Appendix 1 - Cabinet Report 8 July 2020 - Waste and Recycling New Strategic Priority

Appendix 2 - Action Notes from Task & Finish Group Meetings on the 20 July, 3 August, 10 August