
Report of: The Chief Officer Environmental Action

Report to: The Director of Communities and Environment

Date: 11th April 2017

Subject: Changes to Collections of Bulky Household Waste

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): All wards	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

A Full Council decision in February 2017 approved the introduction of a charge for the collection of bulky household waste in Leeds. A charge of £20 per collection of up to four items is proposed, which represents a subsidised collection service for householders. This fee level compares favourably to other Councils, many of which have been charging for this collection service for some years.

The changes proposed provide two significant opportunities for local third sector reuse organisations. Firstly, the charge will drive more households to contact these organisations to remove their waste as that route will remain free of charge. This sector will therefore be provided with more items to collect for eventual re-use and they have recently confirmed the capacity to handle an increased volume. Secondly, a proportion of the income generated through the introduction of a charge will be used to support the work of local reuse organisations to help ensure a sustained presence in the city.

Recommendation

The Director Communities and Environment is recommended to approve the proposed charge of £20 per collection of up to four items, as detailed in section 3.0 below.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to introduce a charge of £20 for each collection of up to four items of bulky waste from households in Leeds.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Residents currently have a range of options to deal with unwanted items of bulky household waste. These include collection from home addresses by the Council or third sector organisations, the householder taking items to a Household Waste Disposal Site or a reuse shop or charity shop and finally, the option of selling the item privately via various electronic platforms.

2.2 The Council currently receives approximately 32,000 requests for collections annually. The requests are not particularly seasonal and demand has remained steady for at least the last 4-5 years. In the last 18 mths, the proportion of actual collections has increased and complaints have reduced as a result of changes made to how the service is delivered.

2.3 By far, the main items picked up via the Councils collection service are fridges, freezers, sofas, beds, TVs and vacuum cleaners. It has been estimated that approximately 25% of these items are in a good enough condition to be reused. A further significant proportion could be recycled but are not currently as a result of present collection arrangements.

2.4 Discussions with third sector reuse organisations in December 2016 showed strong support for the introduction of a charge for the Council to collect bulky waste. The expectation is that more residents will choose to contact these organisations to arrange a collection which will continue to be free of charge. The third sector also collects items from within a home and often with a much shorter time to wait before the collection is made. This sector has confirmed it has capacity to deal with the additional volumes expected once a charge is in place for a Council collection.

2.5 The vast majority of Councils already charge to collect bulky waste from households. Nottingham are believed to be the only Council collecting for free in 17/18. Whilst Authorities are still in the process of confirming 17/18 charges at time of writing, table 1.0 below gives an indication of the typical charges in place elsewhere now.

Table 1.0

Authority	17/18 charge for collection of bulky waste
Birmingham	£23 online or £25 by phone for up to 6 items
Newcastle	£40 for each heavy item (eg a large bookcase) £10 for each large item (eg fridge or washer) £20 for up to 8 small items (eg ironing board)
Sheffield	1-3 items £21.00 (£10 if on income support) 4-6 items £35.40 (£15 if on income support)
Bradford	1-5 items £15
Bristol	1-3 items £25 4-6 items £50

2.6 The experience of introducing a charge by Councils similar to Leeds is consistent in two respects:

- i) Demand for collections falls by 50-60%. The fall has been described by other Councils as being due to various factors. These include residents who tend to collect up items to the maximum number to make the most of the fee they pay for each collection. So, whilst the number of items collected from an address may be the same, only one visit is needed to collect them all. Also, more people have instead chosen the other disposal options that remain free of charge, such as the use of Household Waste Sites.
- ii) Flytipping does not increase significantly when the charge is introduced. Households experience some inconvenience in using the bulky collection service now, for example needing to store the item for weeks until collection and keeping certain items dry etc. That these residents contact the service for a collection and then comply with our requirements indicates they are well motivated to do the right thing. Those residents are unlikely to switch to flytipping to get rid of waste rather than paying a reasonable charge, especially once the time to wait for the collection is significantly reduced.

3.0 Main Issues.

3.1 The changes proposed are as follows:

- All Leeds households wanting to use the Councils bulky collection service will be required to pay an up-front contribution of £20 towards the cost each time they use it;
- The number of collections available for each household will be increased by 33% from 3 to 4 per year;
- Improvements in booking confirmation texts/emails.

3.2 All other aspects of the service will remain as at present, for example a maximum number of items per booking of 4, rules about what can/can't be collected (including the type of item, size/weight, requirement to be kept dry), the

weekdays that wards have allocated for their collections and being clear that items may be collected up to 48 hours after the planned collection date. Garden waste will continue to be collected through this service free of charge in those areas currently without a brown bin collection. A maximum of four bags of garden waste will be taken at each collection.

- 3.3 As a result of the charge and the anticipated drop in demand, it will be possible to reduce the time residents will wait for the collection to be made to around three weeks.
- 3.4 An important element of the introduction of a charge is the ability for a proportion of the income generated to be used to increase the assistance and support to third sector re-use organisations in the city.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

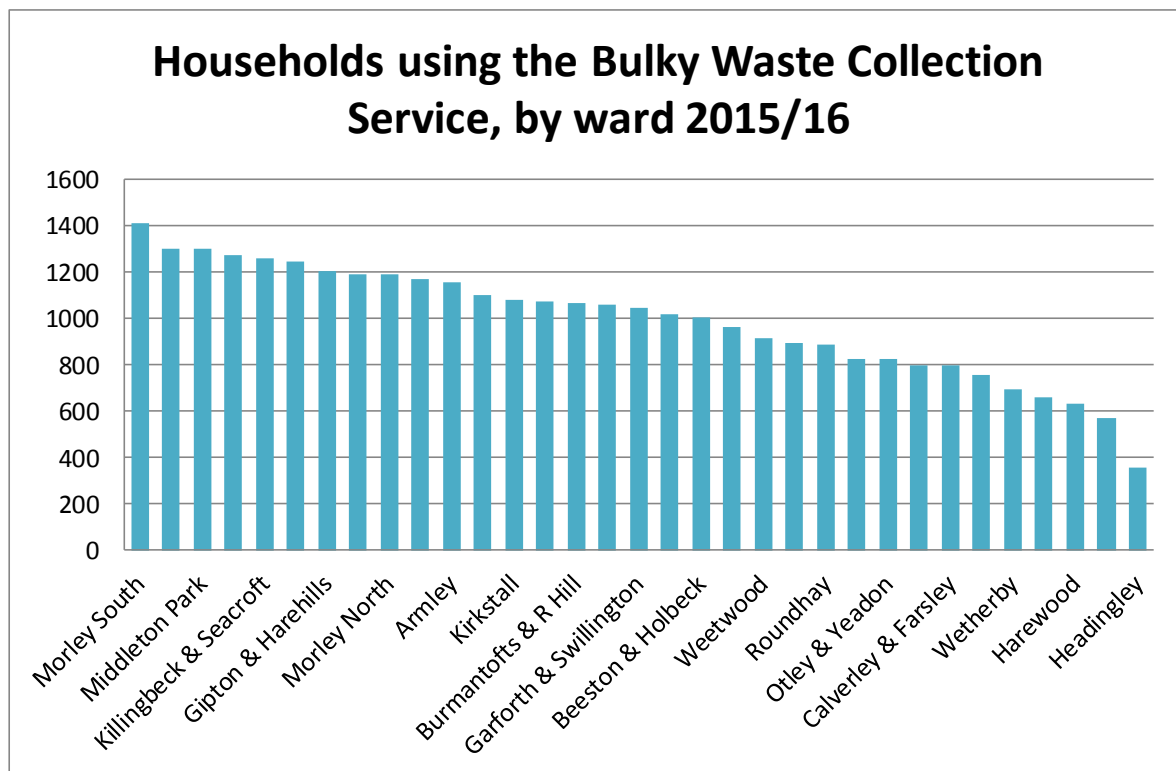
4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The decision to introduce a charge was made at Full Council in February 2017. In addition, a consultation exercise took place throughout March 2017, to which 928 responses were received. Of those respondents, 28% explicitly agreed to the introduction of a charge. The remainder of respondents were largely passing comment on the proposals, with a smaller proportion saying they disagreed with the charge. Comments were made to suggest clean-up costs would increase as flytipping was more likely and the belief that the service should remain free or free to some with residents already having paid for this service through their Council Tax.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The users of the current free of charge bulky item collection service have been analysed. Table 2.0 below shows the ward distribution of all requests for a collection of a bulky item in 2015/16. This has also been analysed according to the population aged over 65yrs by ward, car ownership and income deprivation in households. Generally, there is little correlation between the use of the bulky collection service and the proportion of households with no van, the ward population over 65 yrs old and income deprivation. As an example, Morley South is the heaviest user of the service, but does not have particularly low car ownership & high public sector tenancies; but does have relatively high owner occupancies and only average % population over 65yrs.

Table 2.0



There will be an arrangement during the transitional period of a charge being introduced that the service will respond to genuine cases of vulnerable households where there is safety concern and no other support available to remove items.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 In introducing a charge for bulky household waste, it is expected that more households will choose to contact third sector re-use organisations to remove this waste. These organisations will maximise the reuse of the items collected and therefore reduce the volume which is simply disposed of as waste of no value. The increased throughput of items through the third sector will help to sustain those organisations, as will the additional financial assistance through a proportion of the income generated being made available to that sector.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The proposal to introduce a charge of £20 is estimated to generate net additional income of £150k after a proportion of the income is used to support 3rd sector activity. This is consistent with the City Council's approved budget for 2017/18.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The Director Communities and Environment has authority to undertake this decision under the relevant scheme of delegation.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The consultation exercise in March showed concerns regarding an increase in flytipping as a result of the Council charging to collect items of bulky waste. Whilst this is untested in Leeds to date, the experience of other Councils shows this not to be the case. The possible explanations for this have been dealt with earlier in this report. However, if the experience in Leeds is for some reason different to elsewhere, then the additional capacity created in street cleansing teams as a result of the reduced workload from fewer collections could be directed to any additional flytipping removal work. The measurement and recording of flytipping levels will need to be robust and reliable.
- 4.6.2 The levels of demand for the service may dip below that required to generate the budget expectations of £150k for 17/18 onwards. The budget expectations have again been based on the experience from other Councils and there is no particular reason to expect Leeds will be significantly out of line with that. Ultimately, income levels will need to be monitored throughout the year to fully understand the actuals against the expectations.
- 4.6.3 More households will contact the third sector re-use organisations to pick up their bulky waste in preference to paying a charge through the route of a Council collection. There is a possibility that the increase in volume and activity will exceed the capacity of local reuse organisations. Also, householders could exaggerate the condition of the items to be collected in order to by-pass the Council charge and seek the assistance of the third sector instead. Should that prove to be the case, then the additional financial support available through the income generated could be used to ameliorate these potential scenarios. The exact nature and purpose of this support is an area which requires careful consideration with our local third sector organisations.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The introduction of a charge to collect items of bulky waste provides additional income to the Council and allows additional financial support to be given to local third sector organisations involved in reusing household items. The charge also directly furthers the Council's plans to increase recycling and re-use of goods as a result of the expectation that households will increase their use of the Household Waste Sort Sites across the city and contact third sector organisations to collect items. The expected reduction in demand for collections by the Council will free-up capacity to offset reductions in street cleansing resources in 17/18. Whilst not risk-free, there are a number of ways in which the Council can address any negative and unintended consequences of this charge being in place.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director Communities and Environment is requested to approve the introduction of a charge for bulky household waste collections at £20 per collection of up to four items.

7.0 Background documents

None.