

Council – 26 February 2015

Petition: Charging for the collection of garden waste

1. Summary

1.1. This report is in response a petition received in opposition to the draft budget proposal reference 80: charging for the collection of garden waste, as approved by Cabinet 29 October 2014 for public consultation.

1.2. The 1,800 signature petition, "Axe Labour's garden tax" was presented by Councillor Bird to the Council meeting on 12 January 2015. The petition was worded as follows:

"We support our local Conservative Campaign to axe the Garden Tax that Labour want to impose on us.

We already pay for garden waste collection through our Council Tax. Imposing an extra charge is unfair and wrong: the red tape to collect this charge will cost money, the tips are closing for an extra day and Labour have reduced the months when collection of the brown bin will take place. All of this will increase the likelihood of flytipping and recycling rates will surely reduce.

We demand Labour Axe the Garden Tax!"

1.3. The Council's petition scheme provides that:

'If a petition contains at least 1,500 signatures it will be debated at a meeting of the Council. This means that the issues raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting to which all Councillors can attend and speak. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. The petition organiser will be given 5 minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.

They may decide to take the action that the petition requests; not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to ask for further information. Where the issue is one where the Cabinet are required to make the final decision the Council will decide to make recommendations to the Cabinet. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will be published on our website.'

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the content of the petition be noted.
- 2.2. That Council notes the decision of Cabinet on 4 February 2015, in relation to changes to the draft budget and capital programme, to remove the original proposal of charging for the collection of garden waste.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Currently, the Council carries out a separate collection of garden waste during the summer months from circa 95,000 properties in the borough. Garden waste is placed in a 240 litre wheeled bin that is emptied on a fortnightly basis. No charge is made to residents for this service.
- 3.2 As part of the draft budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17 a proposal for the introduction of charges for the garden waste collection service was approved for consultation.
- 3.3. The estimated annual charge for this service was proposed to be £28 and residents would decide whether or not they wanted to opt in and pay in order to continue to receive the service.
- 3.5 Implementation of this proposal would have provided a revenue stream to support the ongoing provision of a garden waste collection service. The projected £310,000 annual income would be used to offset the costs of operating the service.
- 3.6 From the response to the Council's consultation on the draft revenue budget proposals, approved by Cabinet on 29 October 2014, it was clear that a large majority did not support the option of introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste.
- 3.7 Respondents' main concerns were around the perceived risk of increased fly tipping and a feeling that the service is already paid for via Council Tax. Over 70% of respondents said that they would not pay for the service. Such a low take-up would have had an impact on the viability of charging for the service
- 3.8 As a consequence, Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 4 February 2015 to withdraw this proposal.

Jamie Morris
Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services
16 February 2015