



Tuesday, 10 December 2024

Report of Councillor Rhys Baker
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Waste

Garden and Bulky Waste Collections - Change in Service Charge Proposal

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To highlight the financial impact of increasing the charges for garden waste and bulky waste collections, and to ask the Committee to consider whether these increases should be taken forward and included within the budget setting process.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Recommend to Cabinet an increase of £1 in respect of the garden waste and bulky waste charges for 2025/26.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Sustainable South Kesteven Effective council

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The cost of delivering the garden waste and bulky waste collection services rises year on year. This is because of inflation which affects the operating costs and includes fuel, materials and salaries. Without regular, incremental increases to the charges there is a risk that large and irregular increases may be required to ensure the income generated covers the operational delivery costs.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report, which invites the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider including increases in fees and charges for garden waste and bulky waste collection services as part of the upcoming budget setting process.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

Climate Change

- 1.3 These services offer residents an excellent way to responsibly dispose of their waste, yet offering the service to residents does result in carbon emissions from operating vehicles to collect material. The garden waste collection service plays a vital role in encouraging residents to recycle their garden waste. Any increase in price needs to be considered to ensure it does not act as a barrier to residents who may want to recycle this waste.
- 1.4 Similarly, the bulky waste service offers residents a convenient option to dispose of large household goods and other items. This can help to ensure that items, particularly electrical, comply with Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) disposal directives. It also enables residents to upgrade to more environmentally friendly appliances without worrying about how to dispose of existing ones.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager

2. Background to the Report

2.1. This report highlights the impact of increasing the charge for bulky waste collection and, separately, the impact of increasing the charge for garden waste collection. Both services incur a fee which ensures the cost of running the service is met by those who wish to use it, and not subsidised by residents who do not use the service. To ensure the charges continue to cover the delivery costs, it is important to consider the current financial situation and whether an increase in the service price is required.

Bulky Waste Collections

2.2. The bulky waste collection service is a statutory service that the council can charge residents to use (Environmental Protection Act, 1990). Currently, the council charges £21 for the first item and £11 for each subsequent item. Fridges and Freezers are charged at £21 per item and cannot be counted as the 'first item' to allow for the discounted additional item price. The service collects around 5,700 items per year.

2.3. The total operating costs for this service are around £88,160 per year and a fully subscribed service has a potential income of around £90,000 per year (2023/24 figures). This means that the charge for the service is only just covering the costs of running the service.

2.4. The operating costs (including fuel, salaries and equipment) increase each year in-line with inflation. If a fee increase isn't considered there is a possibility that the cost of running the service would not be covered by the income generated for the delivery of the service.

2.5. Analysis of the bulky waste collection data suggests that if there was a £1 increase on all bulky waste charges, an additional £6,100 in income could be raised.

2.6. If an additional £1 was placed on the fridge/freezer charge, this would generate an estimated additional £200 (based on collecting around 200 fridges per year). Table 1 outlines the current charges and the proposed charges.

Table 1: Current and Proposed Bulky Waste Collection Charges

	2024/25 (£)	2025/26 (£)
First Item	21	22
Additional Item	11	12
Fridge/Freezer	21	22

2.7. When compared to other Lincolnshire authorities, it is difficult to compare like for like as each authority has a slightly different pricing structure. Table 2 shows the pricing structures for bulky waste collections across the seven Lincolnshire authorities; each authority operates a slightly different charging mechanism, and this makes comparing costs difficult. **However, if a resident only has one item to dispose of, SKDC's price is one of the lowest.**

Table 2: Bulky Waste Collection Charges for Lincolnshire Authorities

Authority	First Item Cost (£)	Additional Items (£)	Comments
West Lindsey	34.30	4.50	Based on a point system, the £34.30 covers 6 points e.g. a three-piece suite is 3 points
NKDC	37.00	74.00	£37 covers up to 3 items and £74 covers up to 6
City of Lincoln	34.30	4.50	West Lindsey provides this service on behalf of City of Lincoln
SKDC	21.00	11.00	Higher price for first item to reflect the resource costs to get to the property
South Holland	15.00	25.00	Priced at £15 for 1 item, £25 for 2 and £30 for 3. Maximum of 3 items.
Boston	21.20	29.70	Priced at £21.20 for up to 2 items, £29.70 for 3 and £37.10 for up to 5. A white item is £31.80
East Lindsey	35.00	n/a	Cost covers up to 4 items

Garden Waste Collections

2.8. The garden waste collection service costs resubscribing residents £51 per year to empty their first bin and £42 per additional bin. In the first year, new customers pay £79 for the service (an additional £28 for the bin and £12 for delivery).

2.9. Currently, it is not a statutory requirement that councils offer a garden waste collection, and they are able to charge for this service if they provide it. However, under the 'Simpler Recycling' changes (Environment Act 2021), councils will be

mandated to provide this service by 31st March 2026, but they will still be able to charge for it.

- 2.10. The service is very popular and currently there are around 36,000 subscriptions. The service generates an income of around £1.8million and this income is used to fund the costs of running the service.
- 2.11. This report explores the financial impact of increasing the charge by £1 for the next three years. Table 3 outlines the cost of the service for the next three years under this proposal and Table 4 shows the estimated increase in income for a £1 year on year increase for 25/26, 26/27 and 27/28.

Table 3: Proposed service costs over the next three years

	2024/25 (£)	2025/26 (£)	2026/27 (£)	2027/28 (£)
First Bin	51	52	53	54
Second Bin	42	43	44	45

Table 4: Estimated income based on £1 year on year increase until 27/28

	2024/25 (current pricing)	2025/26 (£1 increase on 24/25)	2026/27 (£1 increase on 25/26)	2027/28 (£1 increase on 26/27)
Estimated Income (£)	1,842,076	1,880,138	1,918,200	1,956,262

- 2.12. Based on the current customer base, this increase would generate an additional £38,000 per year.
- 2.13. When compared to other Lincolnshire authorities (Table 3), SKDC has the second highest charge for the first bin and the third highest charge for additional bins. This reflects the different challenges and costs incurred by each council providing this service. East Lindsey, Boston, and SKDC are broadly aligned on first bin charges.

Table 3 Garden Waste Collection Charges for Lincolnshire Authorities

Authority	First Bin Cost (£)	Additional Bin Cost (£)	Comments
West Lindsey	44	44	£37 for supply and delivery of bin, increasing by £2 for 2025, operates March - November
NKDC	45	8	£41 charge to purchase the bin, year-round collection

City of Lincoln	39	15	£15 charge for bin delivery, year-round collection
SKDC	51	42	£40 charge for supply and delivery of bin, year-round service
South Holland	57	33	£17.50 for supply and delivery of the bin, year-round collections
Boston	50	30	£42.40 for supply and delivery of bin, collections April - November
East Lindsey	50	50	£27 for supply and delivery of bin, year-round collections

2.14. Home composting remains an option for residents who do not wish to make use of the garden waste collection service or who wish to compost a portion of their green waste. The Council provides further information on its webpages to support the uptake of composting: [Home composting | South Kesteven District Council](#)

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. A price increase may result in a lower uptake, which in turn may result in less income for the council. As a result, the bulky waste collection service, which only just covers its cost, risks the need for financial subsidy to continue running. This is typical for bulky waste collection services nationwide.
- 3.2. Failing to introduce an increase may mean that the income does not rise in-line with inflation and the services fail to cover their costs, creating additional financial strain. It may also mean that a larger increase is required later as the cost of the service catches-up with increasing operating costs over several years.
- 3.3. An additional consideration is the impact this may have on the Council's recycling rate. Garden waste is taken for recycling and if residents do not use the service, this waste stream may not be recycled, and this could impact the Council's ability to meet Lincolnshire County Council's recycling target of 50%.
- 3.4. The garden waste collection service is well received by residents and uptake of the service continues to increase. This indicates a good service which delivers value for money.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The other option is to do nothing and leave the 2025/26 charges at the same level as they were for 2024/25. There is a risk that this may result in a larger price rise in the future as the service operating costs continue to rise year on year in-line with inflation.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. This report asks the committee to consider the impact of the suggested price changes for garden waste and bulky waste collections and whether these increases should be taken forward and included within the budget setting process.
- 5.2. If the charges are increased there is a risk that uptake of these services will fall, and the income generated will not be enough to cover the operating costs. This is a notable risk for the bulky waste collection service, as it only just covers its running costs. This was, however, considered in detail by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in their recommendation to Cabinet.
- 5.3. However, if charges are not increased in-line with inflation there is also a risk that the income generated will not be enough to cover the operating costs. Small incremental increases to charges, as suggested within this report, are a good way to mitigate large and irregular increases.