

# Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 17 June 2021

## Garden Waste Registration 2021/22

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	25

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to:
- 1.1.1 Approve the extension of the mid-year registration window to run from the beginning of December until the end of May, with registrations made during this period processed in batches monthly as outlined in 4.5;
  - 1.1.2 Note that an update report on the performance of the expanded registration windows, the rate change and progress made towards further process and system developments will be reported to Committee in four cycles (31 March 2022);
  - 1.1.3 Approve the updated Garden Waste Collection Policy in Appendix 1; and
  - 1.1.4 Note the activities planned to further investigate system improvements and developments (including direct debit/recurring payment options) for future years.

#### Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Andy Williams, Waste and Cleansing Service Manager

E-mail: [andy.williams@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:andy.williams@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 469 5660

## Garden Waste Registration 2021/22

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 This report outlines changes proposed to the garden waste registration process for the upcoming collection year running, November 2021 until November 2022 following the approval at Full Council in February 2021 to increase the charge to £35 per permit as part of the budget setting process.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 An annual charge for the collection of garden waste was introduced in October 2018. As part of this introduction, two windows for registration (a main one in summer/early autumn and then a shorter window (in February) were provided for residents who wanted to join (and then remain) in receipt of the service. Outside of these windows it was not possible to join the service.
- 3.2 The service saw sign-up levels in the first year reach 68,800 households for 74,900 bins, exceeding the predictions within the business case to introduce the charge by 17,800 bins. Over the following two years sign up levels continued to increase and currently sit at 74,500 households for 82,400 bins.
- 3.3 Whilst these sign-up levels are positive, it is acknowledged that the sign-up windows are restrictive and causes frustration for residents who miss them. This has resulted in complaints about the inability to join the service.
- 3.4 The chargeable garden waste service was introduced following the approval at Full Council on February 2018. Due to the timescales for introduction, interim systems and processes were developed ahead of the first registration window opening in May 2018.
- 3.5 Following implementation, the provider of the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (the system used to provide the garden waste registration process and online form), was changed and the transition to the new system was focused on like-for-like processes. This meant that further development of the systems involved in the registration process had to be deferred.
- 3.6 The garden waste registration process involves a number of complex processes that need to take place before the registration can be fully processed and added to

a route before the service commences. These processes affect the timescales for customers between registering for the service and collections commencing.

- 3.7 These processes include:
- 3.7.1 Confirming exemption eligibility against Council Tax records;
  - 3.7.2 Confirming property status against the Corporate Address Gazetteer to confirm if it is residential or commercial;
  - 3.7.3 Commercial properties are further assessed to identify if these are approved commercials (e.g. bowling clubs, lawn tennis courts, croquet clubs, places of worship etc); and
  - 3.7.4 Agreeing commercial waste transfers notes, where required.
- 3.8 Following these, the registrations are exported from the CRM system, data is manipulated and inputted into the Waste and Cleansing's asset management and routing systems, with collection days and routes revised to align to the new registered properties.
- 3.9 The service has worked with Customer Digital Enablement Programme, CGI and the CRM supplier to explore fully integrated systems and direct debit solutions that would automate the processes involved in order to remove the manual steps and ultimately reduce the timescales required. The outcome of this has highlighted some system restrictions that would not allow full integration, and the remaining elements have been deemed cost prohibitive when considered against the benefits they would achieve.
- 3.10 In February 2021, the Council agreed to revise the charge to £35 per bin as part of the budget proposals and achieve full cost recovery. Benchmarking against other Scottish Local Authorities who charge for this service has shown that the charge of £35 is consistent with the services offered by them.
- 3.11 As part of this revised charge, an investment in administration support and system development was included to allow the mid-year sign-up window to be greatly expanded in order to increase flexibility and address the complaints. This report outlines the changes proposed to achieve this.

## **4. Main report**

---

### **Main Registration Window**

- 4.1 The main registration window will take place in Summer 2021 as per the current process. This will see the registration window open between 22 July 2021 and 1 September 2021, with collections commencing from 8 November 2021.
- 4.2 A comprehensive marketing campaign will support the registration period for the new collection year and will advise of the change of rate. This approach will also include emailing current customers who registered with an email address, or sending letters to those without (or where an email address has failed); contacting

customers who have registered a note of interest; radio adverts; social media adverts; lamp post wraps; and posters.

- 4.3 The communication around exemption eligibility will also be reviewed to further highlight this to those who may be able to receive this.

#### **Mid-year Registration Window**

- 4.4 Currently the mid-year registration window runs for two weeks in February. It is proposed to increase this window to six months, opening at the beginning of December and closing at the end of May.
- 4.5 Registrations would be processed in monthly batches, with the processing of each batch taking a month to complete before the permit can be sent and the collections commence. As an example, this would mean those registering in December would be processed and added to routes in January. Permits would be sent out at the end of January and the service would commence early February. Those registering in January would be added to routes in February and service would commence early March and so on.
- 4.6 To allow the processing, routing and permit mailing activities to be completed in a month, a number of data quality checks will take place during the registration window. This includes validating exemption claims, assessing registration details along with other checks required before the subscription is progressed.
- 4.7 Sign up levels each week will be monitored and should they be within a small, manageable, level to manually process and track progression at a more frequent basis, this will take place (for example, if in April sign up levels include a handful of customers on a weekly basis, the service would look to start the routing of these sooner, allowing for the permit to be sent out quicker). This will be considered for development, with associated timescales, based on lessons learnt during the early months of the wider mid-year window.
- 4.8 The service is also in discussions with Customer and Digital Services (ICT), CGI and the CRM provider on the feasibility and costs to identify and flag customers who register on a street that is already being serviced. If this can be done, and the practicality of separating the processing path is suitable, the service would look to reduce the time between registration and commencement where other residents are already receiving this service. Until this can be confirmed, these will be processed as outlined above in 4.4 to 4.6.
- 4.9 Communication around this mid-year window will be focused to the Council's garden waste web page, with some additional communications at the point the window first opens. Ahead of the window closing the wording of the communications will be revised to ensure that it is clear for customers that registrations would be for the current collection year and when the registration period for the new collection year will open. This is to reduce the risk of customers becoming confused and registering for the wrong period unknowingly.

- 4.10 Consideration was given to having the registration window operate year round, however this has been discounted due to the number of complex tasks involved in processing the subscriptions and developing new collection routes.
- 4.11 Registration will continue to be limited to the two sign up windows each collection year, however the impact of this on customers who miss the main registration period is considered to be minimal as the period between November and February is outside the growing season. In addition garden waste collections cease for four weeks over the festive period.

#### **Changes for 2021/22 collection year**

- 4.12 In order to achieve the increased mid-year window, and continue to progress process and system improvements, a dedicated team of one officer and two assistants have been put in place.
- 4.13 A range of key processes linked to the garden waste registration and subscription management have been reviewed and revised to support the changes proposed in this report, and this review of processes will continue ahead of the main registration and mid-year registration windows. This review is also incorporating appropriate lessons learned from the current and previous years of the service.
- 4.14 Customers will continue to be encouraged to sign up during the main registration window as this will allow continuation of the service for current customers, but also minimise the risk of routing changes being required during the year if the numbers registering during the mid-year window cause imbalanced collection days that cannot be contained within collection resources.
- 4.15 Policy and Sustainability Committee on 10 June 2021 noted that it was not intended that a cash payment service will be reintroduced when local offices reopen. This means that all registrations must be completed using a credit/debit card, unless applying for an exemption.
- 4.16 The Council encourages customers to register online, and last year over 90% of customers registered via the webform with the remaining registering over the phone. It is expected that the impact of this proposed change on garden waste customers will be minimal, with no cash being accepted as payment last year but number of garden waste subscribers increased. However, to support this change, the service will remind customers again of the registration methods open to them and that registrations can be made on behalf of someone else such as friend, neighbour or family member if they are unable or unwilling to pay by card themselves.
- 4.17 Whilst this report has focused on the changes to the registration process and widening the window it should be noted that the service has also reflected on lessons learnt for the management of the subscriptions and changes will be made in the upcoming year, for example, changes to reduce the number of replacement permits requested.

## **Changes for future years**

- 4.18 Over 2021/22, the service will continue investigating alternative options for either partial or full system integration within an acceptable cost/benefit bracket; this may be through development of current systems or the procurement of an alternative solution. At the same time as this, the manual processes will keep being refined and adapted where possible to streamline the process and improve the experience for customers
- 4.19 The service will continue to work with corporate colleagues, ICT, CGI and system providers on investigating suitable options to put a direct debit or recurring payment solution in place removing the need for customers to reregister each year. This is likely to be using the corporate solution being developed as a stand-alone option is cost prohibitive. It should be noted that there is currently no corporate direct debit solution and where direct debits are in place within the Council these are through the service-specific systems, for example Council Tax is through the housing system.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 Arrangements for the main registration window for the 2021/22 collection year, taking place between 22 July 2021 and 1 September 2021, will be finalised and supported by a comprehensive marketing campaign promoting the sign-up windows and the change in rate.
- 5.2 If approved, arrangements for the mid-year registration window will be finalised ahead of the window opening in December 2021.
- 5.3 An update report on the performance of the expanded registration windows, the rate change and progress made towards further process and system improvements will be reported to committee in four cycles (31 March 2022).
- 5.4 The success of the changes and improvements made will continue to be monitored throughout the year with refinement and further improvements identified and implemented where possible. This will include closely monitoring the impact on collection routes and the risk of having imbalanced collection days that require a change in day for customers during the year. As the sign up levels during the wider mid-year window are yet unknown the full impact is unclear, it is however expected to be minimal if properties signing up throughout the year are spread across the city, whereas there is likely to be a greater risk where new build estates open.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 The financial impact, both in terms of implementing the changes proposed in this report to expand the mid-year sign up window and the income expected from this increased opportunity for residents to register for the service, were factored into the

calculations for the full cost recovery proposal as part of the budget setting process, and as such there is no additional financial impact caused by this report.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 The proposed changes to the registration process reflect customer demand for a more flexible process.
- 7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the proposal to increase the charge to £35 per permit. The impact of this wider window will have a positive impact on residents who miss the main window, choose not to sign up in the main window or move into Edinburgh/a property with a garden during the year.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

- 8.1 [Revenue Budget 2021/26](#) Full Council, 18 February 2021

## **9. Appendices**

---

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Garden Waste Collection Policy Updated June 2021.

### Garden Waste Collection Policy Updated June 2021

*Yellow highlights reflect additions made.*

#### Provision of Garden Waste Collection

- Our aim is to make the garden waste collection service available to as many households as is practicable, provided we are able to operate an efficient collection route and that it is operationally feasible to provide the service.
- This is not a statutory service; there is an annual charge for providing this service.
- The charge does not include the cost of composting the material collected.
- The service will operate every two weeks, and the collection dates will be advertised on our website. The service will cease for a period of 4 weeks (i.e. two collection cycles) in winter.
- A variation of the service is available on defined streets in the Colinton area. This service is provided by Tiphereth/Colinton Community Compost. Residents in those streets who register to receive a garden waste collection will receive the sack based service as provided by Tiphereth, and not the standard brown bin service provided by the Council.

#### Eligibility

- This service is provided for the collection of household waste.
- The Council does not operate a commercial waste collection service and commercial premises are not eligible to receive the service. Separate arrangements for bowling, lawn tennis and some other clubs are in place.
- Ambassadorial and other embassy premises may be eligible to receive the service but will be required to register and pay for it in the normal way.
- Places of worship premises may be eligible to receive the service but will be required to register and pay for it in the normal way.
- Council premises who request the service will be able to do so but must register and pay for the service.
- Organisations who operate community gardens on Council premises may receive the service but must arrange this through the Council service (e.g. libraries, housing, etc.) who are responsible for that land, and they will be required to pay for the service.

#### Exemptions from Payment

- Some people do not have to pay to use the garden waste service, however they must still register to use the service using either the web form or one of the other registration routes.
- People who need to register for the service but do not have to pay for it are:
- People who are in receipt of the welfare benefit Council Tax Reduction (previously called Council Tax Benefit)
- People who live in a household where someone is registered with Council Tax as being Severely Mentally Impaired
- People who receive the Council's Garden Aid service AND are also exempt from paying for it.

## Paying for the service

- The annual charge covers a full 12 month period which runs from **November** to **November**. Collections will be suspended for a 4 week period (2 collections) in winter.
- The registration period for the year will take place in **late July to early September**. If you subsequently join the service during a later registration period, you will still be required to pay the full annual charge.
- Permits are issued prior to the advertised service commencement date. If you have not received your permit please notify us within 28 days of the advertised service commencement date. **Failure to do this may result in requests for replacement permit being rejected.**
- You may register and pay for the service on behalf of someone else, e.g. a relative, **neighbour or friend**.
- We are not able to accept householders who wish to join the service outwith a defined registration period.
- The charge will apply per bin – you may sign up more than one bin. We will only empty bins which carry the relevant sticker to show that they have been registered.
- The chargeable service may be transferred to a new property subject to the new property being eligible to receive the service. It will be the responsibility of the customer to provide a minimum of six weeks notice of the change; the customer will be responsible for transferring the bin to the new location.
- If your new property does not receive the service (or is outwith the Council boundary) please leave the bin at the current address so that the new residents can use it for the remaining period.
- If you wish to share a bin with a neighbour, or neighbours, only one person should sign up to the scheme and make payment, and ensure that the bin is properly presented on the correct days.
- The bin will be registered to that property (e.g. their flat) and all correspondence, enquiries or complaints relating to the service must be directed through that person.
- There is no discount for the smaller size bin.
- Residents that qualify under the Council Tax Reduction scheme (previously Council Tax benefit), or where someone at the address is registered as severely mentally impaired, will be exempt from paying for the service.

[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20127/benefits\\_and\\_grants/43/claim\\_a\\_council\\_tax\\_reduction](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20127/benefits_and_grants/43/claim_a_council_tax_reduction)

- **If you change your mind, you may cancel the registration at any time. If you cancel within 14 days of registration you will receive a full refund. Please note that if you cancel after 14 days of registration you will not receive a refund.**

## Use of the service

- It is important that your brown bin is only used to collect the correct materials as outlined below. All materials must be loose, and not in a bag. We do not accept any kind of bag or liner in the brown bin.
- Bins which contain other materials will not be collected and we will not issue refunds for these collections

- You must present your bin by 6AM on the day of collection and remove it as soon as possible after collection.
- The bin must be presented at the kerbside outwith your property (except where an assisted collection has been arranged) with the lid fully closed, and in line with our normal policy on the Presentation of Waste.
- Our normal Assisted Collection Policy will apply to this service.
- All bins must display the garden waste collection scheme sticker for the appropriate year. **Bins without a valid sticker displayed will not be uplifted.**
- Where the service is provided to a Council building or land, (e.g. a community garden), or to another organisation, such as a bowling club, etc, it is the sole responsibility of the group responsible to arrange for the bin(s) to be presented for collection and then removed from the street on the correct days.
- Should this prove to cause conflict with the Council's policies on the presentation of waste (e.g. if this means that bins are left out in an area where the other premises are commercial) it may be necessary to review or remove the service.

### **Collection of garden waste**

Collections will take place from 6am on the collection day.

### **Failed collections**

- Collection crews will record instances where bins are not presented or where the contents are contaminated with other types of waste or are too heavy to lift. Those bins will not be uplifted, and no refund will be issued.
- You should remove any contaminants or reduce the weight of the bin, and present the bin again by 6 AM on the next collection date.
- We regret that we are not able to collect garden waste when the contents are frozen due to weather conditions. We will collect on the next scheduled collection; we will not issue a refund in these circumstances.
- Where we are not able to collect your bin due to circumstances outwith our control (such as roadworks or no access) crews will record this and we will seek to return as soon as possible. We will not issue a refund.
- Where we are not able to collect your bin due to circumstances within our control (such as vehicle failure) crews will record this and we will return to collect it within two working days.
- Where we fail to collect your bin as a result of our error, we will return to collect it within two working days of being notified. (Please refer to the operational days for the service).

### **Materials accepted in brown bins**

You can put these in your brown bin:

- Flowers, plants and weeds
- Grass cuttings and leaves
- Hedge clippings, twigs and small branches
- Christmas trees (all decorations must be removed; Christmas trees may also be presented beside the bin in January only; (please cut trees in half)

You can't put these in your brown bin:

- Food
- Animal waste and bedding
- Plant pots
- Soil and turf
- ANY TYPE OF BAG (including bags labelled compostable, degradable or biodegradable)