



**EXTRAORDINARY CABINET: 18 July 2018**

**COUNCIL: 18 July 2018**

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**Report of: Director of Leisure and Environment**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor K Wilkie**

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**SUBJECT: RECYCLING UPDATE**

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Wards affected: Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update Members on the changes to the recycling and garden waste service to improve the future efficiency of the service.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXTRAORDINARY CABINET**

2.1 That Members note that the provision of free brown bins to those residents that are re-subscribing to the garden waste service, as outlined in section 5.8 ceased on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and that any brown bins ordered from this date incur a charge of £25.

2.2 That Members note that the payment scheme outlined in the policy options report, approved by Council in December 2017 applies to all bins, and all households except in exceptional circumstances and for those properties that require an additional grey bin for medical waste as outlined in 5.17.

2.3 That subject to approval of budget by Council the deadline of 16 July be extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to enable those residents who are using blue boxes (or other containers) for paper and cardboard to order a green bin, free of charge as outlined in 5.12 and 5.15.

2.4 That the use of blue boxes (or other containers) for glass, cans and plastic bottles be withdrawn by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018, except for at those properties outlined in section 5.22, and that either:

- a) Blue wheeled bins are issued at a charge of £25 in line with the existing policy as outlined in 5.17, or

- b) Members consider an alternative option outlined in 5.28 to provide blue bins free of charge to those residents using blue boxes or other containers or previously had a box and if choosing this option approve:
  - An exemption to Contract Procedure Rules Number 7, as the contract is expected to exceed £50,000 which would normally require a competitive tender process. This will enable the current supplier of bins to be used to supply the green and blue bins as outlined at 5.28 and request that Council approve the following:
    - That funding of £200,000 be approved from capital receipts to fund blue and green bins to those properties that are using boxes, other containers or previously had a box until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 as outlined in section 5.15, 5.26 and 5.28;
    - That residents who have purchased a blue bin since 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 to replace the use of a blue box or other containers as outlined in 5.22 be refunded.

2.5 That subject to the approval of budget by Council delegated authority be given to the Director of Leisure and Environment in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder to take all necessary steps to implement 2.3 and 2.4 above.

2.6 That this report is not appropriate for call in due to this matter being one where urgent action is required in order to provide a clear notification to residents of service changes resolving concerns.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

3.1 That funding for the changes to the service as agreed by Extraordinary Cabinet as circulated at the meeting be approved on the following basis:

- That funding of £200,000 be approved from capital receipts to fund blue and green bins to those properties that are using boxes, other containers or previously had a box until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 as outlined in section 5.15, 5.26 and 5.28;
- That residents who have purchased a blue bin since 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 to replace the use of a blue box or other containers as outlined in 5.22 be refunded.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 The current waste service collects, residual waste, garden waste and recycling in two streams (paper/cardboard and glass/cans/plastic bottles) and is operated on an alternative weekly basis using a variety of containers. This is summarised in the table below.

Waste Material	Container Type	Charge	Changes
Residual Waste	Grey Bin (small	2014 – Charge of	No Change,

	number of properties on black bags)	£23 for replacement bins 2017 – charge of £25 for all bins except medical waste	however black bag properties will be reviewed as part of route optimisation.
Glass/Cans and Plastic Bottles	Blue Bin or box	2014 – Charge of £23 for replacement bins 2017 – charge of £25 for all bins except medical waste	Blue boxes to be removed except for those properties that meet criteria.
Paper and Cardboard	Blue Bags	No Charge	Blue bags removed and replaced with a green bin except for those properties that meet criteria.
Garden waste	Green Bin	2014 – Charge of £23 for replacement bins 2017 – charge of £25 for all bins except medical waste	Brown Bin introduced for collection of garden waste.

- 4.2 In February 2018, Council resolved that a brown bin be introduced, for use by those residents that re-subscribed to the garden waste service in 2018, allowing for the existing green bin to be reutilised to collect paper and cardboard removing the use of blue bags, except for those properties that are unable to accommodate a green bin due to its design or where they are serviced by a vehicle that is not equipped with the necessary lifting equipment.
- 4.3 In 2013, Council approved the introduction of blue bins to replace the blue boxes except where residents chose to retain a blue box for glass/cans/plastic bottles and subsequently, in 2014 approved the introduction of a charging scheme of £23 for replacement bins.
- 4.4 In 2016, Council approved the introduction of charging for garden waste and agreed an income target of £500,000 in 2017/18 and an additional £100,000 of efficiencies in 2018/19, beyond the first year of charging.

## 5.0 CURRENT POSITION

### Garden Waste Composting Service – Brown Bins

- 5.1 The green bin scheme was first introduced in 2004, free of charge, for the collection of garden waste. Not all residents could participate in the scheme as some properties within the Borough do not have gardens, and therefore, these properties did not receive a green bin.

- 5.2 In 2016, as part of the policy options process and following the notification by Lancashire County Council that the cost share agreement would not be extended, charging was approved, and introduced for the garden waste service on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Residents were able to sign up from 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and over 22,000 subscriptions were received which generated over £700,000 over a 12 month period, exceeding the agreed £500,000 income target. This income target was subsequently revised and a new net income target of £640,000 (allowing for costs of collection) was agreed by Council in October 2017. In addition, to implementing a charge and achieving the new revised income target an additional £100,000 of efficiencies in 2018/19 were agreed as a policy option in October 2016, beyond the first year of charging.
- 5.3 It was envisaged that the £100,000 would be generated by efficiencies, including from a 'round review', and accordingly, in a report to Council in October 2017, Members were advised that the use of route optimisation technology was being implemented in the refuse and recycling function to ensure services were delivered with maximum efficiency.
- 5.4 To maximise the efficiencies it was regarded as essential to enforce the use of bins across all services in order to standardise waste and recycling presentation and maximise efficiency prior to the construction of new rounds, to meet the savings target previously agreed by Council. The change has the benefit of maximising capacity for residents to recycle, improves efficiency in collections, and also addresses health and safety concerns within the service.
- 5.5 The relaunch of the garden waste service in 2018 took place on 12<sup>th</sup> March and initially, residents were encouraged to sign up online. It was agreed by Council, in February 2018, that residents who re-subscribed to the service in 2018, would receive a brown bin free of charge or more if they purchased more green bins the previous year to enable the green bins to be reutilised for the collection of paper and cardboard and cease using the blue bags. To promote the service a range of methods were used, including enclosing a leaflet with the council tax notification, advertising at the concourse centre, a series of press releases, updating the website, use of social media such as Twitter and a leaflet delivered to every household to explain the changes to the service. The telephone subscriptions were later launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.
- 5.6 The current subscriptions for 2018, to the garden waste service are already over 21,000 and over 22,500 brown bins have been distributed to residents, of which at the time of writing the report 1,500 have been purchased as part of a new subscription or additional bins from those purchased in the previous year, generating around an additional £40,000.
- 5.7 Of the subscriptions received so far, 17,950 subscriptions were received online and 3,409 taken over the telephone. To improve the service from the previous year and reduce administration costs, the process of receiving the subscription pack was automated electronically when customers provided an email address, this in turn has generated a saving of approximately £6,460 in postage alone. In addition, printing costs have been reduced and the removal of the subscription sticker for the bin has saved over £1,000.

- 5.8 Since the launch of the changes on 12<sup>th</sup> March those residents that have received their brown bins have switched and started officially using them from 4<sup>th</sup> June. Due to the high demand in subscriptions, the deadline for accessing free brown bins was extended until 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018. From 16<sup>th</sup> July, all brown bins issued, except in exceptional circumstances as determined by the Director of Leisure and Environment in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, will incur a charge of £25.

### **Paper and Cardboard Recycling Service – Green Bins**

- 5.9 In 2017, over 22,000 residents used the chargeable garden waste service. This meant that many properties, who chose not to access the garden waste service were left with a redundant green bin. With the introduction of a new brown bin for garden waste, only to those residents that chose to re-subscribe, this allowed for the reutilisation of the green bins for the collection of paper and cardboard and the removal of the blue bag system, except for those properties that are unable to accommodate a wheeled bin due to their design or where the property is serviced by a vehicle not fitted with the necessary lifting equipment.
- 5.10 It was estimated at the time that the number of properties that would require a green bin, free of charge, would be low due to the low number of properties without gardens. These properties did not receive a green bin at the time when garden waste was introduced and the free bin offer was made. Since 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2,500 green bins have been requested. Included in this figure is a number of requests that were received from residents who despite already having received a free green bin, first time round, requested a new one for paper and cardboard, these requests have been rejected and bins have not been delivered. If these bins are damaged or residents require a new bin these are chargeable under the current policy.
- 5.11 Since the change was announced in March 2018, over 250 requests have been received for green bins containing garden waste to be emptied to enable residents to now use it for paper and cardboard. Many of these requests have been actioned.
- 5.12 The use of green bins for paper and cardboard was implemented on 4<sup>th</sup> June and those residents who have received them have started to present them containing cardboard and paper. Some residents are still awaiting delivery of the green bin and in the meantime are continuing to use the blue bags. Due to the high demand and number of requests received the deadline for accessing a free green bin was extended along with the brown bins until 16<sup>th</sup> July.
- 5.13 Since this switch took place in June, feedback received from both residents and staff has confirmed that the system is much improved, with the bins being more convenient for residents and offering far more capacity, whilst the staff have reported that the system is easier, more efficient and the streets are a lot cleaner with the material being contained.
- 5.14 Residents that had more than one green bin for garden waste can return their unwanted bins to the Council and are being advised to leave them visible and in an accessible place so that they can be collected. Over the next few months

these bins will be collected and if suitable, cleaned and returned to stock. Any bins that are unable to be returned to stock will be recycled.

- 5.15 The participation survey undertaken in June 2018 (see 5.24) has revealed that many residents are presenting paper and cardboard in a blue box having retained it when blue bins were introduced. It is recommended that the deadline for ordering a green bin, free of charge be extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to enable those residents that are using boxes and other containers to obtain the correct bin and for the use of bags and boxes or other containers to be withdrawn, except in circumstances where properties meet the criteria for not accommodating a wheeled bin. In these circumstances a blue bag should be used. The provision of a free bin does not apply new properties ordering their first set of bins or any replacement bins, these will incur a charge in line with current policy.

### **Glass/Cans/Plastic Bottles Recycling Service – Blue Bins**

- 5.16 In 2005, the Council introduced the recycling of glass/cans/plastic bottles using a blue box. The scheme was successful but there were issues with restricted volume of material presented by households, manual handling related to the lifting of the boxes by the collection teams, noise due to using a 'slave' bin system and productivity.
- 5.17 To overcome these issues as part of the budget setting process, Council in February 2013, approved the use of blue bins for the collection of glass, cans and plastic bottles. Whilst, at the time residents were given a choice to retain the blue box, they were encouraged to change to a bin and advised that blue boxes would no longer be issued and that if their box was damaged or went missing at a later date the box would be replaced with a bin. Residents were also advised that only one box would be collected and that no other containers could be used. At the time bins were issued free of charge, this however, subsequently changed when charges for replacement bins was introduced in 2014. Since this time, residents who have required a replacement blue bin have incurred a charge of £23, except in exceptional circumstances. Where it was possible to repair a bin (lids and wheels) this would have been done free of charge. In December 2017, as part of the policy options process and following consultation, this charge was revised to £25 and extended under delegation to cover all bins provided to all households except in exceptional circumstances and for those used for medical waste where a second grey bin is provided, free of charge. Exceptional circumstances would usually include those bins that have fallen into the back of the vehicle whilst being emptied. No concessions are allowed and where a report is received that a bin has allegedly been damaged by the staff, these will only if replaced free of charge if evidence can be provided of the staff causing the damage or the staff reporting the damage themselves. Damaged to bins is considered general wear and tear and due to difficulties in obtaining parts for the large variety of bins in use across the Borough damaged bins are also chargeable.
- 5.18 The change to bins improved the recycling rate by offering additional storage capacity, improved health and safety conditions for the collection operatives (noise and manual handling issues) and allowed a more efficient collection process through the change from kerbside collection vehicles to a more traditional vehicle with compaction. An added benefit of the change from box to

wheeled bin service was that the amount of litter generated on collection day reduced through improved presentation.

- 5.19 In 2013, 48,000 blue bins were purchased and rolled out at a cost of approximately £860,000. The estimated initial take up of bins was approximately 30,000. This figure was reported in a press release in 2014 and is the last known quantity reported. Based on a household figure of 48,000, minus the farms and communal sites, it was estimated that there could be anywhere up to 15,000 properties that still have blue boxes. Providing this number of households with free blue bins would have required further significant capital investment as the original stock has been used up since 2013 to replace bins or provide bins to new properties.
- 5.20 Since 2014, many residents who retained their blue box have mislaid it and rather than opting to purchase a blue bin have implemented their own system, as shown in the photographs below. This has resulted in various different types of containers being visible on collection day, presenting a health and safety risk to the staff. Residents are also presenting multiple containers, adding additional time to complete the rounds. This results in long hours, excess overtime and an additional member of staff being needed on these rounds. There are also many instances where properties have a blue bin and are presenting cardboard and paper in the blue box as previously mentioned at 5.15.



- 5.21 There are many advantages of using a bin including improvements to the service for residents making it simpler, whilst maximising their opportunities to recycle more by providing greater capacity, helping to increase the rate of recycling towards the 50% target. Using a bin also more effectively contains the waste, reducing the need to deploy additional resources e.g. street cleansing service to collect the scattered litter and it makes the operation much quicker, safer and more efficient. Where residents have raised concerns about having a bin due to the small amounts of waste that they are presenting a bin can still be used and presented less often or there are opportunities to share with a neighbour, if this is possible. Where residents are unable to accommodate a bin due to the design of the property as determined by officers, a blue box will be able to be used.
- 5.22 Having considered existing policies and operational practises, previous changes to the recycling service and the free bin offer and recent changes to the garden waste service approved by Council in February 2018 and the need to make efficiencies of £100,000 across the waste service, using available delegations it was proposed that a more efficient, safer operational practise be adopted and steps were taken to move the remaining residents (except for those that are

unable to have a wheeled bin due to the design of their property or due to the vehicle that they are serviced by not having the necessary lifting equipment) from a blue box to a blue bin, whilst continuing to apply the existing charging policy operated since its introduction in 2014. Since this time 401 blue bins have been purchased, although this figure is likely to change. Following a high number of enquiries received the deadline to request a blue bin was extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018.

- 5.23 It was considered beneficial that the blue box change took effect at the same time as the other changes to the service involving the switch between the brown and green bins to ensure that efficiencies were maximised and that the round review could be completed within the timescales set.

### **Participation Survey**

- 5.24 To obtain a more accurate figure of how many boxes are in use across the Borough, a participation survey was undertaken over a fortnight period between Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June and Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. This involved a member of staff driving the round and recording those properties that had presented glass/cans/plastic bottles in either a blue box or their own containers.
- 5.25 It quickly became apparent during the survey that many residents are also using blue boxes for paper and cardboard and these properties were also noted.
- 5.26 During this two week period a total of approximately 4,000 properties were recorded as having presented glass/cans/plastic bottles or paper and cardboard in a box or similar type of container. The number of households recorded gives a more accurate figure to that originally estimated, however, it is likely that the figure will be much higher due to the fact that not all properties present waste on every collection and residents may have stopped participating when they lost their blue box and this has been accounted for in the costings.
- 5.27 The deadline for residents to order a blue bin to replace their blue box has been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018. These bins are currently chargeable in line with existing policy.
- 5.28 Should Members wish to change the existing policies to take account of recent feedback from residents and consider offering those residents who have blue boxes, other containers or previously had a box a free blue wheeled bin, the following should be taken into consideration:
- The charge for blue bins has been in operation since 2014.
  - Since 12 March 2018, when the service change was introduced, at the date of writing this report 401 blue bins have been purchased by residents at a cost of £25.00 generating an additional £10,025.
  - If blue bins are to be provided free of charge to residents who are currently using a blue box (or similar container) for glass, cans and plastic bottles then the Council would reasonably be expected to reimburse those residents who, at the request of the Council, have already purchased blue bins, since being notified of the service change on 12<sup>th</sup> March. Moreover, any move to reimburse could set an expectation for future changes to



service requirements and may lead to complaints from residents who have previously purchased a bin, for the fee they have paid to be reimbursed.

- That free bins are not offered to new properties or to replace an existing bin.
- The time to introduce these containers will extend the project until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 and may impact on the ongoing work around route optimisation and the saving target previously agreed.
- Extending the project and making further changes may give rise to further complaints.
- The cost of providing the properties identified through the participation survey with free green and blue bins, communicating the changes in addition to handling calls is estimated to be up to £200,000, although the exact cost will depend on take up which cannot be known at this time. This is based on the cost per bin, recently obtained during a recent tender exercise through the Yorkshire Purchasing Order Framework.
- If green and blue bins are issued, free of charge until the end of October to those residents that are using blue boxes (or other similar containers) it is recommended that Council approve an exemption to Contract Procedure Rules Number 7, as the contract is expected to exceed £50,000 which would normally require a competitive tender process. This will enable the same supplier to be used who met the value for money criteria during a tender exercise in March 2018 for brown and green bins. This will also avoid any further delays in delivering this project.
- The use of blue bags and blue boxes would cease on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 except for those properties that cannot accommodate a wheeled bin due to the reasons outlined in 5.22.
- The free bin offer is for a limited time period only and green and blue bins will be chargeable to all households from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018.

5.29 Members should also consider that there are a number of other key initiatives including the Skelmersdale Vision, Leisure Centre Strategy and Development Company that will be reported to Council in the forthcoming months that will require significant levels of investment. In addition the Council needs to generate estimated additional income and savings of £1.5m to £2.0m per year by 2020/21. Consequently careful consideration needs to be given to the priorities of different schemes, and allocating funding to provide free green and blue wheeled bins will make it more difficult to deliver on these other initiatives.

5.30 It is recommendation that Cabinet consider the options outlined in 5.27 and 5.28 above.

## **6.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

6.1 The participation survey carried out has enable us to identify many of those households still using boxes for either cardboard and paper or glass/cans and plastic bottles. A letter specifically targeting these residents to explain the changes, could provide much of the information required and prevent residents contacting the Customer Services Team.

6.2 To deliver the bins it will be necessary to hire three vehicles and have three teams of staff delivering bins during a 6-8 week period. If delivery of the bins to the Council is delayed for any reason, by the supplier it will take longer to

implement the changes which may give rise to increased enquiries to customer services.

- 6.3 The website will need updating and a number of press releases will need to be issued to ensure that residents are informed of the change. A service delivery document should also be produced to detail all the rules and criteria of the refuse and recycling service.
- 6.4 Training will be necessary for the Customer Services Team and Street Scene Staff through the use of scripts, verbal updates and frequently asked questions. Additional agency workers will need to be employed in Customer Services, to support the increase in calls during the first few months of the green and blue bin scheme being launched.
- 6.5 The delivery of green and blue bins would be co-ordinated by the Street Scene Services admin team. Training will be provided to the crews to ensure that they are aware of the change.

## **7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

## **8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are significant financial implications arising from this report in respect of the issues raised. The cost of purchasing and distributing green and blue bins, administering and communicating the changes has been estimated at up to £200,000. This will be funded from the capital receipts that were not allocated when the Council set the capital programme in February 2018.

## **9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 There are a number of risks associated with the proposed service changes as follows.
- 9.2 The number of households using boxes may be higher than the participation survey showed and therefore the capital funding required would be greater.
- 9.3 A delay in the delivery of bins by the supplier, to the council will result in the changes being made later than anticipated. If a delay is experienced the service will continue to operate as is until such time that the new bins are delivered.
- 9.4 A lack of communication with the public could result in an increase in calls to the Customer Services Centre. A range of publications will be used to help minimise this.
- 9.5 Investing in free wheeled bins will reduce the monies available to fund other capital schemes. The existing charging policy allows the cost of the bin to be covered by the householder.

- 9.6 If blue bins are to be offered, free of charge to those residents that are currently using a blue box or similar container, this may give rise to complaints and challenges from residents who have previously purchased them since charging was introduced in 2014.
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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The decision does have a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment