

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 15 November 2017
Report for: Information
Report of: Executive Member for Highways, Parks and Environmental Services

Report Title

Management of New Green Waste Fee and System – Update on Implementation

Summary

Following the executive meeting on the 23 January 2017 a report was presented by the Scrutiny Committee Chairman, setting out their comments and findings from the review of the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2017/18. These proposals included an introduction of a charge to residents for the collection of garden waste.

A further Executive meeting held on 22 February 2017 set out a formal response, which included a commitment to develop an implementation plan prior to the implementation of changes to the collection of garden waste and the proposals for changes were then agreed.

A further update has been requested by the Scrutiny Committee on the overall implementation and success of the scheme which commenced on 1 June 2017.

Recommendation(s)

To note the overall success of the introduction the new garden waste service and the overall achievement of the associated benefits.

To note the future improvements required to further develop the service and transition the remaining associated activities to the One Trafford Partnership.

To seek the continued support of Members in the development of the behavioural changes required for the continued success Trafford has in improving recycling rates and the take up the garden waste service.

To note there are further savings proposed for 2018/19 in respect of the higher than anticipated take-up.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council introduced changes to its garden waste collection services on 5 June 2017 which included the introduction of a charge for services that were previously provided at no cost to residents.
- 1.2 The key driver for the introduction of a charge was to sustain a valued, but non statutory service, whilst recognising that not all residents need or use this service, so the costs should be borne by those who do. The garden waste subscription service is optional, and residents pay according to the number of green bins they require. The Council is legally entitled to make a charge for the collection of garden waste and the net saving arising from this change in policy were projected to be £430K in 2017/18.
- 1.3 To complement the change to the garden waste collection service the Council further proposed to subsidise home compost bins from April 2017. For residents that have chosen not to subscribe to the service they are able to exchange their green bin for a green caddy free of charge, which encourages continued recycling of food waste.
- 1.4 The original assumptions made to forecast the savings were as follows:-
 - 22,500 subscribers in Year 1 and a further 3,750 subscribers in Year 2
 - 2,000 additional bins by Year 3
 - 82% of customers would opt to subscribe on line to qualify for the £5 discount

2 IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1 The scheme has been successful with gross income of £1.6m, exceeding the original target of £0.8m.
- 2.2 Subscriptions are almost double the original forecast with 43,500 households opting to subscribe to the service. In addition, 2,500 second permits and 900 subsidised compost bins have been purchased.
- 2.3 The preferred method for sign up has been on-line, with 90% of subscriptions exceeding the forecasted assumption.
- 2.4 Since April 2017, over 3,200 green caddies have been delivered to residents as an alternative to the green bin, which is a positive step to achieving recycling targets.
- 2.5 Whilst the take up has been very positive the unexpected volume has brought some challenges through the implementation. Whilst it has been successful overall there has been a number of improvements identified and issues that require further improvement work over the coming months in preparation next year's renewal and sign up. These are summarised as follows;

- 2.5.1 It was originally anticipated that the One Trafford Partnership would undertake all associated administration activity and the business case allowed for the costs of a dedicated project manager and an administrative assistant. Due to the tight timescales for implementation and the subsequent recruitment required for these posts, the Council decided to undertake this activity for an interim period.
- 2.5.2 There were challenges with the management of calls and payments for the service via the One Trafford Partnership contact centre due to some minor issues with the online payment form. The Council's Access Trafford contact centre supported this with the provision of an "overflow" facility to take payments where these issues occurred.
- 2.5.3 There has been a small number of complaints (circa 200) received from residents on a number of issues including, the overall quality of the permit, objections to the introduction of the charge, responsibility for clearing leaf fall from trees on Council land, and the unfairness of the online discount.
- 2.5.4 The on-line payment process had higher than expected payment failure rates with some residents reporting that it was difficult to navigate, which are similar to issues being experienced by other Local Authorities who we have benchmarked against.
- 2.5.5 There remain some residual challenges associated with the performance data across the waste service, which is impacting on the ability to target the key messages agreed to support the wider behavioural changes needed to improve recycling rates.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The project team required to implement the changes has been established and is now working on key areas of improvement.
- 3.2 To address the lessons learned through the implementation period there are a number of activities required as follows:-
 - 3.2.1 Engagement with suppliers for the subscriber packs has commenced and proceeding on the basis of having pre-populated addresses on the stickers, including a unique barcode which will realise further efficiencies associated with the administration of the scheme.
 - 3.2.2 The posts required by the One Trafford Partnership to support with the management of the scheme will be advertised with an anticipated start date in early January 2018.
 - 3.2.3 Following recruitment to these posts, the administration of the scheme will be transferred to the One Trafford Partnership, which will remove the burden from the Council's existing resources and provide a clear line of accountability.

- 3.2.4 The Council is currently in the process of developing the Customer Relationship Management system which includes the ability to take payments directly on-line
- 3.2.5 The One Trafford Partnership will continue to engage with waste operatives to improve the overall service and actively reduce any associated complaints.
- 3.2.6 Joint activities associated with the required behavioural change will continue and includes a series of workshops throughout the winter and spring periods on “composting” which will focus on encouraging residents to compost their garden waste.
- 3.2.7 The One Trafford Partnership have made a commitment to implement mobile technology across the waste service, which will support more robust performance monitoring arrangements and enhanced management information data.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall the roll out has been successful and has significantly exceeded the financial forecast due to significant uptake by residents. This surplus has been used to further benefit Trafford residents by investing it in additional highway network upgrades.

Many of the challenges were as a result of this increased demand above the predicted levels and this learning is being taken forward to improve the service in the future.