

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE O&S**

**COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**2.00pm hours on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Committee Room 1 – Action Notes**

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**Present:**

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

Councillors Muhammad Afzal, Randal Brew, Ewan Mackey, Yvonne Mosquito, Rob Pocock and Hendrina Quinnen

**Also Present:**

Cllr Lisa Trickett, Cabinet Member Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment

Antony Greener, Director Waste Management

Sukvinder Kalsi, Assistant Director Finance

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

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**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING**

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllr David Barrie, Changese Khan, Chaman Lal, Ray Hassall and Sybil Spence.

**3. REQUEST FOR CALL-IN: INCREASE IN CHARGES FOR GARDEN WASTE 2017**

(See document No 1)

Cllr Brew stated that it was on record that the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats would scrap the charge if they could, and will make that case at the budget meeting in March.

Cllrs Brew and Mackey outlined their reasons for requesting the call-in:

- The equality impact assessment within the decisions is flawed. There should be a more comprehensive approach and, as it currently stands, it is not compliant with council reporting and statutory duties. The report refers to an associated EA should there be some loss of sales due to price increases. This information was not supplied.
- Whilst it was recognised that information had come through prior to the meeting, the decision report was missing data on the costs.
- The decision assumes the retention of the existing customer base – there has been no assessment of the impact of the rise on customer numbers, especially considered alongside a potential council tax increase.
- The report lacks information on green waste recycling to show the impact on recycling compared to the free service, nor was there any performance information;
- The potential for an increase in cost to deal with fly-tipped waste is not taken into account so it could be a false economy.
- There is no assessment of the impact on different areas of the city, nor on the capacity on household recycling centres and surrounding roads.
- There is the potential for the Council to miss out on other recycling some of which generates an income, so should not be taking actions to put people off.
- The increase in charges will at some point result in a loss of sales – increasing charges will increase revenue up to the point where people decide not to take the service – and so can become self-defeating.

The Cabinet Member, Cllr Trickett, responded:

- A number of the issues raised above were in contention when charging was introduced which is not what this call-in meeting is about.
- The increase was set by City Council as part of the budget process, and formed part of the budget consultation.
- Equality issues were one of the key matters considered when the charging was brought in, as a free garden waste service was effectively subsidised by those poorer residents who did not have gardens.
- This is an additional service, not a core service. On balance the introduction of the charge is fair.
- Discounts are available, and the only thing holding up this is the call-in, which is part of an on-going challenge to the charge.

Members of the Committee raised the following points:

- How do we benchmark across similar local authorities? Is this a reasonable figure? Anthony Greener, Director Waste Management, confirmed that £40 was around average for a garden waste charge.

- In response to a question about other ways to make the savings, the Cabinet Member responded that if there is a charge then it has to be delivered in commercially effective way.
- It was noted that garden waste collections are the most difficult to manage logistically as there is a huge variation in tonnage. As the service is charged for then the services has to react and change routes to make them as efficient as possible.
- Regarding the number of rounds, 14 rounds are budgeted for; the intention is to reduce this if possible but the service needs to know where the customers are first.
- Not included in the costs are disposal as the council must dispose of waste however presented (including at household recycling centres) nor is the financing of the vehicles costs – this is funded from the grant.
- The service has been growing: 2014/15 50,000 customers; 2015/16 57,000 customers; 2016/17 62,000 customers. Around 5% to 7% do not renew each year. It was acknowledged that it was not known at which point higher charges would result in a decrease of customers, but the Cabinet Member pointed out that that was in the same in any business scenario.

The Cabinet Member and officers then left the room. Following a discussion amongst Committee members it was

**RESOLVED:-**

That the decision taken by the Cabinet Member and Lead Officer on 24<sup>th</sup> November regarding the increase in charges for garden waste 2017 be not “called in”.

That the Committee Chair write to the Cabinet Member raising the following concerns:

- That the full information contained within equality impact assessments is released;
- That further work is undertaken to encourage full cost recovery, including exploring options for discounted second bins etc.

**4. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**5. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

Agreed

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The meeting finished at 1500 hours.