

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Garden Waste Collection Service Review – Final Report	
Report No:	OAS/FH/18/032	
Report to and dates:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	7 June 2018
		8 November 2018
	Shadow Executive (Cabinet)	27 November 2018
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Purpose of report:	This report summarises the review of the Garden Waste Collection Service by a Joint Task and Finish Group and presents recommendations for the service moving forwards.	
Recommendation:	<p>It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</p> <p>1) Note and comment on the report by the Garden Waste Collection Service Joint Task and Finish Review Group; and</p> <p>2) Agrees the recommendations (as set out in Section 4 of the Garden Waste Collection Service Joint Task and Finish Group report for consideration by the Shadow Executive (Cabinet) on 27 November 2018.</p>	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:	The Task and Finish Group members have reviewed the GWCS with Portfolio holders.	
Alternative option(s):	At the commencement of the GWCS it was agreed to undertake a review after the first three years of operation. A number of options were considered by the Task and Finish Group for different elements of the service and this report summaries their observations and recommendations.	
Implications:		
<i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the subscription charge and/or the number of subscribers will impact upon the amount of income generated. 	
<i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with the introduction of any changes to the way the current service is administered and delivered operationally. 	
<i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the ICT functionality will need to be assessed and scheduled with consideration of the other ICT projects planned. This includes future changes and alignment with the councils Digital Strategy. 	

<i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the current terms and conditions will impact on the current service rules for customers. 	
<i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service is voluntary and available to all households in West Suffolk. 	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Increasing the subscription rate may discourage further household participation.	High	The subscription rate has been frozen for three years – despite annual increases in service variable costs. The proposed £3 increase is modest and one of the lowest charges locally.	Medium
The conclusions are not able to be considered prior to the start date in 2019.	Medium	Ensure all technological implications and other risks are fully understood and assessed before a decision is made.	Low
Additional resources will be required if changing to a 12 month rolling subscription period requires an increase manual processing.	High	The change must be aligned with the Digital Strategy, be fully automated and be deliverable within budget.	Low
Potential proposals relating to Garden Waste terms, conditions and processes are different to the councils' agreed policies, including the target operating model for customer service.	Medium	Ensure all relevant Officers are involved in the review.	Low
FHDC and SEBC do not collectively agree on the recommendations.	High	Councillors from FHDC and SEBC are involved in the review.	Low
There are insufficient resources to deliver any change to the GWCS that is adopted as a result of this review	High	Ensure all changes are fully costed and the capacity required to implement are identified. Ensure all relevant officers are involved in the review to enable implementation plans to be considered alongside other resource and capacity demands across the councils'.	Medium

Ward(s) affected:	All West Suffolk wards
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>	FHDC Cabinet 15SEP15 report CAB/FH/15/041 FHDC PASC 25NOV15 report PAS/FH/15/029 FHDC PASC 28Jan16 report PAS/FH/16/003
Documents attached:	<p>Appendix A – Summary of Meetings</p> <p>Appendix B – Financial Modelling</p> <p>Appendix C – Subscription Charges of Other Councils</p> <p>Appendix D – Subscriptions Through the Customer Services Team</p> <p>Appendix E – Information Flow and Process Map</p> <p>Appendix F – Examples of Branding Used</p> <p>Appendix G – Summary of Meeting Content, Observations, Recommendations</p>

1. Background to the review of the Garden Waste Collection Service

1.1 As part of the introduction of the Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS) in April 2016, Members agreed to undertake a service review after the first three years.

1.2 At the SEBC Council meeting on 19 December 2017, Councillor Nettleton also gave notice under paragraph 9.1 of the Council Procedure Rules of the following motion:

“That with effect from April 2018 new subscribers to the Brown Bin emptying service be charged at the following rates*, depending on the month the subscription is approved:

April £40: May £37: June £34: July £31: August £28: September £25: October £22: November £19: December £16: January £13: February £10.

No new subscriptions accepted in March as officers busy organising renewals.

*Subject to technical amendments”

1.3 This matter was referred to both Councils Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for consideration at their joint meeting on 31 January 2018.

1.4 On 6 and 7 June 2018 respectively, the St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committees resolved to establish a Joint Task and Finish Group to carry out a joint review of the GWCS and make recommendations for 2019 onwards. This will allow time for recommendations to be taken account of before the arrangements for 2019 need to commence (there are system and communications arrangements that need to be undertaken ahead of the annual soft launch for payments in February).

1.5 The Joint Task and Finish Group included eight Members; four from each council (three from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee) with 10 officers in support as required; Assistant Director (Operations); Service Manager (Business); Service Manager (Operations); Waste Strategy Officer; Senior Communications Officer; Finance Business Partner; Business Support Analyst; Service Manager (Customer Services and Transformation); Service Manager (Corporate Policy) and Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), and the Portfolio Holders . The following Members were appointed to contribute to the Garden Waste Collection Service Joint Task and Finish Group:

Forest Heath District Council

Councillor Chris Barker

Councillor Robert Nobbs

Councillor David Palmer

Councillor Rona Burt (Performance and Audit Scrutiny)

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Councillor John Burns

Councillor Mike Chester

Councillor Diane Hind

Councillor Sarah Broughton (Performance and Audit Scrutiny)

1.6 The Joint Task and Finish Group met on five occasions during which there was discussion and agreement on:

- a) the scope of the review
- b) the approach to be adopted
- c) Specific areas to be explored, which included the following:

Finance	Note the current financial position of the GWCS and review the subscription charge from April 2019 onwards. Consider the motion put forward by Councillor Nettleton.
Customer access	Examine incentivising the use of online transactions - for customer convenience and to reduce demand on customer services (channel shift and self-serve). This would require a corporate policy position that could be applied to the GWCS.
Service terms and conditions	Consider the approach to payment options – how to pay and the payment period.
Impact on residual waste	The options for managing garden waste in the black bins.
Communications and marketing	Review the current arrangements for marketing and communication with customers.
Operational changes	Evaluate the option of a different collection day to black and blue bin collections to reduce service costs.
Impact of proposed changes	Understanding the impact of proposals, including implementation risks, costs and customer impact.

- d) Observations and recommendations.

1.7 A summary of the Joint Task and Finish Group meetings held is attached in **Appendix A**.

2. Garden Waste Collection Service – background and progress to date

2.1 The Garden Waste Collection Service (GWCS) was introduced in April 2016 as an opt-in discretionary service and is offered to all residents in West Suffolk.

2.2 Members will recall that the adoption of a subscription service was driven by a change to the funding arrangements for organic waste and an expected increase in the organic waste treatment costs. At the time,

extensive research was undertaken to review experiences elsewhere and a number of unknown variables were estimated and assumptions made in relation to:

- Household take-up rate;
- Annual income generated;
- Cost of waste treatment, due mainly to the procurement of an organic waste treatment new contract;
- Quantity and quality of material collected, considering estimated take-up and the exclusion of kitchen food waste; and
- The impact of the change on residual waste collections.

2.3 As a result, the new service was restricted to the inclusion of garden waste only and participation was voluntary. As part of this change, a 50:50 cost/benefit sharing approach between West Suffolk councils and Suffolk County Council (SCC) was agreed by Public Sector Leaders to ensure that no single organisation would be in a worse financial position following the change.

2.4 Preparations for the introduction of the service commenced in October 2015, involving an officer team made up of representatives from numerous council departments, reflecting the extent of the changes needed. This included:

- Establishing a subscription price and associated terms and conditions.
- Development of a marketing plan and communication messages.
- Development of service application and payment systems in line with the corporate customer access strategy.
- Procurement of a new waste treatment contract.
- Design and implementation of IT systems.

2.5 Overall the approach intended to maximise the use of technology, reduce the ongoing resource demand needed to administer the service and to provide ease of access for customers.

2.6 During the first three years of operation, around 30,000 households have subscribed each year and the service is generally operating in line with the original assumptions and expectations. The service involves an annual payment of £40 per bin (max of 4 bins per household) and includes 26 collections per year from 1 April to 31 March. There are no discounts or refunds and residents can apply for bins up to 31 December. No subscriptions are permitted from January to March to enable preparations to take place for the following subscription year. The subscription charge is £40 irrespective of when the resident applies.

2.7 This review of the Garden Waste Collection Service is therefore taking place at an opportune time for the following reasons:

- i) It was agreed that the subscription charge, and the service itself, would be reviewed after the first three years of operation.

- ii) A new funding arrangement with Suffolk County Council takes effect from April 2019.
- iii) Implementation arrangements for Year 4 of the GWCS will need to commence in October 2018 ready for April 2019.
- iv) IT improvements are required to reflect changes to the corporate CRM, online functionality and the GDPR regulations.
- v) To consider opportunities to amend the customer "application and pay experience" and the associated service terms and conditions.

3. Review carried out by the Joint Task and Finish Group

3.1 The Joint Task and Finish Group reviewed the introduction of the GWCS and progress to date. The new service is different to the previous "brown bin scheme" and involves the following features:

- It is an optional service - £40 per bin per year.
- Residents must sign up to take part.
- No changes to bin collection day/week.
- Collection is for garden waste only – excludes kitchen waste, cardboard and shredded paper.
- Need to "apply and pay" online using the West Suffolk Councils website using credit/debit card. (direct debit functionality was introduced in Year 2)
- No discounts or refunds and requires prepayment in full.

3.2 To date the service has been performing well and within the initial service assumptions. The initial service design was key to the ongoing success and involved adoption of the following key principles:

- Keep it simple.
- Design for the majority of users and not the minority.
- Use evidence-based decision making.
- Ensure back office systems are capable, aligning IT systems and using in-cab technology.
- Make the transition to online application and payment using the website.

3.3 Whilst the design of the garden waste collection service has been well received by service users and is working well, the Joint Task and Finish Group have considered the following key areas with a view to maintaining financial sustainability whilst improving the service users:

- a) Financial arrangements including the annual charge and a revised charging mechanism.
- b) Customer access
- c) Operational changes
- d) Marketing and communication

Financial arrangements

3.4 *Annual subscription charge*

At the commencement of the GWCS, a number of assumptions were made in order to determine the annual subscription charge. These included estimates on waste collection and treatment costs, numbers of subscribers, the quantity of waste collected, "apply and pay" processing costs etc. Associated with this was the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) with Suffolk County Council (SCC); a financial agreement whereby costs and benefits would be shared on a 50:50 basis in order that neither council was worse off as a result of the change.

3.5 Based on this and extensive research into the performance of chargeable schemes locally and nationally, the charge across West Suffolk was agreed at £40 per bin per year and was fixed for three years. No discounts are offered for subscriptions that are taken up part way through the year. The charge is the cheapest in Suffolk and is mid-range in comparison to other authorities operating a similar service (alternate weekly collection of 240 litre wheeled bin) where costs vary from £24-96.

3.6 From April 2019, the IAA between the West Suffolk Councils and SCC will change. As a result:

- there will no longer be a cost-sharing arrangement;
- West Suffolk councils will retain 100% of the subscription income (to offset service costs); and
- the Recycling Performance Payment (RPP), which is a payment made by SCC to West Suffolk, will decrease from £54.76 to £30.00 per tonne of garden waste collected and treated.

3.7 It is important that the GWCS achieves a financial breakeven position to secure financial sustainability and to avoid subsidy by non-service users. Based on a review of the current financial year-end budget estimate, the service will require additional funding of £86,729 in 2019/20. As a result, Officers were asked to model the implications of increasing the subscription charge to both £43 and £45 per bin per annum and review the sensitivity between subscription charge and take-up rate. Details of the financial modelling is included in **Appendix B**.

3.8 Based on research undertaken, lower subscription charges generally result in an increase in subscription numbers. However this will not necessarily ensure better financial performance of the service as the service costs will increase due to more customers requiring a collection and more garden waste to be treated. However, using benchmarking with other councils, officers were able to estimate that for every £1 increase in the subscription cost, there would be an approximate corresponding decrease of 1% in subscription numbers. Further details on the subscription charges of other councils is included in **Appendix C**.

3.9 The Joint task and Finish Group agreed that:

- a) The current charge was based on the best available information at the time and was fixed for three years.

- b) It was important for the service to achieve a breakeven position as a minimum.
- c) A charge of £43 would mean that the service would continue to be the lowest subscription charge in Suffolk and any future changes to charging would be considered to reflect changes to operating costs and the new funding arrangements with SCC.
- d) A price increase of £3 would be more acceptable to customers than a £5 increase, whilst achieving a breakeven position.
- e) In addition to cost, it was noted that there are many factors that influence the number of subscriptions including garden size, household behaviours, council policy (for example a "ban" on garden waste in the residual waste bin), affordability and other socio-economic factors.

Charging mechanism

- 3.10 At present, service subscribers pay a single payment of £40. This enables them to use the service for the fixed 12 month period from 1 April to 31 March. This was introduced based on experiences in other councils and aims to ensure that the application and payment system is simple to set up and administer annually, utilising automation and technology where possible to minimise processing costs.
- 3.11 The Joint Task and Finish Group considered the effectiveness of this approach and in particular, the Motion as set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report.
- 3.12 In 2017/18, 86% of the GWCS customers subscribed by the end of April. The remaining 14% of customers signed up to the service during the year – up until November. Using this subscription year, introducing a reduced monthly subscription charge would result in an equivalent loss of income to the service of £29,831. There is also no evidence that reducing the cost of the service each month would increase the number of subscriptions and in addition there is a chance that customers would defer signing up in order to save money, potentially reducing income further. There is also a risk that customers deferring their subscription would use the residual waste bin as an alternative disposal method.
- 3.13 Introducing a reducing charge each month also has impacts on the technology used for administering the scheme, which would require additional financial and staffing resource. As a result, the Joint Task and Finish Group felt that there were insufficient advantages to support the motion and there would be a number of marketing and operational issues incurred.

Customer Access

- 3.14 The Target Operating Model (TOM) was adopted in by West Suffolk Councils in 2014 with the aim of enabling customers to access timely, accurate, clear, accessible and targeted information independently and without the need for face to face interaction. The move away from cash transactions to

electronic methods of payment is also built in the TOM to help reduce transactional costs. Since the adoption of the plan in 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in the number of customer interactions through the customer services team and a 70% reduction in face to face contacts.

- 3.15 The number of GWCS subscriptions have grown year on year as outlined in the table below.

Apply and Pay method	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19 to Sept	
	Subs £	No. h/holds	Subs £	No. h/holds	Subs £	No. h/holds
CS - CASH	15,440	388	13,280	331	11,120	277
CS - CHQ	20,040	487	20,080	480	16,000	387
CS - CARD	366,160	9,113	325,650	8,002	319,460	7,786
CS - DD	-	-	41,280	1,016	72,680	1,772
Online - CARD	736,360	18,269	411,600	10,023	319,880	7,769
Online - DD	-	-	360,480	8,777	486,680	11,821
Invoice - DTB	45,360	1134	43,440	993	33,520	772
TOTAL	1,183,360	29,391	1,215,810	29,622	1,259,340	30,584

- 3.16 Furthermore, 44% of households have signed up using direct debit and 64% have signed up online. Further information on the number of subscriptions through the Customer Service Team (CST) and website are available in **Appendix D**.

Apply and Pay method	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 (to Sept)
Customer Service	33.94%	32.92%	33.40%
Online	62.23%	63.50%	64.00%
Invoice - DTB	0.10%	3.60%	2.70%

- 3.17 Marketing of the end of the brown bin scheme and the introduction of the garden waste collection scheme was carried out predominantly by information sent out to residents, but all communications pointed them towards the West Suffolk website, where dedicated pages were set up to answer their questions about the close down of the old scheme and the start of the new service. Encouraging residents to sign up to the new scheme online was a priority and the content was designed so that residents could quickly access the correct area of the site so they could do this without having to navigate through different pages.
- 3.18 Customer satisfaction with the delivery of the service is high, as evidenced by both customer surveys and the growth in subscriber numbers year on year. Customers have also complemented the ease of signing up to the service both through the contact centre and the website. Our frontline staff continue to provide a high level of service to customers.
- 3.19 The target operating model for the GWCS has been successful in integrating online forms to the corporate payment system, the Bartec waste management back office system and in-cab devices. This has

automated the application and payment systems for service subscribers and enables the bin collection crews to understand the location of service subscribers and to report bin related issues e.g. if the bin is “not out” or contaminated by materials not accepted through the scheme (for example cardboard or food waste). **Appendix E** shows the flow of information through from the customer sign up process, whether that be via face to face, over the telephone or electronically, through to frontline staff delivering the service. (The Joint Task and Finish Group were able to discuss the operation of the in-cab device with the operational crew).

- 3.20 The Bartec system has enabled the GWCS to be delivered with a high level of accuracy, giving collection crews the confidence that they know which bins are subscribed and allowing the customer services team to quickly identify any problems with service delivery. Many authorities use a sticker system to identify subscribed bins; not doing so provides West Suffolk with an annual saving of approximately £26,000 per annum in sticker purchase costs, administration and postage.
- 3.21 As part of the Customer Access Strategy, automation and self-service were key to achieving success in the move to increasing customers’ ability to manage their interactions with the council. In 2019/20 there are plans to move towards a new target operating model including an account management facility for customers. This platform requires API’s that link the different systems (CST, Finance, Bartec) together to ensure that customer information is shared and acted on correctly.
- 3.22 The Joint Task and Finish Group were keen to progress opportunities to increase the number of subscribers and requested that officers review the option a rolling 12 month annual subscription, thus decoupling it from the fixed financial year.
- 3.23 It was recognised that a high proportion (86%) of subscribers already join at the start of the subscription period, so this would have a greater impact for new GWCS customers and prove to be a more flexible approach. However it was recognised that this new approach would change the way in which the service was delivered, in terms of marketing new and current customers, application and payment systems, including reminders, managing price increases and operational delivery. As a result, the Joint Task and Finish Group supported a move to a 12 month rolling subscription period by April 2020, linked to the Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy and marketing approaches. This approach needs to be fully automated and all costs must be assessed, agreed and acceptable within the budget of the GWCS.
- 3.24 As part of the research undertaken, it was noted that some authorities provided a financial discount to customers who subscribed to garden waste services by annual direct debit. The Joint Task and Finish Group agreed that any discounting due to payment method would have to be agreed as a corporate wide policy and not purely for the garden waste collection scheme in isolation. Further work would be required to investigate how this scheme could work. However, it was considered important to progress the automation of processes and encourage greater online sign-up by direct

debit. This would be essential to facilitate the move to a rolling 12 month subscription process.

Operational changes

3.25 *Impact on residual waste*

The introduction of the GWCS has resulted in an overall reduction in the total amount of household waste requiring collection and disposal. As outlined in the table below, there has been a 7,895 reduction in organic waste, albeit there was a related 3,776 tonne increase in the amount of residual waste. This increase will comprise of uncooked food waste, now illegible for inclusion in the brown bin, in addition to garden waste.

	Brown	Blue	Black	TOTAL	% Change Brown	% Change Blue	% Change Black
Year	(tonnes collected per year)				(based on previous year)		
13/14	18,739	11,679	31,805	62,223			
14/15	19,551	12,012	32,303	63,866	4.34%	2.85%	1.56%
15/16	18,787	12,232	32,814	63,833	-3.91%	1.83%	1.58%
16/17	10,892	11,798	36,590	59,280	-42.02%	-3.55%	11.51%
17/18	11,139	11,488	36,402	59,029	2.27%	-2.62%	-0.51%

3.26 The increase in residual waste arisings is greater than in areas of the county where there has not been a change to garden waste collections (Mid Suffolk and Babergh have only ever provided a paid-for service, Ipswich Borough Council has not introduced charges) and is greater than the 1.5% annual increase predicted due to waste increases. This is in line with the original assumptions

3.27 Options were considered to reduce garden waste in the residual bin, such as through the use of marketing campaigns or through the option of “banning” garden waste from the residual bin. This is a legitimate option and experiences of other councils were reviewed. However it was determined that:

- Enforcement action was inconsistent and difficult, requiring resources to implement and requiring the garden waste to be visible in the bin;
- The overall effectiveness of the approach was hard to determine;
- Not emptying the residual bin was undertaken rather than taking enforcement action; and
- A key focus of activity involved the ongoing message not to put garden waste in the residual bin.

3.28 As a result, it was agreed that educational and awareness raising opportunities should be progressed in preference to a ban on garden waste in the residual bin, with the option of reviewing the ban option at a later date. This would also enable full consideration of the options available to be

discussed with the Suffolk Waste Partnership - having consistent and clearer messaging at a countywide level will be more effective in the long term.

Garden waste bin collection day changes

- 3.29 West Suffolk currently operates an alternate week waste collection service whereby the black, blue and brown bins are emptied over a two-week cycle, with each bin emptying taking place on the same nominated day of the week – known as a singular day bin collection.
- 3.30 The current GWCS operates using the same bin collection rounds as the previous brown bin scheme. This was to limit change for residents and to obtain a better operational understanding of service demand, bin put-out rate and the tonnes of waste to be collected.
- 3.31 The GWCS is currently collecting approximately 60% of the waste collected in the brown bin scheme. Collection round modelling has been undertaken to identify opportunities to unlock collection efficiencies albeit the modelling suggests that the only way to achieve this would be by decoupling the garden waste collection day from the blue and black bin collection day i.e. move from the singular day bin collection. Blue and black bins would continue to be collected on the same day over a fortnight (e.g. blue bin Tuesday week one, black bin Tuesday week two) but the garden waste bin would be collected on a completely different day during the fortnight (e.g. Thursday week 2). This system operates well in other councils and there is an opportunity to align the change with the move to the West Suffolk Operational Hub, for which all bin collection rounds will require review.
- 3.32 West Suffolk has a successful track record managing bin collection day changes and this will be an opportunity to build service efficiency, particularly in light of the increase in residual waste requiring collection. For noting, modelling of bin collection rounds takes into account a wide range of different factors and scenarios, so it is difficult to comprehend the extent of the change until the modelling is complete.

Communications and Marketing

- 3.33 As part of the introduction of the GWCS, two key messages were communicated to residents; firstly, that the brown bin scheme was ending and secondly that a new GWCS was starting. This reflected the understanding that not all households would opt in to the new service and those that would needed to understand the service “offer” and the associated changes. One of the major concerns was the waste previously accepted (including brown card, shredded paper and uncooked food) which was no longer accepted by the GWCS.
- 3.34 Primary communications explaining the service change were sent out to all households in February 2016 in West Suffolk branded envelopes delivered by Royal Mail. This was followed up by bin hangers, press releases, information on social media, posters, community engagement events, vehicle side advertising and dedicated pages on the council’s website. Branding for the service was consistent across all design elements,

including bin stickers, leaflets, vehicle advertising, letters, posters and banners.

- 3.35 Using Bartec back office IT system ensured that subscriptions were managed through the crews' use of an in-cab device to identify subscribed properties rather than by using stickers which has been the approach of other authorities. This created an annual saving of approximately £26,000.
- 3.36 In year two, the focus of communications was to retain customers from year one and to introduce the new payment option of annual direct debit. The benefit of an annual direct debit payment is the automatic subscription renewal without the need for targeted marketing and the ability to project how many customers will subscribe to facilitate more reliable and effective service planning.
- 3.37 Year three communications were designed to further encourage take up of the service by direct debit.
- 3.38 The Joint Task and Finish Group commented that the branding used for the promotion of the service was clear, consistent, bright and eye catching and it was recommended to continue using the same branding for future marketing purposes. **Appendix F** includes examples of the branding used.
- 3.39 There was a particular interest in the combined effect of the growth in residential development and residents moving house – there were 11,587 house sales in West Suffolk in 2017. Whilst it was accepted that there are many factors influencing the household's decision to subscribe to the GWCS, the Joint task and finish Group suggested a number of options to encourage an increase in subscriptions through more targeted marketing campaigns, namely:
- Undertake research from current non-subscribers to understand why they have not subscribed;
 - Discuss with the Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP) options to collectively promote the GWCS;
 - Deliver targeted marketing campaigns, especially in locations with low take up but large gardens or increased garden waste in the residual bin; and
 - Further develop the information and accessibility of the council's website.

4. Garden Waste Collection Service review – recommendations

- 4.1 Throughout the four meetings, the Joint Task and Finish Group reviewed the various elements of the GWCS, experiences from other councils and the options moving forward. At the final meeting of the Joint Task and Finish Group, the following recommendations were agreed.
- 1 Increase the current subscription charge from £40 to £43 for 2019-2020. This included:
 - The subscription charge to be reviewed annually;
 - To be agreed with Portfolio Holders as part of budget setting and the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

- or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the fee annually; and
 - The GWCS budget is to be financially self-supporting.
- 2 The Group felt that there were not enough advantages to support the motion from Councillor David Nettleton to SEBC Council on 19 December 2017 and there would be a number of marketing and operational issues incurred. The Group also did not favour supporting a discounted charging scheme.
 - 3 To depart from the singular bin collection day approach for the GWCS to unlock collection capacity.
 - 4 Move towards a rolling subscription model by April 2020, to be linked to the Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy and marketing approaches.
 - Approach to be fully automated.
 - Cost to be within the budget of the GWCS.
 - 5 As part of the next subscription process:
 - Find out key reasons why households are not signing up;
 - Run a marketing campaign aimed at rounds where take-up is low but garden space is large;
 - Further promote bin sharing;
 - Investigate an incentivisation scheme to encourage sign up direct debit (part of a corporate approach); and
 - To understand the remaining potential in the households not currently subscribing to the GWCS.
 - 6 To retain the current service branding.
 - 7 Run a marketing campaign trial to change non subscriber behaviours.
 - Identify bin collection rounds with the highest amount of garden waste in the residual waste bins.
 - 8 To undertake collection round modelling to reflect future changes prior to the move to the WSOH.
 - 9 To continue to promote take-up and migration to direct debit.
 - 10 Review at a later date the "ban" option after all marketing options had been carried out, with a caveat on what goes in the black bin.
 - 11 Through colleagues in the Customer Services team, seek to create a new section on the website for residents who are new to the area.
 - 12 Work with ARP and encourage them to refer customers to the council's GWCS.
 - 13 To scope work with ARP and any other partners to introduce a new homes pack for house moves.

Appendix G provides a summary of each meeting including the content discussed, the observations made and the recommendations agreed.

- 4.2 Subject to approval of the recommendations, officers will develop an implementation plan.

Appendix A: Meetings of the GWCS Joint Task and Finish Group

Task	Date
<p>First meeting Discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope of the review - Terms of Reference - Background and progress of the garden waste collection service to date - Frequency of meetings 	12 July
<p>Second meeting Discussed the following:</p> <p>Customer Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate approach • Technical requirements <p>Financial position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current financial position • Subscription charge from April 2019 • Incentivising online transactions • Payment options • Review the "Motion" submitted by Councillor Nettleton. <p>Meet the operational crew and the Bartec IT system</p>	3 August
<p>Third meeting Discussed the following:</p> <p>Financial position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the relationship between service charge and subscription rate. • Review the options for increasing the subscription charge (£43 and £45). • Review the pros/cons of introducing a rolling 12 month subscription model. 	7 September
<p>Fourth meeting Discussed the following:</p> <p>Complete the review of the pros/cons of introducing a rolling 12 month subscription model.</p> <p>Impact on residual waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for managing garden waste in the black bin. <p>Operational changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating a different collection day for garden waste to the black and blue bin collection day. <p>Communications and marketing Marketing and communication with customers.</p>	21 September
<p>Final meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed findings from the review - Agreed recommendations 	28 September

Appendix B: Estimated financial position 2019/20 (for comparison purposes)

Year	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	2019/20 (based on 2018/19)			
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Forecast	Forecast		Forecast	
Subscription charge	n/a	£40	£40	£40	£43		£45	
Number of subscribers				30,100	As current	3% reduction	As current	5% reduction
Extra income from price increase (£)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-£90,000	-£51,300	-£150,000	-£82,500
Service cost (£)	£579,748	£556,725	£141,265	£86,729	£86,729	£86,729	£86,729	£86,729
Net service cost (service cost plus extra income)					-£3,271	£35,429	-£63,271	£4,229
Impact of new SCC financial model from 2019					-£54,836	-£54,836	-£54,836	-£54,836
Balance					-£58,107	-£19,407	-£118,107	-£50,607

Notes:

1. The above represent estimates based on 2018/19.
2. Excludes new service costs.
3. Includes potential positive impact of the new financial arrangement with SCC.

Appendix C: Information from Other Authorities

1. Subscription charge and take up at local councils

Council	Cost	Take Up
Babergh	£ 55.00	14,288
East Suffolk	£ 43.00	
Mid Suffolk	£ 55.00	15,005
Ipswich	Free	47,000
West Suffolk	£ 40.00	30,000
Breckland	£ 44.00	
Broadland	£ 53.50	28,000
Great Yarmouth	£ 65.00	9,040
KLWN	£ 54.00	24,000
North Norfolk	£46-£50	20,500
Norwich	£ 48.00	
South Norfolk	£47-£53	25,000

2. Benchmarking costs of 52 council garden waste collection services nationwide

Cost per annum	Number of authorities
>£30	1
£30-£39	14
£40-£49	19
£50-£60	10
<£60	4

Appendix D: Subscriptions to the Garden Waste Collection Service April – September 2018.

	SEBC			
	Income (£)	No. household subscriptions	%	% Excluding Invoices
Customer Services - CASH	7,720	193	0.9%	0.9%
Customer Services - CHQ	10,720	256	1.3%	1.3%
Customer Services - CARD	213,860	5,202	25.4%	25.4%
Customer Services - DD	51,360	1,247	6.1%	6.1%
Online - CARD	215,640	5,233	25.6%	25.6%
Online - DD	342,520	8,301	40.7%	40.7%
Invoice - DTB	400	6	0.0%	EXCLUDED
TOTAL	842,220	20,438	100.0%	100.0%

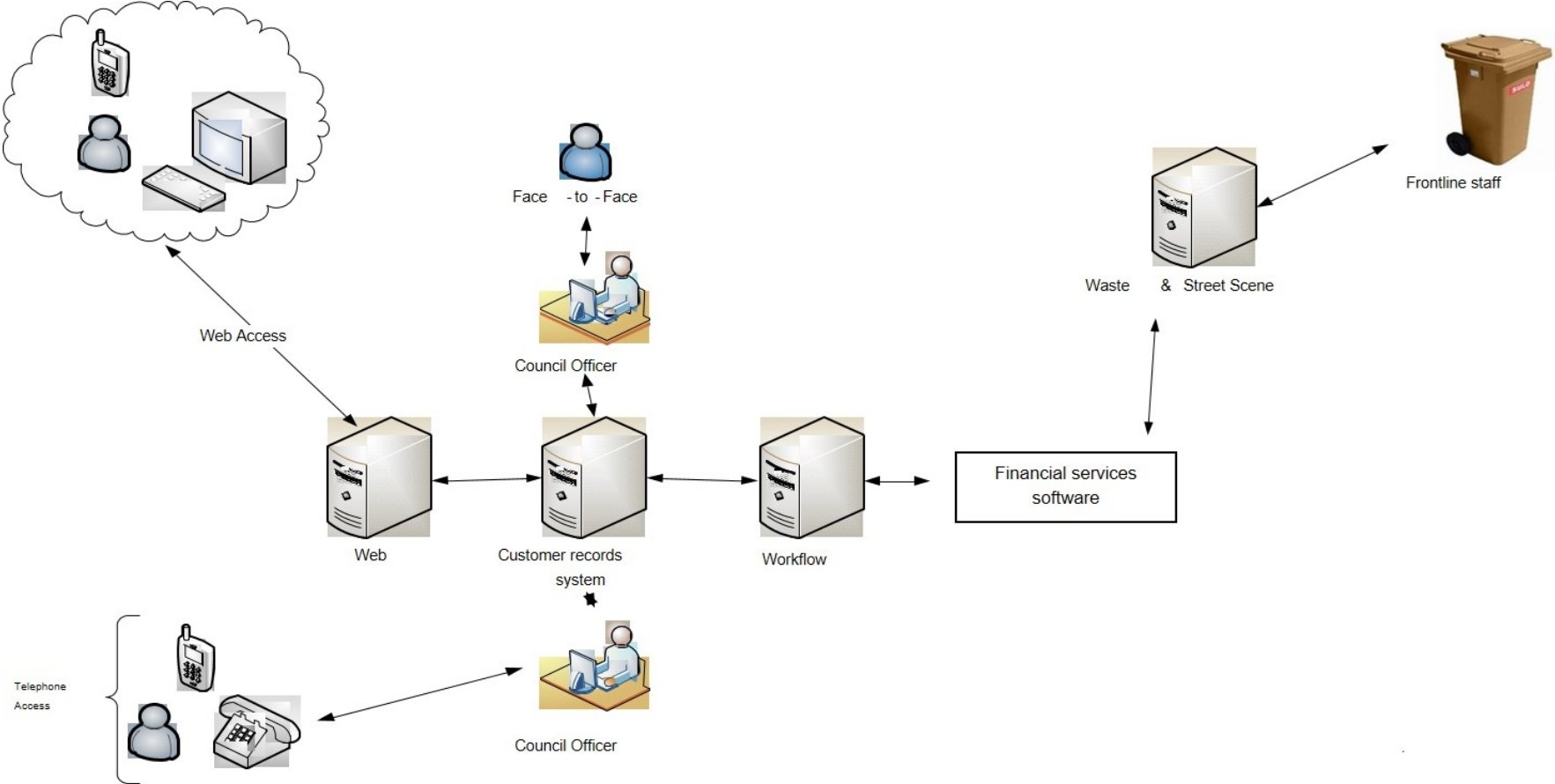
	FHDC			
	Income (£)	No. household subscriptions	%	% Excluding Invoices
	3,400	84	0.8%	0.9%
	5,280	131	1.3%	1.4%
	105,600	2,584	25.3%	27.5%
	21,320	525	5.1%	5.6%
	104,240	2,536	25.0%	27.1%
	144,160	3,520	34.6%	37.5%
	33,120	766	7.9%	EXCLUDED
TOTAL	417,120	10,146	100.0%	100.0%

	WEST SUFFOLK			
	Income (£)	No. household subscriptions	%	% Excluding Invoices
	11,120	277	0.9%	0.9%
	16,000	387	1.3%	1.3%
	319,460	7,786	25.4%	26.1%
	72,680	1,772	5.8%	5.9%
	319,880	7,769	25.4%	26.1%
	486,680	11,821	38.6%	39.7%
	33,520	772	2.7%	EXCLUDED
TOTAL	1,259,340	30,584	100.0%	100.0%

Notes:

1. DD refers to direct debit
2. Invoice – DTB refers to the payment of multiple subscriptions in one transaction
3. Customer services refer to subscription taken by telephone or face to face

Appendix E: Information flow and process map – from customer sign up to service delivery



Appendix F: Examples of marketing materials and branding used

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils
West Suffolk
 working together

Garden Waste Collection Service

Our new service has started!
 If you want to find out more
 or sign up for convenient,
 fortnightly collections of your
 garden waste go online:

westsuffolk.gov.uk/gardenwaste
 or call 01638 719779 or 01284 776119

 **@binmanandrobyn**
#WSgardenwaste

SIGN UP NOW



Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils
West Suffolk
 working together



IMPORTANT

Your brown bin service
 is ending. Details inside
 of the new garden
 waste service.

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils
West Suffolk
 working together

Easter collections
 See details overleaf

Garden Waste Collection Service

Your current brown bin service is ending. Your last collection will be the week commencing 21 or 28 March.

The new Garden Waste Collection Service is £40 for 4 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. Sign up on line at the web address below.

SIGN UP NOW

westsuffolk.gov.uk/gardenwaste




Appendix G: Summary of meeting content, observations and recommendations

Meeting 1:

Subjects covered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. West Suffolk position 2. Why change a successful collection service? 3. The drivers and need for change 4. Convincing Senior Officers, Members and residents 5. Scope of the GWCS project 6. Implementation – project team, technology, 7. Project outcomes achieved: Year 1 - 3 8. Success factors and risk management 9. Lessons learned
Observations	<p>Key outcomes are in line with original assumptions relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscription level achieved • Channel shift and self-serve progress • Customer feedback from “apply and pay process” • Material quality • Service design <p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate team approach. • £40 charge at the time was perceived to be right. • Difficult decisions were made but service outcomes are in line with original assumptions. • Successful transition to online application and payment using the website. • Waste back office system, using in-cab technology is working successfully. • Limited negative impact received – from residents, users and media. • Overall the design of the garden waste collection service has been well received and is working.
Recommendations	n/a

Meeting 2:

Subjects covered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Experience from other councils. 2. Corporate approach to customer access and the Digital Strategy. 3. Using technology to deliver the end to end process. 4. Financial position and the subscription charge for 2018/19. 5. The GWCS “Motion” for a variable subscription rate. 6. Meet the GWCS operational crew and view the Bartec system.
Observations	1. Important that the GWCS breaks-even financially.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Technology works but further development required. 3. Corporate approach to incentivisation scheme to promote online applications and payments. 4. The Group took the opportunity to meet the Organic Waste Collection staff and see the in-cab devices (Bartec) in operation.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In relation to Councillor Nettleton's motion to SEBC Council on 19 December 2017, the Group felt that there were insufficient advantages to support the motion; and there would be a number of marketing and operational issues incurred. The Group also did not favour supporting a discounted charging scheme.

Meeting 3:

Subjects covered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Correlation between subscription charge and take-up rate. 2. Financial impact of charging £43 and £45 per subscription.
Observations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The change in the financial relationship with SCC from 2019/20 onwards. 2. Many factors influence the take-up rate. 3. Growth in household numbers. 4. The role of ARP especially with people moving into the area.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the current subscription charge from £40 to £43 for 2019-2020. This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subscription charge to be reviewed annually; • To be agreed with Portfolio Holders as part of budget setting and the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the fee annually; and • The GWCS budget is to be financially self-supporting. 2. Work with ARP and encourage them to refer customers to the council's GWCS. 3. As part of the next subscription process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run marketing campaign aimed at rounds where take-up is low but garden space is large. • Find out key reasons households are not signing up. • Further promote bin sharing. • Investigate incentivisation scheme to encourage direct debit (DD) sign up.

Meeting 4:

Subjects covered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rolling 12 month subscription period. 2. Impact of garden waste in residual waste bin. 3. Operational changes to the GWCS to increase efficiency. 4. Communications and marketing plan for 2019 onwards.
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Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high proportion (86%) of subscribers had already joined at the start of the subscription period with 45% automatically subscribed by Direct Debit. • Need to reconsider the marketing message if householders joined at different times. • New system would allow flexibility for customers. • Potential risk of increased quantities of garden waste being placed in the residual bin (black bin) if residents delayed their subscription. • There would need to be stricter operational rules. • The “apply”, pay and marketing processes need to be fully automated. • The benefits to having a rolling subscription would be limited to new customers in the first year only.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move towards a rolling subscription model by April 2020, to be linked to the Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy and marketing approaches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to be fully automated. • Cost to be assessed, agreed and acceptable within the budget of the GWCS. 2. Run a marketing campaign trial to change behaviours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify bin collection rounds with the highest garden waste in residual waste. 3. Review at a later date the “ban” option after all marketing options had been carried out, with a caveat on what goes in the black bin. 4. To undertake collection round modelling to reflect future changes prior to the move to the WSOH. 5. To depart from singular bin collection day approach for the GWCS to unlock collection capacity to support residual waste collections. 6. To continue to promote the take-up and migration to DD. 7. To retain the current branding. 8. To scope work with ARP and any other partners to introduce a new homes pack for house moves. 9. To understand the remaining potential in the households not currently subscribing to the GWCS. 10. A “New to area” section to be added to the West Suffolk website.