



## Impact of Universal Credit on Bulky Waste Discount Scheme

<b>Report No:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/19/011</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder for Operations for a decision</b>	25 June 2019
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**Decisions Plan:** A Notice of Intention containing the purpose and background to the decision expected to be made by the Portfolio Holder for Operations will be published on 17 June 2019.

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendation:** **It is recommended that the Customer Service Team uses Council Tax Reduction as eligibility to receive a discounted bulky waste collection, as set out in section 2 of Report No: CAB/WS/19/011.**

## **1. Background / Context**

- 1.1 The bulky waste collection service is a statutory but chargeable service available to all households in West Suffolk. It provides for the removal of large household items including electrical items, furniture and other fixtures and fittings.
- 1.2 The charge for this service is £32 per collection for up to five items, with £3 per item charged for additional items up to a maximum of ten.
- 1.3 Under current arrangements, recipients of council tax reduction and housing benefit are offered a discount of 50% when they book bulky waste collections. This reduces the cost of the collection to £16 for up to five items and £1.50 for additional items. The discount only applies to their first bulky waste collection during the year.
- 1.4 In 2018/19 a total of 2,161 bulky waste collections were undertaken by the Council, 451 (20.9%) of which were discounted.
- 1.5 Council tax reduction and housing benefit are not mutually exclusive, so someone receiving council tax reduction will not necessarily be receiving Housing Benefit. However recipients of housing benefit will usually be eligible for Council Tax Reduction.
- 1.6 Information on the type of benefit residents are in receipt of is checked by the Customer Service Team (CST) through Anglia Revenue Partnership's (ARP) portal "Connect and Serve". When the benefit has been confirmed, the CST agent will call the resident back to finalise the details of the booking. However information on which benefit entitled the resident to the discount is not kept.
- 1.7 The roll-out of Universal Credit across West Suffolk means that the CST will no longer be able to identify claimants previously receiving housing benefit. Universal Credit is replacing all benefits in one payment, for example, housing benefit, child benefit, income support and disability allowance.
- 1.8 Council tax reduction is not covered by Universal Credit and is applied locally. Council tax reduction is means tested and is available to residents who:
- have a disability or are living with someone who has a disability.
  - are severely mentally impaired or living with someone who is severely mentally impaired.
  - are over state pension age, and are living with another adult who is not their partner and does not pay rent.
- A discount of 25% on council tax is available to residents who live on their own; this is called single adult discount.
- 1.9 The latest figures from ARP and the Department of Work and Pensions on the number of residents entitled to the following benefits are:

Council Tax Reduction <b>9,184</b>	Housing Benefit <b>8,429</b>	Universal Credit <b>2,002</b>
Approximately 50% are entitled due to being of pensionable age	This figure is reducing as people are being moved to Universal Credit	This figure is increasing as people are moved off individual benefits

## **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 In order for the CST to ascertain if a resident should be eligible for a bulky waste collection discount, a different marker is required. Council tax reduction is a reliable indicator of financial eligibility for a discount and is available for the CST to check. Eligible residents will continue to receive a discounted service following the same process that is currently in place.
- 2.2 The number of residents currently eligible for housing benefit is similar to those eligible for council tax reduction. Residents claiming housing benefit or who receive the housing benefit element in Universal Credit are highly likely to be eligible for council tax reduction.
- 2.3 The recommendation of this report is required to enable CST to process ongoing applications for the discounted bulky waste collection service and it is proposed that it is introduced with immediate effect. It is intended to undertake a fundamental review of the service charges and the discount later this year, as part of the review of service fees and charges. This review will also take into account the service offered by other Suffolk councils, as set out in Appendix A.

## **3. Alternative options**

- 3.1 In addition to the bulky waste service provided by the Council, there continues to be a number of other options available to residents. Bulky waste collections are available from private operators, usually on the replacement of an old item. Collection takes place when the new item is delivered and costs vary from £15-£30 for a single item (for example a washing machine, fridge freezer or mattress).
- 3.2 Many charities operating locally are able to provide free collections for items that are in good condition and that are reusable. Information on charities offering this service locally is available on the West Suffolk Council website.
- 3.3 Free disposal continues to be available for all household items at Suffolk County Council's household waste recycling centres.

#### **4. Risks and implications arising from the proposal**

##### 4.1 Financial

4.1.1 Impact to the Council's budget are limited by only offering the discounted service to households in receipt of council tax reduction.

4.1.2 There may be a small number of residents who become ineligible for a discounted service, however they will still be able to access the full priced service, or one of the alternative services listed above.

##### 4.2 Legal compliance

4.2.1 West Suffolk Council continues to provide the statutory bulky waste collection service. There is no legal requirement to provide a collection charge discount.

##### 4.3 Personal data processing

4.3.1 CST agents will only check if residents are in receipt of council tax reduction if the resident making the booking for a bulky waste collection requests a discount.

##### 4.4 Environmental or sustainability

4.4.1 Customers are encouraged to pass items on for reuse when requesting a bulky waste collection and through the information on the website.

#### **5. Appendices**

5.1 **Appendix A** – Bulky waste collection services in Suffolk

## Appendix A

### Bulky waste collection services offered by other Suffolk authorities

Authority	Charge	Number of items	Additional cost	Discount
East Suffolk Council	£44	3	£15 per additional item	None
Ipswich Borough Council	£37.50	5	£37.50 for 5 additional items, up to 15.	1 free collection for recipients of means tested benefits: Pension Credit, Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (Income based), Employment Support Allowance (Income related) or Universal Credit <b>AND</b> Council Tax reduction
Mid Suffolk and Babergh	£40.50	5	Not available	None