

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCOUNCIL23 October 2024Report by Director of EnvironmentBROWN BIN (GARDEN / FOOD WASTE) COLLECTION PROPOSAL**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise Council and seek approval for proposed changes to the collection of brown bins (garden & food waste) from Monday 5 May 2025.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council:
- (a) Note the information provided as background on the costs and usage of the current brown bin (garden and food waste) collection scheme; and
  - (b) Approve the change of frequency of brown bin collections to a fortnightly service, while maintaining the current cost of the garden waste permit scheme within this.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The current brown bin collection in East Renfrewshire is a weekly collection of food and garden waste. There are 50 collections throughout the year, with the collection of garden waste requiring the purchase of an annual permit, as this is not a statutory service – but is subject to clear public demand. Food waste collection is a statutory service and is collected from brown bins without a permit.

4. East Renfrewshire Council commenced charging for garden waste collection on Monday 7 June 2021, as approved by Council on [15 April 2021](#). Currently permit holders receive 50 uplifts of their garden waste within brown bins for an annual cost of £52.20. Included in this annual cost is the collection of a single real Christmas tree; additional or standalone tree collections (without a garden waste permit) cost £15 each for collection and disposal.

5. East Renfrewshire is the only council that offers a weekly collection of garden waste. Of the 32 Scottish local authorities, 24 have a charging regime in place and 5 do not collect garden waste. The remaining 3 council areas do not currently charge for garden waste collection; but 2 of these Councils are seeking to introduce charging in 2025/26. The frequency of collection varies for the charging regime, from weekly collections to all year round fortnightly collections, or to seasonal collections (typically March to November) on a fortnightly or less basis.

6. Within East Renfrewshire, the garden waste permit scheme is voluntary. Charging is currently reviewed annually in line with the Council's Charging for Services process. Approximately 22,800 permits were issued for 2024/25, along with 442 permits for an additional brown bin. The number of permits purchased demonstrates the high demand for

this service within East Renfrewshire. This year a range of options were assessed. In addition to considering options for permit price increases, the service considered changes to the collection frequency that are consistent with other local authorities' garden waste services to recover a higher proportion of the operating costs of the service.

## REPORT – PROPOSAL FOR GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION FROM 2025/26

7. To identify the service provision for brown bins being offered by other local authorities, a benchmarking exercise was undertaken as shown in the table below, highlighting that the majority of authorities offer a fortnightly or 4-weekly service as a means of reducing service delivery costs. While the brown bin permit charge in East Renfrewshire is broadly comparable with other authorities, this remains a heavily subsidised non-statutory service, with East Renfrewshire being the only Council collecting brown bins on a weekly basis.

Council Area	24/25 Cost Per Bin / Permit	Collection Frequency	Seasonal / Notes
Renfrewshire	£40	Fortnightly	
Glasgow City Council	£50	Fortnightly	
Inverclyde	£42	Fortnightly	Collections are March to November
South Ayrshire	£50	Four Weekly	No collections in December, January & February
East Ayrshire	£30	Four Weekly	No collections in December, January & February
West Dunbartonshire	£60	Fortnightly	March 2025 start date. Seasonal Collections.
East Dunbartonshire	£50	Fortnightly	No collections in December, January & February
South Lanarkshire	No Charge*	Fortnightly	*Charging of £45 per annum, approved from 2025
North Lanarkshire	No Charge	Fortnightly	2025/26 proposals under consideration

8. It should be noted that the table above is for 2024/25 collections. Most Local Authorities will be reviewing their 2025/26 charging, with increases planned in some authorities.

9. The estimated costs for brown bin collections in 2025/26 is £2,429,447. Costs are inclusive of staffing, vehicles (which includes capital charges), disposal fees and administration of the garden waste permit scheme. The forecasted income is £1,190,160 for the garden waste scheme based on the same level of usage. Garden waste is currently calculated as 80% of disposal fees, equipment and staffing for brown bin collections (therefore the 2025/26 estimated cost for garden waste disposal would be £1,943,558). On this basis, garden waste collections are expected to operate at an under recovery of £753,398. Disposal fees represent a significant cost for all of the Council's waste operations. It is a volatile market where local authorities have no option but to accept significant cost increases when these arise.

10. To reduce the cost of brown bin collections it is proposed that for the 2025/26 financial year, East Renfrewshire Council maintains the current £52.20 annual charge for garden waste collection permits but changes the frequency of collections of brown bins (for food and garden waste) to a fortnightly service, aligning the service with neighbouring authorities. This will provide 25 collections throughout the year, as opposed to the current 50, presenting the opportunity to lower the costs by £356k.

11. A move to 25 collections per annum at a permit charge of £52.20, would mean the cost for collection of garden waste would amount to £2.09 per collection. This is comparable with existing charges in other local authorities where there is a charging regime. Additionally, East Renfrewshire offers the collection of a single real Christmas tree as part of the permit which increases the value of the service; tree collection and disposal is normally charged at £15 per tree.

12. With a projected under recovery of £753,398 in 2025/26, approval to move the brown bin service to a fortnightly collection cycle will reduce costs by £356k, reducing the under recovered costs to approximately £397k.

13. Agreement on this change is required in sufficient time to support a smooth transition to the new approach for 5 May 2025. This will include required re-routing works and development of a communications program.

### **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

14. Changing garden and food waste collections to a fortnightly service will provide the opportunity to reduce the cost for this non-statutory service by £356,000. This will be achieved by a reduction of two refuse collection vehicles and crews required for collections. There will be no redundancies required for this saving.

15. This saving assumes that the weights of garden waste disposed of annually would remain constant. Likewise, income has been based upon the current 22,800 permits purchased in 2024/25. The requirement for additional brown bin permits has not been factored into potential income, with the cost for an additional brown bin remaining the same in 2025/26. There are currently 442 additional brown bin permits in 2024/25.

16. There is no proposal to increase the current annual permit charge of £52.20.

17. Disposal fees for brown bin (garden and food) waste are currently increasing by 20% per year. There is only one facility in Central Scotland which processes this waste. The Service with other local authorities will continue to look at alternative options for processing of garden and food waste.

### **CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

18. Consultation has taken place with the Trade Unions on this proposal. The Council has benchmarked with neighbouring authorities.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

19. The proposals outlined would enable East Renfrewshire Council to continue to offer a garden waste collection whilst reducing costs of this service. These savings will be delivered from the reduction of the number of crews carrying out collections and reduction of vehicles required. The reduction in two crews from the service would result in six posts from the establishment being deleted. These are vacant posts at present and mainly staffed through agency workers. There would not be any redundancies as a result and the staff savings would be achieved through normal turnover. HR have been consulted on the proposals.

20. It is imperative that any decision regarding changes to the brown bin service is made in a timely manner, as there are significant lead in times for re-routing and public communications.

21. There are no property, legal, IT, Subsidy Control, equalities, sustainability and climate change implications associated with this report. It is anticipated that there would be no major change to the high recycling rates that take place in East Renfrewshire currently.

## CONCLUSIONS

22. To balance the costs of service delivery, officers from Neighbourhood Services have carried out a review of the brown bin collection service. As a result of this work, it is proposed to move brown bin collections to a fortnightly service, with no cost change to the permit in 2025/26.

23. The above change allows costs to be reduced through reductions in vehicle costs and staffing. There are no redundancies associated with the proposed change. Changing collection to a fortnightly service aligns East Renfrewshire neighbouring local authorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

24. It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Note the changes and further detailed information provided as background on the costs and usage of the current brown bin (garden and food waste) collection scheme; and
- (b) Approve the change of frequency of brown bin collection to a fortnightly service, while maintaining the current cost of the garden waste permit scheme within this.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from Caitriona McAuley, Director of Environment  
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