

To: Infrastructure, Land, and Environment Policy Board

On: 29 May 2024

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing, and Infrastructure

Heading: Garden Waste Permit and Churches and Charities Review

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council agreed at its meeting on the 14th of December 2023 to carry out a review of the Council's Garden Waste Permit Scheme and the Churches and Charities charges since their introduction over the course of the 2023/24 financial year, and that a report be brought to the ILE Policy Board prior to the summer recess.
 - 1.2 The report will provide an update on how these service implementations have progressed and setting out the current status. The report will also provide reference to the wider landscape across Scotland and where Renfrewshire sits in relation to these service areas.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land, and Environment Policy Board:

- 2.1 Notes the content of this report and approves the continuation of the garden waste permit and church and charity waste service arrangements as set out in the report.
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3. Background

- 3.1 As part of the 2023/24 budget setting process, at its meeting on 2 March 2023, the Council agreed to establish a Garden Waste Permit Scheme requiring Renfrewshire householders to purchase and display a permit for the uplift and disposal of their Garden Waste. Under the general duty applicable to local authorities through the 'Environmental Protection Act' (1990) and the 'Waste (Scotland) Regulations' 2012, Local authorities in Scotland do not have a

statutory obligation to provide a household garden waste collection service. Details of how the Garden Permit Scheme would operate were agreed at the ILE Policy Board at its meeting on 24 May 2023, with the service commencing in July 2023.

- 3.2 At its meeting on 15 March 2023, the ILE Policy Board agreed to continue to provide churches with a free household collection and disposal service (i.e. where the general waste bin is collected every 3 weeks and the recycle bins are collected every 4 weeks). Additionally, if churches generated food waste, this would be collected fortnightly and if garden waste is generated by a church, the church could choose to participate in the garden permit scheme. Where a church wished to receive a more frequent service and / or a larger volume of waste collected, the church would be offered at a reduced commercial waste charge of 55% of the commercial waste charge (i.e. the collection element only). This fulfilled the Council's statutory obligations.
- 3.3 Similarly, the ILE Policy Board in March 2023 agreed to retain the free disposal of collected waste and recycling from charities and uplifts for charities were moved onto the Council's commercial collection and disposal service at a reduced rate of 55% of the normal charge (i.e. the collection element only). Again, this fulfilled the Council's statutory obligations.

4. Garden Waste Permit Scheme

- 4.1 With this being a new service, the Council invested in the promotion and to support residents to apply and participate in the permit scheme. Residents who received the service would affix a sticker to their brown bins to allow collection crews to uplift their garden waste. Those who only presented food waste within their brown bins, were not required to apply for and pay for a permit. The Council also approved the introduction exceptions from charge for those households qualified for with Severe Mental Impairment (SMI).
- 4.2 The information below sets out the participation and income generate through the scheme for the 23/24 financial year and provides an update on the current position with participation for the 24/25 financial year.
- 4.3 For the financial year 2023/24:
 - The Council received a total of 30,413 applications for Garden Permits.
 - 26,795 were paid permits generating a gross income of £1,071,800.
 - 2,615 householders bought more than 1 permit (2,224 bought 2 permits; 303 bought 3 permits; 68 bought 4 permits; and 20 bought 5 permits).
 - 1,602 were approved exemptions (i.e., those in receipt of full Council Tax benefit and those with SMI).
- 4.4 Overall, the net income for 2023/24 was £905,761. Of the implementation costs, 60% were 'one-off' costs. These costs included:
 - The design, print and postage of leaflets to households advising them of the service arrangements; permits and bin tags advising households of contamination.

- Support for the Customer Services Unit (CSU) to advise and help householders complete the online application; support for Council Tax to assess applications for exemptions and support for the waste advisors to help householders with the implementation.
 - A social media/ digital communications campaign to advise householders of the change.
- 4.5 For the current financial year 24/25, to date 29,520 applications have been received, with 27,167 paid permits, 1,477 approved exemptions, with income generated to date of £1,086,680.

Overall Uptake

- 4.6 Prior to implementation, evidence from other Scottish local authorities who had implemented a garden permit scheme suggested that uptake would be around 30-40% in year one. For 2023/24, 28,397 households in Renfrewshire signed up for a garden waste permit, an uptake of 46.5%.

HWRC Sites/ Fly-Tipping

- 4.7 From the introduction of the garden permit scheme in July 2023 to the end of the core garden season in November 2023, comparing tonnage of waste collected against 2022, there was a reduction of 1525 tonnes of material collected from kerbside Brown bins. In this same period, there was also a reduction on the amount of material collected in the grey general waste bin of 32 tonnes and an increase in the garden waste deposited at the HWRC sites of 249 tonnes. Overall, this would indicate that some residents took the option to utilise the free service offered at HWRC sites and that garden waste material was not transferred to the general waste bin.
- 4.8 The roll out of the Garden Waste Permit Scheme followed soon after the introduction of the Environmental Taskforce to deal with fly tipping. A major part of this was implementing a much more rigorous reporting method, this included the “*How to Report Fly tipping*” weblink that was promoted throughout 23/24 on Team up to Clean Up media pages, resulting in much more accurate reporting. Overall, the council has seen an increase in general fly tipping reports, with an increase of 25 specifically for garden waste, this equates to 1.6% of total fly-tipping reports received in 2023/24
- 4.9 Following implementation of the Garden Waste Permit Scheme, a number of good practice and improvements to the overall process for 2024/25 have been introduced including:
- Directly contacting customers who purchased a permit for 23/24.
 - Introducing a separate address into the application form allowing printed permits to be sent to an alternative address, particularly where a family member is providing support to the household.
 - Developing a social media and media release campaign, which has widened the awareness and access through greater publicity within local offices and libraries, Tenants and Tenants Associations, Community Councils, as well as ‘GovDelivery’ newsletters, ‘Meta’ posts, ‘Instagram’ posts and ‘Google’ advertising.

- Developing an automatic Council Tax exemption checking process through AI technology which has vastly reduced the workload of Council Tax and CSU teams.

Benchmarking

- 4.10 As can be seen from Appendix 1 of the report, 76% of Scottish local authorities who provide a household garden waste service, now charge for that service. 7 Scottish local authorities don't provide a household garden waste collection at all. The average permit charge across the 19 Scottish local authorities is £44.62 per bin, putting Renfrewshire below the average. Additionally, Renfrewshire is one of only 6, of the 19 Scottish local authorities that offers any exemptions to households.
- 4.11 Based on the positive uptake of the service, use of the HWRC facilities and the wider context that this is becoming the main service offering across the country it is planned that the garden permit scheme arrangements will continue in its current form.

5. Churches and Charities

- 5.1 The service commenced the introduction of the charges from September 2023, when all of the churches and charities received correspondence detailing the changes, including the frequency of collection and the projected costs based upon the then current service provision they received. On-site appointments with waste advisers confirmed their requirements and to sign the required 'Duty of Care' documentation formalising the new collection infrastructure and frequency of uplift.
- 5.2 To assist each church and charity, the Council provided the required bin infrastructure at no cost to the Church or Charity, and removed any excess bin infrastructure, again at no cost to the Church or Charity. The visits were undertaken from October 2023 and completed by late January/ early February 2024, with all the completed 'Duty of Care' documentation now signed off.
- 5.3 Following introduction of the new service arrangements the following arrangements were put in place with Churches and Charities for waste collection:

71 Churches

- 26 churches have moved onto the free household collection and disposal service; of these 10 have purchased a Garden Permit to add to their household collection and disposal service.
- 11 churches have additionally added a commercial collection service (at a reduced rate of 55% of the normal commercial rate)
- 34 churches have chosen to end their collection and disposal service from the Council.

77 Charities

- 32 charities have moved onto a commercial collection service (at a reduced rate of 55% of the normal commercial rate)

- 45 charities chose not to move to the Council's commercial collection service; and
- 5.4 Following this process, details of those churches and charities who chose not to continue to receive a Council collection service (either a standard household or commercial), have been passed to the Environmental Taskforce who are contacting identified organisations to confirm appropriate, lawful 'Duty of Care' arrangements are in place.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The Garden Waste Permit Scheme has contributed to the Council's Financial Sustainability strategy
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – none
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** - none
10. **Risk** - none
11. **Privacy Impact** - none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** - none
13. **Climate Risk** - none

List of Background Papers

Garden Waste Permit Collection Scheme

Infrastructure, Land & Environment Policy Board

24 May 2023

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

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Appendix 1

| Local Authority | Cost per Bin |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Aberdeen City | £30.00 |
| Aberdeenshire | N/A |
| Angus | £40.00 |
| Argyll & Bute | N/A |
| City of Edinburgh | £35.00 |
| Clackmannanshire | £48.00 |
| Comhairle nan Eilean Siar | N/A |
| Dumfries & Galloway | N/A |
| Dundee City | £45.00 |
| East Ayrshire | £0.00 |
| East Dunbartonshire | £50.00 |
| East Lothian | £35.00 |
| East Renfrewshire | £50.00 |
| Falkirk | £45.00 |
| Fife | £0.00 |
| Glasgow City | £50.00 |
| Highland | £47.75 |
| Inverclyde | £42.00 |
| Midlothian | £40.00 |
| Moray | £50.00 |
| North Ayrshire | £0.00 |
| North Lanarkshire | £0.00 |
| Orkney Islands | N/A |
| Perth & Kinross | £40.00 |
| Renfrewshire | £40.00 |
| Scottish Borders | N/A |
| Shetland Islands | N/A |
| South Ayrshire | £50.00 |
| South Lanarkshire | £0.00 |
| Stirling | £50.00 |
| West Dunbartonshire | £60.00 |
| West Lothian | £0.00 |