



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Proposal to Apply Charges to Bulky Household Waste Collections
Date:	8th September 2010
Reporting Officer:	Sam Skimin, Head of Cleansing Services, Ext. 5273
Contact Officer:	Sam Skimin, Head of Cleansing Services, Ext 5273

Relevant Background Information

As outlined in the Directorate report on the efficiency programme for the Department a proposal was put forward to review the potential for recovering a proportion of the costs of providing the bulky waste service through the introduction of a charge to the public for the service. The purpose in doing this is to generate a level of money which will assist in keeping the 2011/2012 Departmental budgets within the targets set by the Council.

Key Issues

To assess the feasibility of introducing such a charge, Cleansing Services has been enquiring as to the level of service provided by other local councils. Charges for collection range from £5 to £16. The number of items covered by the charge range from 1 to 10 items. Items for collection include very bulky items such as fridges and white goods, furniture etc. but normally exclude builders waste, garden waste and DIY waste.

The proposal for Belfast would be that a £5 charge would be made for up to 5 items and a further £5 for each additional batch of up to 5 items. The size of an item would be restricted to a standard black bag or equivalent, for most loose items, or an item of white goods, furniture or electrical equipment. Very large items or excessive amounts would be assessed individually and an appropriate charge applied for that particular request. This would be applied to the 47,000 (approximate) bulky waste collections we complete each year. Collections would continue to exclude builders' waste.

In considering this proposal there are some issues which the Committee should take into account, i.e:

- The number of requests for bulky waste collections may fall off sharply due to a charge being levied.
- There may be an increase in dumping in the city necessitating extra resources being applied to remove dumped items and to follow up with effective enforcement. This may have an adverse effect on the cleanliness of the city.
- There will be additional administrative workload to process payments etc.

Taking account of any additional income less the extra resources applied to dealing with increased dumping, the cost of introducing electronic and other payment systems and additional clerical support to process payments, the service has estimated the potential for a net increase in income to the Council of approximately £47,000 in the first year of operation. This may increase in future years.

There are, however, a number of uncertainties in terms of what effect this will have on peoples' waste disposal habits so the actual outcome can only be properly determined after the scheme has been in operation for some time and a full operational assessment can be completed. Therefore it is recommended that the introduction of charging is carried out as a pilot in 2010/2011.

Resource Implications

Financial

Financial implications are difficult to quantify in the absence of what effect the charge will have on demand for the service and subsequent waste disposal habits. The estimated net increase in income of £47,000 takes into account a potential for a significant reduction in service requests and any increase in the need for waste clearance, enforcement and additional clerical resources, which would have to be met from any income generated. There will also be an initial cost of systems amendments to enable electronic and other payment options.

Human Resources

There may be a need for some temporary additional resources to deal with clearance of dumped waste and enforcement and permanent additional clerical support to deal with payments processing and additional administration. It is difficult to quantify these with any great certainty at this point until the proposed charges are applied and the effect on the number of service requests, waste disposal behaviour and administration systems is gauged.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the above proposal and to decide if it wishes to proceed with the application of a charge for collection of bulky household items on a pilot basis during 2011/2012.

The Committee is also asked to note that additional resources may be required to deal with the effects of introducing the charge both from an operational and administrative perspective. However the cost of any such resources would be met from within any income gained from the collection charge.

If the Committee decides to apply a charge, it is also asked to provide delegated authority to the Director of Health and Environmental Services to set any future charges for the bulky waste collection service.

Decision Tracking

Should Members approve this proposal, the Head of Cleansing Services will have the proposal Equality Screened and will bring a further update report to Committee once the charging has been implemented and operational for a period of 6 months.

Documents Attached

None