

# Garden Waste Collection Charging

From 1 April 2017, the council introduced a **£35 annual charge** for brown bin collections.

## Food waste update

### **What has changed?**

Residents who have paid for the removal of garden waste in a brown bin can now include compostable food waste together with their garden waste. The council will empty the bin and take all the contents away for composting (so long as it does not contain anything other than compostable garden and food waste).

### **When does the change happen?**

As of **Friday 3 November**, residents who have paid for the removal of garden waste in a brown bin can now include compostable food waste together with their garden waste.

### **What if I'm not subscribed to the brown bin service?**

The council will continue to remove household waste for free, including food waste, whether you have a brown bin or not.

### **Why has the policy been changed?**

Following feedback from residents after the new service was introduced, we've taken further steps to review the policy around food waste.

Residents were initially asked to put food waste in their black bins because we can only charge for the collection of garden waste and food waste can be treated under different conditions to garden waste – which allowed us to explore alternative composting options.

A further review of the processing and collection options has allowed us to update our position, enabling residents who have paid for the removal of garden waste to include compostable food waste in their brown bin.

### **Can I subscribe to the service just for food waste?**

The subscription charge is for garden waste to be taken away, although food waste can also be put in the brown bin, the council is charging for the collection of garden waste.

### **Can I wrap my food waste in newspaper?**

Newspaper is classed as a contaminant, as it affects the quality of the compost that can be produced from food and garden waste. We ask residents to continue putting newspaper into their inner caddies so it can be recycled and made back into paper.

Residents can use paper caddy liners to wrap their food waste, which are sold in many supermarkets and widely available online.

### **Why did my calendar card tell me to continue putting food waste in my black bin?**

The most recent calendar cards were printed before the decision was made to update the policy. As of Friday 3 November, residents who have paid for the removal of garden waste in a brown bin can now include compostable food waste together with their garden waste.

## Subscribing to the service

### **How can I pay for my subscription?**

From Wednesday 1 March 2017, payments will open for residents to subscribe to the garden waste service. Payments can be made using a credit or debit card either online at <http://www.welhat.gov.uk/gardenwaste> or through the Contact Centre on 01707 357000. Please note that we cannot accept payment by cash or cheque.

### **How will you know that I've paid?**

Once you have paid, you will receive an email notification confirming your payment. You will also receive a confirmation letter with stickers to put on your brown bin(s). Your property will be added to an electronic database so collection crews will know who has paid and which bins to empty.

### **Can I have more than one brown bin?**

Yes, the council agreed a £60 charge for a second bin to allow residents to recycle more of their garden waste, if needed. This higher charge for a second bin offsets the additional costs a second bin creates.

### **I have paid for my first bin and have decided I want a second bin – what do I do?**

You won't be able to pay for this online as your property will already be registered. Please call us on 01707 357000 to arrange your second brown bin subscription.

### **Can I sign up part way through the year?**

Yes, you can sign up to the service throughout the year. However, the price will remain at £35 to cover collections up until 31 March 2018.

Having just one renewal date means the service is easier to administer, which will keep the service cost down for its users. It also helps prevent people opting in/out for short periods, which complicates the management of collection rounds and would add further expense to the overall service.

### **Can I share a bin with neighbours?**

Yes, you can share a bin between neighbours. However, the bin can only be allocated to one address.

### **What if I have subscribed, but haven't received, or misplaced my stickers?**

If you have subscribed and paid for the garden waste service, but you haven't received or misplaced your stickers, please don't worry. Please put your bin out and it will still be emptied. This is because your address will be added to an electronic database, which will allow us and collection crews to identify who has paid.

Your stickers should arrive by post within ten working days of you subscribing to the service. If they haven't arrived, or you have misplaced your stickers, an officer will put stickers on your bin in due course, you do not need to contact us.

### **I live in a rented property, can I still subscribe?**

Yes, you or your landlord can subscribe to the service, although please bear in mind that the bin/s are assigned to the property not the occupant/s.

### **I am a landlord/managing agent; can I pay for more than one property at once?**

If you want to pay for more than one property you can do this online by registering and paying for each property separately. Alternatively, you can register the properties you would like to pay online and then call us with your reference numbers to make the payment. For further guidance, please call us on 01707 357000.

### **Can I subscribe to the service if I live in a flat?**

If you already have a brown bin, you can pay for a subscription. Please note, the subscription has to be assigned to only one address, so you will need to agree this with your neighbours.

### **Are concessionary rates available?**

Concessionary rates will not be available. Charging different amounts would complicate the service administration, making it more costly and time consuming to run. Keeping to just one pricing level means we have been able to introduce a lower charge for all.

### **Can I transfer my subscription if I move within the borough?**

If you are moving within the borough, you can transfer your subscription to your new address. Please do not take your bins with you, as these will be provided at your new property. Please call us to transfer your subscription; it may take up to 10 working days.

### **What do I do with animal bedding?**

Animal bedding including hay, straw and sawdust can go in your brown bin.

## **How the service operates**

### **Will my collection day change?**

Initially, collection days will stay the same. Once the new service is established, collection days may change as rounds are reviewed. Residents will be fully informed before any changes happen.

### **What if I receive an Assisted Collection?**

If you subscribe to the garden waste service and you are already on the council's assisted collection, this will not change and you will continue to receive your service as usual.

### **What happens if my bin gets missed?**

If your bin is missed, please report it to us within 2 working days after your collection day. We will return for missed bins which are presented correctly and in accordance with our guidelines.

### **What happens if my brown bin is not collected because it is contaminated?**

We cannot empty bins if they contain the wrong items. If your bin is contaminated, you can:

- If you are able to, carefully sort through the bin to remove what shouldn't be in there. This way we'll be able to collect your bin on your next scheduled collection day.
- Contact us and we can arrange to empty your bin within 10 working days for a charge of £15.53. However, because the waste is contaminated, it may be disposed of.

## **Not subscribing to the service**

### **Is the garden waste collection service compulsory?**

No, you don't have to subscribe to the service. Only those properties that have chosen to subscribe will have their garden waste collected. If you do not wish to use the service, you will be responsible for ensuring that your garden waste is managed and disposed of correctly. You can do this by taking your garden waste to your local [Household Waste and Recycling Centre](#) or [composting at home](#).

### **What will happen to unused brown bins?**

Initially, residents who don't subscribe to the service will be asked to keep their brown bin at home (bins are assigned to a property, not to the occupant/s). This will give people time to consider the benefits of the service and avoids the £13.50 delivery charge to return the bin if residents decide to subscribe to garden waste collections in the future.

We will review the collection of unused brown bins at a later date.

### **Why was my brown bin taped?**

If you have not subscribed to the garden waste service and continue to present your brown bin for collection, tape will be placed around the lid.

If you would like to subscribe for the garden waste collection service, please do so by visiting [www.welhat.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.welhat.gov.uk/gardenwaste) or by calling us on 01707 357000.

If your bin has been taped in error, please contact us, either [online](#), by email [contact-whc@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:whc@welhat.gov.uk) or calling 01707 357000, within 48 hours so we can investigate and arrange for your brown bin to be emptied.

### **How will you stop people putting garden waste in their black bins?**

Garden waste must not be put in black bins and any that are found to be contaminated will not be collected.

## **Impact of the service**

### **Why have you introduced a charge?**

We have some very tough choices to make in finding ways to bridge our funding gap.

The council's core government funding has been halved to £4m in 2016/17, and this will be reduced by another 37% by 2019/20.

We have worked hard to deliver efficiencies without impacting on services, saving £11m since 2010. But despite these efforts, there remains a £2m budget gap and we have to find alternative ways of funding services.

### **Aren't brown bin collections covered by my council tax?**

Council tax is a statutory charge based on the occupation and ownership of a property. It helps pay for our services, but we only get to keep 13% of what's collected. The rest goes to Hertfordshire County Council, the police and town and parish councils. Currently your council tax contributes to the cost of running this service but it doesn't cover the full cost and we must now consider other ways of funding brown bin collections.

Local authorities do not bill residents only for the services they make use of. Nor do they make deductions from council tax based on non-use of a particular service, or when additional charges or fees are introduced.

### **What other ways of saving money have been considered?**

The council has generated £11m of savings and efficiencies since 2010. Each year our savings are set out in detail in our budget papers. Our budget proposals for 17/18 are outlined in a report to Cabinet [here](#) and include a further £1.3m in efficiency savings. The council's [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) sets out areas we can balance our budget in the years ahead.

### **Why is stopping winter collections not an option?**

We have considered all feasible alternatives to introducing an annual charge. Stopping the collections over winter months would not come close to generating the level of savings we need to help bridge the funding gap.

### **Is the council worried about an increase in fly-tipping?**

Over half of councils in the UK are charging for garden waste collections, including Three Rivers in Hertfordshire, and there is no evidence to indicate a rise in fly-tipping or pollution. We are also encouraging alternative ways to dispose of garden waste responsibly, including [home composting](#).

### **Won't this have a negative impact on recycling rates?**

We do not expect a significant reduction in recycling rates and hope most residents will either pay for the service, take their garden waste to their nearest household recycling centre or compost at home.

**Leaves from council trees fall into my garden, why should I have to pay for them to be collected?**

We look after around 45,000 individual trees, plus tree belt and woodland areas. In addition there are many thousands of privately owned trees - all of these contribute to the look and feel of the borough. We hope they are valued by residents across Welwyn Hatfield in all seasons, and any downside of a few weeks of leaf fall each year are felt to be outweighed by the benefits of living in such a green and pleasant area.

There are alternative ways of clearing autumn leaves, including home composting and recycling them into leaf mould – an excellent soil conditioner. The [Royal Horticultural Society](#) and the [BBC Gardening Guides](#) have some easy to follow tips on how to do this.