

Call in of Cabinet decisions from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 July 2014

Decisions made by the Cabinet on 21 July 2014 in respect of the following report below were called in for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Standing Orders.

Changes to Recycling and Green Waste Collections

The decisions made by the Cabinet were:

RESOLVED:

- (i) that approval be given to increasing the frequency of the dry recycling service to a weekly service;
- (ii) that approval be given to the extension of the separate food waste collection service to all street level properties;
- (iii) that approval be given to the introduction of a chargeable garden waste collection service as the means of facilitating these improvements as set out and detailed in section 4 of the report;
- (iv) that the financial and non-financial benefits that will accrue from these changes be noted;
- (v) that approval be given to the amendment to the Public Realm Contract and the minor changes to the contract targets to allow these proposals to go ahead.

Whilst not opposing the principle of charging for garden waste, members felt consider that the system proposed could be improved on.

There was concern at the absence of crucial information in the report including:

- a proper analysis of options available to the council
- consideration of up front payment (covering collection and disposal) for recycling bags rather than an annual charge
- clear financial information regarding risk/gain to Brent Council and Veolia
- information about market research undertaken with residents on options likely to achieve good recycling rates
- how Brent can seek reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities so increasing drop off points. The only site proposed in the report is at Abbey Road
- learning from other local authorities
- contamination of dry recycling/kitchen waste
- monitoring and enforcement
- communication with residents.

An outline of the suggested course of action of the Scrutiny Committee is to:

- seek a report responding to the concerns outlined above
- question lead member and senior officers and the leader

- if necessary, set up a very brief task finish group to examine these issues in more depth.

Additionally, reference was made to residents' concerns about the charge and the implications. Further clarification was requested on:

- the way the decision was made
- what would have changed within a year of a new contract, to justify such big change or adjustment
- the framework is in place for monitoring and reporting
- the financial implications for the council in relation to the scheme.

Whilst not opposing the principle of charging for garden waste, additional concerns were expressed at the absence of crucial information in the report including the failure to:

- demonstrate VFM (value for money)
- show financial information containing savings from decommissioning existing garden waste service
- give financial information regarding risk/gain to Brent Council and Veolia
- model other alternatives, available to the Brent Council and consider their financial and environmental impact.

Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- seek a report responding to the concerns outlined above
- question lead member and senior officers
- if necessary, set up a task group to examine these issues in more depth to ensure VFM.

Finally, representations expressed the concern that a flat fee was regressive, and referred to lobbying by the Mapesbury Gardening Group, environmental groups and local residents. The main concern was that the arrangement may not represent value for money once scenarios for unintended consequences were included in the model.

Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- invite the Lead Member, the Leader and appropriate officers to address these issues.