

SCDC Garden Waste Scheme – Frequently Asked Questions (updated Jan 2018)

What is happening? _____	2
When was this agreed? _____	2
When will this start? _____	2
What does this affect? _____	2
Why are charges being introduced? _____	3
How much is it going to cost? _____	3
Why not just stop garden waste collections? _____	4
Surely you receive enough money from my Council Tax – why do you need to charge more? _____	4
Why not just increase Council Tax to cover the garden waste collection costs? _____	4
Will this increase disposal costs, as people will put garden waste in their grey bins? _____	4
Will all councils in Suffolk be charging? _____	4
Will a charge for the blue-lidded bin or the grey bin be introduced? _____	5
Won't this just increase fly-tipping? _____	5
I don't have a garden – will I have to pay? _____	5
My gardener takes all my garden waste away – will I have to pay? _____	5
Will you be selling compost bins? _____	6
How will we know when to pay? _____	6
Couldn't the £43 charge simply be added to my council tax bill? _____	6
Can I pay in instalments? _____	6
What happens if I move or stop using the service – will I get a refund? _____	6
What happens if I do not pay? _____	6
I am on a low income/benefits – do I have to pay? _____	7
What should I do if I currently share my brown bin? _____	7
Why is the charge the same for a small bin as a large bin? _____	7
I have already paid for a 2 nd garden waste collection, will you honour this? _____	7
How can I opt out of the Scheme? _____	7
How do I return my brown bin? _____	8
How many collections are included in £43? _____	8
How will the refuse collectors know who has paid? _____	8
Will collections remain fortnightly? _____	8
Will I still pay during the winter months when my garden waste bin is often empty? _____	8
What if my garden waste collection is missed – will I be reimbursed? _____	9
Can I still put food waste in my garden waste bin? _____	9
Won't this encourage people to waste food or recycle less? _____	9
You've just moved into a new headquarters building – is this subsidising your new offices? _____	10
Why don't you go back to charging for plastic bags so you only pay for what you need? _____	10
Why change the size of the bins (from 140 litres to 240 litres)? _____	10
Why are you waiting until the autumn to introduce the 240 litre bins? _____	11

What is happening?

Suffolk Coastal District Council is in the process of introducing a £43 a year charge for collecting garden waste.

The scheme is optional, with the first paid-for collections scheduled to start from the beginning of May 2018.

Local residents will be able to subscribe for the new service from 1 March 2018. However, in the meantime, people can register their interest by completing a simple online form and we will email them when the subscription service is live.

When was this agreed?

At its Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, 5 December 2017, Suffolk Coastal decided to introduce a charge for collecting garden waste from homes during next financial year (2018/19).

People in Suffolk Coastal will be given the option of paying an annual charge of £43 per garden waste bin (the equivalent of paying about £1.65 per fortnightly collection).

This is a completely voluntary scheme, which people will have to opt to join (rather than residents automatically becoming part of the scheme).

Later in the year, subscribers to the scheme will also be given the option of receiving a free, larger (240 litre) green bin for their garden waste (240 litres is the most common wheeled bin size, but the current brown organic waste bins in Suffolk Coastal are 140 litres).

The new, larger green bins are expected to be delivered during the autumn (2018) to those residents who request one and have subscribed to the garden waste scheme.

When will this start?

The first paid-for collections are scheduled to start from 1 May 2018.

Residents will be able to join the scheme, and subscribe from 1 March 2018, although you can register an interest in joining before that date (and then we will email you when the subscription service is live).

What does this affect?

Suffolk Coastal currently collects about 50,000 tonnes of domestic household waste a year. About one third of this (about 15,000 tonnes) is organic waste. This is comingled garden (estimated 13,000 tonnes) and food (estimated 2,000 tonnes) waste.

The remaining waste is made up of general 'residual' waste at 22,000 tonnes (44%) and dry recycling at about 13,000 tonnes (26%).

The comingled organic waste (food waste collected together with garden waste) collected by Suffolk Coastal Norse for Suffolk Coastal is currently processed into an agricultural soil improver at an in-vessel (IVC) composting facility at Parham.

This organic waste processing contract ends on 31 March 2019, so a new contract is required to provide waste processing arrangements from April 2019 onwards.

Why are charges being introduced?

The reality is that Suffolk Coastal District Council has protected the 'free' collection of garden waste for as long as it could.

In 2015, we decided to maintain the 'free' garden waste collection service and to bear the cost of reduced Recycling Performance Payment support, despite the financial pressures on the Council.

However, at the time, we did recognise that this is a discretionary service that we provide and we always said we would have to keep this decision under review.

Suffolk Coastal District Council is now under increasing pressure financially, with dwindling support from central Government. Next year (2018/19), we are faced with a budget gap of over £2.8 million.

Providing the organic waste collection and composting service currently costs Suffolk Coastal over £1.2 million a year. This cost has been exacerbated by the £200,000 per year reduction in support for recycling organic waste previously provided by Suffolk County Council.

Our East Suffolk Business Plan identifies the need for us to become increasingly financially-self-sufficient in the future. As a result, we made the difficult decision to join the vast majority of other local authorities in Suffolk and Norfolk and provide local people with the opportunity to pay for a garden waste collection service.

However, this service will be entirely voluntary, with people having to 'opt in' and register to receive the service.

Any funds raised from the service will be re-invested in providing services to local people and reducing our budget gap.

Suffolk Coastal remains committed to an ambitious programme of community-based and major capital investments, such as the current leisure redevelopment, in the coming years. We need to continue to identify strong income streams, if we are to protect frontline services and avoid passing the burden on to the council tax payer.

This meant we had to explore all options available to us to raise money in order to keep council tax increases down and maintain our services.

How much is it going to cost?

Local residents will pay an annual charge of £43 a year per garden waste bin (irrespective of whether it is a brown 140 litre bin or a green 240 litre bin). This equates to about £1.65 per fortnightly garden waste collection.

Why not just stop garden waste collections?

While we do actively encourage people to compost their garden waste, to reduce the amount going into the waste disposal system, simply stopping the service is not a realistic option. Neither is it fair on those with limited, or no, composting space at their property.

The Council has a duty to collect household (but not garden) waste, which is paid for through the council tax everyone pays.

Although collecting garden waste is a discretionary service (for which a charge can be made), to stop it could result in much of the garden waste ending up in the residual waste (grey) bins, meaning that garden waste would simply be disposed of and not recycled.

We originally introduced garden waste collections to reduce the amount of compostable organic waste going in to grey bins. This will continue, and householders will not be permitted to place garden waste materials in the residual waste grey bins.

Surely you receive enough money from my Council Tax – why do you need to charge more?

Suffolk Coastal District Council actually only receives about 10% of the Council Tax that you pay each year. The vast majority of the council tax we collect goes to Suffolk County Council and the Police.

Previously, the majority of the funding we received came from central Government. However, in recent years, this support has been drastically reduced.

Working in partnership with Waveney, we have jointly made over £18million efficiency savings since 2008, but we are still in a difficult financial position and need to make difficult decisions, if we are to protect essential services and keep council tax down.

Why not just increase Council Tax to cover the garden waste collection costs?

Separate garden waste collections are not compulsory (they are what is known as a discretionary service from the Council). Many households do not have a garden, and many that do, compost their waste at home themselves and do not use the garden waste collection service. It is felt that introducing an optional charge, for those who want to use the service, is a fairer system. An overall increase in Council Tax to cover the garden waste collections would mean some households are paying for a service they do not use.

Will this increase disposal costs, as people will put garden waste in their grey bins?

No. The grey bin is for non-recyclable waste which is sent to the Suffolk 'Energy from Waste' plant at Great Blakenham, where it is incinerated to generate electricity. It will not be permitted to put garden waste in the grey bin. Any grey bin containing garden waste will be considered to be "contaminated" and will not be emptied.

Will all councils in Suffolk be charging?

All councils in Norfolk and Suffolk (with the exception of Ipswich Borough Council) already charge for garden waste collections.

The reduction in Recycling Performance Payments (RPP) by Suffolk County Council means that each council has to find the money from somewhere, while seeking to protect other essential services.

In Suffolk Coastal, the reduction in RPP has equated to an annual shortfall of £150,000, rising to over £200,000 in 2018/19, which has been funded through existing budgets.

Will a charge for the blue-lidded bin or the grey bin be introduced?

No. Current legislation does not allow us to charge for blue-lidded bin and grey bin collections. They are statutory services which we must undertake without additional charge.

Won't this just increase fly-tipping?

No, we don't believe it will. We know that the majority of Suffolk Coastal residents are conscientious and care about their local environment. Also, there has not been a reported increase in fly-tipping in other areas where a similar service has been introduced.

Fly-tipped garden waste tends to be in much larger quantities than would fit into a brown bin and, fortunately, is only done by an irresponsible few.

We would actively encourage people, even if they choose not to opt-in to the garden waste collection service, to dispose of their garden waste in a responsible way. There remain a number of options for the responsible disposal of garden waste, whether this is home composting, neighbourhood composting schemes or by taking it to any of Suffolk County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres where garden waste can be disposed of free of charge:

www.greensuffolk.org/recycling/HWRC

For more information, see: www.greensuffolk.org/recycling/composting

I don't have a garden – will I have to pay?

If you do not have a garden, it is unlikely you will need a garden waste bin. If you do not have a garden waste bin, you will not have to pay.

My gardener takes all my garden waste away – will I have to pay?

If you do not use your garden waste bin at all, you would be better off not opting in to the service.

If you have a gardener, and they, or any other trader, take garden waste away from your home for you, **you** must ensure that they are a registered waste carrier by calling 03708 506 506 and asking for an instant waste carrier validation, or by checking the public register online:

environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers

Anyone paid to take waste away from your house must have a Waste Carrier's licence and householders have a Duty of Care to ensure that their waste is disposed of responsibly. Failure to do so can result in fines for the householder of up to £5,000.

More information about your Duty of Care as a householder is available from:

www.greensuffolk.org/assets/Recycling/Flytipping/Advice-to-Householder.pdf

Will you be selling compost bins?

The Suffolk Waste Partnership, which includes Suffolk Coastal District Council, funds a scheme making home compost bins available at subsidised prices from as little as £8.99 for a 220 litre compost bin or £9.99 for a 330 litre bin.

The scheme also includes subsidies on several composting systems which can deal with some cooked food waste. To order a home compost bin or to see more details, visit:

www.suffolk.getcomposting.com or call 0844 571 4444 quoting SUF 17L.

In addition, all households will be invited to keep and re-use any unwanted brown bins if they wish. The bins are suitable for a number of alternative uses, including composting.

How will we know when to pay?

Now that the timeline for introducing the garden waste service has been established, full details will be distributed to all households explaining exactly what to do, how and when to pay and much more.

All details will be put on the website, and further information will also be put out through bin hangers, social media and our Coastline magazine, which goes to all homes in the district. This will be done each year, to remind people of the need to subscribe, if they want their garden waste to be collected by us.

Couldn't the £43 charge simply be added to my council tax bill?

No. Legally, the Council is not allowed to add charges for discretionary services such as this to your council tax bill.

Can I pay in instalments?

The option to pay by instalments is not available. The £43 charge is for one year and will be collected in one amount.

It lasts for one calendar year from 1 May 2018, or the date you sign-up if it is later, so everyone will pay a one-off annual payment of £43, no matter when they join the scheme.

What happens if I move or stop using the service – will I get a refund?

The charge is not refundable, if you stop using the service part way through the year or move out of the Suffolk Coastal area. If you move to another address in Suffolk Coastal, it can be transferred to that address.

What happens if I do not pay?

If you do not pay, it will be assumed that you do not want us to collect your garden waste, so we will stop collecting garden waste from your property.

Residents who do not pay, and do not wish to continue with the service, will have the option of keeping their existing 140 litre brown bin and use it for other purposes.

If you do not want to keep your brown bin after 1 May, please tell us and we will inform you of a date when we will be in your area collecting unwanted brown bins.

I am on a low income/benefits – do I have to pay?

There are no discount arrangements because this is a discretionary service.

If you want to receive the garden waste collection service, then you will need to join and pay the £43 annual charge.

If you have a very small garden, or can't afford the full cost of the service, you may want to enter into an arrangement with your neighbour to share a garden waste bin and the fee.

What should I do if I currently share my brown bin?

If you currently share brown bins with other residents, and want to continue to do so, you will need to organise the right number of bins for your needs. Typically this will apply to people living in flats, shared properties and sheltered accommodation.

It may be that there is a property management company that can subscribe on your behalf. If not, you and your fellow residents will need to come to an arrangement between yourselves to share the bins and the costs.

Why is the charge the same for a small bin as a large bin?

The work required to empty the current 140 litre brown bin is actually the same as for the larger green 240 litre bin being offered from Autumn 2018, despite the difference in volume.

The new larger green bins are likely to be delivered during the autumn 2018. When you subscribe for the service you will be asked if you want to upgrade to the larger bin when these become available. Households who have requested the larger bin will be advised nearer the time, when they can expect the new bins to be delivered.

Even if you initially decide not to upgrade to the bigger bin, you will be able to change your mind later on

I have already paid for a 2nd garden waste collection, will you honour this?

Yes. If you have an additional bin by arrangement with Suffolk Coastal Norse, the collections will continue until the end of the contract and we will write to you to explain your options under the new scheme.

Joining the Garden Waste Collection Scheme

How can I opt out of the Scheme?

You do not have to opt out. The Suffolk Coastal Garden Waste Collection Scheme is entirely voluntary and local people will have to opt to join it (rather than automatically becoming part of the scheme). You can join the scheme from 1 March 2018 – with the first paid-for collections scheduled to begin from 1 May 2018.

If you choose not to join the scheme, and have not paid for your garden waste to be collected, you will not be eligible for your garden waste to be collected by us after 1 May 2018.

However, you can always arrange for garden waste to be collected by joining the scheme at a later date to suit yourself if you change your mind. But you need to register and pay for the service, before collections will begin.

Unwanted brown/Garden Waste bins

How do I return my brown bin?

If you do not opt to join the garden waste collection service (or if you opt to join up and choose to have a larger 240ltr green bin), you can still keep your brown bin and use it for something else.

However, if you do not want to keep your brown bin, let us know and we will inform you of a date when we will be in your area collecting unwanted brown bins.

Collections

How many collections are included in £43?

The garden waste collection timetable remains at once a fortnight. So the £43 charge covers the entire year, so 26 collections in total, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

How will the refuse collectors know who has paid?

Everyone who has signed up to the scheme will receive a waterproof sticker to display on their garden waste bin to show that they have paid.

We will put procedures in place to double check, after 1 May 2018, that we are only collecting from homes with a current garden waste subscription. This may include new technology operated by the refuse crews providing them with up-to-date information on which households have current subscriptions to the scheme.

Will collections remain fortnightly?

Yes. Garden waste collections will continue to be made fortnightly. However, subject to take up, it may become necessary in future to review your day of collection.

Will I still pay during the winter months when my garden waste bin is often empty?

Yes. £43 is the cost of collecting and disposing of your garden waste for one year. This takes into account that most garden waste is collected during the growing season April to September.

We would urge residents to make the most of their garden waste collection service by ensuring as much garden waste as possible is put into the garden waste bin for collection.

Any residents who only generate a small amount of garden waste each year may find it preferable to opt out of the collection service and take their waste to the recycling centre, share a garden waste bin and fee with a neighbour, or make use of the subsidised composting bins instead.

What if my garden waste collection is missed – will I be reimbursed?

No. There will be fortnightly collections within the 12 month subscription period. In the event of severe weather conditions, we will make every reasonable attempt to make alternative collection arrangements to ensure waste does not accumulate.

As with black and blue bin collections, in the unlikely event that your garden waste is not collected, this can be reported online at my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/MyServices, by calling Customer Services on 01394 383789, or by emailing customerservices@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

Food waste

Can I still put food waste in my garden waste bin?

Yes, for the moment you can continue to put food waste in the brown bin, as you have previously done. However, this may change when the contract for disposing of the garden waste is reviewed in 2019.

At present, Suffolk Coastal (through its partner Suffolk Coastal Norse) collects organic waste (mixed garden and food waste) in its brown bins, and this is currently processed into an agricultural soil improver at an in-vessel composting facility at Parham.

This organic waste processing contract ends on 31 March 2019, so a new contract is required to provide waste processing arrangements from April 2019 onwards. Work has already begun on a new waste processing contract, looking at the options of continuing to collect mixed organic waste or moving to collecting garden waste only.

Won't this encourage people to waste food or recycle less?

We recognise that not everyone will want to subscribe to the Garden Waste Scheme, so there will inevitably be an amount of food waste in the residual (grey) bins. However, everyone is still working hard to ensure as much waste as possible is recycled.

In previous years, this waste would be sent to landfill. But, since December 2014, all residual waste from Suffolk is sent to the Suffolk 'Energy from Waste' plant at Great Blakenham.

This plant incinerates waste which would otherwise end up in landfill and generates enough electricity to power 30,000 homes. The ash, left after the waste is incinerated, is processed and used as a road-building aggregate.

We would still urge residents to think proactively about reducing the amount of food waste they generate. UK households throw away 7 million tonnes of food waste every year and much of this is unnecessary.

In Suffolk, about a third of the waste in our residual waste bins is food waste, costing Suffolk Council Taxpayers £4million per year in disposal costs.

As well as saving Council Taxpayers' money, if we all reduce the amount of unnecessary food waste that has to be collected and disposed of, the average family could save up to £60 per month by reducing the amount of food thrown away.

There are lots of easy ways to reduce food waste, including only buying and preparing what you actually need, paying attention to use-by-dates, storing food correctly, and using up leftovers – these all help to reduce the amount of out-of-date or uneaten food that needs to be thrown away.

Remember that you can home compost unavoidable food waste such as fruit and vegetable peelings and teabags, wherever possible. For more information, please visit Love Food Hate Waste at: www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

You've just moved into a new headquarters building – is this subsidising your new offices?

No. The garden waste charge would need to have been introduced regardless of our new accommodation, due to our overall financial position and the reduction in recycling payments from Suffolk County Council.

Our new headquarters, East Suffolk House, was purchased without any extra cost to the council tax payer and costs far less to run – with much lower energy and maintenance costs, so will save money in the long run.

Why don't you go back to charging for plastic bags so you only pay for what you need?

From 2005, prior to the introduction of brown bin collections throughout the district, garden waste collection bags were issued to some households, but were then gradually phased out, and finally ended completely in 2010.

The old bagged service was never a recycling service and was not advertised as such. The garden waste collected in these bags was sent to landfill and not recycled.

Like most UK local authorities, Suffolk Coastal uses wheelie bins for its alternate weekly collections, as bins are totally sustainable, unlike plastic bags, which can split/spill waste and often contaminate the recycling process. For these reasons, there are no plans to go back to collecting garden waste in bags.

However, you are still able to take garden waste to the household recycling sites, if you only create a small amount of garden waste.

Why change the size of the bins (from 140 litres to 240 litres)?

Suffolk Coastal District Council continually reviews its policies to ensure they meet current needs. When planning the new Garden Waste Service, we wanted to satisfy customer requests to give them the option to have a larger (240ltr) wheeled bin. This is also consistent with the Garden Waste Scheme provided in our partners in Waveney District.

Residents can choose to retain their current brown 140 litre bin, if they would prefer because it is more suited to their needs. Equally, people can choose not to join the new garden waste scheme

and compost their garden waste. We remain committed to encouraging people to naturally recycle garden waste, through composting and is why the 140 litre bins were originally provided.

Why are you waiting until the autumn to introduce the 240 litre bins?

At the moment there are about 59,000 households in Suffolk Coastal with a brown 140 litre wheelie bin. We know that some people will not want to pay to have their garden waste collected but it is impossible to know for sure how many people will join the scheme.

Only the people who subscribe to the new scheme will be eligible for the larger bin. Because we don't want to waste council money buying in more bins than we need, and we want to get the best price that we can by buying in large quantities, we will wait a little while before we order the new bins.

It will also take a few weeks to receive the new bins and it will be a big operation to deliver them to all the subscriber households.