



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

**to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
26 JANUARY 2023**

**NEW FEE FOR THE COLLECTION OF WASTE UPHOLSTERED DOMESTIC SEATING
CONTAINING PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement to introduce a new fee and charge for the separate collection of Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS).
- 1.2 That Members note the potential operational impact on the waste, recycling and street cleaning services provided by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members approve an additional fee of £14.50 to the list of Fees and Charges for 2023 / 24 for mixed bulky waste requests containing WUDS to ensure that collections costs are covered for their separate collection as per guidance provided by the Environment Agency;
- (ii) That Members note the new fee will be introduced for the last two months of the 2022 / 23 financial year (predicted income would fall within limits set under Delegation) to ensure the service can be offered to the public as soon as possible.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Background papers

- 3.1.1 In August 2022, the Environment Agency (EA) wrote to all local authorities advising that all waste upholstered domestic seating must be collected separately from other waste and sent for incineration. This instruction followed an investigation by the EA which confirmed that high levels of POPS were found in these items.
- 3.1.2 In that letter local authorities were advised that they would be required to write to the EA providing evidence of compliance by 1 January 2023 however that deadline was later softened by the EA and extended to August 2023.
- 3.1.3 Representations were made to the EA asking for more guidance as they were faced with enormous logistical challenges including changing to collections arrangements.

This affected not only Recycling Centres for household waste but also bulky waste collections and collection of flytipping that contained WUDS.

- 3.1.4 At a recent meeting with Essex County Council (ECC) we were advised that landfill operators had also received a letter advising that WUDS must not be landfilled from 1 January 2023. This was further clarified by the EA that landfill operators must refuse to accept WUDS after this date.
- 3.1.5 This clarification has forced all local authorities to make changes to their collection systems much earlier than anticipated.
- 3.1.6 The types of material that contain POPs are:
- Sofas / armchairs and sofa beds including any parts which contains leather, synthetic leather, fabric or foam including sofa cushions (but not small scatter cushions);
 - upholstered kitchen and dining room chairs;
 - upholstered stools and pouffe;
 - home office chairs;
 - futons, bean bags or large floor cushions.

3.2 Impact on Existing Waste and Recycling Contract

- 3.2.1 Currently the Council charges for bulky collections dependant on the number of items, 1 to 3 items, 4 to 6 items, 7 to 9 items and 9 up to a maximum of 12 items. The collections are undertaken by Suez and the prices reflect the charges applied in the Contract Bill of Quantities plus administration costs.
- 3.2.2 Collections are currently done using a caged vehicle with a driver and one loader on four days per week. Approximately 90 - 110 bulky collections are completed per month.
- 3.2.3 On average we collect 60 WUDS items per month the majority of which are sofas.
- 3.2.4 To ensure that these materials are collected separately from 1 January 2023 there are three options:
- Option One - Collect mixed with none WUDS items but segregate on the vehicle
As Suez collect bulky items using a 7.5 tonne cage vehicle it will be very difficult for the crew to segregate these items completely to ensure that the POPs are not released and contaminate other items on the vehicle. This option will also slow up the crew during collections while they attempt to separate and also at the Waste Transfer Site as they will have to drive over the weighbridge twice.
 - Option Two (preferred option) - Collect separately on a dedicated day agreed with Suez
Collect WUDS separately either using the existing vehicle or a recycling collection vehicle on dedicated days. Although this may mean that a resident

booking a bulky collection will have to book two collection and will be given two dates so that WUDS item will be collected separately, this is the preferred Option as it is more compliant and manageable.

- **Option Three - Stop Collecting WUDS**

Stop collecting WUDS as part of the bulky waste collection service. This could result in an increase in flytipping for this type of material especially as skip companies are no longer accepting these items and residents may opt to have them taken by private operators.

3.3 Impact on Street Cleansing Contract

3.3.1 The Council in addition to providing waste and recycling collections provides street cleaning services through Appleton Contracts. As part of this work the contractor responds and removes fly tipping throughout the district.

3.3.2 As mentioned earlier in this report a risk exists that an increase in fly tipped furniture occurs because disposal options are reduced or become more expensive, should this happen our street cleaning contractor will have to respond. In turn the contractor must also provide additional storage for items falling under the regulation. At this time the Council is unaware if this will have an impact on costs charged to the Council (over and above the set charge made for collections to reflect the additional storage).

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Whilst the Council was aware that changes would have to be made to how WUDS should be collected in future, further guidance has only just been released and we were unaware that these items could not be landfilled after 1 January 2023.

4.2 The bulky waste collection service is a valuable service to residents however the collection fee should cover all costs. Therefore, an additional charge per item for waste upholstered domestic seating has been agreed with Suez over and above the existing charges for the service and it is proposed that this should be passed onto residents should Members approved the recommendation.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

5.1 This report supports the place strategy and the corporate outcome to “reduce impacts of waste disposal and pollution on the environment”.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Residents wishing to dispose of WUDS will incur an additional cost for safe disposal. The Council will promote alternative methods of disposal (through charities for example for good quality items) but should not subsidise the service.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None

- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The service provided should be self-financing, so Members are asked to support the necessary additional charge for the collection of materials as required under the new regulations. To ensure a service can be provided to the public a charge will be introduced for the last two months of the 2022 / 23 financial year under delegated powers.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Minimal Officer time once a new online form is produced by IT.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – In line with the Stockholm Convention, the UK is committed to reducing the levels of persistent organic pollutants escaping as they remain intact in the environment for long periods and if not disposed of properly become widely distributed geographically. They accumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife and have harmful impacts on human health and the Environment. Collecting these items separately and sending them to landfill will reduce the impact that these items on the environment.

Background Papers:

Environment Agency Guidance on WUDS containing POPs [Manage waste upholstered domestic seating containing POPs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614212/Manage_waste_upholstered_domestic_seating_containing_POPs_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

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