

S33. Impact of Special Uplifts Charge

The committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services which provided an update on the impact of the special uplifts charge. From 1 April 2015 the Council had agreed to charge £15.00 per household uplift. Previously two free uplifts per year were provided with a charge of £22.00 per uplift thereafter. 26 of 32 local authorities charged for special uplifts with the average charge per uplift being £25.00. Information was provided on the number of special uplift requests, the number of fly-tipping incidents, and the recharge costs relating to contaminated bins. Carl Bullough provided an overview of the report.

Members discussed the statistical information contained in the report and that perception relating to these issues, particularly fly-tipping, varied from person to person. The discussion highlighted that as well as considering the year on year incidences of fly-tipping, the cumulative increase should be recognised as not all incidents from a single year would be dealt with then. Following a question on the number of fly-tipping incidents, Carl Bullough stated that people defined fly-tipping in different ways. As an example he advised that if a mattress was left in a bin-store that would not be classified as a fly-tip in the figures but that people may see such an incident as being one. The committee stated that more education work was required to ensure that people understood how to properly dispose of their waste and that the Service should liaise with colleagues in Housing. Carl Bullough stated that part of the revised role of the Housing Caretakers would be education with tenants.

The committee sought clarification on the financial savings associated with the introduction of the charge for special uplifts in 2015. Carl Bullough stated that for 2016/17 the Service projected to receive £100,000 in income with £127,000 of savings also made.

Members sought information on the highest and lowest charges across the 26 Councils which charged for special uplifts. Carl Bullough advised that the highest cost was £41.10 and that the lowest was £12.66, with the average cost being £25.00 per uplift.

The committee discussed the use of the National Re-use Helpline which was promoted by the Council as an alternative to having a special uplift. Carl Bullough stated that there were limitations on what materials would be accepted for reuse and highlighted the figures appended to the report which showed local levels of National Re-use Line referrals. Discussion highlighted that different charitable organisations have different needs and that some may be willing or able to take materials that the National Re-use Line could not. Fiona Campbell highlighted the increase in freecycling and community swaps, which were particularly prevalent through social media.

Members asked who was responsible for dealing with fly-tipping incidents on private land. Carl Bullough advised that the responsibility sat with the owner of the land. If the Service was asked, and paid, to uplift from private land they would do so.

Following a question on litter waste in town centres, Carl Bullough stated that there was a group looking at the issue. Funding was being sought from Zero Waste Scotland to support a project specifically targeting town centres.

Members discussed fly-tipping in relation to areas which were regularly used for dumping waste and what could be done there. Carl Bullough stated that surveillance could be considered and that more proactive patrols could be put in place. However, he highlighted that due to resource constraints the approach tended to be reactive. Where those responsible for fly-tipping were identified action would be taken and there had been prosecutions locally which the Council could raise awareness about.

The committee asked how robust the statistics provided in the report were, highlighting that in 2014/15 there had been nearly 16,926 special uplift requests with income received of just £1,010. Carl Bullough stated that most people only requested their two free uplifts under the previous charging regime. He advised that the IT system used at the time was not as advanced as the Service would wish and that if there was variance in how the data was input the system could miss where a household had already had two special uplifts. Members expressed concern about the reliability of the reported data and how accurately the Service could analyse the impact of the special uplifts charge. In discussion, members commented that it was not useful to present the figures from 2014/15 and before if the Service could not be confident in their accuracy.

The committee discussed whether the topic required further investigation. Members highlighted that this could include the responsibilities of tenants/residents, best practice from other Councils and the issue of fly-tipping in general. Following a question on the process to recommend the report topic as a scrutiny panel, Colin Moodie stated that if the committee recommended this topic as a panel this would need to be considered by Council. If the topic was agreed by Council then it would form part of the scrutiny plan for the newly formed Council following the Local Government Elections in May 2017.

Decision

The committee agreed to recommend to the next meeting of Council that fly-tipping and associated issues are included in the next scrutiny plan.