

Report to the Council

Portfolio Holder: Councillor D Jacobs

Date: 21 February 2006

Item: 13

1. GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE – EMERGENCY AND URGENT FUNDING

Recommendation:

To note that the following action has been authorised as urgent pursuant to paragraph 2.65 of Appendix B to the Council's Financial Regulations and paragraph 21 of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Rules:

approval of one-off interim funding of £20,000 to support the delivery of the waste collection service for the month of January 2006.

Background Report:

1.1 As part of the waste management contract, garden waste is collected over a six month period from certain parts of the District. In previous years, at members' request, the Service was extended over a longer time period, and an additional payment of £17,000 per month was made in this respect.

1.2 As part of the negotiations with South Herts Waste Management (SHWM) regarding the introduction of the alternate weekly wheeled bin service, they agreed to provide the garden waste service across the District all year at no additional contract cost. However, although this was agreed at local level by SHWM managers, the Managing Director stated that this position has been misunderstood, and that whilst he will standby the generality of the position, the no additional cost was only applicable once all the District was served by wheeled bins on an alternate weekly basis.

1.3 The refusal to make any payments ahead of a meeting of the Cabinet led to SHWM contacting officers on Friday 6 January 2006 stating that unless a payment of £20,000 was made, they intended to withdraw the garden waste service with effect from Monday 9 January. Officers took the view that action should be avoided since it was impossible to manage such a withdrawal at such short notice, especially during the post Christmas/New Year collection catch up period.

1.4 Following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Performance Management it was agreed that it was essential to maintain the service at this time, and that the payment should be made ahead of a detailed report going to Cabinet for full consideration.

1.5 There was no authority to make this payment since it was technically outside of the current budget provision. It was, therefore, necessary to invoke the Urgency & Emergency provisions of the Council's Financial Regulations, which enable such a payment to be made. These require that the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee be consulted as it was

impractical to convene a meeting of Full Council within the necessary timescale. Councillor Mrs Collins was apprised of the situation and agreed to the payment being made.

1.6 In addition, as the matter was considered urgent and any delay in making the decision likely to be caused by the call-in process would have seriously prejudiced the Council's and the public interest, it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to apply the call-in procedure. The Chairman of the Council was consulted and agreed that the decision proposed was reasonable in all the circumstances and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency.