

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 17 OCTOBER 2012

PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT

REPORT FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY RE-USE SCHEME FOR FURNITURE AND ELECTRICAL GOODS

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the Council actively promotes the environmental and community benefits of the Hopeworx Community Re-Use Project, but declines to enter into a formal agreement for the diversion of all furniture and electrical appliances collected through the bulky waste service.
- 1.2 That the following charges be agreed:-
 - an administration fee of 10%, in respect of any "Reuse Credit" claimed by the District Council from Essex County Council (ECC) on behalf of Hopeworx.
 - a charge of £5 per item of furniture or electrical goods collected from Hopeworx depot by the Council's contractor.

2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE NO. 22/12

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Whilst the Council would wish to promote the use of this scheme by residents, it is not considered appropriate to divert all bulky waste collections to them as many of the items collected are of poor quality and not suitable for resale. Furthermore, there is a concern about adverse customer reaction in the event that calls are initially referred to Hopeworx, who then visit the resident and reject the goods as not meeting their criteria. The concern is that in this situation the customer would need to re-contact the Council in order to arrange for the items to be collected, and that the whole process could take more than a week to complete.
- 3.2 Promoting the benefits of a local charity, such as Hopeworx, is clearly a more sustainable option than sending such items either to landfill or for recycling because the furniture and electrical appliances collected are re-used. This would be for the benefit of the local community, either by supplying decent furniture and electrical appliances to the less fortunate or by raising money for related causes from the sale of such material.
- 3.3 The fees and charges recommended in this report reflect the nominal costs to the authority of administering the payments of the re-use credit scheme. The

collection charge is directly proportional to the fee of £15 paid by the residents for up to three items.

4 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 Hopeworx was started as a community outreach project from the Christian Growth Centre, Rayleigh to meet the needs of the disadvantaged in the community. Initially they concentrated on crisis food packs but later discovered that there was a need for furniture and electrical appliances. They initially advertised the service themselves and operated from lock-up garages but soon realised that they required more space to be of real benefit to the community. Hopeworx now operates with the Lighthouse Furniture Project Ltd. based in Hutton, Brentwood and have opened a Re-Use Centre for furniture and electrical appliances in Brook Road, Rayleigh.
- 4.2 Hopeworx has enquired whether the District Council is willing to work with them to re-use the furniture and electrical appliances that are collected through the bulky waste service. They have an arrangement of this nature in place with Brentwood District Council.
- 4.3 At present, SITA collects all bulky waste such as furniture and electrical appliances for which they are paid a lump sum as part of the waste management contract. This sum was fixed at the commencement of their contract on the basis of estimated volumes and is subject to an annual uplift for inflation.
- 4.4 Hopeworx is very particular about the type and quality of the material they will collect, as clearly it needs to be attractive to a purchaser. If it is determined that the Council should promote the service offered by Hopeworx, our Customer Services team would be able to provide full details of their specification to residents, together with an outline of the procedure and what may occur if the goods are rejected as unsuitable. It would be emphasised that this is not a service operated by or on behalf of the Council. Goods meeting the specification determined by Hopeworx would be collected free of charge by them.
- 4.5 Hopeworx has also stated that they want to claim the Reuse Credit, which is currently £57.20 per tonne. Rochford District Council can claim this sum back from Essex County Council on behalf of the charity but is unable to claim this credit in its own right. There would be a resource implication for the Authority in processing this claim from the County and repaying the charity. It is, therefore, proposed that a 10% administration fee is imposed for this purpose. It should be noted that there is no loss of income to the Council in submitting such claims.
- 4.6 Should Hopeworx subsequently determine that an item they collected from a resident is unsalable, they are likely to request the Council to arrange for its disposal. Waste from premises occupied by a charity, which collects goods for re-use from domestic property, is classified as household waste and the

Council is, therefore, under a statutory duty to arrange collection. However, the Council is permitted to charge for this service. On the basis that goods collected from domestic properties are subject to a charge of £15 for up to three items, it is proposed that a unit charge of £5 is made to Hopeworx.

- 4.7 It is an ECC requirement that the charity has an audit trail to establish the source of the items concerned.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 There are no other reuse charities that operate in the District and collect directly from the households. The only other options would be to enter in to a formal arrangement with Hopeworx to divert all the Council's bulky waste to them initially or to not promote the scheme.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposals contained within this report may result in a marginal reduction in the level of income from bulky waste collections as residents may be tempted by the free collection service offered by Hopeworx.
- 6.2 This service currently provides an income of £30,000 a year and it is estimated that reusable items could account for £1,000 of income. It should be noted that there is no loss of income from recycling credits, as bulky items are sent to landfill and the Council is not able to claim re-use credits for itself.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council is under a statutory duty to collect household waste. Under the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012, this definition is extended to include items collected for reuse by charities and not for profit organisations. However, the Council is permitted to charge a reasonable fee for the collection of such items.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 If the scheme is implemented there will be reduced tonnage of waste going to landfill. Re-using goods is more sustainable than sending them going to landfill or having components recycled. The Council can include the tonnage that is re-used as part of the recycling rate.

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The scheme, if implemented, would mean that discarded furniture and electrical appliances would be reused for the benefit of the community.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Environmental Services

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Barry Saunders (Street Scene Manager) on:-

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.