

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **03 March 2022**
Title: **Community composting scheme**
Portfolio Area: **Environment – Councillor Keith Baldry**
Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained:

Date next steps can be taken:

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Recommendations:

That the Executive

1. Approve the proposed community composting scheme.
2. Approve the guidance document supporting the scheme in Appendix A.
3. Delegates authority to the Lead member Environment and Director of Customer Service Delivery to award funding to new schemes that meet the criteria set out in Appendix A

1 Executive summary

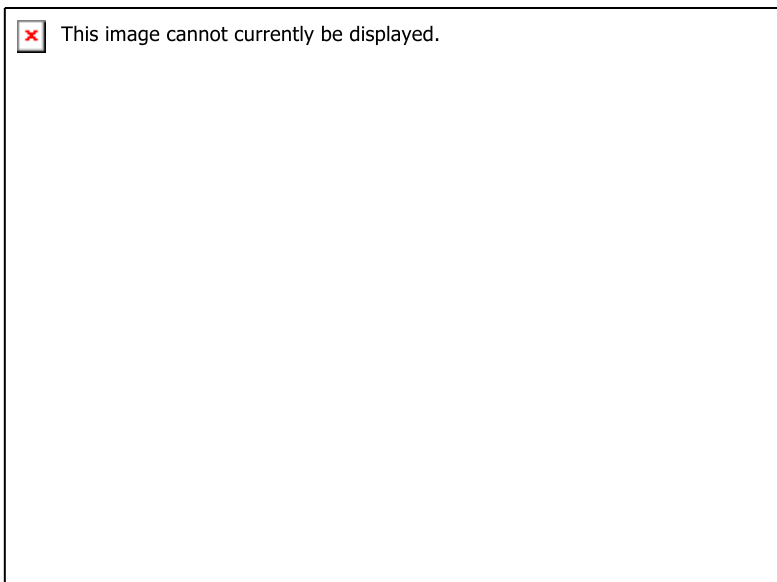
- 1.1 Council on 10 February 2022, approved for £200,000 to be transferred into a Community Composting Earmarked Reserve in 2021/22, as part of the process of closing the 2021/22 Accounts. A scheme is to be set up with a one-off budget of £200,000 in 2022/23 for community composting, aligned to savings in the green waste element of the waste contract in 2021/22 and officers have been tasked with devising a community composting scheme.
- 1.2 This followed the Executive meeting on 27 January 2022, where it was agreed that a one-off amount of £200,000 was to be transferred into a Community Composting Earmarked Reserve (Minute E.79/21 refers).

- 1.3 This report summarises a new two year community composting scheme that will provide operational and financial assistance to new and existing sites. This report seeks the agreement of members to adopt the scheme.
- 1.4 Officers have undertaken research on the operating model of community composting groups, analysing income and expenditure and have subsequently devised a scheme to help meet the needs of these groups.

2 Background

2.1 Garden waste - otherwise known as green waste - is a decomposing organic matter that can be used as a fertiliser. Although composting is not technically waste prevention, it does adhere to the waste hierarchy as a form of recycling as it removes material from the municipal waste stream.

2.2 Waste Hierarchy



- 2.3 Community composting sites are local sites for storing and processing garden waste usually in compost bays or pads with an end product called a 'soil conditioner', which can then be used again locally to fertilise the soil for optimum growing conditions.
- 2.4 The sites are run by volunteers often from the local community and are mainly funded by donations received at the sites and by recycling credits received from Devon County Council in recognition of the waste being diverted away from disposal.

- 2.5 Groups advised that the largest annual expenditure was the 'turning and shredding' of the material using a tractor and other pieces of machinery which are expensive to buy and operate. This function has been provided by the Council historically but at a significant cost to the groups.
- 2.6 The implementation of a community composting site varies significantly due to the following factors:
 - 2.6.1 Site location
 - 2.6.2 Planning permissions requirements
 - 2.6.3 Lead time in obtaining an exemption to operate the site from the Environment Agency.
- 2.7 Depending on the size of the site, the initial set up costs can range from £10,000 to £15,000 and includes purchasing equipment and ensuring the site is secure and in good condition for use as per the Environment Agency guidance.
- 2.8 The Council has no statutory obligation to support community composting groups either financially or operationally, however the Council recognises the social and environmental benefits of these local groups.

3 Outcomes and benefits

- 3.1 There are many benefits that are derived from a community composting group, some of which are detailed below:
 - 3.1.1 Supports local gardeners and allotments.
 - 3.1.2 Encourages social inclusion and economic development through volunteer schemes and training opportunities.
 - 3.1.3 Increases participation and education in recycling awareness and waste prevention
 - 3.1.4 Reduces the risks of the waste being sent to the energy from waste plant or other end destinations.
- 3.2 This scheme supports the Councils Corporate Strategy 'Better Lives for All' in the following areas:
 - 3.2.1 Adapting and mitigating climate change and increasing biodiversity, which states that the Council will lead by example and encourage all others to take their own steps to adapt and mitigate climate change and increase biodiversity.
 - 3.2.2 Contributing directly against action AM1.4 'Deliver funding for community projects'.

- 3.2.3 Increasing the uptake of community composting has the potential to reduce the Council's carbon footprint through a reduction in the frequency of garden waste related vehicle movements.
 - 3.2.4 Strengthening community wellbeing by promoting volunteering and helping more of our communities feel empowered to make a positive impact.
 - 3.2.5 Directly supporting community engagement, education and promoting 'reuse and repair' which are all fundamental elements of the Devon and Torbay Waste Strategy and contributing to the development of a sustainable waste management plan locally and nationally.
- 3.3 By supporting local schemes the Council will be encouraging the 'waste to the proximity principle' which encourages processing, recycling, reuse or disposal of waste as near to the point of its production as possible.

4 Operating model

- 4.1 The scheme will look to support existing community composting sites in the District by providing a 'turning and shredding' of the waste service delivered by the Council's grounds maintenance team.
- 4.2 This will include a member of the grounds maintenance team using the tractor and shredder for up to a maximum of eight days per site, per year.
- 4.3 To support any new groups with set up costs on a match funded basis up to value of £7,500 for up to six new community composting sites each year.
- 4.4 The scheme will look to prioritise support to new community compost groups in geographical areas where there currently isn't one. This will help to ensure that there is equitable provision across the District for all residents to access a site should they wish to recycle their Green waste.

5 Consideration of risk

- 5.1 The Council's grounds maintenance team are trained and qualified to use the equipment required to maintain a community composting site. Therefore this reduces any health and safety risks to volunteers.
- 5.2 By providing support and guidance to community groups and volunteers in setting up new schemes, the Council can ensure that all schemes adhere to environmental and health and safety legislation.

6 Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 It is proposed that the recommendations are approved in order to support the current and new community composting groups over the next two years.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	N/A
Financial	Y	Up to £200,000 of funding is available from the Community Composting Earmarked Reserve. Council on 10 February 2022, approved for £200,000 to be transferred into a Community Composting Earmarked Reserve in 2021/22, as part of the process of closing the 2021/22 Accounts. A scheme is to be set up with a one-off budget of £200,000 in 2022/23 for community composting, aligned to savings in the green waste element of the waste contract in 2021/22.
Risk	N	There are no risks associated within this report
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	N/A
Safeguarding	N	N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	N/A
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	N/A
Other implications	N	N/A

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Community composting scheme guidance document

Background Papers: None

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed	Y
SLT Rep briefed	Y
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	Y
Data protection issues considered	Y
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	N/A