

## Replacement recycling and residual bin costs

Most Councils in Kent have introduced charges for the replacement of lost, damaged or stolen wheelie bins (see table 1 below). The charging policy has been introduced to encourage residents to take responsibility for the containers provided and reduce demand for replacement containers. Some neighbouring Councils suggest that the result has been a significant contribution towards the overall costs incurred.

**Table 1 –charges by other LA’s for replacing residual and recycling bins**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2021/22 Charges for replacement residual/ recycling wheelie bins</b>
Ashford BC	£25 charge for lost, stolen, damaged bins (not if damaged by crews).
Canterbury CC	£50.10 for black rubbish bin and £17.50 for blue recycling bin (other bins also charged for). Charge applies for lost, stolen, damaged bins.
Dartford BC	Cost = £43.50 <i>“If green bins become broken through wear and tear a replacement will be provided free of charge. If it goes missing, [lost/ stolen] you may be asked to pay for a replacement”</i> .
Dover BC	£50 charge for lost, stolen and damaged bins
Folkestone & Hythe	Residual bin = £51.40. Recycling bin = £49.30. (other bins also charged for). Charges apply to lost, stolen or damaged bins (free if crew damaged it or if damaged on collection day). <i>NB – F&amp;H request photo if damaged on collection day</i>
Gravesham BC	Currently Free of Charge
Maidstone BC	£25.00 for new bins.
Sevenoaks	Not applicable as the only provide wheelie bins for Garden waste. Refuse and recycling is still collected in sacks.
Thanet BC	Residual bin = £38.00. Blue recycling bin = £48 Charge applies to Lost, stolen, damaged bins (all other bin types charged for).
Tonbridge and Malling BC	Currently free of charge
Tunbridge Wells BC	Currently free of charge

Most of these councils explain that households can only have one refuse bin per house and cannot purchase more for additional storage. All Councils are working to reduce the amount of waste created. Allowing additional refuse bins discourages recycling. The carbon considerations of replacing a large number of these bins each year is significant. Any initiatives to reduce the need to replace such bins will help with our Climate and Ecological Emergency targets.

At present Swale provide all bin replacements free of charge. The contractors and SBC Contracts team regularly report properties presenting more than one refuse bin or seeing houses with multiple bins, often being used for alternative storage of items.

The proposal in Fees and Charges is for us to introduce a replacement bin charge from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 at the rate of £30.00 per bin. This is only for the large refuse (green) and recycling (blue) wheelie bins. It is not intended to charge for the large and small kitchen food caddies as we are keen to encourage a greater take up of food recycling, or specialist clinical or nappy bins. Garden waste bins are covered by the annual charge.

Residents in Swale may request a new bin via the call centre or an online form for a variety of reasons. The most common reasons for replacement include the bin being lost/ stolen, damaged, damaged by refuse crews, or dropped in the back of the freighter.

The cost to the Council for replacing bins, has been steadily increasing over the past five years as can be seen from the table below. The totals below are thought to be increasing for a combination of reasons – the number of replacement requests coming from residents for damaged, lost or stolen bins, the increased cost of the bins themselves due to the global shortage of plastic, increased number of new properties being built in the area and an increase in garden waste subscriptions. We also expect the trade cost of buying the bins to increase further in 2022.

The budget for 2021-22 is £187,000, we currently estimate spending £337,000, so we have a budget pressure of £150,000. This will be supported by a wheeled bin reserve fund for 2021-22. The proposed budget for 22-23 includes a growth bid of £93,000 (plus use of the remaining reserve funding) but this will mean the reserve will be fully spent by 31 March 2023.

Developers or individuals building new properties are already required to buy the full set of waste containers for their property. This brings in the income that can be seen in the table below.

**Table 2 – cost to provide/ replace all bins to Swale residents.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Cost of all bins (including food and garden bins plus delivery/ removal fees)</b>	<b>Total income from new property bin provision</b>
2016/17	£137,306	£14,288
2017/18	£211,508	£32,569
2018/19	£214,345	£84,452
2019/20	£234,636	£69,156
2020/21	£312,280	£92,630
2021-22	Predicted £337,000	Predicted £91,000

The SBC data currently available does not allow detailed breakdown of the reasons for bin replacements e.g. lost/stolen or damaged, but we can come to a reasonable estimate for the total by removing new property and garden waste deliveries. In 2020-21 therefore, the number of green refuse bins and blue recycling bins replaced totalled 4251 at a cost of £111,379.

The proposal within Fees and Charges has an accompanying relation to the Budget Setting process. An income target of £85,000 has been included based on the new charge of £30. We hope that the new charge will see a reduction in the number of requests and have therefore estimated around 2,800 payments in 2022-23.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Officers are working on a FAQ document that will be widely communicated as we approach April. As many Councils are already charging, we can learn from their approaches and the key questions are already available on their websites.

#### **Contractor damage**

Bins that are damaged by the crews/ freighter will still be replaced free to the residents (at the contractor's expense), but CCTV footage from the waste vehicles may be checked first. Some residents may provide their own evidence from doorbell cameras or household CCTV. The contracts team have confirmed this is already custom and practice and we regularly challenge the contractor to provide evidence that it wasn't them.

#### **Stolen bins**

Some Councils request a police CAD reference number if the bin was reported as stolen and then replace these for free. A crime report does not prove the bin was stolen but does provide some type of deterrent from false claiming of new bins. These will need to be verified with police in order to stop fraudulent use.

However, some local Councils that have had this policy previously, have subsequently removed the option due to the complicated nature of verifying claims and the high levels of misuse. Whilst the expected number of replacements for stolen bins is unknown, it is expected the number will form a high percentage of replacements and will therefore further impact the budget pressure.

Regardless of if the above policy is used, the FAQ advice will be provided to residents on how to reduce the risk of theft/ loss by numbering or identifying their wheelie bins, reducing the amount of time bins are presented for collection etc.

#### **Ownership/Refusal to purchase**

Payment is to contribute to the cost of replacement and does not mean the person paying owns the bin. They will remain the property of SBC.

Other Councils are clear on the policy if somebody refuses to pay for a replacement and presents their waste in a different way e.g. black sacks/boxes etc. FAQs read something like this. ***'We will not collect any waste that is not presented in the prescribed way. Notices can be issued and a fine applied if you continue to attempt to present waste in bags instead of a recognised wheelie bin.'*** Our environmental enforcement team already issue fixed penalty notices to properties who regularly present their rubbish in the incorrect manner and who refuse to comply with initial informal requests, but this is always the last resort after lots of prior engagement.

### **Residents on low income**

The proposed fee is one of the lowest in the County in recognition of the levels of deprivation in the Borough. The cost of purchasing an alternative waste container independently is much higher than the charge we are proposing. Local charities offer an option of supporting residents in times of hardship and will be included in the FAQs.

Concessionary offers are not commonly used amongst other authorities. This would need to have a back-office system of checking applications against Benefits/Council Tax systems, creating additional strain on the contracts team.

### **Summary/Recommendations**

It is recommended to continue with the proposed charge as presented in the Fees and charges report. With reducing central funding and increasing costs, this is required to reduce budget pressures.

The Cabinet member will sign off the FAQs to go on website and to assist call centre staff. Officers and the Cabinet member for Environment will monitor the rollout of the scheme, especially in the first 6 months.

It is recommended to monitor the number of requests based on stolen bins over the first 12 months to inform future fees and charges proposals, rather than immediately adopting the policy of free replacement of stolen bins. Wording will be added to the fees and charges document to show that the Head of Environment and Leisure in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Environment will be able to override the fee in exceptional circumstances.