

## CABINET

11 SEPTEMBER 2014

### 49 NOTICE OF MOTION – THE BROWN BIN TAX AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

At the meeting of the Council held on 14 July 2014 (minute 17 refers), the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly and seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell was referred by the Mayor to the Cabinet for consideration, in accordance with Standing Order 7(4) –

*“Council recalls that when the Labour administration brought in charges for garden waste collection, many residents objected, not only to the charge, but also to different charges being levied for those subscribing on-line and for those subscribing in other ways.*

*The garden waste service is the only chargeable service that operates such a differential.*

*Council notes that over 4,600 residents, without their own computers or access to one, were faced with having to pay out an extra £5. This continues to be regarded as deeply unfair to people who do not have Internet access.*

*Council therefore calls upon Cabinet to review the fairness of this different charging regime, in light of motions previously passed by Council on the issues of digital and financial exclusion, with a view to refunding the additional £5 paid by digitally excluded members of the community”*

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Kelly had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion. He provided a background to it and highlighted that the highest numbers of non-online subscribers to the service and consequently being denied a discount were from Birkenhead and Tranmere. Conversely, the highest numbers of online subscribers were from more affluent areas of the Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability indicated that such a charge would not have been necessary were it not for the scale of cuts imposed on Wirral by the Government. The discount had been offered to encourage greater take up on-line, so as to reduce the need for additional staff being on duty at one stop shops. Volunteers were available in libraries to assist customers with on-line registration and a digital inclusion programme was also provided by Age UK. However, in response to concerns highlighted in the Notice of Motion, it was proposed to include an advice leaflet in the Council Tax booklet to draw attention to services that were available to digitally excluded residents in all areas of Wirral.

**Resolved – That the response of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability be endorsed and reported to Council.**