

9 March, 2018

Dear Sir/Madam:

I have listened with increasing concern over the way that North Herts District Council has been vilified for the introduction of a charge for the brown bin service. This decision has been unfairly politicised by people with ulterior motives, instead of recognising it for what it is; a genuine attempt to assist in balancing the books without having to cut services provided to the less well off, or vulnerable.

I'm upset at having to pay £40 per year for a service which has, hitherto been free, but I would rather see a charge on the brown bin service, than cuts in Community Centre funding, or a reduction in the facilities at Leisure Centres, or how often our streets are cleaned. At least this way, people have a choice in either paying for the service, or opting out. I appreciate that this is a personal view and that not everyone will feel as I do and I do not seek to change anyone's view of the justness of the charge in this letter.

What I would like to do is to lay the lie that this is simply the 'uncaring Tories screwing the poorest in society'. All the major political parties are involved in charging for garden waste collection throughout the country. As at January 2018, 204 councils were charging for garden waste collection. The four councils charging the most for this service are Labour controlled; the highest charge is paid by the residents of Harlow (£96), more than double the NHDC charge. In fact, 92 Councils charge more for this service than NHDC.

NHDC is indebted to Three Rivers Council for their assistance in rolling this charge out; in fact, NHDC models its own system for garden waste collection on the Three Rivers model. Three Rivers is controlled by the Liberal Democrat Party. Sutton, another Lib Dem council, also charges for garden waste (£61.50), much more than NHDC.

While NHDC does not charge the least for such collection, it is by no means the most expensive; seventeen other councils charge the same as North Herts and no council that has implemented garden waste charges regrets that action.

So please, while you may, or may not agree with the reasons for implementing a charge for garden waste collection, lets do away with all the hyperbole and vitriol around this issue. All major parties are implementing this, or something similar; its simply a case of managing budgets, which, by law, councils are obliged to do. We may not like it, but the alternatives are far worse.

Yours faithfully,

Jim McNally
Councillor – Baldock Town Ward