

Cost of council gardening services rises by 70%

The “lifeline” grasscutting and hedge trimming service for older households and people with disabilities is set to rise by 70 per cent.

A councillor warned the significant rise in ‘Garden Aid’ charges will hit the city’s most vulnerable.

Despite only being increased by around five per cent in recent years, the price of accessing grass-cutting and hedge trimming through the scheme will on average rise by 70 per cent due to a change in council contractor.

It means the annual cost of mowing a garden which is 51 to 100 metres squared will jump from £105 to £179.32. Furthermore, trimming a hedge 151 to 200 metres squared in size will more than double, rising by 111 per cent – compared to just 4.94 per cent last year – now costing £170.98.

The scheme is designed to help residents who are “elderly, disabled or medically unable to maintain their garden and do not have any other members of their household who are able to maintain their garden for them,” the council’s website says.

Described as “very basic grass cutting and hedge trimming”, the service is available to people living in council homes over the age of 60 and in receipt of housing benefit, people in all types of property in receipt of disability benefits and residents aged over 80.

It is understood Garden Aid customers have been notified of the changes and have until March 20 to confirm if they want to continue using the service.

Councillor Kate Campbell, SNP, said: "It's an absolute disgrace that some of our most vulnerable residents are seeing a 70 per cent increase in charges for what is a lifeline service.

"Many people are completely reliant on Garden Aid, without it they simply won't cope."



Cllr Kate Campbell

At last month's council budget the SNP's proposals, which were not passed, allocated £32,000 to freeze Garden Aid charges to avoid the "eye-watering increases" and "ensure people who need the support aren't pushed out of this much-needed service".

Cllr Campbell said it was "shocking" the Labour administration "agreed to spend half a million pounds on a big party" for Edinburgh's 900th anniversary by accepting £250k budgeted in

both Conservative and Lib Dem proposals “but refused to spend £32k to freeze charges for residents who really need this support”.

Edinburgh City Council have been contacted for comment.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter