



Watford Borough Council

Waste and recycling engagement

Report

September 2019

1.1 Background to the engagement

Over the summer of 2019, the council undertook engagement to ascertain the views of local residents on recycling, given the recent national publicity on the environmental impacts of the waste we are producing and the unchecked use of natural resources. The engagement also aimed to explore people’s current propensity to recycle and the willingness to change current habits in order to recycle more and reduce the volume of waste sent for disposal. In addition, the council was keen to learn what people thought of charging for a garden waste service – given that the majority of English councils now do charge for collecting garden waste.

1.2 Engagement approach

The council undertook two engagement exercises, both supported by social media advertising. The reason for undertaking the two different approaches was to reach different audiences.

The nature of the channels – online engagement software compared with Facebook messenger – means the survey have to be designed differently, with a chatbot using more informal / chatty language and containing fewer questions overall.

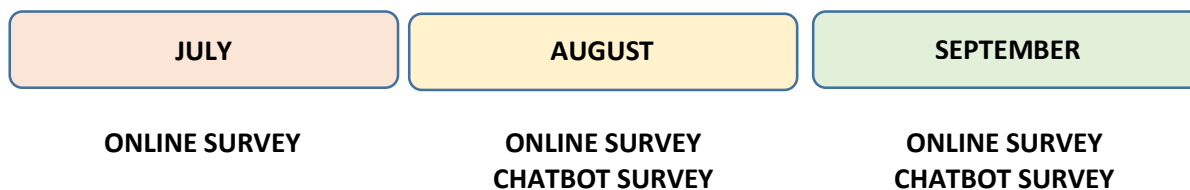
Online surveys tend to be answered by an older profile from certain areas of the borough. Experience to date with chatbot surveys shows that they reach a much younger profile. This was borne out by the data collected as part of both surveys.

1. ONLINE SURVEY

IN FIELD: 30 July – 10 September 2019
RESPONSES: 398

2. CHATBOT SURVEY (DEPLOYED THROUGH FACEBOOK MESSENGER)

IN FIELD: 27 August – 6 September 2019
RESPONSES: 547



1.3 Engagement results

Overall

As expected, there were very different results between the two engagement exercises; this is likely to be linked to the different profiles of those responding.

Type of waste and recycling service received

Although the council undertook Facebook boosts to raise the profile of the online survey to those living in areas of the borough who often don't engage in online consultations and engagement, which are characterised by a higher proportion of flatted living and rental properties, very few responses were received from those living in flats / apartments / homes with communal recycling facilities (just 10%). In comparison 36% of those responding to the chatbot survey lived in homes with communal recycling facilities.

Age profile of respondents

The online survey received the most responses from those in the 35-44 age range (26%), followed by 45 -54 years at 24% whilst the chatbot survey received most responses from those in the age group 18-30 years.

Sex of respondents

Unexpectedly, there was a very significant difference in the profile of those answering the online survey – with 75% of respondents coming from women. In contrast, the chatbot survey was much more in line with the profile of the Watford population – with 52% male (slightly high) and 48% female (slightly low).



1.3.1 COMMITMENT TO RECYCLING

As a 'warm up' question, the chatbot survey asked people what percentage of waste people thought the council currently recycles. Interestingly only 23% thought it was 45% (which is the correct percentage); , by far the most popular answer – with over half of the respondents (51%) choosing this response – was 25%.

This would indicate that the council has more work to do in terms of informing people about recycling and its work in this area.

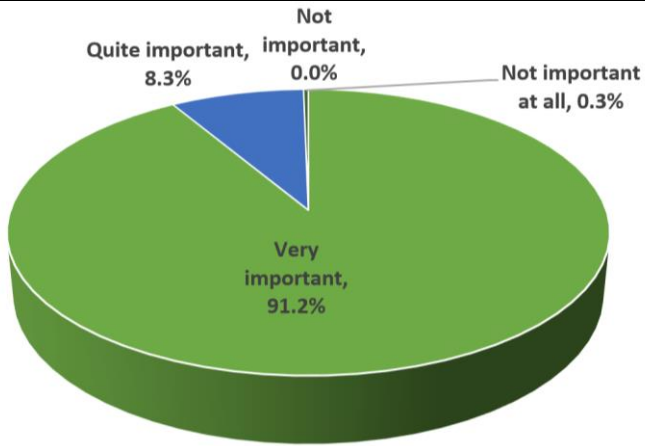
Both surveys returned extremely strong responses around the commitment to recycling with both showing little disagreement that it is important for residents to recycle.

ONLINE SURVEY

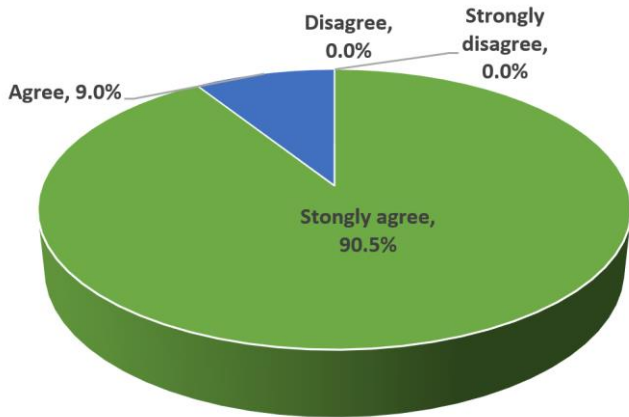
CHATBOT SURVEY

The importance of recycling

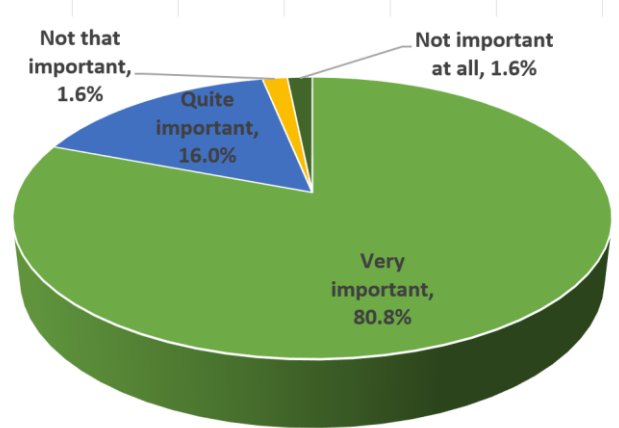
Q. Thinking about people’s current concern with environmental issues, how important for you is the council helping local people recycle their waste / rubbish?



Q. How far do you agree that it is important for you to recycle your rubbish?



Q. How important do you think rubbish-recycling is?



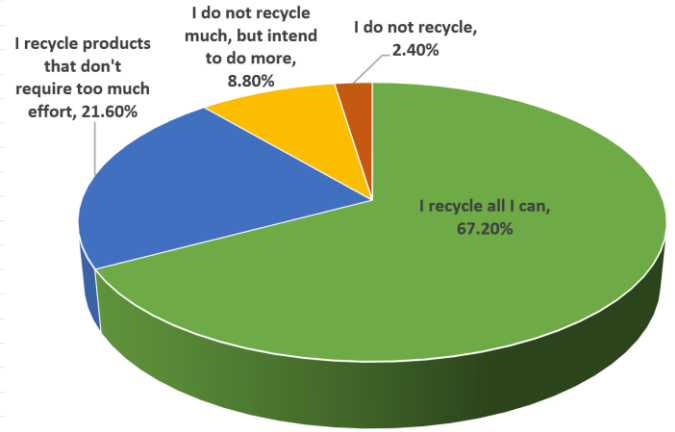
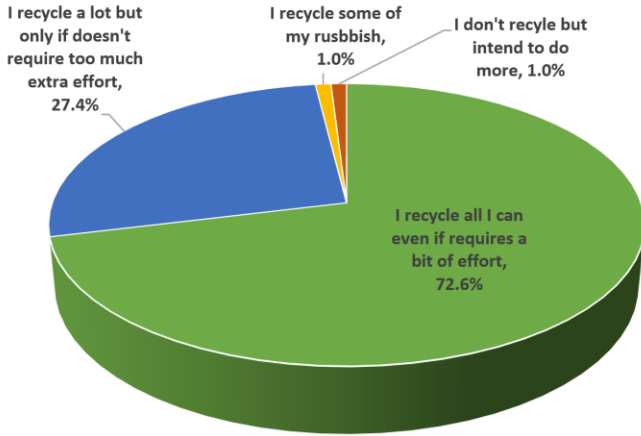
ONLINE SURVEY

CHATBOT SURVEY

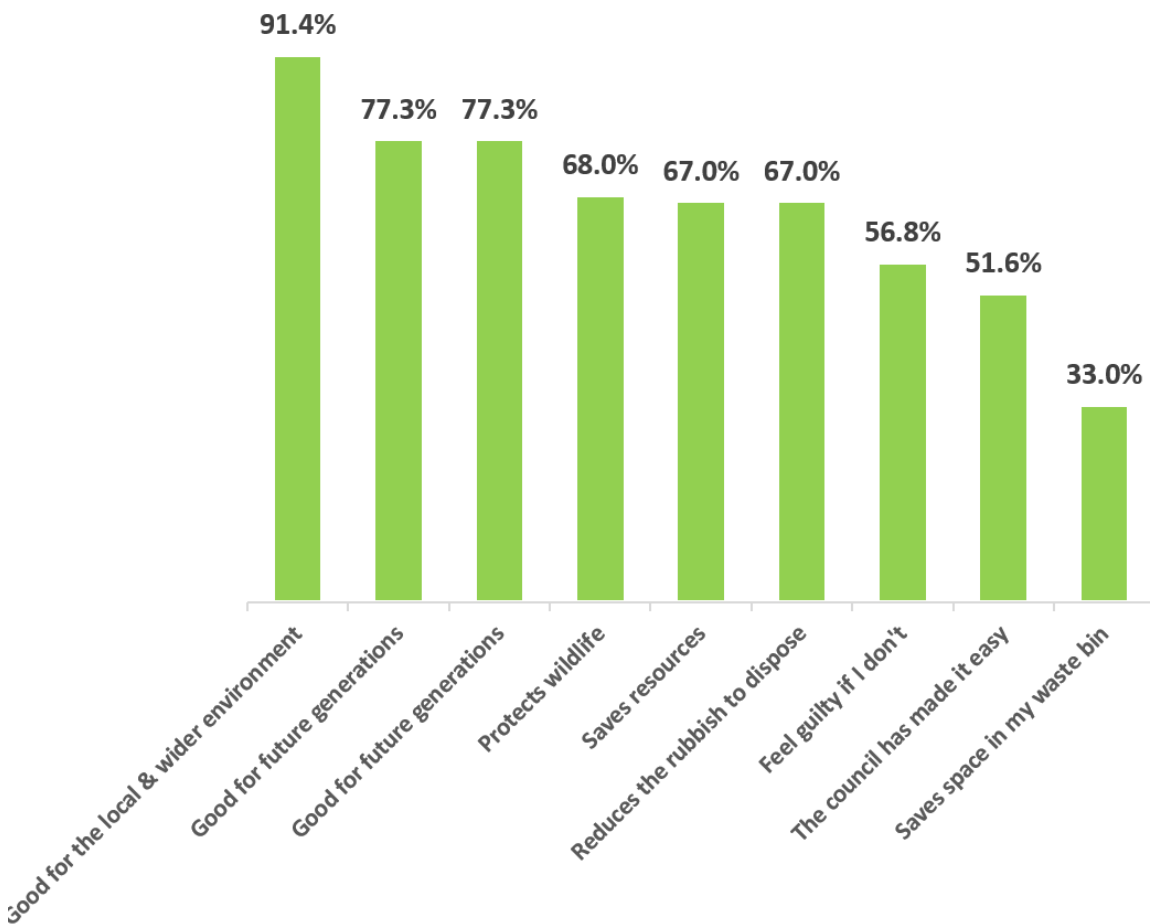
The importance of recycling

Q. Which of these statements best describes how much you currently recycle?

Q. Which of the following statements describes you best?

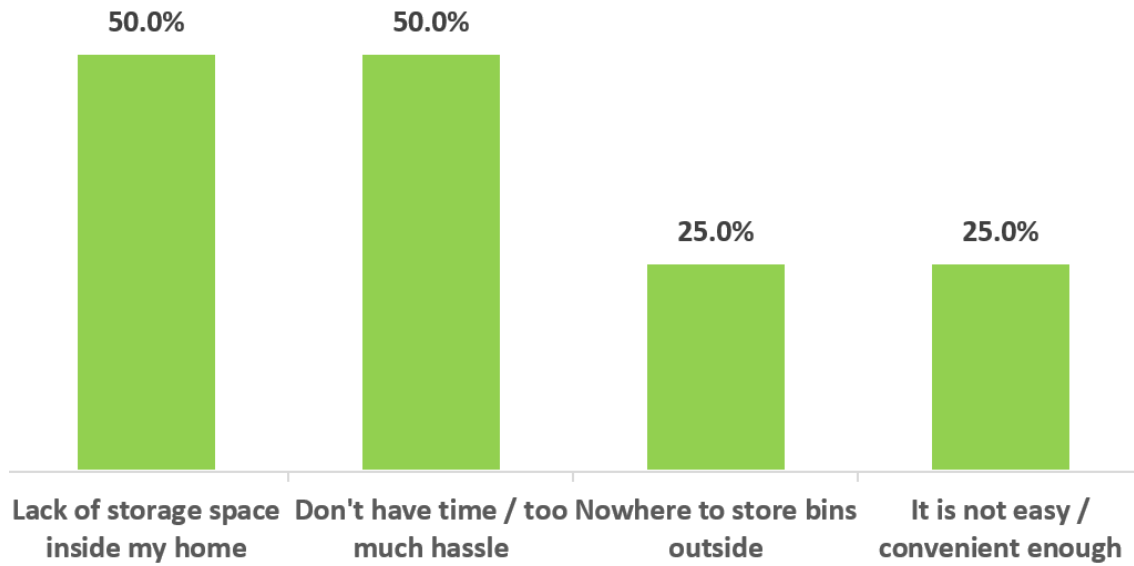


Q. Why do you recycle? (online survey only)



The importance of recycling

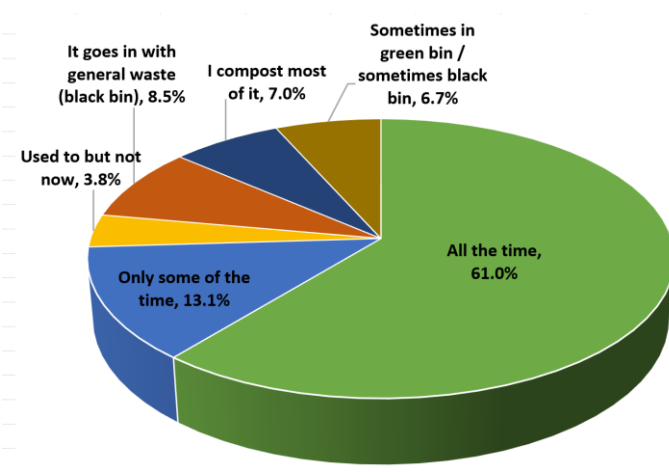
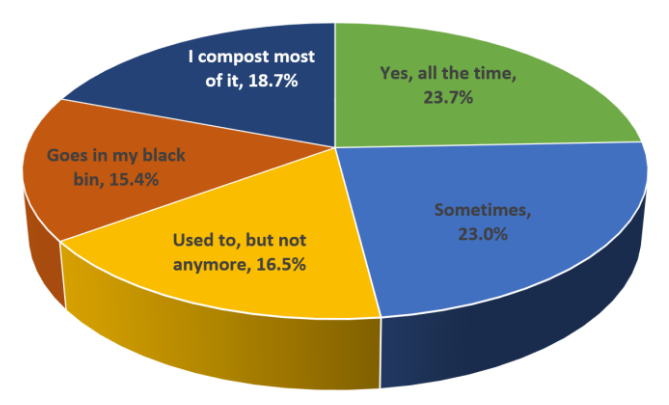
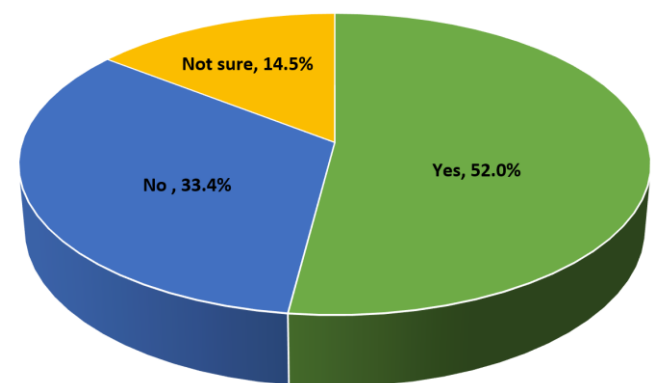
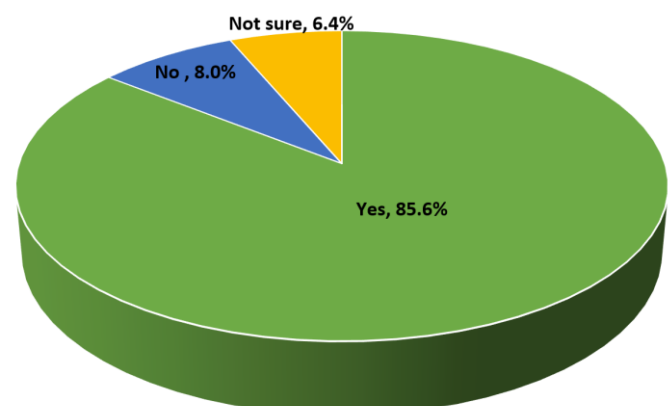
Q. Why don't you recycle? (online survey only)



1.3.2 FOOD WASTE RECYCLING

There was significant difference between people’s propensity to recycle food waste between the two surveys (61% in the online survey and 23.7% in the chatbot survey). This is likely to be the result of the number of people living in homes with communal recycling in the chatbot survey, which means it is more difficult to recycle food waste. For the council, there is definitely scope to increase people’s food waste recycling activity – which may well be achieved through a weekly recycling service.

There was also a significant difference in the responses to whether a separate, weekly food waste collection would encourage people to recycle more. This proposal was met a lot more positively by those completing the chatbot survey but, interestingly, less positively by younger people – just 55% of 18-30 years said it would compared with 85.6% overall.

ONLINE SURVEY	CHATBOT SURVEY																										
Food waste recycling																											
<p>Q. Do you recycle your food waste in your GREEN bin?</p>  <p>A 3D pie chart showing the distribution of responses for the online survey. The largest slice is 'All the time' at 61.0%. Other categories include 'Only some of the time' (13.1%), 'Used to but not now' (3.8%), 'It goes in with general waste (black bin)' (8.5%), 'I compost most of it' (7.0%), and 'Sometimes in green bin / sometimes black bin' (6.7%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All the time</td> <td>61.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Only some of the time</td> <td>13.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Used to but not now</td> <td>3.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>It goes in with general waste (black bin)</td> <td>8.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I compost most of it</td> <td>7.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometimes in green bin / sometimes black bin</td> <td>6.7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	All the time	61.0%	Only some of the time	13.1%	Used to but not now	3.8%	It goes in with general waste (black bin)	8.5%	I compost most of it	7.0%	Sometimes in green bin / sometimes black bin	6.7%	<p>Q. Do you recycle your food waste in your GREEN bin?</p>  <p>A 3D pie chart showing the distribution of responses for the chatbot survey. The largest slice is 'Yes, all the time' at 23.7%. Other categories include 'Sometimes' (23.0%), 'Used to, but not anymore' (16.5%), 'Goes in my black bin' (15.4%), and 'I compost most of it' (18.7%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes, all the time</td> <td>23.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometimes</td> <td>23.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Used to, but not anymore</td> <td>16.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Goes in my black bin</td> <td>15.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I compost most of it</td> <td>18.7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes, all the time	23.7%	Sometimes	23.0%	Used to, but not anymore	16.5%	Goes in my black bin	15.4%	I compost most of it	18.7%
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<p>Q. Do you think that having a weekly separate food waste collection would encourage you to recycle food waste or even more of your food waste than you do at present?</p>  <p>A 3D pie chart showing the distribution of responses for the online survey. The largest slice is 'Yes' at 52.0%. Other categories include 'No' (33.4%) and 'Not sure' (14.5%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>52.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>33.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not sure</td> <td>14.5%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	52.0%	No	33.4%	Not sure	14.5%	<p>Q. Do you think that having a weekly separate food-recycling bin would encourage you to recycle food-waste more?</p>  <p>A 3D pie chart showing the distribution of responses for the chatbot survey. The largest slice is 'Yes' at 85.6%. Other categories include 'No' (8.0%) and 'Not sure' (6.4%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>85.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>8.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not sure</td> <td>6.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	85.6%	No	8.0%	Not sure	6.4%										
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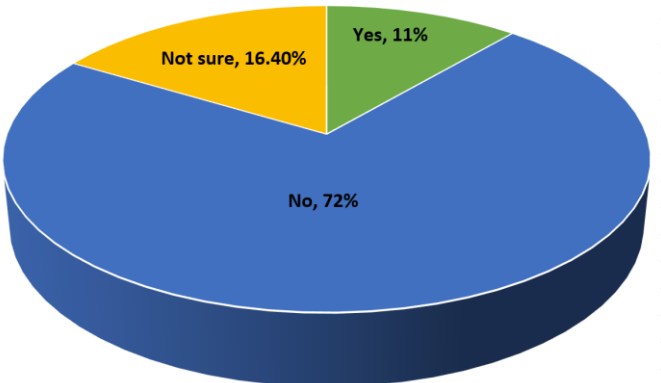
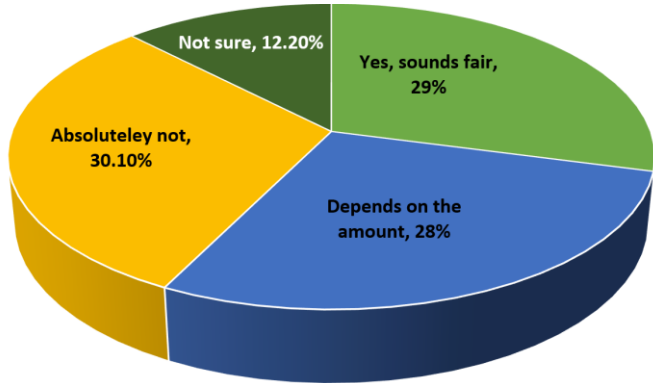
1.3.3 GARDEN WASTE RECYCLING

There was also a significant difference between people’s views on introducing a charge for collecting green waste.

The chatbot survey did include a more nuanced question (adding ‘depends on the amount’, which might have made some respondents less against the proposal than in the online survey, which was a straight yes / no / not sure question.

The difference can in part be explained by the different demographics responding to the survey. Further analysis of the chatbot results shows that the younger respondents (18-30 years) are more open to paying for the service – the older respondents feel the strongest about not paying to have their garden waste collected. In addition, those with communal recycling facilities and, therefore, without access to their own green bin are also more open to a subscription being introduced, which is not surprising. Those that use the service would prefer not to pay, those that don’t would be happy to see those that use it pay for it.

Interestingly, both surveys reported that around 20% of respondents would consider paying for the garden waste service. The online survey allowed an ‘other’ option and nearly a third of people chose this, citing putting the garden waste into the black / residual bin as the way they would dispose of it in future. A number also commented that they felt their council tax should cover the cost of the service, rather than a separate charge.

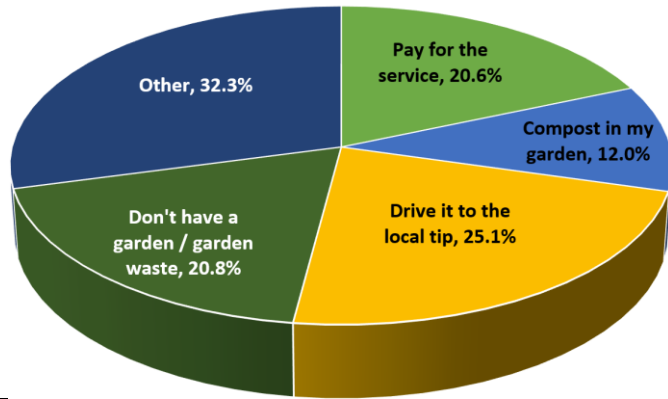
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<p>Q. Do you think that Watford should introduce a charge for a separate garden waste service so that the cost of the service is covered by those who use it?</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Online Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not sure</td> <td>16.40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	No	72%	Not sure	16.40%	Yes	11%	<p>Q. Should Watford introduce a charge for collecting garden-waste, so that this service is covered only by those who use it?</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Chatbot Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes, sounds fair</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Depends on the amount</td> <td>28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Absolutely not</td> <td>30.10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not sure</td> <td>12.20%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Yes, sounds fair	29%	Depends on the amount	28%	Absolutely not	30.10%	Not sure	12.20%
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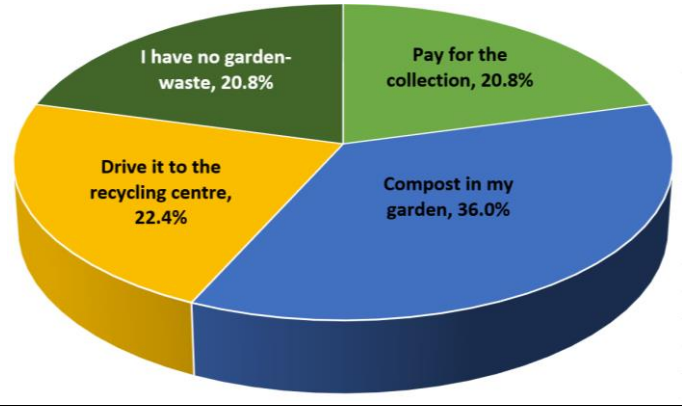
CHATBOT SURVEY

Garden waste recycling

Q. If a charge was introduced for the garden waste collection service, how would you dispose of your garden waste?



Q. If we introduced a collection fee for garden-waste, how would you choose to dispose of your garden-waste?



We would like your opinion on the **waste & recycling services** in Watford!

