**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**POLICY COMMITTEE** **7 MARCH 2022**

**COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1**

Councillor McElroy to ask the Lead Councillor for Communities & Neighbourhoods:

**Smaller Vehicle Needed to Collect Waste from Narrow Roads**

Many times the lorry which collects waste from the grey and red bins has not been able to access some of the narrower roads in Redlands – and I'm sure across the town. This has meant bins haven't been emptied and caused all sorts of waste related problems.

The food waste collection uses a smaller vehicle and is able to access narrower roads with greater ease. Please can the lead councillor update me on the results of the council looking into getting a smaller vehicle to use for emptying grey and red bins on narrow roads.

**REPLY** by Councillor Barnett-Ward (Lead Councillor for Communities & Neighbourhoods):

I have been in correspondence and held meetings with residents who live on narrow streets where parked cars can prevent access by the refuse collection vehicles. I have also doorknocked some of the affected roads on the invitation of ward councillors, so I know how problematic these missed collections are for residents. I have tasked Waste Management with identifying every road with repeated issues and coming up with potential solutions.

Waste management have identified ten roads out of approximately 1,400 across the borough that have had repeated access issues. These roads do not have problems every week, and some are more regularly affected than others, but they all have the combination of very narrow roadway and on street parking which means that a large car parked slightly away from the kerb can be enough to prevent our refuse vehicles from accessing the street for collections.

Waste management are actively seeking solutions to ensure residents of these ten roads have the same reliability of service that the council provides to the other roads in the borough.

Refuse collection vehicles are of a standard width. The supplier of the Council's 26 tonne RCV fleet, Dennis Eagle, do make a smaller 18-tonne vehicle, but whilst this is shorter than our 26 tonne vehicles it is the same width.

Cllr McElroy suggests using food waste-sized vehicles, but they are a very different tool for a very different job. The annual running cost of operating a specialist small 7.5 tonne vehicle, accounting for amortisation of the vehicle, fuel, maintenance, and crew is in the order of £92,000 per year. As the total weight restriction of the food waste vehicles is 7.5 tonnes, they cannot have a device to compact waste. This is not a problem when collecting food waste as it has a greater bulk density of 500kg/m3 and higher moisture content, than residual waste (189 kg/m3) or recycling (86 kg/m3).

Food Waste collections are weekly, using a 23-litre bin, whereas Residual Waste and Recycling are fortnightly collections, predominantly using 140 litre and 240 litre bins respectively. Using the bulk density factors above, this calculates to each household presenting 1.1kg of Food weekly a full bin, 17.2kg Recycling fortnightly and 18.9 kg of Residual Waste fortnightly.

The number of households the Food Waste can service per day is approximately 1800. This is achieved by a technique using a "slave bin" so that 20 Food bins are emptied in to a 240-litre bin before being lifted into the vehicle. The loading cycle time of the lift is 20 seconds with the configuration on the smaller vehicle as opposed to 10 seconds on a standard RCV which is significantly more robust, and two bins can be loaded at the simultaneously with dual lifts.

Emptying individual bins with a slow lift would reduce the number of households per day on a normal Residual or Recycling round to approximately 300 based on lift productivity. However, a compounding factor is that the smaller vehicle without compaction would be only be able to take the waste generated by 30 to 40 households at a time. This would entail multiple extra trips to Smallmead per day, with all the negative environmental, financial and productivity impacts that would entail. For example, Blenheim Gardens is possibly the most frequently affected of the ten streets we have identified. A food waste-sized vehicle would have to travel to Smallmead to be emptied at least twice when collecting from Blenheim Road alone, more likely three times when collecting Recycling.

Taking all these factors into consideration, a food waste sized vehicle collecting recycling or residual waste could only collect from 150 households a day, making it a highly inefficient model, with significant environmental and financial impacts.

Additionally, the Operator's Licence which regulates our vehicle compliance to the Ministry of Transport has classified that the Council are currently at full capacity for vehicles at the Bennet Road depot, therefore any new vehicle would have to be a replacement and not an addition to the fleet. As a food waste sized vehicle would be so much less efficient than our standard refuse collection vehicles, we could not justify removing a full-sized RCV from the fleet to accommodate one.

We continue to explore other options for the ten streets, such as sack collections, loaded into a tipper vehicle, but this is also not straightforward: sacks could encourage vermin, would need to be collected weekly, have manual handling issues for the crews, and the same criteria of capacity and additional requirement to make multiple journeys still prevail.

Network Management and Parking Services have been contacted for their input into possible solutions such as increased patrols for people who are not parked correctly and changes to parking restrictions such as restricted parking on a certain day and time to allow access. These options need further investigation and I will emphasise that no changes to parking restrictions would be made without full consultation with residents.

The Waste Service are aware of the problem in these streets. For the time being we maintain the current operational procedure that if access cannot be achieved, the crew will return and make several attempts in the hope that obstructing vehicles have moved. We will continue to endeavour to seek further possible alternative solutions to resolve the situation.