

**COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1**

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

**Tackling Fly-Tipping with Free Bulky Waste Collection**

Green councillors have long campaigned for action to tackle fly-tipping in Reading. We were pleased to see the introduction of a free bulky waste collection service. Please can the Lead Councillor update me on how the new free bulky waste collection service has been going. What has been going well and what challenges have there been?

**REPLY** by Councillor Rowland (Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety):

I'd like to thank Councillor White for his question - an exact repeat of this question in July. I will not prolong this response by repeating points raised then, but instead concentrate on advising you of where we are since you last asked the same question.

By way of setting quick context: the provision of Free Bulky Waste collections service commenced collections on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022, and we are now just five months into the programme. We are at the point where the accumulated knowledge of how the service is going begins to yield us the information that can enable us to tailor and improve the service to meet its goals; action that is now being undertaken by the Teams.

There are 80 free collection slots a week. Four slots daily are allocated to be called in to the Booking Centre for those with digital exclusion needs, the other twelve daily slots are bookable online.

We are pleased to report that the online booking system continues to work well with collections being completed daily. Recently, there has been reported difficulty of completing bookings with the online system which appears to affect a small number of Apple devices. This has been reported to the digital team who are in the process of testing a solution to resolve the issue.

The bulky waste service performance statistics, from commencement of collection dates on 6<sup>th</sup> June to 21<sup>st</sup> October are as follows:

**Free Bulky Collections**

1620 free collection bookings received up to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022 (includes bookings for future dates). Of those:

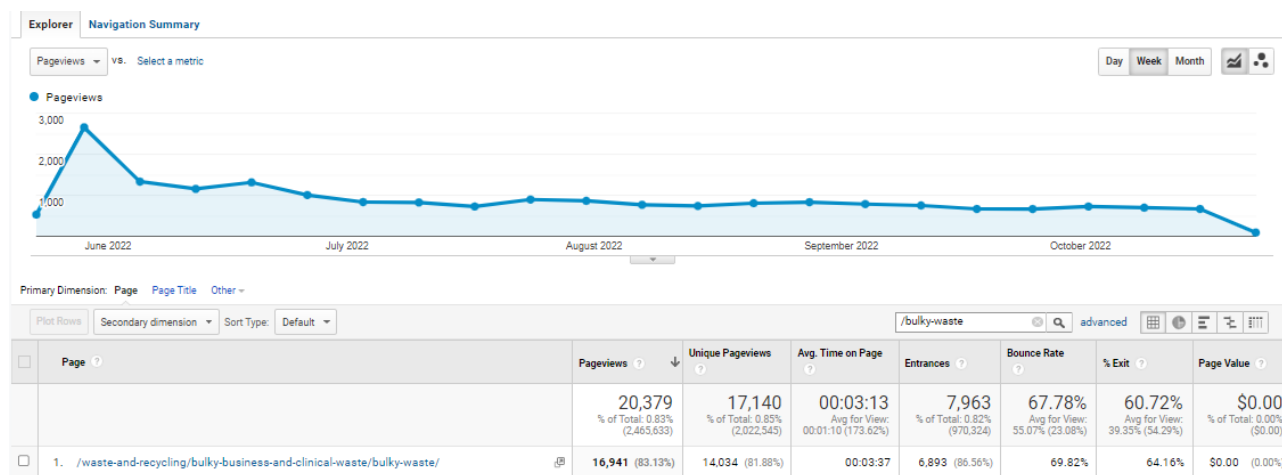
- 1508 free collection bookings received
- 1407 free collections completed
- 101 free collections cancelled

Of the 1407 free collections completed, only 167 were phone call centre bookings for the digitally excluded (approx. 12%). Indeed, the non-digital slots are presently being

underutilised and we are working with the Contact Centre to both understand prospective demand in greater depth and ensure that the process is as simple as possible.

## Booking System

From the launch of the online booking and website for free bulky waste collections, after an initial surge in users, the website traffic has stabilised. The graph shows the page views for the bulky waste service for the period 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> October. The high level of views in June was at the point of the initial service promotions release. The zero result at the end of the graph shows the last week in October yet to be confirmed at time of writing. It is estimated that this line of views will continue on at a manageable level.



Whilst the scheme was designed to reduce fly-tipping across the town, it was additionally put in place to ensure that all residents can benefit from the programme's offerings by addressing:

- Residents that do not have a vehicle to access the Re3 site.
- Residents that are digitally excluded.
- The reduction of single car journeys to the tip, answering our climate emergency goals by improving air quality.

To enable the Council to drive the programme forward to wholly achieve its goals, mapping exercises are being undertaken to compare areas of uptake with fly-tipping numbers and further information is being collated to note the items being removed to determine the overall effect on reducing fly tipping.

This early analysis has made us aware of the need to do more specific promotions in certain areas to ensure the goals of the service are met. This is being monitored weekly and where necessary, the promoting of the scheme into specific areas (where there is digital exclusion and low car ownership) may be tailored. A course of action to drive the service take-up into the areas where the programme needs to be expanded is being developed to ensure the service is achieving its aims and this will begin to be further rolled out in the coming months.

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

31 OCTOBER 2022

### COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health:

#### Supporting our Schools Through Education Crisis

Reports in the national press that 9 out of 10 schools will have run out of money by next year have worried many residents. Can the Lead Councillor for Education tell us what steps the Council is taking to ensure this does not happen, and that our schools, and our children's education, are financially secure?

REPLY by Councillor McEwan (Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health):

Finances nationally are under tremendous pressure. Schools are not exempt from this crisis as all state funded schools are financed via a national funding formula which is only increasing nationally by 1.9% for 2023-2024.

The impact of current inflation rates of 10.1% and the impending decision on Teachers pay that will be a minimum of 5% for 2022-2023, with the likely agreement of NJC pay scales that consist of teaching assistants getting a minimum of 10.5%, means that the situation is looking increasingly challenging both nationally and locally.

As reported to Reading Schools Forum at its meeting on 13 October 2022, of Reading's 34 community schools, 13 are currently showing a worsening budget position, with two new relatively small deficits.

Reading Borough Council work closely with Brighter Futures for Children to provide a range of support for our maintained schools. Officers are in regular contact with every maintained school to ensure our schools are effective, including regarding financial management and support.

The following actions are being undertaken to support our local schools:

- Reading Borough Council manage an energy contract which is available to and used by many Reading schools. The Council has secured through the renegotiation of contract price for the current year (2022-2023) costs below the government's own maximum threshold of utility bills.
- Brighter Futures Finance School Support Service provides telephone advice and support, training, termly conference meetings and guidance notes that include benchmarking practices for school leaders and School Business Managers.
- Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children have worked with the Department for Education to implement Schools Resource Management Advisor programmes to help schools that are at risk of going into deficit. These programmes have been successful over the past year in identifying best practice and recommendations for schools to follow to deliver financial value. These programmes have helped the majority of participating schools into an in-year surplus position.

- BFFC with Schools Forum agreement have implemented a falling rolls fund and continued with a growth funding process that can supply schools additional funding for increased or decreased levels of pupils from October funding census.
- We continue to lobby DfE representatives over contractual and payroll inflation and the need for a specific Schools grant to pay for inflation for staff pay. This action would follow the precedent set by government in previous years when the pay and pension increase for Teachers has exceeded the overall Dedicated Schools Grant uplift.
- Any School at risk of having a deficit will be closely supported, including where necessary being supported to agree with the Director of Education a licensed deficit and deficit recovery plan, to ensure that education for Reading children is not compromised by the financial challenges schools may face.