

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 9 NOVEMBER 2022

### QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor R Singh to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

#### Public Litter Bins

We have a persistent problem of overflowing bins in the parks and near bus stops, and you have to walk just ten steps on any street in Reading to find litter.

Over the years, the amount of street litter and overflowing bins has increased, contributing to general despair among residents. One resident messaged me, "I ask my friends or visitors to meet at the end of the road of my house because I do not want them to see them overflowing bins and litter scattered on the street. I want to be proud, not ashamed of where we live. We want the area to be clean and safe."

Will the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety lend her support to increase the frequency of bin collections from the local parks, near bus stops and street cleaning?

#### **REPLY by Councillor Hacker:**

I invite Councillor Rowland, the Lead Councillor Environmental Services & Community Safety, to make the response on my behalf.

#### **REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:**

I thank Councillor Singh for his question.

There are approximately 2000 residential street litter and dog waste bins across the borough's road network with a further 370 within our parks/open spaces.

The schedules for the emptying of all litter bins are based on a fixed rotational schedule for expediency and managing workloads. Litter bin emptying frequencies are scheduled depending on location with 'high use' areas (Town Centre, District Shopping Areas, Parks and Open Spaces) being attended daily or in the case of the Town Centre, multiple times per day. Other bins located beyond the Town Centre are emptied at least once per week or more often if it is a high traffic area.

Emptying schedules are regularly reviewed to avoid litter bins overflowing. We adjust our schedules and solutions based on evidence of an alteration in collections needed at a particular site. Where persistent overflowing of bins occurs and the capacity of the existing bin no longer meets the needs, such as at well-used bus stops or parks, either the frequency of emptying is increased, or a larger capacity bin is installed to meet requirements.

When finding areas where there are issues, residents and ward Councillors frequently write in and the situation is reviewed and adjusted as needed. I empathise with your resident, however, when confronted with such a complaint, as a Councillor you could have also immediately been an integral part of the solution, in letting officers know directly of the specific area of concern, so that the problem could have already been addressed. Officers always welcome that information and most issues find a quick resolution utilising that route.

Should a member of the public observe a litter bin that is overflowing or excess litter, they can report it directly and easily through our Love Clean Reading App- (which our own Officers frequently use themselves) or by ringing our contact centre at 0118 9373787. Many of our bins have labels on them to advise how to report them if over-flowing.

It is worth mentioning the successful 'RAYS' (Reading Adopt Your Street) initiative that has supported civic-minded residents & volunteer groups to help keep their local area clean and tidy. Our RAYS Plus programme is now running quite successfully with larger groups and many are finding a real purpose, neighbourly camaraderie, and satisfaction in volunteering to keep their area tidy.

An increasing misuse of litter bins by members of the public for the disposal of domestic and commercial waste has been noted. Information found relating to the misuse of these litter bins is passed to our Enforcement Team for further action. The concentration of this misuse is largely, but not exclusively, within the Town Centre. The current government's policy of allowing permitted development of offices to residential is likely already the cause of this increasing impact in the Town centre and this is currently only destined to continue.

Increases in rubbish and litter have also been noted where there are high rates of residential turn-over in areas with heavy concentrations of small flats and HMOs. Transient residents are not always properly advised by agents and landlords of how recycling and rubbish collections operate in Reading. There is on-going education with landlords and agents to ensure this information is fully shared. Officers also frequently visit these areas with informational leaflets as part of that work.

These changes in circumstances and/or behaviours have put an additional strain on our Street Cleansing resources that is constrained by years of budget-tightening. Working with stakeholders and the wider Neighbourhood Service team, a revised change of work has been developed which is soon to be implemented, to provide daily clearance of domestic bags and greater enforcement of commercial waste being left on the streets.

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**QUESTION NO. 2**

Councillor McCann to ask the Chair of the Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee:

**Making Our Narrow Pavements Useable**

There are a number of roads in Redlands with narrow pavements, which are often impassable due to bins blocking the way, especially for people using wheelchairs or pushing buggies.

The council's current policy is that bins in narrow streets will be collected from just inside a property's boundary and returned there, however they are frequently left out. Would the council consider reminding refuse collection teams of this policy, informing residents on the relevant streets that they don't need to put their bins out for collection and letting the local councillors know which streets this applies to?

**REPLY by Councillor Hacker:**

I invite Councillor Rowland, the Lead Councillor Environmental Services & Community Safety, to make the response on my behalf.

**REPLY by the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:**

I would like to thank Councillor McCann for her question.

Recycling and Waste bins on narrow pavements not only impact on residents with wheelchairs and child buggies but also affects people with other mobility issues and the visually impaired.

Your point is relevant not only in your ward, but around the borough. I'm pleased therefore to advise you that our waste service management team is currently addressing a body of work driven by concerns expressed at the Access and Disabilities Working Group about pavement accessibility. At their most recent meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September issues associated with narrow footpaths and waste collections were discussed. Officers advised members of the group about the guidance issued to residents regarding bins on narrow pavements and the operational management practices of Waste Services to mitigate the challenges experienced. As Vice Chair of that group, and from the work I've been engaged in with Cllr Cross in Redlands ward, I have ensured the roads you are asking about are already part of that work.

From that initial meeting, several possible interventions are being considered, some of which have been immediately acted upon and others which are being worked

through with the intention of inclusion in future delivery and operating methods to continually improve accessibility on pavements.

A significant problem identified was that people with sight loss issues were not being able to easily spot the small, dark coloured food waste caddies on the pavement. This doesn't just affect narrow pavements but is a general issue throughout the Borough. To avoid this hazard, officers have been working with crews to ensure food caddies are placed back inside of the curtilage of the property as general operational procedure for all properties. This focus of operational improvements will also reduce these bins being blown down the street in windy conditions reducing damaged bins.

The broader body of work however, is to be undertaken in addressing specific street and area issues as they emerge on a case-by-case basis. You highlight issues in your ward, but there are a variety of similar issues throughout the town which will require intervention to be tailored to a specific Road and its unique geographical challenges. This work is recognising that bespoke arrangements, as far as is practicable, may be required in some instances.

Our approach, which has been practice for many years, has been found to be broadly successful, but clearly we do know that there are issues which is why the work spurred on by the Access and Disability Working Group is so important.

For information the Council provides the following guidance on its website:

“Where there is no pavement, or the pavement is narrow adjoining a property (i.e., the property is next to the road), residents must place their bin, bag, or box on collection day just inside the curtilage of their property adjacent the edge of the road).

This is accompanied by a further infographic, as below:

# Reading Waste Services



[www.reading.gov.uk/waste](http://www.reading.gov.uk/waste)

## Help us to collect your waste

### Right bin, right day, right location

Please place the correct bins on the footpath on collection day by 6am.

Please keep the pavement clear for pedestrians. If this is not possible, place the correct bins at the edge of your property.



Please note: Examples shown are for grey and food waste bin collections.

**Please note:** If you currently receive an assisted collection these changes do not affect you. Our operatives will continue to collect your bins as usual.

We do not currently hold a list of streets to which this guidance applies and apply a common-sense approach in undertaking our statutory waste collection duties. Our staff are aware of the above guidance and are required to act in accordance with it. This requires a dynamic approach in the presentation of waste bins and the return of the bin following collection, as no one solution is correct for all streets or even for all properties within a single street. In tailoring bespoke responses where long-term challenges on narrow roads present themselves, there are the logistical pressures on the Team to clear roads in an efficient fashion that have to be coordinated alongside the cooperation of residents as part of the solution to resolving particular street issues.

Where there are issues found to be occurring within a location on a regular basis, our adopted course of action would be to write to all residents of that Street/Road to remind them of the Council's waste presentation guidance and their role in supporting its successful delivery, alongside continual training and education of waste collection staff.

I am optimistic that the work progressing with the Access and Disabilities Working Group, and with the University around streets in your area, will deliver proper accessibility for persons with accessibility issues around the town.