

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

17 SEPT 2025

Petition from Adrian Lawson:

Tackling Oxford Road Bins and Rubbish

Reading Council:

On Oxford Road bins and waste are out of control. Often large 1100 litre trade waste bins are overflowing and spilling out onto the road. The council's bag collection system isn't working well so waste from flats above the shops piles up. Reading Council please can you tackle these issues.

RESPONSE by Councillor Karen Rowland (Lead Councillor for Environmental Services):

I would like to thank Mr Lawson for his community spirit and interest in an area of town in which he does not live in presenting this petition on behalf of those that live and work along the vibrant Oxford Road, like myself. This petition gives me an opportunity to address publicly the efforts we have made and are continuing to make along the corridor, taking on board the unique challenges that the busy and vibrant Oxford Road presents.

We understand the impact that littering, fly-tipping and poorly controlled business and household waste has on our communities and the impression that it gives to the town's visitors, particularly when it occurs in prominent locations such as the Oxford Road. Tackling such issues along busy town arteries is a genuine challenge where there is a very high turnover of rental residences above shops and many successful street-facing businesses with commercial bins directly on the road.

Last year we completed a project on the Wokingham Road, where we worked with business owners and residents to better manage their waste. The project led to the marking of formal bin presentation bays to control the presentation of waste, with regular enforcement visits taking place to ensure that businesses and residents comply with arrangements. This has been effective, and monitoring and enforcement visits continue to ensure this remains the case. However, as along the Oxford Road, the churn of residents and business owners means that this work is a never-ending task for our team.

Over the winter of 23/24, we initiated a consultation with businesses and residents on the Oxford Road taking in their views and concerns regarding waste management. This engagement was undertaken with participation from the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) to consider best practice options that may be available to address the long-standing issues experienced. The project considered a number of options but primarily recommended pioneering an underground bin storage option. This option, extraordinary expense aside, was ultimately identified as not viable due to the extensive presence of underground services, business parking and traffic demands on this historic artery.

Following this community engagement, the Council then gave a commitment to identify and trial new waste management arrangements for Oxford Road, initially in a targeted area between Reading West Station Bridge and Wantage Road. This would, in a similar fashion to Wokingham Road, focus on the management of trade waste bins, with the regulation of presentation points. We will additionally look to introduce designated household waste facilities that will house communal waste bins, screening them from public view. This year, we have priced out and reviewed various options to look at what is viable for this area. It is

an ambitious project, and our ambition is tempered by what funding is available to the Council.

Our Recycling Enforcement Team already undertake regular weekly inspection visits along the Oxford Road, visiting businesses to ensure documented waste collections are in place, investigating fly-tipping and inappropriately presented domestic waste to see if there is evidence that would allow a fixed penalty notice to be issued. With a limited staff of five enforcement officers, also responsible for the rest of the Borough, this is an on-going struggle with the aforementioned challenges of the Road, to make a lasting perceivable impact.

Therefore, I am pleased to have this opportunity to further promote that Reading entered into a one-year trial enforcement partnership contract with Kingdom Local Authority Support on the 15th September for the provision of waste enforcement services. This has essentially secured five additional officers that more than double the Council's in-house resources and will allow our in-house staff to more closely focus on tackling deeply ingrained issues such as this petition addresses. The new trial enforcement team will regularly undertake patrols along the Oxford Road, amongst other priority areas. The high-profile activity will act as a deterrent to environmental crime, with the team issuing FPN's to those evidenced to be responsible for an offence, including fly-tipping, household waste duty of care and littering. This initiative is in direct response to our Annual Survey that reaffirmed our residents want a cleaner environment. As Lead member and a resident of the Oxford Road, this is a trial that I very much hope begins to turn the tide on some of the ingrained issues that the Oxford Road and the wider town has experienced. Early indications are that people are owning up to their actions when caught littering with many choosing to pay fines on the spot. I am pleased to welcome this additional trial enforcement resource to deliver a real difference for people like you and me and those that have signed this petition.

Given the strength of feeling in our communities along the Oxford Road, I was a bit surprised that the growth of signatures gathered on this petition over time has been somewhat slow. We are continuing, as I outlined, to take significant steps to create lasting improvement. As a local councillor and resident of the area, I relish that work and I appreciate the petition as a vindication that the efforts we are making from the Council to tackle this pernicious problem are the right steps to take will be much appreciated going forward.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

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

External Enforcement Partnership Trial

Persistent fly-tippers treat specific spots in Tilehurst as Council collection points for their furniture, white goods and household waste, spoiling our environment and causing increased collection costs for the Council. I am sure that the same applies in other parts of Reading. Can we be updated on progress in concluding a contract with an external partner to enforce the environmental regulations across our town, in particular to tackle fly-tipping?

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

Thank you, Councillor Thompson, for your question, which provides me with an opportunity to raise broader awareness of the additional resources that have been secured to robustly challenge and penalise those that engage in fly-tipping and littering, addressing the detrimental impact that such thoughtless actions that you have rightly raised, can have upon our town.

I am pleased to advise that on Monday the 15th of September, we began our partnership with Kingdom Local Authority Support, which has provided a dedicated team of five new environmental enforcement officers who are now patrolling Reading's streets to counter littering and fly-tipping. This is a bold new Council initiative in direct response to our Annual Survey that identified that our residents are fed up with the minority who spoil Reading for the majority of people who live in and take pride in our town. The only people who need be concerned about this enforcement change are those who lack respect for our town and drop their litter or fail to correctly dispose of bulky or excess waste.

The partnership with Kingdom Local Authority Support is for an initial one-year trial period and importantly presents no cost to the Council, with Kingdom recovering their costs from a proportion of the fixed penalty notices they collect. The scheme doubles our existing environmental enforcement resources, in a manner that the Council would otherwise be unable to fund due to other budget considerations.

The dedicated enforcement team will operate across the whole borough focusing on areas where littering and fly-tipping are evidenced as being most prevalent, including sites in Tilehurst. The team will both proactively patrol and reactively investigate reports of environmental crime, issuing fixed penalty notices (FPN's) to those that are evidenced to have committed an offence. The officers are easily identifiable to the public in branded uniforms and their interactions with the public are recorded using body-worn cameras, permitting robust evidence gathering and performance management. The Council has additionally reserved the right to be able to review individual cases where deemed necessary.

Kingdom will adhere to the Council's own policy and penalty fee structure in the delivery of the service, with contract management provided by our Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer – Holly Tough, who will oversee both our in-house and partner teams directing them towards areas where the greatest focus needs to go. A range of KPI's have been agreed with our partner and these will be reported on a monthly and quarterly basis to the Council in an agreed format. These reports will be presented to HNL Committee to provide oversight of the effectiveness of the partnership, and if effective, as appropriate, we will seek approval to formally procure the service on a longer-term contract basis, engaging the broader market.

The new team, as our existing in-house employees do, will work closely with the community in identifying and tackling reported issues. As well as continuing to report issues via the Love Clean Streets app, I would like to invite any Councillor that wishes to engage directly with the team on this initiative, to contact Holly Tough to discuss opportunities or hotspot areas and to meet with the team in their Ward to observe them at work.

Alongside our record investment in road repairs across Reading, this Council will continue to respond to the concerns residents tell us matter to them the most. Tough action on fly-tipping and littering falls into that category and I am pleased to welcome this additional enforcement resource to deliver a real difference.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport

Roadworks causing delays north, south, east and west

Everywhere I cycle in Reading roadworks are causing delays. Queues of traffic are wasting people's time and causing pollution. Residents are especially frustrated when traffic lights are set up and then nothing happens over the weekend for example. Please can the lead councillor update me on progress to becoming a permitting authority – which will allow the council to place conditions on utility companies who want to dig up the road. From previous email briefings I understand this has unfortunately been delayed for a year.

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport)

I thank Councillor White for his question.

Reading Borough Council understands and empathises with the frustrations that residents often face with the effect of road works. They are a necessity, whether they are delivering Highway improvements or repairs, or upgrading and maintaining the utility services on which we all rely. They ensure that vital services including water, gas, electricity, telecommunications are maintained and that the roads and footways are maintained and improved, making the living standards and lives better for residents in Reading.

Officers work hard to co-ordinate necessary planned works and events and have the added challenges of unplanned works – those where there is a safety risk, or where there is a loss of service. They work closely with all undertakers of works and event organisers with the goal of encouraging methods that result in the safe and efficient delivery of the work and minimising the impact of the works.

However, being an urban Borough means that there will inevitably be impact to the travelling public when capacity on the Highway is reduced. A permit scheme will not change this.

A permit scheme can enable some additional conditions to be applied on works taking place, but it is equally important to manage expectations around what these can do. They must, by law, be reasonable, achievable and safe, and inspection will be required to check compliance and gather evidence of breaches.

Councillor White has specifically referred to traffic lights being set up and left over the weekend without works taking place. We will all be aware of road works that have not been conducted optimally and the Council are addressing these issues. However, it is worth noting that there can also be safety reasons for why this is sometimes necessary. For example, if the traffic signals are managing traffic around a safe area for pedestrians to walk when a footway is obstructed by works, or where the carriageway is not ready for vehicular traffic use due to materials curing.

Becoming a permit authority will bring benefits to the way in which road works can be managed and officers are undertaking the project to achieve permit authority status but are currently prioritising the Digital Traffic Regulation Order project – a massive and very complex project, and one that is soon to become a legislative requirement.

Councillor White may not be aware, but for his and others' benefit, it is worth reminding that the Council subscribes to a website called one.network, where information received from undertakers of road works is made available to the public in near-real-time. Most UK authorities provide information to this website, so it is a useful tool for finding information and planning journeys across local authority boundaries.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 3

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

Tackling missed and delayed bin collections

Reading Council has changed the way bin collections work. However residents still raise problems with missed or delayed bin collections on the doorstep with Green councillors.

Please can the lead councillor update me on how average monthly missed and delayed bin collections compare to the same month last year with some numbers?

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

I would like to thank Cllr White for this question and the opportunity it affords me to update colleagues on the progress our recycling & waste services team have made since the 9th June 2025 in both improving operational efficiency and consistency of waste collections, following the wholesale waste collection schedule changes that were made.

For the period April 24 – August 24 a total of 3214 bins were reported as missed, with 2,859,517 collections scheduled over the period. The missed bins are equal to 0.11% of all collections (slightly over 1/10th of 1%).

For the same period Apr 25 – August 25 a total of 2646 bins have been reported as missed, with 2,940,096 collections scheduled over the period. The missed bins are equal to 0.09% of scheduled collections. (less than 1/10th of 1%).

It is worth noting that this year, an additional 80,579 collections were undertaken (over the same time period as last year) and 568 less bins were reported as missed over the two directly compared periods. Whilst this figure shows some improvement, the service continues to push for a top quartile performance attainment of no greater than 80 missed bins per 100,000 collections, or 0.08% (or less than 1/12th of 1%).

It should be noted that the service experienced significant challenge as a result of a peak in staff sickness throughout July and August that coincided with peak annual leave arrangements. The service worked additional hours over this period to stabilise collections and minimise rescheduling of collections.

Challenges were also experienced with the reliability of the refuse collection fleet, that the Council's Fleet Management Team have and continue to address robustly with the Council's fleet maintenance partners.

For the period April – August 2024 – 0.73% of collections required rescheduling to an alternate date as a result of service challenges experienced.

For the period April – August 25 – 1.87% of collections required rescheduling to an alternate date as a result of the service challenges experienced.

The overwhelming majority of rescheduled collections are completed the very next working day, ensuring delays are limited to 24hrs, which can include Saturday working as resources permit. The service operates to its published service standards that can be viewed on the Council's website.

The service publishes on the Council's website the detail of known delays and collections affected on a daily basis, advising of the date the collection has been rescheduled for.

When introducing the new collection schedules, we were clear to advise that a predicted period of between 8 – 12 weeks would be required for the service to settle and collection crews become fully familiar with their rounds. This recognised the magnitude of change being borough-wide and also the challenges presented annually by the busy summer period with holiday schedules for the teams. It is pleasing to see that the improvements intended by the optimisation work are being achieved and there is confidence that as we enter the third quarter of this financial year (Oct-Dec) that further intended improvements will be realised.