

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE - 12 NOVEMBER 2025

QUESTION NO. 1

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

Possibility of Leasing a Second Narrow-Access Bin Lorry.

The Council currently has only one narrow bin lorry, which can reach roads where parked cars make access difficult. However, due to limited capacity, a standard-sized vehicle is being used for some of those roads and some bins are being missed as a result.

A resident recently raised concerns about repeated missed collections, including occasions where bins were not emptied on the correct day and crews did not return later in the week. This appears to be an issue affecting other streets with similar access challenges.

While we recognise that the new collection schedule introduced a few months ago may have affected timings, would the Council consider leasing a second narrow bin lorry to help improve reliability and reduce missed collections?

REPLY by Councillor Dennis:

I invite Councillor Rowland, the Lead Councillor for 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 Nikulina for their question which provides me with an opportunity to provide some clarity regarding the efficiency of our narrow access collection vehicle and highlight the hard work of our Recycling & Waste Services Team.

Recycling & Waste Services currently have one narrow access Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) that is deployed to address challenges presented in a number of roads in Reading that experience regular access problems due to poorly parked vehicles.

The vehicle was brought into service in April 2023, to service a total of 13 narrow roads in Redlands, Katesgrove and Abbey ward that experienced access issues. These collections are completed on two days each week. To justify the spend at that time, we also had to ensure the vehicles use in other areas when not needed to service the narrow roads and as such, it is currently used to provide bagged waste collections in the Town Centre and for ad-hoc collections where a narrow access challenge has been experienced.

It is a regular part of daily waste collection operations to adjust dynamically to deal with challenges experienced. For expediency and efficiency, the service initially attempts collections in some of the narrow roads with our regular sized vehicles. However, if that

is not possible, later that same day, the narrow roads vehicle is deployed to attempt the collection. If that is tried and failed, as sometimes even the narrow road vehicle is too wide for the most inconsiderately parked cars, attempts are made later in the same collection week to provide the collection. Currently, within the new route optimisation structure, narrow road collections are undertaken on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but can be called upon at any time outside of this to address missed collections experienced due to blockages on a priority basis.

It should be noted that narrow collection vehicles are inherently inefficient as they have a maximum load capacity of 1.8 Tonne, compared to a standard RCV load capacity of 10 Tonne. The vehicle additionally operates with manual bin lifts, rather than automatic bin lifts, taking four times longer to load a bin. Consequently, the investment in a second vehicle (at a cost of £180k or £750 per week), rather than utilising the vehicle that we already have for this service, would likely not be the most cost-effective solution. We Will continue to utilise the capacity of the existing vehicle in a flexible and prioritised way to address narrow road access issues as they are experienced.

Where appropriate, the Waste Collection Service works collaboratively with other service areas to address the underlying issue that prevents narrow roads accessibility. Solutions can be found through utilising enhanced on-street parking enforcement and the application of access protection markings.