



COUNCIL MEETING – 25 September 2019

Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)

QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Clementson

To: The Cabinet Member for Environment (Cllr Murphy)

“Although I am aware that there have been issues with the refuse collector, Biffa, throughout the term of their contract with the Council, I believe the previous Administration was preparing to assist them to overcome some of their issues which included the replacement of unreliable vehicles.

In July, following the change in the Administration, I wrote to Cllr Murphy on behalf of the residents in the Denmead Ward, some of whom had not had their household waste collected for 4 weeks, and was assured that steps were being taken to rectify the issues.

Madam Mayor, these 'steps', whatever they were, have not resolved the issues and I have now received from residents videos of bins overflowing with black bags of uncollected rubbish and a list of roads in my Ward where collections have been 'missed' recently. The residents tell me they are fed up reporting missed collections to the Council as it has no effect and nothing gets done.

Would Cllr Murphy please tell us:

- What resource is in place to monitor reports of missed collections?
- Who is organising for these missed bins to be collected?, and
- When will this Council say 'enough is enough'; take the necessary action to determine the contract with Biffa and ensure that a new contractor is appointed to carry out the basic statutory requirement of any Council which is to ensure refuse is collected regularly from **all** households thus preventing an environmental risk to health?”

Reply

“Firstly I would acknowledge that the level of service provided over a period of months has been below the required standard. The Council has been working closely with Biffa to address the issues of delayed and missed bin collections and, where appropriate, has taken formal steps under the contract by issuing rectification and default notices.

Biffa have put in place a number of measures to improve their performance which has been adversely affected by vehicle breakdowns, because of the age of the fleet, and staffing issues. There have been improvements in performance but we are not back at the level which needs to be achieved.

Steps taken to bring the service back on track include the delivery of 10 new refuse collection vehicles a month before they were due to arrive to support the 12 month contract extension which starts on 30th September. These freighters have already entered service and Biffa has also introduced performance related pay and used agency workers to provide more staff resource.

In relation to the specific questions raised I can provide the following responses:

- Biffa monitor and report on their performance on a daily basis. This information is shared with the Council's own Client Team who produces a bulletin each morning summarizing the state of the service including details of delayed bin collections. This information is circulated to the Customer Service Centre, Communications, other relevant officers and myself so we are aware of the latest position and can ensure that our customers are provided with the correct advice if they enquire about missed collections.
- Delayed rounds (those not undertaken in accordance with the collection schedule) are prioritised the following day and it is usually possible for them to be completed by the end of that day. Missed bins can be reported on-line, by phone and email and are shared with Biffa who are responsible for arranging collections. Sites which have experienced particular or persistent issues are tackled by the Client Team working closely with Biffa and are subject to monitoring to avoid repeat problems in those locations.
- I share your frustrations regarding the problems experienced over many months but I am satisfied that we, now through our own Client Team dedicated solely to Winchester district, are doing everything reasonably possible to ensure Biffa deals with their performance issues and that they in turn are implementing measures to return this service back to the appropriate standard. In terms of moving forwards the Council decided to extend the contract with Biffa for 12 months in order to allow sufficient time to procure a new contract for the refuse service from October next year. Biffa will therefore be delivering the service for the next year.

Considerable resource and technical planning has been carried out by our officers and Biffa in relation to the contract extension and introduction of the new curbside glass collections. Whilst the short term disruption caused by switching to Winchester only rounds, and providing a brand new service to our customers, should not be underestimated I am confident that Biffa will be able to deliver the waste collection service we all expect and want to see for our District."