

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM44870
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Dyddiad / Date: 6th January 2021

Councillor Ramesh Patel
Chairperson
Environmental Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Ramesh

Environmental Scrutiny Committee - 3rd November 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 16th November 2020 in relation to the Environmental Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd November 2020. For clarity, I have produced this response in the same order as the questions in your letter:

Transforming Collections in Recycling Services

Members broadly welcome the proposals and believe that the revised collection schedule has the potential to significantly improve Cardiff's waste collection service. During the way forward they had a wider conversation about the suggested changes and agreed the following points:

- They thought that the introduction of compliance officers to monitor the work of the collection crews was a positive step forward. They felt that the new roles, alongside modern technology such as GPS tracking would give the Council better control of the work being carried out, which if done correctly could only enhance the waste collections.

Response

Agreed, the management team identified this as a service critical role in terms of improving customer-focused performance. The management team will ensure the provision of appropriate support to ensure the role is successful.

- Several Members raised concerns about how the new four day working pattern would reduce the problem of missed collections, particularly in parts of North Cardiff which have collections on a Friday and might have to wait until the following Tuesday for a crew to pick up any missed waste. It was explained that waste collection crews would have greater ownership of the new rounds, and that compliance monitoring would help address the problem. In addition to this they were told that the Council was looking at other options such as making transit vehicles available to pick up any missed collections. The Committee welcomed the response, but ask that you confirm

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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in writing that measures will be put in place to ensure that missed collections are not left on the street over the weekend, and that all Cardiff streets receive parity of service.

Response

Although collections do not take place over the weekend, we do have responsive cleansing teams working on Friday afternoons/evening and over the weekend. If for any reason, a missed collection does not take place on Friday we would look to support a collection where possible with the provision of a suitable vehicle, fitted with a bin lift, which can work within the cleansing fleet.

- A Member explained that at times he had been left very frustrated by waste collection crews who simply ignored lone black bags on collection rounds when it was clear that they contained household waste that needed collecting. Ignoring the isolated black bags simply made residents angry, prompted Council or councillor complaints and resulted additional officers having to be sent out to collect the bags. He asked if going forward it would be possible to apply common sense, and ask the waste collection staff to pick up such bags. An officer explained that the Council was looking to move away from the red and white bag system in 2021, and would look to switch back to the black bag approach. He assured the Member that in future waste collection operatives would be asked to apply a common sense approach, and to pick up black bags where it was clear that rules were not broken. The Committee welcomed these comments, and ask for confirmation from you that such a common sense approach will be adopted going forward.

Response

If Cabinet agrees the removal of the provision of red and white bags, I can confirm there will be a common sense approach in terms of collections. The guidelines will be three black bags per household but there will be tolerance around this number as long as the resident is engaging in recycling, especially relating to food.

- A Member noted that the new collection rounds were bigger in terms of household numbers, and suggested that this would place pressure on areas where missed collections were already happening. Based on this comment the Committee has asked for details of the daily collection round numbers for all rounds and collection types across the city.

Response

See attached data in Appendix A.

- Members commented that sickness levels were still very high across the Waste Management Service. They asked what the target sickness rate per person was across the service and were told that it was 14.8 days; it was explained that this target has yet to be achieved. In response to this discussion Committee Members have asked for:
 - Confirmation of the current sickness absence target in writing, along with details of the current sickness rate being achieved by the Waste Management Service;
 - Some Members felt that the sickness rate of 14.8 days was not ambitious enough, and that the Council should be targeting an even lower sickness rate. The Committee would like to know if you would consider setting a more challenging target, and if so, what more might be done to reduce the currently high sickness rate;
 - The current sickness target is based on a five-day working week. Members would like to better understand how the new four-day working week will help to reduce sickness rates; if the sickness rate target will change following the introduction of four-day working; and how sickness will be measured across the new four day schedule.

Response

The current sickness absence target in collection is 14.8 days. The year to date (April-November) in collections is 24.73 days. The year to date (April-November) in Recycling and Neighbourhood Services is 18.12 days.

The management team accept overall sickness within the service area is not acceptable and are working within policy and procedures to improve the position. A new management team is in place but it will take time to reduce sickness absence and subsequently the target. Performance management of sickness is required to understand sickness absence information. However, the management team recognise the proactive management of sickness absence through contacting employees regularly who are on sickness absence and referring to occupational health will mean a focused approach on individuals returning to work.

Some of the criticism of a change to 4 day working relates to workload pressures. However, as the change is to a frontline service and the rounds are designed to reasonable collection levels, with associated breaks there is unlikely to be specific workload pressures in comparison to office based staff.

A study conducted by Henley Business School, suggested it could lead to a cleaner environmental footprint. Henley's 'Four Better or Four Worse' paper exploring the growing trend for a four-day working week found that nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of those who have already adopted the scheme reported improvements in staff productivity. The research also found that this working style increased overall quality of life for employees, with more than three

quarters (78 per cent) of businesses saying staff were happier, less stressed (70 per cent) and took fewer sick days (62 per cent).

Monitoring of sickness will continue over the next financial year, following the implementation of 4 day working. This will allow the service to monitor any changes with the hope to adjust any targets.

- The Committee understands that the additional rest day each week might help waste collection operatives better recover after a working week, however, the flip side to this is that they will need to be working harder every day than they were before to ensure that all of the waste is collected. Members feel that the additional daily strain could place additional physical pressure on staff and result in injuries. I would be grateful if you could let the Committee know what measures have been put in place to manage the risk of an increase in injuries.

Response

The new working hours will mean Officers will take a break between 4 and 5 hours, rather than attempting to complete all work within 6 hours. This will mean Officers will have no incentive to rush and will have a 53 minute break halfway through their working day. The majority of injuries come about due to rushing and not adhering to manual handling techniques to protect Officers from injury.

It is accepted, some injuries will come about from general working operations even when adhering to manual handling techniques and the Service Areas have access to a Sports Massage and Physiotherapy services at Lamby Way to limit any ongoing concerns. These service were well received by Officers but have been stopped at this time due to Covid-19. It is hoped the services can be reinstated in the New Year with appropriate controls in place.

- Members welcome the earlier round finishes, and the removal of all waste from Cardiff's streets by 3:45pm. They feel that this should make a big contribution towards making our streets cleaner.

Response

The outcome in relation to improvements relating to cleansing is a key performance indicator for monitoring following the change.

- Members welcome the idea of having a proper break in the middle of a shift, and feel that it will help the service move away from some of the challenges presented by the job and finish.

Response

The outcome in relation to improving collection performance is a key performance indicator for monitoring following the change.

- The cover report for the item explained that the cost of the changes would be cost neutral. When questioned it was confirmed that the cost implications were slightly more complicated than stated in the report, with Members suggesting that it should have been pitched as an investment in Cardiff's waste service and not a cost neutral proposal. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with of all the actual cost changes associated with this proposal, and in doing so set these alongside the existing costings for providing the service.

Response

See attached detail of costing in Appendix B.

- At the meeting the idea of aligning the street cleansing service alongside the revised waste collection scheme was discussed. It would be appreciated if you could confirm in writing if this alignment will take place, and if so, how it will be structured.

Response

We will be redesigning the service to integrate teams into an area based model which will support an efficient and visible cleansing schedule. For example, parks will be integrated so teams also cleanse the surrounding streets of the parks on a daily basis. The street scene team will follow collections in the inner wards and will have street scene operatives and waste officers working as one team to deal with cleansing and enforcement concerns.

The aim is to increase the effectiveness of cleansing and enforcement by expanding the afternoon shift and reducing the early morning shifts. The service does have a number of vacant posts that will be considered for deleting or reallocating to other types of post as part of the redesign process.

I trust the above is of assistance. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yn gywir/Yours sincerely



**Y Cyngorydd/Councillor Michael Michael
Aelod Cabinet dros Strydoedd Glân, Ailgylchu a'r Amgylchedd
Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment**

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Appendix A – 4 Day Working Rounds and Properties Served

Appendix B – Revenue Costing of Delivering