

QUESTION FROM A MEMBER

UNDERSTANDING ORDER NO.20

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY – 10 NOVEMBER 2015

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BULL

Q1 Dog bins

Just over a week ago, there were many instances of overflowing dog bins. I understand the cause was temporary staff shortages due to sickness

Can the Portfolio Holder for Health and Place confirm that this was due to unforeseen circumstances rather than an unacceptable reduction in staff numbers?

Answer – The agency staff member who was covering this particular area left without prior notice, and our back-up, partially trained-up agency staff member was on holiday. With other staff sickness at present this left us very low on in-house knowledge. Although the site listing of dog bins is relatively comprehensive, it helps to know how and where to get to the bins, especially when they are in large sites such as playing fields. The situation was recovered last week.

The four year moratorium on staff recruitment, along with the need to have due consideration to future budget restrictions, has left the operational team carrying a significant proportion of agency staff. Now, with a degree of certainty in the short to medium term, recruitment for replacing the agency staff with permanent staff has commenced.'

Q2 overflowing bins

On 01 November 2015, Exeter City Council launched a new protocol on NOT emptying overfilled wheeled bins. The new policy make clear that the lid must be closed when presenting rubbish.

I thank the Portfolio Holder for Health and Place for the press briefings he has copied to members following the adverse media reports

One of the causes of concern seems to be the £19 charge to return to empty the bin.

Can the Portfolio Holder for Health and Place tell me if this charge approved by members, and if so, when?

Answer - There is not a specific charge for an uncollected bin (for example, if someone forgot to put their bin out and wanted a special collection, we don't have a specific charge for that). However, the nearest thing we do have is a 'bulky-waste' charge designed for large items, but including sacks of rubbish (eg. if someone has cleared out an attic). Here the price is based on what can be collected by two operatives in one visit – this could be a sofa, or alternatively 4 bags of rubbish (two bags per operative being the maximum they are allowed to carry). A wheelie bin can take 4 bags of rubbish in capacity, so that has been the charge quoted to people if they wanted to book a special collection.

In terms of dealing with waste left uncollected when the bin has been over-filled, we have been encouraging people to contact us so that we can have a meaningful conversation about why they fall outside the 99%+ of citizens that don't have a problem fitting their waste in their bin – we want to understand why they are struggling to contain their residual waste, which may be down to them having the wrong-size bin for their size of household, too small a recycling bin, or a lack of knowledge about what they can recycle. Through that conversation, we aim to resolve future issues with their rubbish, and have latterly arranged one-off 'mop-up' collections with them at the end of that conversation.

We have paused our bin-stickering this week, in order to change our approach slightly by treating 'top-up' waste like side waste, and introducing a stronger stance in a phased approach across the rounds.