

Darren Millar AM / AC

Shadow Minister for Health
Gweinidog yr Wrthblaid dros Iechyd

Welsh Conservative Member for Clwyd West
Aelod y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig dros Orllewin Clwyd

Ref: AB/SOBCS

22nd February 2016

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Cllr Dilwyn Roberts
Leader
Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Conwy
LL32 8DU

Dear Dilwyn,

Re: Household Recycling and Refuse Collection Services

I write in advance of discussions which your Cabinet is due to hold at its meeting tomorrow on the future of household recycling and refuse collection services in Conwy.

The papers for tomorrow's meeting seek Cabinet's approval to progress with a reduction in the frequency of general refuse collections from the current fortnightly collection cycle to one collection every four weeks.

A large number of constituents have contacted me to express their concerns regarding these proposals and as a result I established a petition to allow people to record their objections to four weekly collections, and a Facebook page to encourage local people to have their say. The response to these has been overwhelming with over 1,300 signing the petition and almost 2,000 people registering their objections via the Facebook page.

Many local residents have also taken the time to record their comments on the Facebook page and I would encourage Cabinet members to read these prior to making a decision on the future of household refuse collection services. It can be accessed via the weblink below:

<https://www.facebook.com/saveourbincollections>

I commend the Council for meeting its recycling targets to date and while I fully support the local authority in seeking to improve recycling rates further across the County Borough and wanting to reduce costs associated with landfill charges, I do not believe that reductions in the frequency of household refuse collections will achieve these aims.

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA
Tel/Ffôn: 0300 200 7214
e-mail/ebost: darren.millar@assembly.wales



North Wales Business Park, Abergele, LL22 8LJ
Parc Busnes Gogledd Cymru, Abergele, LL22 8LJ
Tel/ Ffôn: 01745 839117
Web/Gwe: www.darrenmillar.wales

Given the above I would be grateful if you could note my strong objections to the proposed changes to refuse collections and consider the points below:

1. Survey

The report to Cabinet makes a number of references to the findings of the Recycle More Survey which was undertaken across the county of attitudes and experiences of waste collection services in the County Borough.

Whilst the survey appears to have secured a good response rate, the analysis of the responses fails to weight the responses to ensure that they are representative of local households in terms of composition and social status.

2. Failure to consult with Staff

There has been inadequate consultation with local authority operatives regarding the proposed changes to refuse collection services. This is unacceptable given the increased occupational risks which are associated with less frequent collections.

The potential health hazards associated with inappropriate items being placed in general refuse bins are a real concern to operatives, as is the increased weight of bins which are collected less frequently.

3. Equalities

The Council has failed to consider the impact of four weekly collections on older people. Whilst consideration has been given to households with children in nappies and for those who are eligible for clinical waste collections, those with conditions such as incontinence have not been adequately considered.

Providing separate collections of incontinence and clinical waste may help to address this problem, but it is also likely to identify the vulnerability of such households and may make them targets for criminals. In addition, there is no provision for the disposal of female sanitary products.

The failure of the local authority to consider the impact of its decision on older people and women could leave any decision to proceed with four weekly refuse collections open to challenge.

4. Financial Implications

Whilst the report appears to take into account the costs of providing new nappy collection services to those who will need them, there are insufficient details in relation to these for them to be adequately considered. In addition, the report suggests that costs in relation to larger numbers of clinical waste collections across the County Borough are yet to be identified.

The report to Cabinet also fails to estimate costs associated with potential unintended consequences associated with the proposed changes such as returning to missed collections, pest control, litter collection and cleaning up fly-tipping.



It would be irresponsible to proceed to a four weekly refuse collection cycle without consideration of the costs of increased clinical waste collections and a financial contingency in the event of unintended consequences.

5. Household Engagement

Some households do not engage with recycling. Reducing the frequency of collections is likely to result in waste from such households building up and causing significant public nuisance and public health risks from odours, bacteria and pests such as rodents, seagulls and flies.

6. Missed Collections

There is likely to be an increased frequency of missed collections with a four weekly collection cycle as remembering the date of a collection will be more difficult than is currently the case

7. Dementia

There has been insufficient consideration of the impact of four weekly collections on those suffering from memory loss and dementia. Remembering to leave waste out for collection can be a challenge with fortnightly collections. Four weekly collections are likely to exacerbate these problems.

8. Impact on Tourism

There has been insufficient consideration of potential unintended consequences on the tourism industry should fly-tipping, litter and pest control issues increase.

9. Bin Capacity

The Recycle More Survey identifies a problem with capacity of the Plastic, Tins and Drink Cans Container currently used as part of the existing Trolibocs system. There are no proposals to resolve this solution in the report to be considered by the Cabinet.

10. Household Space

Whilst I note that families with children in nappies will be afforded separate collections of disposable nappy waste, I am concerned that the separation of such waste will be a problem for many households who do not have the space to separately store yet another bin at their home.

Space is already a problem with the current waste collection system – particularly those who live in properties without gardens, or in flats. This is likely to be even more of a challenge should the local authority proceed with four weekly refuse collections.

11. Zero Waste Scotland

The report to be considered by Cabinet makes a number of references to conclusions made by Zero Carbon Scotland in relation to studies of waste and uses these to support the proposal for four weekly collections. Yet it refrains from mentioning that the work by



Zero Carbon Scotland did not consider the implications of food waste being deposited in bins over an eight week period should a bin collection be missed.

12. Pet Waste

The local authority accepts the arguments presented by Zero Waste Scotland for a separate nappy collection service yet ignores the fact that the same arguments also apply to pet waste.

Zero Waste Scotland recommends that all biodegradable waste be collected separately and frequently – including pet waste. It would be unacceptable for pet waste to be languishing in bins for up to four weeks at a time.

13. Alternatives

Future statutory recycling targets can be achieved without reducing the frequency of residual household waste collections, as has been demonstrated by both Denbighshire and Pembrokeshire Councils.

The local authority should consider a wider number of options for its waste collection services prior to moving forward with a four weekly collection cycle. These options should include working jointly with Denbighshire, which may also lead to reduced management costs, and/or adoption of waste collection services in line with those in Pembrokeshire.

14. Public Interest

Given the level of public interest in this matter I believe that any decision on the future of the frequency of residual collections of household waste should be referred by the Cabinet to full Council.

I trust that this letter will be useful in assisting the Cabinet's deliberations on this matter. In the meantime, should you require any further information, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Darren Millar AM

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA
Tel/Ffôn: 0300 200 7214
e-mail/eboost: darren.millar@assembly.wales



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