

Councillor's Corner – November 2012

The past 8 weeks, since Serco took over the District Council's refuse collection, have been challenging, frustrating and even distressing for all concerned.

What started out as simple teething problems, escalated over the weeks into a shambolic and chaotic affair. Across all three parishes within my ward complaints poured in relating to scores of missed collections (some up to 5 weeks or more), no assisted collections, new bins and containers not being delivered and refuse wagons causing damage to properties. The knock on effect of this saw the District Council's dedicated 'Waste Helpline' overwhelmed with calls, reports of vermin around uncollected refuse and fly tipping across the District.

Upon taking 30-50 combined emails or telephone calls a day personally from my constituents and seeing the entire system fall into disarray, I decided to call the District Council's Chief Executive to seek a special meeting between Councillor's and representatives of Serco to address the problems.

The Chief Executive heeded this request and on 6th November 2012 a special meeting took place. Councillors held the Serco Management Team to account for their failures and made them aware, in no uncertain terms, of their need to 'get a grip' of the situation.

As a result of the meeting and my recent coverage in the local newspaper, Serco representatives have accepted that there were many problems in my Council Ward that needed to be addressed and offered to work with me to resolve them.

Serco explained that problems have occurred due to the size of their vehicles and the crews' familiarity with the new rounds. Smaller vehicles are now being drafted in to deal with the harder to reach areas and crews have been briefed on which roads and outlying properties they have missed.

On the Friday following the meeting, Serco Contract Manager Jo Mortimer and I took a 5 hour tour around the parishes of Elton, Winster and South Darley visiting the areas where collections were being missed, meeting residents on assisted collections and clearing up any uncollected refuse from outlying areas and properties. I was also given a direct contact with the Serco depot to report complaints and missed collections.

With much of the uncollected waste now removed and crews made aware of the missed areas, the following week resulted in a much improved service – not perfect but better. Any missed collections reported to me have been passed on to Serco direct and 'mop-up' collections have taken place as quickly as possible, even at weekends.

Serco have promised to continue working with me to try and resolve the ongoing problems and things appear to be improving. I am aware that there are still problem areas, but I am working everyday to get these sorted out. If you do still have any concerns at all related to refuse collection, please contact me on the mobile number below. I know of a number of residents who have been reluctant to call me, but please do not hesitate.

I wish to thank all Parish Councillors and residents who have helped me over recent weeks by keeping me updated on what is happening in their area and informing me of what collections remain outstanding. Your help has been greatly appreciated.

Please bear in mind that refuse collections take place in Winster on Wednesdays. One week your grey bin for general waste is collected and then on the second week your blue lid bin and green bin are collected. Your green bin and blue lid bin are collected by two separate refuse vehicles at different times of the day. Food caddies are collected every Wednesday.

Finally, I kindly ask all residents to put their bins out in a convenient, safe and visible location on collection days and return any bins and containers to your property following collections. Please, where possible, do not leave your bins obstructing the roads or walkways.

Regards

Colin Swindell
District Councillor

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