



**COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON SUB - COMMITTEE  
- 23RD FEBRUARY 2011**

**SUBJECT: WASTE COLLECTIONS DURING SEVERE INCLEMENT WEATHER**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise members of the disruption caused to waste collections services during the recent inclement weather, the arrangements to the clear backlogs and the rationale for co-mingling the various waste fractions.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 As requested, this report sets out the context of Caerphilly's waste collection system, the difficulties faced when severe inclement weather occurs and the methods employed by the Authority to safely and efficiently deal with any backlog.

**3. THE REPORT**

- 3.1 This report explains our waste collection system in a little more detail so that community and town councils have a better understanding of the task facing us when we have several days of missed collections due to inclement weather.
- 3.2 Every day Caerphilly County Borough Council utilises 30 vehicles to undertake approximately 40,000 waste collections including Food, Refuse and Recycling.
- 3.3 During the periods of inclement weather (heavy snowfall) all available resources from Public Services worked with colleagues from Highways to undertake snow and ice clearance from OAP complexes, town centres and other areas that required improved accessibility.
- 3.4 With the above in mind it is not difficult to see why, when we have missed several days collections (as it has been unsafe to use our heavy vehicles on snow and ice and crews have been assisting with snow and ice clearance) that there will be significant delays getting collections back on track. Unfortunately the above delays would have been compounded if we had tried to maintain separate collections as it involves sending 3 vehicles into a street to collect the different waste fractions and we wouldn't have had sufficient vehicles or crews to provide this level of service in reasonable timescales.
- 3.5 Experience from last year showed that residents were often frustrated if we only managed to get 1 or 2 of the vehicles there leaving behind 1 or 2 waste fractions either due to some drivers undertaking a Dynamic Risk Assessment and determining that it was still unsafe to access certain streets still covered in ice/snow or different vehicles turning up at different times of the day when perhaps earlier or later in the day the street was/was not deemed safe to access.

- 3.6 Crews were required to keep records of all properties missed during the periods of inclement weather and as soon as we had spare vehicles and crews available (and we could safely access the streets) they were all deployed to undertake collections to clear the backlog as quickly as possible. Unfortunately the days of missed collections were followed by repeat events of snow in subsequent weeks and a slow thaw with ice remaining on the ground for prolonged periods which made it unsafe for heavy vehicles to enter many areas to undertake collections.
- 3.7 The situation was of course compounded on this occasion by the holiday period when traditionally additional waste is generated and we do not have all employees in work. It is also worth noting that during the holiday period not all our disposal facilities were available every day and our Waste Transfer Station was not able to cope with the volumes of waste being collected. The decision to co-mingle waste was reinforced by the complications detailed above as we would never have had sufficient spare vehicles or crews to undertake separate collections and clear the backlog in a reasonable timescale.
- 3.8 Even though we had hired in additional vehicles to assist during the holiday period, and had access to our normal compliment of support vehicles, it was never going to be a quick resolution clearing the backlog. The above being said we still managed to clear all backlog properties we were aware of by the week ending 7th January a position which was significantly better than many other authorities across the Country.
- 3.9 In the past we have evaluated the cost of hiring additional vehicles but in reality they are specialist vehicles that are difficult to obtain without pre-booking and as they cost approximately £1,000 per week each to hire it would require considerable additional expenditures if we had these vehicles on hire just in case we need them during the winter months (20 vehicles for 15 weeks would cost £300,000) and speculative expenditure of this kind cannot be justified in this current economic climate. As stated above we have all systems in place to try and get collections back on track as soon as possible after periods of inclement weather but unfortunately we may again in the future have to instigate co-mingled collections when we have a backlog to clear.
- 3.10 What is apparent and has been enforced by Health and Safety Executive guidance is that resolution of missed collections is not an emergency service and clearance of the backlog should not be at the expense of compromising safety. We should only resume normal collections when it is safe to operate our large vehicles on side roads and in rear lanes and we have due regard for the health safety and welfare of both crews and members of the public (it is important to note that many residents kept their recyclables and presented them for collection when the normal, separate collections resumed - in fact the week that normal separate collections resumed the Authority experienced a doubling in quantity of recyclables collected compared to a typical week).

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The liaison committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

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