



Response to  
Street Scene Operational Changes  
2018-19

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## **Barnet UNISON**

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**2018**

### **Barnet UNISON Recommendations:**

To ensure the successful implementation of the reorganisation of the recycling and refuse services Barnet UNISON seeks the support of the Environment Committee to implement the following:

1. Street Scene workforce and Barnet UNISON must have a **direct involvement/engagement** in any proposed changes to the service.
2. **One central depot for the whole workforce.**
3. **No cuts to frontline workforce:** A recognition that by increasing the size of the population of the borough ultimately means the workforce and fleet **must grow**.
4. **Pay:** An immediate and timely investigation into the systemic pay roll issues for Street Scene workforce is conducted in order to restore the trust, confidence and morale of the workforce.
5. **A programme for the replacement** of ageing fleet to commence.

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## 1. Introduction:

Barnet UNISON street scene members are hardworking and proud of the service they provide for Barnet residents.

Over the past three years they have had a series of changes of senior management and numerous restructures which has seen work practices change and cuts to the workforce.

Barnet UNISON street scene members want services to improve for residents.

### **BUT**

To ensure you have a fully equipped and motivated workforce Barnet Councillors need to provide the following

- **One central depot.** An agreed timetable in place to **end the two depots** and restore one depot for services to operate from. The Oakleigh depot is currently not fit for purpose. Our members have been 'working round' work place issues whilst waiting for issues identified as far back as August 2017 to be resolved.
- **Replacement** of ageing fleet
- **No cuts to frontline workforce:** A recognition that by increasing the size of the population of the borough ultimately means the workforce must grow.
- **Pay:** For the last 12 months there has been repeated monthly failures to pay the staff correctly. These are one of the lowest paid workforce in the Council, yet this systemic failure is having a dramatic impact on trust, confidence and morale of the workforce.
- Street Scene workforce and Barnet UNISON must have a **direct involvement/engagement** in any proposed changes to the service.

## 2. Service Change 1- "Reorganisation of recycling and refuse rounds and changes to resident bin collection dates."

Barnet UNISON fully support the reorganisation of the recycling and refuse.

However it is important for the workforce and residents to understand as to what consideration been taken over the growth of the borough and what strategy is in place to continue to provide high quality service for an ever growing population?

Barnet UNISON has for the past three years been asking for the rounds to be adjusted because they are imbalanced as some cannot be completed within the timeframe. Our members are concerned that some of the proposals contained within the report could lead to further problems for service delivery if the local knowledge of the current workforce is not utilised.

Barnet supports the proposal to even out the rounds, however in order to ensure that residents receive an excellent service it is important that the service has the following information:

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- Number of households per round
  - Number of bins per household
  - Capacity of each bin at each household
  - Tipping times.
  - Distance in miles of each round.
  - Route and risk assessments.

It is important for councillors to understand how much each lorry can carry as this will determine how many loads will need to be taken to the transfer centre. For example a round should do more than two loads per shift. A refuse vehicle has the capacity to carry **25.5 tons**. It usually takes between two to three hours to complete one load after which the refuse needs to be taken to a transfer station (Hendon or Edmonton). It usually takes an hour to tip. Most of the Refuse rounds are tipped at Hendon which is then transferred to a landfill site. At present Recycling and Food waste is taken to either Hendon transfer station or Oakleigh depot. If it is taken to Oakleigh it is then transferred Edmonton tip by an articulated lorry.

Under new proposals food waste will go into the refuse bins and taken to landfill.

### **2.1 Refuse rounds.**

Collect household waste. Under the new proposals this will include the food waste which will increase the amount of tonnage collected. The implications will mean the vehicle will not be able to collect the same number of bins as capacity will be reached with **fewer bins collected**.

### **2.2 Duo recycling rounds:**

They collect food and mixed recycling. It is important to note the vehicles designed to take this waste are different from the refuse vehicles. They have a side loading food pod.

Under the new proposals the pod would be redundant thus reducing this vehicles overall capacity.

**2.3 Restricted access rounds duo and refuse.** There are four of these rounds.

### **2.4 Food waste round.**

There is one specific service. It is a specially designed vehicle which collects food waste from restricted access roads throughout the whole borough.

Under the new proposals this service will cease.

- What happens to these two vehicles?

### **2.5 Green waste.**

The whole fleet collects green waste on Saturdays and there is one mid-week round. The proposal is to stop the Saturday service and collect green waste during the week. Implications of this proposal are as follows:

- The Council recruit more staff and vehicles to take away the green waste during the week.
- The Council operate a split shift system to take away the green waste.

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Barnet UNISON has yet to see any details as to how this would work and is a serious concern amongst the workforce.

### **2.6 To help councillors understand the real constraints for the workforce here is a typical working day in Waste and Recycling service.**

- Toolbox talks
- Vehicle checks x 2
- Refuelling
- Two loads take six hours
- Travelling time two hours
- Half hour break for staff
- Debrief

Staff are contracted to be paid 7 hour 12 minutes per day

### **3. Barnet UNISON on implementation.**

- What other Boroughs have shared their experience of this sort of restructure?
- Shunting is a very precarious procedure and can only happen successfully if extra drivers and vehicles are available, if not it would still mean a possible two hour tipping time before any work can be done in that vehicle
- To cover 2 shifts of 22 vehicles how many drivers would be needed to be in the pool?
- Double shifting with an ageing fleet that has a history of constant breakdowns is a high risk practice.
- Where are the “alternative bulking points” identified in paragraph 1.7 bullet point three?

### **4. Vehicle breakdowns**

To be clear on why refuse and recycling has not been collected regularly in the last few months. This was not all down to vehicle breakdowns. Vehicles breakdowns, unfortunately are part of everyday life in this industry, so this is not uncommon. All this came at a time when staff working practices were changed, crews were changed on the rounds and the floor of the transfer station had to be re-laid. The North Circular road had 2 serious accidents and large volumes of congested traffic, which again is not uncommon, so vehicles could not be tipped at Edmonton and vehicles were left full overnight at the depot which had a knock on effect, because before the rounds could start in the morning the vehicles had to be tipped, resulting in the rounds starting late. The catch up was made on overtime being done Saturday and Sunday which has continued for several months.

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## **5. Service change will involve collection day changes:**

Unless this is done with due care and attention unlike in 2013; which led to over 7 different day changes in some areas, we are concerned about the reaction of residents who may display their frustration and anger towards the workforce consequence of poor communication about changes to their collection day. Experience suggests that this can lead to more delays in collections.

## **6. Service Change 2: Stop separate household food waste collections.**

Barnet UNISON are disappointed that after all the money spent on advertising, collecting, buying specialist vehicles, training staff and supplying and delivering the food waste containers, this service is being withdrawn, furthermore recycling food waste is beneficial to the environment.

## **7. Contamination:**

In 2013 new mixed recycling bins were introduced. The subsequent change of putting everything into one bin has in our view led to an increase of contaminated bins which must place an extra cost onto the service.

## **8. Brown Caddy removal**

- What will be the cost of picking up and disposing of the thousands of redundant food bins throughout the borough?
- What will the impact be of having reduced capacity recycling vehicles collecting green waste?
- What will be the impact of putting food waste in the refuse bins, in terms of more tonnage for refuse crews to collect and environmentally?

## **9. Service Change 3- Removal of the recycling bring sites**

The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 clearly sets the strategic Equalities Objective, which is, that citizens will be treated equally, with understanding and respect and will have equal access to quality services which provide value to the tax payer.

- If these very busy and important sites are to be withdrawn, where do the residents who do not have direct access to a household collections leave their recycling?
- If these sites were properly monitored and CCTV evidence was enforced, this would cut down on most of the fly tipping.

It has been noted by residents that fly tipping in the borough has risen to uncontrollable levels, it has also been noted by residents that when Barnet offered a free skip service (which stopped 2013) there was very little fly tipping.

- What savings have been made and what is now the cost of collecting fly tips?

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## 10. Service Change 4: Suspension of green waste over Xmas period

During the six week suspension in December/January feedback from our members is that there was **no** drop in demand. Because of the mild and warm weather during the winter period grass was growing as normal and because the service had been suspended our members experienced a record number of complaints which led to overtime being deployed to collect the green bins. It is worth noting that in the past Xmas tree collection was part of the service offer. Last year it didn't happen which led to numerous reports of trees left out on the pavement, trees were blowing everywhere, eventually these also had to be collected using overtime.

- It took over 3 months to clear the Xmas backlog.
- In our view a three month suspension of the service would be catastrophic.

## 11. Service Change 6: Time Banding

- To introduce time banding successfully all the Trade rounds will have to be re-routed.
- All rounds and routes will have to be risk assessed.
- When will the RATS (Residential Above Trade) be collected and how will they be collected?
- What are the contingency plans if bins are not collected within the time frame?

To implement all these huge changes over such a short period of time with no specific consultation being done is almost a mirror image of what happened to the service in 2013 which resulted in huge overspends for the service not to mention the council's reputational damage.

To ensure this new service is successful the consultation with staff and trade unions needs to be extended in order that everyone is clear of what is expected.

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