

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 17
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Cityclean Refuse & Recycling Collection Complaints
Date of Meeting: 14 September 2009
Report of: Director of Environment
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Since October 2008 there have been significant changes to the refuse and recycling collections across the city. All the refuse and recycling rounds were changed to realise significant efficiency savings and communal bins were introduced in the central parts of the city to contain refuse and improve street cleanliness.
- 1.2 All these changes led to a certain amount of service disruption and increased complaints. This reports sets out details of the number and type of complaints

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) Committee is asked to note the trends in the complaints in relation to refuse, recycling and communal bins. The trends show that the changes caused service disruption which led to an increase in the number of complaints, but these have since decreased.
- (2) Committee is asked to note the plans to further improve service quality now that efficiency savings have been delivered and operational changes have bedded in.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

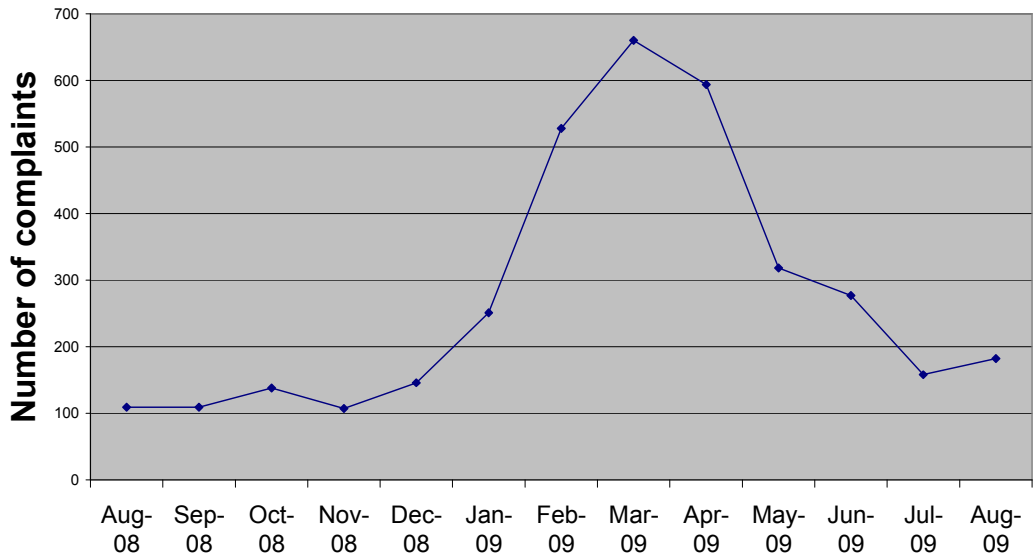
- 3.1.1 Since October 2008 there have been significant changes to the refuse and recycling collections across the city. Following the opening of the waste transfer station all refuse rounds were restructured in October 2008 and following the opening of the materials recycling facility all recycling rounds were restructured in February 2009. The new facilities reduced travelling time for refuse and recycling crews and enabled significant efficiencies to be realised.
- 3.2 Communal bins were introduced to central parts of the city between February 2009 and August 2009. The bins were introduced following extensive trials and consultation in order to contain refuse and clean up the streets
- 3.3 All the changes combined resulted in annual savings across the service of £1 million. The majority of households in the city (121,000) were affected by two changes, one to their refuse collection followed by a change to their recycling collection. This inevitably led to some service disruption and an increase in the number of complaints.
- 3.4 The number of complaints for the refuse and recycling service since August 2008 is detailed in Appendix 1.

Recycling Collection Complaints

- 3.5 The recycling round changes were introduced in February 2009. They affected every household in the city and had to be rolled out in one go for logistical reasons. All residents were written to, to inform them of the changes to the collections. Despite being well planned, due to the scale of the changes, there were teething problems which resulted in service disruption.
- 3.6 Prior to any service changes the number of missed recycling collections was 109 in August and September 2008. The complaints about missed recycling collections increased reaching 528 in February 2009 when the changes were rolled out and peaked at 660 in March 2009. The month delay is probably due to many collections being fortnightly rather than weekly. Since then the number of complaints have trailed off significantly down to 158 and 182 in July and August respectively.
- 3.7 These levels are still higher than prior to the changes and this is partly because there is still some confusion about the need to keep glass separate from other recycling materials. If glass is placed out for collection in the same container as paper, card, cans and plastic bottles it is not collected. The reason for this is that broken glass mixed in with recycling can render the whole load unsuitable for recycling. This is

communicated to residents through the use of 'lock-out' cards which explain why their recycling was not collected and is expected to result in a further decrease in the number of complaints

Number of missed recycling collections

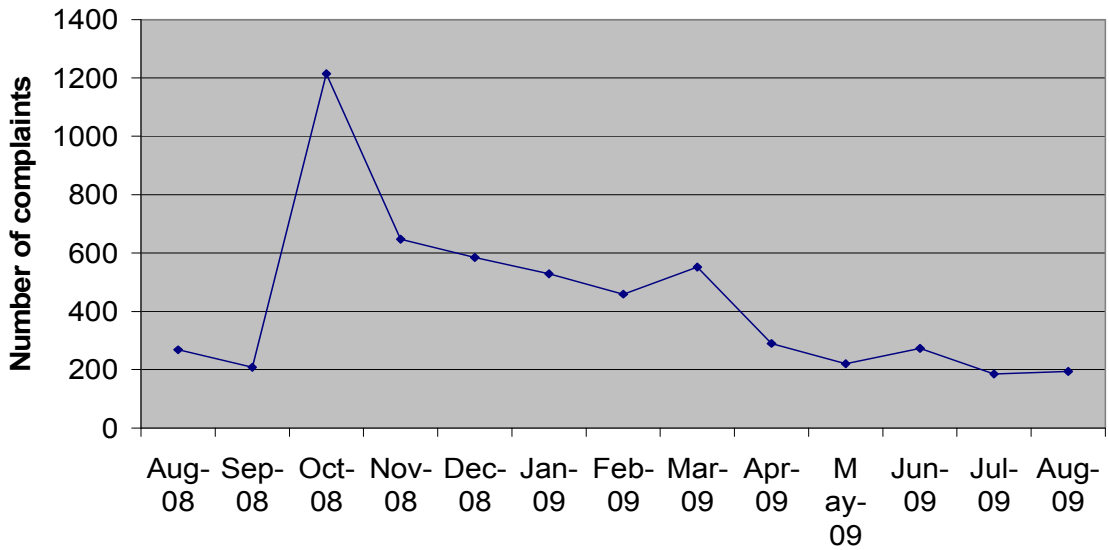


Refuse Collection Complaints

- 3.8 The refuse collection round changes were introduced in October 2008. As with the recycling changes, they affected every household in the city and for logistical reasons had to be introduced across the city at the same time. All residents were written to advise them of the changes.

- 3.9 The changes were planned, but due to the fact that they could not be staggered and that they affected 121,000 households there were teething problems which resulted in some service disruption. This is reflected in the number of complaints. The number of missed refuse collections increased from 208 in September 2008 (before the changes) to 1214 in October, the month of the change. The number of complaints halved in November and has since gradually declined. In August 2009 in the missed bin complaints were down to 194, compared to 268 in August the previous year (prior to the changes).

Number of missed refuse collections

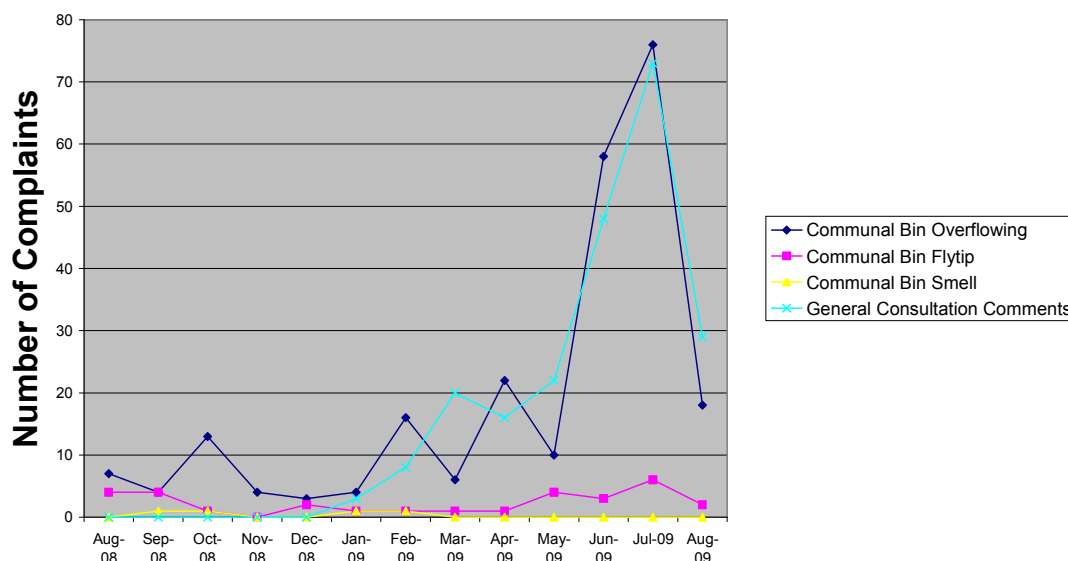


Communal Bin Complaints

3.10 The number of communal bins in the city was extended from approximately 200 prior to February 2009 to 700 on completion of the roll out. Between August 2008 and August 2009 there were 241 complaints about overflowing bins, the majority of which occurred in June and July 2009 (134 in total) when there were problems with bin capacity in parts of Kemptown as part of the roll out. These issues have now been resolved and in August the number of complaints was down to 18, which is equivalent to 2.5% of the bins. The same figure the previous year was 3.5%.

3.11.1 For the same period there were 219 general comments/ complaints linked to the roll out (eg relating to bin locations). These peaked in June and July and are expected to decline as the service beds down and outstanding issues are resolved. There have been four complaints about bins causing odour nuisance between August 08 and August 09 and 30 complaints about fly-tips.

Communal Bin Complaints



Next Steps to Improve Service Quality

- 3.13 Now that service efficiencies have been realised and the changes have largely bedded down, the next stage of work is to further improve service quality. A short term program will be completed by the end of October which includes improving complaint handling, improved performance reporting and performance management and advanced customer service training for contact centre staff.
- 3.14 A longer-term strategy with ambitious customer satisfaction targets will be developed. The work will include a review of systems and processes and training of all staff to ensure Cityclean delivers excellent customer service. This work will be completed by April 2011.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Residents were consulted extensively on the communal bin round changes. The decision to roll out communal bins was made by Cabinet in September 2008 based on the results of the trials with communal bins and the consultation.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The changes to the way refuse and recycling is collected generated significant financial efficiencies and has improved the value for money of the service.

Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice *Date:* 3 September

Legal Implications:

5.2 There are no legal implications in respect of this report for information

Equalities Implications:

5.3 All the service changes have been subject to Equality Impact Assessments and assisted collections are provided for residents who can not access regular recycling and refuse collection services.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 There are no sustainability implications in respect of this report for information

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications in respect of this report for information

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 Now that major operational improvements have been implemented, the focus for Cityclean is on becoming more customer focussed.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 The service changes affected all residents in the city and where there was service disruption this had a negative impact for service users and affected the reputation of the service and the council. However the period of disruption was limited and resulted in significant savings for the council, and levels of complaints have dropped significantly, in some cases to below the levels from before the changes. Short-term plans and long-term plans are being implemented to improve the customer experience further.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix:

1. Summary of Performance Data

Appendix 1

Summary of Performance Data

Month	Recycling	Communal Bins				Refuse
	Missed Collection	Communal Bin Overflowing	Communal Bin Flytip	Communal Bin Smell	General Consultation Comments	Refuse Missed Collection
Aug-08	109	7	4	0	0	268
Sep-08	109	4	4	1	0	208
Oct-08	138	13	1	1	0	1214
Nov-08	107	4	0	0	0	647
Dec-08	146	3	2	0	0	585
Jan-09	251	4	1	1	3	529
Feb-09	528	16	1	1	8	459
Mar-09	660	6	1	0	20	552
Apr-09	594	22	1	0	16	290
May-09	318	10	4	0	22	221
Jun-09	277	58	3	0	48	273
Jul-09	158	76	6	0	73	185
Aug-09	182	18	2	0	29	194

