

Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 08 July 2024

Question from: Councillor Prashad

Question to: Councillor Durrans, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Services and Communities

QUESTION

We recently had an issue in Clay House Park and Brow Bridge Car Park where the refuse bins were not emptied. This happened during the recent spell of hot weather when both the park and car park were very busy with visitors. The bin in the park was less than 6 metres from the children's play area and was a real health hazard. There were fast food containers, bottles and dog waste bags left piled on top and around the sides of the bin. I reported this to the appropriate department on Tuesday morning 18th June and was dismayed to note that these had still not been attended to by Thursday 20th June and by this time, the situation with the waste had deteriorated considerably and the smell was appalling.

I am extremely proud of the area in which I live and I could not stand by and allow for a situation which reflects badly on Calderdale MBC to get any worse. I again reported this to the appropriate department saying that if the bins were not emptied by that afternoon, I would empty them myself. The bins were emptied in the afternoon and I received an email of apology to explain that the operative responsible for this area was on leave and they were short-staffed.

If it is not possible for larger waste bins to be installed in the more heavily used public areas, similar to those at Skircoat Green, what can the portfolio holder do to ensure that there is staff cover during holiday or sick leave to enable continuity of our public bins being emptied?

Response

As with many other council services, Calderdale's street cleansing provision has had to adjust to the reduced funding made available to local government over the last decade or so.

We now have only 18 staff, who cover 16 rounds across all 140 square miles of the borough, and empty around 1,000 bins each week, as well as litter picking when they have time.

In order to address these challenges we have reviewed the location of bins, making sure we have the 'right type of bin in the right place', and this has included the roll out of bigger bins to areas of high footfall where they can be safely sited. This gives extra capacity and prevents bins overflowing at times of peak demand or when we are unable to empty them for whatever reason.

These type of bins have proved to be a success at Albert Promenade and Skircoat Moor, where they were first trialled, and they are now being installed in Shibden Park, followed by the Queen's Road and King Cross area later in the year. In time, it is hoped that we will be able to roll these out to other parts of the borough, including West Vale and other busy locations.

In the meantime, we continue to try to cover holidays and sickness by bringing in staff from other parts of the service (two parks' staff are supporting the cleansing team this week, for example). However, it is a particular challenge when the absence is not planned, i.e. most sickness, and we can't always get the backfill in place immediately. It also means that the work of those staff who are drafted in to support street cleaning remains undone until they return to their substantive posts.

Nonetheless, please be assured that emptying bins to schedule will always be a key priority for the Green Spaces and Street Scene service for many of the reasons you state, and we will do our utmost to provide a reliable service for local residents and businesses. However, there can sometimes be a slight delay in drafting in cover for unplanned absence, so please bear with us in these circumstances and we will get to the bins as soon as possible.