

Lord Provost demands an end to bin collection misery

The matter of bin collections is one which gives Edinburgh's 'first citizen' great cause for concern.

Lord Provost Frank Ross has in recent weeks contacted the council leader, the council's Chief Executive and the Transport and Environment Convener on several occasions asking what the council's operational plan to deal with waste actually is. The waste includes Christmas trees which have to be collected after the festive season too, although the Lord Provost questions whether that is really the council's duty.

He says he is still waiting for a copy of an actual operational plan, but admits that an email from the Environment Convener sent earlier this week was a great deal more forceful than before, and contains at least the outline of a scheme.

The Lord Provost, Frank Ross, told The Edinburgh Reporter : "I am concerned about this matter as I am concerned about the city, not about my political party colleagues or the council. In particular, I think that non-collection of food waste is a real concern."

Transport and Environment Convener Lesley Macinnes reports to councillors each week with a breakdown of the number of complaints from members of the public about the waste service.

Changes were made to introduce a four day collection system during the budget process last February. It took until autumn to set that up and until the new way of working 'bedded in'

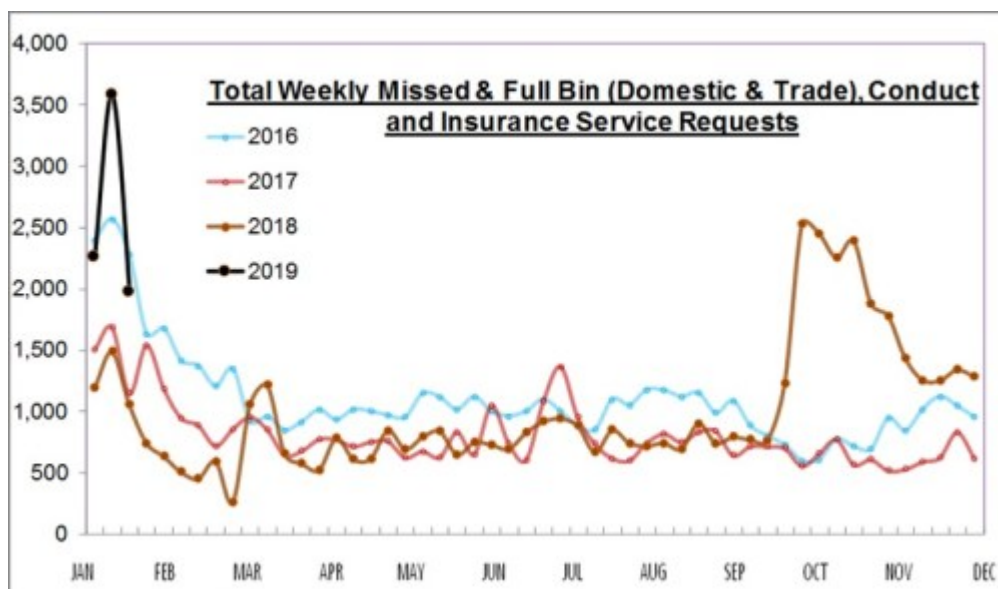
there were expectations of some disruption.

However nobody expected that the council would spend a small fortune on mailing out letters in October with the wrong information in them. This led to a second mailing telling citizens about the four day bin collections between Tuesday and Thursday expected to save about £500,000 as it avoids evening working and Monday public holidays.

There is a stated policy on household recycling and waste communal bin collections [here](#). You could be forgiven for missing it – it takes about seven clicks on the council website to find it. But the administration's business plan is [here](#) and that document sets out as one of its aims this commitment :

Delivering a Council that works for all – more empowered, transparent, and improved public services

Weekly reports



The Lord Provost has analysed the figures provided to him and all other elected representatives which you can see on the graph above. He pointed out that these show that the level of complaints about missed bin collections is now twice as high as it was this time last year despite claims by his council colleagues that complaints are 'down on last week'.

At one stage two weeks ago the number of complaints was higher than it was at any time in the years 2016-18 inclusive as you can see above.

In the week from 15 to 21 January there were 1545 complaints about missed bin collections. While this is explained as a drop on the previous week it is still higher than at any time during 2018. The Lord Provost is adamant that the council must do better.

Plans for improvement

The Transport and Environment Convener is not resting on her laurels it has to be said. The language used in this week's briefing note to councillors is direct. Cllr Macinnes wrote : "As you will be only too aware, there have been considerable difficulties in the delivery of our waste services to Edinburgh residents, compounded recently by additional pressure from this year's festive period.



Councillor Leslay Macinnes Transport and Environment Convener

"I have made it absolutely clear to senior officers that this situation has been completely unacceptable and that immediate further action must be taken to rectify the situation. Edinburgh residents have the right to expect reliable levels of service and to receive a swift response when they have cause to get in touch with the Council."

She is now planning to draw up a series of priority actions to return the council to 'acceptable, sustainable service

levels’.

These include ensuring that complaints are dealt with in two working days, looking at the way bin lorries are used to ensure that any delayed collections are caught up more quickly and improving communication with residents.

[You can report a missed bin collection to the council here](#)

The council will also now review communal recycling routes ‘to improve reliability and performance’, although a wider redesign of the way communal bins are dealt with is also in the pipeline.

The convener has demanded two key reports after what she describes as an ‘unsatisfactory period’, to learn lessons from the changes to the way waste has been delivered and also difficulties over the festive period. The Transport and Environment Committee next meets on 28 February. We will not know what reports they might have before them until the previous week when the council papers are published.

Cllr Macinnes concluded her note with this : “The most important task to emerge from this situation is rebuilding the trust of Edinburgh residents in their waste collection service and this will only be achieved by sustained excellence within day-to-day operations. This is a point I have made clearly and forcefully to senior officers and which I expect to be front and centre of everyone’s minds as we move forward.”



The Rt Hon Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh Frank Ross
The Lord Provost's role is as Edinburgh's civic head, although the Lord Provost is an elected councillor who is still obliged to conduct normal duties for those who elected him. Cllr Ross represents Corstorphine/Murrayfield Ward

It was in that capacity that one of Cllr Ross's constituents contacted him about her bins which were overflowing, although the Lord Provost said he only had to look up and down his own street to see that there were problems.

Council Leader Adam McVey commented to The Edinburgh Reporter : "Lesley, Frank and I, as well as the whole SNP-led Administration, have been putting increasing pressure on officers to demonstrate that they have the right plans in place to bring service standards back to the level the people of Edinburgh rightly expect.

"We'll continue to push for as quick a return as possible to the 5 year record low in waste complaints we saw in 2018 in the coming days and weeks and make any changes necessary to achieve that position.

"Scrutiny of the service delivery, including the testing the strength of the waste service's operational arrangements has

been ongoing for some months and we will continue to do that job and demand better for our citizens.”

Have you encountered problems with your bins? Add your comments below.