

# **Investigation into Christmas bin problems**

**The Capital's under-pressure bin service relied on the good will of workers in agreeing to work on public holidays over the festive period – and a review has now been ordered into the operation over Christmas.**

The city council's refuse services did not operate on either Christmas Day or New Year's Day – but asked staff to volunteer to work on Boxing Day and January 2. Over the two public holidays, 77 per cent of staff turned up for their shift.

The city council will investigate what went wrong over the festive period that led to missed collection complaints increasing to 2,520 in the space of a week. Last week, complaints dropped down to 883.



Cllr Gavin Corbett

Green Cllr Gavin Corbett tabled a motion at full council last week, calling for lessons to be learned ahead of the next festive period.

He said: "I am pleased the council unanimously supported my proposal to review the festive period bin collections. This year was difficult, especially in the west of the city, with residents fed up with overflowing bins. Even now, in mid-February, the impact is still being felt, with stray Christmas trees littering some streets.

"So the number one priority has to be getting the service in

much better shape for next year. I really want to see the evidence on the level of waste produced and the staff capacity needed to deal with it.”

He added: “After all, it’s a time of year when many of us get ill with this or that lurgy and bin staff are no different. It is a time of year when many of us travel to or welcome family to our homes; again bin staff are no different. And yet, it is also a time of year when waste from packaging, food and glass increases dramatically.

“So part of the answer lies in ensuring capacity is there, but part of it is also reducing all that waste in the first place.”

At the council’s Russell Road depot, 81 of the 111 staff required to run normal services turned up to work on Boxing Day and 87 did so on January 2. It was a similar picture at the Seafield depot where 57 of the 72 staff required turned up on Boxing Day and 56 on January 2.

Transport and environment convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, has praised the waste service for help in “getting ourselves back on track”.

She added: “I was happy to approve Cllr Corbett’s motion. It backs up the commitment I’ve already made to make sure we get a grip on what led to the surge in waste complaints after the festive season and to develop improved plans for next Christmas, as well as learning how things could have been done better when we introduced new collection arrangements back in October.

“The waste team are already making progress on the actions I tasked them with and I’m pleased to see that complaints are back to normal levels. We will continue to keep a very close eye on progress and work hard to deliver further improvements, to make sure residents receive the service they deserve.”

Liberal Democrat Cllr Kevin Lang, backed Cllr Corbett’s motion

with an added acknowledgement that the bin problems started back in October.

He said: “The issues that we have seen in waste collection over the festive period, would have been bad enough on their own. The simple reality was that they compounded problems that already existed when the new collection system came into force in October.”

