

Too long to wait for recycling

The council has been accused of “making it as difficult as possible to recycle” in the capital – with delays to bulky item collections raising fears of increased fly-tipping.

Following recent questions by Liberal Democrat councillors, figures revealed that more than half of bookings this year, which cost residents £5, have led to waiting times of longer than four weeks.

More than 10,000 bookings have been made so far this year for uplifts but only 1,093 of these have been carried out within two weeks. A total of 5,683 requests this year have taken more than four weeks – 55 per cent of the overall applications.

Edinburgh Council offers a service where residents can pay £5 to have large items, such as old fridges, televisions and furniture, taken away to be recycled or they can be reused free of charge.

Liberal Democrat Cllr Kevin Lang said: “It does feel as though SNP councillors in Edinburgh are making it as difficult as possible to recycle.

“First we had the garden tax. Then we had a cut in the opening hours of recycling centres. Now we learn that most people are having to wait up to two months, just to get their bulky items taken away. I’ve spoken to people in my own ward who made bookings, paid their money and were left astonished at having to wait so long to have their items picked up.

“I am pleased that new performance targets are now going to be introduced. However, it is even more important that action is taken to reduce these average waiting times.”

Concerns have also been raised that the delays could be resulting in unwanted items clogging up tenement stairwells.

Green Cllr Gavin Corbett said: “A wait of more than four weeks for bulky uplifts is far too long, particularly for people in tenements or flats, where storage options are limited.

“Sadly, it can simply lead to items being dumped in stairwells, streets or in green spaces, where the council will have to deal with it as fly-tipping but lose the income at the same time. So there has to be a sweet spot where more responsive pick-up can help encourage greater use of the service and increase income.

“I would also strongly encourage residents to look at some brilliant re-use options like Freegle or the various Facebook share sites. In my area, the “Slateford Share” is awash with people making good use of items other people no longer want or need and so avoiding having to use bulk uplift at all.”

Environment chiefs have told officials to draw up performance targets in an attempt to improve the situation and have moved to reassure residents that problems with the service have been identified and measures put in place.

Transport and environment convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, said: “The problem had already been recognised and indeed some quite swift action has been taking place in recent weeks.

“We have already seen the figures drop dramatically in terms of waiting times. There were two reasons for this – systems issues and capacity to meet demand.”

In reply to a question by Cllr Lang about uplifting bulky items the number of requests from 1 Jan to 14 Aug has gone

down on last year from 12,722 in 2018 to 10,382 this year The vast majority of bulky waste uplifts have taken between 4 & 6 weeks to fulfil

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 22, 2019](#)

David Bol is the Local Democracy Reporter covering Edinburgh. The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency : funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.