

Questions from Councillor Brian Webber for the Planning, Transport & Environment Panel – January 2015

1. Approximately how many residential properties have been provided with the re-usable bags for presenting residual waste for collection? Are they limited to houses subdivided into flats and HMOs, or is it planned to extend their availability more generally in streets where gulls and other scavenging animals are a problem? Have any penalty notices been issued for not using the re-usable bags?

To date, 6,800 properties have been given a free reusable rubbish sack to help improve the street scene on collection day. This has been done via an initial trial area and five subsequent roll-out phases of the bags. The focus has always been on roads where split refuse and animal scavenging is a known problem, regardless of property type. The bags have been distributed to streets within the City Centre, Kingsmead, Bathwick, Lyncombe, Walcot, Lansdown, Westmoreland and Oldfield Park wards. No penalty notices have been issued to date and significant improvements have been seen in the majority of streets. It is not planned to extend their availability more generally at the moment as they do have operational implications and are not universally popular. The Council will be consulting on changes to waste service specifications throughout 2015. This consultation will look at issues such as the containment of waste and the provision of bins, sacks and containers throughout the district.

2. Many homeowners (particularly those in small flats) are unwilling or unable to find space to keep green boxes for recyclables, and instead put them out in plastic bags. These bags often contain a mixture of different types of item. I personally admire the crews of the 'green' lorries who do a hard job in unpleasant weather conditions, and who do their best to rip open these plastic bags and sort the contents into the various hoppers. Almost inevitably some bags are overlooked or ignored because they include non-recyclable material; and they are ignored by the residual waste lorry because they are not in black bags. The detritus is therefore left (unless picked up by a considerate resident) to disfigure the neighbourhood and attract vermin. There seems to be no easy answer to this, except for more litter bins and litter patrols. Is there any hope of ameliorating the problem?

We are aware that this is an on-going problem with no easy solution. It's difficult to deter residents who want to recycle but have limited space. We try and encourage residents who want to use carrier bags to leave them untied if they contain recycling so that it is more obvious to the collection crews. Our campaigns team are available to visit areas where this is a known problem and to discuss storage and presentation of waste with residents, so please feel free to highlight any specific areas of concern. We will address this issue in the future design of the service which will look in detail at how we collect recyclables, and the impact the method of collection has on the street scene and on the quantities and quality of the recycle collected.