

Cheltenham Borough Council

Inclement Weather Emergency Waste Collection

Policy & Procedure

August 2013

In January 2013, Cheltenham experienced significant snowfall which affected the ability of Ubico Ltd (on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council) to be able to collect waste and recycling from residents. A cabinet member working group reviewed the experience of service disruption and considered what lessons were to be learnt from this, what the policy arrangements were at the time and what more the Council and Ubico could do in future to ensure that disruption is limited during severe weather.

As a result of the comments made by the Cabinet Member Working Group the following procedure should be put into action during an emergency which causes Cheltenham Borough Council's waste and recycling collection service to be disrupted, such as heavy snowfall.

Policy Principles

The general principle is that decisions will be taken at the lowest identified officer level practical to ensure timely and robust results.

Significant disruptions, strategic planning and decision making will be undertaken by way of daily service business continuity conferences between the key stakeholders in order to produce/revise an action plan which will aid in managing the emergency and how it affects the services.

Background Roles & Responsibilities

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) has a statutory responsibility under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to arrange for the collection of household waste in its area.

- Ubico Ltd as the service provider has a responsibility under the contract to collect household wastes and recyclables at a frequency based on the budgetary and policy constraints set by the Council. Ubico is the arbiter in deciding whether or not it is safe to undertake its duties during spells of inclement weather.
- The Council has the final say in deciding how any rectification activities are undertaken, in order to return the services to the status quo so that it can take account of any reputational/other reasons. Decisions will be made on behalf of the Council by the Director of Commissioning in conjunction with the

Cabinet Member (Sustainability), or in their absence the Chief Executive Officer, and Council Leader.

- The Joint Waste Team (JWT) fulfils the 'client functions' on behalf of the Council and acts as the facilitator for emergency planning activities between Ubico and the Council before, during and after spells of inclement weather, with the Strategic Client Officer (or substitute from the JWT Senior Management Team) undertaking the primary role. *All references to the joint waste team in this document should be read in that context.*
- The CBC Communications Team is responsible for coordinating and producing communications on behalf of the Council at a local level. As part of this duty, the team will liaise with the local media and stakeholders, and in particular disseminate information to all concerned in a timely and accurate fashion.
- The JWT Communications team is responsible for coordinating and producing strategic communications on behalf of the Joint Waste Committee, where this is required at a County wide level.
- The Customer Service Team at CBC is the primary public facing department.
- The Customer Relations Team at CBC is responsible for managing incoming comments and complaints received from members of the public.

Procedure Actions

A. Establish the facts

1. Ubico Contract Manager to immediately inform the Joint Waste Team of any serious problem affecting the Borough's waste and recycling collection service. The Joint Waste Team will then establish the exact nature of the problem, which areas of the Borough are affected and how it will impact on the normal operation of the waste service in the Borough.

B. Decide on course of action

1. Ubico will follow the policy and procedures agreed with the Joint Waste Team for decision making on service provision before, during or after severe weather and identify how to deal with the problem i.e. attempt to make collections with all vehicles, attempt to make collections in limited areas or postpone all collections.
2. Where it is safe to do so, attempts will be made to collect from households which can be accessed even if a number of properties will be missed due either to the slower speed at which collections can be made in poor road conditions or because some road or pavement conditions mean some properties cannot be safely accessed.
3. During the course of the first day, the Director of Commissioning shall arrange to convene the first daily business continuity conference for the following morning, unless it is obvious that the emergency is expected to clear during the first day. The key stakeholders and attendees are to be: the Director of Commissioning, the Cabinet Member (Sustainability), Ubico represented by a senior manager, a representative of the local Comms team, the Customer Service Manager, the Strategic Client Officer, or their named deputies.
4. During the first day pre-recorded telephone and social media messages, 'a waste hotline', and other suitable communications shall be instigated unless it is obvious that the emergency is expected to clear during the first day.

C. Communicate the message

1. The Joint Waste Team or Ubico (in the case of decisions delegated to Ubico) to relay all the facts and the agreed action to the Director of Commissioning who then in turn will update the Executive Director and the Cabinet Member for Sustainability (or Council Leader if the Cabinet Member is unavailable).
2. The Joint Waste Team to communicate the key messages to the Council's Communications Team (*if it is felt that the multi-authority co-ordinated communications on behalf of the Joint Waste Committee would be beneficial, then the JWT Communications department will also be notified and will prepare a joint release*).
3. The Council's Communication Team to prepare a draft press release which is timely, accurate and focussed at a local level as well as being clear, understandable and free from jargon.
4. The Council's Communications Team to email the draft press release to the Joint Waste Team, Director of Commissioning, Executive Director, Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Ubico Managing Director for approval.
5. Once approval has been gained the Council's Communications Team to dispatch the press release to all the relevant local papers, radio and TV stations.
6. The Council's Communications Team to send a copy of the media release to any local papers/media not covered in C5 and email all Members, JWT Communications Team, Parish Councils, Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH), Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and all staff with details of the media release (Parish clerks not on email contact list should be sent a copy of the media release by post and also contacted by telephone if possible).
7. Webmaster to display details of the press release on the Council's website and intranet, and send message out via social media avenues.
8. Customer Services Manager to cascade information to all members of the Customer Service and Customer Relations teams and put information on the automated telephone line.

D. Get the message across

1. The spokesperson named on the media release who should speak on behalf of the Council will be the Cabinet Member for Sustainability, the Director of Commissioning (or their substitutes), an officer of the Joint Waste Team, or a member of the Communications Team in order of availability. The Joint Waste Committee shall determine its own spokesperson if required.

E. Update information

1. In an emergency, the situation regarding collections could change several times over a short period of time. Ubico Contract Manager must inform The Joint Waste Team immediately of any changes to the situation (and vice-versa). If the situation does change, the above procedure should be repeated so that an updated message can be distributed as quickly as possible.
2. Weather forecasts will be monitored to enable predicted conditions over the forthcoming days/weeks to be incorporated in the service planning and contingency arrangements.

F. Follow-up once collections have resumed

1. When collections have resumed the Council's Communications Team to prepare and send a clear, understandable and free from jargon media release to all the relevant local papers, radio and TV stations, ensuring information is accurate, unambiguous and in accordance with any specific message that

has been agreed (wording of media release to be agreed by The Joint Waste Team, Director of Commissioning, Executive Director and Cabinet Member for Sustainability before it is sent to the press as per C4).

2. CBC Communications Team to email all Members, JWT Communications Team, CBH, RSL's, Parish Councils and all staff with details of the media release (Parish clerks not on email contact list should be sent a copy of the media release by post and also contacted by telephone if possible).
3. Webmaster to display details of the press release on the Council's website and intranet, and send message out via social media avenues.
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G. Waste Collection Catch-up

1. A singular day's missed collection due to inclement weather will be caught up later in the same week (using a Saturday where appropriate) or at the beginning of the following week (in the case of a disruption on a Thursday/Friday) with Ubico managing the process in order to fully catch-up as quickly as possible.
2. During multiple days disruption Ubico Contract Manager and the Joint Waste Team, Director of Commissioning, Executive Director and Cabinet Member for Sustainability will agree if the emergency waste collection service should be implemented and at which locations (subject to being able to safely gain access).
3. During an incident lasting up to five days of stoppage including Saturdays, there remains a policy aim to catch up without significant loss of customer collections, with crews using banked hours to work additional hours beyond their normal shift subject to various limitations set out elsewhere e.g. tipping facility availability. Therefore careful consideration will be given to what messages to give out to the public, especially as customers may otherwise miss re-scheduled collections. In all scenarios before and during the catch-up, process F1 – F4 will be followed.
4. Following multiple days of missed collections and where collections can be safely made (e.g. only on passable roads), the Joint Waste Team acting on behalf of the Council may instruct Ubico to:
 - (a) prioritise getting black bags off the streets
 - (b) concentrate resources in known 'hotspot locations' for waste collection
 - (c) focus making collections from those householders which have waited longest.
 - (d) co-mingle or suspend Garden Waste collections, and/or utilise organic collection vehicles to collect refuse and food waste co-mingled from properties that have previously missed a collection.
 - (e) Provide non-scheduled catch up collections to accommodations served by communal bins, where bins are contained in bin stores and there is no need for residents to present the bins for collection, areas which have a build up of black sacks or households which are experiencing a significant difficulty in storing their waste. The priority will be to remove refuse and food waste.
 - (f) Respond to requests from those residents already in receipt of an Assisted Collection, for a catch up collection – assessing whether a collection can be safely provided and whether resources are available to provide a collection, on a case by case basis.
 - (g) suspend the 'no side waste' policy

- (h) suspend the ruling on allowing private vans to use the Swindon Road Recycling Centre to dispose of household waste
- (i) instruct Ubico to make bring site locations safe to use where conditions allow

H. Emergency Waste Collection Service

1. The Swindon Road Recycling Centre plus 5 areas of the Borough offering a total of 6 locations are available to site a waste collection container/vehicle during extended spells of inclement weather, which will allow residents of the surrounding areas the opportunity to bring their waste to the Swindon Road Recycling centre/vehicle in refuse sacks (no wheeled bins), if they choose to do so and consider they are safely able to access the site.
2. The emergency waste collection service will only engage if the following are available;
 - Staff are available to manage the Swindon Road Recycling Centre facility
 - The necessary number of waste collection drivers and loaders are able to get to the Swindon Road depot to commence work
 - A vehicle/s is/are able to be safely operated in the conditions
 - Safe passage available via the road network from the Swindon Road depot to the chosen location(s)
 - Car Park accessibility
 - Landfill Site at Wingmoor Farm being open and accessible to accept waste
 - Safe passage available via the road network from the Landfill Site to the Swindon Road depot
3. Once agreement has been reached as per G2 and H2, Ubico will contact the relevant authority (Car Parks, Parish Councils or Private Site Owners) to advise and gain approval from them for a waste collection vehicle to be sited in their car park.
4. The Council's Communications Team to prepare and send a clear, understandable and free from jargon media release to all the relevant local papers, radio and TV stations, ensuring information is accurate, unambiguous and in accordance with any specific message that has been agreed (wording of media release to be agreed by The Joint Waste Team, Director of Commissioning, Executive Director and Cabinet Member for Sustainability before it is sent to the press as per C4).
5. CBC Communications Team to email all Members, JWT Communications Team, CBH, RSL's, Parish Councils and all staff with details of the media release (Parish clerks not on email contact list should be sent a copy of the media release by post and also contacted by telephone if possible).
6. Webmaster to display details of the press release on the Council's website and intranet, and send message out via social media avenues.
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Eligible Locations

A risk assessment has been conducted to identify suitable locations to site a waste collection vehicle during spells of severe inclement weather. Having consulted the Gloucestershire County Highways gritting area schedule, the locations have been chosen because they are on main trunk routes which should be passable.

Each of the locations listed below has large enough access to allow for the safe manoeuvring of a waste collection vehicle, without posing a risk to the public, private property or the vehicle and crew. In addition the locations provide a skeletal geographical coverage of the Borough.

Coronation Square Car Park		
Brizen Recreation Ground		
Priors Park Recreation Ground		
St James Street Car Park (for town centre area)		

The chosen car park must have been sufficiently cleared of snow and not have any cars which have been abandoned blocking the access or posing a potential risk to the collection staff or vehicle.