

## **Update on industrial action causing disruption to waste services – suspension of recycling collection services extended Briefing Note No. 22-05**

**Service: Waste Management**

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We wanted to update you on the ongoing industrial action between our contractor Hills Municipal Collections and the GMB Union.

### **Waste recycling collections – suspension extended**

Unfortunately, an agreement between the two parties has yet to be reached and the GMB Union has confirmed that it will continue striking until 2 April. Therefore, alongside Hills Municipal Collections, we've made the difficult decision to suspend recycling collection for a further two weeks. This means that recycling collection services won't resume until the week of 4 April, and not the previously stated 21 March. Please share this update with your communities.

We are asking residents to not put their blue lidded bins and black boxes out until their next collection day from 4 April onwards. There will be no recycling collections until 4 April.

This current phase of the strike is due to end on 18 March, but we anticipate using the three operational days before the next strike commences to catch-up on any collections missed, therefore we will be unable to collect any recycling during that small window.

When recycling services do resume from 4 April, waste crews will accept additional materials that don't fit in blue lidded bins or black boxes, so we will allow residents to leave them in bags, bin bags and crates and they will be picked up if they are left next to their containers. In the meantime, we are encouraging people that are unable to store additional materials to take them to their nearest household recycling centre (HRC), as they are operating as normal.

We are focusing our resources on emptying household waste bins, and garden waste collection will also continue. Given that around 90,000 households use the paid for garden waste service, compared to around 230,000 who have blue lidded bins and black boxes, postponing garden waste wouldn't provide enough resource to also collect recycling. Doing a mix and match service with garden waste and recycling would be a very complicated and logistical challenge, and we still wouldn't be able to get to everyone's property. Therefore, we feel we've made the right decision to extend the recycling collection suspension, albeit a difficult one.

### **Service update**

Despite the challenges and the ongoing suspension of the kerbside recycling service, we're pleased to see that good progress have been made on the collection rounds this past week. All catch up work to empty household and garden waste from 7 March has finished, and most scheduled collections for this week (w/c 14 March) have now been completed. With support from the police, we are starting to see vehicles deploy from our depots earlier this week which is having a positive effect on the ability of Hills to maintain the majority of scheduled residual and garden waste collections. However, an apparent overnight break-in

at Churchfields depot resulting in damage to council property and waste collection vehicles has unfortunately delayed deployment of vehicles on 16 March, but we're working hard to get things moving as quickly as possible.

### **Disruption at depots**

Wiltshire Police will continue to provide support in limiting the amount of disruption at the depots. Our focus is to ensure that those Hills Municipal Collections workers who aren't involved in the industrial action can carry out their roles as safely and with as little disruption as possible so that household waste collections can take place throughout the county.

### **Further strike action?**

Until Hills Municipal Collections and the GMB Union reach an agreement, we have to assume there will be further industrial action in due course. We will continue to work with Hills Municipal Collections to ensure there is as little disruption as possible.

### **Suggested social media post**

If you would like to post about the disruption to waste collections to keep residents updated, you're welcome to use the below draft post – or you can write your own.

Due to ongoing industrial action between Hills Municipal Collections and the GMB Union, Wilts Council has extended the suspension of recycling collection until week of 4 April. Pls continue to put your household/garden waste bins out as normal.

More info <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/faq-hills-municipal-collections-industrial-action>

### **Where to go for more information**

We have updated our FAQs at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/faq-hills-municipal-collections-industrial-action](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/faq-hills-municipal-collections-industrial-action) so please continue to share those with any residents who you speak to who aren't aware of this update.

We will continually widely promote updates as much as possible. So far, we have issued numerous press release updates which have been widely covered by local media, residents' newsletter articles and social media content (<https://twitter.com/wiltscouncil>).

If you need clarification on anything or have any further questions, please don't hesitate to email [martin.litherland@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:martin.litherland@wiltshire.gov.uk).