

Letter from Councillor Colin Couch, Executive member for environment, Welwyn Hatfield Council to the Welwyn Hatfield Times (1)

Sir – I'd like to respond to some concerns raised by local residents about the unavoidable disruptions to refuse and recycling collections caused by the adverse weather conditions recently.

I'd also like to stress that decisions have always been made with the safety of our operatives and members of the public in mind.

Putting a 14-tonne (unladen weight) refuse freighter on an ice-packed road would have been completely irresponsible and would have endangered lives!

Regrettably, following the recent prolonged snowy weather, some refuse collections were delayed.

Extra services were made over the weekend to ensure collections were back up to date by Monday, January 18.

All the roads specifically named in the article on January 20 will have had a minimum of two collections since Christmas and most will have had three collections.

The difficult decision to suspend recycling services was made because vehicles and staff were required to support the refuse service, which was the priority due to the vulnerability of refuse sacks on the boundary.

Because of this, during this latest bout of snow and the one before Christmas, unfortunately it has meant the recycling collections became further delayed.

Once again it has to be said the roads named in the article will have had at least one collection since Christmas and some two.

Such a long period of snow as unprecedented in the UK making it difficult for services to be maintained, which mirrored problems faced throughout the country.

In the past, we have looked into purchasing equipment for vehicles and operatives, however, snow chains cannot be used if there is snow on some roads and not others! Also, because such heavy and prolonged snow is so infrequent and so unusual, if we were to purchase the exceptionally expensive equipment it may sit idle for years at a time!

Of course, if annual snow becomes the norm and then we will look to acquire the necessary equipment.

All refuse collections from the festive period were made by January 4.

To date this week, refuse collections have been happening as scheduled.

Recycling collections have resumed as per our schedule and we hope this week's collections will be complete by the end of the week.

We are sorry for the inconvenience the disruption has caused, but please be assured that extra crews are working hard to collect in the waste which has accumulated during the disruption as soon as possible.