

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
11th February 2015**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor John Powell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Stephen Hayes

Changes to clinical waste collections have recently been notified to service users, only ten days before implementation. The changes concern the definition of 'clinical waste', and many items previously included in the yellow bag collections will now be excluded, reducing substantially the number of residents eligible for this service.

Notably, used colostomy bags will not now be regarded as clinical waste, and service users have been told to place these in their normal household residual waste, currently collected fortnightly but possibly soon to be collected on a three-weekly cycle.

Service users are extremely concerned and in some cases very distressed about this change. Users of the clinical waste collections typically have long term health needs and are frequently sensitive about their need to access this particular service.

Service users have been told that hygiene issues are addressed by the use of wheelie bins. However, many were issued with purple bags for household waste collection because their wider health circumstances, and/or the nature of their property (eg numbers of steps to reach the roadway) make the use of wheelie bins impracticable. These residents are left with the prospect of having used colostomy pouches stored in their homes as domestic rubbish for up to three weeks.

I appreciate that clinical waste collection is carried out by the authority on behalf of Powys tHB, but I am concerned that this authority has accepted too readily the re-definition of clinical waste with a view to reducing the costs and charges relating to this service.

Is the portfolio holder satisfied that if colostomy bags are to be treated as general waste all possible hygiene concerns have been addressed, and that the particular challenges facing those who are now losing this service, in following the new procedures, have been assessed and attended to on an individual basis?

1. Please note that the service is the responsibility of PtHB and should have been undertaken by them a considerable time ago. The responsibility for deciding who receives the service going forward rests with them. Please be advised that we have for a number of years undertaken the service upon the PtHB's request at no charge and that simply cannot continue.
2. I have been advised that the operational cost of the service is around £150k per annum, I suspect that the true cost is considerably higher as this take no account of admin, supervision, corporate costs etc.
3. There will be a greatly reduced cost to the authority going forward. Clearly some waste will be entering the residual waste stream but the volume and weight will be limited. We will be paying landfill disposal rates on this material and not clinical waste treatment costs at a site in Wrexham. The two previously dedicated vehicles have been decommissioned and the staff assigned to other duties.
4. Very approximately we were previously providing a service to around 350 residents. From the 01/02/15 this service has been transferred to PtHB. They have reviewed our customer database and the individual waste streams and intend providing the service to around 65 residents.
5. There is always concern when such changes are made and I agree that we are dealing with some of our most vulnerable members of society. This is however an important and necessary change. It is not simply about saving money as we were advised by the PtHB that the service was in breach of clinical waste guidelines.
6. No decision has been made on 3 weekly collections and it would be a little premature at this stage to speculate on this matter, it has however been identified in our budget strategy as a potential efficiency saving. As with any such service change mitigation measures would need to be considered and that could include additional services for producers of non -infectious hygiene waste.
7. It is not possible to confirm that "all possible hygiene concerns" have been addressed as that is a matter for individual householders. However the measures proposed comply with the latest guidance and are in keeping with other Welsh Local Authorities.
8. If you can provide the details of your concerned constituents I will make sure that the waste team contact them personally to ensure as smooth as possible transition to the new service.