

Wheelie Bins roll into Brackenbury

Council Knows Best ?

Richard Owen and Rosemary Mortimer



LBHF leaflet

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the current borough-wide bin rollout is the discrepancy between residents' preference for the smaller 93cm bins, and the Council's apparent reluctance to tell people that they exist and are an option (no mention - above). Many residents, of course, prefer to have no wheelie bins at all, finding that the current system suits them best.

In the early phases of the rollout, 93cm bins didn't exist, or at least hadn't delivered by the supplier. In February we spoke to a resident of a street in Brook Green that had just been 'blitzed' with 110cm bins, two per tiny garden. She had been told that 93cm bins were 'on their way' and would possibly fit better under a large wisteria gracing the front of her property. We decided to survey the entire street. An overwhelming majority of the near 50% who responded said that the bins were too large and/or tall. Yet they were unaware of any alternative.

It wasn't until mid-May that the Council had actual 93cm/120L bins to show to representatives of Brackenbury Residents Association. And, to be fair, they were 'show-cased' along with the larger 140L and 240L bins at a drop-in session for residents at the Grove Neighbourhood Centre on 12th June.

Our Brook Green survey, hearing from dozens of residents at the Grove Neighbourhood Centre, many other conversations with friends and neighbours - these all indicate a strong preference for the smaller 93cm bins. It's not hard to see why. Any 'large' dustbin creates challenges in a relatively small front

Taking a View

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garden. The 93cm bins are less visually dominant and more likely to sit comfortably behind a wall or hedge, they are easier to handle for the older and infirm, and you don't need planning permission to make a bin store to hide them in (unlike their taller cousins). 120L capacity is still ample for a wide range of household types with weekly collections.

The mystery is why the Council is so coy about the existence of these smaller bins. Here in Brackenbury we have received two large leaflets - glossy, colourful - and one smaller card about the bin rollout. The 93cm bins are not mentioned on any of them. Instead there are plenty of photos of the 'standard' bin set, i.e. large 240L and 140L wheelies plus the two smaller food waste bins. See above.

A close reading of the text does suggest the possibility of alternatives, yet in a way that is less than helpfully clear. One leaflet refers to a 'flexible approach, with different bin sizes available'; but doesn't say what those are. The second leaflet is even more cryptic, and just shows an image of the 'standard' set of bins as being what you 'are likely to receive'. The smaller card says nothing about choice, just an image of the standard bins to reinforce a message of 'this is what you are getting - like it or not'.

We know the Council is keen to make the rollout 'efficient', and minimise the number of post-delivery bin 'swaps'. One way to do this is to give every household the same bins, bins that are far too large for many, yet be deliberately vague about alternatives. That seems to have been the approach so far. It has led to the illusion of 'customer satisfaction' and some good scores on metrics that are important to the Council, but not necessarily to residents.

It's obvious to us here in Brackenbury that the smaller 93cm bins should be the default option for residents who want bins. They are the optimal choice for a range of settings.



Sulgrave Road



Dalling Road



Studland Street



Melrose Conservation Area



Batoum gardens

Over-large 110cm bins obstructing doors and windows, not beautiful and not easy to use. Small bins for waste food, good idea if people use them