

## **Members Update - Ubico Services – Stroud Contract**

As you will be aware SDC took decisive action to safeguard critical services outlined in the Business Continuity Plan that officers and Ubico management had reviewed in the lead up to the current Covid-19 lockdown. This, combined with the preparation that Ubico undertook to induct additional agency staff has meant that all waste services have been maintained, apart from the provision of bulky waste collection.

In summary the immediate response to UK lockdown was:

- **To lock all public conveniences and suspend the vast majority of building cleaning activity;** this has allowed a cleaning resource to be dedicated to the improved hygiene regimes for Ubico fleet vehicles. Most particularly, on services where social distancing can't be maintained, vehicles are being cleaned each day (alongside the provision of disposable gloves and hand sanitiser)
- **To suspend the grounds maintenance operation;** this has allowed redeployment of staff, including 1 staff member that has a mechanical background to assist in the workshop. The workshop fitting team that undertake fleet repairs has been badly effected by staff absence and decisive action was taken to recruit short term cover.
- **To suspend the bulky waste collection service** (and only serve those that had already booked and paid); this has limited pressure on waste services, and in light of the closure of HRCs has minimised this impact. Our fear is that when this service resumes, if it is prior to HRC re-opening, we could be overrun with requests. This service currently remains under review and at present we don't have the capability to undertake collections, whilst maintaining social distancing.
- **To suspend new and renewal subscriptions on our garden waste service;** this has meant that even in light of the increase in volumes, whilst people are at home and tending their gardens (particularly noticeable after the very dry Easter weekend), we haven't had to worry about increasing crew numbers to 3 and have been able to operate driver plus 1 loader rounds.
- **To reduce the street cleansing provision;** this has allowed us to prioritise the collection of litter and dog bins and reactive work. The period has actually been useful for the sweeping of busy routes that are difficult to access in normal high traffic times.
- **To suspend receptacle delivery and collection;** this has eased staff pressure

As time has gone on, we have adjusted things slightly in response to staff numbers. Initially Ubico had around 16 operatives isolating or shielding. This has dropped to just under ten more recently.

### **Current Service Status – 22/4/2020**

- Refuse, Recycling, Food and Garden Waste collections are being undertaken with no service disruption
- Bulky waste collections remain suspended
- Garden waste subscription renewals and new subscriptions remain suspended
- Public Conveniences remain closed, although some deep steam cleaning is being undertaken
- Grounds maintenance has resumed and will operate within the confines of the staff and physical resource to allow social distancing. This week 3 of the 4 rounds have been operating.
- Street cleansing continues to be rationalised

- Limited replacement receptacle requests are being taken. Only requests for grey residual wheelie bin and garden waste wheelie bin replacements are being taken, alongside any requests for receptacles from brand new properties.

### **Waste Volumes**

Waste volumes have undoubtedly increased across all waste streams. It's a little too early to tell by exactly how much, but our thoughts are currently at around 10%. There has been some interest in food waste, related to reports of panic buying, and so we've taken a little look at weights for food waste pre and post lockdown. We've seen weekly weights rise from circa. 105 tonnes to circa. 120 tonnes, somewhat in keeping with our thoughts for recycling and residual waste above.

### **Recycling Markets**

Our dry mixed recycling goes to Suez (Birmingham) and they are operating business as usual. Markets remain in place for onward sale and reprocessing of material. It is a similar story for our paper and cardboard mix which goes to Palm Paper for direct reprocessing. Paper markets weren't strong prior to Covid-19 and whilst wider fluctuations will put financial pressure on SDC, it won't impact material recycling.

### **Social Distancing**

Ubico and SDC have reviewed and adhered to the various guidance documents issued by DEFRA and the industry body WISH. We are both content, that all guidance is being followed to keep staff as safe as possible, whilst ensuring a public health risk is not generated by non collection of waste.

### **Public Response**

Crews have been supported like at no other time in memory. SDC officers and Ubico management have been encouraged to see the support and appreciation of these operatives both in the field and via the social media channels, ably updated by Rachael Lythgoe and Ben Falconer. We're all just hoping the positivity lasts well beyond this crisis!!

### **Additional Costs/Lost Income**

Whilst redeployment of staff from suspended services has limited this impact, there will be costs associated with additional staff provision in particular. Ubico are maintaining a separate budget line for anything related to Covid-19 so that this can be easily interrogated retrospectively. Clearly SDC have been supportive of essential additional spend to enable services to function as much as possible.

There will potentially be a loss of income from garden waste subscriptions and bulky waste collections. The timeframe for full resumption will dictate the full impact.

### **Flytipping**

Whilst there are numerous reports locally and nationally about vastly increased numbers, we aren't experiencing a huge increase in the district. We've been keeping an eye on this and until recently, we've had less reported cases in the comparable month period this year than we had last year. The most recent figures that we've run suggest marginally more in the last 30 days than the comparable period last year, but we believe this to be a 'normal' fluctuation. There could be cases that remain unreported, but for now we're content that this is not a substantial problem.

### **Customer Service Centre Support Invaluable (as always)**

CSC call handling in a new guise has continued to be critical. The changing nature of services has made this more challenging to ensure correct information is being conveyed, but on the whole everything has worked well.

### **Financial Impact**

Ubico are incurring additional costs as a result of the response to this crisis. They are monitoring this cost throughout and are reporting to SDC on a weekly basis. As at 24/4 the costs incurred were £34k. This has largely been on agency staff and additional cleaning supplies required.

### **Furloughing of staff**

To date Ubico have not furloughed any staff. However, they have received legal advice that they should consider furloughing staff who are unable to work as a result of being shielded or who are unable to work due to caring responsibilities.

There are eleven staff who are in the shielded category and Ubico are writing to all of them to seek their agreement to being furloughed from May 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of their 12 week shielding. Ubico will top up their pay from the 80% to ensure they remain on full pay.

Data is being collated to determine whether they have staff who should be furloughed due to caring responsibilities.