

Letters to the Manager- Concerning his introduction of Refuse Collection Charges - 28/11/99

Dear Mr. Brady,

Now that the dust is settling on the estimates I thought it was important to write to you to emphasise a number of points I made at the estimates meeting.

I don't think that any of us are under any illusions as to what a turbulent period we are now entering. The imposition of local charges, be they for water or refuse collection, is about as welcome as King Herod's decree that the first born in every household be put to the sword!

I am personally against a charge of this type; in common with many people I feel that the average person already pays enough tax to cover the provision of basic services. In last Friday's Irish Times the Dublin City manager said a local tax or domestic rates should be reintroduced but that this should be balanced by a reduction in personal taxation.

In any case 27 of the 29 county councils have introduced charges for refuse collection so such charges are rapidly becoming a fact of life. As complaints about the bin collections are the single most common complaint I receive from the people I represent, I felt duty bound to vote in favour of any revenue raising charge that promises a dramatic and direct improvement in this service. To ensure that the money raised does go to the refuse service I felt it right to insist on the inclusion of a customer charter before I could consider voting for this charge.

Now that we have voted in the charge we must at all costs avoid the situation Wicklow County Council found themselves in. In Wicklow over 2,000 people transferred during the past year to private operators due to their superior standard of service. Private operators were achieving twice the lift rate of the council service. Last week the Wicklow manager proposed increasing the household charge from £95 to £200. Last Monday night the members voted to reject this charge completely thereby privatising the bin collection service. This service will now be provided by five competing operators.

It is likely that we will be faced with a similar decision to Wicklow County Council's in next year's estimates, to back a charge proposed by yourself or not. What happens between now and then in terms of the quality of the bin collection service will have a critical bearing on the outcome of this future decision. If the complaints about non-collection at new estates and in bank holiday weeks continue to be received by the other members and myself in the coming year, it is highly unlikely we could countenance continuing to support a charge.

While you came to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council with a very good reputation, the jury remains out on judging your determination and ability to bring about resolutions to the core problems (such as the I.R. problem in the refuse department) that have beset our council for a number of years.

Referring to your letter to the members of November 3rd, you indicate that the charge we have voted in is related to domestic refuse charges.

If this charge is to be sold to our constituents on the basis that it will pave the way for improvements in the refuse collection service you must appreciate that public acceptance or rejection of this charge will hinge on the improvement or lack of improvement in the bin service.

I'm sure you realise, now that the members have backed your estimates, that your reputation for efficiency and effectiveness will be directly and graphically linked to the future performance of the bin collection service.

Yours Sincerely