

## Mark joins Milton Keynes' bin men in a post Easter collection

The days of the 'bin man' are gone, to be replaced by the modern 'Waste and Recycling Operative', political correctness gone mad, or a true reflection on what really happens to our rubbish here in Milton Keynes?

To find out for myself I volunteered to join one of our collection teams in Bletchley last week and give them a hand collecting the city's rubbish. After a thorough safety briefing at the recycling centre in Wolverton, I joined Paul, Mez and Darren on their round in their new 'single pass' vehicle. Designed with separate sections for pink sacks, black sacks and glass, the vehicle reflects the move away from just throwing everything into black sacks destined for landfill and the growing popularity of recycling. With a modern vehicle like this, the need for multiple collections, in theory at least, is much reduced.

To say I hit the ground running is an understatement, these guys don't mess about! The young crew literally run everywhere and within 30 minutes my outer layers have been stripped off and the chilly morning soon felt more like summer. I'd joined the crew on one of the busiest days of the year, as they struggled to catch up after a long bank holiday weekend. Black sacks in the main hopper and pink in the smaller, with the lorry almost in perpetual motion, no need to go to the gym for these boys and I can see why there didn't seem to be an ounce of fat on any of them.

So what are the rookie errors for a new 'Waste and Recycling Operative'? Standing directly behind the hopper when it goes into crush mode, with a loud "pop" a bin bag bursts and out shoots some foul smelling maggot juice, down the front of your fluorescent orange sweatshirt. One to be avoided I'm assured. The guys have got a great sense of humour and they need it, not least when encountering poorly parked cars that prevent their lorry reversing down tight Bletchley streets.

It was a fascinating morning, hard work but thoroughly satisfying. We all get frustrated when sometimes our blue recycling box isn't exactly where we left it (they really do all look the same after a while) but I left full of admiration for a crew doing a job many of us wouldn't fancy. So next time you're stuck behind a bin lorry, rather than hoot your horn, why not give them a smile and say 'thanks' to some of Milton Keynes' hidden heroes.