

# Pressure mounts over bin-collection switch

By **Ross McDonagh**

DUBLIN city councillors are calling on the city manager to pressure Greyhound Recycling into reversing its up-front payment demands.

But the private waste company has insisted its position remains the same – and it is under no obligation to change it.

This week, city residents reacted angrily when they discovered Dublin City Council had relinquished its bin-collection duties to private operator Greyhound, which in turn told customers it would not collect their bins if they did not make an up-front payment of €100 within a month.

Individual lift charges also have to be paid in advance with immediate effect, they were informed by letter.

Yesterday, both the Labour Party and Fianna Fáil groups of councillors on the city council called on the city manager to renegotiate the contract with Greyhound.

However, Labour questioned Fianna Fáil's 'sudden eagerness' on the issue, since it was the party in govern-

## 'The city manager must renegotiate the terms'

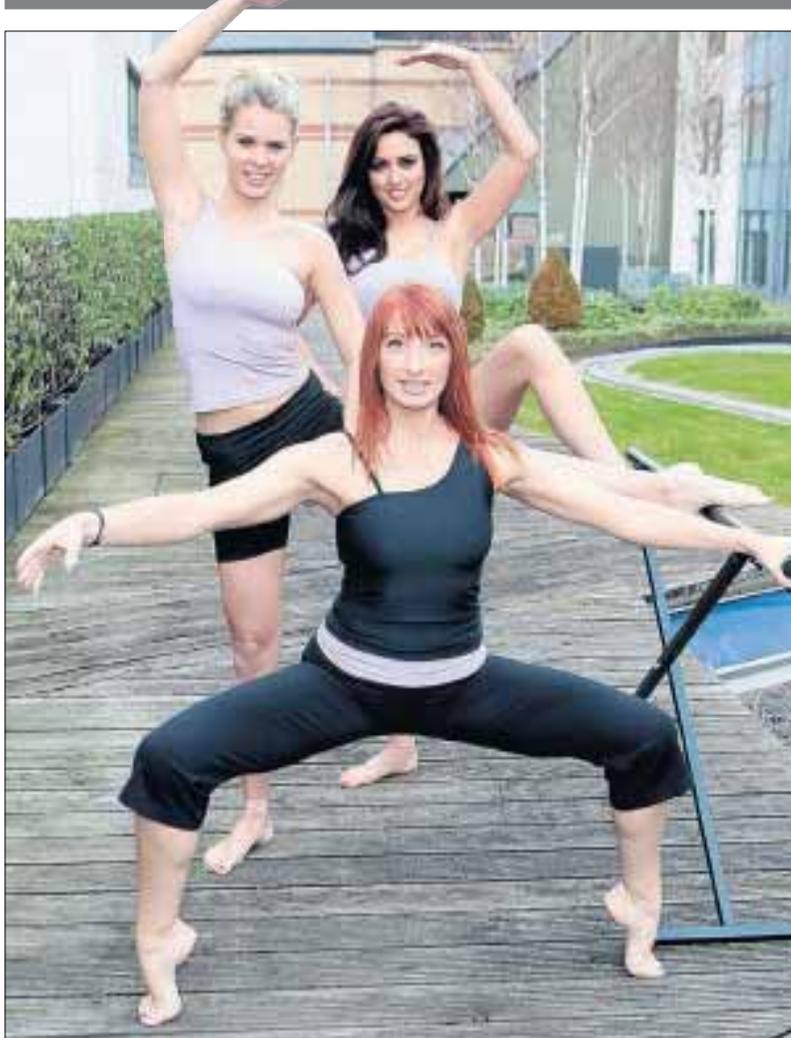
ment when the decision was made to shift responsibility of waste management from councillors to the city manager – against the wishes of the majority of councillors – who knew the move would ultimately result in privatisation.

'We are deeply alarmed with the requirement of customers to pay an up-front fee of €100 in order to have the service provided,' said Labour councillor Dermot Lacey.

'Given that we are in the post-Christmas period, not least recognising the financial difficulties which many are already experiencing, we are calling for a change in the ways which people can pay. The city manager must renegotiate the terms of the agreement, and allow residents to pay the standing charge in stages rather than a once-off "up-front" payment.'

Mary Fitzgerald of Fianna Fáil said the City Council withdrawal had been very poorly managed, and that councillors had received dozens of calls from distressed residents.

Both groups of councillors said they hadn't been told about the up-front payment clause.



**FLEXERCISE:** Fitness guru Emma Newman puts models Nadia Forde and Karina Graham through their paces at the Irish launch of BarreConcept, the latest celebrity fitness craze, which combines a cardio workout with ballet, yoga and pilates. Picture: Brian McEvoy

However, a spokesman for the City Council said every councillor had been made aware of the switch to Greyhound on December 5, and the issue was discussed at a City Council meeting then. He could not confirm if the matter of price was discussed, nor if any of the councillors queried it themselves.

Although the contract between the City Council and Greyhound allows for it to increase lift charges in July due to an impending Government increase in the landfill levy, a source inside the waste

management industry highlighted that one of Greyhound's 'unique selling points' was that very little of its waste is diverted to landfill – as it recycles much of it or it is used by industry – and so should not be affected by the levy increase.

A Greyhound spokesman said a decision would not be made on a possible increase until July.

Meanwhile, Dublin City Council confirmed that pre-paid bin stickers will be honoured until March 16, and any leftover stickers will be refunded after that.



**THINK PINK:** Singer Ronan Keating with his sister, Linda, at the launch of the Marie Keating Foundation Think Pink campaign. The annual drive – which runs throughout February – raises funds for the cancer charity through Think Pink days at schools, businesses and community groups. For more, go to [mariekeating.ie](http://mariekeating.ie) Picture: Fennells

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## Limerick murder investigated

DETECTIVES are trying to establish a motive for the killing of a man in Limerick. The 43-year-old, named locally as Gerard McMahon, was found with a number of stab wounds outside a house at Lenihan Avenue, Ballinacurra Weston. Gardaí arrived on the scene after being alerted by ambulance paramedics at about 12.35am yesterday. The single man was taken to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital where he was later pronounced dead. Separately, an investigation has been launched after a man was found dead in an apartment block in New Quay, Clonmel, Co Tipperary, at about 6.45am yesterday.

## Ireland's trade surplus hits high

IRELAND'S trade surplus has hit a record monthly high on the back of unexpectedly strong exports and continued weakness in imports. The Government welcomed yesterday's report, which showed the seasonally adjusted trade surplus reaching €4.3billion in November 2011 – 12.5 per cent higher than a year ago. It is also 3.3 per cent higher than the previous record high which was set in September. Meanwhile, exports in November rose to €8billion, 5 per cent higher than in October, while imports slid a monthly 6 per cent to €3.7billion.

## 1 in 10 'has alcohol problem'

NEARLY one in ten people surveyed about drinking in Northern Ireland was found to have a problem with alcohol. The research compiled on behalf of the UK Department of Health was based on interviews with more than 2,000 people and revealed trends in alcohol use. But a specific test used to identify problem drinkers indicated that 9 per cent of people fell into that category, while 61 per cent considered themselves light drinkers and 36 per cent consider themselves moderate drinkers. Only 3 per cent of the 9 per cent felt they were heavy drinkers.

## and finally...

AN OPOSSUM led to the evacuation of a New York City subway car. Startled early-morning riders aboard a Manhattan-bound train spotted the mammal curled up underneath a seat near the train's heating duct. The animal apparently boarded the train at Coney Island in Brooklyn, where the platform is above ground.

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# Call to reform sentencing laws

JUDGES should have the power to determine the absolute minimum amount of time murderers serve in jail, the Law Reform Commission has declared. The Commission published a Consultation paper with a number of recommendations on mandatory prison sentences, including that, in murder cases, the sentencing judge be allowed to recommend a specific minimum

term as part of life sentence. Currently, the only completely mandatory sentence in Ireland is the life sentence for murder – judges have no discretion here and must impose a life sentence, and do not even have the power to suggest any specific minimum sentence. This is in contrast to the position in Northern Ireland, where the sentencing judge can recommend a

minimum life tariff (as in the recent case of former dentist Colin Howell, where the judge recommended a 21-year minimum term). The Commission also recommended that current minimum sentence law for drugs offences be reviewed because it has led to a bulge in the prison population but without any significant effect on those at the top of the drugs industry.