# Birmingham City Council offers free rat-catching as bin strike worsens vermin problems



Birmingham City Council’s ongoing bin strike has intensified concerns over public health and local governance, with the authority introducing free rat-catching services for residents amid mounting reports of vermin issues. The strike, which has yet to see resolution, has led to visible waste accumulation, prompting the council to take measures aimed at mitigating the consequences.

In response to what has been described as a growing local health crisis, Birmingham City Council quietly amended the pricing of its pest control services, making rat catching in gardens or homes temporarily free of charge. Previously, residents were charged £26.40 per visit for this service. This change comes amid reports of rats “the size of cats” being spotted in various parts of the city, reflecting the severity of the situation caused by the disruption in regular waste collection.

The Conservative Party has criticised the Labour-led council for its handling of the crisis. Kevin Hollinrake MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, spoke to Express, asserting: “At least the rat catchers will be happy, but local taxpayers won’t be! It is a sad state of affairs that Birmingham’s Labour-run council are now having to whack their council taxpayers with the costs of rat-catching services. This is what happens when basic services collapse.” He continued, “Residents are wading through waste that the council fails to clean up, while taxpayers are also forced to fund the clean-up of a mess entirely of Labour’s making. A functioning council would collect the bins, but Labour’s chaos has turned Britain’s second city into a battleground for vermin. And yet Labour’s West Midlands Mayor claims he hasn’t seen a single rat. That tells you everything you need to know about how out of touch they are. Only a vote for the Conservatives on the 1st of May will deliver better services, lower taxes, and councils that get the basics right.”

The council itself has appealed to trade union members involved in the strike. John Cotton, leader of Birmingham City Council, addressed Unite Union workers, urging them to “accept reality.” Cotton emphasised that previously cut Waste Recycling and Customer Operations (WRCO) jobs could not be reinstated and that the council would not consider any proposals that might reopen equal pay liabilities. He stated, “To make progress Unite must accept reality. We will not be able to make progress until Unite accepts that the WRCO role cannot be brought back and that the council cannot and will not entertain anything that would re-open an equal pay liability. That wouldn’t be fair for residents or workers and is a red line for Birmingham City Council.”

The strike has thus far created a challenging scenario for the city’s residents, who face both the practical difficulties of uncollected waste and concerns over the spread of vermin. The ongoing dispute between the council and trade unions continues to dominate the local political and social landscape as efforts to resolve the situation remain stalled.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham_bin_strike> - This page confirms the start date of the Birmingham bin strike in March 2025, the dispute over the elimination of Waste Recycling and Collection Officer (WRCO) roles, and the resultant large-scale uncollected rubbish leading to a declared major incident by the city council.
* <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2025/april/birmingham-bin-workers-overwhelmingly-reject-partial-offer-from-council> - This source corroborates the ongoing strike by Birmingham bin workers rejecting the council’s partial offer, emphasizing workers' opposition to significant pay cuts and job losses connected to the WRCO role removal.
* <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/04/15/uubt-a15.html> - This article details the political and operational context of the strike, including the Labour-led council’s refusal to reinstate WRCO roles, the involvement of the British government’s military planning support, and the council’s hard stance on equal pay liabilities.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yceiv6jgOs> - The video reports on the ongoing strike’s severe impact, including 21,000 tonnes of uncollected waste, the council’s declaration of a major incident, and rising public health concerns such as increased rat sightings, supporting the article’s description of the vermin problem and council measures.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1765459/birmingham-labour-council-rat-catching-costs-kevin-hollinrake> - This news article features Conservative MP Kevin Hollinrake’s public criticism of Birmingham’s Labour council for escalating costs to residents due to rat-catching services and waste management failures during the bin strike, supporting the quoted statements in the original article.