# Birmingham residents confront rodent crisis amid bin workers' strike



Residents of Birmingham are facing an escalating public health crisis as a strike by nearly 400 municipal bin workers has left the city’s refuse collection at a standstill. The action, which began on Tuesday, is part of a dispute over jobs and pay amid claims of severe financial strains on the council. Since the strike commenced, streets across the city have seen an alarming increase in rubbish accumulation, leading to the emergence of a significant rodent problem.

Elderly resident Kolpona Begum expressed her concerns to the Daily Mail, stating, “I’m too scared to let my grandchildren play in the garden anymore. Rats are everywhere. They’re as big as cats. It was absurd to begin with, but now it’s getting dangerous.” The overflowing bins have provided ample sustenance for an increasing rodent population, creating conditions many locals are describing as hazardous to health.

Grahame Turner, a technical manager at the National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA), voiced his worries, stating, “This is a huge public health danger, and what we’re seeing in Birmingham is incredibly concerning.” He highlighted that rodents are actively seeking out easy meals due to the abundance of accessible waste, which poses various health risks, including the spread of diseases such as leptospirosis and salmonella.

The strike action comes as Birmingham grapples with its longest bout of industrial action since the winter of discontent in 1978, when nationwide strikes crippled public services. Residents are now comparing the current state of the city to that tumultuous period, with one individual noting, “It's like living in a prison. But instead of bars, we’ve got bin bags.”

Will Timms, known locally as “rat man” and owner of WJ Pest Solutions, has found himself at the forefront of the crisis, taking it upon himself to combat the growing rodent population exacerbated by the waste backlog. During a recent visit to the city, he reported that he had seen a considerable increase in the number of rodent jobs since the strikes began, stating, “Before the bin strikes… you wouldn’t see black bags on the side of the road. The bin men were quite good at doing it. Since February though, it’s just become a complete joke.” He noted that rats, typically nocturnal, are now visible throughout the day due to the extensive rubbish present.

The strike has not only raised concerns regarding public health but has significantly disrupted the lives of residents, particularly those with additional caring responsibilities. Selina, a mother of four, articulated the challenges her family faces, noting that her household’s rubbish has gone uncollected for about two weeks. She stated, “We have a son who has got autism so … we have to clean all the time.” Meanwhile, Arshad Sherbaz, another local resident, condemned the situation, stating, “It’s the largest council in Europe and second biggest city in the UK and to have a sight like that on its streets, it’s quite shameful.”

The local council, meanwhile, has acknowledged residents' frustrations while asserting that their proposed restructuring of waste services is essential for financial sustainability. A spokesperson highlighted, “Residents of Birmingham want and deserve a better waste collection service and the restructure that Unite is opposing is part of the much-needed transformation of the service.” They urged the union to return to the negotiating table to reach a resolution that would alleviate the challenges faced by residents.

As the situation continues to develop, many in Birmingham remain hopeful for a resolution, as a petition calling for urgent action by the city council has amassed over 5,500 signatures. In the meantime, the ongoing industrial action looms large over an increasingly concerned populace, battling both the consequences of a waste crisis and the associated public health risks.

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

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-sees-rubbish-piled-on-streets-as-workers-walk-off-job-indefinitely-13326368> - This article supports the claim that nearly 400 council bin workers in Birmingham have gone on strike indefinitely over a dispute involving jobs and pay, leading to significant disruptions in waste collection.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/birmingham-bin-strike-dates-map-b2712734.html> - This article corroborates the information about the strike's impact on residents and the potential for the action to extend into the summer, affecting multiple neighborhoods across Birmingham.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/birmingham-bin-strike-rats-rubbish-health-b2715636.html> - This article highlights the public health concerns associated with the strike, including the rise of rodents and related health risks, as voiced by experts like Grahame Turner from the National Pest Technicians Association.
* <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk> - This is the official website of Birmingham City Council, which would provide information on the council's stance and efforts regarding the strike and waste management restructuring.
* <https://unitetheunion.org> - This is the official website of Unite the Union, which represents the striking bin workers and provides updates on their negotiations and grievances with Birmingham City Council.
* <https://www.npta.org.uk> - This is the official website of the National Pest Technicians Association, which would offer insights into the public health risks associated with pest infestations during the strike.