# Birmingham City Council declares major incident amid waste crisis



Birmingham City Council has declared a major incident in response to an escalating waste crisis following several weeks of bin strikes. The strikes, which have been ongoing since March 11 and involve members of the Unite union, are rooted in disputes over pay and potential job losses. As a result, some 17,000 tonnes of uncollected rubbish have accumulated across the city's streets, raising significant public health concerns.

On March 31, the council officially recognised the situation as a "public health emergency", with local residents reporting alarming scenes of rubbish strewn throughout neighbourhoods. Billy Moore, a resident who shared footage of the situation on TikTok, noted, "There are rats as big as cats; I believe there are reports of people getting sick and ill. It’s everywhere." His video has gained considerable attention, highlighting overflowing bins and piles of discarded furniture and mattresses.

The local council remarked that members of Unite have set up picket lines that have obstructed waste vehicles from operating effectively, exacerbating the crisis. In response, the council has dispatched additional resources, including 35 new refuse vehicles, and is exploring support from neighbouring authorities in a bid to alleviate the situation.

Reports indicate that residents are increasingly fearful of the public health implications of living in such conditions, with several noting the prevalence of rats and other vermin that have proliferated due to the excess of waste. Emil Laursen, a father from Balsall Heath, described the transformation of Birmingham into what some are calling a "third world city", stressing the need for swift action to address the accumulating rubbish. He expressed his frustration, stating, "It has become a public health issue for sure."

Former waste management worker Mazar Dad highlighted the growing rat population, adding, "The problem has got tremendously worse week by week." He condemned a lack of effective contingency planning from the council, suggesting that if the strikes were resolved immediately, it would still take months to completely clear the waste obstruction.

Birmingham City Council has assured residents that they are attempting to manage the situation, encouraging them to continue placing out their rubbish bins on scheduled collection days, despite the interruptions caused by the strikes. Cllr John Cotton, leader of Birmingham City Council, acknowledged the distress caused to residents, asserting that the declaration of a major incident was necessary to mobilise resources and validate the urgency of the situation.

Meanwhile, Unite has framed the council's declaration as a strategic move to undermine opposition against cuts to pay and job security. General Secretary Sharon Graham stated, "Birmingham council could easily resolve this dispute but instead it seems hellbent on imposing its plan of demotions and pay cuts at all costs."

As tensions between the council and the union persist, residents have called upon both parties to negotiate a swift resolution in hopes of restoring normal waste collection services and rectifying the public health crisis that has emerged in Birmingham.

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

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/major-incident-declared-in-birmingham-as-17-000-tonnes-of-rubbish-piles-up-13339391> - This article supports the claim that Birmingham City Council has declared a major incident due to a massive accumulation of rubbish during the bin strikes, which started in March and are linked to Unite union disputes over pay.
* <https://conservativehome.com/2025/03/31/robert-alden-our-plan-to-end-the-birmingham-bin-strike/> - This piece details the impact of the bin strikes on Birmingham, including the reports of large rats and the ongoing public health crisis, as well as criticizing the Labour administration for the situation.
* <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/mp/jim-mcmahon/debate/2025-03-31/commons/commons-chamber/birmingham-city-council> - This link provides context on the parliamentary discussion regarding the Birmingham City Council's handling of the waste crisis, mentioning the industrial action by the Unite union.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/major-incident-declared-in-birmingham-as-17-000-tonnes-of-rubbish-piles-up-13339391> - The article also notes that the council has deployed additional resources to manage the crisis and explores support from neighbouring authorities.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - While not directly providing additional corroboration beyond the original report, this source indicates where the original article could be found, focusing on public health concerns and resident reactions.
* <https://conservativehome.com/2025/03/31/robert-alden-our-plan-to-end-the-birmingham-bin-strike/> - This article highlights the local Conservative group's plan to end the strike and criticizes the Labour administration's handling of waste services, including past disputes and mismanagement.
* <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/birmingham-bin-crisis-hits-disgusting-31323929> - Please view link - unable to able to access data