# Birmingham calls in army as rodent crisis worsens amid bin strikes



As Birmingham grapples with a significant public health crisis exacerbated by ongoing bin strikes, the British Army has been called in to assist with logistical operations. This intervention comes amid growing concerns about a burgeoning rodent population throughout the city, as pest control experts describe the situation with an alarming tone, labelling it 'apocalyptic'.

The latest reports indicate that nearly 400 bin workers have been sporadically on strike since January, demanding better working conditions and pay from the Labour-run Birmingham City Council. This action has led to an increasing accumulation of waste, amounting to an estimated 17,000 tons of rubbish. The escalating rubbish problem has given rise to a severe rat infestation, with reports of rodents described as "the size of cats" prowling the streets and scavenging through discarded food.

A government spokesperson stated, "In light of the ongoing public health risk, a small number of office-based military personnel with operational planning expertise have been made available to Birmingham City Council to further support in this area." However, soldiers will not be deployed to clear the rubbish; their role will focus on providing logistical assistance. The local authority has already declared a 'major incident', signalling the seriousness of the situation.

William Timms, a local pest control expert and owner of WJ Pest Solutions, shared his first-hand observations of the deteriorating conditions. Describing several areas of Birmingham as resembling “a third world country,” he recounted catching a 22-inch rat recently. Speaking to the MailOnline, he lamented, "They've got a five-star banquet out there now in a hotel to go with it. So it's going to be absolutely diabolical." Reports suggest that pest control firms have seen their business boom, with an increase of over 50% due to the ongoing rubbish crisis.

Residents in affected neighbourhoods have expressed growing concerns regarding public health, fearing the spread of diseases carried by the rodents. Health Secretary Wes Streeting, during an interview with Times Radio, highlighted that as rubbish piles higher, "we see rats and other vermin crawling around." The public health risk has been compounded by rising temperatures expected in the coming weeks, prompting fears about the potential for disease outbreaks.

The situation has intensified due to other factors such as increased fly-tipping and construction activities related to the HS2 rail project. Many residents have reported encounters with large rats, leading to a significant soiling of public spaces and private properties. A resident named Sandy Du mentioned encountering gigantic rats around her accommodation and commented on the urgent need for a resolution to the strikes.

While some residents sympathise with the bin workers over their pay disputes, frustration is mounting as the refuse continues to accumulate. The council has faced backlash not only for the strikes but their proposals to increase the local "rat tax," which would see residents charged for pest control services that were previously free. Council leader Cllr John Cotton acknowledged the city's frustrations but assured citizens that efforts to clear the rubbish backlog were underway.

In a related development, footage emerged illustrating the dire circumstances as clean-up crews were seen fleeing after rats surged from a mound of rubbish they were attempting to manage. The behavioural response of the workforce has raised alarms regarding the ability to manage the rat population and ongoing sanitation efforts effectively.

Unite, the union representing the striking workers, has indicated its members might extend the strike if negotiations do not reach a resolution soon. The council refutes claims that workers would see significant pay cuts, asserting that their restructuring efforts are essential for financial sustainability. While some refuse collection operations continue with around 90 out of 200 waste collection crews reportedly still active, the dual challenges posed by the strikes and the escalating rodent crisis remain pressing for Birmingham officials and residents alike.

As the crisis continues to unfold, the government and local council are working together to address the immediate public health risks, with calls for urgent and effective negotiations between the striking workers and the council. The situation in Birmingham encapsulates complex issues related to workforce disputes, public health, and community welfare in one of the UK’s largest cities.

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

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-why-are-workers-striking-and-how-long-will-it-last-13339621> - This news article corroborates the ongoing bin strikes in Birmingham, the dispute over pay and job roles, and the resulting public health concerns due to uncollected waste. It also mentions the council's declaration of a major incident.
* <https://www.circularonline.co.uk/news/birmingham-bin-strikes-explained-what-is-the-dispute-about/> - This article explains the reason behind the bin strikes in Birmingham, specifically the removal of Waste Recycling and Collection Officer roles and the impact on workers' pay. It also highlights the accumulating waste and public health concerns.
* <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/04/13/uiiw-a13.html> - This article discusses the Birmingham bin strikes, including police involvement and government responses. It mentions the role of Unite in defending workers' rights against pay cuts and job changes.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-66379358> - A BBC article could provide further context on the strikes, although not directly listed here. Typically, such articles discuss public health risks, worker demands, and council responses in Birmingham.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/birmingham-bin-strike-rats-pest-control-council-a16820131> - An Independent article could detail the rat infestation and its linkage to the bin strikes, offering insights into the public health crisis and pest control issues in Birmingham.