# Birmingham’s rat infestation worsens as bin strike leaves 17,000 tonnes of rubbish uncollected



As Birmingham grapples with the ongoing fallout from a protracted bin strike, the streets have transformed into a scene reminiscent of a disaster zone. One area, Clarence Avenue in the Handsworth District, has become particularly emblematic of this crisis, with rubbish piled up so high it obstructs walkways and spills into the roads. William Timms, widely known as the "Rat Man of Birmingham," has been at the forefront of addressing the escalating rodent problem, which has intensified as uncollected waste builds up. Since the strike began on March 11, the piles of rubbish have grown alarmingly, with Timms describing the situation as “absolutely diabolical.”

The strike, driven by disputes over pay and working conditions involving approximately 400 members of the Unite union, has left Birmingham City Council facing a daunting task. With an estimated 17,000 tonnes of refuse left uncollected, the council has declared a 'major incident', prompting them to mobilise additional resources to tackle the problem. Yet, despite these measures, little progress has been made in resolving the deadlock between the council and the strikers. In recent meetings, the anticipated wage proposals meant to broker a resolution failed to materialise, leaving residents in limbo and contributing to a worsening public health scenario.

Timms’ observations highlight not just the visual impact of the waste, but also the dangers it poses to public health. In his video updates, he has pointed out that many of the black bags holding the rubbish have been gnawed through by rats. These rodents are reportedly thriving on the protein-rich refuse, consuming everything from discarded gym supplements to ordinary food waste. As Timms notes, "it's excellent for a rat," which contributes to a riskier environment for residents. Pest control experts echo this sentiment, warning that the infestation of rats and other vermin poses a public health hazard, bringing with it the potential for diseases such as leptospirosis and salmonella.

The situation is particularly exacerbated in student-heavy neighbourhoods like Selly Oak, where overflowing bins and the sight of dead rats have become distressingly common. This crisis has underscored a broader public health concern, as the accumulation of rubbish continues to attract not only rats but also foxes and other pests. Residents have reported an increasingly unsanitary living environment, with some stating that the size of the rats has grown alarmingly, leading to fears of them becoming as conspicuous as domestic pets.

Birmingham’s predicament serves as a stark reminder of the intersecting issues of labour strikes and urban sanitation. While the local government is taking measures to address the trash crisis, evolving dynamics in negotiations between the council and the bin workers highlight the complexities of achieving a sustainable resolution. Until a compromise is reached, residents are left to navigate the health hazards and chaos resulting from this unprecedented situation.

As the city awaits news of any potential resolutions, the plight of Birmingham's streets continues to resonate, illustrating the fragile balance between public health, environmental safety, and workers' rights in the face of industrial action.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/birmingham-bombsite-again-citys-busiest-35309204), [[4]](https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-to-continue-after-union-rejects-councils-offer-13348716)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-40704763), [[3]](https://www.the-independent.com/bulletin/news/birmingham-bin-strike-rodents-rats-health-b2715715.html), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/birmingham-major-incident-bin-strike-rats-b1219907.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.the-independent.com/bulletin/news/birmingham-bin-strike-rodents-rats-health-b2715715.html), [[5]](https://www.dailytuesday.co.uk/birmingham-bin-strike-rubbish-crisis/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/birmingham-major-incident-bin-strike-rats-b1219907.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-to-continue-after-union-rejects-councils-offer-13348716), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/birmingham-major-incident-bin-strike-rats-b1219907.html), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/09/wednesday-briefing-how-a-refuse-collectors-strike-caused-mayhem-in-the-midlands)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/birmingham-bombsite-again-citys-busiest-35309204), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-40704763), [[5]](https://www.dailytuesday.co.uk/birmingham-bin-strike-rubbish-crisis/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/birmingham-bombsite-again-citys-busiest-35309204> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-40704763> - A Birmingham resident reports that uncollected rubbish is attracting rats, foxes, and mice, becoming a health risk. The rubbish has not been collected for nearly six weeks, leading to overflowing bins and surrounding areas infested with rodents. The city council is prioritising areas with significant waste accumulation but acknowledges the challenges posed by the ongoing strike.
3. <https://www.the-independent.com/bulletin/news/birmingham-bin-strike-rodents-rats-health-b2715715.html> - The Birmingham bin strike has resulted in uncollected rubbish piling up, creating a public health hazard. Pest control experts warn that rodents are feasting on the rotting waste, increasing the risk of diseases like leptospirosis, hantavirus, and salmonella. The strike, involving nearly 400 council bin workers, is due to a dispute over jobs and pay between Unite the Union and Birmingham City Council.
4. <https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-to-continue-after-union-rejects-councils-offer-13348716> - The long-running strike by bin workers in Birmingham will continue after union members overwhelmingly rejected the city council's offer. The action, which began on 11 March over pay disputes, has led to thousands of tonnes of rubbish remaining uncollected and warnings of a public health emergency. Residents have complained about rats as big as cats and other hygiene issues.
5. <https://www.dailytuesday.co.uk/birmingham-bin-strike-rubbish-crisis/> - Birmingham's streets, particularly in student areas like Selly Oak, have become overrun with trash and vermin as the bin strike escalates. Overflowing bins, festering waste, and dead rats are common sights. The indefinite walkout by bin workers is due to a dispute over pay and role changes, leading to immediate and devastating impacts on the community.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/birmingham-major-incident-bin-strike-rats-b1219907.html> - Birmingham City Council has declared a major incident over the impact of the ongoing bin strike, estimating that 17,000 tonnes of waste remain uncollected around the city. The strike, involving members of the Unite union, has led to rubbish piling up in the streets and residents complaining about rats. The council is deploying additional resources to manage the situation.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/09/wednesday-briefing-how-a-refuse-collectors-strike-caused-mayhem-in-the-midlands> - The Birmingham bin strike, resulting from the council's plans to eliminate the role of waste recycling and collection officer, has led to increasing quantities of rubbish piling up in parts of the city. Residents report unsanitary waste overflowing from bin bags gnawed at by rats, with the backlog of waste growing by about 1,000 tonnes a week. The council declared a major incident, with more than 17,000 tonnes of uncollected rubbish on the streets.