# Birmingham’s new Lord Mayor faces bin strike protests amid mounting waste crisis



The recent election of Birmingham’s new Lord Mayor, Zafar Iqbal, took on a dramatic tone when the ceremony was interrupted by protestors advocating for striking bin workers. Iqbal, a councillor representing the Tyseley and Hay Mills ward, was formally elected to this politically neutral yet pivotal role during a lively meeting held on May 20. His responsibilities include not only representing the community at formal events but also supporting local charities and chairing council meetings at this time of civic unrest.

The celebration was marred by the shouts of demonstrators from the public gallery. These protests were rooted in the ongoing bin strikes that have gripped the city since January 2025, driven by members of the Unite union. The dispute escalated after Birmingham City Council announced plans to eliminate the Waste Recycling and Collection Officer (WRCO) role, a move that union representatives argue would reduce worker salaries to levels barely above the minimum wage. Despite the significant public discontent and mounting pressure, the council insists it has made a "fair and reasonable offer" to its workers.

As tensions reached a peak during the mayoral ceremony, an audience member shouted critically at the council leader, John Cotton, igniting a cacophony of dissent within the chamber. Former Lord Mayor Ken Wood, who was presiding over the event, attempted to restore order, instructing protestors to quiet down or to leave. As Iqbal was named Lord Mayor, claps from councillors rang out amidst the protests, indicating a strong division between the council and the disgruntled citizens.

In his inaugural remarks, Mayor Iqbal expressed a connection to Birmingham that has thrived for over 50 years, stating, “It is the most amazing place in the world, attracting people like me from every corner of the globe and turning them into Brummies.” He vowed to promote the city and its diverse neighbourhoods and aimed to inspire the next generation of leaders throughout his term.

The bin strikes, however, have continued to cast a long shadow over Birmingham, with concerns that they have resulted in unsanitary conditions across the city. Reports indicate that nearly 17,000 tonnes of uncollected rubbish have amassed, leading to widespread public health hazards and growing frustration among residents. In March 2025, Councillor Majid Mahmood resigned from the authority after alleging intimidation on the picket lines, highlighting an environment of escalating tension surrounding the strikes.

Residents voiced that the accumulation of waste has left Birmingham resembling a 'third world city,' and there have been calls for the resignation of city councillors due to inadequate responses to the crisis. With rodents and public health risks becoming pressing issues, the city council officially declared a major incident in response to the worsening situation. As cleanup efforts began, the mayor’s office faces intensifying scrutiny over not only the strikes but its overall governance.

Against this backdrop, Mayor Iqbal’s leadership will be challenged in navigating the delicate balance between community needs and council responsibilities. As he takes office in such turbulent times, there is a significant expectation for proactive measures that will address the immediate concerns of the striking workers while ensuring that Birmingham remains a vibrant community for all residents.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birminghams-new-lord-mayor-elected-31686366), [[2]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birminghams-new-lord-mayor-elected-31686366)
2. Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6: [[3]](https://www.birminghamworld.uk/news/birmingham-bin-strikes-councillor-quits-5054954), [[4]](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/environment/2025/03/27/frustrated-residents-call-for-birmingham-councillors-to-resignation-amid-bins-strike-chaos/), [[5]](https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/04/01/the-birmingham-bin-strike-has-left-us-living-in-a-third-world-city/), [[6]](https://tribune.com.pk/story/2537449/ongoing-strike-in-uks-birmingham-leaves-17000-tonnes-of-garbage-piled-up), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crk0yg3p8k4o)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birminghams-new-lord-mayor-elected-31686366> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/birminghams-new-lord-mayor-elected-31686366> - Birmingham's new Lord Mayor, Zafar Iqbal, was elected during a ceremony on May 20, 2025. The event was disrupted by protesters from the public gallery, who were supporters of striking bin workers. The protesters voiced their concerns over the council's plans to eliminate the Waste Recycling and Collection Officer role, which they argued would lead to significant pay cuts for workers. Despite the interruptions, Mayor Iqbal addressed the attendees, emphasizing his commitment to celebrating Birmingham and inspiring future leaders over the next year.
3. <https://www.birminghamworld.uk/news/birmingham-bin-strikes-councillor-quits-5054954> - In March 2025, Councillor Majid Mahmood, Birmingham's cabinet member for environment, resigned from the Unite the Union after accusing striking workers of intimidation and threats on picket lines. The ongoing bin strikes, which began in January 2025, have led to significant disruptions in waste collection services across the city, with residents expressing growing frustration over the situation.
4. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/environment/2025/03/27/frustrated-residents-call-for-birmingham-councillors-to-resignation-amid-bins-strike-chaos/> - In March 2025, Birmingham residents called for the resignation of city councillors due to the ongoing bin strikes that have left rubbish piling up across the city. The strikes, initiated by the Unite union over disputes regarding job roles and pay, have led to significant public health concerns and environmental issues, with residents expressing anger over the council's handling of the situation.
5. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/04/01/the-birmingham-bin-strike-has-left-us-living-in-a-third-world-city/> - In April 2025, Birmingham residents expressed concerns that the ongoing bin strikes had transformed the city into a 'third world city.' The strikes, which began in March 2025, have resulted in 17,000 tonnes of uncollected waste accumulating on the streets, leading to public health hazards and environmental issues. Residents reported increased rodent activity and unsanitary conditions due to the waste buildup.
6. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2537449/ongoing-strike-in-uks-birmingham-leaves-17000-tonnes-of-garbage-piled-up> - In April 2025, Birmingham City Council declared a major incident over the ongoing bin strike, which had left 17,000 tonnes of waste piling up on the streets for almost a month. The strike, initiated by the Unite union over pay disputes, particularly concerning proposed salary cuts and demotions, led to significant public health concerns and environmental issues, prompting the council to mobilize additional resources for cleanup efforts.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crk0yg3p8k4o> - In January 2025, bin strikes began in Birmingham, with 12 days of action planned across four months. The strikes were initiated by over 350 workers who voted for industrial action due to the city council's decision to 'downgrade' some roles. The dispute centers on the council's decision to remove Waste Recycling and Collection Officer (WRCO) roles from some bin workers, a move that the Unite union argues could lead to significant pay cuts for affected workers.