# Violence and intimidation spark bin collection crisis in Brighton



A clandestine war among waste collectors in Brighton has erupted into a crisis marked by grave threats and acts of violence, leaving employees fearful and residents overwhelmed by uncollected rubbish. Reports of death threats, sabotaged vehicles, and a trove of weapons found within the Hollingdean depot have culminated in a toxic atmosphere for workers and a concerning situation for the community, raising alarming questions about the competence and oversight of local governance.

Over the past 18 months, tensions at the city-run waste disposal site have escalated, with Brighton and Hove Council accusing the GMB union of sheltering workers who engage in threatening behaviours. Allegations include 'bully boy tactics' that have resulted in a staggering increase in missed bin collections, soaring from 573 in December to 1,369 by April—a 140 percent rise. This disruption has left streets littered with waste for as long as eight weeks, exacerbating frustrations among residents. As one independent councillor noted, the situation has caused significant distress for those with mobility challenges, as overflowing bins block entries and pathways.

Recent findings from an investigation led by barrister Aileen McColgan KC highlighted a culture of abuse within the depot, encompassing bullying, racism, sexism, and homophobia. The inquiry, which interviewed over 70 witnesses, revealed alarming behaviour, including GMB representatives bringing weapons such as knives, nunchucks, and even a samurai sword to work. It's a testament to the deep-seated issues plaguing this operation, with one participant likening the workplace culture to George Orwell’s "Animal Farm," where bullying and intimidation have regrettably become the norm.

With incidents of physical sabotage increasingly common—such as the cutting of wiring on bin lorries and vehicles being set on fire—employees have reported feelings of being hunted, prompting some to develop PTSD. One manager recently received a chilling death threat, underscoring the unbearable pressure and unaddressed issues permeating the atmosphere at Hollingdean.

A series of critical events, including the uncovering of weapons, has called into question both the leadership and operational dynamics within the depot. In one instance, a manager's vehicle was vandalised with a threatening message urging them to 'leave the case alone,’ indicating a worrying willingness among some to resort to violence for the protection of certain interests, all while the council seemingly turns a blind eye.

Despite GMB's condemnation of violence, its officials stand accused of failing to adequately address the serious allegations against union representatives who are said to foster a hostile workplace. Gavin Davies, Regional Secretary of GMB, expressed disappointment at the council's timing and narrative, asserting that the council should not retroactively use a two-year-old report to shift responsibility for ongoing service failures. Such excuses highlight deep inadequacies in leadership that continue to affect workers and residents alike.

In light of these systemic issues, Sussex Police are actively investigating the reported acts of criminal damage alongside other serious offences. The division's Chief Superintendent has stated that the reported incidents are of a very serious nature and urged witnesses to come forward. With the ongoing investigations, specific details remain limited, yet the community's outcry for accountability and improvement grows ever louder.

As Brighton grapples with the ramifications of this troubling saga, the cries for change are not just whispers; they are a clarion call for action against the mismanagement that has fostered this grim atmosphere. An independent report has recommended significant alterations to the management and culture at the depot, yet real change remains elusive amid persistent intimidation and sabotage. The community is left hoping for resolution while council and union leaders must urgently confront their failures to create a safer and more equitable workplace for all employees.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14760613/Brightons-Bin-Mafia-waste-collectors-death-threats-weapons-uncovered.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2023/11/14/union-used-weapons-and-violence-to-bully-bin-depot-bosses/> - An independent report by barrister Aileen McColgan revealed that GMB union representatives at Brighton and Hove City Council's Cityclean depot in Hollingdean used threats and violence against managers. The report detailed instances of GMB reps bringing weapons into the depot, including knives and metal bars, and making threats of physical violence. It also highlighted a culture of bullying, intimidation, racism, sexism, and homophobia within the workplace. The findings were based on interviews with over 70 witnesses and led to calls for significant changes in the depot's management and culture.
3. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/05/09/death-threat-made-to-bin-depot-manager/> - In May 2025, Brighton and Hove City Council reported that a manager at the Cityclean depot received a death threat in January. The council also highlighted ongoing issues with vehicle sabotage, including instances of tyres being slashed and wires being cut on bin lorries. These acts of intimidation and vandalism have led to significant disruptions in waste collection services, with missed collections more than doubling since January. The council is investigating these incidents and has reported them to Sussex Police.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/14/union-reps-threatened-colleagues-with-knives-at-depot/> - An investigation into Brighton and Hove City Council's waste service, Cityclean, uncovered a toxic culture of racism, homophobia, and sexism. The report found that GMB union representatives brought weapons into the workplace and threatened colleagues with knives. Employees were subjected to racist name-calling, and vehicles were defaced with racist graffiti. The report also revealed instances of sexual harassment and homophobic abuse. The GMB union condemned such behaviour but had not received the full report at the time of publication.
5. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/03/12/bin-lorries-deliberately-vandalised/> - Brighton and Hove City Council reported deliberate vandalism of bin lorries at the Cityclean depot in Hollingdean. Council leader Bella Sankey stated that the cutting of lorry wires was unlawful and dangerous to staff. The sabotage coincided with the council's announcement of redundancies, leading to missed collections and disruption of waste and recycling services. The council is investigating the incidents and has notified Sussex Police.
6. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/23921329.brighton-council-urged-make-changes-troubled-bin-depot/> - An independent report into Brighton and Hove City Council's Cityclean depot in Hollingdean recommended ten changes to address a culture of violence and abuse. The report found that GMB union members made threats to stab and attack coworkers, and weapons such as a samurai sword and knives were discovered on site. Other staff members faced racism, homophobia, misogyny, and bullying. The inquiry also found that GMB representatives protected certain members from disciplinary action while leaving others without support.
7. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/24185479.brighton-unprecedented-number-bin-lorry-defects-sabotage/> - Brighton and Hove City Council reported an unprecedented number of bin lorry defects attributed to deliberate sabotage at the Cityclean depot in Hollingdean. The council stated that vehicle defects had increased dramatically since some Cityclean staff lost their jobs in October 2024. The sabotage led to missed collections and overflowing bins across the city. The council is investigating the incidents and has notified Sussex Police.