

Communities, City Management & Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	28 March 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Waste Action Squad
Report of:	Sam Eaton Senior Practitioner Claudia Hemsley Head of Service PPL
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cllr Dimoldenberg Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	N/A
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1. Executive Summary

Achieving the ambition of clean and pleasant streets across the city will require us to enhance our efforts to tackle the constant challenge of dumped rubbish and littering. In response, we are looking holistically at all the opportunities we have across our services to find ways of tackling this together in a more systematic way. This considers waste reduction and recycling, correct disposal and effective collection, and enforcement and cleansing activity.

As part of this approach, we are proposing to roll out a targeted engagement approach to identifying and finding effective solutions to addressing dumping 'hotspots' across Westminster. This will bring together a range of officers, including from our Waste and Cleansing Service and City Inspectors, and be underpinned by stronger resident engagement and communications, to support partnership working on waste at a local level.

The Waste Action Squad programme commenced in October, undertaking nine weeks of action in wards across Westminster. The wards completed so far are as follows: Hyde Park, West End, Pimlico North, Marylebone, Harrow Road, Church Street, Queens Park, Maida Vale and Lancaster Gate.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- To review the Waste Action Squad Pilot, approach and results outlined in this briefing.
- To invite suggestions on how this might be enhanced or improved in the future roll out.
- To assess the impact of this programme to our clean streets agenda and approve the extension of this way of working across the city.

3. Background

Street cleanliness and tackling fly tipping in residential areas is a priority and we are committed to cracking down on fly tipping and ensure clean streets. The council is charged with engaging and collaborating with local communities to work together to deliver on these objectives.

The drivers of fly tipping and poor waste disposal are hyper-local and changing behaviour involves a detailed conversation with residents and businesses to support them to dispose of their waste in the right way. From a council perspective delivering clean streets involves a range of services, including City Inspectors, waste removal and street cleaning teams working alongside area-dependant teams such as our short term lets service, housing teams or anti-social behaviour professionals.

Reflecting the need to tackle this issue holistically, the need for enhanced community engagement and drawing on previous successful trials, a ward-focused education and enforcement programme, Waste Action Squad brings together key WCC services to focus on engaging with residents and the community for a dedicated week in individual wards, working with residents to find long term solutions to entrenched dumping issues.

4. Aims and Objective

Traditional approaches to dealing with dumped waste via reporting, enforcement and cleaning often has short-term results. Therefore, we believe a more holistic project-based approach should be adopted in addition to our standard practice, for us to better understand the drivers in specific locations, deliver bespoke action in response and to achieve long term sustained outcomes for our residents. There are also possible additional benefits from this

approach, for example, in terms of providing residents advice on waste collections and recycling via our engagement.

The Waste Action Squad has been trailed as a multi-disciplinary approach to tackle waste and fly tipping in a holistic way. The trail focused on engaging with residents in key waste hotspots, educating residents on how to dispose of their waste appropriately and to get their views on how we could keep the streets cleaner. The programme brought together City Inspectors, Waste and Recycling Teams and our waste partner Veolia, alongside ward councillors, business improvement district representatives and other council teams, to speak to residents on street in waste hotspot areas. The aim was to seek a reduction in levels of dumping of waste and littering through education, and solutions developed in partnership with the community.

5. 100 Dumping Hotspots and Enforcement

The City Inspector service has been working closely with ward members and our cabinet member to gather a list of problematic dumping sites and streets where cleanliness is a problem. This has been the focus of a sustained enforcement operation by the service, and the outcome of this is detailed below.

- Overall waste enforcement actions have seen an increase of 174% between 2019/19 – 2022/23 (as of 21/3) and a 64% increase when compared with the last financial year.
- We have undertaken 2230 enforcement actions against residential waste. This data includes fixed penalty notices (FPNs) and warnings. This includes a 40% increase in FPNs issued against residential waste.
- Waste investigations which generally relate to City Inspectors reporting dumped waste for collection has increased substantially over the last 5 years with a 165% increase when compared with last year. Waste investigations almost always relate to waste being reported for collection where no evidence is found in the waste to take enforcement action. The lack of evidence almost always means we cannot undertake enforcement action however officers have been prioritising this work alongside enforcement to ensure waste is cleared as quickly as possible by Veolia.
- This equates to approximately 43 instances of dumped waste a day being reported for collection, on top of any enforcement.

6. Waste Action Squad Pilot

The Waste Action Squad programme commenced in October 2022, undertaking nine weeks of action in wards across Westminster. The wards completed so far are as follows, Hyde Park, West End, Pimlico North, Marylebone, Harrow Road, Church Street, Queens Park, Maida Vale and Lancaster Gate. Each action week included an engagement, education and enforcement programme based on the concerns identified in the ward, in three key areas.

The map shows the engagement locations by the waste action squad.



- On street engagement, where officers spoke to residents about their views on street cleanliness and how we could work together to reduce littering and fly tipping.
- Educating residents and businesses on how to dispose of their waste appropriately to ensure clean streets.
- Visible enforcement and cleansing activities on areas that have been highlighted by residents.

7. Waste Action Squad Pilot Outcomes

The Waste Action Squad team have spoken to 1,700 people about waste and street cleanliness, understanding their concerns and educating residents on how to dispose of their waste appropriately, across nine wards. We have deep cleaned 90 dumping hotspots across the nine wards and spent just under 300 hours engaging with residents and enforcing against waste offences.



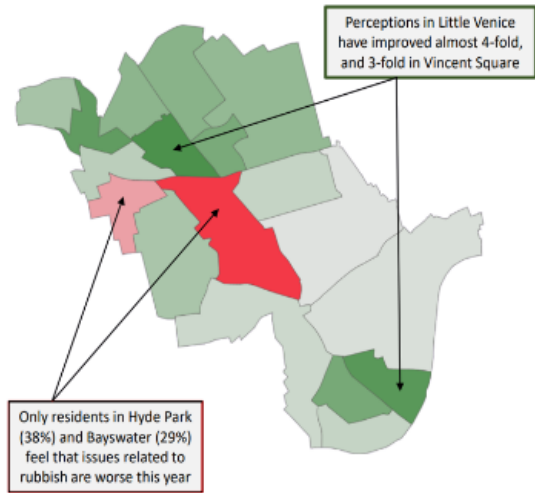
Engagement Figures by Ward

■ Lancaster Gate
 ■ Hyde Park
 ■ Church Street
 ■ Harrow Road
 ■ Maida Vale
 ■ Marylebone
 ■ Pimlico North
■ Queens Park
 ■ West End

Spoke to	258	120	88	336	180	218	411	68
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On average 56% of residents, businesses and visitors feel that waste is a problem in their areas, however this varies significantly between wards. For example, 71% of Pimlico North residents felt waste wasn't a problem, compared to much lower percentage in areas such as Queens Park (35%), Harrow Road (26%) and the West End (19%). This mirrors differences seen in relation to waste and litter in both enforcement activity and the city survey.

Year on year change in feeling that rubbish and litter are a problem (2022 vs 2021)



Hotspot Map of Waste Enforcement Activity FY 2022/23



8. On Street Feedback

The on-street discussions have provided detailed and extensive feedback on the cleanliness of our streets, and how together we could keep them cleaner.

The Council received positive feedback for the following:

- Offering a great and speedy service.
- Seen to try to keep the streets clean.
- Businesses are happy with Westminster Collections.

- Very happy with the new food recycling bins.
- Recognition for the frequency of collections.
- Praise for the street sweeping service, and their dedication to keeping streets clean.

We have received some areas for improvement:

- Lack of understanding about how to dispose of waste appropriately.
- More calls for emptying the bins, particularly at weekends.
- Lack of information on how to dispose of larger items.
- Dog fouling continues to be an issue in some areas.
- Impact of short term lets on the street cleanliness.
- Feeling that individuals dump waste on street, with a low risk of consequences.

9. Communications



Our communications service created a bespoke programme of activity to support the work of the Waste Action Squad, raising awareness of the programme and how communities can get involved with keeping streets clean. We have created a clear brand and logo which is enabling the programme

to deliver a on street and online presence.

The aim of the campaign was to drive traffic to the webpage so users could learn more about the Waste Action Squad. The tiles below show excerpts of the Waste Action Squad campaign to support the on-street programme. For a low cost the campaign delivered over 25,000 impressions, and our videos were viewed over 5,500 times.

@CityWestminster
Thu 10/20/2022 8:37 pm BST

Illegally-dumped waste harms our environment, landscape and the cleanliness of our streets 🗑️
Meet the #WasteActionSquad who have been at...

Post Clicks (All) 100

Westminster City Council
Thu 11/17/2022 3:18 pm GMT

Fly-tipping and illegally dumped waste is a huge issue that hurts our businesses and neighbourhoods.
The Waste Action Squad is visiting areas in...

Post Clicks (All) 225

Westminster City Council
Wed 11/23/2022 2:13 pm GMT

Marylebone residents – the Waste Action Squad is in your area working with residents and visitors to address the dumping of rubbish in key hotspots ...

where we're going to take targeted action in consultation and in partnership

Post Clicks (All) 731

10. Ward Action Plans

Following a review of the intelligence we have received from on-street engagement, local action plans have been created in each area. The squad have committed to 42 actions across the nine wards.

The bullet points below give a flavour of the activity that has occurred because of the engagement.

- Moved problematic bins to a more effective places, resulting in less dumping and street urination.
- Deep clean undertaken of problematic pavements, in parallel with an education campaign to businesses around how to keep pavement stain free and a photographic audit in place to support any subsequent enforcement.
- Proactive education campaign around a local market, reviewed all waste arrangements for businesses and market traders in the locality, to ensure appropriate waste removal arrangements are in place and set clear expectations.
- Waste Transfer Notices checked for all hotels in a problematic locality, to ensure they have waste removal processes in place, due to intelligence received about drivers of dumped waste.
- Planters placed in previous dumping hotspot to change dumping behaviours at this location.
- Operations undertaken to educate and enforce around area highlighted as a problem for smoking littering and dog fouling.
- Established a pilot scheme using mobile CCTV cameras in bulky waste dumping hotspots to enforce against individuals committing these offences.
- Every business on Harrow Road has been visited from Maida Hill to Queens Park, reiterating waste collection time and waste procedures. In last two months over 200 businesses engaged with.

11. Review and recommendations

A review has taken place of Waste Action Squad trail programme with the Cabinet Member and the key benefits are highlighted below.

- On street engagement with residents is welcomed by the local community and is providing valuable insight into local street cleanliness issues that we can resolve.
- Stakeholders are widely supportive of the activity and feel that it signals that tackling on street dumping is a priority for the council.
- This programme provides a good tool to highlight the extensive work the council does to keep Westminster's streets clean and improve the visibility of the City Inspectorate and waste teams.

- The communications promoted through local social media has been very successful, with a high engagement rate, despite a limited budget.

Following this review, it has been agreed that it would be beneficial to continue with the programme and develop this model further this year. The Waste Action Squad are preparing the next ward programme, which is outlined below, which will be extended as we progress through the year.

Ward	Management Area
Bayswater	South
Westbourne Park	North
Vincent Square	South
Regents Park	North
Knightsbridge & Belgravia	South
Little Venice	North
Pimlico South	South
St James	South/Central

In addition to the ward programme outlined above, there are three priority areas that will be the focus in the coming financial year.

- Developing our communications strategy to support this activity is crucial. We are investigating how we promote the work of the enforcement teams to deter poor behaviours and continue to educate residents and businesses on how to dispose of their waste appropriately. The high visibility of the Waste Action Squad is valuable, ensuring that residents can see on street activity, following engagement on street.
- Understanding the drivers of behaviours is essential, from on street discussions it is apparent that ensuring clean streets, relies on ensuring that individuals understand how to dispose of their waste in the right way and that we make that process as easy as possible. As a result of the programme, we are investigating options to improve the clarity of our collection timings, improve the way we respond to dumped waste and educate visitors to our city on how to dispose of their waste appropriately.
- Ensuring clean and well managed streets is reliant on excellent coordination between enforcement officers, waste and cleansing service and our waste contractor. The waste action squad programme allows us to easily understand local concerns and resolve them, through a coordinated approach.

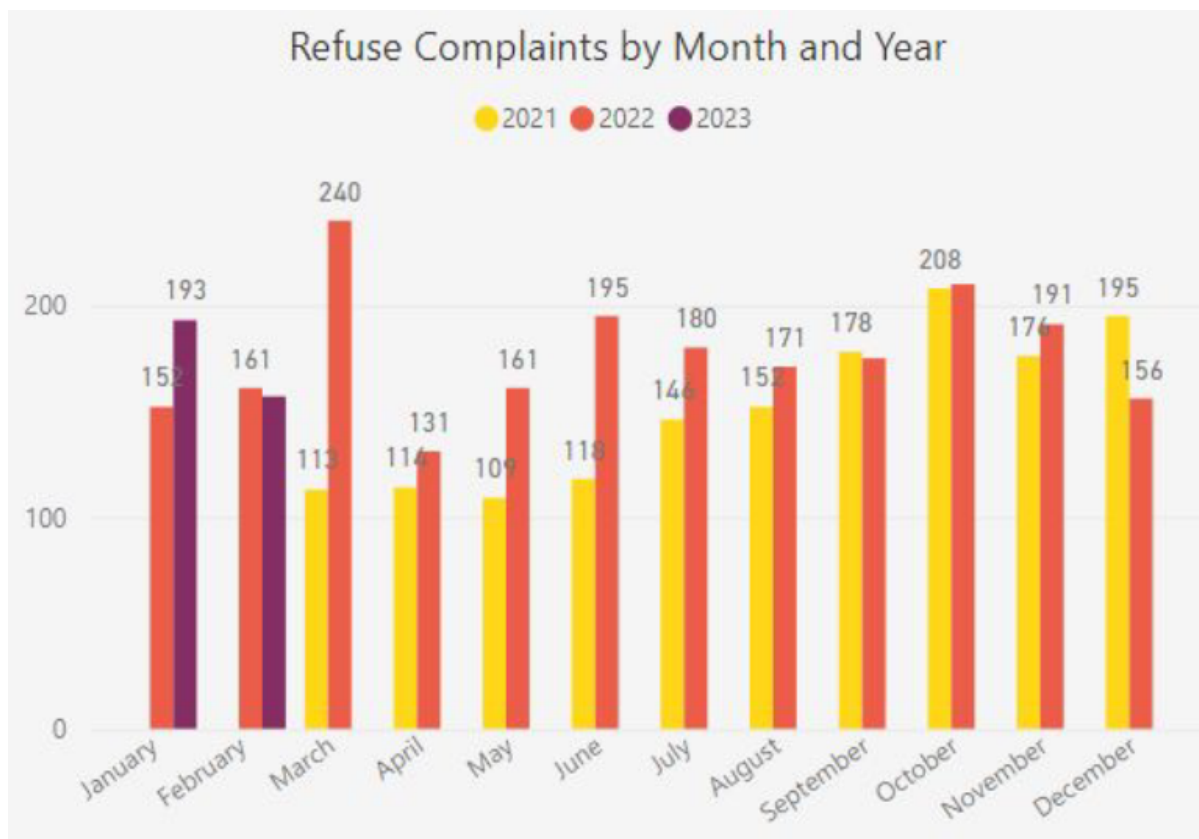
12. Waste and Cleansing Supplementary Detail

1) City Survey Results

The most recent City Survey (conducted September – November 2022) confirms that residents continue to consider waste, recycling and street cleansing services as being amongst the most important services provided by the council and also those with the highest satisfaction ratings. Residents reported a **94%** satisfaction rating for waste collection services – an increase of 8% on the 2021 City Survey result. Satisfaction with street cleansing services also increased by 5% - from 88% in 2021 to **93%** in 2022.

2) Waste Performance

As detailed in the graph below, in February we received 158 complaints, which was roughly the same as last year, and also lower than the monthly total for January. Officers continue to work closely with Veolia to resolve the root cause of these complaints.



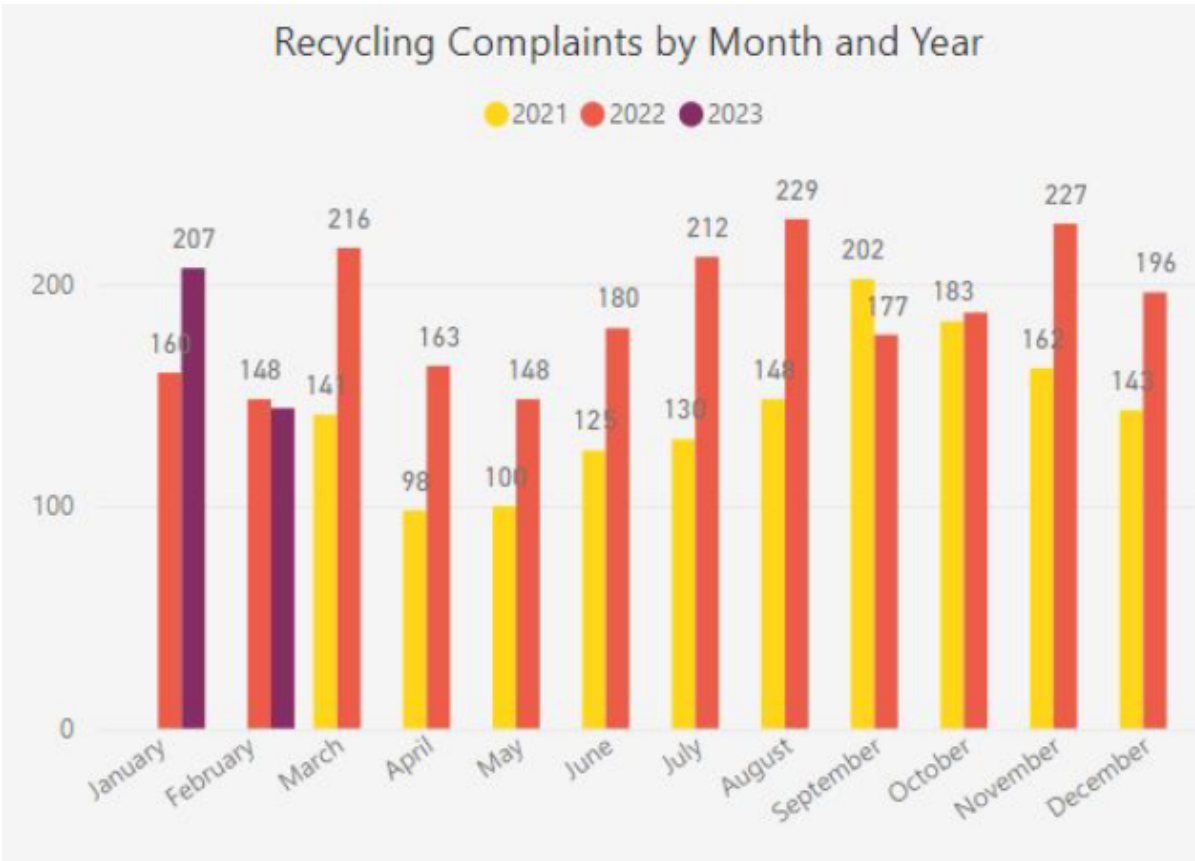
A total of 12,906 tonnes of waste was collected in February, which was a 6% increase compared to last year's 12,210.

3) Food Waste

In the last quarter the permanent food waste recycling service has expanded to the West End, St James’s and Marylebone wards, making the service available to suitable properties across all wards in Westminster. We now offer access to a food waste recycling service to nearly 60,000 suitable households (including over 50 housing estates). In the past 12 months we have collected over 1,000 tonnes of food waste from residential properties to be recycled. We will be working over the next 12 months to ensure as many of our residents as possible can recycle their food waste.

4) Recycling Performance

As detailed in the graph below, in February we received 144 complaints, which was roughly the same as last year, and also lower than the monthly total for January. Officers continue to work closely with Veolia to resolve the root cause of these complaints. Recycling tonnage data from March 2023 had not been audited at the time of producing this report but officers forecast a household recycling rate of 24% for the 2022/23 financial year. This was a 3% rise in the recycling rate compared to 2021/22 which was primarily due to the roll-out of the household food waste collection service.



5) Street Cleansing Performance

The third and final set of street cleanliness results for the year were delivered by Keep Britain Tidy in March.

	Tranche Survey	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Fly-posting
2021-22	1	2.70%	2.88%	4.13%	1.59%
	2	5.24%	4.40%	5.56%	2.22%
	3	7.07%	2.34%	5.14%	0.64%
2022-23	1	2.55%	0.50%	8.76%	2.39%
	2	5.56%	2.10%	8.73%	3.17%
	3	1.90%	3.93%	6.98%	1.90%

The observable **Litter** score at 1.90% is a big improvement on the second survey score of 5.56%, conducted in November, and is also better than the first survey score of 2.55%. **Detritus** has steadily deteriorated through the year, and at 3.93% is higher than the previous two surveys, but not particularly surprising given all the rainfall so far in 2023. The score for **Fly-posting** at 1.90% is better than both previous surveys, so too is **Graffiti** at 6.98%. Overall, the results are still very favourable, and standards of absolute street cleanliness remain very high, overall. When compared to results for London, and also nationally, the scores in Westminster for **Litter** and **Detritus** are much better than both the National benchmark and London Benchmark results.

Of the other metrics, the score for Gum Staining at 16.83% has more than doubled since the second survey, while Grease and Grime Staining has also increased significantly from 16.03% in the second survey to 25.71% in the most recent third. With more deep cleansing resources out there now, this trend will hopefully reverse through the year.

Operationally, the last month was distinguished by a growing number of protests to clean up after. Most notable were the Doctors and Teachers strikes, and also the widely publicised Ukrainian Flag protest.

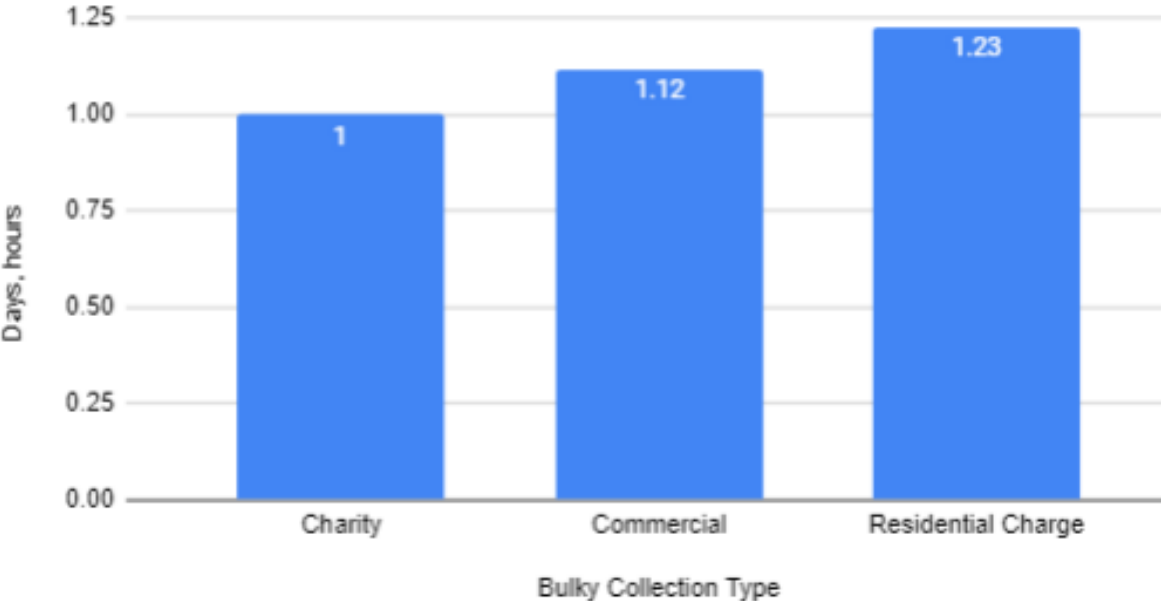




6) Bulky Waste

A total of 812 Bulk Collections requests were received in February. A total of 679 requests were completed, 117 requests were not completed, and 16 requests were still to be actioned by the end of the month.

Average Turn - Around Time without collection day selected - March 2023



If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author
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