

## GRAFFITI REMOVAL

<b>Committee name</b>	Residents' Service Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Nicola Herbert – Head of Waste Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	N/A
<b>Ward</b>	All

### HEADLINES

This report summarises the graffiti removal service within Hillingdon, detailing the scale of incidents and the processes in place to ensure that the Borough's public places are maintained to a high standard.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. **Notes the arrangements under the current graffiti removal contract; and**
2. **Supports the continued works under the existing contract arrangements.**

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Removal of graffiti is carried out by the Council's contracted supplier MPM Graffiti Solutions. Members of the public are encouraged to report incidents of graffiti via the Council's website. The removal programme incorporates both reactive works in response to online reports, and proactive works with teams working across the Borough identifying incidents and carrying out visits to known areas for graffiti.

The current contract with MPM Graffiti Solutions is in place until November 2024, with the possibility to extend the contract for one further year. The current supplier has provided services to Hillingdon for 18 years, with the most recent contract awarded via open tender in 2021.

It is not considered to be cost effective to bring the above services 'in house' at this time due to the costs associated with the purchase of vehicles, other resources, and workforce training. The supplier is responsible for ensuring that staff receive adequate training for the safe storage, handling, and use of chemicals. The supplier is responsible for ensuring that staffing is maintained and that absences are covered by qualified and competent staff.

Ad-hoc requirements such as chewing gum removal, subway and pavement washing, playground and skatepark cleaning, and washing of litter bins are also undertaken within the contract without impact on SLAs for other works.

Graffiti removal is carried out on both public and private property with the permission of the owner. It is the responsibility of TFL to clean and remove graffiti from bus stops/shelters.

The street cleansing team offer some support for small or light graffiti removal with the jet wash facilities available on the mini-sweepers or with graffiti removal wipes for officers on the out of hours teams, but larger incidents and those on non-wipeable surfaces require the specialist support of the contractor. Removal is completed through a combination of jet-washing, painting and use of suitable chemicals. The team use their experience to identify which is the most suitable method in each instance, with every care taken not to damage the surface during removal.

Some instances of graffiti are more difficult to remove and may not be completed within the agreed SLA whilst further arrangements are made to support the work. This includes working at height, working in busy traffic conditions, areas that are difficult to access such as rough ground or areas with overgrown shrubbery, or working in freezing temperatures where jet washing may create a slip hazard to the public. Where this is the case, officers work with the supplier to seek a suitable solution and complete the removal as swiftly as possible.

In recent years there have been minimal cases of 'acid etched graffiti', whereby hydrofluoric acid is used on glass surfaces to leave a permanent mark. As the acid burns the glass, it cannot be removed with cleaning and requires professional surface polishing or full replacement of the glass. Where this occurs on private property, the owner is responsible for the repair of the property.

## **PERFORMANCE DATA**

The supplier makes use of the Council's In-cab reporting software, ensuring that all reported jobs are recorded and completed within the specified SLAs. This also allows the supplier to effectively route their daily work to be as efficient as possible whilst reducing carbon emissions caused by unnecessary travel. The SLA for graffiti removal is five working days. However, if the graffiti is at height or in a place that is difficult to access, this sometimes takes longer.

If the graffiti is abusive, obscene or racist, it will be removed within 24 hours. Approximately 10% of reported incidents are recorded as 'offensive'.

The number of reported incidents during the last 12 months is shown in the table below:

Year	Month	Number
2023	May	106
2023	June	79
2023	July	57
2023	August	78
2023	September	133
2023	October	101
2023	November	87
2023	December	77
2024	January	94
2024	February	82
2024	March	87
2024	April	85

The contractual arrangements regarding 'working at height' are detailed below:

- The supplier is expected to remove graffiti and flyposting up to a height of 4M and to provide all safety equipment necessary within the contract price.
- If the Council requests the removal of graffiti from heights over 4M, the Council will be responsible for the costs associated with the provision of safety equipment (e.g. scaffolding / cherry picker). The Council will also arrange all provisions.
- Work at height above 4M will fall outside of the normal SLA timeframes.
- The supplier's staff will require certification to work from height as whilst the Council will provide all provisions such as a cherry picker vehicle and driver, it will be the supplier's employees that will carry out the required work.

Arrangements for working at height are made in partnership with the Council's street lighting contractor.

There is not an official 'hot spot' list for areas with higher instances of graffiti; however, the supplier has provided the below list based on anecdotal evidence from the removal team of where they visit regularly and identify unreported graffiti:

Botwell Lane, Hayes  
Coldharbour Lane, Hayes  
Station Rd, Hayes  
Yeading Lane, Hayes  
Balmoral Drive, Hayes  
Botwell Common Road, Hayes  
Uxbridge Rd, Hayes  
Uxbridge Rd, Uxbridge  
High Road, Ickenham

High Street, Ruislip  
West End Rd, Ruislip  
Victoria Rd, Ruislip  
Field End Rd, Ruislip  
High Street, West Drayton  
Station Rd, West Drayton

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT**

The continuation of graffiti and fly-posting removal and street washing services by a competent and effective contractor benefits both residents and businesses in the Borough by ensuring that our streets and town centres are clean and welcoming.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

In March 2023, as part of a review of the services contracts, it was identified that only 27% of graffiti removal works were completed in response to an online report, with the remaining graffiti removal work relating to proactive scoping by the Council's supplier.

Officers worked with the supplier to agree a reduction in resources to reflect the level of scheduled work whilst ensuring the availability of further support should there be an increase in reports, or any large-scale works required.

The savings achieved by this are demonstrated in the table below which summarises the contract spend per year for the last five years:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Spend</b>
2019/20	£159,808.13
2020/21	£162,050.62
2021/22	£165,314.76
2022/23	£164,453.25
2023/24	£112,011.34

## **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IMPLICATIONS**

The issue of Graffiti on privately owned premises is dealt with under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Community Protection Notice).

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (ASBA 2003), as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA 2005), gives local authorities the power to issue a fixed penalty notice for the offence of graffiti.

Hillingdon Council adopted the maximum fine level of £500 (50% discount if paid within 14 days) for this offence in April 2024.

The Council also has powers to issue a Community Protection Notice to an individual aged 16 or over, or a body, requiring the person or body to stop doing specified things, to do specified things or take reasonable steps to achieve specified things, if satisfied on reasonable grounds that:

- (a) the conduct of the individual or body is having a detrimental effect, of a persistent or continuing nature, on the quality of life of those in the locality, and
- b) the conduct is unreasonable.

Where a person issued with a community protection notice fails to comply with requirement of the notice, the Council may have work carried out to ensure that the failure is remedied, but only on land that is open to the air. Where the premises is not open to the air, the Council would first need to issue a notice specifying the work it intends to have carried out to ensure that the failure is remedied, the estimated cost of the work, and invite the defaulter to consent to the work being carried out before doing so. The consent must be obtained from the defaulter and the owner of the premises on which the work is to be carried out unless the authority is unable to contact the owner after making reasonable efforts to do so.

A person who fails to comply with a Community Protection Notice commits a criminal offence and on conviction if an individual, is liable to a fine not exceeding level 4 (£2,500) or if a body, to a fine not exceeding £20,000. Additionally, the Council has powers under section 1 of the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 to apply for an injunction to compel the owners and occupiers of premises to remove graffiti from premises.

A time limit can be set in the notice for when the graffiti should be removed. A time frame of 7,14,21,28 days can be used but should be reasonable depending on the issue i.e. offensive graffiti will warrant a shorter time frame for removal.

Graffiti is criminal offence under s1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971, dealt with by the Police.

Hillingdon Council works with the Police and information is shared related to identified 'tags' and offenders. However, identification of, or catching an individual in the act, is rare and the default action is removal rather than prosecution.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil.

## **APPENDICES**

Example pictures:



