

Appendix 4: Environment Services Contract Performance Engagement

1. Background

1.1 Over Summer 2023, Camden carried out borough-wide engagement to gain feedback on Veolia's delivery of the Environment Services contract. This was to get a better understanding of what residents and internal stakeholders feel is performing well from the contract, what could be better and what the priorities should be for the future service. Engagement included a facilitated resident workshop, borough-wide resident survey, resident diary with in-depth interviews and internal feedback from the Estates Management, Green Spaces and Environment Services teams.

2. Facilitated resident workshop

2.1 On 18 July 2023, a facilitated resident workshop on the performance of Camden's recycling and waste collection and street cleansing services was held to get a better understanding of what residents feel is and isn't working currently and what should be priorities for the future service. 15 residents attended, who were recruited via Camden's Citizen's Panel, ensuring the attendees selected represented Camden's diversity and range of housing types and tenures.

2.2 Key findings from the workshop were that residents wanted more reliable collection services, more frequent street sweeping, more litter bins, tackle business waste on pavements, more enforcement against littering and fly-tipping and better education and clearer signage on how to use services. They felt customer service could be better with more prompt response, action, proactiveness and feedback, and for staff to listen and be respectful with empathy and understanding. Suggestions for a future service included electric street notice boards with information about services, pop-ups in empty shops to educate on services and climate emergency, and for call centre staff to have better knowledge of who the councillors and caretakers are across the borough.

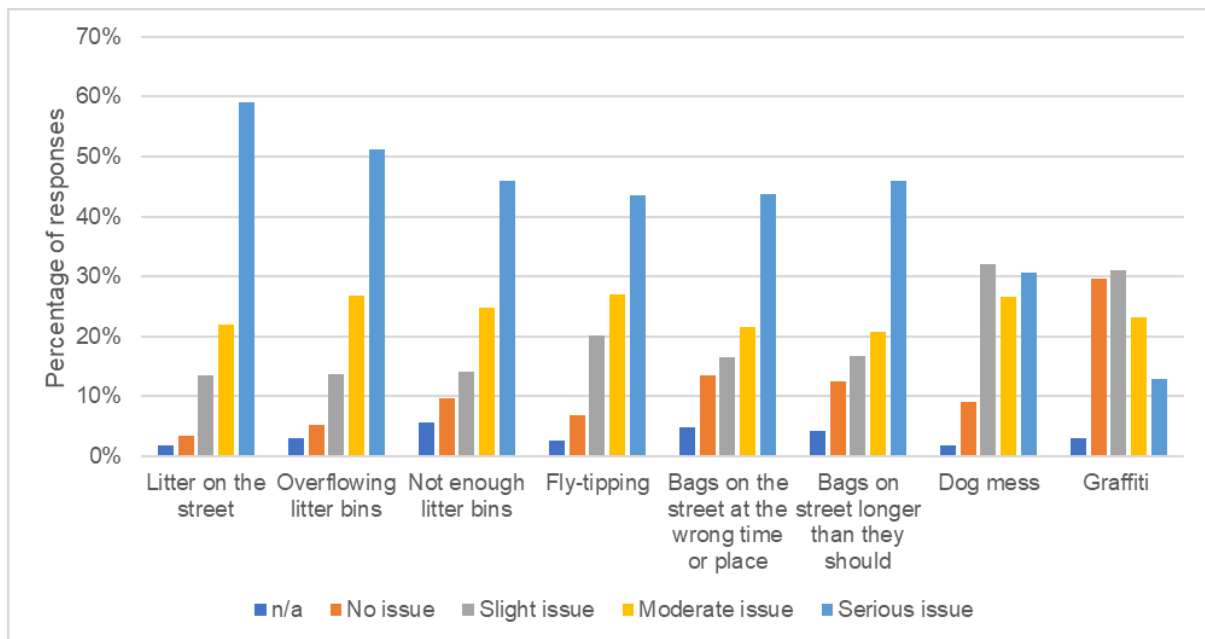
3. Resident survey

3.1 The resident engagement survey ran from 24th August to 24 September 2023 and was available to residents online and paper copies provided in libraries. 813 responses were received, the majority of which were made online.

3.2 The online survey was designed to align with the Good Life Camden framework to gain insight of resident's experiences of Camden's waste, recycling and street cleansing services, using a mix of free text and tick box answers. The majority of respondents felt happy and safe with their local area as a place to live.

3.3 Respondents were asked to what extent they felt a range of environment services issues were a problem in their local area, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Respondents priority issues in their local area



3.4 The top 5 issues considered a serious problem were:

1. 59.2%: Litter on street
2. 51.2%: Overflowing litter bins
3. 45.9%: Not enough litter bins
4. 45.9%: Recycling/ rubbish containers on street longer than they should
5. 43.6%: Fly-tipping

3.5 Litter on the street came out the key issue. Comments included concerns about variance in cleanliness area to area with infrequent street cleaning, dirty pavements, the need for more street sweepers and more seasonal attention, for example clearing leaves in autumn. Many commented on overflowing and not enough litterbins on the street, and a need for more frequent emptying was highlighted as something the Council could do better to improve the cleanliness of residents' localities.

3.6 Many comments were made regarding containers not being returned properly after collection, creating obstructions and hazards for pedestrians, especially those with mobility or visibility challenges. Concerns were also raised about rubbish bags from flats above shops and businesses being left out on pavements for extended periods. Many respondents expressed frustration with frequent fly-tipping in their areas, suggesting the need for better surveillance, quicker clean-ups and stricter enforcement against fly-tippers.

3.7 In addition to above, within the free-text responses, the following were highlighted, in order of priority, as the main areas where the contract could perform better:

- Missed collections (both recycling and rubbish) sometimes resulting in bags being ripped open and waste spread by animals
- Spillages not being cleared up after collections

3.8 The areas with positive feedback were:

- Appreciation for street cleansers, with many comments that they do a good job and work hard
- Satisfaction with the Love Clean Streets app
- Several comments indicate satisfaction with the regularity of waste collection services and street cleansing

3.9 Within the responses there were conflicting opinions on a range of areas. Some residents find street cleansing and waste collection services to be satisfactory, while others find them lacking or inconsistent. Whilst many respondents expressed appreciation for the ease and effectiveness of the Love Clean Streets app, some hadn't used it or believe it might inadvertently encourage improper disposal by ensuring rapid clean-up.

3.10 Some respondents find their local environment sufficiently clean, while others describe their areas as dirty or inadequately managed, indicating that experience varies across different parts of the borough. There was however an overall theme suggesting that people acknowledge the difficulty of maintaining cleanliness when residents themselves do not take responsibility for keeping their environment clean.

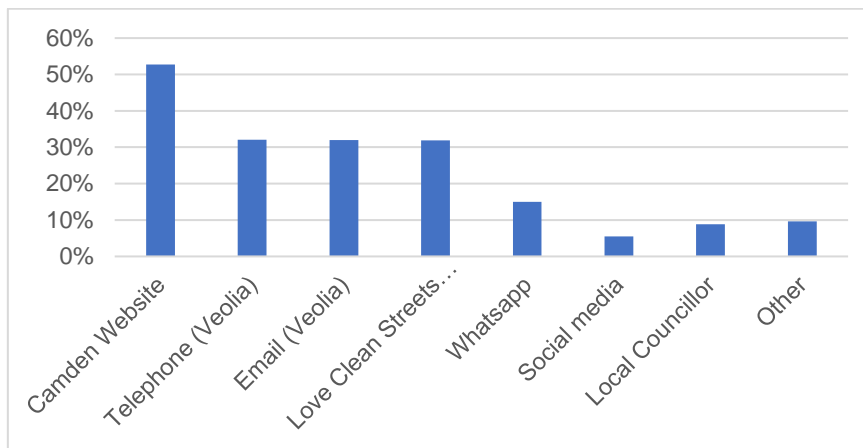
Customer service

3.11 59% of the respondents stated they had reported an issue relating to the recycling or rubbish collection service or street cleanliness within the past 12 months. The main methods of contact were the Camden website (17.3%), Love Clean Streets app (16.2%), telephone (12.9%) and email (7.7%) and most found it easy to report. The reason for contact was mostly missed collections (27.9%) or reporting fly-tipping (12.4%).

3.12 The level of satisfaction with the service respondents received was 20% satisfied and 26% dissatisfied. Of those dissatisfied, many stated that after reporting an issue or making a complaint, there was little to no follow up, lacked timely rectification or were closed without being resolved.

3.13 When given options of the preferred method of contact to report an issue with their recycling or rubbish collection or street cleansing in the future, 52% of respondents found the Camden website most favourable. Telephone, email and the Love Clean Streets app were also popular with around 31% preference respectively.

Figure 2: Respondents preferred method of contact



Future service delivery

3.14 The most prevalent themes across all responses regarding priorities for future service was for cleaner streets, by tackling litter, overflowing bins, fly-tipping and more frequent street cleansing. More reliable collections were also key priorities, alongside responding to and resolving complaints more promptly, improved communications about collections and how to use services to encourage responsible behaviour. Stronger enforcement on littering and fly-tipping and increasing business accountability was also highlighted.

4. Resident diaries and in-depth interviews

- 4.1 To get a more in-depth insight into resident's experience of Camden's recycling and rubbish collection and street cleansing services, 3 residents were recruited from the Citizen's Panel to keep a 2-week diary followed by a telephone interview in September 2023.
- 4.2 Participants felt the streets were generally clean, with a good service from their local street sweepers, however one commented that street cleanliness seems to vary by area across the Borough. Regular fly-tipping is a key issue, although it was highlighted that these were usually rectified quickly. One participant felt enforcement signs are not a deterrent to fly-tipping and suggested QR codes are provided on signs to advise how to report. Ordering single-use sacks was felt to be quick and easy but other requests such as textile and electrical bag delivery take longer.
- 4.3 Overflowing communal bins was a common issue, which attracts wildlife and fly-tipping. Participants suggested a need for more bins, including dog waste, and regular collection of communal recycling and food waste bins, clearing spillage when needed. Businesses and residents above shops leaving waste on-street was also highlighted as issues. All felt unclean streets negatively affect their mood.
- 4.4 Future priorities were highlighted to be more reliable and regular collection services, tackling fly-tipping, provision of more and accessible recycling bins and better education and communications on how to use services.

5. Internal feedback

5.1 Camden's Estates Management, Green Spaces and Environment Services team officers were also consulted for feedback. What officers felt worked well was resolving issues such as fly-tips, using the Love Clean Streets app, estates collections and resolving issues with support from Borough Monitoring (SAMO) Team.

5.2 Areas highlighted as could be better was the need for more collection crews, investment in new vehicles so less breakdowns, more cleansing of estate bins and better co-ordinated cleansing in parks. Officers felt focus on a greener fleet, innovation, provision for flats above shops and supporting transition to a more circular economy should be included in the future service.

6. Summary

6.1 Overall, participants felt happy with where they live but raised that litter was a key issue, with not enough or overflowing bins therefore wanted more placed on-street and emptied more regularly. Street cleanliness was a concern, with dirty streets and pavements from litter, stains and collection spillage which many commented varies by area. Some felt better and more frequent cleansing was provided in the more affluent parts of the Borough. Much praise was received for the work of street sweepers although there was a strong feeling there should be more regular sweeping boroughwide.

6.2 Missed and irregular collections, returning containers and collection spillages were priority concerns. Whilst fly-tipping was also raised as a major issue, many respondents found reporting via the Love Clean Streets app very helpful, and that they were cleared quickly. Reporting issues or making requests was most favoured via the website, followed by Love Clean Streets, phone and email, all of which respondents found easy to use.

6.3 It was suggested there should be more education to change behaviour, so people and businesses were more accountable for their waste, alongside provision of better signage and information to ensure people know what to do with their waste. There was also a call for more enforcement against littering and fly-tipping.

6.4 What participants felt should be priorities for future service were:

- Cleaner streets via more litter bins, frequent emptying and street cleansing
- Improved collection service efficiency, with less missed collections
- Tackling fly-tipping and more enforcement
- More education on how to use services and better signage
- Better provision for flats above shops to reduce bags left on-street
- Transitioning to a greener fleet

End