

Item No. 6	Classification : Open	Date: 01/05/2024	Meeting Name: Environment Scrutiny Commission
Report title:		Environment Scrutiny Committee Report - Waste In Parks 2024-25	
Wards affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Catherine Rose Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks, Streets and Clean Air	

Background

1. Urban parks became critical for maintaining the well-being of urban residents during the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the borough. The post-pandemic environment has seen the trend of greater public use of parks continue and with it several challenges requiring agile adaptive measures in response. A key issue of challenge being the management of waste in several of our parks.
2. This paper sets out the current arrangements for waste collection and recycling , and highlights the interventions applied to strengthen standard contract provision in advance of a full review of the grounds maintenance service taking place this year.

Current Service Provision

3. There are currently 1013 of the standard bins strategically located in Southwark's 97 park sites (including 4 cemetery sites) with a capacity of 90 litres per bin. In addition, 50 larger euro bins, with a capacity of 1100 litres each, have been utilised during and post-pandemic to supplement waste collection in major parks in identified hotspots, where groups of people typically gather and standard bins have experienced overflow issues e.g. Dulwich Park, Peckham Rye Park, Belair Park, Tanner Street Park, Bermondsey Spa Gardens, Russia Dock Woodland and Brunswick Park.
4. As a legacy of former arrangements, there remain a small number of the old Dog Waste Bins (dog waste since collected as part of general litter). We have some larger 'Nexus' bins in Burgess Park and a few other parks with high footfall, however these are difficult to empty by just one litter operative.
5. In 2022, two standard bins were replaced with bins with a wider opening to better accommodate pizza boxes which are a particular problem at Tanner Street Park.

Definition

6. In relation to the Contract "litter", "litter picking", "debris removal", "cleansing" and any reference to debris or arisings from works covers the definitions of both the 1983 Litter Act and the 1990 Environmental Protection Act (Part IV) and include "anything whatsoever that it is thrown down, dropped or otherwise deposited in or on any place in the open air".
7. This includes:
- The removal of litter, debris, leaves from all non-sports hard surfaces, plant beds and hedge bases, canine faecal matter, animal carcasses, accident debris, cans, cartons, cigarette ends, paper, polythene, boxes, timber, metals, plastics, glass, tins, clinical waste, hypodermic syringes and such "sharps".
 - Fly tipping or any accumulation of rubbish less than three cubic Metres or capable of being lifted by two operatives into a pick-up vehicle.
8. All bagged materials deposited on Park sites are covered by this definition and are removed as part of the litter clearance operation:
- (i) The emptying of all litter bins.
 - (ii) The collection, storage and return of shopping trolleys.
 - (iii) The disposal of all litter and arisings to approved disposal sites for the particular form of debris, in full compliance with the "Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991" in the transfer and disposal of all extraneous matter.

Collections

9. Collections are undertaken by Southwark's grounds maintenance contractor Quadron Idverde (QI) according to the terms of the contract (extended for 3 years October 2023) according to a tiering system.
10. The standards applied to the contract and tiering system are defined by the Environmental Protection Act Code of Practice (Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 Part IV):

Table 1 - Standards

EPA Code of Practice	
Grade A	No litter or refuse
Grade B	Area predominantly free of litter and refuse, apart from small items such as cigarette ends and ring pulls
Grade C	Widespread distribution of small item (as above) and larger items including beverage containers, fast food packs, animal faeces etc.
Grade D	Heavily littered with small and large items, with accumulations along boundaries and in "hot spots"

11. QI maintain the cleanliness standard required 365 days a year in the categories below.

Table 2 – Tiering (Summary - Litter/bin emptying before 10am & before 15.30pm daily 7 days per week tier 1 & 2 sites, tier 3 sites once per day)

Tier 1 (Zone 1) – Major Parks
a) A permanent presence providing a full litter clearance to be completed by 10.00am and thereafter two complimentary clearance operations at regular intervals of 3 hours throughout normal working hours i.e. 07.30 – 16.30, 7 days a week.
b) The provision of a responsive litter clearance service in the event of an Authorised Officer inspection identifying an EPA standard failure or a customer service request. The Provider will provide a responsive service that will return the standard of cleanliness in that area to Grade A in accordance with the following response times: Grade B – 6 hours Grade C – 3 hours Grade D – 1 hour
Tier 2 (Zone 2) – Predominantly Local Parks/Gardens
a) A twice-daily presence providing a full litter clearance to be completed by 11.00am and a complimentary clearance operation after an interval of at least three hours, 7 days a week.
b) The provision of a responsive litter clearance service in the event of an Authorised Officer inspection identifying an EPA standard failure or a customer service request. The Provider will provide a responsive service that will return the standard of cleanliness in that area to Grade A in accordance with the following response times: Grade B – 12 hours Grade C – 6 hours Grade D – 3 hours
Tier 3 (Zone 3) – Other Open Spaces
a) A daily full litter clearance to be completed by 12 noon, 7 days a week. Litter Clearance and Fly-tipping continued...
b) The provision of a responsive litter clearance service in the event of an Authorised Officer inspection identifying an EPA standard failure or a customer service request. The Provider will provide a responsive service that will return the standard of cleanliness in that area to Grade A in accordance with the following response times: Grade C – 12 hours

Grade D – 6 hours

Late Litter Service

12. In addition to the above, prior to 2016, the grounds maintenance contract also provided a “late litter” service where bin emptying and litter picking went on into the early evening. This limited the volumes of litter visible on the sites the following morning during peak use periods. The cost of this provision at the time was £50,000. This provision was taken as a saving in 2016.
13. A reduced form of this service was used as a contingency measure during the Covid lockdown to mitigate the high levels of litter generated through the 20-30% increase in parks use. The additional cost pressure was in the region of £25-£35K.
14. Post-pandemic, the service has been informally in operation in the spring/summer months and is now agreed as a formal re-edition in the grounds maintenance contract (See Next Steps).

Waste transfer

15. QI are required to deposit all general and green waste materials (excluding waste recycled in parks) to the waste facility located at Devon Street, managed by Veolia.
16. QI bear all related waste disposal costs. The current cost for which is £185 per tonne.

Figure 1 – General Litter collected/processed 2022-23 & 2023-24 (post-COVID)

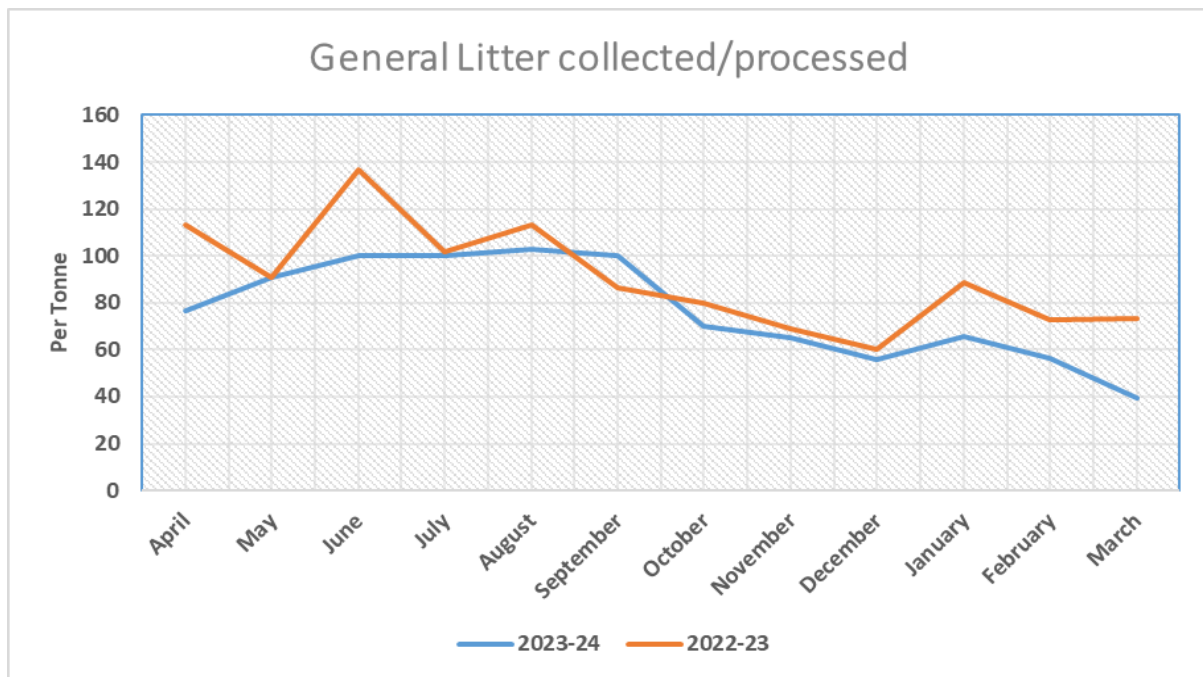


Table 3 - General Litter collected/processed & contractor costs 2022-23 & 2023-24

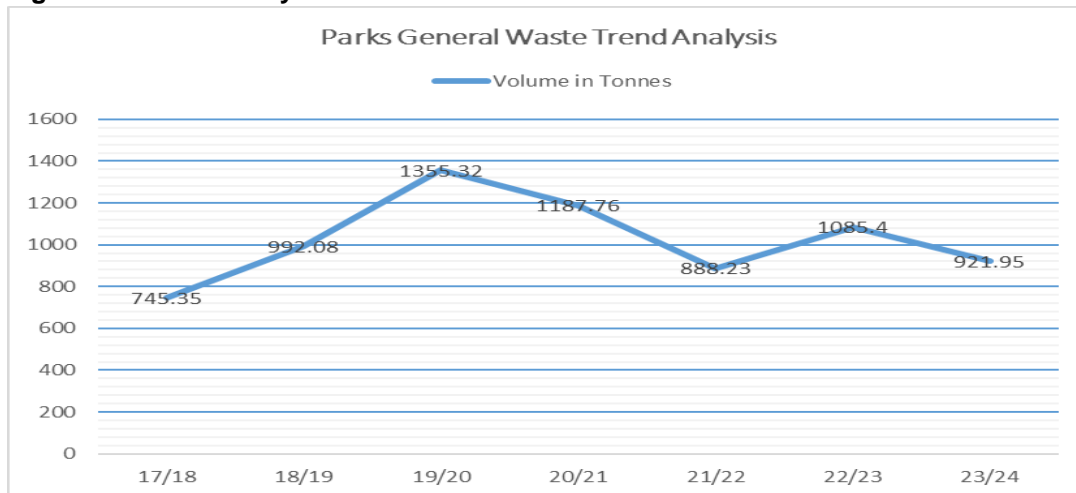
	2023-24 per tonne	Contractor cost (£)	2022-23 per tonne	Contractor cost (£)
April	76.4	£ 14,134	113.18	£ 20,938
May	90.76	£ 16,791	90.75	£ 16,789
June	99.82	£ 18,467	136.52	£ 25,256
July	99.9	£ 18,482	101.49	£ 18,776
August	102.74	£ 19,007	113.18	£ 20,938
September	99.91	£ 18,483	86.42	£ 15,988
October	69.86	£ 12,924	80.06	£ 14,811
November	65.2	£ 12,062	68.86	£ 12,739
December	56	£ 10,360	60.3	£ 11,156
January	65.48	£ 12,114	88.4	£ 16,354
February	56.32	£ 10,419	72.88	£ 13,483
March	39.56	£ 7,319	73.36	£ 13,572
Annual Total	921.95	£ 170,561	1085.4	£ 200,799

17. As evidenced in Table 3 litter collections decreased by 163.45 tonnes from 2022 to 2023 (15%) with an associated cost reduction to the contractor of just over £30K.

18. The contract has been priced on an assumed average figure per annum, based on a five years previous tonnage, therefore QI will experience a spectrum of cost liability (risk and benefit) over the duration of the contract (for the last 3 years QI have used some savings from a reduction in waste collected to contribute towards the supply of a dustcart to enable the emptying of the Eurobins).

19. The variation is explained by the differing weather conditions experienced between the spring/summer periods of 2022 (dry and warm) and 2023 (variable) and the associated impact on park visitors and the duration of their visits.
20. The general trend illustrated in Figure 2 shows the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns on litter collection 2020 & 2021 and the heat wave of 2022.

Figure 3 – Trend Analysis 2017-2023



17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
745.35	992.08	1355.32	1187.76	888.23	1085.4	921.95

Recycling

21. The vast majority of green waste produced through parks operations is recycled in our parks in composting facilities at contractor depots. Grass, leaf litter, other arisings etc. are used to produce compost, which is used seasonally on park borders in order to ameliorate growing conditions. Any green waste that is sent to the waste facility is also sent for composting by Veolia.
22. Green waste produced through arboricultural operations is also recycled. The majority of wood chips are sold to produce wood pellets for heating systems, with smaller volumes used by Southwark's Housing Grounds Maintenance teams and QI for composting.
23. Logs are retained in parks wherever practicable, however those recovered from site and stored at the tree waste site are often delivered to stakeholders for use in community projects.
24. Mixed Municipal Bulky Waste e.g. fly-tipped items such as furniture and household appliances are sent for external sorting with around 50% extracted for recycling. Any Hazardous Waste collected is sent for disposal as this cannot be recycled.
25. Very little (1-2%) of general litter is extracted for recycling, however un-recyclable material is transferred to national sites by Veolia where it is converted to electricity through a combustion process.

26. Increasing recycling rates from general litter collected will form a key area of focus when parks operations are reviewed during 2024 and reported to Cabinet (see paragraph 33).

Volunteering

27. There has been an increase in groups who want to volunteer to pick up litter and QI have facilitated this with bin bags and litter-pickers. Groups vary from pre-organised friends of parks to corporate volunteers and community payback activity. Whilst this additional input is welcome, it should be considered as added value and supplementary to the core service.

Challenges

28. In providing an annual litter clearance service across the seasons, it is important to consider proportionality and to obtain an appropriate balance between capacity, cost and complaint levels. With this in mind, there will always be a small number of days per year where litter levels will exceed capacity. This is accepted across all parks nationwide. The level of service will always be dictated by the degree of organisational tolerance to litter related complaints, versus the extra cost of increased capacity.

29. **Weather:** During periods of good weather it is often difficult to stay on top of litter produced by multiple groups of people. As previously referenced, since 2021 50 euro bins have been deployed to tackle this. The cost for this element of the service is currently £20,800 for a 6 monthly period which has been deployed on an ad hoc since the pandemic.

30. **Events and litter impacts:** Large planned events also have the potential to increase volumes of discarded litter. This has the potential to overload standard bin capacity and also add significant time to litter picking duties. This is usually mitigated and resourced by the event organisers through pre-agreed arrangements set at the point of being given permission to hold the event in the first instance.

Monitoring

31. Parks officers and managers are in regular contact with QI local management to address hot spot issues as they arise. Complaints referencing litter are also analysed in order to inform the strategic deployment of standard and euro bins in order to provide an agile service in a dynamic park user environment.

Review

32. The approach to litter management will be included in a comprehensive review of parks operations informing a Gateway Zero report for the Future Direction of Service to Cabinet later this year.

Appendix 1 – Litter Bin Provision

Litter bin type	Number	Capacity	Image
'Chieftain' (by Glasdon) – <i>standard provision across all parks</i>	1013	90 litres	
Eurobin – <i>strategic deployment for large visitor numbers</i>	50	1100 litres	