

Title of Report	Graffiti Removal Policy	
Key Decision No	HCE S713	
For Consideration By	Cabinet	
Meeting Date	20 July 2026	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Jacob Cable, Cabinet Member for Climate, Clean Energy, Air & Transport	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards	
Key Decision & Reason	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards
Implementation Date if Not Called In	29 July 2026	
Group Director	Rickardo Hyatt, Executive Director Housing, Climate & Economy	
Report Author	Sam Kirk, Assistant Director Climate, Sustainability & Environment Services, Sam.Kirk@hackney.gov.uk	

1. **Cabinet Member's introduction**

- 1.1. I am pleased to present the updated Graffiti Removal Policy for the London Borough of Hackney. This policy reflects our commitment to maintaining clean, safe, and vibrant public spaces while respecting the diverse cultural landscape of our borough.
- 1.2. We have carefully considered the evolving dynamics between graffiti and street art, ensuring a balanced approach that prioritises community safety and cohesion, in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty and the Hackney Equality Plan. This policy provides clearer definitions, emphasises understanding the intent and context of artwork, and ensures consistent decision-making regarding removal.
- 1.3. We believe this updated framework will foster greater community pride and continue to make Hackney a place where all residents feel safe and valued.

2. **Group Director's introduction**

- 2.1. This report outlines the Graffiti Removal Policy, a crucial framework for our operational teams in managing graffiti and street art across the London Borough of Hackney.
- 2.2. The policy provides clear definitions and criteria for removal, enabling our teams to make informed and consistent decisions.
- 2.3. We are committed to efficient and effective graffiti removal, prioritising offensive and hate-based content for swift action. Furthermore, the Policy addresses practical considerations such as reporting mechanisms, and responsibilities for private property.
- 2.4. This Policy will enhance our ability to maintain a high standard of public spaces, ensuring a cleaner and safer environment for all residents and businesses.

3. **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended:

- 3.1. To approve Graffiti Removal Policy in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. To delegate authority to the Director of Environment & Climate Change (or equivalent) to approve any future minor amendments to the policy.

4. **Reason(s) for decision**

- 4.1. This Graffiti Removal Policy provides clear definitions, distinguishing between graffiti and street art, ensuring greater clarity and consistency in graffiti removal. Additionally, the Policy emphasises the importance of understanding the intent behind the graffiti and the context in which it appears, allowing informed decisions to be made as to whether the content is harmful or is inappropriate ahead of its potential removal.

5. **Background**

- 5.1. The Council acknowledges the evolving dynamics and tensions within urban spaces and recognises the importance of distinguishing between graffiti and street art while ensuring that community safety and cohesion is maintained. The Council has a commitment to ensure and enhance community cohesion in our Hackney Equality Plan.
- 5.2. While some view street art as a positive contribution to the urban environment, both graffiti and street art encompass a wide spectrum of styles, intentions, and impacts. The Council recognises that these forms of expression can range from valued artistic contributions, attracting visitors to the borough, to unauthorised markings that may negatively affect public spaces.

- 5.3. The Policy outlines the Council's approach to managing graffiti and street art removal within the London Borough of Hackney. It aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced framework that considers artistic value, public perception, and the need to maintain clean and safe spaces.

Strategic Policy Context

- 5.4. The Council's policy priorities are set out in the Strategic Plan: Working Together for a Better Hackney 2022-26. Within it it sets out our vision to tackle structural and systemic discrimination through embedding an anti-racist approach and ensuring accountability. This Graffiti Removal Policy recognises the importance of respecting and protecting equality and diversity, for example, religious beliefs and practices, particularly in evaluating content for removal. Any markings that are offensive, discriminatory, or harmful to individuals or groups will be prioritised for action, ensuring alignment with the Policy.
- 5.5. Further, when determining actions around implementing this policy, the Council must have due regard to the overarching Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Also it must adhere to the Hackney Equality Plan, whereby we commit to undertaking a review of Community Cohesion.

Equality, inclusion, diversity and belonging (including statutory equality impact assessment)

- 5.6. The Policy aims to create a balanced and comprehensive framework for managing graffiti and street art removal within the London Borough of Hackney. Objectives include distinguishing between graffiti and street art, maintaining public safety and clean spaces, respecting artistic expression, fostering community cohesion, and ensuring consistency in decision-making regarding removal. It also aims to define "offensive, discriminatory or inflammatory content" in a nuanced and objective way.
- 5.7. The background is the "evolving dynamics and tensions within urban spaces" where graffiti and street art exist. The Council acknowledges different views on street art and recognises both positive and negative impacts of these forms of expression on public spaces. The Council also has commitments to the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Hackney Equality Plan.
- 5.8. The impact assessment highlighted the need for several key actions to mitigate negative impacts and ensure fairness:
- A focus on the continued fast-track removal of hate-based and offensive graffiti was reinforced, recognising its disproportionate impact on certain socio-demographic groups.
 - Consideration of discretionary free removal for residents on low income, acknowledging socioeconomic inequalities.

- Emphasis on multiple reporting mechanisms to ensure accessibility for all.
- Implementation of a regular review and monitoring schedule, including Equality Impact Assessments.

5.9. The assessment has strongly influenced the proposal by embedding equality considerations throughout the Policy. It has ensured that the Policy is not just about graffiti removal, but also about community cohesion, safety, and fairness. The assessment's findings necessitate the actions to be included within the plan, and will form part of any decision to adopt the Policy, so are therefore crucial and impactful.

5.10. Where the potential for negative impacts of graffiti were identified, the Policy's primary objective is to balance the maintenance of clean, safe public spaces with the preservation of valuable street art. This approach acknowledges the inherent tension between these priorities and ensures that removal decisions remain consistent, legitimate, and aligned with our commitments to community cohesion and artistic expression.

5.11. Internal teams, Streetscene, Parks & Green Spaces, Planning, Legal and Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation, Regen and Culture, and Policy have been consulted. As such legal justifications and potential impacts have been sought from these teams.

5.12. For the full Equality Impact Assessment please refer to Appendix 2.

Sustainability and climate change

5.13. There are no direct implications as a result of this report. However, there are indirect considerations. The Graffiti Removal Policy aims to maintain clean and safe public spaces, which can contribute to a more sustainable urban environment by fostering community pride and discouraging further environmental degradation, whilst supporting social cohesion.

5.14. The Council recognises that graffiti removal activities can have environmental impacts and is committed to carrying out this work in a way that supports its broader climate and sustainability objectives. Wherever practicable, environmentally responsible methods and materials will be used to minimise emissions, pollution and waste. Further, water use will be managed carefully, and the Graffiti Removal Team will also seek to reduce vehicle emissions by planning efficient removal routes and, where possible, using low-emission vehicles.

5.15. In line with the Council's Climate Action Plan, graffiti removal practices will aim to reduce the organisation's overall carbon footprint. Staff are encouraged to adopt sustainable work practices, such as reusing materials and ensuring waste is responsibly managed. By integrating these considerations, the Council ensures that graffiti removal contributes not only to local amenity and safety but also to environmental protection and long-term climate goals.

- 5.16. Should the Council be required to procure external specialist graffiti removal services, the same standards will form a part of any procurement process.

Consultation/engagement

- 5.17. There is no statutory consultation required in updating this policy. Internal teams, including Streetscene, Parks & Green Spaces, Planning, Legal and Community Safety, Enforcement and Business Regulation, Regeneration and Culture, and Policy have been consulted.

Risk assessment

- 5.18. The Graffiti Removal Policy acknowledges risks such as community dissatisfaction, potential legal challenges, and the unintended promotion of unauthorised graffiti or offensive content. Mitigation measures include establishing clear criteria and processes for evaluation and removal, ensuring decisions align with UK legislation, and providing training for Council workers to support fair and consistent application.
- 5.19. By having an updated and published policy, this should further reduce risks by fostering understanding, inclusion, and shared ownership of public spaces, helping to balance artistic expression with public safety and order.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. The costs of graffiti removal are met within the existing resources of the service. However, graffiti removal for businesses which may be charged for, will generate an income to offset some of the costs of the service. The level of fees for enforcement action are set by statute. The service will continue to monitor the total cost of providing this service.

Finance implications prepared on behalf of the Director of Finances & Corporate Resources by John Holden, Assistant Director of Finance - Sustainability, Public Realm and Special Projects.
Email: john.holden@hackney.gov.uk Date: 3 July 2026

7. HR/OD implications

- 7.1. There are no direct HR/OD implications as a result of this report.

HR/OD implications prepared on behalf of the Director of HR/OD by Steve Swain Strategic HR OD Business Partner.
Email: Steve.Swain@hackney.gov.uk Date: 3 July 2026

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. The recommendations set out in part 3 of this report fall within the definition of a Key decision under the Council's Constitution.

- 8.2. Cabinet is authorised to approve the recommendations set out in Section 3 of this report, pursuant to the Council’s constitution Article 13.5 which states:
- 8.3. A key decision is a Cabinet decision which is likely to:
- i) Result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decisions relates, or
 - ii) Be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council.
- 8.4. Recommendation 3.2 of this report recommends that Cabinet approve Graffiti Removal Policy (as set out in Appendix 1).
- 8.5. Currently the Mayor’s scheme of delegation reserves to the Mayor and Cabinet approval of: all corporate policies and strategies and all formal service strategies. The Mayor and Cabinet are permitted to approve the recommendation set out in Paragraph 2.1 of this report.
- 8.6. The recommendation set out in 3.2 of this report recommends that Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Environment & Climate Change (or equivalent) to approve any future minor amendments to the policy. Paragraph 2.2 (Sub-delegation of Cabinet Functions) i) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules states that *“If the Elected Mayor delegates functions to the Cabinet, unless they direct otherwise, then the Cabinet may delegate further to a Committee of the Cabinet, to an officer, to any joint arrangements, to another authority or to area committees”*. Cabinet is therefore permitted to approve and delegate functions as per the recommendations in 3.2 and 3.3 of this report.

Legal implications prepared on behalf of the Director of Legal, Democratic & Electoral Services by: Josephine Sterakides, Team Leader-People.
Email: josephine.sterakides@hackney.gov.uk Date 3 July 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Graffiti Removal Policy

Appendix 2 - Graffiti Removal Policy Equality Impact Assessment