



**Glasgow City Council**

**Economy, Housing, Transport  
and Regeneration City Policy Committee**

**Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of  
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability**

**Item 6**

**11th March 2025**

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**BUSKING AND STREET PERFORMING IN GLASGOW CITY CENTRE:  
PROJECT UPDATE**

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on matters related to busking including an overview of steps taken to date and an outline of proposed actions going forward.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the contents of this report
- (ii) Consider the findings of the review undertaken on 2024 activity
- (iii) Considers the proposals for 2025-26 as outlined in the report
- (iv) Notes that a further update to this Committee will be provided in early 2026.

Ward No(s): 10

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Despite receiving broad public support, busking and street performing can at times become intrusive and be perceived as a nuisance, especially to those living or working in close proximity. The positive and negative perceptions were demonstrated through a public consultation exercise between 23rd July and 1st September 2023, which received over 2,700 responses and was previously reported to [this Committee](#).
- 1.2 The previous committee report also outlined related issues, the wider strategic and legal position, and the proposed action plan to be progressed over 2024 in relation to supporting busking activity.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide an update from the 2024 action plan alongside the proposed next steps for 2025-26.

## 2 CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

- 2.1 By way of a summary of previous reporting to Committee, the key challenges involved are briefly noted as follows:
  - GCC regularly receives complaints about “nuisance” busking
  - Determining what constitutes “nuisance” busking can be subjective with different factors being considered by different organisations
  - The increasing availability and use of amplified equipment has been an exacerbating factor
  - Local authorities are limited in how they can respond to such complaints; enforcement powers are reserved by Police Scotland
  - Busking is not deemed to be a licensable activity
  - GCC (and Local Authorities generally) instead tend to rely upon a voluntary [Code of Good Conduct](#)

## 3 PROJECT ACTIVITY: 2024

- 3.1 A partnership working group was established in 2024 by GCC and Police Scotland to review the findings of the public consultation, develop a workplan of future activity, and to monitor progress. An overview of project actions completed since June 2024 and grouped by theme is provided below:

### 3.1.1 *Signage*

- Introduction of new on-street signage in Buchanan Street from mid-June 2024 to highlight the busking Code of Good Conduct
- Additional signage also installed around Partick Station

### 3.1.2 *Engagement/Messaging*

- Production of Code of Good Conduct cards for distribution by GCC Community Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to local buskers
- Marketing/promotion in local/national media to raise project awareness

- Development of a new GCC [webpage](#) for public-facing information about busking, including an online portal for complaints and enquiries
- QR codes on the new signage which link to this webpage
- Liaison with Musicians Union, and Equity to help inform members in respect of Glasgow's Code of Conduct for buskers – which both organisations have been happy to support

### 3.1.3 On-site Actions

- Continued liaison with Police Scotland for project support, including inter-agency days of action through joint patrols
- Daily proactive busker engagement by GCC CEOs and issuing of Code of Good Conduct cards

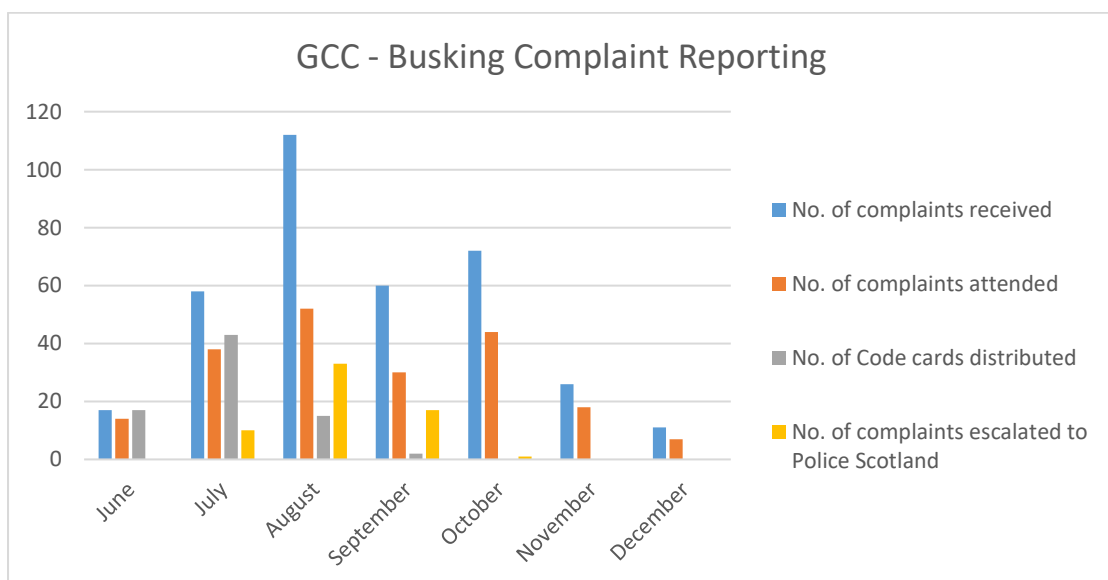
### 3.1.4 Data/Reporting

- Data collection and business intelligence for incident reporting and project monitoring/review

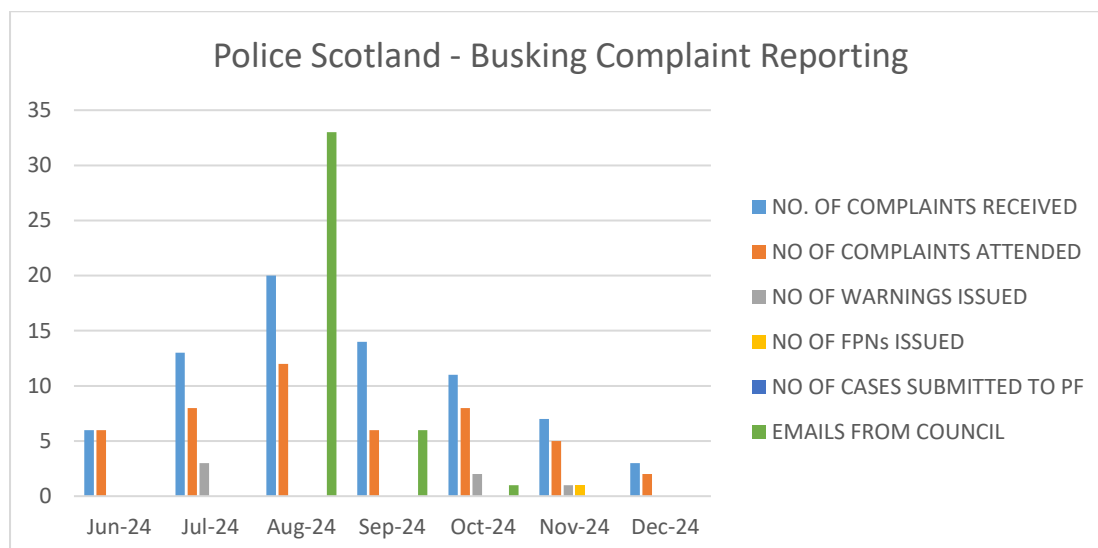
## 4 PROJECT FINDINGS

- 4.1 As per **item 3.1.4**, both GCC and Police Scotland have collected related datasets to help monitor project effectiveness and inform action delivery. A summary of this *quantative* data over the reporting period June – December 2024 is provided in **Table 1** and **Table 2** below.

**Table 1: GCC Busking Complaint Reporting**



**Table 2: Police Scotland Busking Complaint Reporting**



4.2 When examined in more detail, the data demonstrates several key issues and challenges. In summary, complaints about nuisance busking tend to focus on the same recurring sites, and for the same recurring issues. These *qualitative* aspects (i.e. complainant perceptions) can be summarised as follows:

- Location:
  - Buchanan Street (adjacent to the Apple Store)
  - Buchanan Street (adjacent to TGI Fridays)
  - Buchanan Street (adjacent to Nelson Mandela Place)
  - Argyle Street (adjacent to St Enoch Square)
  - Argyle Street (adjacent to the old Debenhams)
  - Argyle Street (adjacent to Miller Street)
- Issues:
  - Use of amplified equipment
  - "Fake" violins and accordions
  - Bagpipes
  - Religious "hate" preachers
  - Drums
  - Persistent/lengthy pitch duration
  - Poor quality
  - Lateness of busking

4.3 Despite the enforcement restrictions faced by local authorities, most complainants still believe that GCC can and should be taking more action to address highlighted issues – most specifically in relation to the use of amplified equipment.

- 4.4 Whilst CEOs are proactive, engaging with buskers every day, and attend as many complaints as they can, enforcement restrictions can prevent effective resolution, especially where offenders become belligerent. In such instances complaints will be escalated to Police Scotland. However, the ability of Police Scotland to respond timeously is constrained by wider operational activities. In most cases, the offender is no longer on site by the time Police Scotland respond.
- 4.5 Furthermore, CEOs and Police Scotland can find themselves targeted by the public with accusations of bullying when engaging with buskers – even when responding directly to complaints received. It is also noted that the signage is subject to vandalism and must be regularly replaced.
- 4.6 Many complainants also indicated the impacts arising from nuisance busking, predominantly business orientated but also from a residential perspective. This included people with ASD or other neuro-divergent issues.
- 4.7 In brief, the public tends to perceive GCC rather than Police Scotland as the primary point of contact for complaints. The measures taken to date have therefore been an attempt to address concerns within the existing enforcement landscape.
- 4.8 It should be noted that Police Scotland reviewed all city centre beats over 2023 as part of the project monitoring process and established that only 28 busking complaints were recorded in that year. **Table 4.2** above illustrates a clear uplift in reporting which indicates some impact of the improved complaint handling systems. However this has also led to some unintended consequences which are highlighted in **section 6.3** of this report.

## 5 ADDITIONAL POWERS

- 5.1 In addition to the actions summarised above, GCC officers have explored potential enforcement powers available to local authorities under existing legislation.
- 5.2 It should be noted that City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) has also undertaken a similar exercise, albeit at a more advanced stage. GCC officers have been liaising with CEC colleagues to learn lessons wherever possible. The following items represent an overview of these findings and are noted for reference.
- Relevant legislation is contained within s.54 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
  - This restricts enforcement powers to Police Scotland
  - As legislation already exists, creating a byelaw to better manage busking is likely to be precluded
  - An initial approach by CEC to extend existing enforcement powers to local authorities was not supported by Scottish Government:  
*“...whilst amplification of sound is a source of considerable concern in some areas, it is not of a scale that requires action at the national level...”*
  - Scottish Government instead proposed that local authorities use Sections 112-118 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982

- These provisions do give local authorities the power to regulate the use of land or premises which they own, occupy, or manage (e.g. as per Parks Regulations etc.)
- However, any non-compliance would still rely upon criminal enforcement by Police Scotland (i.e. ultimate outcomes would remain the same)

## 6 CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The lack of direct access to enforcement powers fundamentally limits GCC's ability to take effective measures to address complaints, especially where offenders are persistent, act in bad faith, and are aware of the legal position.
- 6.2 As long as this position remains, there will be a reliance on Police Scotland to undertake enforcement actions, though wider operational considerations and availability of resourcing continues to make this challenging.
- 6.3 The revised approach reflects these challenges and has improved complaint reporting and data collection methods, though this has perhaps also encouraged a volume of complaints exceeding previous years, as well as engendering multiple complaints from the same sources for the same issues. The evidence gathered clearly demonstrates several aspects for further investigation, including the targeting of key sites which generate most complaints. A further unintended consequence of greater reporting is the impact this places on resources, which in turn can lead to customer frustration when their complaint is not felt to be quickly responded to.
- 6.4 Furthermore, partnership working with Police Scotland, including the joint days of actions, appears to be the most effective methodology within the existing legal restrictions. It is therefore proposed that this collective approach be continued where possible, with particular emphasis on the traditional peak period (i.e. June to October). As such, related resourcing implications are being explored.
- 6.5 In addition to the steps undertaken to date, more detailed engagement with local stakeholders is also proposed to better monitor local perceptions. At the same time, more public-facing messaging would help highlight the issues associated with nuisance busking towards greater understanding of the actions taken by the council and Police Scotland when addressing complaints. This would be carried out in tandem with ongoing promotion of the Code of Good Conduct.
- 6.6 Further investigation into additional enforcement powers (i.e. as outlined in **section 5**) in partnership with colleagues in CEC is recommended by officers. However, expectations should be tempered by previous Scottish Government intimations.
- 6.7 It is therefore proposed that the next phase of activity will include:
  - a. Ongoing activity by GCC City Centre Regeneration, GCC Community Enforcement Officers, and Police Scotland over 2025 - with weekly liaison meetings, fortnightly joint patrols, and particular emphasis on the traditional peak periods

- b. Continued promotion of the Code of Good Conduct through physical signage and the issuing of cards to buskers
- c. Continued focus on the identified problem locations with use of warnings and fixed penalty fines for offending buskers and potential confiscation of equipment for persistent offenders
- d. Further stakeholder engagement and public facing messaging
- e. Continued liaison with City of Edinburgh Council to establish better, smarter interventions through shared learning and experience
- f. Exploration of options to assist in closer engagement with the busking community to ensure their voices are heard

6.8 An update report will be made to this Committee in early 2026 to report on findings and any additional requirements.

## 7 POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

### Resource Implications:

*Financial:* None

*Legal:* Appropriate internal guidance is currently being sought on related matters to understanding any wider legal implications.

*Personnel:* None

*Procurement:* None

### Council Strategic Plan:

- Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.*
- **GRAND CHALLENGE ONE – Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities**
    - MISSION 4: Support Glasgow to be a city that is active and culturally vibrant
  - **GRAND CHALLENGE FOUR – Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities**
    - MISSION 1: Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods

### Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

- Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.*
- Issues related to the public realm and wider street management, including busking and street performing, do not necessarily fall within protected characteristics groupings. However, the busking measures taken to date do support the following Outcomes:
- Outcome 3 – signposting Council Family services

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* No equality impacts are anticipated but an EqIA screening process can be implemented if deemed appropriate once next steps are agreed.

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.* This activity is not anticipated to impact socio-economic disadvantage.

### **Climate Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:* The busking measures outlined in this report indirectly encourage the positive use of public space, thereby promoting active travel and general inclusivity:

#### **Climate Plan Theme 1: Communication and Community Empowerment**

- Aim: To foster participation and collaboration.

#### **Climate Plan Theme 2: Just and Inclusive Place**

- Aim: Ensure that the transition to a net-zero society is a catalyst for building a fairer, healthier, prosperous, resilient, and greener city for all.

#### **Climate Plan Theme 3: Well Connected and Thriving City**

- Aim: Support decarbonisation of transport systems by helping to improve infrastructure for walking, cycling, wheeling, and reducing the need to travel.

#### **Climate Plan Theme 4: Health and Wellbeing**

- Aim: To support equitable access to good quality open space and green infrastructure in the city.

#### **Climate Plan Theme 5: Green recovery**

- Aim: Supporting improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and remote working.

*What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?* The measures outlined in this report are not anticipated to have any direct climate impacts.

*Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?* This is not anticipated.

**Privacy and Data Protection impacts:** A DPIA is required by law where the processing of personal data is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

*Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N*

The project will not collect personal data except through the provision of contact details for the purposes of community engagement. Permission for any other use, or any ongoing use, will be sought at the point at which contact details are provided.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the contents of this report
- (ii) Consider the findings of the review undertaken on 2024 activity
- (iii) Considers the proposals for 2025-26 as outlined in the report
- (iv) Notes that a further update to this Committee will be provided in early 2026