

Agenda

Environment and Climate Change Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 15 January 2025

Time 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Roger Clark, Alex Eyre, Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann (Chair), Claire Martin, Charlie Miller, Pete Neal, Chris Palmer, Ashley Shiel, Julien Speed, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster (Vice-Chair).

Quorum = 5

Pages

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- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 3 October 2024 (Minute Nos. 303 – 310) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

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Issued on Tuesday, 7 January 2025

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Environment Committee	
Meeting Date	15 January 2025
Report Title	Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Janet Hill, Climate Change Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To note the report

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 26 June 2019 the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency setting ourselves challenging targets to achieve net zero carbon for the council by 2025 and net zero carbon across the Borough by 2030.
- 1.2 Part of the declaration requires an annual progress report to be taken to Council in January each year.
- 1.3 This is the sixth annual report covering the activities undertaken towards achieving our targets during 2024.
- 1.4 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the pressures on the Council from resource and economic pressures.
- 1.5 This will be the last Annual Report on our current Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. We are currently drafting a new Action Plan with new targets and timelines which will be taken to the Environment Committee for adoption in the Spring.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since the Spring of 2019 councils across the UK have been declaring climate emergencies of varying types and ambition.
- 2.2 One of the first things the newly elected council did after the May 2019 local elections was to develop a Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration motion which was passed unanimously on 26th June 2019.
- 2.3 Swale has set some of the most ambitious targets nationally to achieve net zero carbon by 2025 as an organisation and by 2030 as a Borough.

2.4 Our policies and strategies are being reviewed and changes are being made as necessary to achieve net zero carbon across the Borough by 2030. A Climate and Ecological Action Plan was developed, as required by the declaration, and was adopted on Earth Day, 22nd April 2020.

2.5 The full Annual Report can be found at Appendix I.

Progress highlights

2.6 A steering group of councillors and officers meets regularly to progress actions and includes coverage of all service areas across the Council.

2.7 The refurbishment of the second floor of Swale House is complete. Master's House is fully refurbished and has been successfully let to a charitable enterprise supporting youth in business.

2.8 Most of our fleet vehicles for directly delivered services have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. The grounds maintenance contract has seen new electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The new waste and street cleaning contract will reduce carbon emissions by re-routing rounds to reduce fuel use by 10-15%, using cleaner more fuel-efficient Euro VI diesel vehicles with an electric lift for the bins and use of EVs for some supervisors and street sweeping vehicles.

2.9 The Improvement and Resilience Fund enabled projects which help to tackle the emergency including LED lighting, tree planting, the car clubs, EV charging points and air quality measures. This fund is now spent.

2.10 We are working with KCC to explore in more detail measures to increase active travel, promote wider adoption of electric vehicles, and improve the air quality especially in the Air Quality Management Areas. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. An air quality tool for health professionals was launched in November. We have developed an air quality planning technical guide and trained planning officers. An Anti-idling campaign has been rolled out with signage, staff training and the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for non-adherence.

2.11 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration stated that we would "eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible" by 2021. A cross department audit of the council's plastic use was undertaken, and elimination or replacement of single use products is underway both in Swale House and across our estate/services. The drinks and vending machine contracts were not renewed. Where it has not been easily possible to remove products, facilities to recycle specific plastic waste in Swale House have been introduced. For example, coffee cups, crisp packets, pens and blister packs can be recycled. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted.

- 2.12 A Fuel and Water Advice Service was developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The adviser was appointed in late 2020 for two years. Funding for a third year was agreed in 2022. In 2024 Swale used some of our HSF to continue this service while other external funding was sought. In 2024 1139 fuel vouchers were issued, 150 Winter Warm packs were given out, and 330 energy efficiency packs. £16k of Southern Water debt was cleared and 32 households moved to a lower water tariff. 130 households were added to the Priority Services Register
- 2.13 KCC has secured LEVI funding and we have been working with them to start the process of on street EV chargers being installed. A ten year Kent wide programme should see 650 chargers installed in Swale. The EV chargers in our car parks continue to be well used.
- 2.14 A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022 and another in Sittingbourne in March 2023. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50% which is above expectations. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments.
- 2.15 The Planning Committee has successfully requested more renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures to be included in new developments. All new developments are encouraged to achieve a 50% saving in carbon emissions over 2013 building regulations (19% more than current regulations). The emerging Local Plan will work to bringing this down to net zero emissions.
- 2.16 This year we have planted 150 standard trees and 6200 whips.
- 2.17 COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste being put out by residents. We are therefore working on education campaigns to get this reduced.
- 2.18 Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be a local authority partner in their 3Cs project which is restoring saltmarshes along the Swale. We are working with Peel Ports on a beneficial use of dredging materials project and we are supporting the local Farmers' Cluster in their work on biodiversity net gain.
- 2.19 Swale supported the University of Kent's successful bid to Innovate UK for the Kemsley Cluster project. Five of the largest manufacturing businesses in Swale are looking at their energy demands and emissions and identifying synergies. Swale sits on the Advisory Board.
- 2.20 Swale is the only second tier authority in Kent with an Active Travel Co-ordinator. A lot of work has been undertaken to promote active travel such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Projects, Active Travel bids to KCC with

funding awarded for public consultation and feasibility studies. The three LCWIPs in Swale will be merged into one.

One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. A scheme that takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. The benefits are bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners learn new skills increasing their employability on release and economically vulnerable people get access to bikes which may make travel to work more viable and improve health. In 2024 150 bikes were donated and 100 distributed.

Looking forward

- 2.21 In 2019 the Council set very ambitious targets to reach net zero. This drove us to start on projects which might have been delayed otherwise – tree planting, LED roll out, car clubs, EV charging, the renovation of Swale House and the Master’s House, to name a few. Our efforts have been recognised by the Carbon Disclosure Project and Climate Emergency UK. Covid brought its challenges but also accelerated the use of virtual meetings and hybrid working, while paper use and business mileage has reduced dramatically
- 2.22 Although we are moving in the right direction, it has become apparent that we will not achieve the aspirational target of being a net-zero council by 2025. There are numerous reasons for this, including a lack of financial support from national government, industry not being able to deliver the required infrastructure, and constantly changing offsetting situations. Despite this, we remain committed to reducing both our own emissions and in leading the residents and businesses of Swale on their own net-zero journey
- 2.23 At Swale we have a small dedicated team which has worked with the Steering Group to embed the cause across the entire organisation. The emergency impacts all our work. Staff recruitment and retention is an issue countywide with staff leaving for London and other unitary authorities. This is a common feature across Kent, where all local authorities are in the process of revisiting their targets and producing freshened action plans. In doing this, the need to explore more joint working Kentwide has been recognised, and efforts are underway to develop these relationships
- 2.24 Swale Council consulted with the Carbon Trust throughout 2024 to recalculate our carbon footprint, as well as model various carbon reduction scenarios going forward. We are also revisiting targets that were set for Borough wide net-zero, and in the process of developing a renewed Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This will set fresh actions to ensure that Swale Borough Council maintains our momentum
- 2.25 The financial situation facing local authorities and the cost-of-living crisis has limited our options and we need to understand what is feasible.

2.26 The revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan will be put to the Environment and Climate Change Committee in Spring 2025 for adoption.

3 Proposals

3.1 To note the report.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 There are no decisions to be taken from this report. However, an alternative option would be to revert to our previous pre-Declaration way of working. This would mean our own emissions would decline more slowly than planned. Borough wide, taking no action would have similar consequences. We would also risk reputational damage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Steering Group has been involved in the development of this report.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Progress on the declaration will support the delivering improved quality of life and delivering the council of tomorrow priorities.
Financial, Resource and Property	The annual report identifies funds that have been used. Activities to address the declaration have financial implications and these will be addressed through the base revenue and capital budget processes. Grants from external sources will also be sought wherever possible.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The progress made to date supports improving our environment and contributes to the development of a more sustainable council and borough.

Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the environment and sustainability have tangible health and wellbeing benefits.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

8 Background Papers

Motion to full council 26 June 2019

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2156/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-Jun-2019%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=10>



Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report 2025

150

bikes distributed
through Swale Cycle
Recycle

218 members

of the Green Grid
Community Forum

£102,367.87

in grants provided
through the community
infrastructure grants

617

car club bookings


Only Kent authority with
an active travel
coordinator

18

installations of solar PV
through solar together

7

households with low
carbon works through
Home Upgrades Grant
scheme

1,139

fuel vouchers issued,
worth £63,727

330

energy efficiency packs
given out

£16k

of water
debt cleared

6

schoolteachers
Carbon Literacy Trained

40.87%

recycling rate

53

members of the Green
Schools Forum

22

staff climate
champions

150

standard trees
planted

6,200

whips planted



Swale Borough Council

Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2025 (looking back at the achievements over 2024)

Background

In June 2019 Swale Borough Council, in common with many other local authorities, passed a motion to declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

This motion included the provision of an annual report in January of each year.

This is the sixth annual report and covers 2024's activities to address the emergency.

This will be the final report on the current Action Plan. We are reviewing both our targets and the Action Plan and will publish a new one in the Spring of 2025.

The original motion also included targets to achieve net-zero within our own operations by 2025, and 2030 for Boroughwide net-zero. The Council is in the process of reviewing these targets. The Carbon Trust was commissioned to undertake a review into the Council's emissions throughout 2024 and the findings will be used to inform any decisions around targeting.

A steering group consisting of councillors and officers representing all service areas of the Council meets regularly to progress the actions within the Action Plan.

The refurbishment of the second floor of Swale House is complete and funding has been agreed for solar PV which will be installed in 2025. Masters' House is fully refurbished. The latter has been successfully let to a charitable enterprise supporting young entrepreneurs.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, and with a total mileage of 55,000 miles have saved around 11.5tCO₂e throughout 2024. The grounds maintenance contract has seen electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The new waste and street cleaning contract has been implemented. While there continues to be teething problems, the use of Euro VI diesel vehicles fitted with electric lifts, and the re-routing of rounds is estimated to reduce emissions by 12-15%.

In 2023, Council funding allowed the roll out of LED lighting replacement, tree planting, a range of air quality measures, and the installation of 18 EV charge points across the Council's car parks. The roll out continued in 2024. Monitoring of the EV chargepoints is underway, and data shows 27,800 electric vehicles were parking in Council owned car parks between January and September 2024. However, most of these were not charging. Less than 1% of parking is EV charging, which is estimated to have offset approximately 66.4 t CO₂e in the same period.

Community Infrastructure Grants (CIG) have provided £102,367.87 to projects which take measures such as insulation and the installation of renewable technologies in community facilities.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

The Rural Swale Small Business Grant Scheme has provided £21,000 to small businesses to make capital investments to support growth and carbon reduction measures.

Together, the schemes have seen 17 projects approved that will reduce emissions. These included the installation of solar PV, low energy lighting, bicycle racks, EV charge points, and active travel infrastructure. Provided alongside this is a bespoke low-carbon advisory service, which has given 17 organisations practical guidance on reducing their emissions.

Swale Borough Council partook in the Home Upgrades Grants scheme (HUG2) to support residents with high energy bills and reduce their properties domestic carbon emissions. Throughout 2024 works were completed for seven households, with six more receiving support.

A successful bid to the Local Authority Tree Fund, Highways England and Trees for Communities has allowed Swale to plant 6200 whips and 150 standard trees.

The Council continues to follow the Air Quality Action Plan (2023-2028) to achieve a cleaner, healthier borough. On Clean Air Day 2024 a new Air Pollution training platform for healthcare professionals was launched. We are working with KCC to explore measures to increase active travel, promote wider adoption of electric vehicles (e.g., on street charging), and improve the air quality especially in the Air Quality Management Areas. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration stated that we would “eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible” by 2021. A cross department audit of the council’s plastic use was undertaken, and elimination or replacement of single use products is underway both in Swale House and across our estate/services. Facilities to recycle difficult-to-eliminate plastic waste in Swale House were introduced in 2023, including coffee cups, cardboard, newspaper, and plastic bottles. Further facilities have been rolled out in 2024 for the recycling of empty pens, blister packs and crisp packets. Swale has also joined a Digital Kent initiative to allow staff to recycle old devices, which are then recycled and given to members of the community to support digital integration. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted.

A fuel and water advice service was developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The adviser was appointed in late 2020 for two years. Funding for a third year was agreed in 2022. Although the Special Project’s Fund funding was exhausted in 2024 Swale was able to support the service continuing using some of our Household Support Fund allocation and Children and Families secured additional external funding. This year the service has issued 1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, 330 Energy Efficiency packs. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly and 6000 people have been reached on social media month. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water and water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products have started to be supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.

A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022 and in Sittingbourne in March 2023. The town of Faversham has two hybrid cars and one electric car, while Sittingbourne has three hybrid vehicles. These have completed 617 bookings in the last 15 months, driving a combined total of 64,522 miles. This is estimated to have saved 4.7 tCO₂.

The Local Plan rewrite is underway, and the Council is utilising this opportunity to pursue the most ambitious options to ensure the next generation of housing is net-zero. The revised Action Plan will include these measures.

COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste being put out by residents. We are therefore working on education campaigns to get this reduced.

Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be a local authority partner in their 3Cs project. This project is now underway, having successfully secured funding, and will see nine hectares of restored saltmarsh along the Swale. We are supporting the Zoological Society of Londons Tranforming the Thamescape, an intergrated coastal habitat restoration project for the Greater Thames Estuary, as well as working with Peel Ports on a beneficial use of dredging materials project.

Swale Borough Council is a member of the advisory board of the North Kent Local Decarbonisation Project (LIDP), an ambitious project to develop and deliver a joint carbon reduction strategy by the Kelmsley Industrial Cluster, supported by Innovate UK.

Swale remains the only second tier authority in Kent with a dedicated Active Travel Co-ordinator, and work is underway to produce a Swale Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.

One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. The scheme takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. The scheme ensures that bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners learn new skills increasing their employability on release, and economically vulnerable people get access to bikes which may make travel to work more viable and improve health. Over 150 bikes have been distributed into the community throughout 2024.

Events have been held to engage and inform residents about the Climate and Ecological Emergency. During Great Big Green Week, Swale received grants from the Royal Horticultural Society and Cycling UK to hold train station gardening events in Queenborough, Faversham and Sittingbourne, as well as two bike repair cafés in Sheerness. Swale has supported litter picking days at Kingsborough Manor Community Woodland, collecting thousands of tree guards to be recycling by CDDL

Recycling. A schools Eco-Fair in October in partnership with Friends of Milton Creek Country Park, Swale Friends of the Earth, and Take Pride integrated physical activity with climate awareness for five classes of students from six local primary schools. Carbon Literacy Training was delivered to STEM teachers from a local secondary school to roll out certification to over 1200 students. A case study is being prepared to enable the rollout of training to more secondary schools. National Tree Week 2024 saw five events take place around the borough, including whip planting, guided tree walks, litter picking and tree guard removal.

Establishing a Baseline

To achieve our targets, we need to monitor the existing situation in both the Council and the borough as a whole. Latest figures on CO₂ emissions are released annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The latest figures give us the data until the end of 2022. Waste collection figures are similarly only updated to the end of the 2023/24 financial year. Until the most update statistics are provided, we will not be able to fully comprehend the impact of the Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in 2019.

The report from the Tyndall Centre recommended that Swale should aim for an annual emissions reduction of 13% in order to achieve our borough wide targets. At 2017 emissions rates, Swale’s carbon budget would be spent within 7 years. Figure 1 demonstrates Swale’s emissions across the borough from 2017 compared to the minimum reduction rate of 13% per year.

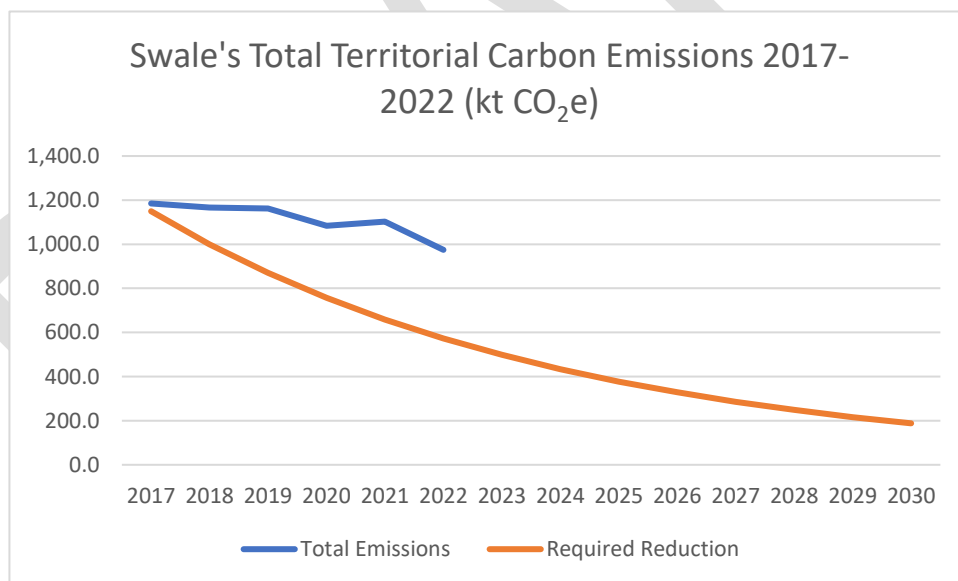


Figure 1: Source, DESNZ

Energy Consumption and Emissions

Traditionally Swale has been a hub of industry, and as such has always had higher energy consumptions arising from the commercial and industrial sectors when compared to other Kent Districts. These two sectors alone are now responsible for 48% of the boroughs total emissions. Emissions from these sectors peaked in 2010 and have consistently declined ever since. This has contributed significantly to the overall downward trend in carbon emissions in the borough (see figure 2).

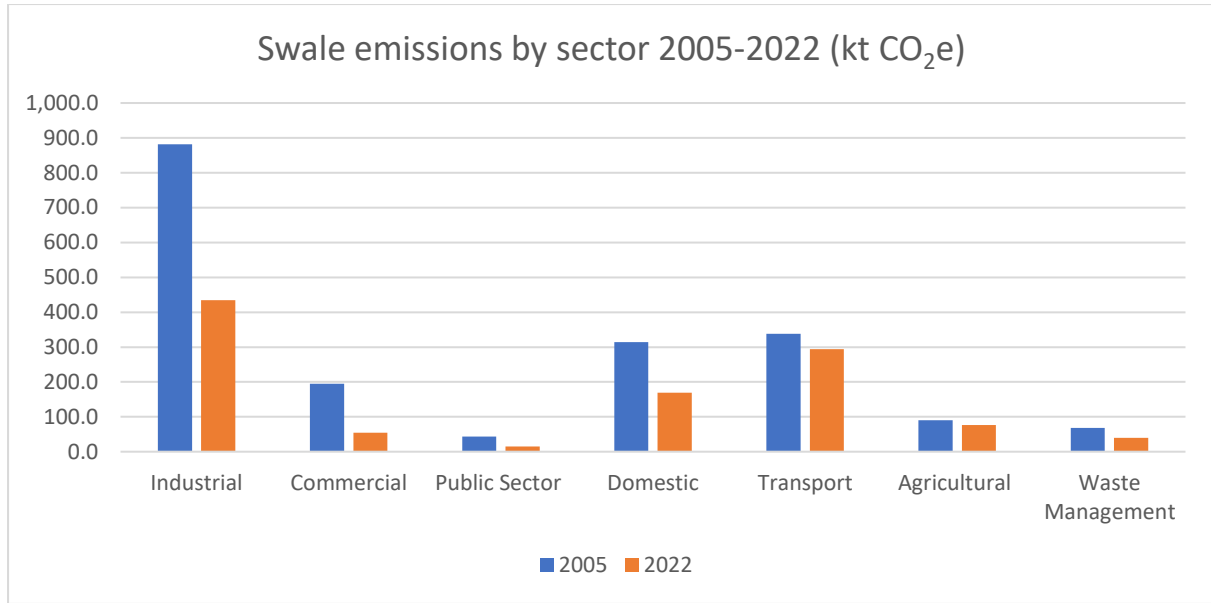


Figure 2: Source, DESNZ

In Swale in 2022, 43% of CO₂ emissions came from the Industry Sector, while only 5% came from the Commercial Sector. Transport accounted for the next largest source of emissions, at 29%, followed by domestic emissions from houses at 17%, agricultural sector emissions (5%), public sector emissions (1%), and waste management (0.1%). Meanwhile, Land Use, Land Change and Forestry meant that 15.4 tCO₂ was sequestered from the atmosphere. This can be attributed to carbon sequestration from forest land and grassland in Swale. The total carbon emissions from the borough have decreased since the declaration was made in 2019, with per capita emissions dropping from 7.8 tCO₂ to 6.3 tCO₂ between 2021 and 2022.

Industrial and Commercial Sectors

Despite a slight rise in 2021, there has been an overall decrease in emissions from industry since 2005, with this trend continuing strongly in 2022. Within the sectors there has been a 52.2% decrease in CO₂ emissions between 2005-2022 (see figure 3).

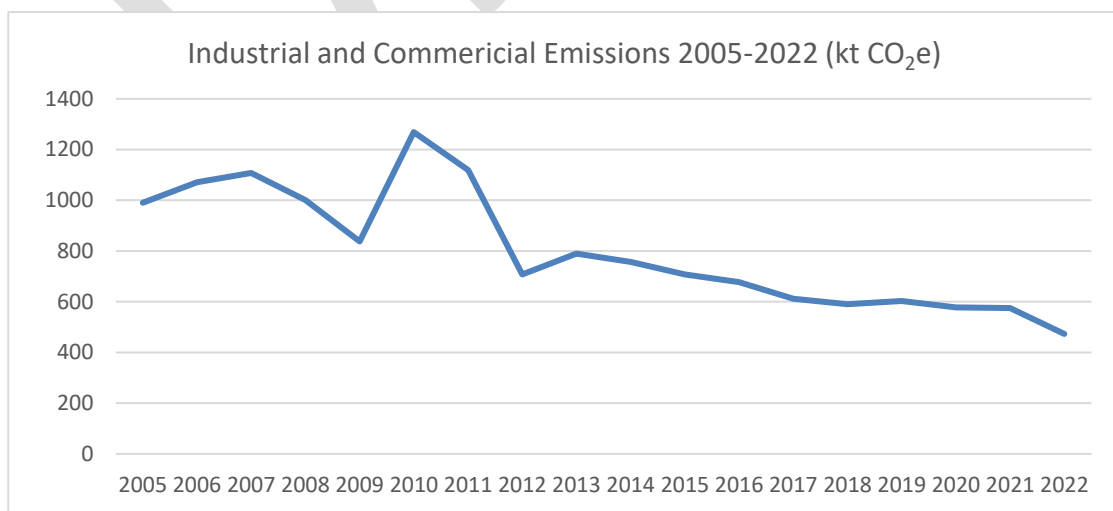


Figure 3: Source, DESNZ

Transport

In Swale, transport emissions have remained stable. The exception to this was during 2020, when reduced movement was seen as the result of Covid-19. The loosening of restrictions in 2021, transport emissions rose by 11.8%, although they remain 12.2% below pre-pandemic levels (figure 4)

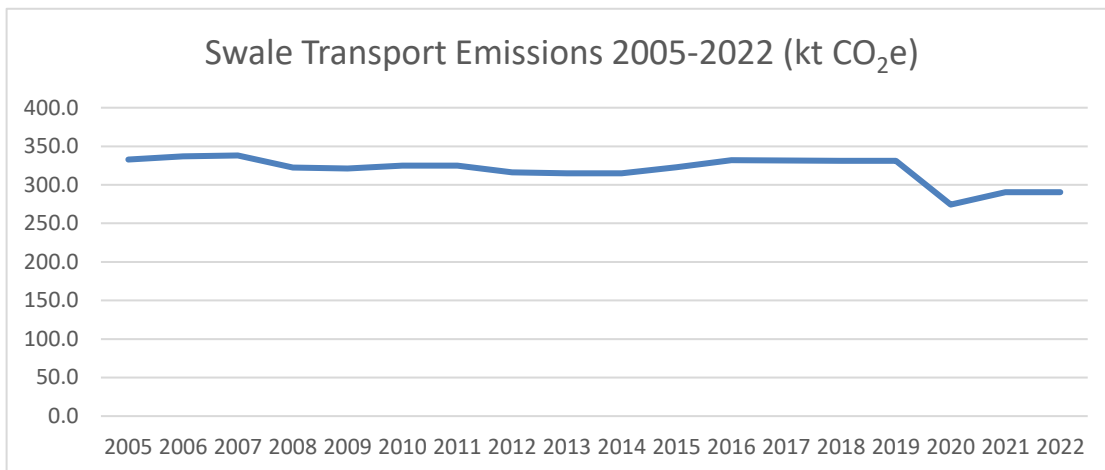


Figure 4: Source, DESNZ

Domestic

Swale's domestic emissions (figure 5) are the 4th highest in Kent, with 72% resulting from domestic gas use. The overall trend in domestic emissions is positive, with a decrease of 46% between 2005-2022. This can largely be attributed to a decrease in emissions relating to domestic electricity use (see figure 6).

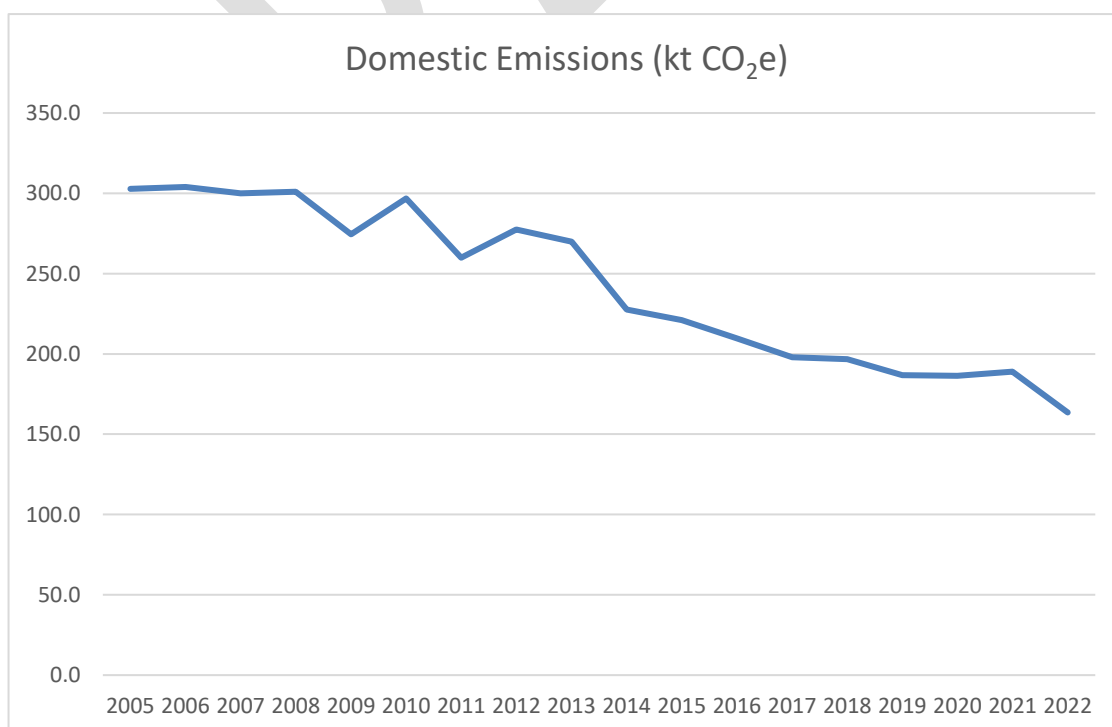


Figure 5: Source, DESNZ

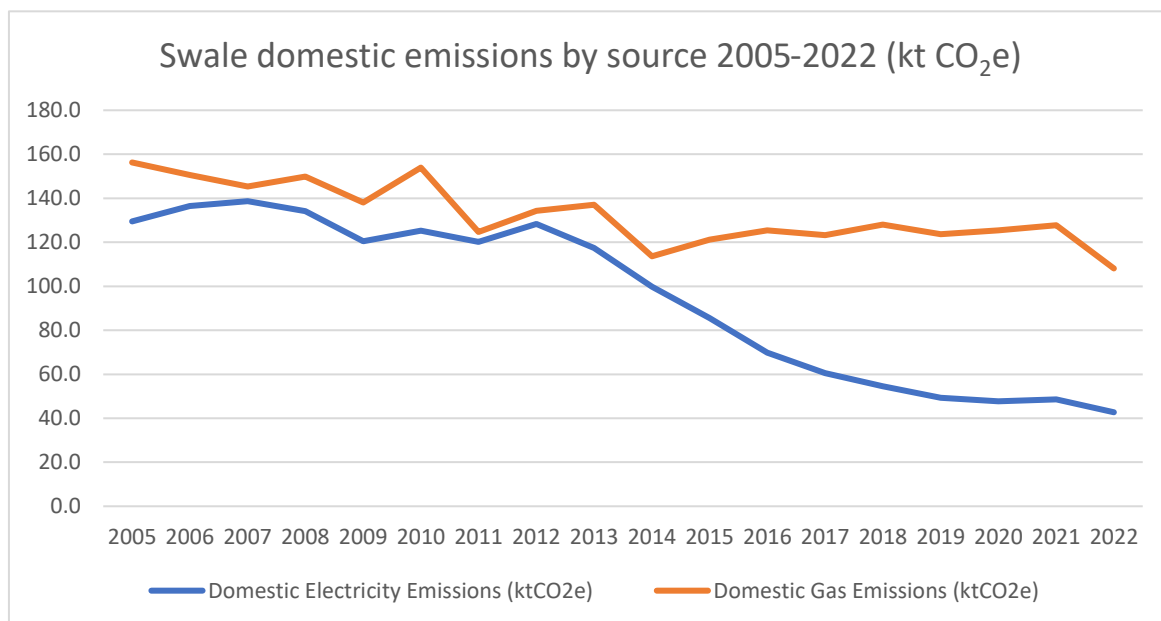


Figure 6: Source, DESNZ

Public Sector

Since 2021, public sector emissions have been included in the DESNZ reporting. These figures show that historically, Swale has had some of the highest public sector emissions in Kent (figure 7).

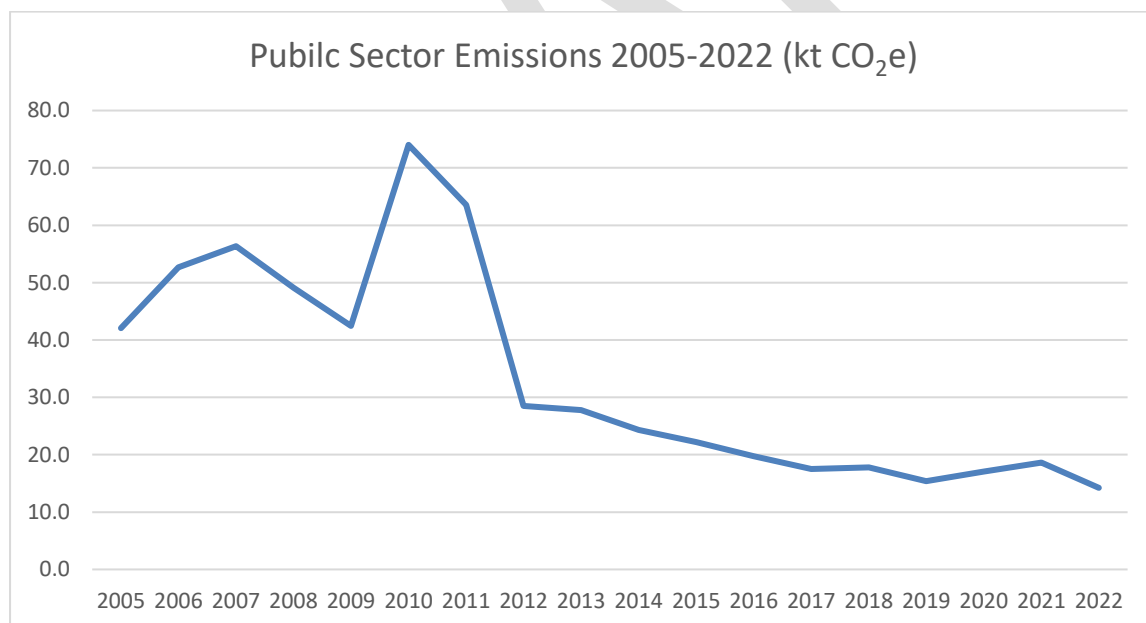


Figure 7: Source, DESNZ

Other Greenhouse Gases

In 2022, DESNZ included a breakdown of other greenhouse gas emissions within territorial emissions data, namely Methane and Nitrous Oxide. Figure 8 shows how these have fallen significantly since 2005.

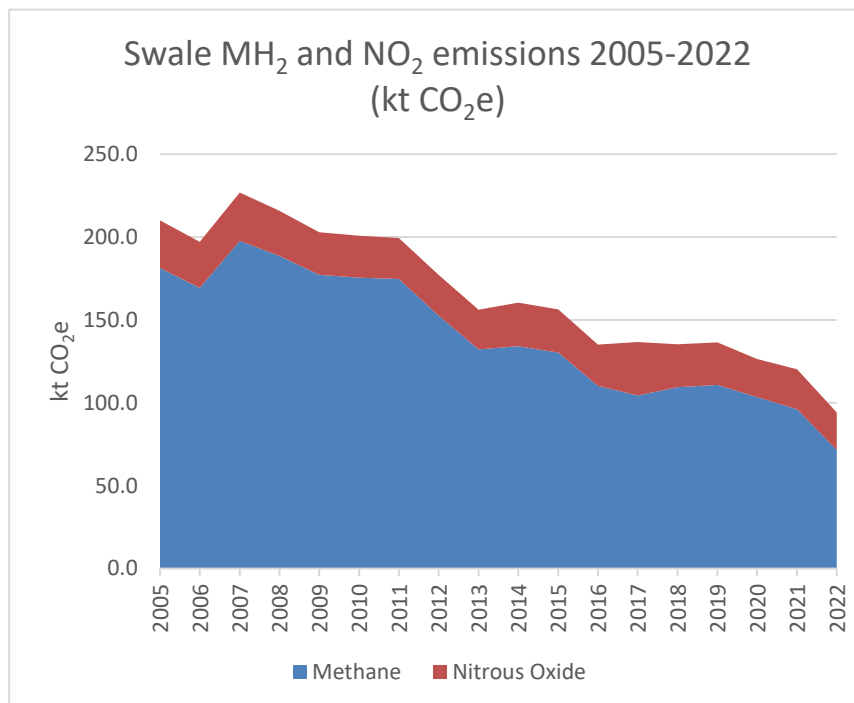


Figure 8: Source, DESNZ

Household Waste

As the waste collection authority, we have targets to reduce the amount of residual waste collected, and increase the proportion sent to recycling and composting. Household waste collection has seen a number of changes this year, with the rollout of the new service from March. Despite the disruption of changing vehicles, disposal locations and having to work from a temporary depot, the new cleaner vehicles and electric lifts will have shown carbon reduction benefits. We have seen an increase in contamination of bins this year which has led to lost recycling loads and we will be focussed on reducing contamination in 2025.

Percentage of household waste recycled and composted (2024)	
Month	% Recycled
January	34.3
February	34.5
March	37.2
April	41
May	42.5
June	45.1
July	39.7
August	34.1
September	35.8
October	32.8

Figure 9 – Source, Waste Contracts Manager

Renewable Generation

At the end of 2022, there were 2,520 installation sites producing renewable electricity in Swale, an increase of 14.2% from 2021. Of these sites, 99.3% were domestic photovoltaics. The remaining sites include 13 onshore wind installations, three sites generating renewable energy from sewerage gas, landfill gas, or municipal solid waste, and one site generating energy from biomass.

The total generation is an estimated 141,589 MWh.

Swale Borough Council's response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

The Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared on 26 June 2019, shortly after the new coalition administration took office following the May 2019 local elections.

Our Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet on Earth Day - 22 April 2020. It was approved by Council in October 2020.

The full action plan can be found [here](#)¹. The Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan sets out the Council's strategy and identifies some enabling tools that are essential to progress across a wide range of areas. The plan then identifies a set of specific actions in the following areas: Council operations; Buildings and energy efficiency; Transport and air quality; Resource consumption and waste; Ecology and biodiversity; Resilience, adaptation, and offsetting. This report reviews progress under each of these headings.

The Action Plan is currently being revised and will be published later in 2025.

Enabling Tools – Cross Cutting Themes and Actions

Swale Borough Council recognises that there are cross-cutting actions needed to underpin the specific actions targeted at the particular causes of carbon emissions. The strategy set out in the Action Plan is based on an approach to Lead, Show, Support.

LEAD: We will lead by taking actions to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's own operations and to enhance biodiversity in the management of the Council's own estate.

SHOW: Use the council's improved operations and estate as beacon of good practice on the road to net zero.

SUPPORT: Assist businesses, organisations, and residents to take their own actions and to build the capacity to move towards a low carbon economy in Swale.

This plan requires that actions which address the carbon footprint of the Council's own operations will be an early focus.

Table 1, below, sets out progress on the enabling actions identified in the Action Plan.

¹ <https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/Climate-Change-and-Ecological-Emergency/SBC%20CEE%20Action%20Plan%20Final%20with%20illustrations.pdf>

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Department	Action	Time scale	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
CEE	Rolling out a climate change learning and development programme for staff to improve understanding of carbon and the wider environmental context. The skills programme will include: Base level training for all employees	Short	-	New project officer undergoing train the trainer training and working on this. Member training being developed	Project officer fully trained.	On Track
CEE	Encouraging personal responsibility and roll out of a Green Champions Network.	Short	-	Meetings and activities ongoing	Meeting and activities ongoing	On Track
CEE	More targeted/ intensive training for organisational decision-makers to enable them to adequately assess carbon impacts in their decisions	Short	-	CL training delivered to Environment Committee in January	In conjunction with KMEG	On Track
CEE	Sharing our knowledge – we will provide capacity to share our learning and approaches with others, such as town and parish councils and community groups.	Short	-	Green Grid mailing list continues to grow, and a monthly newsletter is published. Two in person meetings held.	Green Grid mailing list continues to grow, and a monthly newsletter is published. Two in person forum meetings held, one at Milton Creek Country Park and one at Lynsted Community Kitchen Garden. Six school science teachers received Carbon Literacy Training, with view of rolling out training to all year 9 students.	On Track

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CEE	Promotion of low carbon food through council facilities and communication. Promotion of vegan and vegetarian diets using seasonal, local sources to support local food networks.	Short	-	Limited work during 2023	The Council purchases very little externally produced catering overall. Ad-hoc Climate events do provide suitable catering. Regular messaging through staff forums encourages positive choices.	Started
CEE	Identify and align to national days of action to reinforce the message of collective action.	Short	-	Highlighted where possible across SBC external comms e.g., social media, Inside Swale. Promoted Great Big Green Week but no external funding this year limited our involvement	Highlighted across SBC external comms e.g., social media, Swale Means Business, CEE website, and Green Grid forum newsletters. Promoted Great Big Green Week and ran six of our events	On Track

Table 1 Progress on Enabling Actions

Ten High Priority Actions

In addition to the enabling tools, we selected ten actions to be classed as 'high priority' for 2024. They are shown in table 2 below and discussed under the theme headings which follow.

	Action	Action Owner	Target date	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)
1	Carry out roof top solar PV viability studies on our properties	Property	2023	Large
2	Implement the EV strategy. Lobby KCC re on-street charging	Environment and Leisure	2025	Medium
3	Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.	Environment and Leisure	2025	1,481t offset of woodland
4	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	ECS, Planning, Environmental Health	2030	Large
5	Increase engagement with staff and members to roll out learning about the climate & ecological emergency.	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	Small

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	Review of staff business travel			
6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ED	Medium	Medium
7	Behaviour changes around domestic waste and food recycling	Environment and Leisure	Short	Small
8	Refresh the Action Plan	Environment and Leisure	2024	Small
9	Implement stage 1 of LED roll out across council parks and open spaces	Environment and Leisure	2023	Medium
10	Improve air quality across the whole borough, focussing on the six air quality management areas (AQMAS)	Environmental Health	Short	Small

Table 2 Top Ten Priority Actions 2024

Progress against all actions can be found in the relevant sections of this report.

The chart below gives an indication of overall progress. With the targets for Council operations by 2025 and Borough by 2030 this shows a good level of progress. The following pages summarise the key achievements over the year in each of the areas of the action plan.

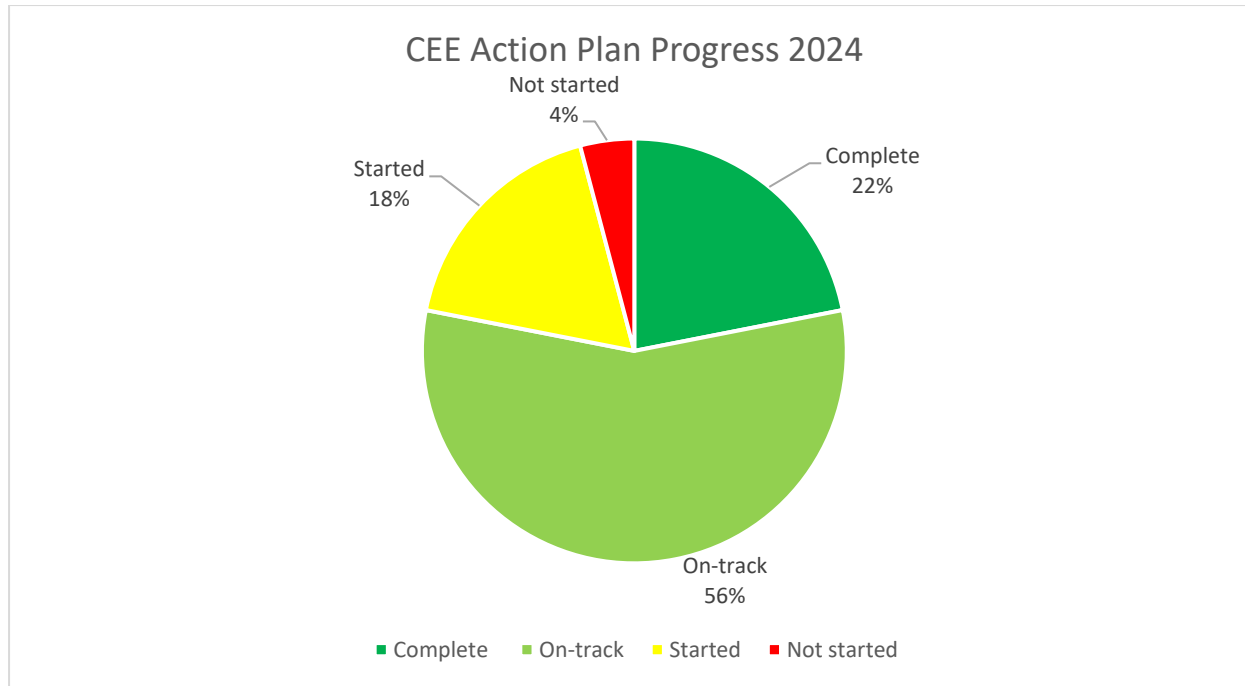


Figure 1 Overall progress against Action Plan as of Dec 2024

Council Operations

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Property	Retro-fit Swale House to cut carbon emissions (eg. extra insulation, triple glazing, heat pump, solar PV).	2025	186	Roof, windows, and insulation complete. Internal work almost complete. Solar feasibility study complete. Master's House units let out	Work complete. Funding for Solar on the roof of Swale House agreed. Currently out for tender, with installation planned for 2025.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Replace SBC fleet vehicles with electric vehicles.	2025	26	Electrification of fleet complete - 9 electric vehicles are now in use, saving almost 20 tonnes of CO2 each year. The Mayor's car is now an EV, as is the Staying Put Handyman's van and an EV pool car is available to staff. The parking wardens' two vehicles are electric vehicles	Complete	
Commissioning	Revise procurement strategy to embed the climate and ecological emergency into all procurement decisions.	2023	780	This new policy provides more emphasis on this topic and crucially require contractors to report back throughout contract terms on their achievement of targets. The Procurement officer has joined the procurement sub-group of the Kent Climate Change Network	Complete	
Property / CEE	Eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible	2021		Tea & coffee facilities amended to remove single-use sachets and included milk in glass bottles. Central recycling centre working well and more to be trialled. A team to volunteer to trial not having black bins in their office – evidence shows it improves recycling rates at central recycling points. Climate Champions working to remove plastics in their teams with good progress so far eg. black sacks and	A Sustainable Events Policy is being written which will apply to all outdoor events taking place on Council land. This will be supported by a Sustainable Events Guide.	On Track

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				challenging suppliers. More messaging to be shared with staff to encourage best practice.		
CEE / Economy & Regeneration	Carry out regular staff commuting survey and encourage commuting by walking, cycling or public transport.	2025	20	Completed July	Complete	
HR	Encourage use of IT to reduce business travel to meetings.	2025	15	Use of IT for virtual meetings established and maintained through flexible working arrangements. All councillors provided with dedicated laptop	Complete	
HR	Review HR strategy to remove incentives to use a car for business travel.	2025	15	There should also be a wider action on staff travel that looks at car parking, council vehicles, electric cars, and other ways of travel to be taken forward by a project team that should involve other HOS and managers currently responsible for these areas	We have promoted a new staff scheme to encourage take up of public transport season tickets.	Started
HR	Introduce a cycle to work scheme that includes e-bikes.	2021	2	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	The Cycle to Work scheme includes e-bikes and the total cost of bikes allowed to be bought by the scheme has been increased.	Complete
Property	New waste contract for Swale House to reduce waste & increase recycling.	2020	6	New waste contract now in place (Reduced the number of collections per year, recycling services are more straight forward. Option to introduce food waste collection.) Contract included company working with us to help reduce waste and promote recycling. Swale House. Central recycling point installed and food waste bins in kitchens.	Complete	
Property	Provide facilities to encourage cycling to work (eg. secure cycle storage, shower)	2020	1	Shower refurbishment complete. 6 extra secure spaces for bike storage	Complete	

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IT	Develop working practices to use IT to reduce use of paper.	2025	5	Paper used considerably reduced.	Paper used considerably reduced. Committee chairs encouraging paperless meetings	Complete
Property / Environment & Leisure Services	Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council estate, including parks and open spaces.	2023	19	We have been working closely with KCC's term lighting contractor, which has resulted in an agreed schedule of works and specifications. The previous estimated cost of this work was around £286k, which is well over our available budget. As such, we have split the works into prioritised "phases" which will be completed until funds are exhausted. To date, we have completed an initial phase to replace lighting along Sheerness seafront and have also completed phases 1.1 to 1.7.	We continue to work closely with KCC's term lighting contractor to progress the LED Lighting Upgrade Project. To date we have completed phases 1.1 to 2.6 of the lighting schedule, as well as some lighting replacements along Sheerness Seafront. A quotation has now been received for phases 2.8 to 3.1 of the works and an order has been issued to the contractor. To date, we have replaced 110 units with LED lights. Whilst it is acknowledged that funding will not be sufficient to complete all of our lighting assets, a substantial number of our lights will be upgraded to LED specification under this project. As part of this work, a complete update of Swale's lighting asset records held by UK Power Networks is also being undertaken to ensure accurate information on our assets is held by the electricity provider.	On track

Table 4 Progress against council operations actions

The Carbon Trust was appointed in 2019 to undertake carbon foot-printing and baselining of our own estate and to propose steps to achieve carbon net zero across council operations by 2025.

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The report was completed in early 2020 - the full version of which can be found [here](#)²

To reach the target of carbon neutrality by 2025, it was identified that the Council must reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions by approximately 68 tCO₂e per year, and scope 3 emissions by 994 tCO₂e per year.

Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy. Scope 3 emissions are all indirect emissions (not included in scope 2) that occur in the value chain of the Council, including both upstream and downstream emissions. This equates to a 14% reduction in emissions year on year to achieve the target.

The Carbon Trust made several recommendations for our buildings and contracts which we have already fulfilled, such as the electrification of our fleet - 9 electric vehicles are now in use, saving almost 20 tonnes of CO₂ each year. The Mayor's car is now an EV, and an EV pool car is available to staff. The parking wardens' two vehicles are electric vehicles.

The Carbon Trust report showed that about half of the council's direct carbon footprint arises from the waste contract. The specification for the new waste contract highlighted the desire for reducing carbon emissions and submissions during the tender came forward with lots of ideas. The new contract started in March 2024 incorporating the following initiatives.

The contractor is a net producer of renewable energy and will self-supply electricity to the Swale depot. Any electric vehicles charged at these sites will therefore be powered with renewable energy.

Electric vehicles are provided for the delivery of some frontline services. Where staff receive a company car, they are encouraged to choose an electric vehicle, from an extensive range.

A sustainable travel policy has been implemented that encourages all staff to consider the impact of meetings and how to plan business travel sustainably. A Sustainability Champion has been recruited at the depot. They will deliver local environmental initiatives including a biodiversity action plan.

² <https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/Climate-Change-and-Ecological-Emergency/Carbon-Trust-Report-on-Swales-Carbon-Footprint.pdf>

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All Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles are Euro VI, which reduces levels of harmful exhaust emissions including nitrogen oxide (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), hydrocarbons (THC and NMHC) and particulate matter (PM). Environmental improvements are delivered from less pollutants and lower CO₂ emissions.

Driver monitoring software is used to support drivers in driving more sustainably e.g., through reduced speed and idling, as well as over revving engines.

Electric bin lifts are fitted to all 26 tonne collection vehicles delivering a 5% saving in fuel, reducing emissions and noise pollution.

Mechanical sweepers are fitted with dust suppression and water recirculation equipment reducing air pollution and water usage. Electric equipment is provided to street cleansing operatives wherever available.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is an alternative available solution. It is claimed that it delivers a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide equivalents when compared to diesel. Currently it is not economically viable but the use of HVO will continue to be reviewed and assessed throughout the contract.

For street cleansing, there are electric hand tools such as leaf blowers. There is also a e-glutton available. This uses a powerful vacuum to ensure swift cleansing of 'hard to reach' areas.

Our new contractors, Suez, have given considerable thought to how we tackle weeds yet reduce the use of herbicides. They are using a 'Foamstream' system. It kills weeds, moss and algae using a combination of near boiling water covered by a biodegradable foam made from natural plant oils and sugars, making it 100% biodegradable. Foamstream is uniquely effective because the foam acts as a thermal blanket, ensuring the heat is retained in the water while it's applied to the plant, keeping the plant in the kill zone for 6 times longer than any other herbicide-free alternative. Foamstream is approved for organic use by the British Soil Association, and the Organic Farmers and Growers Association, meaning it can be used around people, animals, and waterways safely.

Our contractors are in negotiations with a well-known local charity to encourage the re-use of various items collected through the bulky waste, WEEE and textiles service. Re-useable products will be stored for the charity to view and remove any items that they find useful.

The current ground's maintenance contract started in January 2022. Since the commencement of the contract, we have been working very closely with the grounds maintenance contractor to support their implementation of a number of improvements. The

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contract now benefits from a number of electric vehicles, battery operated handheld power tools, and an ongoing commitment to the gradual reduction and complete elimination of the use of pesticides over the five-year contract. Continual identification and implementation of increased biodiversity and varied maintenance regimes including a number of enhanced wildlife areas. Ongoing monitoring and recording of recycling values has been introduced as part of the new contract. Feb 24 – Sept 24 saw recycling figures 5.6t of Dry Mixed, 3.5t of Mixed Glass and 164.5t of Green Waste.

The refurbishment of Swale House was completed in late summer of 2023. The window replacements are bringing a saving of approximately 39 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. Funding has been agreed for the installation of solar PV panels, which should produce 50% of our electricity demand and saving £32,750 pa at current prices. The payback period should be three years.

The bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund was successful and this was used in the Master's House refurbishment. It is estimated that the switch from an oil boiler to an air source heat pump is saving 32 tonnes of CO₂ per annum from operational energy. We have been able to use this investment as match funding for our Levelling Up Fund big *Sheerness Revival*, which includes solar panels for Masters House.

Swale House now has LED lighting throughout. A full survey of all of our lighting assets in Swale, both within our open spaces and within our off-street car parks has been undertaken. Plans are being drawn up to upgrade to LED any lighting units that have not already been converted. LEDs consume up to 70% less energy.

Swale House and other buildings under our control now have both 100% renewable electricity supplies and bio-methane gas supplies.



Image 1: the refurbished Masters House.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Plannin g Policy	Prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan, use a planning condition based on a 50% improvement over current building regulations, ratcheting to 75% and 100% improvement by 2025 and 2028 respectively, as the basis for negotiation with developers through pre-application and planning application negotiations.	2020-2030	400 - 1,000+	This is being encouraged currently, with varied success – generally larger house builders are pushing back more than smaller developers. This, however, demonstrates that this condition is viable in Swale and the importance of adopting Local Plan policy to require it.	Net-zero evidence base being undertaken; this will feed into the emerging Local Plan.	On Track
CEE	Bulk buying scheme for solar PV installations paid-for by residents (in partnership with KCC).	2020-21	100	Two more rounds in 2023 with 72 installations including 3 with battery storage. 184 installations since the project started.	18 installations throughout 2024.	On Track
CEE	Fuel and water poverty outreach service to reduce fuel and water bills for vulnerable residents.	2020-23	to be monitor ed	Project funded by SBC Special Projects ended in October 2023. Over three years over 1500 people reached advised and over 2500 fuel vouchers issued. Part of SBC’s HSF will be used to continue this project managed by Children and Families.	1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, and 330 Energy Efficiency packs have been issued. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly. 6000 people reached on social media monthly. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water. Water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods. 130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products being supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.	Compl ete

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Plannin g Policy	Use the local plan review to investigate the potential to introduce minimum requirements for on-site renewables on new developments.	Short	Large	Included in Local Plan Review	This will be updated as the Local Plan progresses	On Track
Plannin g Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including focusing development on Swale's conurbations to utilise existing vacant sites and under-utilised sites within the settlement confines.	2025	Large	The success of this objective is related to the timescale for adoption of the Local Plan Review, which is currently delayed from its published programme (LDS). A new programme/LDS will be confirmed in late spring/summer, with an anticipated revised Regulation 19 Plan going to consultation in the autumn of 2022 and anticipated submission in Spring 2023.	An updated Local Plan timetable was agreed at Full Council in December 2024	On Track
Plannin g Policy	Encourage high-quality, medium-high density dwellings near to transport nodes. Development could be supplemented by restricted parking, and EV pool-cars.	Short	Large	As above. The next iteration of Local Plan will be looking at reinforcing a land use strategy that focuses development in existing conurbations near transport nodes. The Transport Strategy will be updated to accompany to next iteration of the Local Plan.	An updated Local Plan timetable was agreed at Full Council in December 2024. The preferred growth option will be discussed during the course of 2025/26.	On Track
CEE	Signpost householders and businesses to grant schemes for insulation and energy improvements, such as the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), Warm Homes and advice services such as the Energy Saving Trust.	Short	Medium	Achieved via FWHA, as well as press release and corresponding social media posts encouraging Warm Homes Grant. Regular advice provided via Inside Swale, often referencing Energy Saving Trust.	Regular signposting taking place through Green Grid newsletters, social media, the CEE webpage, and the One Swale Roadshow.	On Track
CEE	Encourage Town and Parish Councils to fit LED lighting and other low energy technology by providing information on cost savings and carbon reduction.	Short	Small	Have written to town/parish councils with further engagement required.	As Dec 23	Started

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Plannin g Develo pment	Provide pre-application advice on energy efficiency and carbon standards and statements for future developments	Short	Large	Being implemented by DM team and Climate Change Officer	Pre-app advice being provided by the DM team and the Climate Change Officer.	On Track
Plannin g Policy / CEE	Investigate the potential to set up an offset fund (106 Agreements) or allowable mechanism for developers to pay into if a certain energy efficiency of buildings is not able to be met in the development and use this money for carbon saving projects	Short	Large	Outputs from KWT/SELEP project delayed and possibility that the amount of offsetting from this scheme will be limited. Other options (eg retrofitting existing stock) to be investigated, but this is complex.	Emphasis has switched to Biodiversity Net Gain. However, offsetting as a last resort will be considered in the next Local Plan.	Started
Plannin g Policy	Investigate options for monitoring and testing conditions compliance on significant major planning applications (250 dwellings +), including those related to climate change (eg the performance gap between buildings designed energy use and actual energy use), with a view to securing S.106 obligations from developers to contribute towards the cost of such compliance monitoring	Short	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review – policy DM3	On hold as implications of new NPPF (Dec 2024) are being investigated.	On Track
Housin g	Enforce private rented and non-domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulations	Mediu m	Medium	We are utilising existing legislation under the Housing act to enforce standards in the private rented sector not MEES at present. We do not have any capacity to deal with additional legislation due to high workloads. We continue to contact landlords who we believe may have properties with Low EPC.	No capacity for MEES investigations.	Started

Table 5 Progress against buildings and energy efficiency actions

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The next Local Plan is being prepared and will incorporate and build on actions for buildings and energy efficiency set out in the Action Plan. Already, new housing developments are encouraged to reduce carbon emissions by 50% more than required in the current Building Regulations. Guidance has been published to illustrate how developers can achieve the reduction. Applicants are signposted towards this information when seeking pre-application advice.

We are working with the Kent Wildlife Trust and local farmers to explore offsetting options for new developments. Where the carbon emissions of a development cannot be reduced, the developer would make a payment into the fund to enable the carbon emissions to be offset elsewhere in the Borough. The carbon price will be set to allow onsite carbon reduction to provide the lower cost option, to encourage carbon emissions to be avoided rather than offset. We are also working with KWT on biodiversity net gain through a saltmarsh restoration project.

We pledged through the Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration to take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on our most vulnerable residents. The Fuel and Water Advice Service is available to vulnerable residents across the borough. Funding was secured for a fourth year of delivery using the Household Support Fund and external funding. This year the service has issued 1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, 330 Energy Efficiency packs. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly and 6000 people have been reached on social media monthly. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water and water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods. 130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products have started to be supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.

Transport and Air Quality

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Environment & Leisure	Install EV charging points across the borough.	2025	to be monitored	10 double charge points fully operational	<p>No further installations as public demand is not sufficient.</p> <p>The Council is working with Kent County Council to deliver on-street electric vehicle charge points in residential areas across Swale through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. Tender is currently out for a charge point operator. It is expected that around 600 charge points will be installed around the borough.</p>	Complete
CEE	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	2030	Large	<p>Faversham LCWIP adopted. Faversham Parishes to Town Project Complete (EAC funded)</p> <p>Sustrans Solar Cycle Way Options Report Completed (developer funded – c.£7k)</p> <p>Three Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4) KCC Submissions developed and presented to residents and Councillors. One ATF4 bid – Faversham Cross Town Path – successful and awarded £995k by Active Travel England (ATE)</p> <p>NCN Route 1 Quietways Bid successful (£30,000) – Faversham – Teynham & Conyer - Feasibility Study Complete</p> <p>NCN Route 1 Barrier Redesign bid successful (£48,000) – initial research & assessment complete.</p> <p>Sheppey Light Greenway Project</p>	<p>New permanent Active Travel Officer appointed to role in August 2024.</p> <p>Faversham LCWIP in place and some schemes/initiatives being delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East to west walking route • North to south design project • Reviewing LCWIP including better linkage to the Highways Infrastructure Plan (HIP) <p>Faversham Hopper Bus commenced in April '24 to restore public bus service to the residents of Oare, Newnham, Lynsted,</p>	On track

			<p>obtained seed funding and has partnered with Greenways and Cyclerroutes Limited to assess potential routes. Work commenced on clearing the route at Power Station Road. ATE Capability Fund bid successful (£40,000) projects underway are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheppey Towns Connectivity Active Travel Feasibility Study (£15,000) • Swale LCWIP data analysis (£10,000) • Faversham Cross Town Path 2 – Construction Bid Study (£15,000) <p>Swale Cycle-re-Cycle established in partnership with HMP Swaleside, Canterbury Bike Project, KCC and FCC</p> <p>Cycling UK Big Bike Revival bid successful (£2,100), community bike rides and events held across the borough.</p> <p>Second Cycling UK Community Cycle Club established with Age UK in Faversham</p> <p>Explore Sittingbourne & Faversham Cycling & Walking Maps completed - available online and at VICs.</p> <p>Linking Coast to Downs Project completed with one new cycle route and two new walking routes. Available online and at VICS</p> <p>WAC funded Swale Trails – two rides and four walks – launched. Available online and at VICs</p> <p>County submissions included to the Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan and with Planning Policy, to the Local Transport Policy 5</p>	<p>Faversham and parts of Teynham.</p> <p>Sheppey Light Railway Greenway (SLGR) have now cleared a section of the old railway from Scrapsgate Road to Sheerness Golf. Permissions are being sought from other landowners to progress other parts of the proposed route.</p> <p>Capability Fund has been awarded of £50,750.</p> <p>Sheppey Towns LCWIP stages 1-4 completed.</p> <p>Swale LCWIP stages 1-4 completed.</p> <p>The forward plan for the LCWIP is to now merge the Sheppey Town and Swale LCWIP together as one Swale-wide LCWIP (whilst ensuring the agreed and adopted Faversham LCWIP in also incorporated) and take this through the committee stage and public consultation in 2025.</p> <p>Sittingbourne Connectivity Study has commenced this year to better understand the area of Sittingbourne and agree proposed 'active travel corridors'.</p>	
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				“Rainbow of Rural Solutions” presented at Cycle County Active County, the national active travel conference in Oxford.		
Planning Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including favouring public transport and active transport. Use Local Plan Review to reduce the need to travel (e.g., for work).	2025	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	On Track
ECS	Promote work-place car chargers (Government funding available).	Medium	Medium	Included in business support on CEE webpages and supported by actions in the EV strategy. Businesses sign posted to grants etc	The Workplace Charging Scheme has been promoted across a range of external communications, including Swale Means Business, the CEE webpage, and newsletters for the Green Grid Forum and Green Schools Forum.	On track
Planning Policy	Through the Parking Standards SPD, require that 10% of parking spaces in new developments are provided with Electric Vehicle charge points (best technology available at the time of planning approval) which may be phased with 5% initial provision and the remainder at an agreed trigger level	Short	Medium	Parking Standards SPD Adopted 2020 - action complete	Complete	

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<p>Planning Policy</p>	<p>Use the Local Plan Review to require that where a development is for more than 50 residential units measures such as the following be provided-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel plan including mechanisms for discouraging high emission vehicle use and encouraging the uptake of low emission fuels and technologies • A welcome pack available to all new residents online and as a booklet, containing information and incentives to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes from new occupiers. • EV car club provision within development or support given to local car club/EV car clubs. • Designation of parking spaces for low emission vehicles • Improved cycle paths to link cycle network. • Adequate provision of secure cycle storage. • Using green infrastructure to absorb pollutants. 	<p>Short</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p> <p>Car club established in Faversham and Sittingbourne enabling developers to include additional vehicles in their developments – initial conversations underway.</p>	<p>As Dec 23</p>	<p>On Track</p>
<p>Planning / Air Quality</p>	<p>Incorporate a policy on air quality in the local plan review</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Small</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review.</p>	<p>On Track</p>

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Planning / Air Quality	Work with KCC to develop the Swale Local Transport Strategy (to run in parallel to the Local Plan Review) and the promotion and facilitation of a major shift in priorities to public transport and active travel.	Short	Medium	A draft Local Transport Strategy went to consultation in Spring 2021 with the Regulation 19 Local Plan Review. This will be updated to accompany the next stage of the Local Plan Review Consultation and together with the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out schemes to encourage walking and cycling and sustainable travel	The Council has contributed towards the KCC Local Transport Plan and the current draft Local Transport Strategy will be integrated into the emerging Local Plan.	On Track
Air Quality	Establish an anti-idling campaign, initially around school sites from which it can be expanded.	Short	Small	Campaign ongoing	Anti-idling patrols have started and will run throughout school terms for 42 weeks.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Develop EV charging strategy including publicly accessible fast and rapid chargers, in council and private car parks (e.g., hotels, shopping centres), and working with KCC for on-street charging.	Short	Medium	ORCS funded EV chargers installed	The Council is working with Kent County Council to deliver on-street electric vehicle charge points in residential areas across Swale through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. Tender is currently out for a charge point operator. It is expected that around 600 charge points will be installed around the borough over a 10-year contract period.	Complete
ECS	Promote business fleet decarbonisation, including the potential cost and reputational benefits.	Medium	Small	Fleet decarbonisation promoted to businesses via ebulletins	Fleet decarbonisation promoted to businesses via ebulletins	On Track
Air Quality	Engage with public transport providers to improve the quality, quantity and affordability of public transport, so that more people commute by public transport, and reduce carbon emissions from buses.	Medium	Medium	Funding largely for subsidised fares. A pilot is operating in Swale.	In 2023 the Environmental Protection Team updated the SBC Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (2023 - 2028). The AQAP includes measure 13 Public transport improvements to bus infrastructure/service - Support public transport providers in a lobbying role for improvements to infrastructure	Started

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					and service improvement. This measure is still to be actioned.	
Planning Policy / Air Quality	Work with KCC to implement 20mph limit across built up areas of borough as a cost effective and swift way to improve air quality, reduce health inequalities, lower carbon footprint and encourage active travel (following the implementation of a comprehensive 20mph zone in Faversham).	Medium	Small	Data collection on going and will be analysed in 2024.	The 2023 updated AQAP includes the following measure: "20 is plenty" zones - to be monitored and reviewed for AQMAs. Newington's air quality and 20 mph limit will be assessed through continuous monitoring to assess long-term air quality changes within the AQMA and potential impact of speed change. Currently, air quality is improving within the district, in addition to Faversham and Newington, therefore it is hard to assess the impacts.	On Track
Air Quality	Undertake a feasibility study on implementing a Clean Air Zone along the length of the A2 from Brenley Corner to the western boundary with Medway.	Short	Small	SBC have had two high-level officer meetings to discuss support of KCC to advance the non-charging CAZ priority measures. The second meeting (28/04/22) identified significant reservations from KCC highways and at this point in time there is little support that can be offered for implementing the non-charging CAZ. However, KCC are keen to support active travel measures and review highway related schemes through other potential traffic orders. Relevant KCC officers will be attending the steering groups to review the AQAP update measures.	Complete	
Air Quality	Apply to Defra's Air Quality Grant Scheme for an electric bus (joint bid with Arriva our main local bus company).	Short	Small	Schools encourages to use 'Pollution Patrol' which is a free interactive website for primary schools, children and their families developed to help raise awareness of air pollution, the	From successful Defra bid Environmental Health launched a 'Clean Air Academy' (November 18, 2024) which is an online tool for health professionals to use to assist	Complete

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				damage it can cause and ways that individuals can help to reduce their impact by changing behaviours.	patients with CHD/COPD in navigating air quality information.	
Air Quality / ECS	Encourage local school and business travel plans to reduce car journeys.	Short	Small	Review under way.	This measure is currently being led by KCC. The updated AQAP includes a measure 3: Air pollution alerts, information to raise awareness on impacts and solutions. Our Kentair website has free air pollution alerts and information. There are currently 336 registered users for the email service. During 2024 SBC have promoted the digital education package 'Pollution Patrol' to schools, with prize draw to encourage schools to use it. Uptake has slowed.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Establish a tree planting strategy for schools (links with biodiversity)	Short	Small	Swale Green Schools' Forum established to meet regularly with primary and secondary schools to discuss issues and projects such as tree planting and other ecological initiatives.	SBC has limited land so tree planting efforts will gradually turn towards supporting other landowners in the coming years. Officers continue to engage with schools regarding tree planting and biodiversity through the Green Schools Forum. Greenspaces team are to begin drafting a strategy for schools in early 2025.	On Track

Table 6 Progress against transport and air quality actions

The Air Quality Action Plan is now active. It outlines what the council will deliver between 2023 and 2028 to reduce concentrations of air pollutants and people's exposure to air pollution. It includes a package of measures that have been prioritised relative to their viability, cost effectiveness of air quality and non- air quality benefits.

The AQAP Steering Group was formed in early 2022 to develop and deliver the Strategic AQAP update for Swale and assessed the AQAP options proposed, including a review of the 2018 – 2022 AQAP measures, including the recommended measures from

the CAZ Feasibility and Source Apportionment studies. The group also collaborated to identify what traffic management interventions were required; what may influence local pollution in the future (i.e., five to ten years); and other existing projects in Swale that could contribute to emission reductions (or increases).

The steering group review of measures also considered the viability of measures and used cost benefit analysis to prioritise measures relative to the cost effectiveness, air quality and non- air quality benefits.

The steering group meets quarterly every three to four months. Task and finish sub-groups are responsible for implementing and delivering specific measures and meet more regularly, reporting back to the steering group. The task groups are also responsible for providing further sub-actions and associated measurable milestones.

Updates on milestones are reported to the AQAP Steering Group and are published through the Councils Air Quality Annual Status Reports. Some new measures include; more car clubs and bike hire schemes; installation of more electric vehicle charging points; anti-idling campaigns; campaigns to educate the public about air pollution and improving walking and cycling infrastructure.



Image 2: Bikes donated through the Swale Cycle Recycle scheme.

We have established car clubs in Faversham and Sittingbourne contracting Hiya Car to run them for us. Two self-charging hybrids and one electric car are available and are located in three car parks in both town centres. Use of the cars has been greater than anticipated with utility rates up to 50%. It is generally considered that one car club vehicle takes up to 18 cars off the road. In addition car club users are more likely to consider walking and cycling as alternative methods of travel. We are working with developers to include car clubs in larger developments.

One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. A scheme that takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. The benefits are bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners learn new skills increasing their employability on release and economically vulnerable people get access to bikes which may make travel to work more viable and improve health. This year over 100 bikes have been distributed and over 150 bikes donated to the project.

Swale remains the only second tier authority in Kent with an Active Travel Co-ordinator. The role was made permanent in the Spring reflecting the Council's commitment to Active Travel. And the new officer took up their role in August.

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The Faversham LCWIP is in place and some schemes/initiatives being delivered - the east to west walking route, the north to south design project, a review to include better linkage to the Highways Infrastructure Plan and additional cycle storage engagement activities are being planned to start in early 2025.

The Faversham Hopper Bus run by Faversham Town Council, commenced in April to restore public bus services to the residents of Oare, Newnham, Lynsted, Faversham and parts of Teynham.

The Sheppey Light Railway Greenway (SLGR) has now cleared a section of the old railway from Scrapsgate Road to Sheerness Golf club plus another smaller section along the route. Permissions are being sought from other landowners to progress other parts of the proposed route. SLRG has applied to the Woodland Trust for some trees to help with this project.

Capability Fund funding has been awarded of £50,750 for LCWIP consultation and implementation studies, and the continuation of the Swale Cycle Recycle project.

Stages 1-4 of both the Swale and Sheppey Town LCWIPs have been completed and it has been decided to merge these into one Swale wide LCWIP (whilst ensuring the agreed and adopted Faversham LCWIP is also incorporated) and take this through the committee stage and public consultation in 2025.

A Sittingbourne Connectivity Study has commenced this year to better understand the area of Sittingbourne and agree proposed 'active travel corridors'. This study will enable us to calculate the costs for each corridor, calculate the calories burned by using each corridor and calculate the typical CO₂ emissions saved based on mode shift to walking and cycling.

The Community Infrastructure Grants have been established to support community infrastructure in Swale, using money allocated from two Government funds - the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Grants are available for capital investment and will prioritise investments for community benefit and include support for: Investment which improves the environmental and financial sustainability of community facilities/amenities through carbon reduction measures.



Image 2: Solar PV was installed on the roof of Graveney and Goodnestone village hall through the Community Infrastructure Grants.

Successful projects have encouraged walking and cycling or the use of electric vehicles through the installation of active travel infrastructure, bicycle racks, and EV charge points. Three village halls have been awarded grants to install solar PV, while other organisations have installed low energy lighting and water irrigation systems. Applicants have also been able to access advice from a low carbon advisor about their project. For example, they can receive advice about ensuring that the project is value for money and suggestions for improvements to the design of their project. The total grants awarded are currently projected to be £102,367.

Rural Swale Small Business Grant Using money allocated from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This funding is available to support small rural businesses to make small capital investments to support growth and carbon reduction measures or support capital projects which help develop the local visitor economy. Businesses can also access support and advice from a Low Carbon Advisor to develop their project. Total grants awarded throughout the scheme amount to £21,000.

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Resource Consumption and Waste

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Planning Policy	Provide guidance on waste minimisation and resource consumption via a Sustainable Design & Construction SPD.	Short	Medium	Not yet started Local Plan Review taking precedence. However, the Local Plan will address waste.	Not Started	
Environment & Leisure	Decrease the amount of household waste collected by promoting each separate method of recycling	Short	Medium	Use of KRP videos to promote behaviour change, along with social media campaigns driven by Swale	Some delays due to the new contract roll out KRP promotion on hold	On track
Environment & Leisure	Increase amount of garden and food waste collected for compost.	Short	Medium	Garden waste subscriptions are still fluctuating. The cost-of-living crisis and increase in subscription costs is having an impact on residents signing up	This year garden waste subscriptions have increased to 21,317 as of the end of December.	Started
Environment & Leisure	Encourage residents to recycle small electricals, textiles and batteries.	Short	Medium	Ongoing	This was removed from the new waste collection contract as a fortnightly kerbside service as there are more reliable options for residents this was promoted in our letters to residents during the service change and is included on our website. However, residents can include these items with bulky waste bookings and the contractor will run new drop-in events across each town in 2025.	On track
Environment & Leisure	Signpost residents to recycling facilities for products that cannot be recycled in the kerbside collections.	Short	Small	Waste Wizard tool now on website	As above update.	On Track

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Environment & Leisure	Reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads.	Short	Medium	Targeting of areas of high contamination and behaviour change communication	Unfortunately, contamination has increased this year. Suez have a project officer who will be working with our Education Officer to target this in 2025.	On track
Environment & Leisure	Encourage litter picks and measures to reduce the amount of plastic litter in the sea	Short	-	Ongoing	Swale has supported 20 volunteer litter pick groups throughout 2024.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Work with KCC to stop export abroad of recyclables	Medium	-	Ongoing, although lack of UK infrastructure to recycle for some specific materials	As Dec 23	On track
Environment & Leisure	Influence KCC to maintain or improve the low levels of waste that go to landfill.	Medium	Small	Ongoing	Less than 1% of Swale waste goes to landfill.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote reduced use of single-use plastic (e.g., in partnership with Plastic-Free Faversham and Plastic-Free Sheerness).	Short	Small	Ongoing	Officers have attended community events to promote the reduced used of single-use plastics e.g the Graveney Flower Festival during Great Big Green Week 2024, with a theme of recycling and flower displayed made from plastic waste.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Work with Kent Resource Partnership on county-wide education/communication schemes	Short	Medium	Ongoing, Swale remain part of the KRP providing funding for county wide campaigns	KRP has reestablished in the later part of the year and is considering impacts from the new waste legislation focussed on Simpler Recycling.	On Track
Environment & Leisure / ECS	Promote improved recycling of commercial waste with businesses across the Borough	Long	Large	Applying to WRAP business waste pilot project. Providing information about Produced in Kent's 'Food Loop' programme. Sharing Blueprint to a Circular Economy information.	Produced in Kent no longer running Food Loop	Started

Table 7 Progress against resource consumption and waste actions

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Wherever possible, use of single-use plastics has been eliminated in Swale House and across our estate. Cleaning product packing has been changed. Drinks machines using plastic sachets have been removed. Vending machine – both food and drink – contracts were not renewed. Biodegradable tree guards are being used for tree and hedge planting in the Council's country parks. A sustainable events policy is being written for outdoor events which take place on Council land, alongside supplementary guidance.

Phase 2 of the Marine Town project was rolled out in October 2023 providing all Marine Town residents the ability to recycle their food waste and reducing refuse collections from weekly to fortnightly encouraging residents to recycle more. Officers have been working hard with the residents of the area providing recycling information and helping to ease any concerns residents had about the change. The project was also rolled out to the few remaining areas of the Borough that did not have this type of collection ahead of the to the start of the new waste contract.

Community litter picks have been supported.

We have continued to work with Defra and LARAC to help steer government policy around the changes to packaging waste legislation.

We support and promote the Repair Cafes in Faversham enabling a large range of household items to be repaired and reused rather than going to waste.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Environment & Leisure	Establish a baseline of trees and woodland on council land and develop a funded action plan to increase tree cover in Swale and promote the benefits of sequestration.	Short	Medium	Ongoing and additional LATF funding applied for	LATF funded planting completed. LATF round 4 application unsuccessful for planting in winter 2024/2025.	On Track
Planning Development	Ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements.	Short	Medium	As a result of the Environment Act 2021 a requirement for mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will come into effect in January/April 2024 for major/small sites schemes	10% Biodiversity Net Gain conditioned in planning permissions. Local Plan will require 20%	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers.	Short	Small	Use of pesticides is only undertaken as spot treatment on hard surfaces with contractors having converted to a chemical with a lower rate of active ingredient to further reduce pesticide use. Street cleansing contract to use alternative methods from 2024.	Throughout 2024 100 litres of pesticides in the form of Roundup Pro Active 360 was used. This is down from the 160 litres used throughout 2021.	On Track
environment & Leisure	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	Unfortunately, the compost supplier unable to deliver.	Completed	
Environment & Leisure	Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.	Short	Small	Discussion with local coppice contractors to identify appropriate timber from the felling plan for this season's contracts are ongoing. 1.5 Ha coppiced	0.38 hectares coppiced in 2024	On Track

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Environment & Leisure	Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work in Swale's efforts to achieve action 1	Short	Large	Continuing work supporting community groups. Also encouraging tree planting via Swale Green Schools Forum. Successful tree week.	A wide range of organisations have consistently been involved in tree planting efforts. These have included local primary schools, Friends of Milton Creek Country Park, and Friends of Faversham Rec.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote forest and beach schools	Short	Small	Regular interaction with 20+ primary and secondary schools via the Swale Green Schools Forum	Benefits of forest and beach schools promoted through the Green Schools Forum. Continuing to work with and support local organisations which provide forest schools to local primary schools.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Support Swale in Bloom working with schools, community groups, voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils to enhance local habitats and wildlife corridors improving biodiversity conditions across Swale	Short	Small	Ongoing but no officer resource to support In Bloom. No funding for plant giveaways in Great Big Green Week	In-Bloom role now obsolete. Swale working with Kent Wildlife Trust Group and local farming cluster on the 3C's project to restore grazing saltmarsh along the Swale.	On Track

Table 8: Progress against ecology and biodiversity actions.

This planting season we have planted 6200 whips and 150 standard trees.

Five events were hosted across the borough during National Tree Week 2024. This saw hundreds of whips planted at Milton Creek Country Park and Faversham Recreation Grounds, tree guard removal and litter picking at Kingsborough Manor Community Woodland, and a guided tree walk through the King George V park.

We are reducing our use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer and encouraging the use of compost from food waste recycling. Work is underway to incorporate a term into allotment agreements that prevents the use of pesticides.



Image 3: Hedgerows planted during National Tree Week

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The renewed grounds maintenance contract also included increased provisions to reduce fertilisers, pesticides and weed killers, as well as a commitment to replace vehicles and tools with electric models from year one. The waste contract does not use any pesticides.

The Environment Grant scheme reopened in October using ring fenced funds from littering fines.

Developers are being encouraged to leave gaps in garden walls and fences for hedgehogs. Warning stickers from the Hedgehog Preservation Society have been added to strimmers and other heavy machinery used by SBC contractors, Blenwood. Operatives have also been made more aware of the need to protect wildlife through training talks.

This year 0.38 ha of coppicing occurred in Perry Wood. This brings work in line with the management plan. All the timber has been used for fencing locally. Coppicing enhances biodiversity, allowing wildflowers and insects to thrive as light reaches the woodland floor.

Our Green Grid network continues to grow and keeps like-minded organisations and individuals in touch. We publish a monthly e-newsletter with a mailing list of over 200 local businesses, parish councils, community groups and individuals. The combination of twice-yearly networking meetings. In April 2024 we visited the Lynsted Community Kitchen Garden – a new garden which started during Covid and now 201 members growing a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers organically. In October we visited Milton Creek Country Park to see the work of the Friends group and the new cabin which was partly funded by a Community Infrastructure Grant from Swale, using funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Image 4: Guests at the Green Grid autumn meeting, hosted by Milton Creek Country Park.



Image 5: Work begins at Conyer, where the restoration of coastal grazing saltmarsh is underway.

The drafted Local Plan includes policies to improve development outcomes with support for access and recreation, green spaces, biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation. There are policies to ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements. We have gone beyond the Government requirement of a 10% biodiversity net gain and are seeking a net gain of 20%.

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We were approached in 2021 by the Kent Wildlife Trust to be their only Kent local authority partner in their Wilder Carbon Project which is investigating both offsetting and biodiversity net gain. We are working with them and a local landowner on a project exploring saltmarsh restoration in the Swale. Work has recently commenced at Conyer. A similar saltmarsh restoration/creation project is being undertaken by Peel Ports to make use of beneficial dredging materials. We are supporting the Zoological Society Of London in their Transforming the Thames project.

A cluster of thirty local farmers is working on the opportunities for biodiversity net gain in the Borough and has identified some sites and exploring the feasibility of others.

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Energy Generation and Storage

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Property	Perform a viability survey at all existing council owned sites to potentially accommodate solar PV.	Medium	Small	Feasibility study commissioned and completed	Funding agreed for Solar on Swale House. Tender ongoing, and installation planned for 2025.	Complete
Environmental & Leisure / ECS	Signpost residents and businesses through communicating benefits, understanding financial and business cases for installing energy storage with grid balancing capability.	Long	Medium	General business engagement on energy and low carbon solutions continued, however no specific focus on energy storage due to lack of time, skills, and resources.	Not Started	
Environment & Leisure	Encourage and support community energy projects. Consider community energy as a financial investment.	Medium	Small	Encourage and support local community projects	Not Started	

Table 9 Progress against Energy Generation and Storage actions

Permission was been granted, by the Secretary of State, for the Cleve Hill Solar Park which is now under construction. This will consist of 800,000 solar panels over an area of approximately 360 hectares on the Graveney Marshes. It will have the capacity to generate 350MW of electricity and will have 700MW of battery storage.

The draft Local Plan includes policy on renewable technology at micro and macro levels.

Resilience, Adaptation and Offsetting

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Planning Policy	Incorporate a policy on climate change adaptation in the local plan review	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Timetable for Local Plan approved (LDS).	Started
Emergency Planning	Regularly update the Emergency Plan for the borough in partnership with the County Council	Short	-	Ongoing	Council website signposts people to the Kent and Medway Prepared website, which highlights resilience plans and actions to be taken in emergencies.	On Track
Planning Policy	Ensure the Local Plan reflects the level of current and future flood risk, and development in flood risk areas is avoided.	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is being undertaken as part of the emerging Local Plan. This will support better understanding of current and future flood risk.	Started
Planning Policy	Ensure the Local Plan provides for linking habitat restoration and creation to improve access, flood protection and water quality.	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Emerging local plan to investigate habitat restoration and linkages through a suite of environmental policies, as well as the Councils Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.	Started
Planning Policy	Ensure the installation and maintenance of green infrastructure via the Local Plan and suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements in subsequent developments.	Short	Medium	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review and Planning Application decisions	The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is to be a golden thread throughout the emerging Local Plan.	Started

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Planning Policy	Work with the Environment Agency, KCC and the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to manage flood risk and coastal erosion across Swale.	Medium	-	Ongoing	Planning Policy working on a range of environmental projects with the EA, KCC, and the LMIDB.	On Track
Planning Policy	Work to restore natural processes within river systems to enhance water storage capacity and improve water quality.	Medium	-	Contact with LMIDB	The Council is supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 3C's project to restore grazing saltmarsh around Conyer Creek. • The ZSL Transforming the Thames/Restoring the Thamescape projects to restore seagrass beds, saltmarsh and native oyster beds in the Thames Estuary. 	On Track
Planning Policy	Develop and start to implement a Nature Recovery Network, linking habitat restoration and creation to improved access, flood protection and water quality	Medium	Small	Planning Policy are working with KCC on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Local Nature Recovery Network will be an important element of the forthcoming Local Plan	Policy and Resources Committee agreed to confirm that the Council is content with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to go out for public consultation.	On track

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Planning Policy	Work with Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to minimize the long-term risk of flooding	Short	-	Ongoing	Planning Policy works closely with LMIDB on a number of projects.	On track
Emergency Planning	Make sure everyone can access the information they need to assess any risk to their lives, livelihoods, health and prosperity posed by flooding and coastal erosion;	Medium	-	Flood Awareness Week promoted via social media	Advice for resilience against major emergencies including flooding promoted on the Swale Borough Council website.	Started
Emergency Planning	Bring the public, private and third sectors together to work with communities and individuals to reduce the risk of harm – particularly those in vulnerable areas.	Medium	-	Promote third party events	Promotion of third-party events ongoing through CEE webpage and Green Grid Community Forum.	Started

Table 10 Progress against Resilience, Adaptation and Offsetting actions

The draft Local Plan includes policy on climate change adaptation.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments have been undertaken and the Local Plan will reflect the level of current and future flood risk, and development in flood risk areas will be avoided.

The Local Plan will provide for linking habitat restoration and creation to improve access, flood protection and water quality, and the installation and maintenance of green infrastructure via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements in subsequent developments.

We regularly update the Emergency Plan for the Borough in partnership with the County Council and make sure everyone is able to access the information they need to assess any risk to their lives, livelihoods, health and prosperity posed by flooding and coastal erosion.

We bring the public, private and third sectors together to work with communities and individuals to reduce the risk of harm – particularly those in vulnerable areas. We have supported communities in the development of their localised emergency and flood plans. We advertise the Environment Agency run awareness weeks.

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We are working with the Environment Agency, KCC and the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to manage flood risk and coastal erosion as appropriate across the Borough.

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Looking forward

In 2019 the Council set very ambitious targets to reach net zero. This drove us to start on projects which might have been delayed otherwise – tree planting, LED roll out, car clubs, EV charging, the renovation of Swale House and the Master’s House, to name a few. Our efforts have been recognised by the Carbon Disclosure Project and Climate Emergency UK. Covid brought its challenges but also accelerated the use of virtual meetings and hybrid working, while paper use and business mileage has reduced dramatically.

Although we are moving in the right direction, it has become apparent that we will not achieve the aspirational target of being a net-zero council by 2025. There are numerous reasons for this, including a lack of financial support from national government, industry not being able to deliver the required infrastructure, and constantly changing offsetting situations. Despite this, we remain committed to reducing both our own emissions and in leading the residents and businesses of Swale on their own net-zero journey.

At Swale we have a small, dedicated team which has worked with the Steering Group to embed the cause across the entire organisation. The emergency impacts all our work. Staff recruitment and retention is an issue countywide with staff leaving for London and other unitary authorities.

This is a common feature across Kent, where all local authorities are in the process of revisiting their targets and producing freshened action plans. In doing this, the need to explore more joint working Kentwide has been recognised, and efforts are underway to develop these relationships.

Swale Council consulted with the Carbon Trust throughout 2024 to recalculate our carbon footprint, as well as model various carbon reduction scenarios going forward. We are also revisiting targets that were set for Borough wide net-zero, and in the process of developing a renewed Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This will set fresh actions to ensure that Swale Borough Council maintains our momentum.

The financial situation facing local authorities, as well as the cost-of-living crisis has limited our options and going forward, we will need to assess what is feasible.

The revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan will be put to the Environment and Climate Change Committee in the early part of 2025.

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Conclusion

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan was adopted in 2020 and was scheduled for review in 2025. The new Action Plan is due to be published in early 2025. As such, this is the final report based on the original action plan.

The past five and a half years have been extremely unusual and challenging and have certainly contributed to the hampering of the transition to net-zero. Yet in the time since Swale declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency the Council has remained strong in our ambition and achievements, both in the measures we have taken to decarbonise within our operations and influence wider net-zero throughout the Borough.

Among the highlights of our works are the electrification of the SBC fleet, the improvement of electric vehicle infrastructure across the borough, the establishment of car clubs in two of the district's towns, the use of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to complete low-carbon refurbishments of Swale House and Masters House. The new refuse collection contract facilitates progressive savings and will oversee the use of more efficient and cleaner vehicles. Work on Biodiversity Net Gain is underway, while a progressive Local Plan is being developed.

The Council has forged strong partnerships with a wide range of businesses, community groups, and environmental organisations to engage and inspire residents around the topics of climate change and biodiversity loss, encouraging positive community action.

It is always the case that initial reductions in carbon emissions will be the easiest to make, and that without ambitious support from central government, substantial year-on-year cuts will become increasingly difficult.

While our new Action Plan will reflect these barriers, it will also build on the efforts and relationships that have been developed as the result of the 2020 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan, ensuring that Swale Borough Council continues to lead by example and support the wider Borough in achieving net-zero.

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Environment Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	15 January 2025
Report Title	Barbeques in Public Spaces - Review
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment & Leisure
Lead Officer	Graeme Tuff, Greenspaces Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To note the report and agree not to proceed with a specific PSPO ban on the use of disposable barbeques in Council open spaces.2. That Officers undertake a media and social media campaign at the appropriate time of year to highlight the risks of use of disposable barbeques and fires in public open space, and to clearly state that they are not permitted under our current byelaws.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following a Council recommendation to look into a proposed Motion “Use of BBQ’s” and the subsequent Environment Committee report and debate, this report updates Members following a further year of monitoring locally by Kent Fire & Rescue Services and identifies the experience from neighbouring authorities who have enforcement powers to ban the use of barbeques through byelaws and Public Space Protection Orders.
- 1.2 This report summarises the information previously provided and makes a recommendation not to proceed with a specific ban on the use of disposable barbeques in Council open spaces.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Summer of 2022 set new records for heat in the UK and brought to the public awareness the risk of large-scale fires in open spaces. Kent saw a number of major incidents, with Swale experiencing a small number of recorded fires in our open spaces.
- 2.2 As a result, a Motion (see appendix I) was presented to Council on 7 December 2022. Councillors referred the Motion to the next feasible Environment Committee without debate and this took place on 2 March 2023 Minute no. (760)/2/3/23.
- 2.3 The original motion asked Councillors to note the comments made by London’s Fire Commissioner which amongst other things, suggested a national ban on the

- sale of disposable barbeques and asked the Council specifically to write to Central Government and the local MPs for Swale in support of a national ban. At the meeting on 2 March 2023, it was agreed that the Chair of the Environment Committee send a letter to Central Government and Local MP's, lobbying for a national ban on the sale of disposable BBQ's.
- 2.4 The motion also proposed a ban on the use of barbeques from all council owned land to the extent that this is possible, with the exception of registered campsites, beach huts or events that have a risk assessment in place and a method agreed with the council regarding use and disposal.
- 2.5 Following Members request that monitoring of incidents be undertaken a further report to Environment Committee was considered on 17 January 2024, Minute No. (564)17/1/24. This identified that limited monitoring information was available from Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service and that Canterbury City Council's Public Space Protection Order ban on the use of disposable barbeques, had only just been introduced with only warnings being issued. Further monitoring and update report was requested.
- 2.6 Barbeques have a number of risks when used in public spaces. As mentioned in the motion, a single ember could in certain circumstances create a large-scale fire, putting those in the public space at risk and greatly impacting nature and biodiversity. Furthermore, if they are left in-situ they create a risk of other users of the spaces touching/falling/stepping on them and causing injury. Finally, it is difficult to dispose of these products safely. They remain hot for a long time after use and are therefore difficult to take home. This results in them either being left or placed in public litter bins and examples have been seen elsewhere where litter bins then catch fire.
- 2.7 The motion asked for views on how we might control use and implement fines for non-compliance. The original report to Environment Committee identified that Swale currently has byelaws in place for our parks and open spaces and foreshores. The 2005 Pleasure grounds, public walks and open spaces document details the sites where the byelaws apply and the conditions of use. Under the protection of the ground, its wildlife and the public, we have a section specifically for fires. However, The Sheppey Promenade Beach and Foreshore byelaws of 1991, do not contain any reference that could be considered to cover the use of disposable barbeques. Therefore, at the current time it would be difficult to enforce any ban on use of barbeques on the beaches.
- 2.8 As such, there are some existing legal mechanisms in place to deal with the issue should it be felt required. The issue with byelaws is having the resource to enforce them and if we were to enforce, there is currently no option to impose an immediate fine. In all enforcement we have to consider what is proportionate and the level of fine imposed is generally low. Therefore, one would suggest this mechanism would only be used in extreme circumstances.
- 2.9 Furthermore the separation of particular instances from enforcement makes for an inconsistent approach and open to challenge. For instance, a beach hut owner

could not accurately be evidenced as being a lower risk than somebody simply sitting in a park or beach location. This becomes easier in the example of events, as these are generally pre-planned, registered with the Council and event documents provide evidence of safety and risk assessments. Our 'land hire' form is used to capture this information for any requests to use Council owned land for events.

2.10 We have liaised with neighbouring Boroughs:

- Maidstone – Rely on their “no fires” Parks & Open Spaces 1998 Byelaw and commented that for a specific PSPO, additional resources would be required for enforcement, signage and administration. They further commented that a public awareness campaign at the appropriate time of year is more effective.
- Canterbury - Have used different legislation to try and enforce a ban on barbeques in public places. This stemmed directly from a range of incidents that resulted in considerable damage to beach huts, litter bins and personal injuries. The Public Space Protection order, amongst other things included '*lighting or fuelling any open fire; and using, lighting or discarding any disposable barbecue*'. This allows for enforcement officers to issue immediate 'fixed penalty notices' (FPNs).

This PSPO came into force in Feb 2023 and feedback provided by the authority advises that in the first-year warnings were issued as an introduction to the new order, with no FPN's issued. In the second year 2024, Canterbury City Council have advised that no FPN's have been issued.

2.11 Swale Borough Council has a range of PSPOs in place covering dog offences, alcohol control and the gating of specified alleyways with regular reviews in place. Consultation with the public and police would be required to create a new PSPO related to this motion and evidence would need to directly link to disposable barbeques being the source of incidents.

2.12 Monitoring by Kent Fire & Rescue Services identified 4 fires in Swale linked to disposable barbeques recorded in 2023 and a further single incident in 2024. However with limited detail provided, while these were within the public realm it has not been possible to identify if these were specifically in Public Open Spaces or Seafront areas controlled by the Council.

3 Proposals

3.1 Given the low level of incidents recorded by Kent Fire and Rescue Services, it would be difficult to justify the introduction of a specific additional byelaw or PSPO banning the use of barbeques in public open spaces at this time.

3.2 It is further recommended that Officers undertake a social media campaign at the appropriate time of year to highlight the risks of use of disposable barbeques and fires in public open space, and to clearly state that they are not permitted under our current byelaws.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Amend the current byelaw for foreshores and beaches to include a section on fires as per the pleasures grounds byelaws. As discussed, enforcement resources would need to be reviewed at a time where the Council is reassessing what it can and can't do due to the pressures of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 4.2 Seek to implement a new PSPO and go out to consultation on including the ban on use of disposable barbeques. This is not recommended at the current time as it is not felt there is sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion and we may be challenged on its implementation.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 We consulted with other neighbouring Councils, one of which have recently implemented a ban and we have sought feedback following introduction of their PSPO.
- 5.2 We have liaised with Kent Fire and Rescue colleagues through the Swale Community Safety Partnership, who have provided statistics for this report.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposal would align to Environment- To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.
Financial, Resource and Property	The enforcement of byelaws and/or PSPOs would need either an increase in internal officer resource or increased costs of using an external contractor if they were to be effectively used. This would need to be reviewed against the current Medium Term Financial Strategy and against the Council's priorities.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	As discussed in the main document, the Council currently has byelaws in place that could be used if required. There is strict guidance in place for the use of PSPOs and we would need to evidence the impact their use was having in Swale in order to justify.
Crime and Disorder	There was an increase in fires recorded across Swale, however the source of these was not known. It is considered the hot weather will have contributed alongside deliberate acts. Monitoring over the years has identified fires caused by disposable barbeques.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Fires in greenspaces can harm wildlife and affect the biodiversity of the location.

Health and Wellbeing	None Identified at this stage
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The main report documents the main concerns relating to use of disposable barbeques in public spaces. Where there is a history of issues, we work with Kent Fire and Rescue to reduce risk e.g. through introduction of fire breaks in grassland and ensuring appropriate access to fire crews.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Motion presented to Council

8 Background Papers

- None

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Motion - Use of BBQ's

The summer of 2022 has set new records in the UK for heat. Connected to this have been numerous fires that have devastated large plots of land, destroyed properties, killed animals, caused injuries and endangered life. Fortunately, it appears no life was lost but the impact of these fires will last for years.

Some of these fires were caused by people having BBQ's and failing to dispose of them after they have finished. One ember can cause a large fire these can be from a BBQ or other means with a naked flame.

Barbecues and any naked flames pose a significant fire risk if they are not put out properly and, if necessary, disposed of. These can cause grass fires in open spaces and scorching the grassed areas. The dry spell has left grassland like a tinderbox and increases the chances of a fire caused by a disposable barbecue.

London's Fire Commissioner Andy Roe has said "Despite our grass fire warnings, we've still seen some people behaving carelessly and recklessly. On Saturday (23rd July) firefighters prevented a serious blaze at Wanstead Flats caused using a disposable barbecue. We need urgent action now to see a national ban on the sale of disposable barbecues. They can be bought for as little as five pounds and can cause untold damage, especially when the grass is as dry as it has been over the last few weeks".

This council recognises the threat BBQ's and naked flames can have on our land but also that they can also be used appropriately and are an important aspect to the tourism of the area. Several years ago this council agreed a motion to ban the use of lanterns on council land due to the risk they present to livestock and fire. BBQ's if unmanaged are an even greater risk.

This council recognises the comments from Andy Roe and resolves to ban the use of disposable BBQ's from all council owned land with the exception of registered campsites or events that have a risk assessment in place and method regarding use and disposal agreed with the council.

This council:

- Recognises the comments from Andy Roe.
- Would support a ban on the use of BBQs from all council owned land, to the extent that this is possible, with the exception of registered campsites, beach huts or events that have a risk assessment in place and a method agreed with the council regarding use and disposal.
- Would support the introduction of a charge/fine to people who did not follow such a ban, to the extent that this is possible.
- Requests the Environment committee to undertake the necessary work to develop and adopt a policy which would fulfil these objectives, to the extent that they are feasible within the law and any other relevant constraints.
- Calls on the Government to introduce a national ban on the sale of disposable barbecues as soon as possible and resolves to write to the relevant Government Departments and our local MP's expressing this view.

The intention of this motion is also connected to the environmental emergency and our need to protect of grass lands for peoples leisure and welfare of animals and all those who rely on the grasslands. We recognise that a blanket ban on BBQ's would have serious consequences on aspects of our tourism in Swale as it is popular with people when camping and we do not wish to deter this.

Proposer: Cllr Bowen
Secunder: Cllr Dendor

Environment and Climate Change Meeting	
Meeting Date	15 January 2025
Report Title	Swale Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Report
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment & Leisure Phil Sutcliffe, Communications & Policy Manager
Lead Officer	Janet Dart, Policy & Engagement Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the content of the Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Report. 2. To agree the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Member Panel as set out in Appendix I.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the scrutiny review of the mobilisation of the new waste and street cleansing service for Swale. It describes the process taken in carrying out the review and sets out the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the member panel going forward.

2 Background

- 2.1 The previous waste and street cleansing contract expired on 23 March 2024. The Mid Kent Waste Partnership (MKWP) (Swale, Ashford and Maidstone Borough Councils) undertook a joint tender process to find a supplier for an 8-year contract.
- 2.2 There had been very little change in the service over the course of the 10-year contract between 2013 and 2023 (the first time the council entered the MKWP). As we had the same contractor prior to that, little had changed in 15 years.
- 2.3 In June 2021 Cabinet agreed the following recommendations and strategic objectives:
 - To remain within the Mid Kent Waste Partnership.
 - To retain an alternate weekly collection (AWC) for co-mingled kerbside recycling and residual waste. To collect food waste weekly, and to provide separate chargeable garden waste and bulk waste collection services.

- To keep the collection services contracted out as the preferred service delivery model, and develop a waste collection specification to meet council priorities on climate emergency and recycling rates.
 - To keep street cleansing contracted out but to adapt the future contract specification to improve flexibility of resource and improve service.
- 2.4 In December 2022, following an extensive tender process, the Environment Committee agreed to award the contract to SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd for 8 years.
- 2.5 The new contract commenced 24 March 2024. Disruption was expected and it is common with any new contract for problems to occur.
- 2.6 A recovery plan was developed to focus on action and improvement, which was agreed and monitored by the member waste working group.
- 2.7 However, it is best practice for any major project to review what went well, what went wrong and lessons are captured for future work.
- 2.8 It was proposed at the Environment & Climate Change meeting on 16 July 2024 that a formal Scrutiny Panel be formed to undertake a scrutiny review, reporting back to an Extraordinary Environment & Climate Change Committee meeting in November 2024. Due to the large amount of data and information for the Scrutiny Panel to review, it was agreed to extend the review until January 2025, to give the Panel adequate time to carry out the review thoroughly.
- 2.9 The Panel was made up of the following Members:
- Cllr Rich Lehmann (Chair)
 - Cllr Chris Palmer
 - Cllr Hannah Perkin
 - Cllr Julien Speed
 - Cllr Dolley Wooster
- 2.10 The policy team provided support to members to enable the process.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Review Panel Members were tasked by the Environment & Climate Change Committee to include the following within the scope of the review:
- a) The time period should cover from the start of the project (June 2020) up to September 2024.
 - b) The themes of the scope were resources/staffing, data and rounds, contract and project management, and internal and external communications. More detail about the scope and the terms of reference are set out in Appendix III. The scope gave the key areas of focus but left flexibility for the Panel to weave in other areas as they arose during the process.

c) The scope included waste collections and street cleansing.

2.12 As part of the scrutiny process, Panel Members looked at key information on:

- Staffing numbers
- Deployment sheets
- Project timelines
- Tender documents
- Performance data
- Risk registers
- Mobilisation plans
- Recovery plans
- Officer and member group notes
- Resident communication examples

2.13 It is worth noting for context some of the local and national influencing factors during the tender development stage. Whilst the new service changed from the previous provider to Suez on 24 March 2024, this was only one step in a process that began four years earlier.

2.14 Changes in senior management at the council from late 2020 onwards, and the significant turnover of councillors in the 2019 and 2023 elections, meant continuity was impacted for certain periods of the project.

2.15 Nationally, changes in legislation by the Government meant the process of setting the contract specification was challenging as frequent changes needed to be made and at the point of tender there were still many unknowns about what direction the new legislation would go in. The pandemic also brought a number of challenges and complications for the service.

2.16 During the period of disruption, the General Election was announced which meant plans to publicly discuss the issues had to be postponed, to avoid breaking strict rules about what meetings can be held during the pre-election period.

3 Proposals

3.1 To note the content of the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Report.

3.2 To agree the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Member Panel as set out in Appendix I.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 To not accept the conclusions and recommendations – this is not recommended as it is important, given the issues the council has experienced, that lessons are learnt for the future.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Ahead of the tender process significant consultation was undertaken with residents, councillors and staff. Residents were asked to respond to a waste survey in 2021, where more than 1,400 responses were received, with an excellent return with themes that fed into the specification for all three partners (highlighted in more detail in the June 2021 Cabinet report).
- 5.2 An online public survey was launched on 3 September 2024, closing on 2 October 2024. The intention of which was to capture the experiences of residents both before and after the start of the new waste contract on 24 March 2024. The survey was widely publicised via social media, press releases, direct email with parish/town councils and promotion at area committees. As members acknowledged not everyone has online access, hard copies were made available. More than 2,100 responses to the survey were received, and a summary of the responses are set out in Appendix IV and V.
- 5.3 Members of the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Panel attended the September 2024 round of area committee meetings to seek feedback from residents, parish/town councils and community groups. The Chair of the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Panel also attended the Local Councils' Liaison Forum on 25 September 2024. A summary of responses from these meetings are set out in Appendix VII.
- 5.4 A survey of SBC Councillors was carried out to seek feedback on how their individual wards were affected. A summary of responses from this survey are set out in Appendix VI.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Environment – to provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.
Financial, Resource and Property	There were no financial implications in holding a Scrutiny Review, however considerable officer resources were required to support and feed into the review.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The review scrutinised the procurement process which was completed in line with our Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and national legislation.
Crime and Disorder	Despite an understandable frustration from residents who have received disrupted collections, physical and verbal abuse to staff at SBC and the contractor has been unacceptable.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	One of the key benefits of the contract and a strategic objective agreed at the start of the tender process was the environmental gains we will make on the service’s carbon footprint. Despite the disruption many of these benefits are already being achieved.
Health and Wellbeing	The delivery of a successful waste contract is imperative for public health reasons. It is acknowledged that through the mobilisation period there have been reports of vermin and detritus in the streets.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Some residents require additional services such as clinical and assisted collections. The Panel considered whether the disruption impacted those residents.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Major contract failure risk is one of our corporate risks and has clear mitigating actions set against it. This action has been reviewed throughout the mobilisation period and reported to Audit committee.
Equality and Diversity	The disruption will have impacted some of our more vulnerable residents – assisted and clinical collections. An Equality Impact Assessment was not carried out as it was felt that it was not necessary for a continuation of service.
Privacy and Data Protection	No personal data was collected as part of this Scrutiny Review. All surveys were anonymous with just postcodes being collected for the public survey. No personal information was included in any of the documentation the Member Panel reviewed as part of the Scrutiny Review.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Conclusions and Recommendations
- Appendix II: Summary of Recommendations
- Appendix III: Scope of the Scrutiny Review
- Appendix IV: Summary of online public survey– text responses
- Appendix V: Summary of online public survey
- Appendix VI: Summary of responses to SBC Member questionnaire
- Appendix VII: Summary of feedback from Area Committees
- Appendix VIII: Timeline of tender preparation and mobilization

8 Background Papers

[Cabinet 2021](#)

[Environment Committee Dec 2022](#)

[P+R January 2023](#)

Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review

Member Panel conclusions and recommendations



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Foreword by Chair of the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Member Working Panel:

The start of the new waste and street cleansing contract with Suez Recycling and Recovery UK saw a significant period of disruption to the service for the residents of Swale.

Whilst the changes being introduced at the start of the Suez contract meant that some disruption was expected, the scale and duration were far greater than anyone had anticipated.

With any project of this scale, it is important to look at what went wrong, what went well, and to make sure lessons are learned to help inform future changes.

In this case, the Environment & Climate Change Committee believed it was particularly important that this should be carried out promptly and thoroughly in the form of a scrutiny review.

Between August and November 2024, myself and fellow councillors from all the political groups on Swale Borough Council carried out a number of workshops with those involved.

We have interviewed council officers and Suez representatives, and have gone through vast amounts of documents and data to examine the different aspects of the project. The scope of this work ranged from the early stages of preparing the initial tender, right up to the mobilisation and the subsequent response to the disruption.

This report presents the findings of the Member Panel and sets out the conclusions reached and recommendations made. It also aims to help provide an honest explanation of the causes of the disruption for residents who have patiently endured this period of poor service.

I, and the Member Panel, are grateful to the more than 2,100 people who took the time to complete the public survey, which has fed into this review and our recommendations.

I must also thank all the members of the panel for their hard work and commitment in carrying out this review. This process has been a good example of how councillors can put aside political differences to work constructively and effectively together for the benefit of the whole borough.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff at Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Suez for their work and commitment to resolve the problems and bring the service to a more acceptable standard.

Everyone wants the waste service to succeed, and I hope this report will help to ensure that any future changes deliver the service local people deserve.

Cllr Rich Lehmann

Chair of Environment & Climate Change Committee

Members of Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Member Panel

Cllr Rich Lehmann, Cllr Chris Palmer,
Cllr Hannah Perkin, Cllr Julien Speed,
Cllr Dolley Wooster



Resources and staff

Summary of conclusions and recommendations:

Recruitment and vacancies at Suez – As with any major operational service, there are periods where vacancies occur and this is particularly the case when a major transfer happens. It became clear at the start of the new contract that a number of roles within the Swale depot needed recruitment action. This has taken time to resolve. There were conversations with previous contractor and Suez before the contract start about the Contract Manager role as this was vacant for at least 6 months before the end of the previous contract. Suez wanted to put in an experienced person from the start, but found it hard to recruit. The post has now been filled and there is now an experienced Contract Manager in place. Suez admitted there had not been consistency up until that point but believed it was important to get the right person.

Suez found that the Swale depot was more difficult to recruit to in the early stages. This wasn't as much of a problem at Ashford and Maidstone. Suez were in the Sunday Times top 20 best companies to work for and feedback from other Councils who have worked with them confirmed that people liked working for Suez.

Reliance on overtime – the TUPE process (Transfer of undertakings – Protection of Employment) - protects existing employees when a commissioned service changes operator. It ensures terms and conditions (including pay) are maintained. The TUPE terms and conditions clause for this contract state a 39-hour week for drivers with an expectation to do overtime to complete the service. This is a culture that Suez stated they would like to change. They are making progress with expectations and changing how they recruit staff and will be undertaking a consultation with a view to drivers moving to a 42-hour week contract.

Working hours on Fridays - The TUPED contract allows for an hour less on Fridays at Swale. Resources have been designed to be sufficient across the week regardless of the Friday finish time, but routes may have needed amending earlier to take this into account.

Suez staff holidays - there was some crossover with holidays that were approved by the previous contractor and holidays previously booked by new employees, which were honoured. This was an issue during the transition, but there is a new process for booking leave at Suez so this should not be an ongoing problem.

Staff sickness – Suez stated that staff sickness has been higher than anticipated but a system has been put in place to manage this (Bradford Factor). There is a pool of back-up labour to call on (2 drivers, 4 loaders) plus agency staff if necessary. Swale has the highest sickness rate across the partnership.

Recommendation 1 - TUPE information should be provided earlier in the tender process (as far as permitted by legislation) in future projects.

Training and induction - Access to staff prior to contract start was a challenge, however, all members of staff, including the supervisory team, attended the weekend induction sessions which were held over two weekends. It covered areas such as health and safety, vehicles hardware and software, depots, reporting of information and new ways of working. New ways of working will not always be popular and will take time to embed.

Suez advised that their staff could request further training if they feel it is necessary. Supervisors have been enabled to deliver training and there is a training matrix on the depot wall for all staff to see what they are trained in and what their future training needs are.

The training weekends went very well and have now become a benchmark for Suez. Some staff are resistant to the changes in technology, but this is being worked on. The Member Panel felt that the training model was not designed for different learning styles and providing a variety of learning methods could have been beneficial.

Better sharing of information between outgoing and incoming contractors needs to be a focus for future projects.

There was some confusion about the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), which is a device to help staff record work. There should have been clarification that if there were bins put out which were not on their PDA list, they should collect and call their supervisor. Suez said that during training the message was pushed hard to only collect what was on the PDA but there needed to be better collaboration with crews and supervisors during the disruption.

During the scrutiny review the Member Panel questioned if a phased approach could have been used to start staff on the old contractor routes and then change the routes at a later date. Suez stated that they wouldn't normally do a phased implementation of new rounds and for Swale the change of location of the food disposal site was an influencing factor.

Also, the different configuration of the new vehicles forced the need to change routes. Using the old fleet initially was considered as an option but as the vehicles were not owned by the Council, it was not possible. Furthermore, decisions were being made at a time of lots of changes to legislation and local circumstances such as disposal sites and property growth, so it was considered to be best to implement the new routes at the start.

Recommendation 2 - Training for contracted staff prior to the new service is essential to ensure a smooth transition. Where possible use a phased approach for training to minimise service disruption.

Pay negotiations - The annual pay negotiation coincided with the start of the new contract. This was resolved by both Suez and SBC contributing to the awarded pay increase, however, future tender projects need to factor in that negotiations with unions should take place earlier.

Redeployment of staff - staff were taken off routes they were familiar with as Suez use a different 'clockwise' model so that most crews focus on a particular area of Swale each day rather than being spread out. This meant not all crew members had local knowledge on all days.

CCTV in vehicles - CCTV was installed on the vehicles prior to contract start but access to the software to view it was not immediately available. Additionally, Suez stated that their staff were not trained to use CCTV at the start of the contract. Contractually, the CCTV is for Suez and SBC officers to check to clear up any misunderstandings and data belongs to Suez. With regard to levels of abuse towards Suez and SBC staff, although the vehicles have CCTV they do not pick up audio. Personal safety of both SBC and contract staff must be a priority.

Recommendation 3 - Where relevant, the council should request that the contractor considers the use of personal safety cameras for their operatives if they are not explicitly mentioned in a bid, and also that CCTV on vehicles should be operational from day one of the next contract.

Vehicles - all bidders were asked to put forward their solutions based on tonnage, type of borough, number of different collection types, location of disposal sites etc. The member working group discussed the options at the time. Twenty-three vehicles were ordered and perceived to provide the greatest flexibility with future waste legislation changes.

SBC purchased the vehicles as per the contractor specification and they have a lifespan of approximately 8-years. The new vehicles have reduced emissions, for example the bin lifts are now electric powered instead of diesel and they use a lot less fuel. They have improved technology that allow real time information to be passed from the drivers into Suez's IT system. That means supervisors and SBC officers, as the client, can see that information much more in real-time.

The vehicles have improved food pods which have resolved previous problems with corrosion and potential contamination. However, Suez advised the food pods and narrow vehicles have caused more problems than expected. Some of the problems have been caused by longer familiarisation than anticipated which has led to some damage. Some repairs have been necessary due to mechanical and technology breakdowns.

The chassis etc were standard but the compartments were built to the tender specification. They are similar to ones used around the country. Hire vehicles do not offer the specification we use currently, so that is why some vehicles may look slightly different and why some food collections are missed and should be returned for at a later date.

The new vehicles all have to have an MOT every year. It can take a week to service/MOT a vehicle and Suez try to stagger these throughout the year as they were purchased at the same time and do not want them all being due for inspection/work at the same time. These are complicated vehicles with many moving parts and are heavily used so will always be prone to maintenance requirements. Also, new vehicles often need returning under manufacturer warranties for certain issues. Vehicle issues are reducing.

Food transfer bins - There has been an increase in food waste collections and requests for food caddies. To start with the food transfer bins used were either blue or green bins which has caused concern with residents as they believed the food waste is going into the general waste. The use of different coloured bins should have been in the contract. It is not contractually covered but Suez have resolved this issue by using black bins with tape round them the majority of the time.

Impact of the disruption on SBC staff - the roll-out placed stress on those involved at the forefront of the service, in particular contracts monitoring and customer services staff. They worked a lot of additional hours. As the scale of the disruption became apparent, the business continuity plan was implemented on 26 April 2024 to allocate roles to others outside the key departments. Regular weekly meetings took place to discuss business continuity. Senior managers took the lead on issues such as staff welfare, communications and data.

Demands on the SBC call centre - there are multiple members of staff in the Customer Services Centre, but they are not all full time. Generally 4 or 5 are working at one time. The demand on the call centre during this period was unprecedented. This is considered in more detail under the Communications section of the report.

Recommendation 4 - For future project implementation where there will be a change to a service, ensure there is adequate staff resource in place to deal with potentially high levels of incoming queries.

SBC staff resource – during the peak of the period of disruption, members offered to provide assistance to take the pressure off staff. Senior management took the view that there was a distinction between officer and member responsibilities. Around this time the Local Government Association Peer Review had observed the lines were blurred between officer and member responsibilities. There was acknowledgement that different skills could have been utilised earlier in the project planning/mobilisation phase.

Recommendation 5 - Ensure the appropriate skills are in place at contract implementation.

Feedback from the surveys relating to this theme include (see Appendix IV and VI for full feedback):

Public survey:

- Several respondents reported that their bins had been damaged by the bin lorries or during collection;
- some residents said that the bin lorries had damaged their fences/property;
- some residents reported encountering rude or unhelpful staff when trying to resolve issues; and
- some respondents felt that their complaints about street cleaning issues were not addressed adequately by the council.

Member survey:

- The design and capacity of the vehicles were questioned along with their suitability for different routes;
- vehicles appear to break down or need repair often;
- the food pods seem to break often;
- some Members stated they would like to thank SBC staff for their efforts;
- issues with Suez staff logging rounds as complete when they weren't;
- the abuse aimed at staff has been unacceptable;

- there were reports of bins being damaged;
- SBC underestimated the number of staff needed at the start of contract;
- Concerns were expressed about the TUPE and induction process; and
- More contract monitoring needs to take place.

Data and rounds

Summary of conclusions and recommendations:

Provision of data before start of contract -

SBC were expecting to receive the round data from Suez in September 2023, but actually received the final data on 13 February 2024. This resulted in a short turnaround for data verification and creation of letters to be sent to residents. There were lots of new considerations such as changing government legislation, a second tipping site for food and growth in new developments which all needed to be taken into account at this stage.

Suez's IT management system CORE is a powerful tool and the Member Panel received a demonstration of the software at one of the workshops. When asked if all of CORE's functionality was up and running from day one, Suez said it was not ready for the level of failure, so they were not able to share the data with SBC. There were so many data changes that it was not possible to extract data. The system was set up for a successful service, not a failing one.

Suez said there have been delays in dealing with some complaints due to some process issues. For example, if a resident reports a missed bin, CORE updates automatically. However, if Suez are aware of a missed bin, then CORE has to be updated manually. There have been delays for complaints being resolved when they are emailed to Suez, this was due to the Suez staff focusing mainly on stabilisation service delivery.

Route assumptions were made on collection rates based on urban/rural, narrow/standard, traffic speeds, bin weights and distance from the disposal site. There was an assumption of an 80% put-out rate for recycling bins in Swale which meant there were fewer recycling rounds to start with. This was resolved fairly early into

the disruption period. Suez have reported there are a number of residents with more than one recycling bin which impacted collection rates. Suez asked for the numbers at the planning stage, but SBC did not hold this data.

One of the biggest perceived problems that came out of the public survey was the inefficiency of the rounds, in particular the routes and vehicles used. SBC had limited access to the data under the old contract which was recognised and has been changed under this contract. Officers gave some advice on rounds, but it was mainly the responsibility of the contractor to design the rounds. Not all data/intelligence was captured in a system previously. Some crews were familiar with properties and knew where to find bins etc. As this sort of information was not recorded on a system, when crews changed, they didn't have the knowledge of the areas.

There were reports of access problems in some areas due to parked vehicles blocking access, road closures and difficulties accessing communal bins. This was exacerbated by a large backlog of waste which had not been collected by the start of the new contract.

Recommendation 6 – Ensure data is provided earlier, with agreed timescales, in the tender process and carry out checks to ensure it is correct.

Housing growth – the figures were prepared in accordance with the SBC Planning Team and came from the Local Plan. A reconciliation process is taking place with Suez. Officers believe the projected figures are about right with what was stated at tender and what is on the ground now. Suez have said they will regularly review the routes. Capacity has been added to routes to take into account things like increased tonnage and traffic delays. The Contract and Resources Team are consultees on planning applications but this can be strengthened.

Recommendation 7 – The Contract and Resources team are consulted in the early stages of a planning application to ensure that estate design takes account of the ease and consistency of bin collections and that the accessibility of communal bin stores is assessed.

Recommendation 8 – An annual review should be requested to ensure rounds do not become unmanageable over time due to new housing development.

Rounds - there was a reliance on overtime previously to complete rounds. This was due to housing development that took place over time and no major changes were made to rounds to accommodate this. During the tender process, government legislation changes were taking place and SBC had to make adjustments to the tender. SBC's brief to tenderers was to come up with the most flexible service to take legislation change into account.

There was one less recycling round than refuse round so it was not possible to mirror week 1 and week 2. The build-up of the Suez recycling collection service was made by analysing the tonnage provided as well as making an assumption of participation (80%) as Suez didn't have this data at tender or mobilisation stage. Wasteflows / waste arising and tonnages are always the first indicator used to calculate resources. A further recycling round was added after the initial period of disruption which meant routes could be mirrored and there is now a better spread of rounds. Another factor is the KCC decision to take food waste to Ridham Dock (five miles away) rather than taking all waste to the one disposal site, the impact of which couldn't be truly estimated before the start.

There were conversations with crews about the suitability of rounds, but they weren't driven in totality. The expectation that the routes would be pre-driven was not in the contract but there is a line in the tender document saying they would undertake route risk assessments, which officers from all three councils in the partnership were under the impression they would be pre-driven.

Suez said they didn't have anyone with local knowledge to sense check the rounds and initially the data was not available. They said that a lesson they have learnt for future new contracts is to employ someone to drive the routes. A risk route assessment was carried out by Suez which followed the national HSE guidance and industry standards. This looked at health and safety issues such as schools, speed limits, traffic lights, and care homes etc, instead

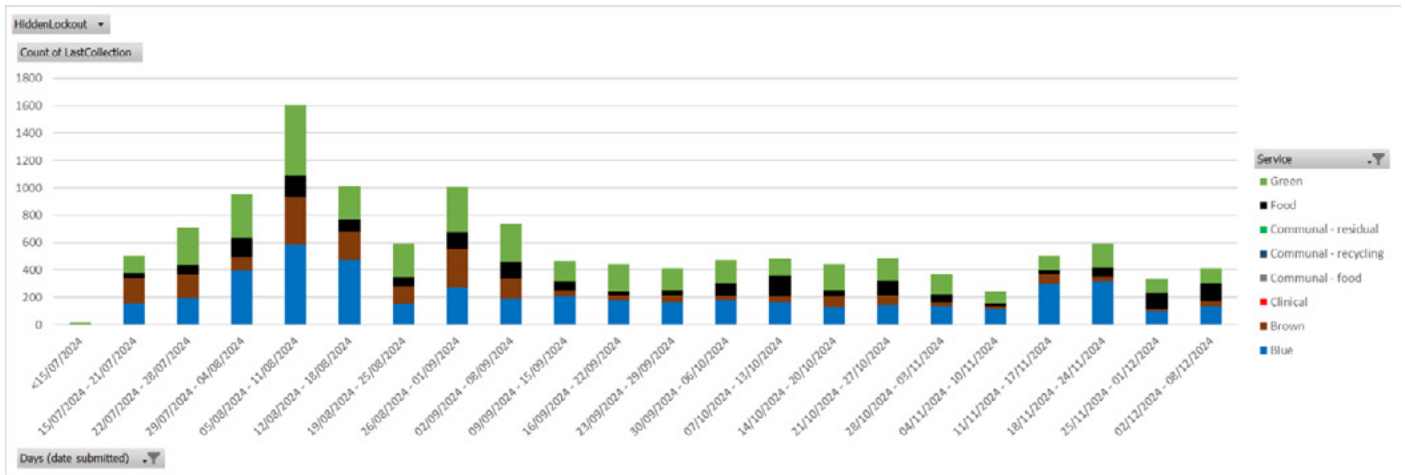
of sense checking routes. The information from the risk assessment checking was fed into the CORE system.

If the data had been provided earlier, then it could have been better checked by officers and gone to members for sense checking. However, it was part of the contract that the winning bidder would design the routes. Suez had difficulties accessing information/data from previous contractor. Suez have said that at the end of their contract they will have clean data to hand over.

Catch-up rounds are something that Suez do not want to be in the position of needing to use, instead they aim to just have missed bin rounds. Suez said that their catch-up rounds in the early weeks could have been structured better logistically and geographically.

Suez said in the early days crews started the round in the same place each week which resulted in the same roads at the end of the round being missed each week. SBC officers requested that rounds which regularly failed to complete were started at different points each time. This suggestion was not consistently implemented across all crews by Suez, although in hindsight they agreed it would have been beneficial to the service. However, this isn't an issue now as rounds are being completed in the majority of cases.

Two re-routes were carried out in September and December 2024 to overcome the problems with missed bins. Each re-route saw a marked improvement in completion rates and made it easier for catch ups to be undertaken. The December reroute was necessary to adjust for smaller imbalances in the revised September routes. The table below shows changes in missed bin reports week- by-week since July 2024:



Communal bins - Under the new contract all vehicles are capable of collecting communal bins. The data that was handed over by SBC at tender, stated there were 194 communal locations but there are actually 329. This was because a large number were picked up by standard rounds rather than the specific communal round in the old contract. SBC also didn't have a breakdown of the number of communal bins at many of the properties. This has since been rectified and we are in a much better position with data. A route plan is being finalised to ensure that all are collected effectively. At the moment refuse for communal bins is collected weekly and recycling every other week. Flats tend to recycle less than houses, this could be due to issues such as lack of space to store general waste and recycling separately. A project officer will be looking at possible ways to overcome this.

Street cleansing - a review of litter bins was undertaken by the contracts team to suggest some for removal. This was not completed by the start of the tender and the data provided to Suez was incorrect. Suez will review their collections using the up-to-date data. A project has been undertaken to give each bin a reference number which will make routes and rationalisation easier in future.

All streets are zoned 1-4 as per national guidance and there is a schedule for cleansing on CORE. Suez agreed they haven't used CORE as well as they should have for street cleansing, but the IT system will be fully utilised over time and give improved street cleansing information. There was no online management of street cleansing in the previous service so this will be an improvement when it arrives.

Suez admitted they haven't been monitoring street cleansing as much as waste collections, but this is now improving.

Streets were not in a good condition at the start of the contract, so SBC funded an additional crew. A lot of work has taken place to rectify some of the problem areas, such as alleyways, which will make it easier to maintain them in the future.

Vulnerable users - a review of 'assisted' and 'clinical collections' was carried out prior to the tender, writing to all vulnerable users asking if they still required assisted and/or clinical collections, this showed there was a reduced demand. Officers confirmed that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not carried out at the tender preparation stage and this was documented in the Council committee reports. The reason for this was that, as there was no change to the service delivery model, it was not required. In hindsight the scale of day changes (known late in the process) should have triggered an EqIA as in some cases the disruption resulted in non-collection which may have impacted some vulnerable users. Panel Members suggested allocating vulnerable users to Contract Monitoring Officers to monitor and flag up potential problems.

Recommendation 9 – Reassess if Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) should be carried out at key points during tender preparation. If there are any significant changes to a contract or when unexpected problems arise, this should trigger the completion of an EqIA.

Recommendation 10 – Link Contract Monitoring Officers (CMOs) to vulnerable properties better in times of disruption so that potential problems are identified quickly.

Feedback from the surveys relating to this theme include (see Appendix IV and VI for full feedback):

Public survey:

- Frequent missed collections was the most common complaint, with many residents reporting that their bins were not collected for weeks at a time;
- respondents noted that collection days were often changed without notice, leading to confusion and missed pickups;
- some residents complained about overflowing bins and litter scattered around their neighbourhoods;
- some residents expressed concerns about the potential health hazards associated with uncollected waste, such as pests and odours;
- many respondents reported that their streets were rarely cleaned or not cleaned at all;
- some respondents felt that the focus was on cleaning town centres, while residential areas were neglected;
- respondents complained about overgrown weeds, hedges, and bushes obstructing sidewalks and roads; and
- litter and fly-tipping were common issues, especially in rural areas and near overflowing bins.

Member survey:

- Some people didn't have their bins emptied for 14 weeks;
- parked cars were used as an excuse for non-collection;
- some people paid private companies to remove their waste;
- pavements were blocked by uncollected bins causing difficulties for pedestrians with pushchairs and wheelchair users;
- rural areas were particularly impacted;
- dog waste bins were overflowing;
- narrow roads caused some collections not to be completed;
- communal bin stores and food waste collections were a particular problem;
- sack collection only areas had rubbish stacking up due to missed collections;
- residents have asked to bring back Biffa;
- assisted collections were not honoured for some time;
- assisted collections often missed or not recorded on the Suez system;
- problems with incontinence products not being collected; and
- problems with assisted initially due to out of date data being passed from Biffa to Suez, but resolved by re-registering.

Contracts and project management

Summary of conclusions and recommendations:

Member working groups - The early Member Waste Working Group in 2020 was made up of Administration Members only. After the Borough Election in May 2023, there was a large turnover of councillors and the membership of the working group changed and included opposition Members. The Member Panel discussed the effectiveness of working groups holding and disseminating information.

Recommendation 11 – Member working group meetings during tender and mobilisation were useful, however needed more regular updates to the parent committee. Request that the Constitutional Working Group agree a model set of Terms of Reference (TOR) as a guide, so that at the implementation of each new working group, full and clear TOR can be set.

Project management - The consultant who was appointed at the beginning of the project carried out a review of the current service, looked at the pros and cons of different operating models and the financial projections. This culminated in the Cabinet decision to stay with the current service. They were retained for 3 years to give support and external oversight throughout the project.

All three authorities had equal responsibility for the contract, but Maidstone was listed as the lead authority. It is a legal requirement that only one authority leads but this is just a formality. In practice, all authorities carry equal weight. Each authority took a role in the tender project: Ashford led on procurement; Swale led on legal and Maidstone on finance.

Tender process – councillors reported a question they were frequently asked by residents was why did the other bidders pull out of the tender process? At the tender release stage, there were a lot of other authorities that had their waste contracts up for tender, so there was competition from bigger contracts. Once bidders submitted a selection questionnaire, they could view the detailed tender. It was at that point they decided whether or not they

were interested in proceeding. Additionally, some companies were not bidding at that time, as it was a period of uncertainty with imminent changes in government legislation due to be announced. Two companies did go through the majority of the tender stages though.

There was no minimum number of bidders required to proceed with the tender award process, providing there was one bidder that met all of the specific evaluation criteria. The Suez bid not only met the required criteria, but exceeded it.

Officer resourcing - At contract mobilisation, officers assessed they had enough resource, but in hindsight that wasn't the case. The level of disruption impacted the contracts team and call centre. The problems with the website reporting form for missed bins turned out to be a worst-case scenario. Neither officers nor members looked at worst-case scenarios early enough. The Member Panel felt that the streamlining of staff in recent years had reduced the officer resource too much. At the time senior management didn't think more staff were needed based on the information they had available to them, as it was felt that any issues could be dealt with by the officer team in place. Once the problems became apparent, the Chief Executive confirmed that the resource would be made available to do what was necessary to resolve the issues and additional resource was recruited.

Recommendation 12 – Adequate officer resourcing should be put in place at the outset so that SBC are prepared for any worst-case scenario situation.

Scrutiny - If it becomes apparent that a service is going to change significantly, the responsible Service Committee should call it in for scrutiny, even if it is late in the project. The mechanism for Service Committees to scrutinise should be clarified. Updates should regularly go to the responsible Service Committee as well as the member working group.

Recommendation 13 – If it becomes apparent that a service is going to change significantly, the responsible Service Committee should consider calling it in for scrutiny, even if it is late in the day. To assist with this, the mechanism for Service Committees to scrutinise should be clarified.

Contract management – As with any contract, performance needs to be monitored against the output specification and what is submitted as part of the tender. The Contract Monitoring Team are responsible for overseeing this contract. This includes analysing data, investigating issues/complaints and utilising the contract solutions. The Mid Kent Waste Partnership Officer (jointly employed by Ashford, Maidstone and Swale as part of the new service) analyses and checks data and report content. A range of regular reports are required from Suez through the contract. Complaints are also a good measure of accuracy. These methods should provide effective monitoring of Suez reporting.

The Mid Kent Waste Partnership Officer is developing a process so that it will not be necessary to wait for the monthly or annual reports. Performance dashboards will provide real-time access to performance data. The Corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPI) currently have three performance indicators for waste which follow the old national way of reporting. There will be a number of other ways to present more detailed information, which can go to the Member working group quarterly.

Holding the contractor to account – a key part of the contract is the performance criteria and performance mechanism. It was designed by the consultant based on industry norms and uses points and financial deductions if problems are not rectified within certain timescales. It is a lot clearer on reporting and data requirements. As an industry norm there is an exemption period of 3 months from the start of the contract. There are thresholds at different levels and there is a termination threshold should it be needed.

Rectification Plan – for issues such as the bin delivery backlog plan, there is a clause in the contract that makes Suez consider resolving an issue via a rectification plan. Once in place it is not set in stone, it is an ongoing discussion with Suez and discretion can be used if progress is made. If SBC feel Suez are not doing what they should, SBC can escalate and consider mitigation at higher levels in the contract.

Carrying the learning forward - The Member Panel asked what historic information, from when the previous contract was implemented, did Members and officers have access to when developing the new tender? The contract document, specification and key policies were available at the start and helped form the basis for the tender. Notes from tender meetings and learning was limited due to changes in staff and document retention policies. The Member Panel felt strongly that there should be a mechanism put in place to ensure learning is carried forward for future contract change.

Recommendation 14 – As a matter of course when working on a new tender, learnings from scrutiny reviews and project evaluations from the previous contract, should be available to review.

Feedback from the surveys relating to this theme include (see Appendix IV and VI for full feedback):

Public survey:

- Some respondents continued to express dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the waste collection service, citing missed collections, delays, and other issues;
- some respondents noted that despite initial improvements, at the time of the survey the service had deteriorated in recent months;
- respondents felt that the change in contractors had resulted in a significant decline in service quality;
- respondents urged the council and Suez to take steps to improve the overall quality of the waste collection service; and
- some respondents suggested that residents should be compensated for the inconvenience and financial losses caused by the poor service.

Member survey:

- The people of Swale deserve better than what has taken place with the waste collection and although there are signs of improvements, measures need to be put in place to prevent anything like this from taking place again;
- SBC need more staff monitoring on the ground and in the office to reply to member enquiries;
- concerns express as to what extent contract monitoring is being done. SBC needs to be standing over the contract and enforcing every clause;
- contract management has been bad across all three authorities;
- not enough feedback due to lack of staff, the council should have had lots of temporary or seconded contractor monitoring officers or assistant contract monitoring officers; and
- there wasn't and still isn't enough officers on the ground physically monitoring elements of the contract;

Communications (internal and external)

Summary of conclusions and recommendations:

SBC communications plan – the focus of the communications plan was to make sure that residents knew the change was coming, including the withdrawal of the electrical and textile collections. The expectation was that data would come through in good time so that residents could be advised of any changes to their collection dates before the implementation of the new contract. The communications plan focused on raising awareness of the change to the contract, and how it would affect people, through activities such as bin lorry naming, content in Inside Swale, updates through social media and news release, a new section on the website and letters being sent out to residents.

Information provided to residents before the start of the contract - the Member Panel considered whether enough communication about the upcoming changes had been provided to residents. The most important message to get across was when residents should be putting their bins out. As mentioned in earlier parts of this report the data was provided late and showed significantly more day changes than previously expected. This left a very short period of time for the service to verify the data so letters tailored to each property could then be produced and sent to residents. All the letters were sent out by 20 February 2024, more than a month before the start of the new contract. The public survey asked if residents received a letter before the contract change notifying them about changes to the service. 66.2% said they recalled receiving a letter, 14% could not remember and 19% said they did not receive a letter.

Communication with residents after the start of the contract – the Member Panel felt that as soon as the extent of the disruption was known, SBC ideally should have used parish councils, town councils, area committees, community groups and borough councillors to get information out as well as the other usual channels such as the website and social media. However, it became clear early on that the

information about rectifying missed collections was not reliable and sharing it regularly was causing further confusion and frustration. Officer resources also needed to be focussed on resolving the collections issues in the first place.

Some Members also suggested that a public apology from the Council Leader and Chief Executive should have gone out sooner along with information on how long it was likely that the period of disruption would last.

Internal communication with councillors – councillors were receiving many requests for information from residents and also requests to assist with resolving non-collection issues. This resulted in the SBC contracts team receiving duplicate reports of an issue and were being hit from every angle. Each complaint had to be investigated and responded to.

The Customer Service Centre (CSC) were in the same position, they had so many requests coming in at certain times they had to send out standard responses to emails and to stop the phone lines crashing, they had to limit the number of waiting calls. During the period of high complaint volumes, the contract reporting structure sometimes resulted in issues being missed as it was not always clear who would respond.

Members suggested a single generic email address be set up for councillor reporting but at the time were told that this would generate more work for officers, with the intention being to fix the automated reporting.

Recommendation 15 – The process for councillors to report issues to officers should be made clear from the outset of a new contract to ensure that duplicate reports are not made to multiple officers.

The impact on the Customer Services Centre (CSC) - the impact on staff in the CSC was huge, some experienced and valuable members of staff resigned and recruiting and training new staff takes time. The level of abuse staff received on the telephones was unacceptable. Before the contract start the CSC were asked if they needed extra staff, but the team felt they could cope with any queries, but in hindsight they should have had extra staff trained and in

place for ready for the contract start. When the CSC employed temporary staff after the start of the contract, training and retaining them was a challenge and some only stayed one day.

Recommendation 16 – For future major projects, ensure that scrutiny is carried out in the preparation and implementation phases to assess risk and in advance put precautionary additional resource in place in readiness for the unknown.

Daily member/officer meetings – the intention was that political Group Leaders should meet daily with key officers to receive an update on the current situation. The expectation was that Group Leaders would then share that information with members of their Group. However, the councillor attendance of this meeting grew and the focus became parochial rather than strategic. There were incidents where the meetings became confrontational due to the frustration of councillors. Some officers were instructed by senior management to stop attending the daily meetings for their wellbeing. This resulted in the Chief Executive being the single point of contact for the informal administration.

Recommendation 17 – Ensure the member/officer protocol covers working relationships in strategic meetings so that they are a safe space where officers and Members will have confidence there will not be a blame culture.

Recommendation 18 – Consider holding briefings twice a year for all councillors where information can be shared on what teams throughout the council are working on and have planned for the future to assist with improving member/officer working relationships.

Decision making – under the Committee system, which has been SBC's governance system since May 2022, all councillors are now involved in taking major decisions through service committees and full council. This proved to be a challenge in the early days of the contract when decisions needed to be made and the Member Panel felt this is something that needed to be addressed should there be emergency situations in the future.

Recommendation 19 – Clarity on decision making processes under the Committee system should be established so it is clear where decisions are made on operational solutions in any future emergency situation.

Updates for members - The daily email update reports were an interim measure implemented to try and get information to councillors who were at the front end of queries. They were a guide at the point of writing, rather than complete accuracy. A round can show at 100% but still have a number of reasons why a bin(s) have not been collected e.g. locked out by crew for contamination/bin not out etc or where a crew (wrongly) believe they have collected all bins on a road. A member survey was carried out as part of this scrutiny review and some members felt that the lack of a Friday evening update made it difficult to answer resident queries over the weekend. The office is officially closed on Friday afternoons which is something members agreed as part of the 34-hour week contract for staff in lieu of no pay increase in 2023.

Recommendation 20 – Regular member update meetings have been useful and should be implemented if there are similar ongoing incidents in the future.

Recommendation 21 - Annual contract updates to be presented at the Environment & Climate Change Committee moving forwards.

Recommendation 22 – A request for training on data interpretation to be referred to the Member Development Working Group. Any data provided for members should be clearly presented in an easily understandable format.

Social media - Councillors have varying experience and skills with social media and as highlighted in the Member Survey, there was a grey area with what messaging councillors should be putting out. More support could have been given on social media. There is a mistrust of local authorities in general which needs to be built back up. Ideally, residents should feel they can trust the system to report problems rather than going to councillors.

Recommendation 23 -Ensure the project communications plan considers major service changes and how to respond in periods of disruption, with particular reference to the use of social media.

Website reporting forms – The process behind the online reporting forms was agreed before the start of contract, and they were designed for normal, good service. Delays to getting access to real data in Suez system meant these could not be fully tested ‘end to end’ to identify any concerns with the processes. When the contract started, some people had difficulty reporting missed collections for a variety of reasons that had not been considered and the system reacted differently in the ‘live’ format. For example, if Suez logged a road as ‘still in progress’, it was not possible for residents to report a missed bin. However, the ‘round still in progress’ was sometimes incorrect and remained on the system as Suez were not updating the information. The form was designed not to receive missed collections more than two days old, as per the contract, so when the status was changed, people were unable to report, causing further frustration.

Feedback from the surveys relating to this theme include (see Appendix IV and VI for full feedback):

Public survey:

- Residents complained about the lack of timely responses from the council or Suez when reporting missed collections;
- residents stated they often received conflicting information from the council or Suez, leading to frustration and confusion; and
- many respondents felt that there was insufficient communication from the council or Suez regarding service disruptions or changes;

Member survey:

- There were reports of residents not receiving enough or incorrect information before the contract started;
- there were also reports of residents saying they had sufficient information;
- bin stickers would have been helpful;
- residents reported to councillors they were not kept informed about missed collections;
- problems were experience with online reporting of missed bins;
- there were cases of either delayed or no response to complaints;
- residents resorted to asking their ward councillor for assistance/information when they could not get help from the website;
- there were reports of the website working well and prompt responses to complaints/queries;
- the daily updates were useful but didn’t provide area-specific information to give to residents; and
- there were no Friday evening updates which would have helped with dealing with resident queries over the weekend.

Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review - Summary of Recommendations:

Number	Recommendation
1	TUPE information should be provided earlier in the tender process (as far as permitted by legislation) in future projects.
2	Training for contracted staff prior to the new service is essential to ensure a smooth transition. Where possible use a phased approach for training to minimise service disruption.
3	Where relevant, the council should request that the contractor considers the use of personal safety cameras for their operatives if they are not explicitly mentioned in a bid, and also that CCTV on vehicles should be operational from day one of the next contract.
4	For future project implementation where there will be a change to a service, ensure there is adequate staff resource in place to deal with potentially high levels of incoming queries.
5	Ensure the appropriate skills are in place at contract implementation.
6	Ensure data is provided earlier, with agreed timescales, in the tender process and carry out checks to ensure it is correct.
7	The Contract and Resources team are consulted in the early stages of a planning application to ensure that estate design takes account of the ease and consistency of bin collections and that the accessibility of communal bin stores is assessed.
8	An annual review should be requested to ensure rounds do not become unmanageable over time due to new housing development.
9	Reassess if Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) should be carried out at key points during tender preparation. If there are any significant changes to a contract or when unexpected problems arise, this should trigger the completion of an EqIA.
10	Link Contract Monitoring Officers (CMOs) to vulnerable properties better in times of disruption so that potential problems are identified quickly.
11	Member working group meetings during tender and mobilisation were useful, however needed more regular updates to the parent committee. Request that the Constitutional Working Group agree a model set of Terms of Reference (TOR) as a guide, so that at the implementation of each new working group, full and clear TOR can be set.
12	Adequate officer resourcing should be put in place at the outset so that SBC are prepared for any worst-case scenario situation.

13	If it becomes apparent that a service is going to change significantly, the responsible Service Committee should consider calling it in for scrutiny, even if it is late in the day. To assist with this, the mechanism for Service Committees to scrutinise should be clarified.
14	As a matter of course when working on a new tender, learnings from scrutiny reviews and project evaluations from the previous contract, should be available to review.
15	The process for councillors to report issues to officers should be made clear from the outset of a new contract to ensure that duplicate reports are not made to multiple officers.
16	For future major projects, ensure that scrutiny is carried out in the preparation and implementation phases to assess risk and in advance put precautionary additional resource in place in readiness for the unknown.
17	Ensure the member/officer protocol covers working relationships in strategic meetings so that they are a safe space where officers and Members will have confidence there will not be a blame culture.
18	Consider holding briefings twice a year for all councillors where information can be shared on what teams throughout the council are working on and have planned for the future to assist with improving member/officer working relationships.
19	Clarity on decision making processes under the Committee system should be established so it is clear where decisions are made on operational solutions in any future emergency situation.
20	Regular member update meetings have been useful and should be implemented if there are similar ongoing incidents in the future.
21	Annual contract updates to be presented at the Environment & Climate Change Committee moving forwards.
22	A request for training on data interpretation to be referred to the Member Development Working Group. Any data provided for members should be clearly presented in an easily understandable format.
23	Ensure the project communications plan considers major service changes and how to respond in periods of disruption, with particular reference to the use of social media.

Waste and Street Cleansing - Scrutiny Review Scope

This paper sets out the scope terms of reference and scope of the review.

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To have the opportunity to debate the contract mobilisation.</p> <p>To enable an evaluation period and record lessons learnt for the future.</p>
<p>Methodology</p>	<p>Scrutiny Panel of five councillors taken from the Environment & Climate Change Committee to undertake review. No substitutes possible.</p> <p>Review of the contract documentation</p> <p>Exploratory sessions with officers from key departments and representatives of Suez – presentations of information, performance data and question and answer process.</p> <p>Engagement with residents (area committees and resident online questionnaire)</p> <p>Parish and Town Councils (local councils liaison forum in September 2025)</p>
<p>Areas to consider in scope</p>	<p>Resources / Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment - Training - Culture change - SBC resources - Staff welfare - Fleet / vehicles - New bins/bin delivery - How vehicles CCTV is used - Vulnerable users – assisted collections <p>Data and rounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of data before the contract start - Understand the CORE system (Suez software) - Round routing process - Road access issues - Review bulk bin store / communals - Review litter bin frequencies - Vulnerable users – assisted collections - Equality Impact Assessment - Performance data

	<p>Contract and Project Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How was the project set up / what ongoing monitoring occurred - Review contract documents - Review process for defaults and rectifications - Recovery Plan - Member involvement - Alternative contract management system options <p>Communications (internal and external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-service resident comms (letters/social media) - Process for resident reporting forms - Webpages - Social media - Review comms plan - Communications to and from councillors - Back office systems
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Councillors receive assurances on project delivery - Residents feel they have been able to have their say - Lessons learnt for the future - Areas identified for improvement - Successes are captured and communicated
Timescale	<p>The scope and membership were agreed at the 16 July Environment & Climate Change Committee.</p> <p>A series of 5 workshops took place between 4 September and 19 November 2024 where Panel Members considered all areas set out in the scope. Representatives from Suez attended the workshop on 14 November 2024.</p> <p>A public survey was carried out between 3 September and 2 October 2024. This was online mainly but hard copies of the survey were widely available to residents who did not have online access.</p> <p>Residents' experiences were also gathered at the Area Committee meetings taking place between 3 September – 26 September 2024.</p> <p>Parish and Town Councils were consulted at the Local Councils' Liaison Forum on 25 September</p> <p>A Member survey was carried out between 26 September and 14 October 2024.</p> <p>The final report to be taken to the Environment & Climate Change Committee on 15 January 2024.</p>

Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review – summary of responses to public survey free text questions

(This summary of over 2100 responses to the survey have been generated by AI)

Other than missed/delayed collections, have you had any other issues with your waste and recycling service?

Key Themes from the Survey Responses on Waste Collection Issues

Based on the survey responses, several key themes emerged regarding the issues people faced with their waste collections:

Missed Collections and Delays

- **Frequent missed collections:** This was the most common complaint, with many residents reporting that their bins were not collected for weeks at a time.
- **Inconsistent collection schedules:** Respondents noted that collection days were often changed without notice, leading to confusion and missed pickups.
- **Delayed responses to missed collections:** Many residents complained about the lack of timely responses from the council or Suez when reporting missed collections.

Damage to Bins and Property

- **Damaged bins:** Several respondents reported that their bins had been damaged by the bin lorries or during collection.
- **Damaged fences and property:** Some residents said that the bin lorries had damaged their fences or other property.

Poor Communication and Customer Service

- **Conflicting information:** Residents often received conflicting information from the council or Suez, leading to frustration and confusion.
- **Lack of communication:** Many respondents felt that there was insufficient communication from the council or Suez regarding service disruptions or changes.
- **Rude or unhelpful staff:** Some residents reported encountering rude or unhelpful staff when trying to resolve issues.

Environmental Concerns

- **Overflowing bins and litter:** Many residents complained about overflowing bins and litter scattered around their neighbourhoods.
- **Health hazards:** Some residents expressed concerns about the potential health hazards associated with uncollected waste, such as pests and odours.

Other Issues

- **Incorrect bin placement:** Some residents reported that their bins were left in the wrong places after collection.
- **Issues with food waste collection:** Some residents experienced issues with their food waste bins, such as missed collections or damage.

Overall, the survey responses highlighted a significant number of problems with the waste collection service, including reliability, communication, and customer service. These issues have led to frustration and inconvenience for residents.

Any other comments about the (recycling and waste collection) service you would like to share?

Key Themes from the Survey Responses on Further Comments

Based on the additional survey responses, several key themes emerged regarding the waste collection service:

Continued Dissatisfaction with the Service

- **Poor performance:** Many respondents continued to express dissatisfaction with the overall performance of the waste collection service, citing missed collections, delays, and other issues.
- **Lack of improvement:** Some respondents noted that despite initial improvements, the service had deteriorated in recent months.

Communication and Customer Service Issues

- **Conflicting information:** Residents continued to report receiving conflicting information from the council or Suez.
- **Lack of responsiveness:** Some respondents complained about the lack of timely responses to complaints or inquiries.

Specific Issues

- **Missed collections:** Missed collections remained a significant problem, particularly for residents in multi-occupancy buildings and rural areas.
- **Damaged bins:** Respondents reported that their bins were often damaged during collection.
- **Environmental concerns:** Concerns about overflowing bins, litter, and potential health hazards persisted.

Comparison to Previous Service

- **Nostalgia for previous service:** Many respondents expressed a preference for the previous waste collection service, highlighting its reliability and efficiency.
- **Disappointment with the change:** Respondents felt that the change in contractors had resulted in a significant decline in service quality.

Calls for Improvement

- **Better communication:** Respondents called for improved communication from the council and Suez, including clearer information about collection schedules and service disruptions.
- **Improved service quality:** Respondents urged the council and Suez to take steps to improve the overall quality of the waste collection service.
- **Compensation:** Some respondents suggested that residents should be compensated for the inconvenience and financial losses caused by the poor service.

Overall, the additional survey responses reinforced the concerns raised earlier in the survey regarding the waste collection service. Despite some improvements, many residents remain dissatisfied with the current service and are calling for significant changes.

Do you have any other comments about street cleaning you would like to share?

Lack of Street Cleaning

- **Infrequent or non-existent cleaning:** Many respondents reported that their streets were rarely cleaned or not cleaned at all.
- **Focus on town centres:** Some respondents felt that the focus was on cleaning town centres, while residential areas were neglected.

Overgrown Vegetation and Litter

- **Unmaintained vegetation:** Respondents complained about overgrown weeds, hedges, and bushes obstructing sidewalks and roads.
- **Litter and fly-tipping:** Litter and fly-tipping were common issues, especially in rural areas and near overflowing bins.

Drainage Issues

- **Blocked drains:** Blocked drains were a concern for some residents, leading to flooding and waterlogged areas.

Public Health and Safety

- **Health hazards:** Overgrown vegetation, litter, and overflowing bins were seen as potential health hazards.
- **Safety concerns:** Blocked drains and overgrown vegetation were also considered safety hazards, especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

Dissatisfaction with Council Response

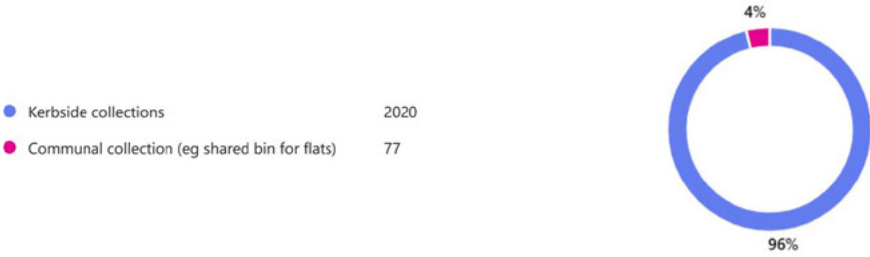
- **Lack of action:** Many respondents felt that their complaints about street cleaning issues were not addressed adequately by the council.
- **Inconsistent responses:** Some respondents reported receiving conflicting or inconsistent information from the council.

Overall, the survey responses highlighted a significant lack of street cleaning services in many areas, leading to concerns about public health, safety, and the overall appearance of the communities. Residents called for more frequent and thorough street cleaning, as well as better maintenance of public spaces.

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Responses Overview

1. How is your waste and recycling collected?



2. Are you registered for an assisted collection?



3. Are you registered for a clinical waste collection?



4. Do you have an active garden waste subscription?



5. Please provide your postcode. This is so we can get a picture of how different areas of the borough were affected, and will not be used for any other reasons.

2088 Responses

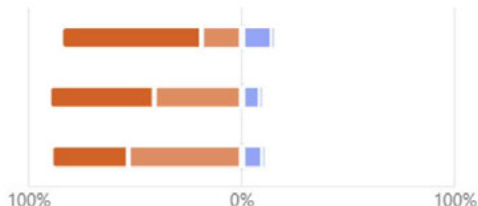
6. Before the contract change, did you, or anyone in your household:

- Yes
- No
- Can't remember
- Didn't live in the area

receive a letter informing you of any changes?

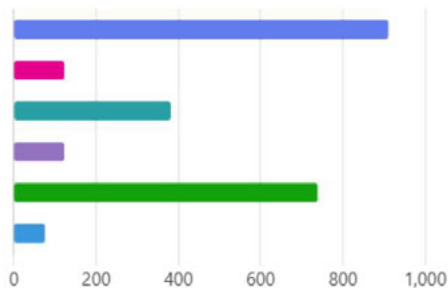
feel you had enough information about the changes to the service?

try to find more information about changes to the service?



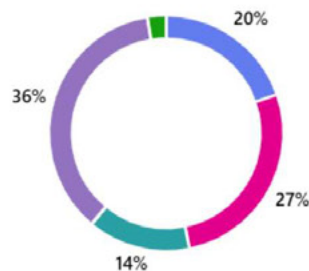
7. If you wanted more information, how did you try to find it? Please select all that apply.

- Council website 909
- Calling the council 121
- Social media 380
- Local press 121
- I didn't look for more information 737
- Other 74



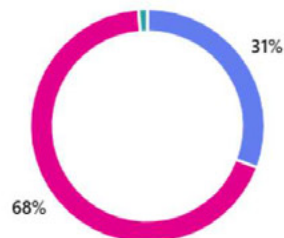
8. Were you able to find the information you wanted?

- Yes - all the information I needed 391
- I found some of the information I needed 539
- No - I couldn't find the information I needed 282
- I didn't look for more information 724
- Can't remember 51



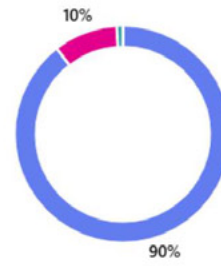
9. Were your collections on the day(s) you expected?

- Yes 644
- No 1425
- Can't remember 25



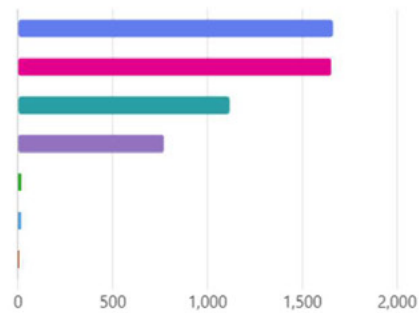
10. Did you experience any missed collections?

● Yes	1872
● No	200
● Can't remember	19



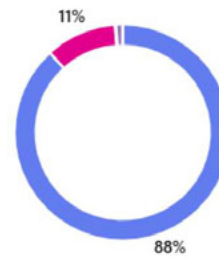
11. Which collections were missed? Please select all that apply

● General waste	1660
● Recycling	1650
● Food waste	1114
● Garden waste	767
● Clinical collection	14
● Bulky waste	13
● I didn't have a missed collection	2



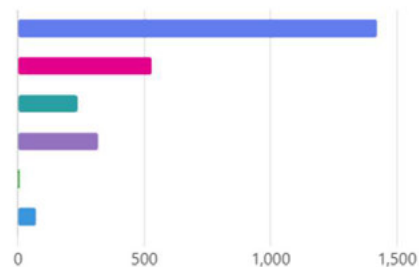
12. Did you try to report the missed collection?

● Yes	1650
● No	199
● I didn't have a missed collection	3
● Can't remember	18



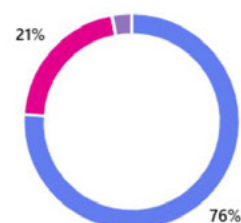
13. If you tried to report a missed collection, how did you report it? Please select all that apply

● On council website	1419
● Called the council	527
● Email to council	234
● Contacted my local councillor	315
● I didn't have any missed collections	4
● Other	69



14. Were you able to report the missed collection?

● Yes	1339
● No	369
● I didn't have a missed collection	1
● Can't remember	51



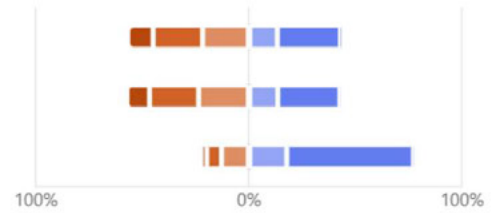
15. If you reported a missed collection, how satisfied were you with:

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- I didn't have a missed collection

Finding how to report a missed collection

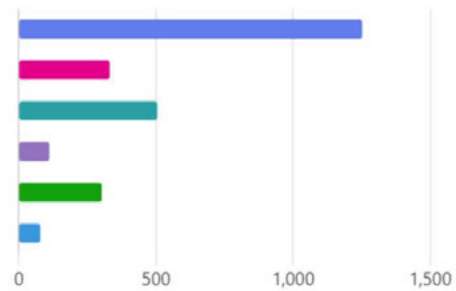
Completing the missed collection report

The council's response to reporting the missed collection



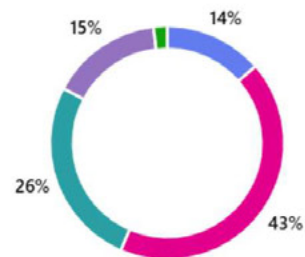
16. If you wanted more information about your collections, how did you try to find it? Please select all the apply

- Council website 1250
- Calling the council 329
- Social media 503
- Local press 109
- I didn't look for more information 300
- Other 76



17. Were you able to find the information you wanted?

- Yes - all the information I wanted 249
- Some of the information I wanted 784
- No - I couldn't find the information I wanted 479
- I didn't look for more information 282
- Can't remember 34

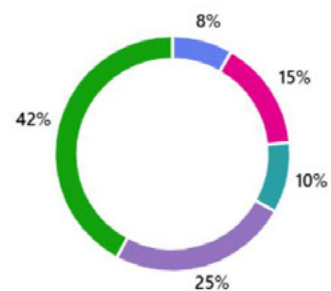


18. Other than missed/delayed collections, have you had any other issues with your waste and recycling service?

1337
Responses

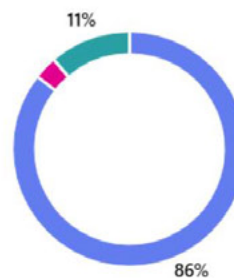
19. How satisfied are you with the waste and recycling service?

- Very satisfied 169
- Somewhat satisfied 307
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 197
- Somewhat dissatisfied 501
- Very dissatisfied 856



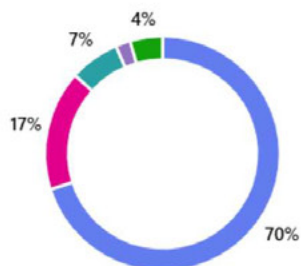
20. If you have any issues with your collections, will you report them?

● Yes	1734
● No	65
● Maybe	227



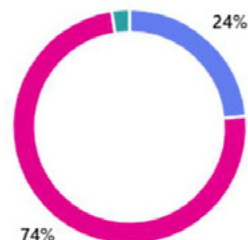
21. If you have any issues with your collections, how are you most likely to report them?

● On council website	1406
● Call to council	331
● Email to council	138
● I wouldn't report it	41
● Other	89



22. Have you changed how you use the waste and recycling service since the contract changed on 25 March?

● Yes	477
● No	1500
● Maybe	49



23. If you have changed how you use the service, please tell us how

548
Responses

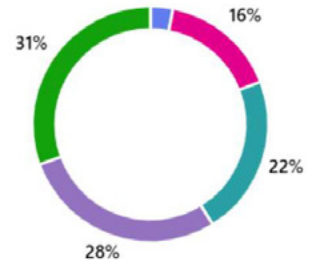
24. Do you have any other comments about the service you would like to share?

Please don't use this to report a missed collection, visit www.swale.gov.uk/report-a-missed-bin instead

1304
Responses

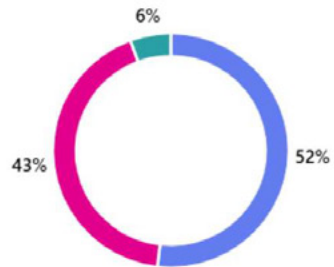
25. How satisfied are you with the way the council keeps streets and footpaths clean?

● Very satisfied	64
● Somewhat satisfied	331
● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	454
● Somewhat dissatisfied	584
● Very dissatisfied	630



26. Since 25 March, have you reported any of the following? Please select all that apply

● Overflowing litter bin	409
● Flytipping	336
● Graffiti	44



27. If you reported one of these issues, how satisfied were you with

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- I haven't reported one of these issues

Finding how to report the issue
 Completing the report
 The response to the report



28. Do you have any other comments about street cleaning you would like to share?

887

Responses

Swale Borough Council Councillor Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review survey – Summary of responses received

A survey was circulated to all 47 Councillors and 19 responses were received. Below is a summary of those responses.

Question 1 - Before the contract started are you aware if residents in your ward felt they had enough information about the changes?

Of the responses received 7 stated that residents in their ward felt they had received enough information before the contract started.

Responses are summarised below:

- A lot of people said they didn't receive a letter or the information was incorrect;
- other steps could have been taken to get the information out such as video recordings that could have been shared online for each area;
- there was an overwhelming assumption it would be a smooth transition;
- more social media engagement would have been beneficial;
- it is not possible to reach everyone;
- the initial information was sufficient;
- bin stickers would have been helpful; and
- ward councillors should have been given the opportunity to sense check the rounds in advance.

Question 2 - Once the contract started are you aware if residents in your ward felt they had enough information about any disruption to collections?

Of the responses received 14 felt residents in their ward did not have enough information about any disruption to collections.

Responses are summarised below:

- Not kept informed of missed collections or plans to address them;
- many people reported issues via the website and no feedback was received;
- emails from residents and councillors were not always answered;
- issues also with the telephone system meant a lot of residents simply gave up trying to report;
- very little was communicated by the council, administration or collectors;
- few people, even councillors were getting prompt, or even any feedback when they submitted complaints;
- one day, everyone was told to bring their bins in. The next day, they were told to leave their bins out in case a truck happened to pass by;
- residents felt information about disruptions was lacking detail and timeliness;
- the SBC website look-up tool displayed the wrong information; and
- residents resorted to asking ward councillors for information.

Question 3 - To what extent was your ward affected by missed collections?

A summary of the ways in which wards were affected are below:

- residents' faith in the Council has changed;
- some people didn't have their bins emptied for 14 weeks;

- parked cars were used as an excuse for non-collection;
- people took their rubbish to the tip but some were turned away as waste was not being accepted;
- some people paid private companies to remove their waste;
- pavements were blocked by uncollected bins causing difficulties for pedestrians with pushchairs and wheelchair users;
- rural areas were particularly impacted;
- dog waste bins were overflowing;
- narrow roads caused some collections not to be completed;
- communal bin stores and food waste collections were a particular problem; and
- sack collection only areas had rubbish stacking up due to missed collections.

Question 4a - What was your experience of reporting missed collections – on your own behalf?:

Councillors experiences of reporting missed collections are summarised below:

- On one occasion I was told my bin had not been on the pavement - when it had been;
- the most frustrating aspect was sending in report after report for the same locations with no response at all, or no resolution;
- no confirmation of receipt of complaint received initially, or notification about any resolution;
- reporting via the website overall worked well; and
- four councillors responded to say they had a very good experience of reporting and receiving a response.

Question 4a - What was your experience of reporting missed collections – on behalf of residents?:

- Too much false information and failed promises of recollections often for months, which just added to residents frustrations;
- emails not always responded to but when they were, the response was helpful;
- in the early months only about a half of complaints lodged were responded to.
- some responses to complaints were vague;
- frustrating not to have the information to pass onto residents;
- information provided was sometimes incorrect;
- officers responded quickly with information about a resolution;
- the same issues repeated week after week despite reporting;
- residents were thankful for our help. Elderly residents have said they couldn't get through on phone line;
- not enough feedback due to lack of staff, the council should have had lots of temporary or seconded contractor monitoring officer or assistant contract monitoring officers;
- there wasn't and still isn't enough officers on the ground physically monitoring elements of the contract;
- street bins are still an issue; and
- only a couple of times did I have to escalate the issue.

Question 5 - What feedback have you received from residents in your ward about reporting missed collections?

Responses are summarised below:

- residents have reported spending ages on the phone waiting to speak to someone;
- reports of the website not working;
- feedback was overwhelmingly negative;
- there was gratitude when problems were resolved;
- there was understanding and patience;
- tailored responses to emails were not received;
- frustration when there were no responses to reporting;
- residents found it hard to understand why there was a problem when the previous contractor had successfully completed collections;
- some residents found the reporting procedure was too complicated;
- some residents found the reporting procedure easy;
- SBC staff were kind and helpful; and
- the Council's reputation has been undermined.

Question 6 - Was there anything specific about your ward that you observed which may have contributed to missed collections such as access problems?

Responses are summarised below:

- Suez reported difficulties with access but it was not an issue for the previous contractor;
- properties missed as crews had no knowledge of them or where bins were normally placed;
- Hilda Road a particular problem for a range of reasons;
- communal bins a problem in Queenborough, Halfway and Sheerness;
- properties missed as they were listed by name, not street address;
- the system kept saying there was a road closure when there wasn't;
- assisted collections were also badly affected. Disabled residents went for weeks seeing their bins missed while others nearby were collected;
- issues caused by not enough or wrong data;
- there appeared to be an over-supply of small vehicles which resulted in collections not being completed;
- Lamas Drive, vehicles parked so collection vehicles could not get through;
- There are too many random addresses on narrow roads;
- Cryalls Lane at the London Road end, access problems due to parked cars;
- Road works caused access problems;
- The previous contractor did not provide key codes for communal bins;

Question 7 - Do you feel you have received enough information/data throughout the period of disruption to assist with resident queries? If not, what additional information would have been useful?

Responses are summarised below:

- Didn't feel the information provided could be trusted;
- councillors were told not to re-use the daily update but this limited what information could be passed onto residents;
- it would have been useful to have answers to residents' questions about why there were never enough lorries to replace broken down ones or those in for a service or MOT, and why there were never enough staff or managers to replace those that were off sick;

- councillors should have been provided with the details of each route, which were only listed as numbers in the beginning;
- the waste update was a shambles. The numbers were quickly meaningless, showing routes as being 100% when they clearly weren't;
- there was no information as to which properties were supposed to be collected when;
- daily updates did not give area-specific information;
- wards that have Friday rounds had no daily update until the following Monday or Tuesday;
- there was no separate data for food waste;
- communication with councillors around how new service would work didn't adequately explain how long expected new service would bed-in, and also told that new zones would make collections more efficient but since heard of real geographical mismatches which really shouldn't have happened;
- the daily bulletins were helpful, but in my view did not contain enough detail;
- the daily updates sometimes contained inaccurate or conflicting information;
- other systems such as live updates on the website;
- a ticket tracking system would have allowed councillors to follow the progress of issues raised; and
- five councillors felt they had received enough data/information.

Question 8 - Did you find the information/data provided easy to interpret?

Responses are summarised below:

- The bit about 70%, 95% or 100% collections was misleading because it did not reflect the geography;
- the information provided was easy to interpret, just not detailed enough to be effective, or outright wrong;
- in the beginning no, but once I became familiar with the language being used and how the statistics were being applied, the information/data provided became easier to understand; and
- seven councillors felt the information/data provided was easy to interpret.

Question 9 - Apart from reporting missed collections on behalf of residents, are there any other actions you have had to take resulting from the new waste contract?

Responses are summarised below:

- Reporting of speeding and dangerous driving of Suez vehicle;
- resolving ongoing problems of broken bins;
- chasing up about garden waste bins not being delivered;
- calling KCC as there were reports of the Sheerness tip being full;
- councillors paying over £1,000 out of own pockets to clear waste not collected for over six weeks;
- visiting locations to provide Suez with full address and What3words;
- set up local WhatsApp groups to keep residents informed;
- visiting locations to monitor if bins had been collected;
- managing a large volume of phone calls, emails and Facebook interactions;
- acting as intermediary between residents and council officers;
- requesting extension to garden waste bin subscription due to non-collections;
- chased non-delivery of new bins;

- reporting that food caddies were being thrown back onto the street and damaged;
- request a CMO escort a crew to locate communal bins;
- had to arrange for housing associations to undertake bulk clearances of bin areas for fire safety reasons;
- reporting increased flytipping and littering;
- attending many meetings with officers, Suez, residents and parishes; and
- two councillors said they didn't have to undertake any additional actions.

Question 10 - Can you comment on whether the round changes, which started on 16 September, have resulted in improvements in your ward?

Responses received summarised below (at time of the member consultation):

- nine councillors reported no or little improvement;
- six councillors reported an improvement; and
- two reported a mixed result.

Question 11 - Are you aware of any issues experienced in your ward by vulnerable residents?

Responses are summarised below:

- Issues with bins being left in the wrong place which caused difficulties for residents with mobility problems;
- difficulties experienced clearing up mess created by missed collections and bags being ripped open by foxes;
- a child was injured by a sharp object sticking out of a black bag uncollected from the street;
- complaints about wheelchair users not being able to use pavements due to uncollected waste;
- assisted collections were not honoured for some time;
- assisted collections often missed or not recorded on the Suez system;
- councillors putting bins out for elderly residents;
- problems with incontinence products not being collected;
- problems with assisted initially due to out of date data being passed from the previous contractor to Suez, but resolved by re-registering;
- some problems with arranging collection of yellow bio-waste bins;
- communal bins in older people's homes not collected regularly;
- missed clinical waste; and
- one councillor said there had been no problems in their ward.

Are you aware of any issues experienced in your ward by residents who use communal bins?

Responses are summarised below:

- ongoing problems of communal bins being missed were reported in the following areas:
 - The Oasts and Blossom Grove
 - Queenborough, Halfway and Sheerness;
 - Sheppey Beach Villas – due to vehicles not being given permission by land owner use private roads;
 - Regis Gate Lodge and Double Day Lodge
 - Thistle Hill;
 - Whitehall Court, Bell Road;
 - Love Lane flats,

- Kingsmead Estate, Nove Avenue and Bensted Grove; and
- The Alms Houses.
- Two councillors said there had been no problems in their wards.

Question 13 - Do you have any comments or observations about the vehicles used in the new contract?

- Responses are summarised below:
- Believe they are not the correct size;
 - vehicles are often off the road for repair, damage, service or MOT;
 - they look nice but the names that were chosen by the public could be more visible;
 - the food collection system could have been better planned and the capacity more accurately calculated;
 - it took Suez a long time to realise the vehicles could not handle certain routes;
 - they seem to break down often;
 - why are they not fully electric?
 - there is a miss-match of vehicle size to route requirement;
 - smaller vehicles going down narrow routes take less waste;
 - was the previous 70/30 split vehicles better?
 - the waste transfer bins are still an inappropriate colour and give residents no confidence that Swale is actually going to recycle the food waste or the recycling; and
 - why do the food pods keep breaking?;

Question 14 - Do you have any comments or observations about either SBC or Suez staffing?

- Responses are summarised below:
- No issue with SBC team and would like to thank them for their efforts;
 - witnessed one Suez staff member running a vehicle on his own;
 - contract management has been bad across all three authorities;
 - staff have received horrific abuse but they were sending emails even at 10 pm;
 - administration response unacceptable, an apology only coming far into the contract;
 - Suez staff should have been paid the same from the start;
 - Suez staff logging rounds as complete and when challenged still staying bins were emptied and only backing down when photographic evidence proved;
 - there seems to have been an excessive number of bins being damaged;
 - SBC customer services understaffed;
 - why weren't Suez fully staffed from the beginning of the contract?
 - SBC need more staff monitoring on the ground and in the office to reply to member enquiries;
 - Suez staff with experience/knowledge of areas were moved to areas they were unfamiliar with;
 - crew have told residents that they aren't told to look at the PDA for assisted collections etc;
 - appreciation expressed for the hard work of SBC officers;
 - concerns about the TUPE process and how this didn't adequately prepare the workforce for the degree of change, meaning many who transferred over were resistant to new rounds and processes;

- SBC underestimated the number of staff required to deal with the substantial number of complaints raised;
- I would like to praise the Environmental team who in my opinion acted with complete professionalism and did all they could operating under extremely difficult circumstances;
- amount of Suez staff sickness was frustrating and left the contract understaffed; and
- I do wonder to what extent contract monitoring is being done. SBC needs to be standing over the contract and enforcing every clause.

Question 15 - What feedback have you received from residents in your ward about street cleansing since the new contract started?

Responses are summarised below:

- Residents complain about dirty streets, litter, rubbish bins overflowing and fly-tipping, however these have been issues for years;
- road sweepers are scheduled but residents report they haven't seen them;
- reports of wards not being cleaned;
- paths need clearing;
- bins need to be emptied more frequently;
- litter picking and fly-tipping clearing should happen quicker;
- the wait for bulk waste collections was a month;
- fly-tipping was being cleared quickly since the start of the contract;
- road sweeper not suitable as it has to go over the same area several times;
- residents were not aware about the removal of dog waste bins and that dog waste should go in general waste bins

Question 16 - Overall, how would you say the new waste contract has impacted on your role as a councillor?

Responses are summarised below:

- Hugely, the amount of time I have spent has made the role almost full time as well as the target for frustrations;
- it's helped let people know who their councillors are, and what other things they can help with;
- it has been all consuming since the new contract and the calls, email, instant message issues raised was intolerable at times plus some abuse early on;
- residents have threatened to dump their uncollected rubbish on my own doorstep. SBC has measures in place to deal with the mental health of council staff - but is oblivious to the pressures placed upon unpaid councillors;
- I was easily spending over 20hrs a week trying to resolve waste issues in my ward. It was the subject most residents stop me with, when out and about. I needed to do a weekly trawl of 5 facebook groups, messages, emails, face to face conversations before emailing cleansing;
- I believe the people of Swale deserve better than what has taken place with the waste collection and although there are signs of improvements, measures need to be put in place to prevent anything like this from taking place again; and
- I ensured my message was to report online where possible, but through the call centre if not.

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Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review

Summary of feedback received at the September round of Area Committee meetings

Eastern Area Committee – 3 September 2024

- Replies from officers to emails from Members were normally prompt, but there had been occasions when no response had been received from officers;
- thanks were noted for the excellent clean up by Suez following the Hop Festival in Faversham;
- thanks were also noted for Suez removing graffiti at the West Faversham Community Centre;
- a blue recycling bin that had been missed in Watling Ward was set on fire;
- the public would only be interested in their bin collections taking place, they would not be interested in the detail relating to the start of the contract;
- problems with collections in rural areas were raised; and
- roles and responsibility should be made clear in the report that was submitted to the Environment & Climate Change Committee.

Western Area Committee – 5 September 2024

- Why did the contract with Biffa end?;
- what guarantees were SBC given that Suez could do the job?;
- were there financial penalties for Suez not delivering the service?;
- were there going to be round changes for rural areas?;
- suggest that Suez do the same as Biffa and start collected at the outside of an area and work in, it would be easier to pick up missed bins on the way back;
- some areas had not experienced any problems, were they the rounds that were the same as the old Biffa rounds?;
- the problems with non-collection of communal bins were a health-hazard;
- would SBC not be making improvements until after the report was presented at the Environment & Climate Change Committee on 20 November 2024?;
- there was too much reliance on technology;
- could parish council clerks be advised about the round changes coming up to alert residents to look out for letters?;
- SBC should consider a back-up plan such as bringing in an alternative company; and
- Members complimented Suez on the clear up after Sittingbourne Carnival and the Hop Festival.

Sheppey Area Committee – 19 September 2024

- Why was there not a contingency plan in place?;
- how can the operatives empty some bins and leave others on the same road;

- food waste bins have been missed;
- regarding street cleansing, used sanitary towels were stuck to a lamp post, it was months before these were cleared away;
- roads that had been on a schedule for a deep clean before the contract change have still not been cleaned. Why was the schedule made if the contract was changing?;
- parking close to junctions was an issue, the Suez vehicles could not get past.

Sittingbourne Area Committee – 26 September 2024

- Were the re-rounds working?;
- one of the issues had been communal bins being missed, what had been put in place to resolve this?;
- there had been confusion about collection days for residents living in properties on the High Street, Sittingbourne;
- some litter bins had not been emptied and were overflowing;
- Councillors emailing Cleansing Services with problems were not always receiving replies;
- the Council Leader, Councillor Tim Gibson thanked Councillor Lehmann for all the work he had done over the period of disruption. He said it was a mammoth task and he had done a sterling job; and
- why were Fridays the worst day for missed collections.

Appendix VIII

Mid Kent Waste Partnership Tender Project Timeline		
No.	Description	Date(s)
1	Consultant report - Waste Service Options	July 2020
2	Initial Informal Cabinet Discussion	July 2020
3	Member working group creation	September 2020
4	Initial working groups discussions on Mid Kent Partnership / Delivery Model / Service options	18 Sept 2020, 16 October 2020, 20 November 2020
5	Member Waste Working group	March and May 2021
6	Initial Cabinet Committee Decision	9 June 2021
7	Creation of tender documents	June 2021 - November 2021
8	Member Waste Working group	Sept and November 2021
9	Advertising and Release of tender documents	November 2021
10	Project Initiation Document (tender) – to SBC Senior Management Team	December 2021
11	Member Waste Working group	January and February 2022
12	Tender Phase 1 - PQQ and Shortlisting	10 January 2022
13	Tender Phase 2 - Invitation to Submit Detailed Solutions	14 January 2022 to 25 March 2022
14	Tender Dialogue sessions	March / April 2022
15	Tender Phase 3 - Invitation to Submit Refined Solutions	25 April 2022 - 10 June 2022
16	Member Waste Working group	July 2022
17	Tender Dialogue sessions	July and August 2022
18	Tender phase 4 - Issue of Final Tender documentation	August / Sept 2022
19	Tender Evaluation Period	October and November 2022
20	All Member Briefings	7 and 14 November 2022
21	Tender award decision Swale - Environment Committee	19 December 2022
22	Tender award decision Swale – to Policy & Resources Committee	4 January 2023
23	Contract Completion and Mobilisation phase	January 2023 - March 2024
24	Member Waste Working group	April 2023 and Sept 2023
25	All Member Briefing	25 September 2023
26	All Member Briefing	26 February 2024
27	Contract Start date	24 March 2024

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Forward Decisions Plan: Environment and Climate Change Committee 2025

Report title, background information and recommendation(s)	Date of meeting	Open or exempt	Lead Officer and report author
Shoreline Management Plan Policy & Community Engagement Planning – Eastchurch Cliffs	18 March 2025	Open	Head of Service: Martyn Cassell Report Author: Mike Knowles
Revised Climate Ecological Emergency Action Plan	18 March 2025	Open	Head of Service: Martyn Cassell Report Author: Janet Hill
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) public consultation	18 March 2025	Open	Head of Service: Martyn Cassell Report Author: Michelle Anderson
Review of Air Quality Management Areas in East Street (AQMA 3) and Teynham (AQMA 5)	4 June 2025	Open	Head of Service: Tracey Beattie Report Author: Clare Lydon

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