

<b>Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Performance report for waste collection and street cleansing service (April 2025 – Sept 2025)
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment & Leisure
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Alister Andrews, Environmental Services Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. To review and discuss the contents of this performance update.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This is the first Swale Borough Council mid-year waste collection and street cleansing report since the annual report was presented to this committee in June 2025. This update is a '*lighter touch*' report. It covers the service performance from April 2025 to Sept 2025.
- 1.2 Overall, the waste collection service has settled and is performing in-line with the contract requirements. Street cleansing continues to be an area of focus.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Suez were awarded the contract for Mid Kent in 2023. The Mid Kent Waste Partnership includes Ashford Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Swale Borough Council. Suez undertake bin collections for all councils and street cleansing for Ashford and Swale only.
- 2.2 The contract is an eight-year contract that started in March 2024.
- 2.3 In July 2025 Officers updated Members at the Environmental Services and Climate Change committee on annual performance. It was recommended that a *lighter touch* mid-year update report was presented to members in Autumn 2025.
- 2.4 This report delivers against the 2025 Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny review recommendations.

### **Strategic Matters**

- 2.5 The final contract prices have been agreed for 2025/26. This included complex agreements over TUPE figures and other parameters such as indexation for

some elements and property number increases. The future uplifts will be less complex as they will be primarily indexation calculations with annual adjustments for property number changes.

- 2.6 At the time of writing, the financial performance mechanism figure for 2024/25 is likely to be agreed as per contract terms and conditions.
- 2.7 The packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) year 1 payment figures were reviewed by DEFRA and revised letters were sent to Local Authorities in July 2025. The revised figure for Swale was £2.31M to be paid in increments in Nov (double payment); Jan; and March. This figure was approximately £1M more than the previous notification from DEFRA. However, the full figure is not guaranteed and is dependent on what the scheme administrators receive from producers. The government have, for this transitional year only, guaranteed the same £1.4M that we received last year for 2025-26. Future years carry no guarantees. The figure is based upon a Pack UK Local Authority Packaging Cost and Performance (LAPCAP) model. The LAPCAP model considers factors such as frequency, pattern and types of collections alongside population densities, property types and accessibility (rurality) and levels of deprivation.
- 2.8 DEFRA sent a further letter in May 2025 to advise that they will be appointing a Producer Responsibility organisation (PRO). It will play an important leadership role in pEPR delivery. Pack UK will appoint the PRO in March 2026. Over time it is likely that the PRO will absorb some of the functions of Pack UK. DEFRA recognises that some LA's may have concerns, but they feel that producer led schemes are necessary to achieve efficiencies.
- 2.9 The regulator will have the power to deduct 20% of EPR payments if the LA does not reach the necessary '*efficient and effective*' standards. The criteria used to determine 'efficient and effective' are not yet totally clear.
- 2.10 The Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2025- 2030 (KJMWMS) is currently being reviewed by KCC and partners and is likely to be shared wider later this year/ early 2026.

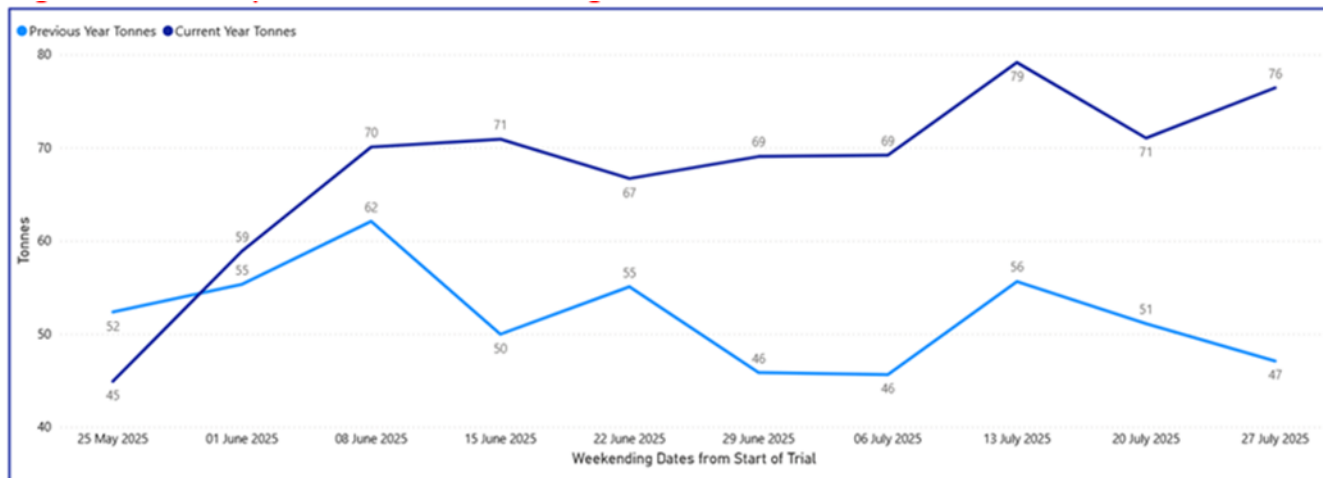
### **Simpler Recycling**

- 2.11 As detailed earlier in this report, food waste collections will be required from all residential premises by April 2026.
- 2.12 National trials for collections of films and flexible plastics have completed (Findings are available to read in the FlexCollect report – a link can be found in the background papers). Discussions are taking place between the waste disposal authorities and the material recycling facilities regarding how these materials should be collected once the new burden to collect these arrives in March 2027. It seems there are questions around collection methodologies, infrastructure and markets for these materials which are still being discussed.

- 2.13 Deposit Return Schemes for plastic drinking bottles are still due to launch in England in October 2027. The intention is to reduce litter and increase recycling. Removing plastic bottles from kerbside collection schemes will impact composition dynamics and disposal/ waste value figures.

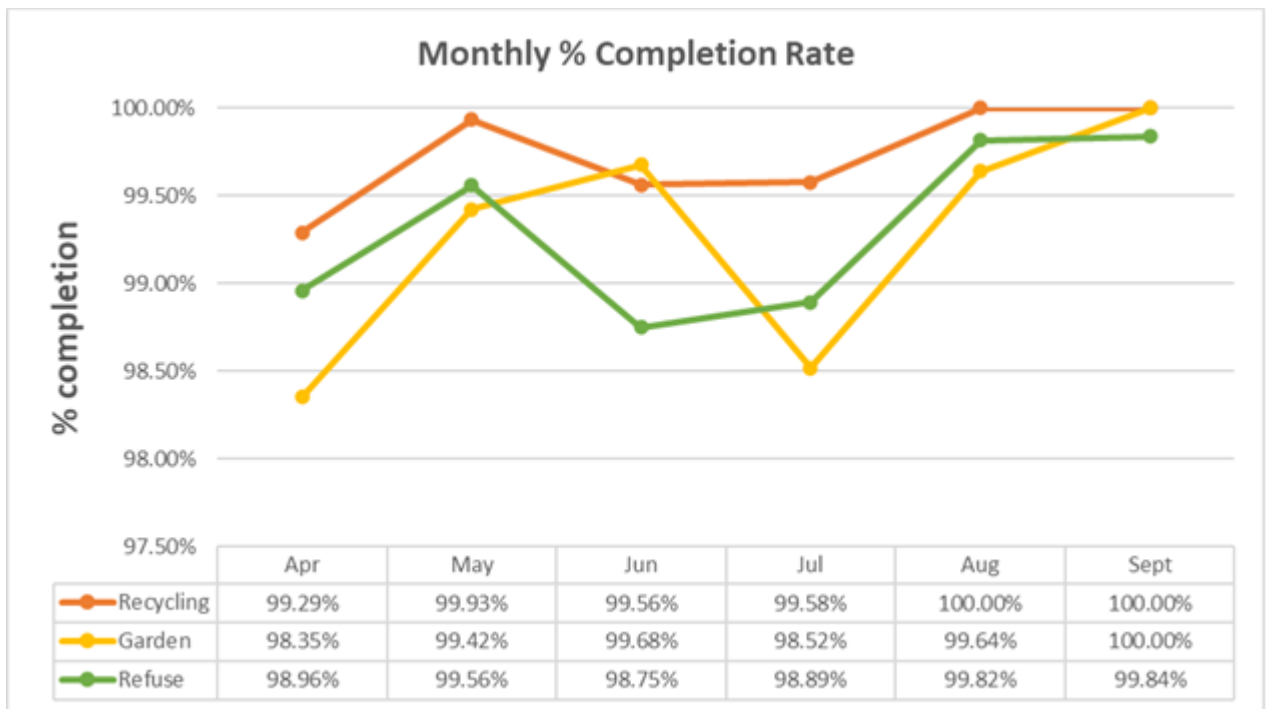
### **Waste Collections**

- 2.14 Under 'Simpler Recycling', all properties in Swale must have waste food collections by April 2026. A project is ongoing by officers to deliver this. Although the vast majority of individual properties in the borough already receive weekly food collections, there are a small number of roads where these food bins need to be delivered alongside an educational offer to ensure reasonable take up of the scheme.
- 2.15 The main focus for waste food roll-out has been at communal properties and holiday camps. These are more complex services to provide at such premises. Communal properties may have limited space for additional bins. Officers have been visiting every bin store to capture data on space, services and bins already present. Many of these properties currently receive weekly refuse collections. The current project plan intends to roll out recycling services to these premises as well as food. This will bring these residents in line with the rest of the borough by receiving alternate weekly collections (refuse and recycling) with weekly food. Nationwide data shows that in some communal properties, the shared responsibility for success may reduce the effectiveness of the scheme, so positive roll out, support and education are key.
- 2.16 Suez did undertake a communal round re-route in the summer. This improved collection rates. However, further round changes will be necessary to accommodate the alternative weekly collection requirements. Suez are well aware of these requirements and they are considering the procurement of new communal collection vehicles to ensure this is completed as efficiently as possible.
- 2.17 Swale received £58.5K capital funding for food containers in 2023/24. DEFRA also notified Swale that a revenue payment of £77.5K will be received. This consisted of £60.5K in 2024/25 for container delivery and project management and £17K will be awarded in 2025/26 for comms & procurement. No funding was received by Swale from DEFRA for new vehicles. Quarterly reporting to DEFRA is required on how new burden food grants are being spent.
- 2.18 From April 2026, it is understood that the ongoing resource funding for food waste will be provided through the finance settlement rather than as a separate new burdens grant.
- 2.19 A recent joint project with KCC promoted food waste awareness and recycling in Swale by placing stickers on wheelie bins. The project was more successful than expected with food waste tonnages increasing significantly and remaining at about 30% higher than last year.



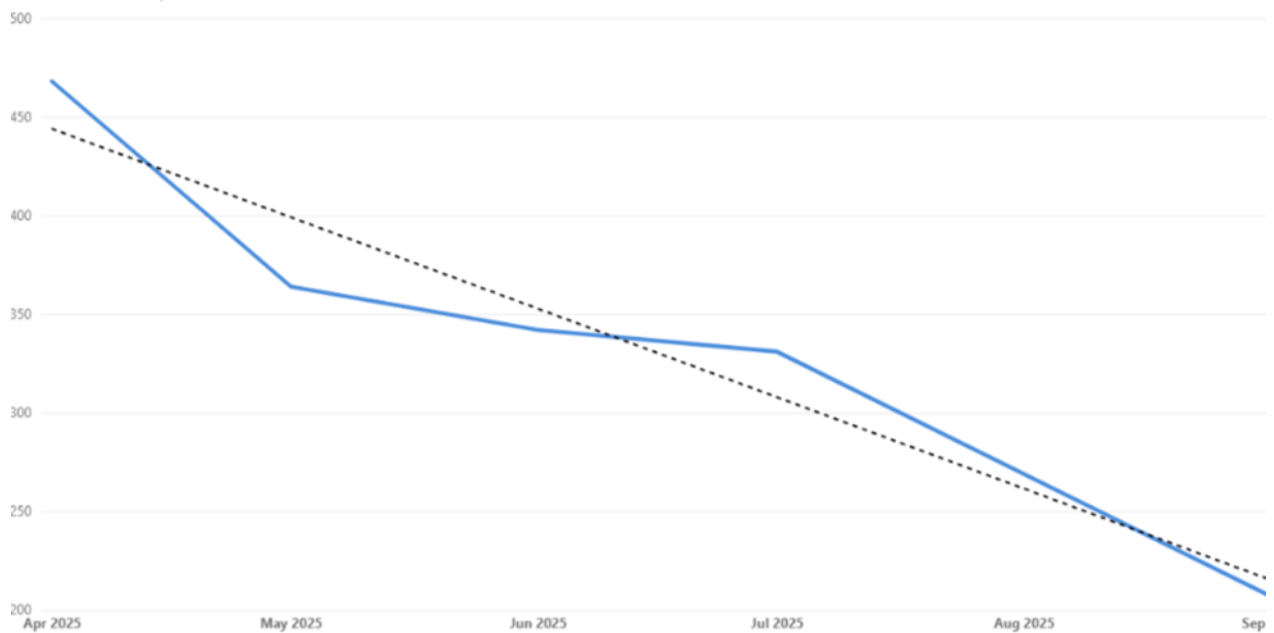
**Figure 1 – Graph to show food tonnages in Swale**

- 2.20 The project resulted in residents requesting over 8000 food bins. The excessive figures resulted in some delays to bin deliveries. Consequently, food tonnages remain higher in 2025 than in 2024. At the moment there is not enough data to determine if this resulted in a corresponding decrease in residual household waste tonnages.
- 2.21 Collection performance has continued to improve. Figure 2 shows that over 99% of wheelie bins collected between April and September 2025 were collected on their scheduled day. August and September showed further improvements on this figure. *Please note that roads that were attempted to be collected but access prevented collection, are counted as 'completed' from a performance perspective.*

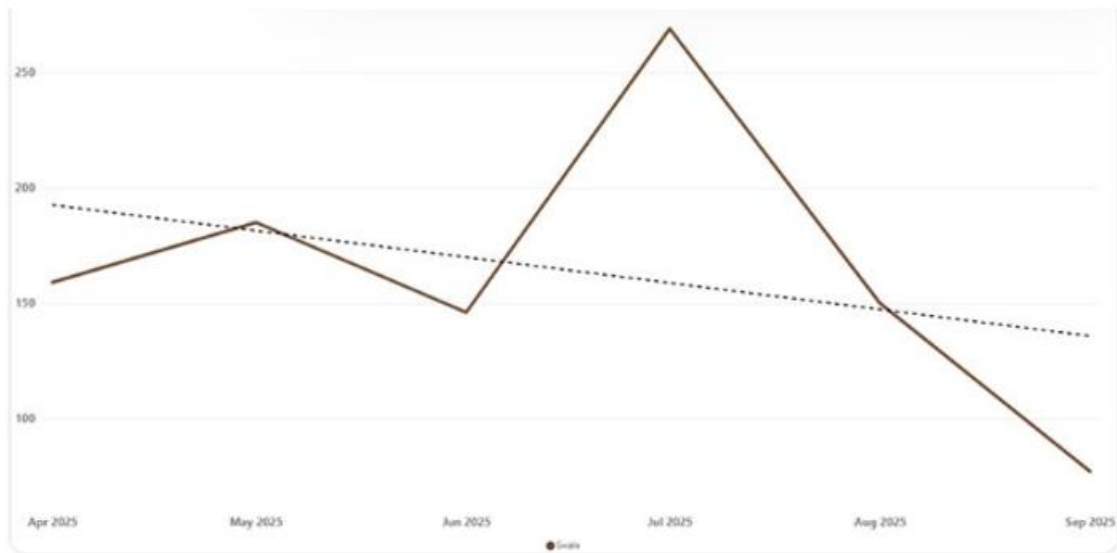


**Figure 2 – graph to show collection performance from April – Sept 2025**

The following graphs show that missed bin collections for recycling and refuse continue to reduce month on month.



**Figure 3 – Graph to show the number of reported missed recycling collections since April 2025**



**Figure 4 – Graph to show the number of reported missed refuse collections since April 2025**

- 2.22 It is also important to recognise that performance has improved for rectifying missed bins once reported by residents. Since May 2025, the number of missed bins that were not returned for within 24 hours has steadily fallen, with the vast majority being collected the following day.
- 2.23 Feedback from operational officers advise that this past summer has been impacted by fewer staff related issues and absences than in many of the previous years (including under the previous contractor). Suez advise that this is because they have far better mechanisms and procedures in place.
- 2.24 There has been ongoing recycling education and social media posts over the past few months. A focus was during national recycling week at the end of September. These posts were well received by residents. The posts continue to advise on what can and cannot go in certain bins.
- 2.25 Contamination of recycling bins remains a concern. It is not uncommon for entire lorry loads to be re-categorised as ‘residual waste’ if the contamination levels are excessive. Consequently, these materials are lost from the circular economy forever as residual waste goes for incineration (energy from waste). The overall cost of incinerating waste is higher than recycling it. This is likely to become even more of an issue for future unitary authorities and waste disposal authorities as Emission Trading Schemes expand to encompass the waste sector in the coming years.
- 2.26 Officers are working with Suez to ensure more recycling bins are being checked at the point of emptying, with bins being left if contaminants are present. Bins should have a tag placed on them to advise residents of the reason why the recycling bin was not taken. Crews should also photograph the contents in case of complaints. The intention is for the scale of these operations to increase over

coming months to target specific contamination items in the areas where we have the highest rejection rates.

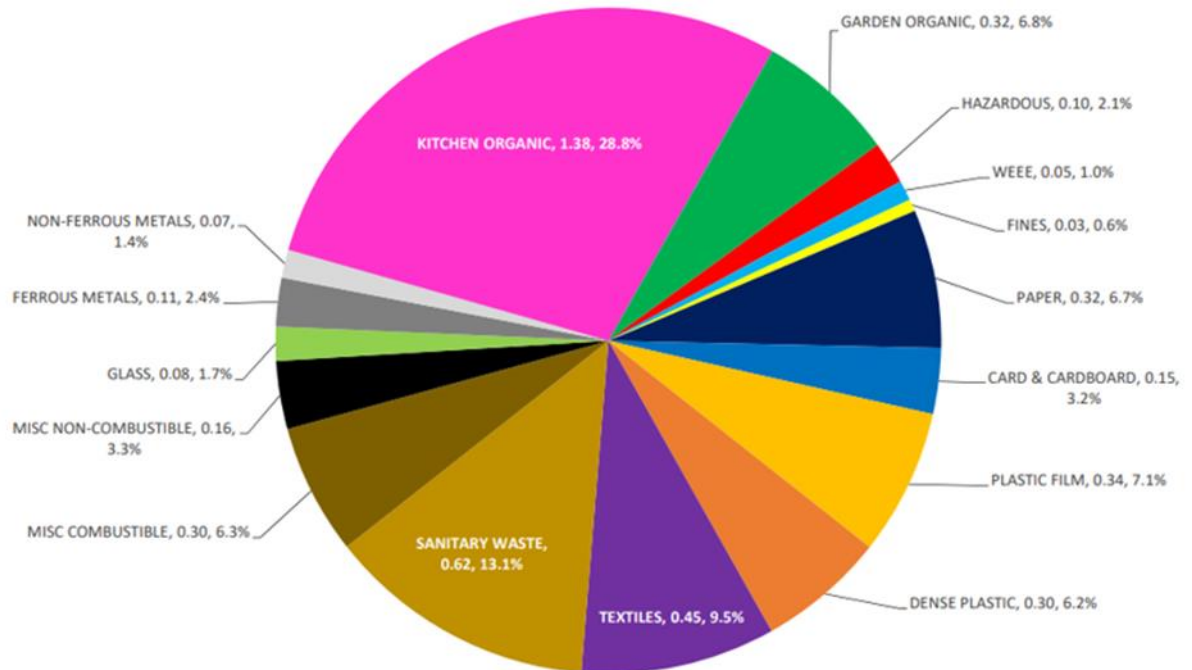
- 2.27 The main contamination items that cause the rejected recycling loads are food waste; black bin bags, textiles and used dirty nappies.



**Figure 5 - contamination in recycling bins**

- 2.28 At the time of producing this report, recycling data was only available for Q1. The data is yet to be verified but it is indicating a recycling rate around 36.6% for Q1.
- 2.29 Through the Kent Resource Partnership (KRP), the 12 LA Members commissioned a consultancy to consider whole system costs for waste collection and disposal. This work was commissioned to identify possible savings. It will also assist Swale BC in writing an assessment to explain why the authority is not collecting paper and card (fibres) separately to the other recyclables. The report suggests that there are no whole system financial savings to be made within Swale by collecting fibres separately. However, separating paper and card remains the government's preferred model.
- 2.30 The report uses 2023/24 data, which highlights that Swale residents produce more Kg/HH/year of residual waste than many other Kent LA's. The 2023/24 data also shows that Swale residents recycle less than some other Kent LA's. This may be partly due to the high contamination levels in Swale recycling bins e.g food, black bags, textiles etc.
- 2.31 2025 composition studies have concluded in Swale for residual bins and food bins. The main summary findings identify that 27% of waste in the green wheelie bins was food waste. 86% of this food waste was avoidable. Half of all discarded food in the green wheelie bins was still packaged.
- 2.32 43.1% of residual waste could have been recycled at the kerbside (over 2kg/HH/week)

- 2.33 Food waste bins have very little contamination. Residents who use these are using them well, although 72% of the waste food in the bins could have been avoided. The future focus needs to be on better participation by residents in food waste collections.



**Figure 6 – pie chart to show average Swale residual bin waste composition (Kg/HH and %)**

## Street Cleansing

- 2.34 With waste collection performance continuing to improve, our focus remains on making improvements to street cleansing.
- 2.35 Suez have completed their road cleansing scheduling. This information is ready to be uploaded into the Suez Software system called 'CORE'. Once uploaded it will allow much better monitoring of performance.
- 2.36 The upload will take place once all litter bins have been identified and recorded on the cleansing schedule. This process was delayed due to staff issues. The remainder of the litter bin audit work is being undertaken by Suez officers so as to progress as swiftly as possible. The litter bin data will be checked by Swale BC officers prior to upload.
- 2.37 In parallel with the audit, Swale BC officers will continue the work of placing QR codes on litter bins to allow residents to report issues with litter bins using their mobile device. There have been issues with the initial stickers used and this is being rectified with the original company used.



- 2.38 At the time of writing this report, the autumn leaf cleansing schedule has commenced to target roads where leaf litter is more of an issue.
- 2.39 Environment officers have undertaken two partnership enforcement events since April. These operations target drivers of vehicles possibly committing waste related offences. Between April 2025 and September 2025, ten fixed penalty notices (FPNs) have been issued for waste related offences.
- 2.40 Fly tipping events have reduced by 388 incidents (25%) between April – Sept in 2025 compared to the same period in 2024.

Fly Tipping Incident Data		
	01/04/2024 to 30/09/2024	01/04/2025 to 30/09/2025
Land Type	Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents
Totals	1533	1145
Year	2024	2025
Unclassified	15	9
1A - Highway	891	618
1B - Footpath or Bridleway	92	55
1C - Back Alleyway	326	297
1E - Council Land	154	131
1F - Agricultural	6	0
1G - Private Residential	24	21
1H - Private Commercial	4	4
Industrial		
1J - Watercourse or Bank	21	10
Waste Type	Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents
Totals	1533	1145
Year	2024	2025
Duplications	31	22
2A - Animal Carcasses	1	0
2B - Green	49	37
2C - Vehicle Parts	13	20
2D - White Goods	124	99
2E - Other Electric	30	13
2F - Tyres	29	14
2G - Asbestos	32	7
2J - Construction/demolition	141	82
2K - Black Bags Commercial	11	17
2L - Black Bags Household	133	102
2M - Chemical Drums Oil or Fuel	13	14
2N - Other Household Waste	815	608
2O - Other Commercial Waste	56	35
Other Unidentified	55	75

Tip Size	Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents
Totals	1533	1145
Year	2024	2025
Duplications	31	22
3B - Single Item	247	243
3C- Car Boot load or less	230	236
3D - Small van load	586	421
3E - Transit van load	421	203
3F - Tipper lorry load	18	20

**Figure 7 – comparison of fly tipping from April – Sept 2024 compared to the same period in 2025.**

- 2.41 At the start of October, officers commenced a preliminary market engagement exercise to explore opportunities for future additional environmental enforcement contracts. Previous similar contracts tackled issues such as littering and dog fouling. Updates will be shared with this committee as feedback is received.

### **Social Value**

- 2.42 As a partnership, Swale, Suez and CXK (a training provider) delivered its first 'Upcycle Your Skills' programme. The scheme took place on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 2.43 Upcycle Your Skills is a five-week programme designed to boost young people's employability and introduce them to local employers. Participants were not currently in education, employment, or training (NEET), or they were at risk of becoming so. Upcycle Your Skills equipped participants with vital skills, confidence, and opportunities.
- 2.44 The report is attached as Appendix I. It achieved some remarkable successes. One beneficiary has already been offered a Street Cleanser role with Suez after impressing them in interview.
- 2.45 Suez continue to explore opportunities to provide 'two minute litter pick stations' around the borough. Suez are also continuing to explore how they can assist Repair Cafes with WEEE recycling (waste electronic and electrical equipment). This may involve some area-based roadshows.
- 2.46 Suez have produced their first ever 'Social Value and Impact Report'. The report is for Mid Kent and Suez would be keen on feedback (see Appendix II). The report uses 15 monetised metrics and suggests that contract year 1 had a total social value impact of £4.15M.
- 2.47 The 'Active Citizenship Together' scheme (ACT) has continued this year. This is currently funded via income from Fixed Penalty Notices for waste related offences. Between April – September the team of prison offenders have undertaken 22 days of work which included clearing fly tipping, litter picking and tidying land where the ownership is unknown; canal clearance; rubbing down and re-staining benches; painting goal posts and allotment clearances.

### 3 Proposals

- 3.1 To review and discuss performance between April 2025 and September 2025.

### 4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Stop providing councillor updates - The council are not statutorily obliged to produce these reports. However, members have specifically requested updates on performance of this contract so the 'do nothing' option is not recommended.

### 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Satisfaction surveys were undertaken prior to the new contract launching. Consultations were also undertaken as part of the member led waste scrutiny review process (published in January 2025). Officers are considering undertaking a further waste collection and street cleansing satisfaction survey in late 2026 and members views on this would be appreciated.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The waste collection and street cleansing contract is the council's largest contract and it impacts every resident in the borough. Therefore, it is relevant to many of the corporate priorities.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The costs of this contract will be reported in the end of year financial reports. The new fleet cost over £7M for Swale. The streets element of the contract is circa £2.4M and the waste collection element is circa £5.4M. There are also some services which are payable by residents. In 24/25 garden waste subscriptions generated £1,184,169 and bulky waste services generated £108,138 to offset costs against the overall service price.</p> <p>DEFRA have suggested that packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) contributions in 2025/26 may increase to £2.31M. However, this full amount is not guaranteed and a lesser amount of around £1.4M may be awarded if the scheme administrator does not receive all payments due from packaging companies.</p> <p>Swale received £58.5K capital funding for food containers in 2023/24. DEFRA also notified Swale that we will receive a revenue</p>

	<p>payment of £77.5K spread across 2024/25 and 2025/26. Reporting is required back to DEFRA by end of October 2025 on how revenue grants for food waste new burdens are being spent. These reports will be required quarterly.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The council are legally required to provide waste collection and street cleansing services.</p> <p>Under the 'Simpler Recycling' regime, Local Authorities will need to provide weekly food recycling services to all residential premises by April 2026.</p> <p>Under 'Simpler Recycling', Local authorities will need to start collecting films and flexible plastics by 2027. KCC are yet to advise on the collection methodology. Discussions are ongoing with the material recycling facilities.</p> <p>The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic drink bottles is expected to come into force in England in October 2027.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>The swift removal of litter and fly tipping assists in reducing the 'broken window' effect and keeps the borough clean. Officers continue to tackle waste related crime.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>This was fully discussed throughout the contract award as it was a key priority for Members. The new fleet have electric bin lifts and are Euro VI compliant which reduces emissions. The full round re-routes for collections reduced mileage of vehicles, thus reducing vehicle emissions. Suez are currently reviewing further alternative fuel options for the existing fleet.</p> <p>Improving recycling rates by tackling contamination will improve environmental performance further.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Adequate street cleansing reduces litter, detritus and dusts building up on roads and becoming airborne.</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>The collection routes have been developed to avoid busy areas like schools at the busiest times of the day. The impact of disrupted services can affect vulnerable residents more, so specific attention is paid to assisted and clinical collections.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>Service was unsatisfactory at the start of the contract. However, improvements were consistently made. Service is currently in a much better position than in contract year 1.</p> <p>The team are meeting regularly with Suez to ensure the communal food roll out goes as smoothly as possible by April 2026. At</p>

	<p>present the team intend to deliver food and dry recycling to many of these premises at a similar time. Suez are advising that they will adjust collection schedules for these specific premises.</p> <p>The street cleansing modules and scheduling have been developed but they are yet to be uploaded and put into effect. This is being managed through regular meetings and action plans.</p>
Equality and Diversity	The service provides for every resident in the borough. Additional measures have been implemented to ensure all residents have access to the waste collection service. For example, residents can request 'assisted collections' if they are unable to put bins out themselves. The contractor also collects clinical waste and sharps from residents on prescribed medication.
Privacy and Data Protection	None

## 7 Appendices

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

- Appendix I: Upcycle Your Skills Swale – End of programme report (July – August 2025)
- Appendix II: Mid Kent Waste Partnership Social value and Impact Report 2024/25.

## 8 Background Papers

The waste collection and street cleansing annual report that was presented to the Environment Services and Climate Change Committee in July 2025 (along with the minutes of that committee meeting) are available here:

[https://services.swale.gov.uk/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=u11573ahKQ0\\_wPr7aHwhWpb1brVkkVXOtXCbCnRhXSk](https://services.swale.gov.uk/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=u11573ahKQ0_wPr7aHwhWpb1brVkkVXOtXCbCnRhXSk),

The full waste scrutiny report by the cross party member group (published Jan 2025) can be found here <https://news.swale.gov.uk/news/waste-scrutiny-review#:~:text=The%20review%20worked%20to%20identify,responses%20to%20the%20public%20survey>.

FlexCollect report <https://flexibleplasticfund.org.uk/flexcollect-report-2025>