

Annual Performance Report 2025/26

Waste collection and street cleansing service



Comment from Chair of Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee

The 2025/2026 Waste and Street cleansing Annual performance report shows the significant progress that has been achieved since the previous reporting period. This can be seen in the positive trajectory shown in the data provided and is testament to the commitment and collaborative efforts of all involved.

It is recognised that there are still improvements to be made and the coming year will be critical in sustaining momentum, addressing remaining challenges and delivering further improvements in efficiency, environmental impact and the quality of the service provided.

Cllr Dolley Wooster – Chair of Committee

Introduction

This is the second annual performance report since the start of the eight year waste and street cleansing contract in March 2024. The contract includes waste collection for Mid Kent covering Ashford Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Swale Borough Council. The contract also includes street cleansing services for Ashford Borough Council and Swale Borough Council.

The waste collection element of the contract covers the collection of all domestic refuse streams which includes recycling, refuse, food, garden, clinical and bulky items. The street cleansing element of the contract covers manual street cleansing, mechanical sweeping, litter and dog bin emptying, fly tip removal, fly posting removal and graffiti removal.

Management and monitoring of the contract is carried out by the Contracts and Resources team including Contract Monitoring Officers, Environmental Campaigns and Performance Officer, Temporary Waste and Street Cleansing Project Officer, Environmental Contract Manager and the Environmental Services Manager. The team work closely with the Environmental Response Team who are responsible for waste enforcement activities in Swale.



The Contract in Numbers

Waste collection in Swale for 2025/26

Collections	Over 140,000 scheduled collections every week
Households serviced each week in Swale	67,912
Number of collection operatives and drivers in Swale	79 (31 drivers and 48 loaders)
Number of SBC owned vehicles for waste collection in Swale	28 (any additional hire/ purchased vehicles are funded by Suez)
Tonnes of dry recycling collected and recycled in 25/26	10,351
Tonnes of residual waste collected in 25/26	31,804.19
Tonnes of compostable (food and garden) in 25/26	9,757
Total bulky collections undertaken in 2025	3,741
Garden subscribers at end of 25/26	20,161
Number of ad hoc clinical collections in 25/26	5,504
% of staff for Suez that live locally	92.79%
Estimated recycling rate (tbc later in year)	36.33% (this shows a 2% increase on last years figure of 34.9%)

Street Cleansing

Number of litter and dog bins in Swale which are serviced by Suez	1,323
Length of roads in Swale to be kept clean (including High Speed Roads)	1,095,404 metres – in addition to this there are over 30,000 metres of footpaths and bridleways and 69,000 square metres of car parks to cleanse
Number of vehicles for street cleansing (with some being fully electric)	13 – including 3 x mechanical sweepers
Number of street cleansing operatives and drivers	31
Fly tips removed in 2025/26	2,660
Offensive graffiti removed in 2025/26	37
Street litter arisings	861 tonnes
Highways mechanical sweepings	257 tonnes

Key achievements in 2025/26

Introduced alternate weekly collections - Officers have introduced alternate weekly collections for the small number of individual properties that remained on a weekly refuse collection. This ensures that all residents across the borough now receive the same level of service and it encourages everyone to utilise the services provided and recycle as much as possible. This was successfully completed in March 2026.

All residents now receive a food waste service – All communal properties and the small number of individual properties that were not currently on the food waste scheme were delivered a food waste bin, information leaflets and a roll of compostable food bags. Officers worked closely with management companies and residents to assess storage capacity and addressed any concerns raised about the scheme.

Food waste campaigns - Officers worked closely with KCC. Stickers were placed on all refuse bins asking residents not to place food waste into the residual waste bins. A free roll of compostable liners and information leaflets were also put through resident's letter box providing information on the food waste scheme and how to request a food waste bin. This resulted in a large increase in food bins being provided to residents and ultimately food waste being diverted from the residual bins and into the waste food stream. 41% more food waste was collected in 25/26 compared to the previous year (the highest increase across Kent).

Contamination campaigns - KCC and SBC officers started trials for a contamination campaign in Swale. The campaign will be extended to the rest of Kent. Officers accompanied three collection crews on their rounds, checking for contamination in the recycling bins. Any contaminated bins were photographed, marked with an information hanger and information leaflets were posted through resident's doors. There were a number of positive interactions on site with residents. Officers then followed up with a letter to any properties where contamination was present advising of the consequences if contamination persists.

Simpler recycling and EPR funding - SBC received Extended Producer Responsibility funding to assist with the new Simpler Recycling regulations. This legislation required local authorities to provide food waste and dry recycling to all residential properties by 31st March 2026. Funding was used to purchase containers, provide information for residents and employ a Temporary Waste and Street Cleansing project officer and a Waste Comms officer to deliver the various projects mentioned above. The changes aim to standardise collections, reduce confusion for residents and improve recycling rates across England.

Performance

Collections

Bin collection performance has continued to improve throughout the year. Missed bins are down in Swale by 95.5% from last year. 99.68% of all rounds were completed on their scheduled day.

Figure 1.1 – Monthly % Completion rate for Swale. The chart shows that as the year progressed, nearly all collections took place on their scheduled day.

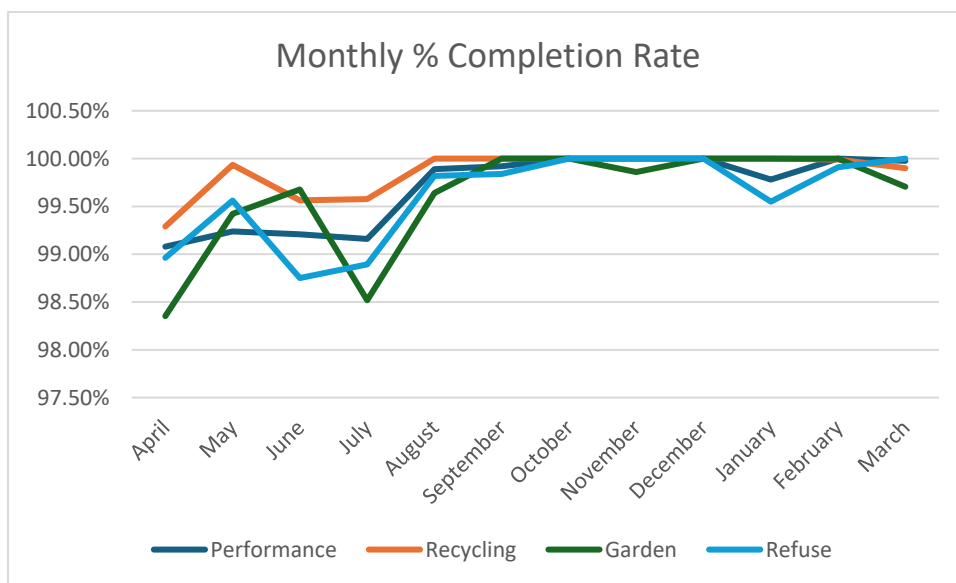


Figure 1.2 – The chart below shows the number of residual missed collections in 25/26, showing an improvement across the year.

Residual

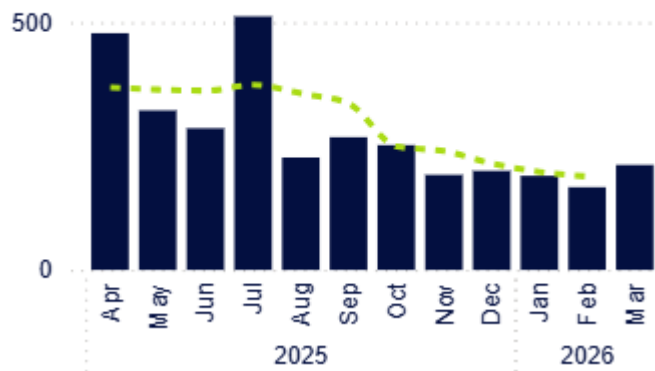


Figure 1.3 – The chart below shows the number of recycling missed collections in 25/26 showing an improvement across the year.

Recycling

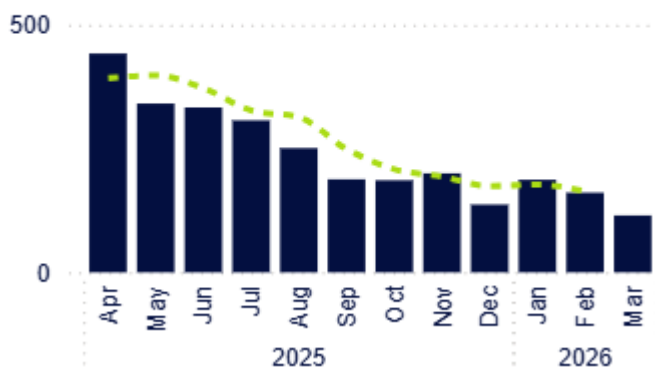


Figure 1.4 – The chart below shows the number of garden waste missed collections in 25/26.

Garden

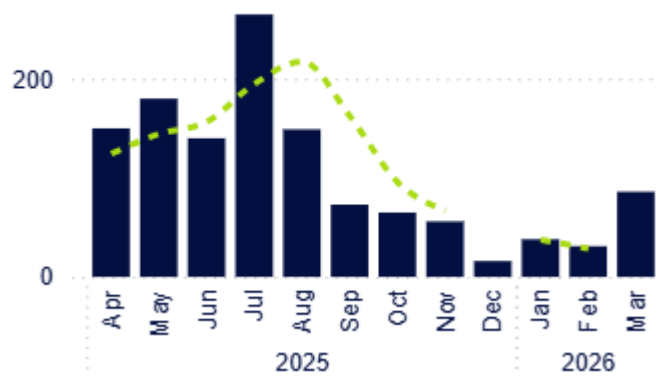


Figure 1.5 – The chart below shows the number of food waste missed collections in 25/26. The spike in July was due to the increase in residents using the food waste service following the food waste sticker campaign.

Food

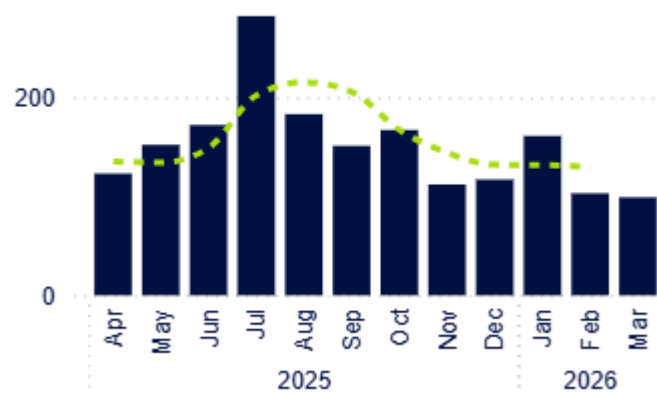


Figure 1.6 – The chart below shows a comparison in the recycling composting rate in Swale for 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26

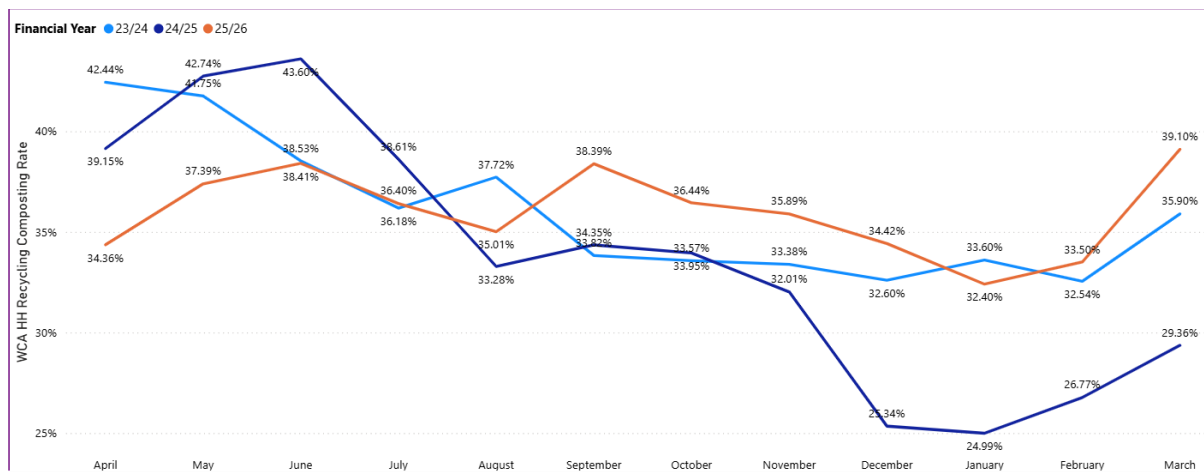
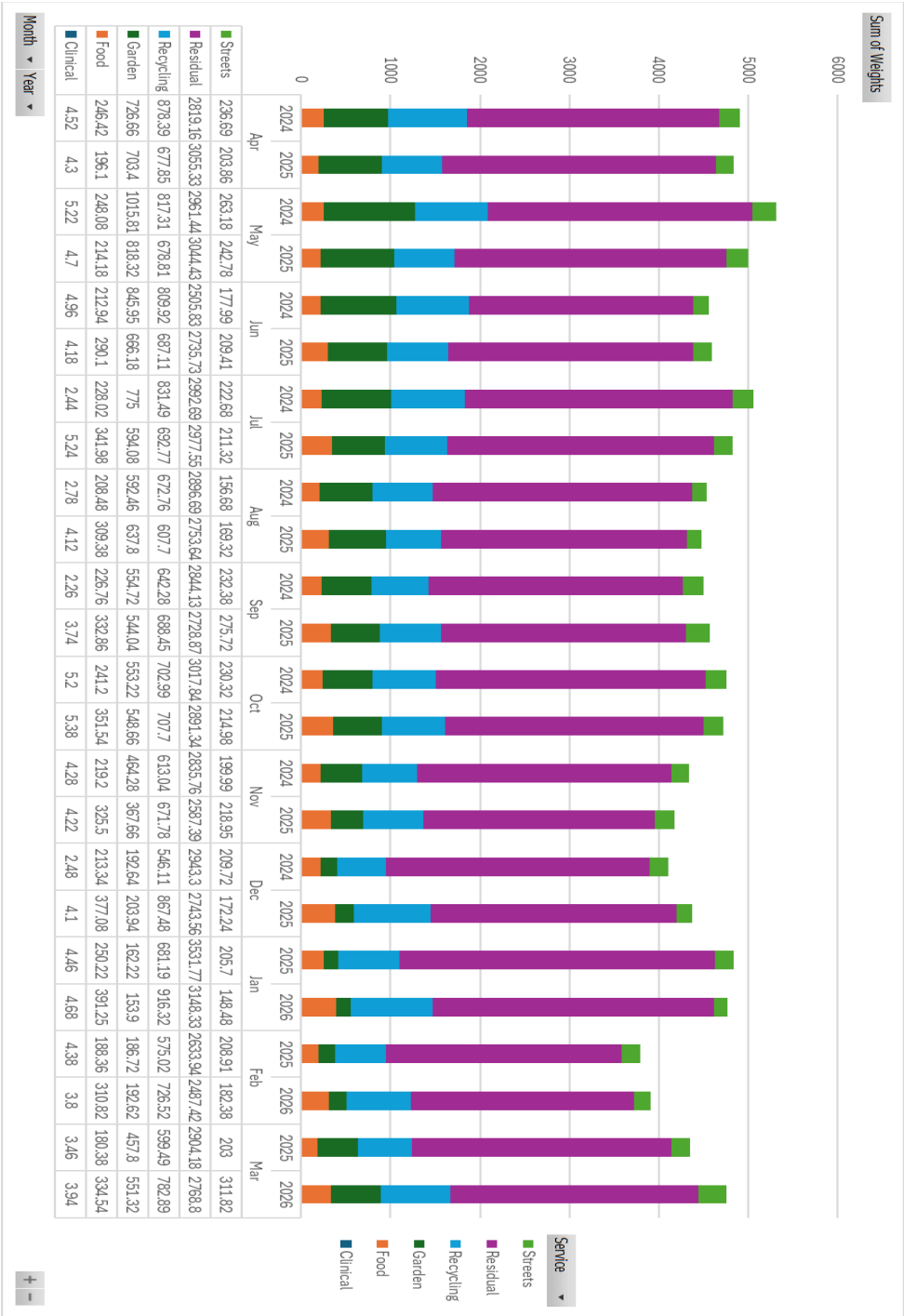


Figure 1.7 – The chart below shows the overall tonnages collected in Swale in 25/26 for Refuse, Recycling, Garden waste and Street cleansing arisings. The data behind the graph shows that food campaigns resulted in a food tonnage increase from June and a corresponding downturn in residual tonnages.



Assisted Collections

Following a request from Councillors, this year officers have been focussing on missed collections for residents that receive an assisted collection. Performance in this area has been closely monitored. Suez managers have been working with crews to make improvements via a range of actions including Tool Box Talks and active monitoring. The impact of this, as can be seen from the graph below. Around 6% of all missed collections are assisted collections. In 24/25 the average number of missed bins per month was 81. In 25/26, this was almost halved at an average of 47 per month across the year and further improvements were made during the last quarter at an average of 36 per month.

Figure 1.8 – Number of missed collections vs Missed Assisted collections – This chart shows the comparison between number of Missed Assisted collections reported vs General Missed collections.

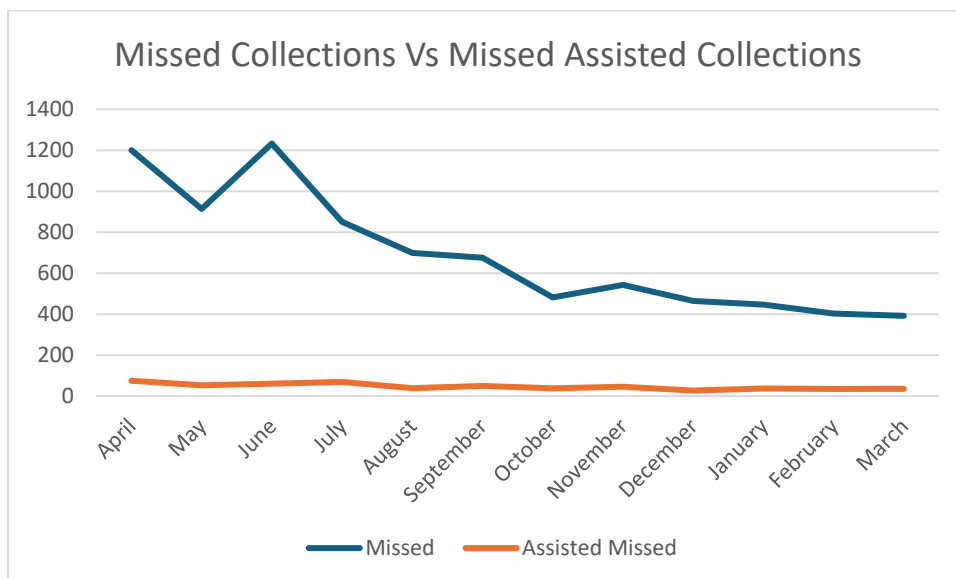


Figure 1.9 – This chart provides a comparison between the number of missed assisted collections reported in 24/25 and 25/26, showing a vast improvement in overall number of missed assisted collections across the year.

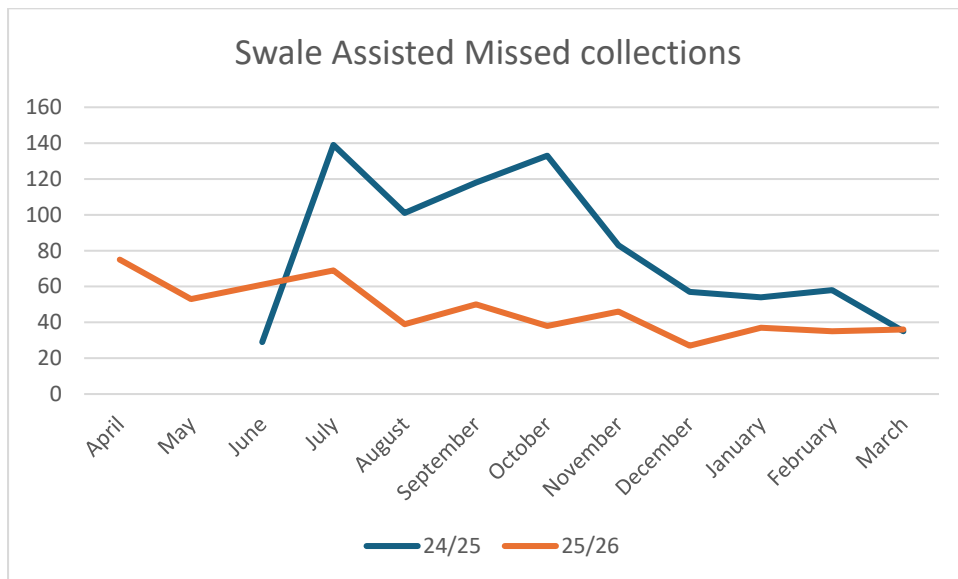


Figure 1.10 – This chart shows the number of Complaints/Comments/Compliments received throughout 2025/26

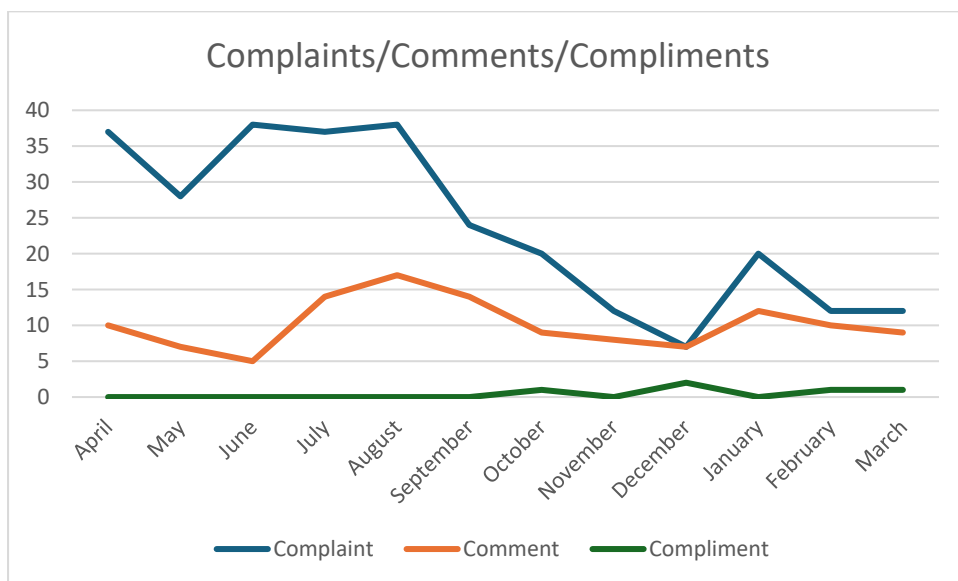


Figure 1.11 shows the breakdown of complaint types for food and refuse. The majority is due to failed delivery of containers which is due to the large increase in requests for food waste containers during the food waste sticker campaign, followed by Attitude/Crew Conduct and Failure to collect missed bin.

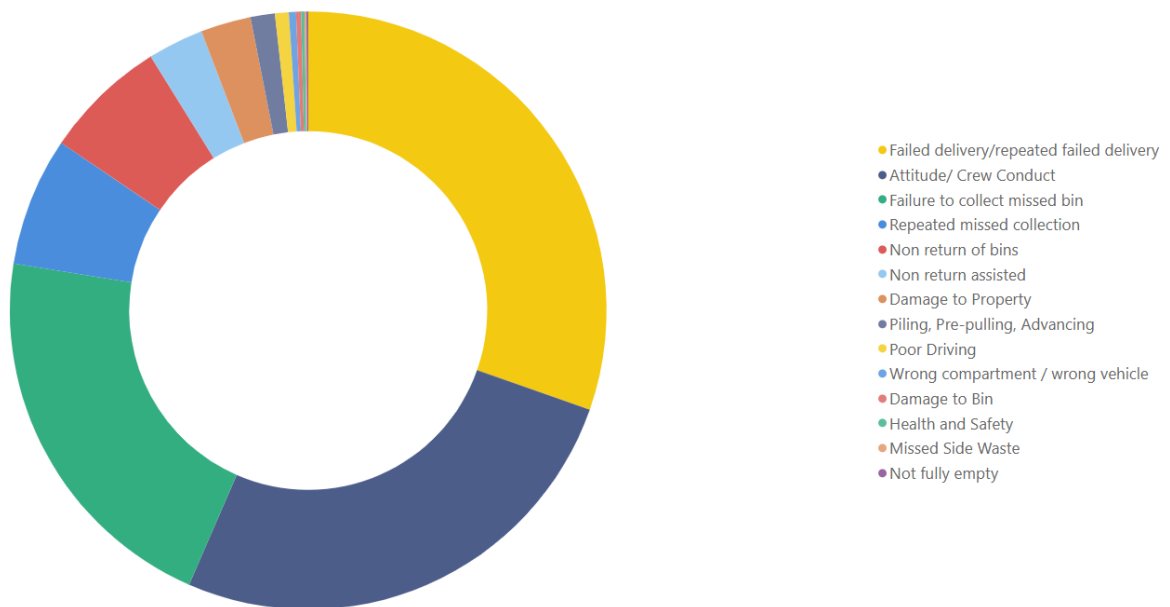


Figure 1.12 shows the breakdown of complaint types for recycling.

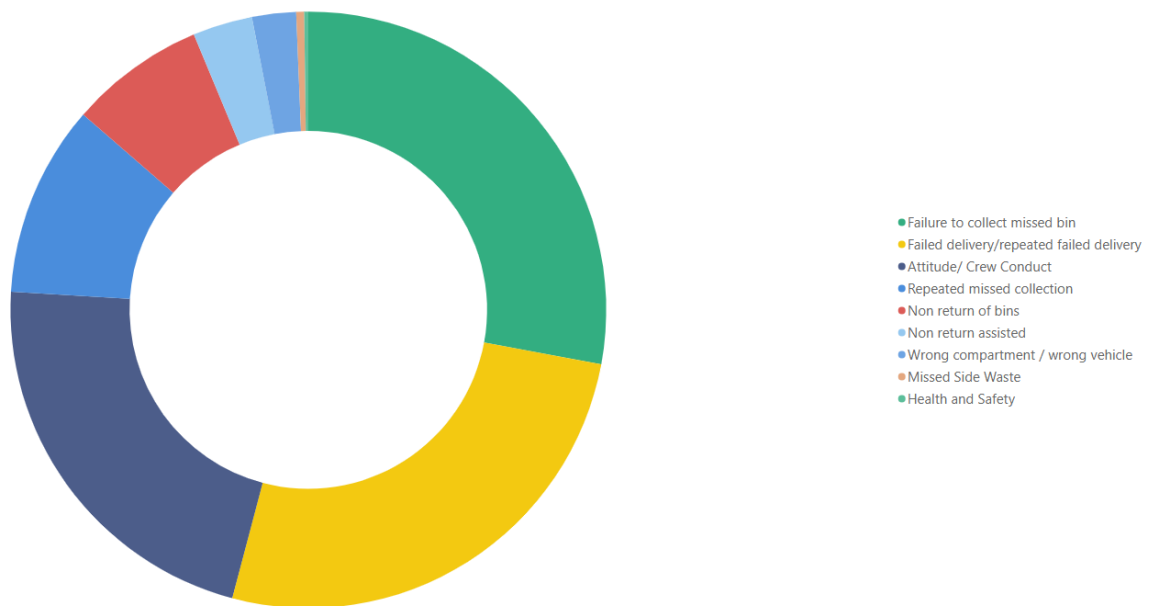
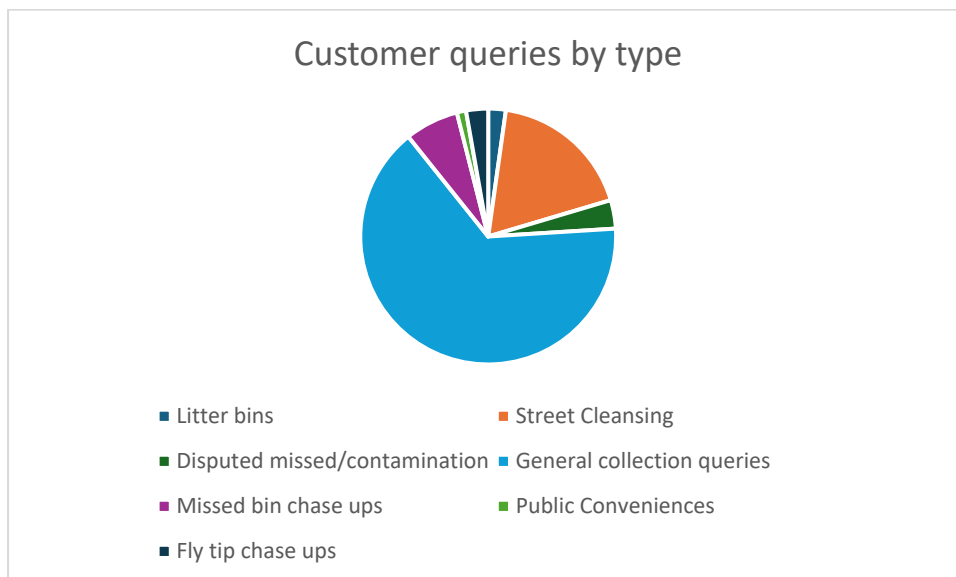


Figure 1.13 – The chart below shows a breakdown of customer queries received by the Contracts team by type. The majority of queries received are regarding general waste collections.



Contamination

Contamination in recycling remains a key challenge. Sampling of recycling at the recycling plant has identified elevated levels of objectionable and prohibited materials in Swale recycling bins. Consequently, this has resulted in a large number of whole loads being rejected at the waste transfer station in Swale. Rejected recycling becomes residual waste that gets incinerated. The cost of waste to energy can be four to five times more expensive than recycling at the material recycling facility. It also removes those materials from the circular economy forever.

Figure 1.14 – shows the types of contaminants found in recycling loads – the 4 main contaminant types are still black sacks, food waste, textiles and sanitary waste

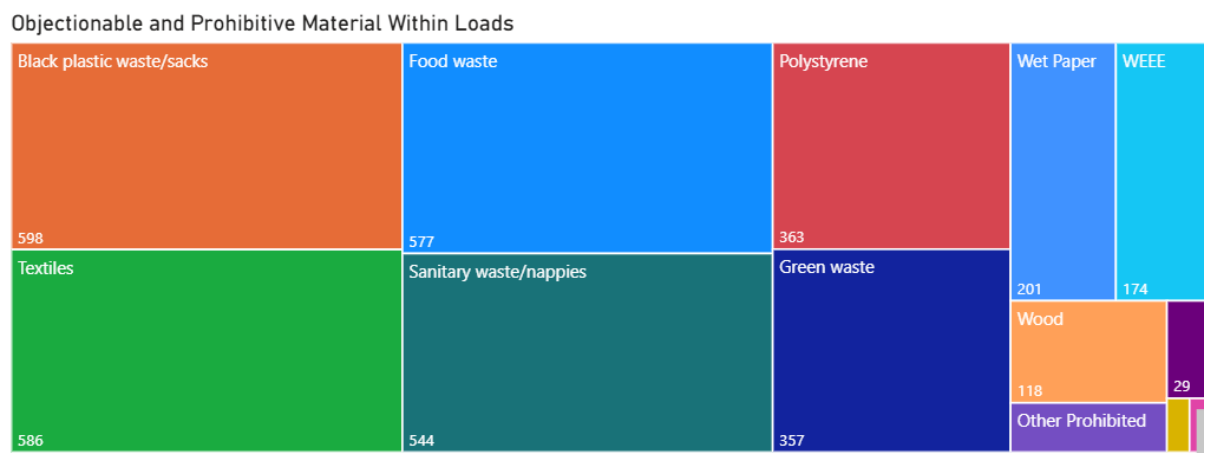


Figure 1.15 – Number of contamination lockouts by crews

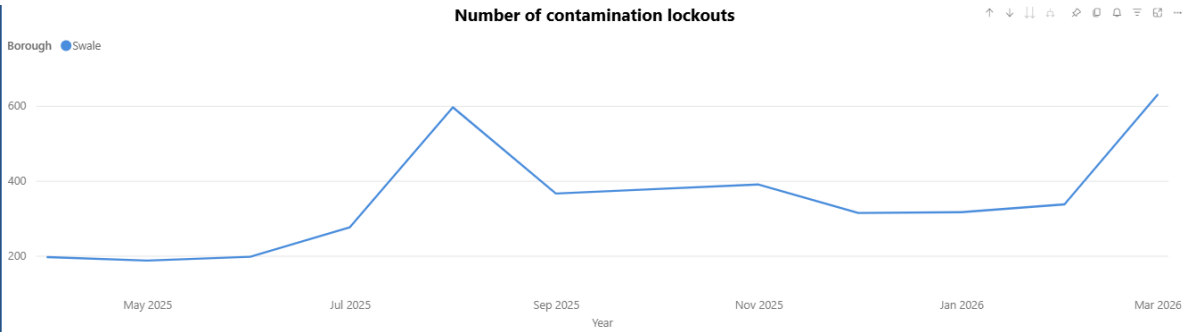


Figure 1.14 –The chart below shows the reasons for contamination lockouts as reported by crews

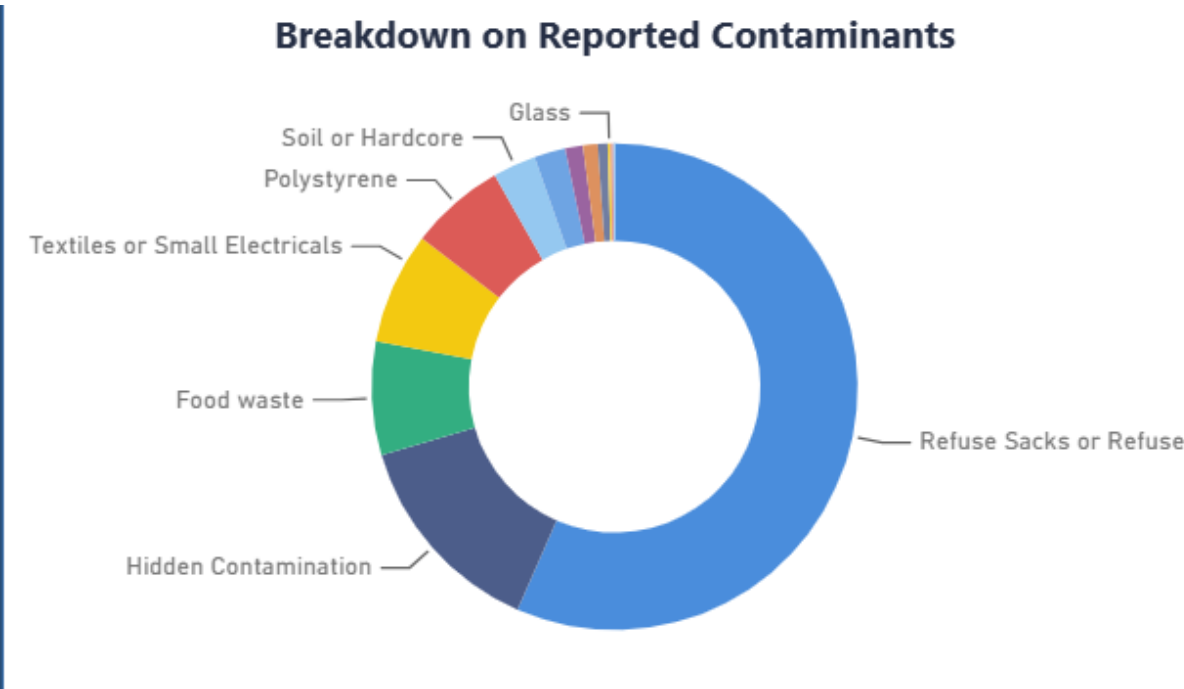


Figure 1.15 – shows the percentage of photographs taken by collection crews to support contamination lockouts, showing an improvement from Year 1 of the contract

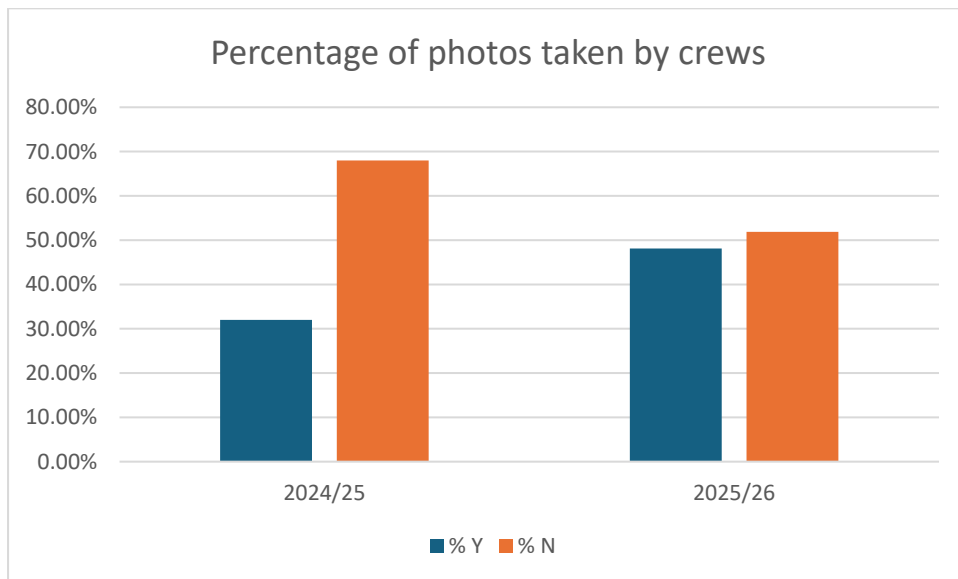
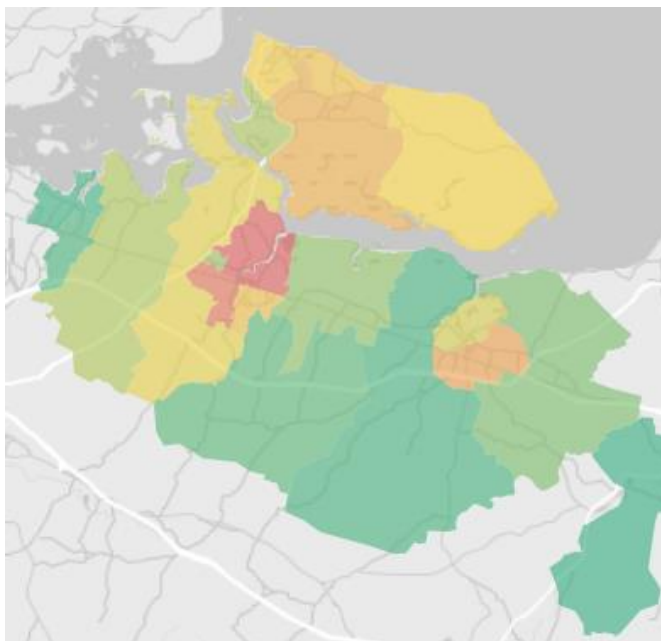


Figure 1.16 – Heat map showing worst affected areas for contamination lockouts. This heat map is created from data inputted by the crews. It shows where bins have been 'locked out' for contamination. The data will become more reliable as more crews lock contaminated bins out on their handheld devices (all crews are expected to take a photograph to show the contaminants).



Contamination Project

In 2024/25, contamination cost over £415,000 across Kent, without including the value of recyclable materials that couldn't be processed and were lost from the circular economy. Swale Borough Council's Environmental Campaigns and Performance Officer teamed up with KCC officers to trial a contamination project across Swale. The aim was to increase communications and engagement on three collection rounds to reduce contamination in mixed recycling by:

- Sending information to residents to remind them what can and can't be recycled
- Locking out (not emptying) recycling bins containing items that could spoil other recycling
- Tagging locked-out bins to provide specific feedback on the problem
- Sending residents a postcard and letter asking them to remove the wrong items and present the bin again on their next scheduled recycling day

By doing this we hoped to give clear kerbside feedback and a consistent consequence when contamination occurs to improve recycling behaviours over time.

The first round of checks across 900 households in Swale confirmed 92% of bins contained good quality recycling. The team reported some very positive conversations with residents. The trial was in its closing stages at the end of the 25/26 reporting period, therefore final data is not yet available. However, officers have reported a vast improvement in the quality of recycling presented in the trial areas.

Under 'Simpler Recycling', from 1st April 2026 Tetra Paks (liquid cartons) are able to be recycled kerbside via the blue bin. Information on the council website has been updated to reflect this.

Food Waste

Between the months of May and June Swale, KCC and other stakeholders ran a very successful food waste sticker campaign. The primary aim of the campaign was to prevent food waste. The secondary aim was to divert unavoidable food waste from being placed in the green residual bin and instead be placed in the food bin. Swale used grant funding to issue over 9,000 free food bins to residents. As a result, Swale had the strongest improved food recycling tonnages in Kent at around 41% increase compared to last year. Much of this food waste was diverted from the residual bin to the food waste bin where it will be used to generate power and produce soil

conditioners. This was a remarkable accomplishment. A second phase of the project is currently underway which is expected to result in further increases.

Figure 1.17 shows a copy of the sticker placed on residual waste bins to encourage residents to use their food waste bins.



In parallel with the above campaign, officers worked with Suez to introduce food waste to all communal properties across Swale. This was a requirement under the Simpler Recycling legislation. The legislation stated that all properties must be offered a food waste collection by 1st April 2026. Although most individual premises already receive food collections in Swale, this was not the case for all communal premises. Officers worked closely with management companies and residents which resulted in a smooth transition and compliance with the regulations.

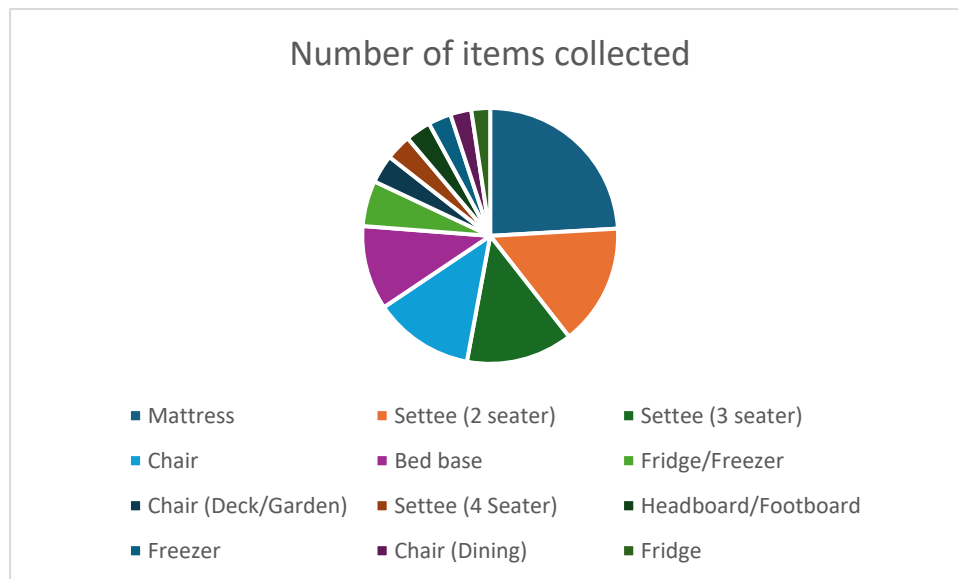
Waste Composition Analysis

KCC carried out a further waste composition analysis across Kent in summer 2025, key findings for Swale are as below:

- In terms of residual waste generation, Swale households were setting out an average of 5.08kg per household per week.
- Food waste was seen to be the major component of residual waste forming 26.7% of the total. Of this waste, 86% is avoidable with 41% of all discarded food still packaged.
- In total 42.9% of residual waste collected could have been recycled at the kerbside – 2.18kg per household per week.

Bulky collections

Figure 1.18 shows the number and types of bulky items collected



Officers have been working closely with Suez on balancing the availability of bulky collection slots across the borough. This has included several amendments to the areas and collection days within the Suez booking system. This has ensured that there is more availability in the areas of highest demand. Recent testing has shown an improvement in availability. This will be monitored and improved further as necessary.

Street Cleansing

A Street Cleansing Project carried out jointly by SBC and Suez has seen an overhaul in routes and rounds for street cleansing. The project involved a complete review of all roads in Swale along with all litter and dog bins. Each litter and dog bin in the borough was visited by Suez to provide an updated GIS location along with a description and condition survey. This data is now being used to update the CORE route planner system. It will also enable QR code stickers on each litter bin to enable residents to report any issues with bins.

Figure 1.19 – a photo example of a QR code sticker on a litter bin

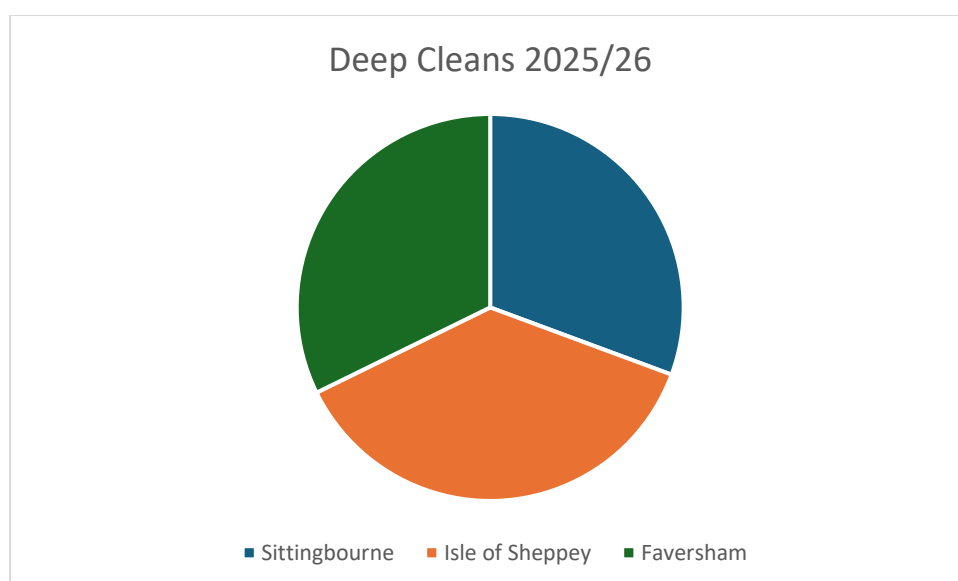


The audit has highlighted a number of litter bins that are in need of replacement and officers are actioning the replacement in order of priority.

The outcome of the project will enable an improved set of data and an asset register for litter bins. It will also allow officers access to information on when roads have last been cleansed, when they are next due to be cleansed as well as track the routes the street cleansing crews have taken in real time. It will allow officers access to information on when litter and dog bins have been serviced and when they are next due to be serviced. Although this has taken far longer than originally anticipated, it will be a large step forward.

Deep cleans continued weekly throughout the year with a total of 58 cleans taking place (some roads were split over two days due to the size of the road).

Figure 1.20 – The chart below shows the split of deep cleans by area



Leafing season ran slightly later in the year due to the warmer weather. Officers monitored this throughout the leafing season. Some roads were identified throughout the period of the leafing season that were not on the original leafing plan which officers worked with Suez to ensure leaves were cleared and requested to be added to the plan for the coming year.

Figure 1.21 shows the number of graffiti items removed

Number of non offensive graffiti reports	32
Number of offensive graffiti reports	30

Figure 1.22 – This is the number of Dead Animal Reports received in 2025/26

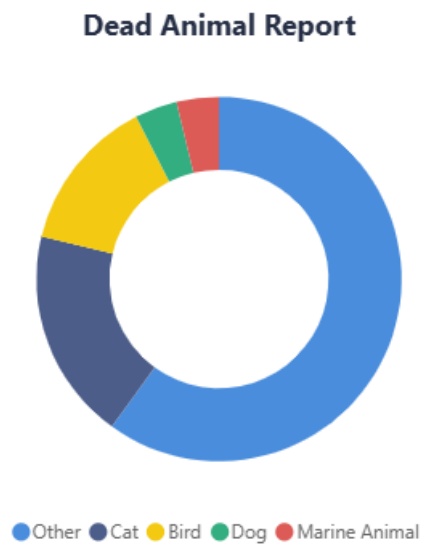


Figure 1.23 – The chart below shows the number of Street cleansing complaints received. There were 38 recorded with the majority being failure to cleanse a street within SLA.

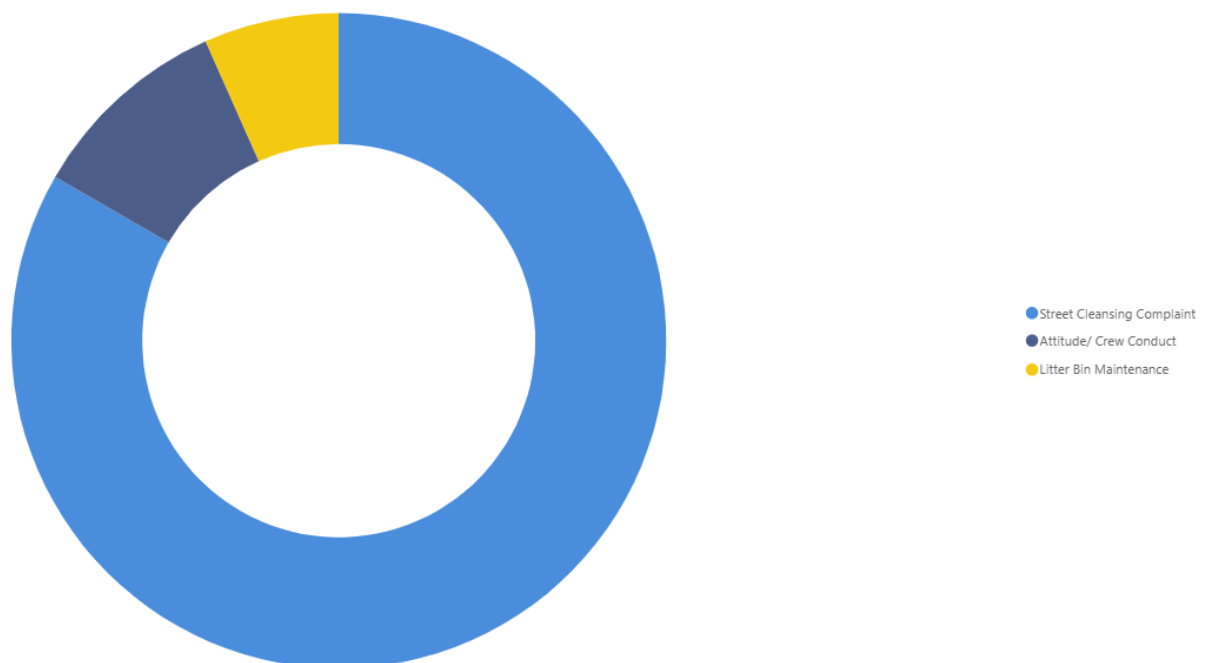


Figure 1.25 – This shows the number of fly tips by waste type – the majority is Other Household Waste, followed by Black Bags Household, White Goods and Construction/Demolition waste

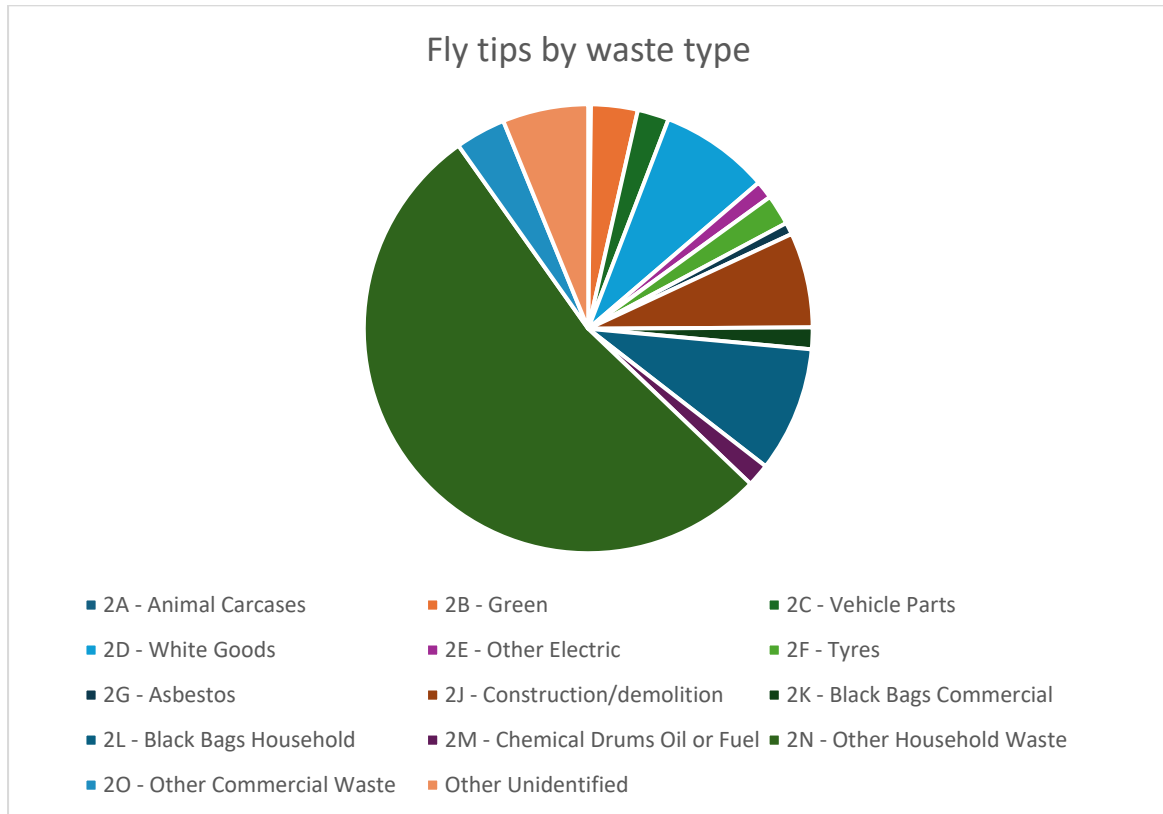
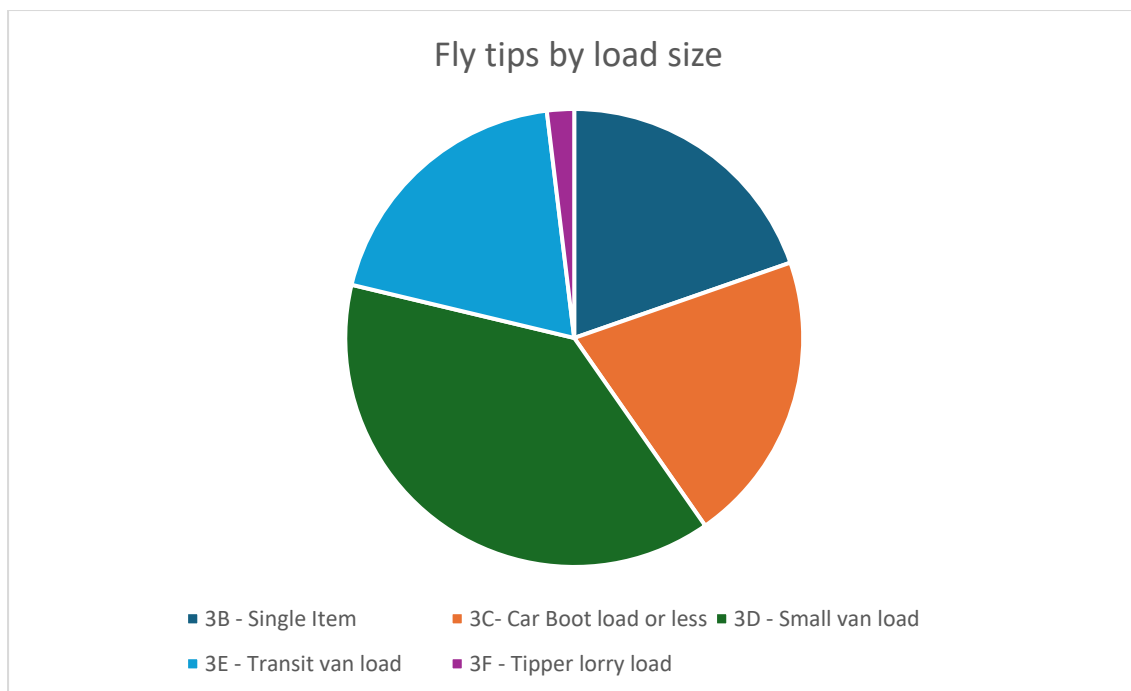


Figure 1.26 – The chart below shows the number of fly tips by load size



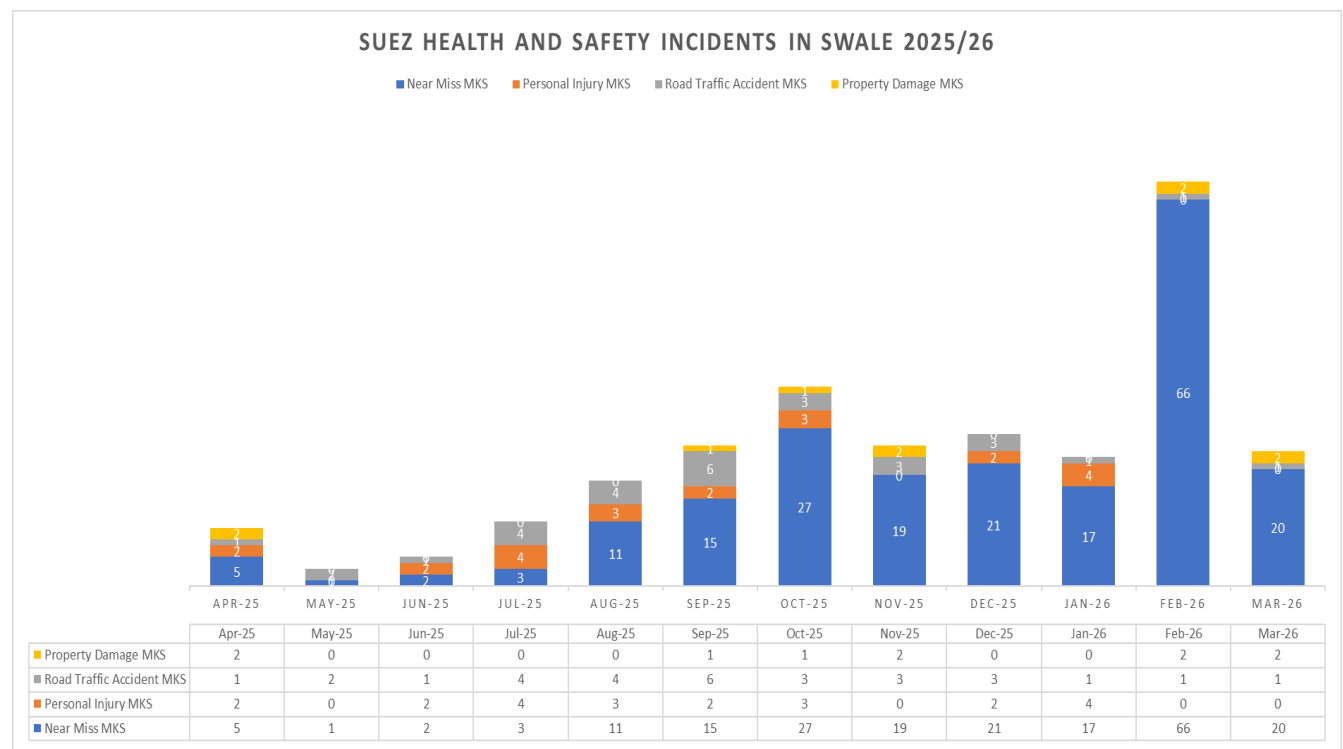
- The number of reported fly tips in 25/26 decreased from the previous year. Totals were 2621 for 24/25 and 2600 for 25/26
- The biggest reduction in reporting land type is highways (6.5%).
- 'Operation Assist' is an intelligence led operation in partnership with the police where vehicles carrying waste are targeted and checked. There were five Op Assist days with the local Police team in 2025/26. . There has been regular coverage of these multi agency events, showing vehicles & fines on social media platforms.
- The biggest increase in Fly Tipping Land types is back-Alley ways (7.7%) – Focus group and projects to be assessed for 26/27. These projects will likely include the use of overt CCTV cameras in hot spot areas.
- In general, the EA have been very active in Swale at the Illegal Waste sites. There have been numerous Roadside stop days with the DVSA & Police

Health and Safety

Suez have been working on their proactive reporting and engagement with Health and Safety. Across Mid Kent they have reported:

- 363 near misses
- 2,586 Safety in Mind conversations between crews and supervisors. These are recorded conversations that supervisors will have with crews during their daily Health and Safety monitoring checks discussing issues that may have occurred such as not using the correct PPE.

Figure 1.27 – The chart below shows the number of Health and Safety Incidents in Swale. Suez had a push on near miss reporting which resulted in the spike in reports in February 2026



Environmental benefits/healthier communities

Suez introduced 3 #2minclean boards across Swale in partnership with SBC officers. The boards provide free access to litter picking equipment, encouraging members of the public to carry out a quick two minute clean up in the area. The boards were placed at Faversham Swimming pool, Sheppey Leisure Centre and The Hub Café, Sittingbourne. Due to vandalism issues at the Sheppey Leisure Centre site, this

board was moved to Queenborough and is being monitored by Queenborough Town Council.

Three WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) roadshows have been delivered across Swale to make recycling easier and more accessible for residents. A total of 330kg was collected from all three events. The most successful was at the Faversham event in Leslie Smith Drive. Other events were held at Rose Street Car park in Sheerness and Milton Country Park in Sittingbourne.

Suez worked in partnership with CXK on the successful 'Upcycle Your Skills' programme. This was a five week program which was designed to boost young people's employability and introduce them to local employers. The project was a huge success which achieved great results. Three of the ten participants secured employment including one participant who was offered a street cleansing position directly with Suez.

In parallel with the Suez annual report, they also produce a social value report attached as Appendix III.

Looking ahead for 26/27

Street Cleansing – SBC and Suez will continue to monitor the new routes and rounds and ensure services and reporting mechanisms continue to improve. There will be a focus on street cleansing and litter bin emptying across the summer period to ensure there are adequate resources during the warmer weather particularly in parks, open spaces and on Swale's beaches.

Further improvements on food participation and recycling – KCC are carrying out a re-run of the sticker campaign to further encourage residents to use the food waste service. Officers will also be keeping a focus on participation rates in communal properties and Holiday camps.

Alternate Weekly collections – Officers will be focussing on moving communal properties to alternate weekly collections wherever possible to fall in line with the rest of the borough and increase recycling rates in Swale.

Contamination – Following the success of the contamination trial, we will be working with Suez to extend the project to targeted areas across the borough. New resident information packs have been produced and are being delivered to residents when new bins are delivered. The packs contain all the relevant recycling information residents will need to help reduce contamination.

Simpler Recycling – We will be working with the Kent Resource Partnership to share concerns around the upcoming introduction of recycling plastic films by April 2027. If the date remains in force, decisions will need to be made on how we participate. We will also prepare for the new deposit return schemes for plastic bottles and cans in England by October 2027.

Social Value – Officers will continue to work with Suez on continuing the successful initiatives such as 'Upcycle your skills' and the WEEE roadshows as well as new innovative initiatives that are being explored to provide further social value to the residents of Swale.

A further Customer satisfaction survey is planned for later in 2026.

Officers have submitted a bid for funding to place a number of receptacles across the borough for residents to use to recycle their unwanted/damaged small waste electrical and electronic equipment. The initiative will be in partnership with SWEEEP who will empty the bins for recycling. Locations will be confirmed if funding is granted.

We are looking at better ways of measuring performance which will include aligning our benchmarking data with neighbouring authorities. As an example, the KPI for 2026/27 for Missed collections will be measured per 100,000 bins collected as this is the industry practice. Swale will measure performance against the contract value of 75/100,000

Digital waste tracking – This is a Government consultation which proposes replacing paper-based duty-of-care documentation with a single, mandatory UK-Wide digital system. The changes aim to improve data quality, reduce waste crime and streamline compliance.

Officers will continue to work with Suez to ensure that routes and rounds are undertaken in the most effective way. There is a minor re-route planned for 26/27. Where changes are viable and will deliver more resilient rounds in an efficient way then we will work in partnership to ensure these are completed in line with the findings of the scrutiny review.