

AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 18 January 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

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

Quorum = 16

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. 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.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 7 December 2022 (Minute Nos.497 - 506) and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 4 January 2023 (Minute Nos tbc) as correct records.

5. Mayor's Announcements

6. Leader's Statement

7. Questions submitted by the Public

To consider any questions submitted by the public. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Wednesday before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

8. Questions submitted by Members

To consider any questions submitted by Members. (The deadline for questions is 4.30 pm on the Monday the week before the meeting – please contact Democratic Services by e-mailing democraticservices@swale.gov.uk or call 01795 417330).

9. Council Tax Support Scheme

10. Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

11. Recommendations for Approval

Issued on Tuesday, 10 January 2023

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

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Council	
Meeting Date	18 January 2023
Report Title	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery, Director of Resources
Head of Service	Zoe Kent, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Lead Officer	Zoe Kent, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the outcome of the public consultation (Appendix I) and the equality impact assessment (Appendix II), and to consider the potential impact of the proposed changes on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex under the Equality Act 2010. 2. Council are asked to approve the introduction of a new income banded / grid based council tax reduction scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2023 to simplify the scheme for claimants, reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit and to improve the targeting of support for the lowest income families as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee on 14 December 2022

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the implementation of the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2023.
- 1.2 Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 1.3 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the Council from government has reduced year on year.
- 1.4 As with the majority of authorities within England, the Borough Council needs to make changes to the CTR scheme for working age applicants (the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government) in order to reduce the significant administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.
- 1.5 This report recommends the adoption of a new scheme with effect from 2023/24.

2 Background and Proposals

- 2.1 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:

- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities;
- Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

- 2.2 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.
- 2.3 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.
- 2.4 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of Council Tax Reduction can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 2.5 When Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support and, due to the reduction in funding available from the Government, required that all working age applicants were required to make a minimum payment. The current minimum is 20% namely that all working age applicants can receive up to 80% support towards their Council Tax, subject to their level of income.
- 2.6 Since that time only slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

The main issues with the current scheme

- 2.7 There are a number of issues with the current scheme that will need addressing if the system is to continue to provide effective support to low-income taxpayers and also if the Council is able to provide the service in an efficient manner. The main issues are as follows:
- The introduction of Universal Credit for working age applicants; and
 - The need for a simplification of the scheme.
- 2.8 Each of the above are examined in detail below:

Council Tax Reduction and the roll out of Universal Credit

- 2.9 The introduction of Universal Credit within the area has, as experienced in all other areas, brought a number of significant challenges to both the administration of Council Tax Reduction and also the collection of Council Tax generally. All Councils have experienced the following:
- The reluctance of Universal Credit claimants to make a prompt claim for Council Tax Reduction leading to a loss in entitlement;
 - A high number of changes to Universal Credit cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions requiring a change to Council Tax Reduction entitlement. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum. These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays, and the demonstrable loss in collection; and

- The increased costs of administration through multiple changes with significant additional staff and staff time being needed.

2.10 It is clear that the existing means tested Council Tax Reduction scheme, which is too reactive to change, will not be viable in the longer term now that Universal Credit has been rolled out fully within the area and with the massive increase in Universal Credit claimants due to the COVID-19 crisis and the continued roll out of the Government's managed migration programme which will move all legacy benefit cases across to Universal Credit.

2.11 The move to a new more efficient scheme from 2023 is now imperative.

The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.12 Notwithstanding the introduction of Universal Credit, the existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:

- It is complex for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
- The administration for staff is complex, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
- Staff have to undergo significant training to be proficient in processing claims;
- The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and
- The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax.

2.13 Clearly there is a need now to simplify the scheme, not only to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit, but also make it easier for customers to make a claim and to significantly reduce the costs of administration.

The recommended approach for the 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction Scheme

2.14 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is recommended that an alternative approach be taken from 2023/24. The approach has been to fundamentally redesign the scheme to address all of the issues with the current scheme and in particular;

- (a) The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
- (b) The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

2.15 Work has been ongoing since early this year on a new scheme which is now complete. Consultation has also been undertaken with the public and the major precepting authorities.

2.16 The recommended new scheme has a number of features as follows:

- More targeted support shall be given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the current scheme. (It should be noted that the Council is not reducing the overall level of support);
- The changes can **only be made to the working age schemes** as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by Central Government;
- The current means - tested schemes will be replaced by a simple income grid model as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Band	Discount	Single Person	Couple	Lone Parent with one child or young person	Couple with one child or young person	Lone Parent with two children or young persons	Couple with two children or young persons
1*	80%	£0 to £95.00	£0 to £145.00	£0 to £150.00	£0 to £200.00	£0 to £220.00	£0 to £270.00
2	60%	£95.01 to £140.00	£145.01 to £190.00	£150.01 to £200.00	£200.01 to £250.00	£220.01 to £270.00	£270.01 to £320.00
3	40%	£140.01 to £190.00	£190.01 to £240.00	£200.01 to £250.00	£250.01 to £300.00	£270.01 to £320.00	£320.01 to £370.00
4	20%	£190.01 to £270.00	£240.01 to £320.00	£250.01 to £320.00	£300.01 to £370.00	£320.01 to £400.00	£370.01 to £450.00
5	0%	Over £270.00	Over £320.00	Over £320.00	Over £370.00	Over £400.00	Over £450.00

- It is recommended that the highest level of discount will continue to be at a current level (80%), Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a ‘*passport benefit’ such as Income Support, Jobseeker’s Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount;
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant’s and partner’s, (where they have one) net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants;
- Where any households have non-dependants (e.g. adult children) residing with them, deductions will continue to be made, but will be charged at £10 per week where the non-dependant is in work and £5 per week for those that are not in work;
- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards. Where a family also receives a childcare disregard (for childcare costs not paid for by Central Government schemes), the income levels in the ‘grid scheme’ are set at a higher rate;
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;
- Where any applicant, their partner or dependent child (ren) are disabled or are carers, a further disregard will be granted at the same level as the premiums that would have been granted under the previous scheme, thereby protecting this group;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded;
- Any applicant receiving Universal Credit will have the following disregarded:
 - (a) An amount in respect of the housing element;
 - (b) An amount in respect of any carer’s element; and

(c) An amount in respect of any Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity element;

- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue;
- Extended payments will be removed; and
- The capital limit of £10,000 will remain, with no tariff (or assumed income) being applied.

How the new scheme will address the problems with the current Council Tax Reduction

2.17 With the simplicity of the new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claiming process.** All applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Reduction will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
 - **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will be no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Reduction, and for all other applicants, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;
 - **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in maintaining the high collection rates currently achieved. The increased level of discount will assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
- **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Reduction scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
 - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Reduction will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and
 - The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes will be effective from the day of the change rather than the Monday of the following week.

Transition to the new scheme and the Exceptional Hardship Scheme

2.18 The Council must be mindful that any change in scheme or a transition to a new scheme may have result in a change to the entitlement of certain applicants.

- 2.19 Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there will be some winners and losers although the new scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable. The new scheme will contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council will consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant.
- 2.20 This approach will enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme will form part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme and fall to be paid through the Collection Fund.

3 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 3.1 The alternative to introducing a new scheme for Council Tax Reduction from 2023/24 is to leave the existing scheme in place.
- 3.2 This would be a short-term option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the Council's area.

4 Consultation Undertaken

- 4.1 A full consultation process was undertaken in line with the legislative requirements. Both major preceptors and the public (including other stakeholders) were asked to provide their views on the changes.
- 4.2 No comments were received the major preceptors. and an analysis of responses from both public and other stakeholders is shown within Appendix I.
- 4.3 The public consultation ended on 27th November 2022 and the Council received 277 responses to the proposed changes. In summary the responses were overwhelmingly in favour of the changes as follows:

Question	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age?	74.18	7.69	18.13
Changing the Non-Dependant deductions.	69.14	11.11	19.75
To replace the current earnings disregards and replace them with a standard £25 per week disregard irrespective of the number of hours worked	73.72	8.33	17.95
To provide additional income disregards for the disabled and carers	88.96	4.55	6.49
The scheme will disregard certain crisis payments paid to taxpayers (Local Welfare Provision)	90.26	1.30	8.44

5 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The objectives and priorities in the corporate plan. Performance is measured through BV9 Percentage of Council Tax collected in year.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>The current Council Tax Reduction scheme costs approximately £10m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in the following proportions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough Council (11.2%); • The County Council (73.0%); • Police and Crime Commissioner (11.6%); • Fire and Rescue Service (4.2%); <p>The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to target support to low income households although the maximum level of support remains in line with the current scheme.</p> <p>There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the costs would be at the same level as at present namely £10m</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states: Before making a scheme, the authority must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it, • publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and • consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. <p>In addition, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make a resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.</p> <p>The Council has followed the legal requirements throughout.</p>
Crime and Disorder	Not directly applicable
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>The recommended scheme will provide a modern, more efficient scheme which will be more straightforward to administer for staff to administer.</p> <p>By reducing the number of changes made to entitlement, the new scheme will minimise the effect on the environment.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	Council Tax Reduction is essential for low income households. Ensuring that it is paid correctly to all applicants who may be entitled will assist the health and wellbeing of working age low income households.

Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>The proposed scheme contains provisions for dealing with vulnerability and protects both families, applicants who are disabled and carers.</p> <p>In all cases, where an applicant is of the opinion that they require additional support, they may apply to assistance under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Not directly applicable
Equality and Diversity	<p>The public sector equality duty requires decision-makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity right throughout the decision-making process. A full Equality Impact Assessment is included within Appendix II.</p> <p>The move to the new scheme will either have a neutral or positive affect to the majority of working age claimants. From current modelling 5,381 claimants will receive the same or more support that under the previous scheme.</p> <p>As with all changes however there will be up to 673 claimants who may receive less support that previous. In all of those cases, further support will be available through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
Privacy and Data Protection	All requirements have been adhered to.

7 Appendices



- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I [Responses from Public Consultation]
 - Appendix II [Equality Impact Assessment]

Appendix I [Responses from Public Consultation]

Swale Borough Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24 Consultation




1. Background to the Consultation

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		99.28% 275
2	No		0.72% 2
		answered	277
		skipped	0

2. Part 1 – The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age

2. Do you agree with introducing an income-based banded discount scheme?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		74.18% 135
2	No		7.69% 14
3	Don't Know		18.13% 33
		answered	182
		skipped	95

3. If you disagree with introducing an income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?




Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	21
1	Whilst agree with principal of the banded approach, don't feel the content could be simpler or fairer for some people, eh hours worked and initial income disregard is likely to be more financially beneficial to part time workers		
2	It would help if the Swale website's Band classification lined up with the .Gov website classification. The .Gov website says I am band C, I have no clue what that is on the Swale website. The Council should take each household on a case by case basis. Such as in this household I am over 60, on Universal Credit and care for a disabled adult who lives in this house and a separate working adult. In the current set up I pay the majority of council tax out of my Universal Credit while the working adult only pays roughly 30% of the amount.		
3	You say there will be winners and losers, but it is not clear how individual circumstances will affect claims.		
4	it will depend as my daughters minimum wage went up with everyone elses but because of this her wages went up by £12 a week so we lost the £12 housing benefit we were receiving, if minimum wage goes up you should not lose housing benefit as it is still 'minimum wage'		
5	Should not include personal pension.		
6	Im unsure on how this would impact me		
7	I would like there to be more help for people in full time employment that already pay a large amount of tax		
8	I disagree with introducing an income banded scheme as it is even more open to fraud. Also it is an administrative nightmare. You should make thing simpler and not more convoluted.		

3. If you disagree with introducing an income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

9	The explanation of which band you fall into is not clear. I looked on the web site and could not find any information. Without understanding that, I am unable to take a view as to whether it is fair or not.		
10	Those who work more are continually penalised and those who claim are rewarded by paying less.		
11	I work full-time and why would i want to pay more based on my income when those who not even trying to work will pay as less as.This is a bit unfair.		
12	Uniform payment across property types is more in keeping with equality.		
13	I currently receive 25% discount as a single person having to shoulder the extra expenditure the cost of living crisis is having on my disposable income your changes will be tipping me into poverty. I wouldn't be considered as vulnerable but I do have health conditions that don't qualify me for extra help I have worked for 45 years and don't believe anything I say will make a blind bit of difference to what you will do I just want you to know that those not on benefits are also struggling to manage and don't get anything or any consideration I am now one of the working poor due to the inept government we have Give up some of your expenses don't ask me to pay more		
14	Because people who are working don't get any support on their council tax or discount on their council tax and people who are working will have to pay more money for people who don't work		
15	The value of the property should dictate the amount of council tax not the income.		
16	People go to work and should be credited for going. I understand some people are unable to and these people need support. I work 48hours a week and strive to live comfortably, while I have a mate and his misses earning just as much as me and neitger worked since covid and neither plan to. Under the new scheme they would have a full deduction while I would pay more. It encourages people to live of benefits.		
17	It doesn't seem fair. There is a risk that some people currently receiving help would end up worse off		
18	Lone parent should be where the partner has passed away. Otherwise they should be paying towards the child. All benefits should be considered. If people want to live in a specifc area they should be aware of the cost of living and not rely on tax payers		
19	I do not understand what information is being shown in table 1 What are the bands and how are they determined? How is the level of discount determined and by whom? How is the precise level of discount determined as there appears to be a substantial range given within each cell?		
20	Passported cases should be assessed on income too		
21	My wife and I have moved from New Zealand where land size and house value are the basis for council tax. Why would you tax my income twice, as a government council.		
		answered	21
		skipped	256

3. Part 2 - Changing the Non-Dependant deductions.

4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?




Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		69.14%	112
2	No		11.11%	18
3	Don't Know		19.75%	32
			answered	162
			skipped	115

5. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	15
1	I agree with keeping deductions at £10 per week for non-dependent working individuals to incentivise work. On that basis I think the non-working non-dependents discount should be removed in order to further incentivise going to work. This way people know if they go to work they will help with earning the discount - rather than giving them a higher discount for staying off work than they already receive		
2	Consider mirroring UC (no deduction if non-dependant is aged under 21).		
3	I do to a degree, however I do believe that an NDD who is disabled and claims PIP/DLA should be exempt - in line with NDD for UC.		
4	The amount from 3. 50 to 5.00 is not simplifying anything. So this is inacrate as a benefit to change.		
5	This is a broad stroke and does not take into considitdon the personal circumstances.		
6	Why encourage people not to work by upping their money		
7	There should always be an incentive for people to work		
8	Everyone should pay council tax - it is a tax on your property. Just lower the council tax in general so more people mange to pay it. Making all those dispensations and giving people Tax Credits is not solving the problem.		
9	Equality		
10	Poll tax comes to mind be prepared for the reaction		
11	Work class don't get anything reduce for them so again we aren't being supported		
12	Things are working well as they are now.		
13	My son is disabled,I am his full time career as everything is getting more expensive I can't see how I will afford yet another increase in my outgoings even if it is a small amount.		
14	Some people can't work due to disabilities.		
15	All I know is. I can't afford to pay the amount already required. With my new mortgage rate, gas and electric that's 80% of our wage. Now that's without food, council tax etc		
		answered	15
		skipped	262

4. To replace the current earnings disregards and replace them with a standard £25 per week disregard irrespective of the number of hours worked

6. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?




Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes 	73.72%	115
2	No 	8.33%	13
3	Don't Know 	17.95%	28
		answered	156
		skipped	121

7. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	8
1	Whilst simplifying it is helpful for the council to administer and people to understand, the same amount irrespective of hours worked does seem unfair for workers and not necessarily encourage people to work full time hours as this may not increase their income when taking into account potential benefit income including council tax reduction scheme		
2	You say it incentivises "work", but pays little regard to those unable to increase their levels of work for a variety of reasons.		
3	Why should someone in work benefit more than now? Why should childcare disregards remain? if you have children you should be responsible for paying for childcare, I can't afford for my council tax to be increased to pay more for those in work or who have children. Why should any income be disregarded; HMRC doesn't disregard any of my income where tax is concerned.		
4	this may not take into account personal circumstance which may lead to more hardship practically in the current climate.		
5	For the same reasons as my precious answer.		
6	People who work full time arent getting anything reduce		
7	I don't think its fair for low earners		
8	Lone parents disregard should be higher, in line with universal credit rules regarding working with a child. Larger deductions the younger the child		
		answered	8
		skipped	269

5. Part 4 - To provide additional income disregards for the disabled and carers

8. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes 	88.96%	137
2	No 	4.55%	7
3	Don't Know 	6.49%	10
		answered	154
		skipped	123

9. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	4
1	Those claiming P.I.P OR disability allowance should have a standard allowance deducted from council tax support the same as the working but at a lower rate. Reason being those claiming these benefits are better off than those who are working part time hours with extra universal credit income as much as £300 a month without any deductions at all. Part time workers working plus 16 hours or more than £350 per month have 60p deducted per pound earned plus a deduction in council tax support, so it would only seem fair that those who have extra income in disability allowance should have a slight deduction in their council tax support.		
2	More benefits is not the answer, it would be much better to move people with disabilities to homes for disable people where they can be looked after.		
3	Allowances are provided for disabled people. In some cases the income is significantly higher than minimum wage.		




9. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

- 4 People receive benefits as a 'wage' because they cannot work. I do not see why they should then become exempt from paying council tax, especially when benefits always increase with inflation and wages do not.

answered	4
skipped	273

6. Part 5 - The scheme will disregard certain crisis payments paid to taxpayers (Local Welfare Provision)

10. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?




Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		90.26% 139
2	No		1.30% 2
3	Don't Know		8.44% 13
		answered	154
		skipped	123

11. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00% 1
1	I don't see why additional income such as 'crisis payments' should be disregarded as it is still in income into the household. Otherwise people on benefits receive a higher income yet those working stay on the same wage, seems very unfair		
		answered	1
		skipped	276

7. Part 6 - Disregarding emergency increases in national welfare benefits

12. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		84.56% 126
2	No		4.70% 7
3	Don't Know		10.74% 16
		answered	149
		skipped	128

13. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	5
1	If their income is increased then this needs to be taken into account. It should not be down to the people working to have an increase in their taxes and NI to cover an increased income for people on benefits. This is simply making people on benefits more wealthy and actually makes applying for benefits more appealing than working		
2	How can this change ensure no adverse effect when it is at the council's discretion?		
3	Get people of benefits and tax credits by lowering the council tax so they can pay.		
4	increased payments should be considered as income		
5	It's income and should be classed as such		
		answered	5
		skipped	272

8. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

14. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	33
1	Apart from the non-dependents discount which I commented on previously the rest of scheme and proposed changes I agree with		
2	The scheme could be simplified further by looking at UC awards and which elements are ignored, only housing costs would appear to be the only applicable element, all others should be considered but be an automatic entitlement to the scheme.		
3	As per usual the terminology used in this consultation is not user friendly		
4	Any changes that reduces administration costs but still continues to support those on low-incomes is in my opinion welcomed.		
5	I am confused with the current scheme as being in band D and a new build our council tax support has constantly changed over the last year and has never been consistent		
6	Make it linked with UC as the constant changing for self employed people put huge strain on planning and paying bills. Emails come in before notification letters. Poor communication		
7	The proposed changes to the scheme appear to make sense.		
8	I believe that the welfare state should help more when people are in a position where they are struggling with their bills, Low earners the elderly and people on benefits require more assistance and its nice to see the council considering less fortunate		
9	Further clarity on individual circumstances would make it easier to make a clear decision one way or another. I don't find the expression "winners and losers" very informative or helpful.		
10	any household in receipt of minimum wage should get some support		
11	Will help personally to people who are disabled		
12	It is sometimes very hard to understand the forms, so any help on making it easier would be very welcome.		
13	Think it would be a good idea to automatically back date working age claims for 3 Months like we currently do for Pension age claims as some people may have never claimed before and would not be aware to put in a claim straight away.		
14	The new system is fairer and less complicated		
15	Surely the aim of any local or National government is to encourage people to work (if they can) and surely if you need more money you work more. Why should those who pay their council tax support people who could work more but choose not to because of a loss in benefits/council tax reduction. By continually supporting people more and more there is no incentive for them to support themselves.		
16	This scheme clearly is more targeted and effective in supporting those most vulnerable.		

14. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.

17	in general I agree with the proposed scheme however this is in danger of affect some people who make have special circumstances and will need to be assessed separately.
18	Every support should reach out everyone according everyone's needs
19	By giving people handouts and subsidies you take away their dignity.
20	It is good to hear that changes would simplify the process of application And administration.
21	I think there needs to be further investigations, as some people claiming benefits are clearly able to work. Especially if they are doing voluntary work as by doing this they could actually get a part time job and earn some of there own money
22	These proposals seem to be fair, practical and well thought-through.
23	Current council tax tariffs is unaffordable to most in the current economic crisis
24	Simplifying the scheme benefits both claimants and the council: for claimants it is easier to understand and the payment processing time is reduced; for council it will reduce admin costs and reduce stressful work
25	I agree with supporting lower incomes, however we need to encourage people to work and contribute I don't want the scheme abused - people need to work and contribute like all other working people
26	I understand that lower income houses need support, however I don't understand how some of these houses on universal credit can afford to put up Christmas lights in November and run them while houses with a decent income are struggling to pay the fuel bills etc. it seems there is so much help out there for 'lower income' households where half of them have undeclared earnings and actually better off than a family with two working parents earning and honest days living!
27	I think earning a should come into it rather than blanket for all in x situation. We all should contribute something as it pus for important services
28	Should be changed and supported more people doesn't mean if someone is working more then 16 hours can pay and live on that kind of money,
29	Benefits should be for those who have hit hard times. Too many people use benefits as a way of life. More people need to be working, benefits are supposed to be a short fix. Too many single parent familes.
30	You should go ahead. It sounds very sensible.
31	Increase support for working households and lone parents. Up the earnings threshold for council tax support.
32	I understand that the scheme needs to be overhauled and made simpler for people to access but that is the job of the ridiculously high paid staff at the council. If their wages were capped then it would be more money to spend on services needed in this county.
33	Please get a 'plain English' version next time! Much of the language here is Council Speak.

answered	33
skipped	244

15. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	19
1	It would be helpful if it could be calculated for your take home pay. Often us who pay into a pension get no help. Can this be took into consideration		
2	Real Time sharing of data between council and dwp so eligible claimants get an automatic application processed, avoiding the need to make separate application assuming they are made aware of the need to do this at the time they apply for UC etc		
3	I would like to see the backdating rules for working age claims brought in line with the same backdating rules as pensioners. Many people that have always worked are not always aware of the Council Tax Scheme, by the time they make a claim for Council Tax Support they are often late and lose benefit through no fault of their own, especially when it takes the DWP at least 6 weeks to process a new claim for Universal Credit. This will help Council Tax payers at a difficult time when they are learning to adjust to being out of work, and will help the collection rate of Council Tax.		
4	I agree with the standard rate for working people as it is confusing on the current scheme.		

15. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

- 5 Check the banding of the property. Some are grossly out of line. I have a 4 bed end of terrace, no drive or garage and I'm on band E. The house I was trying to buy before this one was a five bed end of terrace with garage and was a B. Both in Faversham.
- 6 The situation I am in is that I am unable to work due to caring for my 89 year old mother who is bed bound and unable to complete any basic tasks herself. My sister and I had to give up work at the beginning of the pandemic due to risks of transmission to our vulnerable mother, and since this time she has become for more dependant and needs 24 hour care. This is split between my sister and I, undertaking a 24hr on/24hr on system. We are both therefore in receipt of Universal Credit as unable to go out to work, but only I am in receipt of carers allowance as it can only be awarded to one carer, despite the need for a minimum of two.
This means that our total house income is pensions for my mother and UC for my sister and I.
I sincerely hope that the proposed changes take this into account and we do not lose any of the discount in Council Tax that we currently qualify for, and no increased payment is required.
- 7 It would be nice if the council could reduce the council tax a little more for the elderly and people on benefits, particularly the ones who still fall foul of having illnesses but don't qualify for benefits such as PIP, but qualify for Limited capability for work and work-related activity
- 8 minimum wage does not allow you to live without struggling so you should still get some housing benefit
- 9 I hope these changes do not penalise those who work to help pay benefits to those who do not work
- 10 - Lower the council tax, build accommodation for the elderly and the disabled. Do not give preference to single people with a child. Give people their dignity back. Build more affordable houses.
- 11 Not enough allowance is given to disabled people or their careers, this needs to be addressed as some careers only receive the careers allowance and nothing else
- 12 Reduce the tariff as a palliative
- 13 The council should help more with food parcels for the vunarble as many times as they need
- 14 Reduction if you have a disabled child
- 15 If all household members are out of work, what will Swale do to encourage them back to work. We do not want those who work and don't get any support to have to pay for others, it is not fair
- 16 Clamping down on benefit frauds when reported instead of ignoring them!
- 17 Remove council tax reductions and make it fairer for all. Work the budget, define the cost per house and then charge it. IF a house has 4 people then a 25% for each is due. If I have single person then 100% is payable. The current model is discriminatory to those working in a family unit.
- 18 Eligibility for council tax support outside of vulnerable groups could be provided only if someone has resided in Swale for a significant period of time
- 19 I do not believe people should be exempt from paying council tax, a reduction yes but to contribute nothing is wrong.

answered	19
skipped	258

16. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	13
1	This test is a little wordy and may not be able to be understood by everyone		
2	Use words with meanings that the ordinary person can understand. If you want to keep your writing ' legal ' then add a passage at the end explaining its meaning		
3	Sort out your communication don't email a bill before the letter as to why changes to payments. It pus huge metal health stress on people		
4	Pleas see above.		
5	Keep u the good work		
6	So many other things the council should do than giving away money and turning people into dependencies of the state.		

16. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

7	This document is worded, that the reader knows all about the benefits system. I have no clue. A simple statement as to how it affects single working applicants would of been helpful.		
8	Not applicable		
9	Another stealth rise thanks		
10	It needs to be fair. Too many working families do not get any help at all and they cannot expect those not working to not contribute at all		
11	By all means change the scheme, but be more vigilant of who the reduction is going to and whether they actually deserve it....and not add the cost to honest people making sure they pay their bills regardless		
12	It should be changed this as I am lone parent of two and do not qualify for reduce my council tak support as I earn to much but my wages does not cover everything, it should be supported people who work as well		
13	It would have given me more confidence if the opening comments on consultation responses had not given the closing date as Thursday 27 November 2022!!!!!!		
		answered	13
		skipped	264

9. About You

17. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	2.82%	4
2	No	97.18%	138
		answered	142
		skipped	135

If yes, please tell us the name of the organisation/group and add any other comments you wish to make.

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
1	Optivo		
2	Optivo		
		answered	2
		skipped	275

10. Questions for Individuals


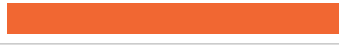
18. Do you live in the Swale Borough Council area?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	100.00%	135


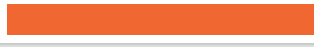
18. Do you live in the Swale Borough Council area?

2	No		0.00%	0
			answered	135
			skipped	142



19. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		50.74%	69
2	No		49.26%	67
			answered	136
			skipped	141


20. Are you or your partner in work or self-employed?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		54.89%	73
2	No		45.11%	60
			answered	133
			skipped	144




21. Are you liable to pay Council Tax?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		94.85%	129
2	No		5.15%	7
			answered	136
			skipped	141








22. Are you currently serving in the Armed Forces?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		0.00%	0
2	No		100.00%	134
			answered	134
			skipped	143





23. What is your gender?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		36.03%	49
2	Female		61.03%	83
3	Non-Binary		0.00%	0
4	Prefer not to say		2.94%	4
			answered	136
			skipped	141

24. What is your age?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	18-24		0.00%	0
2	25-34		9.56%	13
3	35-44		30.15%	41
4	45-54		18.38%	25
5	55-64		27.21%	37
6	65-74		9.56%	13
7	75-84		1.47%	2
8	85+		0.00%	0
9	Prefer not to say		3.68%	5
			answered	136
			skipped	141






25. Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		28.57%	38
2	No		66.92%	89
3	Don't know		0.75%	1
4	Prefer not to say		3.76%	5
			answered	133
			skipped	144

26. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
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26. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?

1	Prefer not to say		8.82%	12
2	White British		83.82%	114
3	White Irish		0.00%	0
4	White Gypsy or Irish Traveller		0.00%	0
5	Any other White background		5.88%	8
6	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black African		0.00%	0
7	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black Caribbean		0.00%	0
8	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Asian		0.00%	0
9	Any other multi mixed background		0.00%	0
10	Asian or Asian British Pakistani		0.00%	0
11	Asian or Asian British Indian		0.00%	0
12	Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi		0.00%	0
13	Asian or Asian British Chinese		0.00%	0
14	Any other Asian background		0.00%	0
15	Black African		0.74%	1
16	British Caribbean		0.00%	0
17	Black British		0.74%	1
18	Any other Black background		0.00%	0
			answered	136
			skipped	141

27. Other ethnic group?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
1	White USA		
2	Why is White Irish identified as a separate group to White British?		
		answered	2
		skipped	275

Appendix II [Equality Impact Assessment]

Community Impact Assessment

A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in decision-making.

When to assess

A CIA should be carried out when you are changing, removing or introducing a new service, policy or function. The assessment should be proportionate; a major financial decision will need to be assessed more closely than a minor policy change.

Public sector equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- 3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics that apply to the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

We also ask you to consider other socially excluded groups, which could include people who are geographically isolated from services, with low literacy skills or living in poverty or low incomes; this may impact on aspirations, health or other areas of their life which are not protected by the Equality Act, but should be considered when delivering services.

Due regard

To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances and in particular on the relevance of the aims in the general equality duty to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. The three aims of the duty may be more relevant to some functions than others; or they may be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others.

Collecting and using equality information

The Equalities and Human Rights Commissions (EHRC) states that 'Having due regard to the aims of the general equality duty requires public authorities to have an adequate evidence base for their decision making'. We need to make sure that we understand the potential impact of

decisions on people with different protected characteristics. This will help us to reduce or remove unhelpful impacts. We need to consider this information before and as decisions are being made. There are a number of publications and websites that may be useful in understanding the profile of users of a service, or those who may be affected.

- The Office for National Statistics Neighbourhoods website <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>
- Swale in 2011 http://issuu.com/swale-council/docs/key_data_for_swale
- Kent County Council Research and Intelligence Unit http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/kent_facts_and_figures.aspx
- Health and Social Care maps <http://www.kmpho.nhs.uk/health-and-social-care-maps/swale/>

At this stage you may find that you need further information and will need to undertake engagement or consultation. Identify the gaps in your knowledge and take steps to fill these.

Case law principles

A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- The general equality duty is not a duty to achieve a result, it is a duty to have due regard to the need achieve the aims of the duty.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

Examples of case law can be found here [EHRC relevant case law](#). They include examples of why assessing the impact **before** the decision is made is so important and case law around the need to have due regard to the duty

Lead officer:	Zoe Kent
Decision maker:	Council
People involved:	Zoe Kent
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a localised scheme that the Borough is required to put in place to give financial assistance towards Council Tax to those residents on a low income. • The Council is required to review this scheme each year and to either maintain or replace the scheme before 11 March of the any financial year.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The CIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	18 January 2023
Summary of the decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>What are the aims and objectives?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide support to low income working age households in respect of their Council Tax 2. In the case of pension age applicants, the scheme provides support in line with the Governments Prescribed Requirements as laid down by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended. <p>What are the key actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a scheme that supports those claimants on a low income • Putting into place a scheme that does place an onerous financial burden on the authority which could put other services provided by the Borough at risk. • Continuing to design and deliver services to meet the needs of vulnerable customers • Consider user feedback, engagement and consultation when designing the scheme <p>What are the expected outcomes?</p> <p>To put in place a scheme that balances the needs of low income applicants for Council Tax Reduction against the budget requirements of the Borough.</p> <p>Who will be affected?</p> <p>Working age residents who are on a low income who apply for help towards their Council Tax. This covers all areas of the Borough but particularly those who live in deprived areas.</p> <p>How many people will be affected?</p> <p>6,063 working age claimants will be affected by the changes to the scheme (9.21% of all Council Tax account holders).</p>

Information and research:

- Outline the information and research that has informed the decision.
- Include sources and key findings.
- Include information on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics.

The Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age each year. The Council is keen to consider altering the current scheme for several reasons:

- The cost of administering the scheme is increasing. This is primarily due to inbuilt complexities in the current scheme – for example every time an applicant’s income changes, their case must be reassessed, and their award must be reprofiled.
- Universal Credit (UC) is undoubtedly a contributing factor to this, especially for claimants who are in employment. Applicant’s’ UC is recalculated every month which can generate new files for the council to process. For applicants receiving fluctuating wages, this means they receive a revised award every month and, therefore, a revised council tax bill, which is costly to administer and deliver.
- This reprofiling of payments also creates a high level of uncertainty for customers. Payments made by customers can be delayed because of the requirement to give 14 days’ notice, meaning customers do not have the opportunity to apportion their remaining council tax payments over as many instalments. On average 40% of UC claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement each year. These changes result in amendments to council tax bills, the re-calculation of instalments, delays, and resetting of recovery arrangements.
- Universal Credit claimants often fail to claim Council Tax Reduction because of the belief that they have claimed it as part of the UC process, leading to a loss of financial support to those most in need.
- The administration of the current scheme is complex, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants. This means the timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications. A simplified scheme will allow the possibilities of awards being automated, resulting in a prompt award of support, so meeting customers’ need for real-time changes to their bill according to changes in their circumstances.
- Above all, the cost of administering the scheme remains high, whilst customer satisfaction is reducing as customers are often confused by the nature and regularity of correspondence they receive and are less able to budget/manage their money based on fluctuating awards.

In view these issues, it is proposed that an alternative approach be adopted from 1 April 2023. The approach has been to fundamentally redesign the scheme to address the issues with the current scheme, in particular:

- The targeting of support available to the poorest households;
- The customer experience;
- The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit;

- The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit.

Scope of the Community Impact Assessment

The following identifies the potential impact on working age applicants and particularly groups of applicants.

It should be noted that pension age applicants will continue to be protected under the rules prescribed by Central Government. These broadly replicate the council tax benefit scheme, which existed prior to 1 April 2013.

In relation to equalities, Central Government has not been prescriptive in how it does this, but points to the Council's existing responsibilities including the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Person Act 1986, and the Housing Act 1996, as well as the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The Council has given consideration to the effects of the options on working age applicants, in particular, vulnerable groups.

Disability

Working age applicants with disabilities continue to make up a high proportion of the caseload at 11%. Working age applicants with disabilities will in the main be treated more favourably than other working age applicants on the basis that:

- Disability benefits will be disregarded in the assessment of weekly income; and
- Further disregards will be granted in line with the amounts that would have been granted as premiums under the current scheme.

Age

The proposed changes affect working age households only and pension age applicants will continue to receive support under the Government's prescribed scheme.

Carers

There is a higher proportion of applicants with a carer in the household, than the population generally overall (16%).

Working age applicants with a carer in the household will be treated more favourably within the scheme, on the basis that both they and any disabled persons being carers for will have amounts disregarded from their income when calculating the level of Council Tax Reduction.

Gender

Females continue to make up a high proportion of the caseload at 63%. Although, there is a difference between the average amounts females and males receive per week, this is due to factors relating to circumstances which directly affect the calculation of council tax reduction, and is not linked to a applicant's sex directly.

Ethnicity
The proposed scheme makes no reference to ethnicity and treats all working age applicants equally.

Other protected characteristics
The proposed scheme makes no reference to the following protected characteristics and treats all working age applicants equally.

- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

Actions to mitigate any identified impacts
The Council has an Exceptional Hardship Scheme; the design of this allows any applicant to apply for additional support. It examines their overall circumstances, examining both income and expenditure with a view to determining whether exceptional hardship exists.
Under the scheme, applicants will potentially be able to receive additional support up to the full level of their Council Tax.

Consultation:

- Has there been specific consultation on this decision?
- What were the results of the consultation?

Yes, in line with statutory requirements.

The major preceptors were consulted on the changes to the scheme. No comments were received from any of the major preceptors against the changes to the scheme.

The results of the public consultation can be found in:

- Appendix I: Consultation with the public

A full analysis is provided in the appendices.

In the case of all consultees, there was an overwhelming agreement to change the scheme.

In relation to the public consultation the following results were achieved:

Question	Yes %	No %	Don't know %
The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age?	74.18	7.69	18.13
Changing the Non-Dependant deductions.	69.14	11.11	19.75
To replace the current earnings disregards and replace them with a standard £25 per week disregard irrespective of the number of hours worked	73.72	8.33	17.95

	To provide additional income disregards for the disabled and carers	88.96	4.55	6.49
	The scheme will disregard certain crisis payments paid to taxpayers (Local Welfare Provision)	90.26	1.30	8.44
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? Can any conclusions be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Those with a protected characteristic continue to be protected under the scheme.</p> <p>The scheme will continue to protect working age applicants who are disabled, have disabled partners or children or who are carers.</p> <p>Other protected characteristics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religion or belief; Sexual orientation; Gender reassignment; Marital or civil partnership status; or Pregnancy or maternity <p>Are not affected by the changes or the scheme in general.</p>			

Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's [PSED Technical Guidance](#).

Aim	Yes/No
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	No

Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Characteristic	Relevance to decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of decision Positive/Negative/Neutral
Age	Medium	Neutral
Disability	Medium	Neutral
Gender reassignment	None	Neutral

Marriage and civil partnership	None	Neutral
Pregnancy and maternity	None	Neutral
Race	None	Neutral
Religion or belief	None	Neutral
Sex	None	Neutral
Sexual orientation	None	Neutral
Other socially excluded groups ¹	Low	Negative

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see PSED Technical Guidance). <p>Advise on the overall equality implications that should be taken into account in the final decision, considering relevance and impact.</p>	<p>Summarise this conclusion in the body of your report</p> <p>We have considered how all groups with protected characteristics will be affected by the scheme. As part of our consultation, we asked responders their gender, age ethnicity, whether they considered themselves disabled and whether they claimed Council Tax Reduction.</p> <p>A breakdown of how they responded to the options is available in Appendix II</p> <p>As the Council continues to provide the same maximum level of support, notwithstanding the change in scheme design, the adverse impact on individuals is relatively small</p> <p>This position is clearly supported by a majority of consultation responses, including those from current Council Tax Reduction recipients.</p>
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Timing

- Having 'due regard' is a state of mind. It should be considered at the inception of any decision.
- Due regard should be considered throughout the development of the decision. Notes should be taken on how due regard to the equality duty has been considered through research, meetings, project teams, committees and consultations.
- The completion of the CIA is a way of effectively summarising the due regard shown to the equality duty throughout the development of the decision. The completed CIA must inform the final decision-making process. The decision-maker must be aware of the duty and the completed CIA.

Full technical guidance on the public sector equality duty can be found at:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/PSD/technical_guidance_on_the_public_sector_equality_duty_england.pdf

This Community Impact Assessment should be attached to any committee or SMT report relating to the decision. This CIA should be sent to the Website Officer (Lindsay Oldfield) once completed, so that it can be published on the website.

¹ Other socially excluded groups could include those with literacy issues, people living in poverty or on low incomes or people who are geographically isolated from services

Action Plan

Issue	Action	Due date	Lead Officer	Manager	Lead Member
Review of new scheme	The Council will continue to review the scheme throughout 2023/24	2023/24	Zoe Kent	Lisa Fillery	Cllr. Baldock

Actions in this action plan will be reported to the CIA group once a quarter, so updates will be required quarterly.

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Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	18 January 2023
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. Note progress

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 fourth annual report covering the activities undertaken towards achieving our targets during 2022.
- 1.4 It is very positive to be able to report the amount of progress made despite the pressures on the Council from pandemic and other economic pressures.

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.

3 Progress 2022

3.1 The report can be found at Appendix I.

Progress highlights

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

3.3 The refurbishment of Swale House is currently underway. A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund facilitated carbon reduction work in the Master's House in Sheerness.

3.4 Most of our fleet vehicles for directly delivered services have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. The new grounds maintenance contract which started on 15 January has seen new electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The proposed 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.

3.5 The Improvement and Resilience Fund is enabling projects which help to tackle the emergency including LED lighting, tree planting, the car club, EV charging points and air quality measures.

3.6 We are working with KCC to explore in more detail 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. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel and a schools education programme has been rolled out this year. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. 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.

3.7 Swale's ambitious targets were acknowledged this year by both Climate Emergency UK and the Carbon Disclosure Project. Climate Emergency UK scored our Action Plan and placed us in the top 20 local authorities in the UK. The Carbon Disclosure Project considered our progress in delivering the Action Plan and we were rated A – one of only 123 'cities' worldwide getting this top rating.

3.8 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.

- 3.9 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 and started to deliver the service in January 2021. Funding for a third year has been agreed in 2022 and an assistant has been funded from an external source. The service has advised over 1000 households across the Borough on energy and water use and issued over 1400 fuel vouchers. Late in 2021 with the backing of several members from their own grants, the service has also taken on tackling period poverty. 360 packs were given out in 2022.
- 3.10 Via the Off Road Charging Scheme (ORCS) funding was secured for additional EV charging points across the borough. 10 twin chargers have been installed in three car parks. These new charging bays add to the existing SBC EV charging bays (4 in Faversham, 8 in Sittingbourne and 4 in Sheerness).
- 3.11 A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022. Two hybrid cars and one electric vehicle are available in car parks across the town. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50% which is above expectations for year 1. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments and considering the establishment of a club in Sittingbourne.
- 3.12 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 bring this down to net zero emissions by 2030. A guide for developers including examples of how the 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council's website.
- 3.13 In 2022, 205 standard trees and 6607 whips were planted at various locations. In the 2022/23 planting season we anticipate planting 20 standard trees and 11048 whips and making a further bid to Local Authority Tree Fund.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be their only local authority partner in Kent in their Wilder Carbon project. We are working with them and local landowners to explore offsetting opportunities both for ourselves and other local organisations.

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 required to meet our 2025 targets as declared in the emergency. Borough wide, taking no action would have similar consequences with a failure to meet 2030 targets. We would also risk reputational damage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Steering Group, chair, deputy chair and opposition lead of the Environment Committee have all been involved in the development of this report. It was taken to the Environment Committee in November 2022 for consideration.

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	This report is for noting but the annual report identifies funds that have been used. Activities to address the declaration have financial implications and these will be addressed through the Improvement and Resilience Fund and through the base revenue and capital budget processes. Grants from external sources will also be sought.
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>

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Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2023

- 30** MEMBERS OF STAFF CARBON LITERACY TRAINED
- 170** MEMBERS OF THE GREEN GRID
- 85%** OF ACTIONS IN THE CEE ACTION PLAN STARTED, ONGOING OR COMPLETE
- 34** BUSINESSES TRIALED ELECTRIC VANS
- 11** TONNES CO₂ SAVED BY THE EV FLEET IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS
- 18** NEW EV CHARGING BAYS
- 20MPH** ZONES ACTIVE IN NEWINGTON & FAVERSHAM
- 50** BUSINESSES RECEIVED CLEAN GROWTH GRANTS
- 366** SUSTAINABLE PERIOD PACKS PROVIDED
- 20** SCHOOLS JOINED THE GREEN SCHOOLS' FORUM
- 41%** RECYCLING RATE
- 100%** RENEWABLE ENERGY AND HEATING USED IN SWALE HOUSE
- 196** HOUSEHOLDS SIGNED UP TO THE PRIORITY SERVICES REGISTER
- 944** FUEL VOUCHERS AWARDED
- 3** CAR CLUB VEHICLES INTRODUCED IN FAVERSHAM
- 103** HOUSEHOLDS SIGNED UP TO INSTALL SOLAR PANELS
- 590** HOUSEHOLDERS PROVIDED WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY PACKS
- 60** INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ACTIONS PLEDGED TO REACH OUR NET-ZERO TARGETS
- 10.9 TONNES** OF GREEN WASTE COMPOSTED SINCE START OF NEW GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT



Swale Borough Council

Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2023 (looking back at the achievements over 2022)

Background

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

Swale has some of the most ambitious targets in Kent and the UK, seeking to achieve net zero carbon for our own estate by 2025 and across the borough by 2030. Other Kent local authorities' target dates range from 2030 to 2050.

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

This is the fourth annual report covering 2022's activities to address the emergency.

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

The refurbishment of Swale House is currently underway. A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund facilitated carbon reduction work in the Master's House in Sheerness.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. The new grounds maintenance contract which started on 15 January 2022 has seen new electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The proposed 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.

The Improvement and Resilience Fund is funding projects which help to tackle the emergency including LED lighting, tree planting, the car club, EV charging points and air quality measures.

We are working with KCC to explore in more detail 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. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel and a schools education programme has been rolled out this year. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. 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.

This year our Climate and Ecological Action Plan was scored by Climate Emergency UK and placed in the top 20 local authorities in the UK. We continue to work with the Race to Zero and to date we are one of only two Kent authorities to have joined UK100 – a coalition of local authorities with ambitious climate emergency plans.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2023

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. Facilities to recycle difficult-to-eliminate plastic waste in Swale House have been introduced. For example, coffees cups, yogurt pots, newspapers, tinfoil containers, cardboard, blister packs, nylon packing straps, metal book spines, suspension files empty aerosol cans and plastic bottles. 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 and started to deliver the service in January 2021, albeit in a way different to first planned. Funding for a third year has been agreed and an assistant has been funded from an external source. Since Jan 2022 the service has advised over 1000 households across the Borough on energy and water use. Over 850 energy efficiency packs have been given out, £7869 of water debt has been written off, almost 6 tonnes of carbon have been saved via the use of LEDs and water saving hippos. 271 people have been added to the Priority Services Register and over 1400 fuel vouchers issued. Late in 2021 with the backing of several members the service has also taken on tackling period poverty since January 360 packs have been issued.

Via the Off-Road Charging Scheme (ORCS) funding was secured for additional EV charging points across the borough. 10 twin chargers have been installed in three car parks adding to the existing SBC EV charging bays (4 in Faversham, 8 in Sittingbourne and 4 in Sheerness). A further bid will be considered in 2023 should relevant funding become available.

A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022. Two hybrid cars and one electric car are available in car parks across the town. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50%. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments and considering the establishment of a club in Sittingbourne.

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. The Local Plan will bring this down to net zero emissions by 2030. A guide for developers including examples of how the 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council’s website.

This year we have planted 205 standard trees and 6607 whips and during the next planting season we will plant 20 standard trees and 11048 whips.

COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. We continue to engage with staff to see how this can be maintained moving forwards. However

other challenges have arisen from the pandemic, such as the increase in household waste which is slowly starting to fall again.

Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be their only local authority partner in Kent in their Wilder Carbon project. We are working with them and local landowners to explore offsetting opportunities both for ourselves and other local organisations.

Swale's ambitious targets were acknowledged this year by both Climate Emergency UK and the Carbon Disclosure Project. Climate Emergency UK scored our Action Plan and placed us in the top 20 local authorities in the UK. The Carbon Disclosure Project considered our progress in delivering the Action Plan and we were rated A – one of only 123 cities worldwide getting this top rating.

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 Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The latest figures give us the data until the end of 2020. Waste collection figures are similarly only updated to the end of the 2020/2021 financial year. Until the most up to date statistics are provided, we will not be able to fully understand the impact of the Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in 2019.

As set out by the Tyndall Centre, Swale should aim for an annual emissions reduction of at least 13% per year and up to 25% in order to achieve our targets. It has been established that at 2017 emission rates, Swale's carbon budget would be spent within 7 years. Figure 1 sets out Swale's emissions across the borough from 2017 compared to the minimum reduction rate of 13% per year.

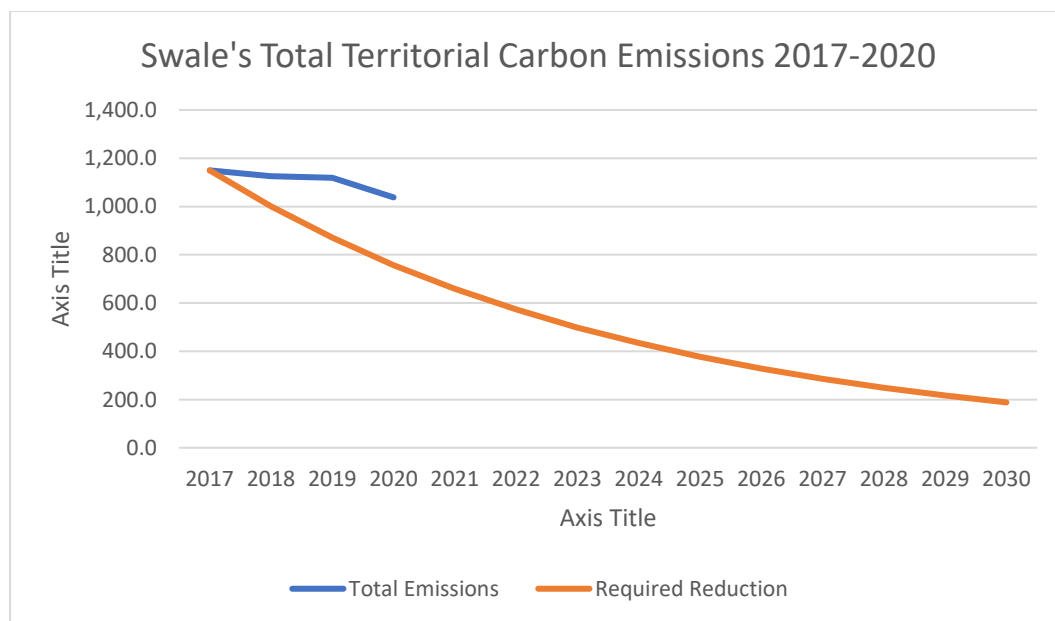


Figure 1 Source BEIS and the Tyndall Centre

Energy Consumption and Emissions

Due to the nature of the types of businesses, Swale has always had higher energy consumption and carbon emissions from the commercial and industrial sector in comparison to other Kent districts (as seen in figure 1). The commercial and industrial sector are responsible for most of the carbon emissions in Swale. Emissions from this sector have reduced since a peak in 2010, which has contributed substantially to a reduction in the overall carbon emissions in the borough.

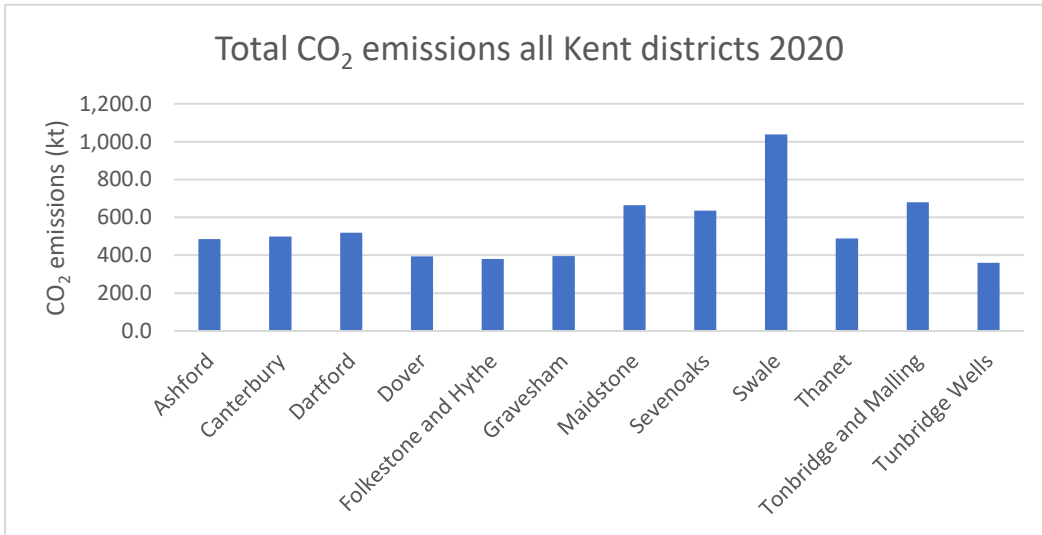


Figure 2 Source BEIS

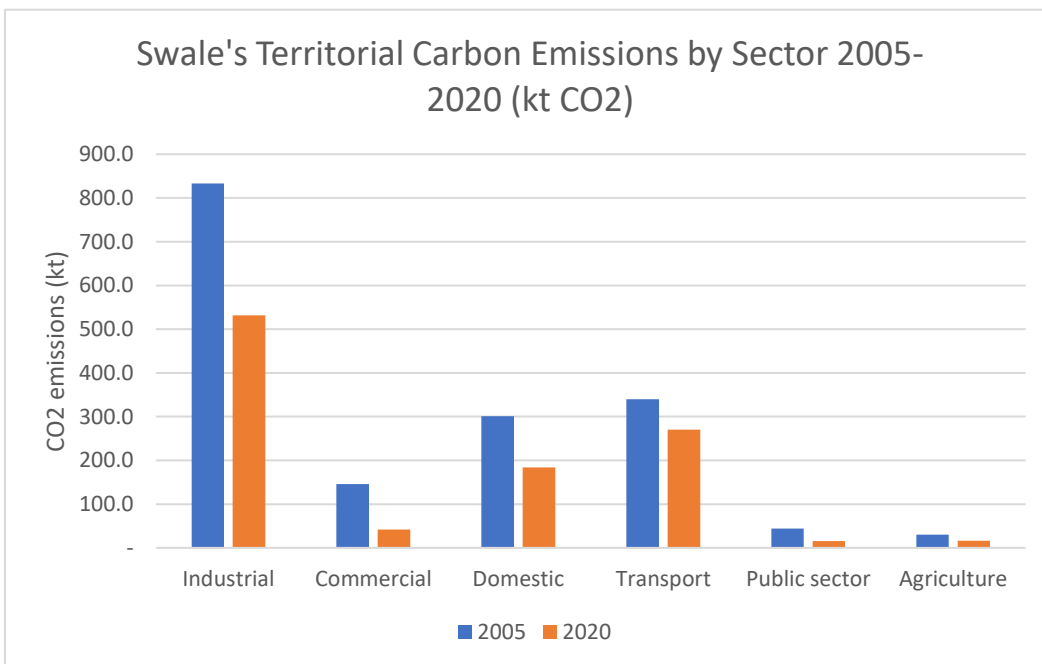


Figure 3 Source BEIS

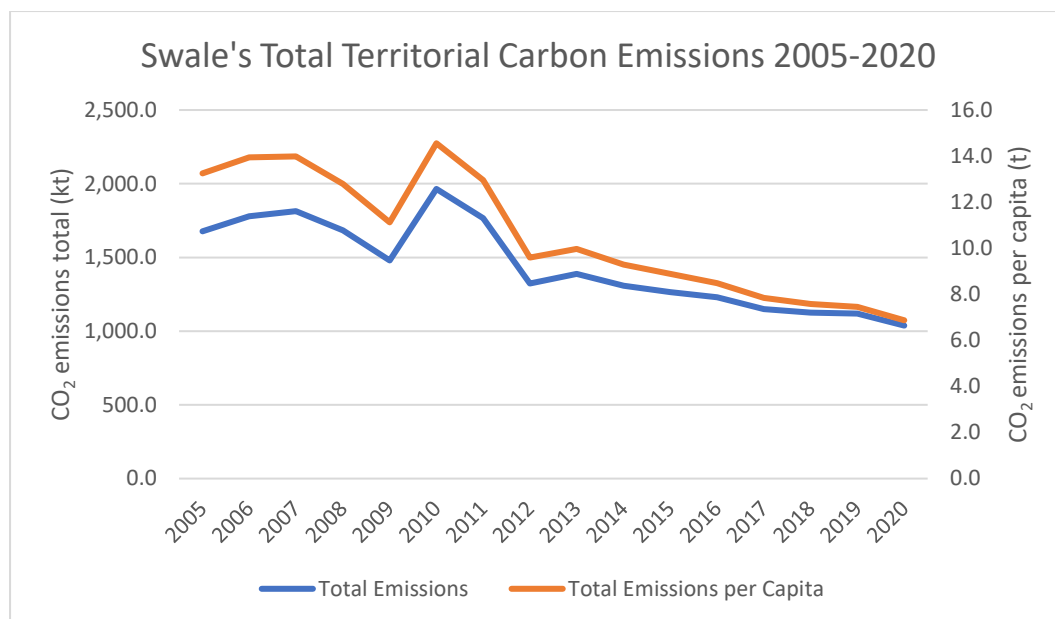


Figure 4 Source BEIS

For the 2020 data provided by BEIS, Local Authority territorial carbon emissions have been broken down into a higher number of subsections for the first time. In Swale in 2020, 17.7% of emissions came from domestic properties, 26% from transport, and 55% are industrial and commercial emissions (see figure 2). In addition to this, 1.5% from the public sector and 1.6% from agriculture, with -22.1 kt CO₂ net emissions from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry changes, attributed to carbon sequestration from forest land and grass land in Swale. The total carbon emissions from the borough have generally decreased over time, with this trend continuing in 2020, and per capita emissions dropping from 7.5 to 6.9 tCO₂ between 2019 and 2020 (figure 3).

In figures 4, 5 and 6 below the legend of the y-axis on the left refers to emissions from Swale, the legend on the right refers to Kent.

Industrial and Commercial Sector

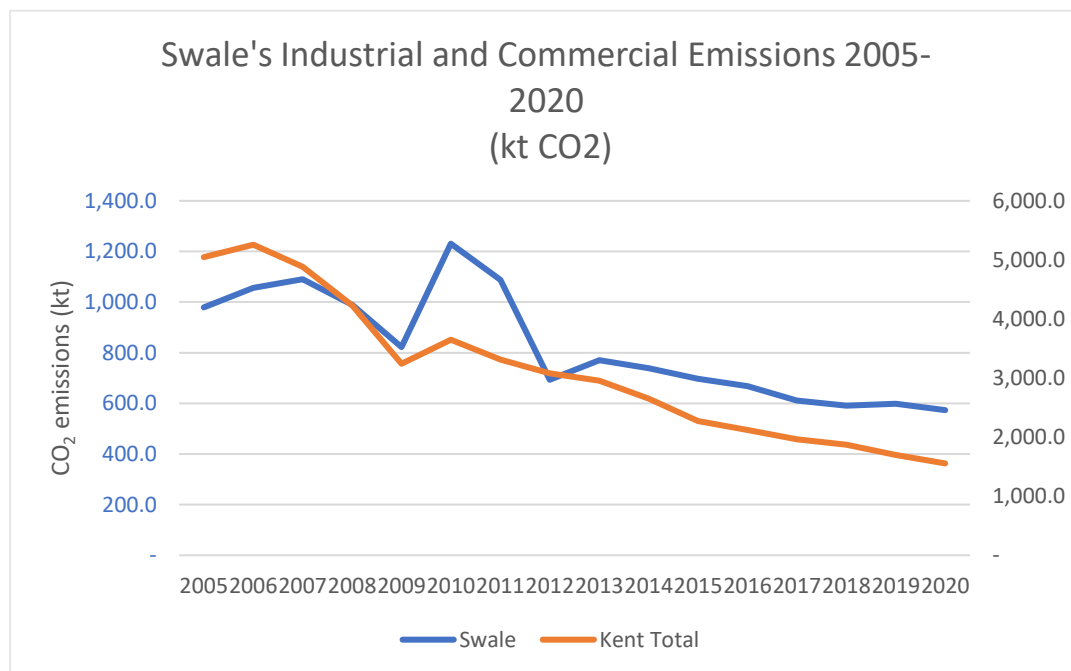


Figure 5 Source BEIS

At both borough and county level there has been a decrease in emissions from industry. Within Swale’s industrial and commercial sector (figure 4) there has been a 41.4% decrease in CO₂ emissions between 2005-2020.

Transport

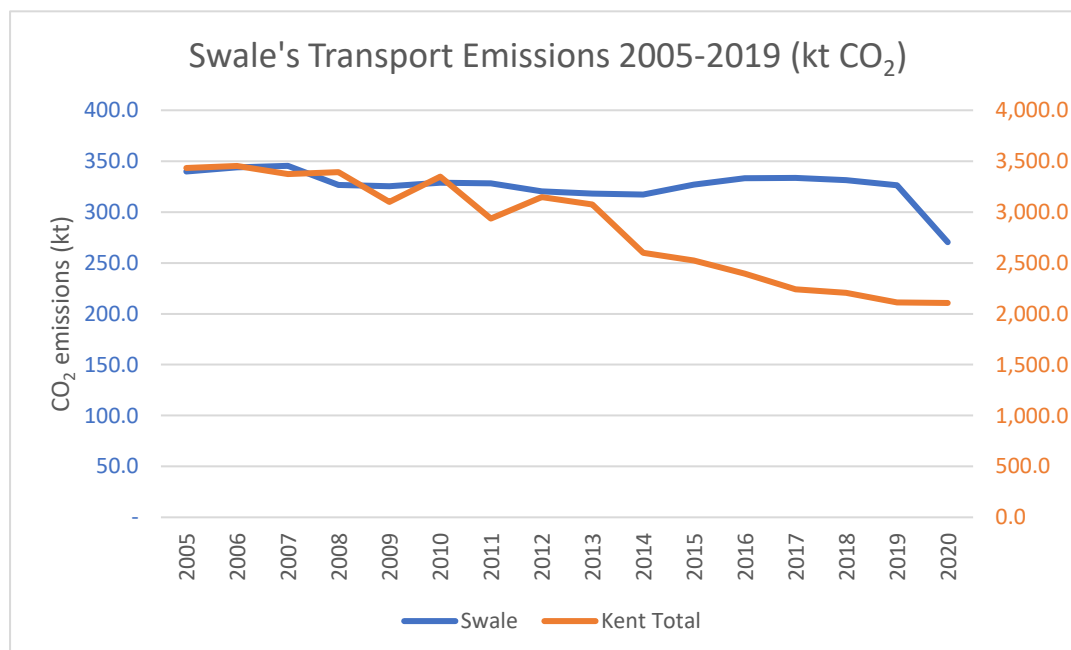


Figure 6 Source BEIS

In Swale, transport emissions had fallen by 7% between 2005-2014, but rose again by 6% between 2014 and 2017. Unsurprisingly, transport emissions dropped to the

lowest level since 2005 in 2020, due to restrictions and reduced movement as a result of Covid-19.

Domestic

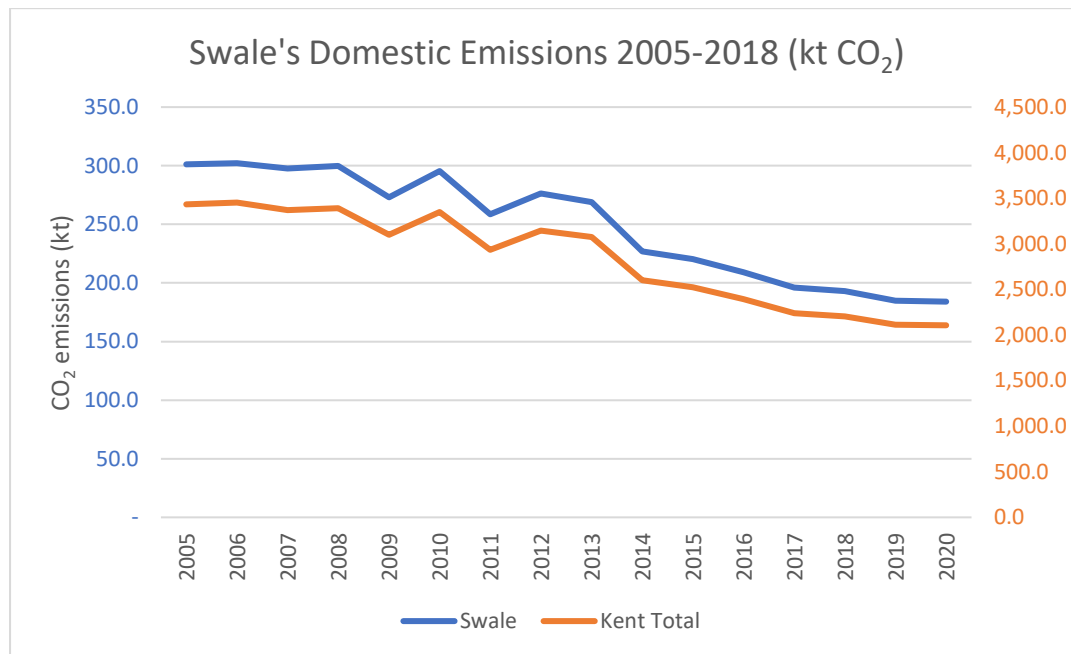


Figure 7 Source BEIS

Swale’s domestic emissions (2019 figures) are the 4th highest in the County, with 67% resulting from domestic gas emissions, for which Swale also ranks 4th. Overall domestic emissions have decreased at a faster rate since 2013.

Overall, emissions across all sectors have been decreasing per capita – in 2005 per capita emissions were at 13.8 tonnes and have decreased to 6.9 tonnes in 2020.

Public Sector Emissions

Since 2021, BEIS has included public sector emissions in its emissions data publications. Figure 7 shows Swale to have had some of the highest public sector emissions in Kent when compared to other districts. However, this has decreased significantly in recent years.

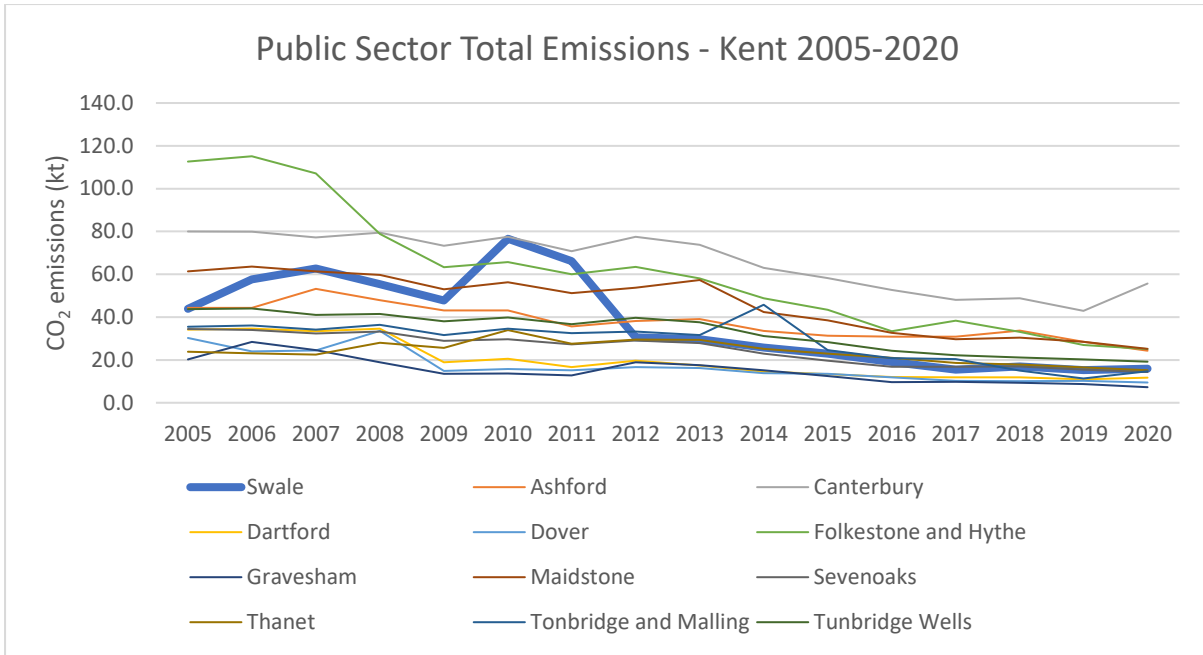


Figure 8 Source BEIS

Other Green House Gas Emissions

In 2022, BEIS included a breakdown of other greenhouse gas emissions to the territorial emissions data for local authority areas. Below shows the methane, nitrous oxide and CO₂ as a proportion of all greenhouse gas emissions since 2018.

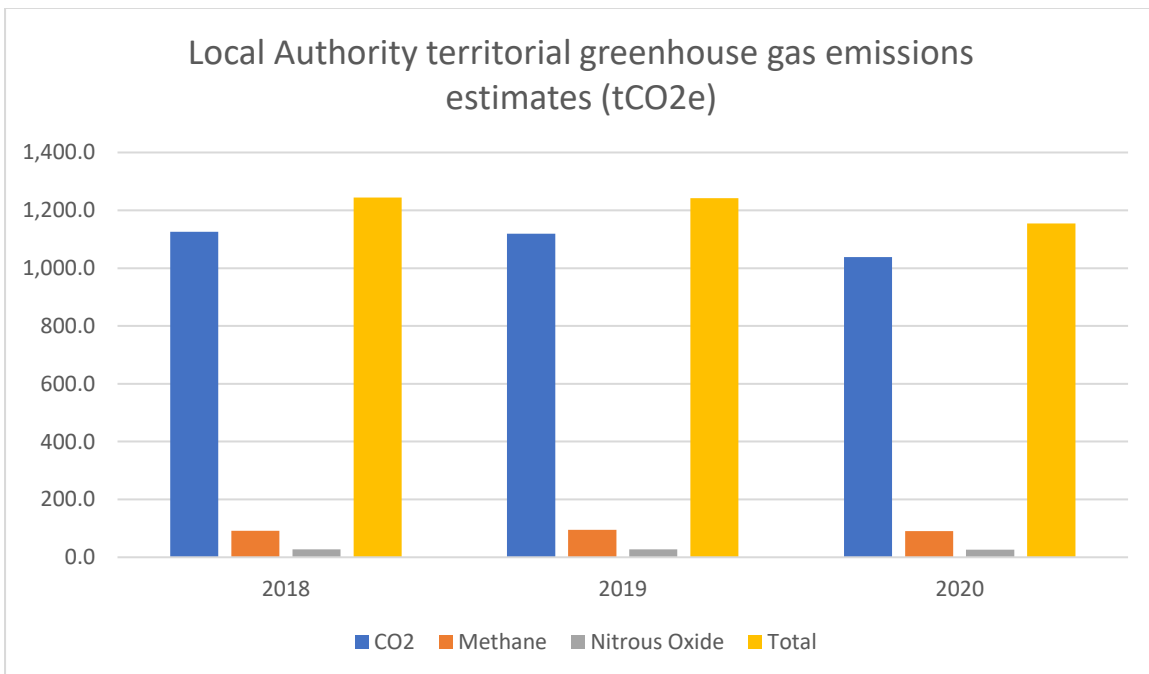


Figure 9 Source BEIS

Renewable Energy

At the end of 2021 there were 2,206 installation sites producing renewable electricity in Swale, an increase of 8% from 2020. 99.3% of these were photovoltaic, the majority of these being domestic roof top installations. In addition there are seven commercial solar PV sites, 10 onshore wind installations, three sites generating renewable energy from sewerage gas, or land fill gas, or municipal solid waste and one site generating energy from biomass. Swale also has two domestic wind installations.

These sites, plus offshore wind, provide a total capacity of 802MW of electricity. 79% of this comes from offshore wind, and the rest comes from solar photovoltaics (8%), municipal solid waste (6%) onshore wind (4%), sewerage gas (<1%), landfill gas (<1%) and plant biomass (3%).

The Smart Export Guarantee came into force in January 2020, enabling domestic and small-scale renewable energy generators to be paid for energy fed into the grid.

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is a government scheme that aims to encourage the uptake of renewable heat technologies amongst householders, communities, and businesses, through financial incentives for fitting technologies such as heat pumps, solar thermal water heating and biomass boilers.

Between April 2014 and July 2020, 140 domestic installations had been accredited for the RHI in Swale. The scheme closed in March 2022.

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 increased (figure 9) and recycling rates have continued to plateau (figure 8), remaining lower than our partners in the waste partnership.

We know that waste levels have increased during 2020-2021 due to the Covid19 pandemic, including food and garden waste; paper, cardboard, and glass; and other recyclables and this has not reduced to 2019 levels in the last year.

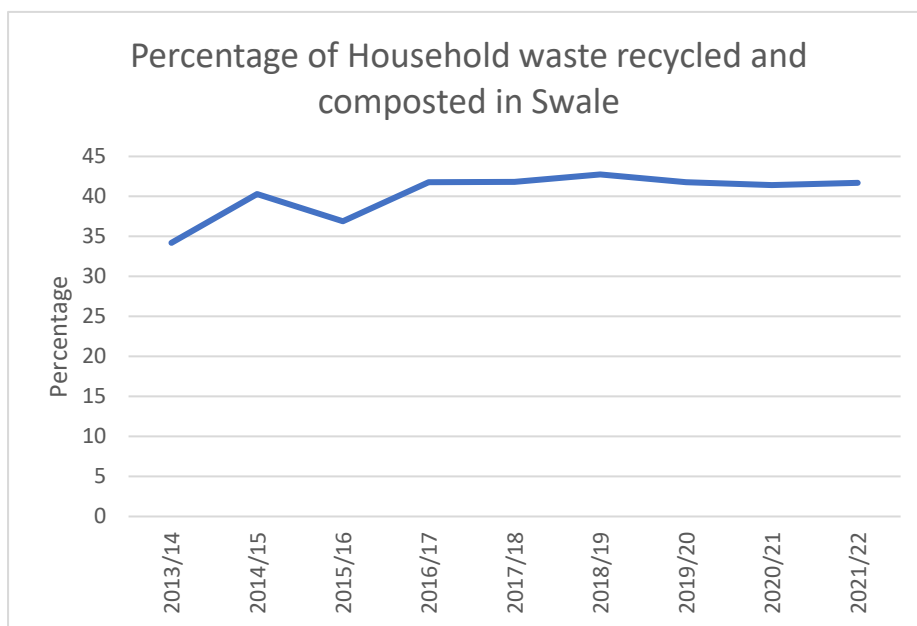


Figure 10 Source Environmental Contracts Manager

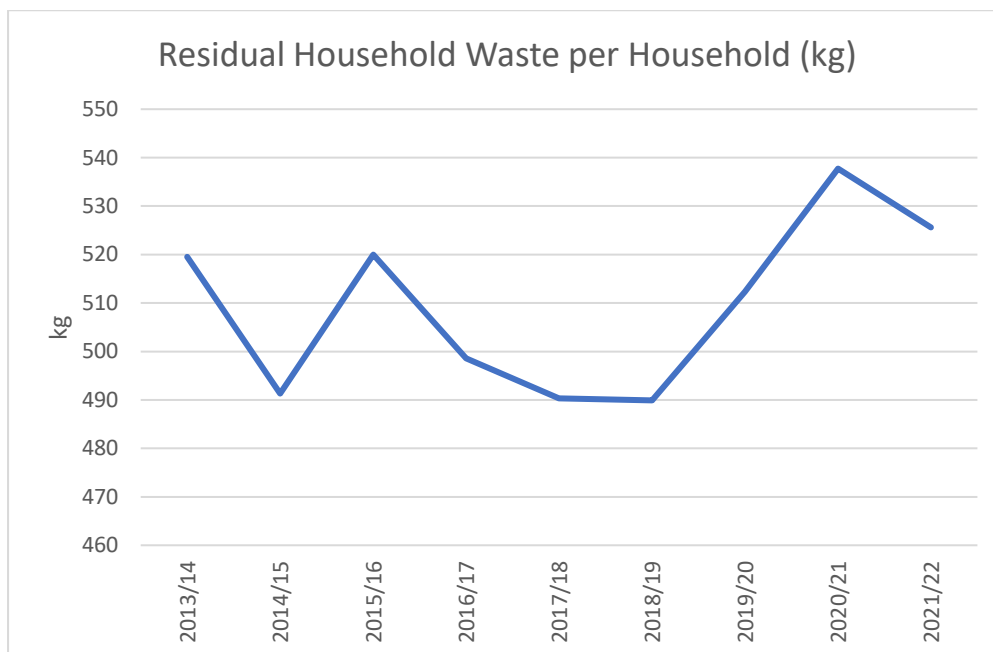


Figure 11 Source Environmental Contracts Manager

With a new street cleansing and waste collection contract due in March 2024, the draft specification highlights the aspirations of the Mid-Kent Waste Partnership to make improvements in reduced carbon emissions and a collection service that maximises recycling.

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.

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 2023

Department	Action	Time-scale	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base level training for all employees 	Short	-	e-learning module developed and completed by 80% of staff. Carbon literacy training delivered to 25 SBC staff.	60 members of staff trained and certified. Member training being developed.	On Track
CEE	•Encouraging personal responsibility and roll out of a Green Champions Network.	Short	-	28 'CEE Champions' recruited and activities started	30 'CEE Champions' recruited and activities started	On Track
CEE	•More targeted/ intensive training for organisational decision-makers to enable them to adequately assess carbon impacts in their decisions	Short	-	Carbon literacy training delivered - future programme targeted at managers/decision makers to be discussed.	CL training for environment committee members agreed at Member Training Working Group. The Head of Environment and Leisure attended LGA CLT for senior managers with this we can apply to be a 'Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation'	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	-	Talks given to Sittingbourne Rotary Club and Faversham Town Council 30 events co-ordinated during Great Big Green Week in September in collaboration with 15 community organisations, October with over 1200 people attending	Increased numbers of parish councils signed up to the Green Grid mailing list - sharing regular updates about projects, funding and events.	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	-	Largely on hold due to COVID; Business Event had vegan catering Christmas tips given.	Limited work during 2022. Promoted internally to staff.	Started
CEE	Identify and align to national days of action to reinforce the message of collective action.	Short	-	Timetable drawn up and activities delivered in 2021. New timetable for 2022	Highlighted where possible across SBC external comms eg social media, Inside Swale. 25 events run through Great Big Green Week Appendix 1 details these communications	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 2022. 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	Retro-fit Swale House and the Master's House to cut carbon emissions	Property	2025	186
2	Develop, adopt and implement an EV strategy	Environment and Leisure	2022	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, Air Quality	2030	Large
5	Increase engagement with staff to roll out learning about the climate & ecological emergency. Review of staff business travel	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	
6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ECS	Medium	Medium
7	Set up an offset fund to enable off-site offsetting within the borough.	Planning/CEE	Short	Large

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8	Establish and promote a car club in Faversham.	Environment and Leisure	2022	Small
9	Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council parks and open spaces.	Environment and Leisure	2023	19
10	Improve air quality, focusing on AQMAs along the A2 and the establishment of a Clean Air Zone	Air Quality	Short	Small

Table 2 Top Ten Priority Actions 2022

Progress against all actions can be found here: https://swale.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/408594/All-Action-Progress-for-Annual-Report-22-public-A.pdf

The graph 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 12 Overall progress against Action Plan

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Spend towards achieving these ambitions has been derived from the Improvement & Resilience Fund, as set out below in Table 3:

Top 10 Action	Details	Spend
2 – EV Strategy	Contribution to EV charge point project using On-Street Residential Charge Point grant.	£53,219.18
3 – Tree Planting	Community tree planting during National Tree Week and other community events during winter 2022/23. Approx. 2000 whips plus maintenance.	£25,000.00
8 – Car Club	Faversham Hiyacar contract and new charge point to support electric vehicle in fleet.	£36,611.63
9 – LED Lighting	Phase 1 and 2 of LED installation.	£70,000.00
10 – Air Quality	Air quality (Sensor, Newington Assessment, Anti-Idling Signs & Campaign).	£31,238.00
Remaining Funds	Proposed to allocate to smaller projects aligning with the Top 10 Priority Actions e.g. walking and cycling, business and staff engagement, etc.	£15,845.19
Total		£250,000.00

Table 3 - Spend towards CEE Action Plan progress

Council Operations

Dept.	Action	Time-scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	Status
Property	Retro-fit Swale House to cut carbon emissions (eg. extra insulation, triple glazing, heat pump, solar PV).	2025	186	The tenders have been evaluated. Report going to March Cabinet with recommendations – so we may have a further update at the actual meeting. Recommendations to carry out window replacement, roof works and undercroft insulation.	Swale House – phase 1 roof works complete. Windows and undercroft insulating underway. Masters House phase one complete	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	As Dec 21	Complete
Commissioning	Revise procurement strategy to embed the climate and ecological emergency into all procurement decisions.	2023	780	The new policy was adopted by Cabinet on 27th October. 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	As Dec 21	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	As Dec 21	On Track

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				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 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	First survey complete. COVID delayed subsequent surveys	Completed 18th 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	As Dec 21	Complete
HR	Review HR strategy to remove incentives to use a car for business travel.	2025	15	Delayed due to Covid priorities.	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.	Started
HR	Introduce a cycle to work scheme that includes e-bikes.	2021	2	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	Complete

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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. Grace working with Deb & NWOW group with new ideas as we begin to come back to office and redesign Swale House. Central recycling point installed and food waste bins in kitchens.	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. NWOW group working on new ideas as we begin to come back to office and redesign 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	Shower refurbishment complete. 6 extra secure spaces for bike storage	Complete
IT	Develop working practices to use IT to reduce use of paper.	2025	5	Paper used considerably reduced.	Paper used considerably reduced.	Complete
Property / Environment & Leisure Services	Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council estate, including parks and open spaces.	2023	19	Most of Swale House has LEDs. LED surveys have been carried out in all Council owned buildings where we have responsibility. Budget to be found. Swale House to be done with retrofit and any redesign. Open Spaces LED upgrades to be funded via CEE Improvement and Resilience Fund allocation.	Have met with contractor to go through number of queries regarding current lighting specification and locations. The previous estimated cost of this work was around £286k, well over our available budget. The contractors are now working through the latest information following our meeting to come up with a revised estimate, and the works have been split into "phases" to allow us to undertake the work in different sections. First replacements expected in the new year.	Started

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Table 4 Progress against council operations actions

The Carbon Trust was appointed 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.

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, 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. Energy used and CO₂ saved at the Swale House charging points is shown below

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

Dashboard

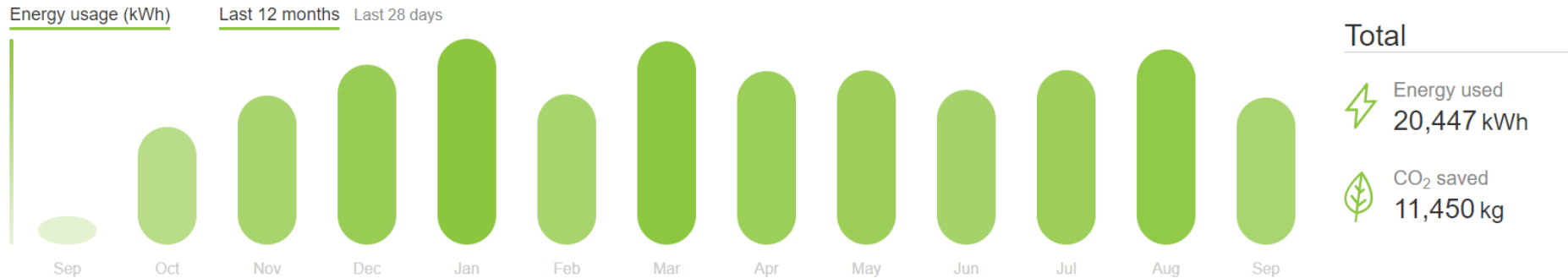


Figure 13 Energy usage from EV fleet charge points between Sep 21 and Sep 22

The Carbon Trust report showed that about half of the council’s 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. Council committees have recently reviewed the tender process and will have made a decision on the new contract from March 2024. Next year’s report will detail fully the initiatives to be undertaken and the proposed gains in carbon emission reductions.

The Council retendered in 2021 for its ground’s maintenance service. The new contract started on 15 January 2022. The winning tender bid included a number of improvements with electric vehicles for supervisor and litter collection vehicles, electric handheld power tools, a commitment to the steady reduction and then complete elimination of the use of pesticides over the five-year contract and consideration of increased biodiversity and varied maintenance regimes including more wildlife areas. Recycling of litter collected during grounds maintenance has been included for the first time. Since January 4.63 tonnes of dry mixed recycling and 4300 litres of mixed glass, bottles and jars have been diverted from landfill and 223 tonnes of green waste has been composted.

The contract for the refurbishment of Swale House was awarded and work commenced in the late summer of 2022. The full savings achieved will be reported on next year, but the window replacements should bring about a saving of 39 tonnes of CO₂ per annum according to the Carbon Trust report.

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The bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund was successful and this was used in the Master's House refurbishment. Phase One was completed in 2022. It is estimated that the switch from an oil boiler to an air source heat pump will save 32 tonnes of CO₂ per annum from operational energy. Should funds become available to carry out phase 2 then greater savings would be made.

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.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Dept.	Action	Time-scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	Status
Planning 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 used currently, with varied success	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.	On Track
CEE	Bulk buying scheme for solar PV installations paid-for by residents (in partnership with KCC).	2020-21	100	A scheme to encourage householders to fit solar PV, Solar Together, has run throughout 2021 with 77 households signing up, 146 of these have also chosen to install battery storage and 3 three households with existing solar have signed up for retrofitted battery storage. Installations so far result in an	Issue with supplier from previous round. Fortnightly catch up with all LAs KCC and iChoosr to resolve this. Current round is proving popular. 103 households initially requested a survey. Comms Team have been promoting. Battery storage and EV charging being offered as an add on.	On Track

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				estimated 23.86 tonnes CO2 reduction in year 1. Another round will be run in 2022.		
CEE	Fuel and water poverty outreach service to reduce fuel and water bills for vulnerable residents.	2020-23	to be monitored	This year 265 householders have been provided with energy efficiency packs. Over 800 householders received energy advice or fuel and water saving items. Almost £10,000 of water debt was written off vulnerable householders' water accounts. Sixty householders were added to WaterSure or New start schemes and over 100 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register.	£5125 from KCC Helping Hands for energy efficient electric blankets and thermal imaging camera. Cross-departmental steering group on energy crisis F&W adviser to providing advice to staff via bulletin etc Household Support Fund remaining inhouse but moved to ECS team. referral route for Fuel Bank Foundation vouchers Worked with over 1000 households Jan - Dec Swale Sisters – 360 packs Fuel vouchers – over 1400 issued Funding (not SBC) for part-time assistant – Funding from SBC confirmed for third year of project	On Track
Planning 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	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review.	On Track
Planning Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including focusing development in Swale's conurbations to utilise existing vacant sites and under-utilised sites within the settlement confines.	2025	Large	Included in Local Plan Review	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	On Track

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					Plan going to consultation in the autumn of 2022 and anticipated submission in Spring 2023.	
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	Included, where appropriate in Local Plan Review for town centres as well as specifically through Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD and by Faversham Town Council in Faversham Neighbourhood Plan	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.	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	Some progress made through comms and engagement plan and via FWHA service. New CEE webpages developed and information included but yet to be published.	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.	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.		Started
Plannin g Policy	Consider development of a financial viability toolkit to ensure that the cost of low and zero-carbon methods is accurately assessed (eg building materials, design and orientation, natural ventilation, landscaping, renewable generation and off-setting). Toolkit to be used by development management for pre-application advice.	Short	Large	Not progressed to date due to lack of officer time and financial cost	A financial viability toolkit it not likely to be developed at this stage. The Local Plan will be viability tested again, including the detail included within policies DM 3 and 4. Examples of the 50% condition being used in Swale currently demonstrates that policy is viable when considered from early stages.	Obsole te

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					If agreed, this item could be removed from the Action Plan.	
Plannin g Policy	Develop, initially through a Supplementary Planning Document and subsequently the Local Plan Review Policy, the potential to move rapidly towards zero-carbon development in Swale including using tools such as the Home Quality Mark and BREEAM.	Short	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review, DM 3. An SPD however, is not a priority at this stage, due to resource commitment and detail provided within DM3 itself. Other tools, eg Net Zero Carbon Toolkit could be adopted as a resource for developers to refer to.	Obsole te
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	Being implemented by DM team and 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	Working with Kent Wildlife Trust under their Wilder Carbon project to explore offsetting possibilities with local landowners	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.	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	Short	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review – policy DM3	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review – policy DM3	On Track

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	towards the cost of such compliance monitoring					
Housing	Enforce private rented and non-domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulations	Medium	Medium	Financial penalties for non-compliance in development - no update since 2020 round up.	<p>We are utilising existing legislation under the Housing act to enforce standards in the private rented sector not met at present.</p> <p>We do not have any capacity to deal with additional legislation due to high workloads</p> <p>We continue to contact landlords who we believe may have properties with Low EPC.</p> <p>We are signed up to Sustainable warmth project which will run to 2023</p>	Started

Table 5 Progress against buildings and energy efficiency actions

The next Local Plan is being prepared and incorporates 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 to explore offsetting options for both our own estate and 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 pledged through the Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration to take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on our most vulnerable residents. After a delay due to COVID19, Children and Families were able to roll out the Fuel and Water Adviser service

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from January 2021. The service is available to vulnerable residents across the borough, albeit in a different way to originally planned. Funding has been secured for a third year of delivery and Children and Families also secured external funding for a second member of staff to assist. This year over 1400 Fuel vouchers have been issued. 889 Energy packs have been provided containing LED bulbs (saving 4445 kg of CO₂), water hippos (saving 1457kg of CO₂) and various other energy saving products specifically for each households needs. £7,869 of water debt has been written off by Southern Water. 271 households have been signed up to the Priority Services Register.

Towards the end of 2021 it became evident that period poverty was affecting many Swale households. The Fuel and Water Adviser, supported by members, has taken this on board and has developed 'Swale Sisters' - a project that not only supports those in period poverty but educates around reusable sanitary products, thus reducing waste and pollution. So far this year, 360 packs have been given out saving up to 5kg of CO₂ per person per annum. Schools have been worked with and lessons developed.

Transport and Air Quality

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	Status
Environment & Leisure	Install EV charging points across the borough.	2025	to be monitored	Charge points installed in 4 SBC car parks winter 2020/21. Study completed by Energy Saving Trust and application to ORCS being developed.	ORCS funding application successful for 10 twin EVCP (20 charging bays) across 3 car parks. Work commenced in November 22 with all fully operational by end of Jan 2023.	On Track
ECS	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	2030	Large	Progress made on the Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement 2018-2022. Progress made on The Linking Coast to Downs project to confirm new walking and cycling routes in Sheppey and Faversham. New trails and maps being produced and advertised to residents.	Faversham LCWIP consultation closed P2T Solar Way: meeting with Developer 16/9. Kent PROW commissioning Sustrans to undertake a Feasibility Study FTC Bike Hangar installed, and parking rates agreed. WAC Routes Consultation Event postponed Sheppey Community Cycling Group initial mechanics training complete. Swale LCWIP: Community/PC meetings complete Online survey closed 12/9	Started

					<p>£1,300 of S106 funds obtained for cycle parking for Halfway & Minster FTC successfully bid for Cycling UK funds for community rides £2,100 bid to Cycling UK being assessed Active Travel Fund 4, bid prepared Bid to ATE Capability & Ambition Fund prepared. Discussions started with Southeastern & Network Rail on accessible northern access and improvement to cycle parking at Sittingbourne and new, larger lifts at Faversham Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Project Launched</p>	
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 (eg 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	To be included in webpages content. Further work between ECS and CEE teams discussed. Promoted via clean growth grant scheme?	To be included in business support on new CEE webpages and supported by actions in new EV strategy. Climate advice for businesses, such as workplace charge points, provided for businesses e.g. The Council's business support advisor has also commenced a new programme of 2 hour seminars to help businesses manage change. The seminars encourage businesses to plan for issues including the climate and ecological emergency.	Started

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<p>Planning Policy</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Incorporated in the adopted Parking Standards SPD</p>	<p>Parking Standards SPD Adopted 2020 - action complete.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<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 	<p>Short</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p> <p>Car club established in Faversham enabling developers to include additional vehicles in their developments – initial conversations underway</p>	<p>On Track</p>

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	<p>cycle storage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using green infrastructure to absorb pollutants. 					
Planning / Air Quality	Incorporate a policy on air quality in the local plan review	Short	Small	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	On Track
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	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	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 Regulation 19 Local Plan Review Consultation (currently due Autumn 2022) and together with the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out schemes to encourage walking and cycling and sustainable travel.	On Track
Air Quality	Establish an anti-idling campaign, initially around school sites from which it can be expanded.	Short	Small	Signs up, officers undergoing training. Campaign started and engagement with schools underway.	ERT and Environmental Protection have issued 3 press releases and has fed into Facebook and Twitter (4 Nov 21, 27 Jan 22, 30 Mar 22). Media sources picked up several stories, including Kent online (7-14 April 2022). Other engagement is through the new Green Schools Forum (joint working with Climate Actions). Green School Forum was successful, 14 schools attended, as well as various stakeholders	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Develop EV charging strategy including publicly accessible fast and rapid chargers, in council and private car parks (eg hotels, shopping centres), and working with KCC for on-street charging.	Short	Medium	EV charging strategy drafted, going to consultation Earl 2022.	EV Strategy adopted at Environment Committee on 30th June. Agreed to award ORCS project works to Pod Point Ltd. Procurement underway for delivery by end 2022.	Complete

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ECS	Promote business fleet decarbonisation, including the potential cost and reputational benefits.	Medium	Small	To be included in webpages content. Further work between ECS and CEE teams discussed. Promoted via clean growth grant scheme?	Investigated continuation of Kent REVS scheme within Swale borough. Working on survey for local businesses ahead of Swale REVS scheme in progress with KCC. 'Go Electric' webinar provided during Great Big Green Week	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	Engagement with KCC via consultation process and additional meetings. Awaiting outcomes.	Uncertain to what funding will be available for Swale through the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan. KCC a currently undergoing a review of the funding available.	Started
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	20mph limit introduced in Faversham. Plans for Sittingbourne and Sheerness proposed via Active Travel Fund application. To be progressed through Active Travel post and LCWIP plans for western area.	20mph is now active in Newington and Faversham. AQ data will be monitored at Newington air quality station over 2023 to assess if the change in speed limit impacts (+/-) air quality	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	Feasibility study and options appraisal completed. Working with KCC to explore delivery.	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	Complete

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					KCC officers will be attending the steering groups to review the AQAP update measures.	
Air Quality / ECS	ECO Stars fleet recognition scheme - business case is for engaging and inviting new operators with key information on benefits to business, fuel savings and environment. At present Swale has 22 operators signed up.	Short	Small	ECO Stars no longer running - engagement with businesses through summer 21 survey	Not active – to be removed or replaced in action plan.	Obsol ete
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	Unsuccessful, but another bid submitted for HGV monitoring in St Pauls. Outcome expected Earl 2021	We have launched ‘Pollution Patrol’ which is a free interactive website for primary schools, children and their families developed to help raise awareness of air pollution, the damage it can cause and ways that individuals can help to reduce their impact by changing behaviours. All primary schools in Swale will have access to this important resource from Monday the 25th of April. The website includes games, an immersive 360O story mode, curriculum-linked teaching resources and a school assembly plan amongst other elements. Canterbury City Council and the MidKent Environmental Health Partnership have created the interactive website through Defra funding.	Compl ete

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Air Quality / ECS	Encourage local school and business travel plans to reduce car journeys.	Short	Small	Consultation with businesses to understand travel plans and inform future work. Engagement with schools limited due to Covid-19, however working with CEE team on collaborative AQ and climate change approach.	The Business Travel Plan Survey has been completed and circulated to relevant KCC and SBC departments. A review of how this has been useful for departments to provide additional support in the form of incentives and improve sustainable travel will need to be completed. Engagement with schools via the Pollution Patrol project.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Establish a tree planting strategy for schools (links with biodiversity)	Short	Small	Individual work with schools undertaken to encourage applications to Woodland trust tree planting funds. Engagement with KCC tree officer to ensure joined up working. Tree planting strategy for schools yet to be completed.	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.	On Track

Table 6 Progress against transport and air quality actions

The current Swale Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) concludes at the end of 2022, and we are required to propose a new plan for the next five years (2023 to 2028). The AQAP outlines the strategic and local actions/measures we will take to improve air quality in Swale Borough Council between 2023 and 2028. This action plan takes a collaborative approach with the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan and evidence-based Transport Strategy. Officers have also worked closely with officers from Kent County Council's Highways, Public Health and Active Travel departments to ensure that the measures detailed within this updated action plan continue to provide a holistic approach to tackling the source of poor air quality in the borough. The AQAP report was presented to the Environment Committee on 3rd November prior to public consultation.

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A Kent wide bid to Defra's Air Quality Grant Scheme for an education package is now live and is being promoted to all schools across the Borough. Data on the success of the package can be reported in the next annual report. Green School Forum was set up by the council to engage with schools on range of schemes related to air quality and climate action.

The anti-idling campaign, around schools continue. Over the year the Environmental Response Team has experienced resource pressures and have been unable to visit hotspot sites. The campaign is being reviewed and Environmental Health is exploring options to use our external litter picking contractors for engine idling patrols with focus on the educative campaign instead of enforcement. Various new hotspots have been identified by members of the public. Environmental Health are undertaking an audit of new hotspot sites and plan to order signage for locations most suitable. Environmental Health, Development Management and Planning Policy have had a meeting with Medway Council to discuss appropriate mechanisms to deal with this issue as part of a long-term solution, for example, joint mitigation and agreement in policy. Environmental Health has commissioned an independent air quality assessment to provide the council with an evidence base to back up future decisions. Results from this can be shared in next annual report.

Apart from exceedances at St Paul's Street and Keycol Hill the general trend over the last four years is one of improving air quality in the AQMAs. This does need to be a cautious interpretation, giving the general pandemic impact of traffic movement in this period. St Paul's Street has not been compliant of the annual allowance for PM₁₀ daily limit for three years.

A source apportionment study was completed which identified an interesting anomaly in the air quality readings. The normal correlation between NO₂ and PM₁₀ did not occur. The normal fluctuations in NO₂ peaks should be followed by PM₁₀, instead PM₁₀ showed high reading when NO₂ was low. Consultants undertaking additional real time monitoring to better understand the spatial extent of particulate emissions.

We established our first car club in Faversham in May contracting Hiya Car to run it for us. Two self-charging hybrids and one electric car are available and are located in three car parks in the town centre. Use of the cars has been greater than anticipated with utility



Image 1 Pollution Patrol Online Resource for Schools

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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.

Users have been very satisfied with the service

“Having opted out of a company car scheme now I work from home, this is a great solution to hiring cars locally when you need one. We hired to go to Latitude and got free fuel included for the weekend”. - Victoria G.

“Caught out with vehicle servicing - and needed transport quick. Convenient central location and really easy to use. The car was perfect, online instructions were clear for a newbie - I would definitely use Hiyacar again!” - Robert N

“I have several times this summer used Hiyacar for days out at the seaside or to visit country house gardens. I once used it to drive to a vaccination centre that was inaccessible by train. Booking the cars (even at relatively short notice) is always straightforward, and the checking in and out process is easy. The Swale Car Club cars are modern, clean, and in excellent condition to drive. Overall the Hiyacar experience has been a lot of fun. I’m really grateful to have such a useful service so close by to my house. I’m really looking forward to my next booking on Monday - driving a modern hybrid car is a joy compared with driving my previous car”. - Thomas P



Image 2 Car Club launch in April 2022

One user has given up his mobility scheme vehicle and uses a car club vehicle frequently. To date he has hired a car 34 times clocking up 1170 miles at a cost of £630.58. These journeys have saved approximately 85 grams of CO₂ per mile over using a comparable petrol car. A saving of 30%.

The Planning Policy team has incorporated an air quality policy into the emerging Local Plan.

Faversham now has a town-wide 20 mph speed limit, which will help to improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions, improve road safety and encourage more journeys to be made by walking and cycling. Surrounding villages are considering similar schemes.

Staff cycle storage and showering facilities have been improved and the limit for the cycle to work scheme has been raised to £2000 to permit the purchase of e-bikes. In 2021 five employees took advantage of the scheme and one more joined in 2022.

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Clean Growth Grants worth £392,118.02 were awarded to 50 businesses across Swale to assist with the purchase and installation of energy and emission saving technology. The average grant was £7,842.36. Installations included LED lighting upgrades and replacements, Solar PV, EV charging points, a bio-thermal hot water system, an electric forklift to replace an LPG forklift, an electric utility vehicle, roof insulation, double glazed doors and upgraded refrigeration.

Resource Consumption and Waste

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	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, Draft Policy DM 3 does address waste.	As Dec 21	Not Started
Environment & Leisure	Decrease the amount of household waste collected by promoting each separate method of recycling	Short	Medium	Promoted via social media and Inside Swale.	Use of KRP videos to promote behaviour change	Started
Environment & Leisure	Increase amount of garden and food waste collected for compost.	Short	Medium	Increased sign ups to garden waste service this year	The cost of living crisis has seen a fall in subscriptions to garden waste collections	Started
Environment & Leisure	Encourage residents to recycle small electricals, textiles and batteries.	Short	Medium	Increase seen - to be continued when staff time and resource permits. To be included in campaigns and communications.	Ongoing	Started
Environment & Leisure	Signpost residents to recycling facilities for products that cannot be recycled in the kerbside collections.	Short	Small	To be included in webpages content. Pumpkin recycling programme example of SBC promotion of additional recycling.	Waste Wizard tool now on website	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads.	Short	Medium	Promoted via social media and Inside Swale.	Targeting of areas of high contamination and behaviour change communication	Started
Environment & Leisure	Encourage litter picks and measures to reduce the amount of plastic litter in the sea	Short	-	Promoted via social media and Inside Swale. Encouraged via Great Big Green Week events.	Ongoing	On Track

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Environment & Leisure	Work with KCC to stop export abroad of recyclables	Medium	-	Ongoing	Ongoing, although lack of UK infrastructure to recycle for some specific materials	Started
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 (eg in partnership with Plastic-Free Faversham and Plastic-Free Sheerness).	Short	Small	Ongoing - SBC provided thorough responses to the DEFRA consultations and work is underway with Democratic Services to agree briefing sessions for Members on Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Recycling Schemes and consistent collections. DEFRA are yet to advise when they may have feedback from the responses provided, but it is anticipated that encouraging packaging companies to design out waste and to legislate for them to pay for local authorities to collect their waste, this will have a positive impact on household waste figures in the coming years. Continued collaboration with Plastic Free Faversham, eg. through Great Big Green Week	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Work with Kent Resource Partnership on county-wide education/communication schemes	short	Medium	Promoted via social media and Inside Swale.	Ongoing, Swale remain part of the KRP providing funding for county wide campaigns	On Track
Environment & Leisure / ECS	Promote improved recycling of commercial waste with businesses across the Borough	Long	Large	To be included in webpages content.	Applying to WRAP business waste pilot project. Providing information about Produced in Kent's 'Food Loop' programme. Sharing Blueprint	Started

					to a Circular Economy information.	
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Table 7 Progress against resource consumption and waste actions

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.

Following a cross departmental audit of plastic use 143 plastic items were found to be in use 88 of which could be classed as ‘single-use’. The most prevalent were bottles, bags and pens. Teams have introduced recyclable and non-single-use items, running down existing stocks first.

Work is ongoing to decrease the amount of household waste collected by promoting each separate method of recycling and to increase the amount of garden and food waste collected for compost. We are also working to reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads, for example through working with the Kent Resource Partnership on a county-wide education/communication programme. Bin stickers with recycling messages have been rolled out across the Borough.

A succesful trial in Marine Town, Sheerness, has led to the introduction of alternate weekly waste and food collections and in an areas where this had previoulsy not been possible. Householder engagement and education led to this and will now be rolled out in the few remaining areas of the borough that do not have.



Image 3 Single-use bottles and cups collected on Refill Day

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Via social media and press releases, we are signposting residents to recycling facilities for products that cannot be recycled in the kerbside collections.

Community litter picks have been supported. Measures have been taken to reduce the amount of plastic litter in the sea. We are working with KCC to reduce the export abroad of recyclables and maintain the low levels of Swale waste that goes to landfill.

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

We are promoting the reduced use of single-use plastic in partnership with Plastic-Free Faversham. Events were held across the borough during Great Big Green Week with 27 events and 1500 attendees. A report can be found at Appendix 2.

We are promoting improved recycling of commercial waste with businesses across the Borough via our business ebulletin. Collection of dry recycling and food waste has been introduced for Swale House where previously it was all dealt with as one waste stream. The number of items that can be recycled has increased to include yogurt pots, newspapers, tinfoil containers, cardboard, blister packs, nylon packing straps, metal book spines, suspension files empty aerosol cans, plastic bottles and coffee cups.

We supported the Faversham Community Wardrobe's Clothes Swap during Great Big Green Week and funded Circular Faversham to hold a repair/reuse fashion show in November.

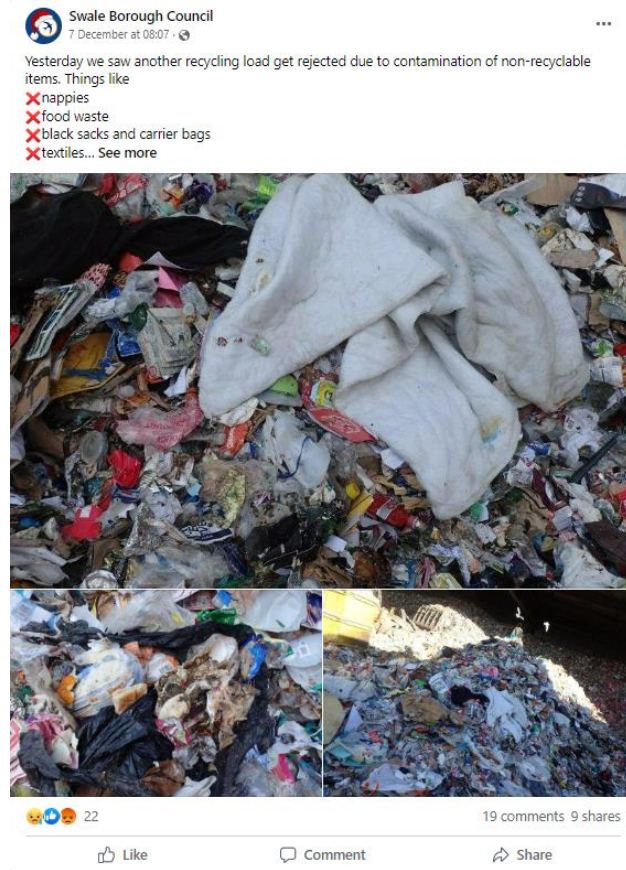


Image 4 Contamination information shared on Facebook.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	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	An open space survey has also been undertaken and potential tree planting have been identified. Tree cover/BNG being assessed via KWT/SELEP project.	Currently working on plans for standard tree planting and whipped tree planting at various sites identified across Swale using the LATF funding. Funding has also been provided via the Improvement & Resilience fund. We are discussing options on how best to use the funding.	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	To be investigated.	Biodiversity Net Gain is required through the NPPF. Once the Environment Bill is enacted the requirement will be 10%. The emerging Swale Local Plan Policy is for 20% BNG.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers.	Short	Small	Included in new grounds maintenance contract.	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.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	Locally produced compost promoted via public compost giveaway. To be repeated in 2022.	SBC resources would not allow this campaign to be repeated in spring 2022 and the compost supplier could not provide the compost. Now a campaigns officer is in post, we will try and repeat this successful campaign in spring 2023. Material is derived from	On Track

					garden waste only now as food waste goes to an AD plant.	
Environment & Leisure	Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.	Short	Small	This year 1.2 ha of coppicing occurred in Perry Wood. All the timber has been used for fencing locally. Coppicing enhances biodiversity, allowing wildflowers and insects to thrive as light reaches the woodland floor	Discussion with local coppice contractors to identify appropriate timber from the felling plan for this season's contracts are ongoing. 1.37 ha coppiced	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work in Swale's efforts to achieve action 1	Short	Large	Community groups engaged via GBGW. Increased work with businesses planned for 2022.	Continuing work supporting community groups. Also encouraging tree planting via Swale Green Schools Forum. Successful tree week.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote forest and beach schools	Short	Small	Completed via MSEP project? To continue to promote. Engagement with schools increased and Swale Green School Forum planned for 2022.	Positive outcomes from MSEP project. Regular interaction with 20+ primary and secondary schools via the Swale Green Schools Forum.	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	Close work between project officer and greenspaces engagement officer to work with groups, eg through GBGW.	Continuing work supporting community groups. Also encouraging tree planting via Swale Green Schools Forum. Grants and information provided via the monthly Green Grid newsletter. Excellent In Bloom judging results. Strong focus on biodiversity, bee roads and reuse/recycling. 'Get Swale Growing' plant giveaway during GBGW.	On Track

Table 8 Progress against ecology and biodiversity actions

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This year we have planted 205 standard trees and 6607 whips, which included 300 whips donated by Leysdown Parish Council. During the next planting season we will plant 20 standard trees and 11048 whips. A further bid will be made to LATF to facilitate further tree planting. There were six opportunities for volunteers to plant trees with Trees for Farms in November, planting 475m of hedgerow made up of over 2,400 trees at three different farms. Swale Borough Council supported volunteers to plant 1300 whips during Tree Week in November. A report on Tree Week can be found at Appendix 3

We are promoting projects that encourage pollinators including KCC's Plan Bee and Get Swale Growing. Over 270 bee and pollinator friendly plants were given away during Great Big Green Week.

We are reducing our use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer and encouraging the use of compost from food waste recycling.

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 Environment Grant scheme for communities reopened for applications in November 2021 and we made grants totalling £10,000 for anti-littering activities and education during 2022. The scheme depends on the income 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.

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This year 1.37 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.

Swale did extremely well in this year's South and South East in Bloom awards. Local gardens and sites won nine gold awards, seven Silver Gilt awards and one Silver award. Some of these were first time entries. In the Neighbourhoods category local sites won one Advancing, four Thriving and two Outstanding. Our Greenspaces Activities Co-ordinator won an Outstanding Achievement Award and our Greenspaces Apprentice was recognised with a Young Gardener Award. A former councillor's work was also recognised with an Outstanding Achievement Award.

In the Spring we relaunched our Green Grid network. The combination of a networking meeting and visit to a local green business has proved popular. We also publish a monthly e-newsletter with a mailing list of over 170 local businesses, parish councils, community groups and individuals.

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%.

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 to explore offsetting opportunities for our own estate initially and then to broaden the offer to developers.

A local farmer is working with Marks and Spencer on a trial of wild flower strips in orchards to encourage pollinators. This is one of only two trials nationally.



Image 5 Green Grid members at Elvis & Kresse, viewing the hay bale insulation of the new workshop



Image 6 Green Grid members at Elvis & Kresse, viewing the natural wastewater treatment system

Energy Generation and Storage

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2021	Progress Dec 2022	Status
Property	Perform a viability survey at all existing council owned sites to potentially accommodate solar PV.	Medium	Small	Swale House discussed with retrofit. No progress on other buildings yet.	Swale House and Master's House retrofit took priority. Property does not currently have the resource to review in detail.	Not Started
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	Promoted via Solar Together. To be included in webpages. Further work needed in 2022.	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
Planning Policy	Investigate the possibility of increasing thermal storage (e.g. hot water and ground inter-seasonal storage) for greater maximisation of local energy generation.'	Medium	Medium	Not yet started Local Plan Review taking precedence.	Suggest this is removed from the Action Plan at this stage as Local Plan Review unlikely to have resources to progress this level of detail. Could be mentioned in update to pre-amble to DM 4 Sustainable energy production, distribution and storage (Reg 19, 2021)	Obsolete
	Investigate a pilot programme to use new technology such as virtual private wire technology to balance between energy generation, storage and use within the borough as part of achieving net zero carbon.	Medium	Medium	Early work with Wheelebrator, BEIS and KCC. Rejected by central gov	Early work with Wheelebrator, BEIS and KCC. Rejected by central gov	Obsolete
Property / ECS	Develop Swale as an innovation area promoting new low-carbon technology, linked to incubator units for low-carbon start-ups in a retrofitted Swale House.	Medium	Medium	To be investigated.	Swale House commercial use deemed to be a priority but not in the context of low carbon innovation – we would be constraining ourselves. We will presumably create space that allows them to operate in a more	Obsolete

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					Carbon efficient way, focused on the need to reduce carbon from the commercial sector in the Borough generally, rather than an innovation/low carbon sector specific workstream. Property does not currently have the resource to review in detail.	
Environment & Leisure	Encourage and support community energy projects. Consider community energy as a financial investment.	Medium	Small	Encouraged where appropriate. Principal of extension of permitted time from 25 to 40 years established for existing projects. Investment possibilities under review.	No Change in year but plans to pursue in 2023	Started

Table 9 Progress against Energy Generation and Storage actions

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We are signposting residents and businesses through communicating the benefits of installing energy storage with grid balancing capability.

Permission has been granted, by the Secretary of State, for the Cleve Hill Solar Park. This will consist of 800,000 solar panles 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 2021	Progress Dec 2022	Status
Planning Policy	Incorporate a policy on climate change adaptation in the local plan review	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	As Dec 21	Started
Emergency Planning	Regularly update the Emergency Plan for the borough in partnership with the County Council	Short	-	Ongoing	Ongoing	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	As Dec 21	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	As Dec 21	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	As Dec 21	Started
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	Ongoing	On Track
Planning Policy	Work to restore natural processes within river systems to enhance water storage capacity and improve water quality.	Medium	-	Green Grid responsibilities have been transferred from ECS to EL/CEE.		Not Started

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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: Being progressed through the Local Plan Review (Early stages, working with KNP/KWT) ECS: Green Grid responsibilities (including this action) have been transferred from ECS to EL/CEE	As Dec 21	Started
Planning Policy	Work with Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to minimize the long-term risk of flooding	Short	-	Ongoing	Ongoing	Started
Emergency Planning	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;	Medium	-	Flood Awareness Week promoted via social media	As Dec 21	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	As Dec 21	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.

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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.

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.

Looking forward

We have revisited our Action Plan and identified the top 10 actions to prioritise for 2023.

In 2023 we are focussing our activities on finishing the retro-fit of Swale House and the Master's House phase 2 (subject to funding), planting 11,000 trees funded by the Local Authority Tree Fund, progressing the new waste contract to include carbon savings, further engagement with businesses to promote LoCase grants and the uptake of EVs, and developing the Clean Air Zone measures with KCC.

They are detailed in table 11 below.

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2023 Top 10 Priority Actions

Action	Action Owner	Target date	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Measures of Success
1	Property	2023	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies completed PV roll out started
2	Environment and Leisure	2025	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy shared with stakeholders Installation of additional charge points in car parks in areas with high on-street demand Progress on on-street charging
3	Environment and Leisure	2025	1,481t offset of woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress made against tree planting targets Other planting opportunities investigated (eg hedgerows, saltmarsh etc) Work completed with stakeholders and other landowners to identify further sites to plant Engagement work conducted with residents, schools and groups to increase understanding of the importance of trees Biodiversity Net Gain in tree planting sites
4	ECS, Planning, Air Quality	2030	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop LCWIPs in Sittingbourne & Sheerness – use LCWIPs across borough to apply for infrastructure funding Linking Coasts to Downs routes finalised and advertised Installation of cycle racks Bike Hire scheme investigated
5	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Champions activities progressed, measured through behaviour change across teams Carbon Literacy training delivered, and Carbon Literacy Organisation certification investigated

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	about the climate & ecological emergency. Review of staff business travel				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member training developed and delivered • Staff business travel review complete
6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ECS	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased installation of work-place chargers measured across the borough • Increased number of businesses engaging with the council to receive support on decarbonisation measures • Measure success of Clean Growth Grant and share best practice/case study examples
7	Behaviour change around domestic waste and food recycling	Environment and Leisure	short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy and materials developed • Increased recycling rates • Less contamination of blue bins
8	Establish and promote a car club in Sittingbourne.	Environment and Leisure	2023	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car Club introduced and advertised in Spring 2023 • Advantages (carbon and cost savings) advertised to residents and encouraged to join • Further campaigns completed dependent on uptake levels • Usage monitored across car club lifetime
9	Implement stage 1 of LED roll out across council parks and open spaces	Environment and Leisure	2023	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED lighting installed across the estate, prioritising most in demand areas • Carbon and cost savings captured and promoted to parish councils and other stakeholders to encourage installation of LED lighting
10	Improve air quality across the whole borough, focussing on the six air quality management areas (AQMAs)	Air Quality, Environmental Health	short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality Action Plan 2023-2028 • Air Quality Defra bids Pollution Patrol - increased engagement with schools Success of bid to Defra and development of resource • Continuing reductions in NOx and particulate matter evidenced in Swale's Annual Status Reports.

Table 11 – New top 10 priority actions for 2023

Conclusion

In the three and a half years since the Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared, Swale has made good progress in what have been, extremely unusual and challenging circumstances. We remain a leader in Kent in both our ambition and achievement. Highlights include electrification of the SBC vehicle fleet, improved infrastructure of electric vehicle charging across the Borough, the establishment the car club, the energy efficiency improvements in both Swale House and the Master's House and the very successful Great Big Green Week and Tree Week. The new refuse collection contract will facilitate considerable savings and see the use of more efficient and cleaner vehicles.

Covid led to some emissions reductions particularly around transport. The challenge will be to retain and build on the best adaptations that have contributed to a reduction in carbon emissions while facilitating and improving our everyday lives by, for example, video conferencing technology, good broadband, more journeys made by walking and cycling, supporting local businesses etc.

It is always the case that the first reductions made to carbon emissions are the easiest to make. Substantial year-on-year cuts will become increasingly difficult. Our challenge is to ensure that the impetus continues in order to meet our targets.

Appendix 1 - Climate and Ecological Emergency Communication and Engagement 2022

1.1 A range of 'days of action' and information campaigns were conducted across a range of social media and communications channels for public information, as well as via internal communications with staff, throughout the year. These included:

- Solar Together Round 2
- Inside Swale – Spring 2022
- EV Strategy Consultation
- Anti-Idling Campaign
- Great British Spring Clean
- Kent Air Week/Car Club launch
- Everyday Active Travel Challenge
- Walk to School Week
- National Vegetarian Week
- No Mow May
- Inside Swale - Summer 2022?
- Clean Air Day
- World Refill Day
- EV Strategy Launch
- Youth Climate Competition
- Great Big Green Week
- Great Big Green Streets
- Pumpkin Rescue
- Share the Warmth Campaign
- National Tree Week
- Inside Swale - Winter 2022
- Schools Small Electrical Recycling Competition

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2. Staff Engagement: Staff climate champions from each team (21 total) have been attending quarterly meetings to keep momentum up for single-use plastic reduction and other behaviour change objectives
3. The climate champions have spearheaded initiatives such as central recycling points, a staff plant swap and planning events for the postponed Wellbeing Week
4. 66% of staff climate champions have received Carbon Literacy Training, and are therefore able to embed this within their roles
5. Inside Swale: every edition of the quarterly magazine included an article advertising the Fuel and Water Home Advice service, as well as tips for saving energy and water at home. Most editions also included a waste related feature, and an update on recent climate change projects. Inside Swale is delivered to **62,443** households.
6. SBC Facebook – from 1 January 2022 to 30 November 2022, there were 79 posts relating to environmental campaigns on the SBC Facebook page, equating to 19.3% of all posts this year (up almost 10% compared to last year). The most popular post topics include:
 - Electric vehicles and EV charging
 - Active travel
 - Recycling tips
 - Tree planting
 - Events
7. The total reach for all these posts was 308,752, with 324,591 total impressions. Engagement totalled at 4,708, averaging at 59.6 engagements per post.

Note about Facebook stats – This year Facebook changed its algorithm, which has significantly impacted on posts from pages. They want to push pages to pay to boost posts, rather than rely on organic growth. This means that we have seen a drop in organic impressions, reach and engagement.

8. SBC Twitter: From 1 January 2022 to 30 November 2022, there were 85 Tweets relating to environmental campaigns on the SBC Twitter page, equating to 15.5% of all tweets this year (up almost 5% compared to last year). The most popular post topics include:
 - Tree planting
 - Electric vehicles and EV charging
 - Active travel
 - Recycling/reuse statistics
9. The total reach for all these posts was 41,785 and engagement totalled at 1,584, averaging around 19 engagements per tweet.

Note about Twitter stats – similarly to Facebook, we have found that Twitter has changed the way they push their tweets in their algorithms. We regularly link to more information but unfortunately Twitter suppresses tweets that link away from their page.

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10. Swale Means Business:

The amounts in the 'overall' boxes include other content we have posted this year such as for funding opportunities like LoCASE. The number of subscribers for the Economic Development Ebulletin is currently 2020.

	Twitter	Facebook	Total
Refill Day	70	49	119
Clean Air Day	185	-	185
Great Big Green Week	108	58	166
Plastic Free July	77	21	98
Overall Facebook reach			128
Overall Twitter reach			1472
Overall			1600

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Appendix 2 – Great Big Green Week



For the second year, funding was secured for Great Big Green Week to host a week of events demonstrating the importance of tackling the climate and ecological emergency, whilst celebrating the work of community groups supporting the local environment. £8000 was awarded by the Climate Coalition, of which £4,500 was distributed via grant applications from local community groups and organisations, with the remaining used to support events hosted by Swale Borough Council. Collaboration across the council between the Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer, Greenspaces Activities Coordinator, Active Travel Coordinator and Environmental Campaigns & Performance Officer facilitated many of the events, including the Climate Roadshow – held in Faversham, Sheerness, Queenborough and Sittingbourne.



Big Local Eastern Sheppey on a GBGW Funded Litter Pick



Councillors attending the 'Great Big Green Streets' Sustainable Transport Festival in Sittingbourne

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Business Networking Breakfast and Tour at SWEEP Electrical Recycling Facility



Bike Fix at the Faversham Repair Cafe



'Postcards from a possible future' by Swale Friends of the Earth



SBC Staff on a guided walk at Milton Creek Country Park

Appendix 3 - Tree Week 2022

This year tree week fell between 26th November and 4th December which gave us the opportunity to organise several community planting events. We hosted five separate events across Swale planting a total of 1300 trees, we were helped by various schools, colleges, businesses and community groups. The whole week was well attended and received by local residents with plenty of positive comments. We exceeded our target by 300 trees and the project was regarded as a huge success. I must give special thanks to Grace for providing the funding to make this happen and her engagement work to bring in Volunteers. Further thanks need to go to Kris, Ali and Rosie for all

their help, support and hard work during the build up to the event and throughout the week itself. We also owe thanks to Blenwood who generously donated a van and two members of staff to assist throughout the week.

Manor Road

We held the first event at Manor Road (Rushenden) where we were joined by the U3A group, students from Sheppey College and some solo volunteers. The Friendly Faces charity provided us with hot drinks and biscuits in the Rushenden community house which was appreciated by all who took part. Our aim for the day was to plant 250 trees but we exceeded this by 100 trees taking the total to 350.



Milton Creek Country Park

Tuesday saw us set up shop within MCCP where we were gapping up and creating new hedge rows and tree lines. We were joined by the friends of MCCP and a class from the Lower Halstow Primary School along with some other solo volunteers as well as local councillors Tony Winckless and Roger Truelove. Throughout the morning the pupils engaged with us and the volunteer group to learn more about trees and how to plant them. We received a visit from the mayor which was a pleasant surprise for the students. Throughout the day we planted 225 trees in total which was a huge success given the harsh soil conditions within the park.



Millfield Open Space

On Wednesday we arrived at Millfield Open Space and were joined new group of students from Sheppey College along with various solo volunteers and some employees from Jazz Pharm. Thanks to everyone's tireless efforts we were able to plant 250 trees on this site. Once completed we instructed a fencing contractor to erect a fence to help reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and help the trees grow to their full potential.



Oare Gunpowder Works

At Oare Gunpowder Works an abundance of volunteers showed up despite the harsh weather conditions, the volunteers included the local friends of group, a large group from Jazz Pharm, lots of local residents and local councillor Mike Whiting. Some local resident donated trees that they had grown from seed which helped boost the numbers within the park. The intention within the park was to create a hedgerow along the footpath to help separate visitors and wildlife, these will also provide a food source and habitats once mature. A massive thanks was given to all who helped and persevered through the rain as with their efforts we were able to plant 225 trees.



KGV Sittingbourne

We rounded up the week of at KGV Sittingbourne where the bad weather followed us, but that did not deter several volunteers from showing up and providing much needed assistance with the final push. We were again joined by a large group from Jazz Pharm, pupils from South Avenue Primary School and other solo volunteers. We worked on gapping up a grassed area to the south of the park. Despite the wet cold conditions, we were encouraged by the fact that we planted another 250 trees taking our weekly total to 1300 trees which far exceeded our target of 1000.



Council is asked to note the recommendations from the following meetings:

Minute no. 526 Policy and Resources Committee 14 December 2022 (which is the subject of Agenda item 9 on this Agenda):

(1) That Council approves the introduction of a new income banded/ grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1 April 2023 to simplify the scheme for claimants, reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit and, to improve the targeting of support for the lowest income families.

Minute no. 551 Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee 4 January 2023 (these recommendations were accepted by Full Council at its extraordinary meeting on 4 January 2023).

(1) That the Committee recommends to Council to approve the fleet funding as outlined within the exempt appendix and it is included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and capital programme.

(2) That the Committee recommends to Council that delegated authority is given to the Section 151 Officer to adjust the detailed financing of the scheme if required to maximise the value for the Council.

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