



Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford

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Dear Members

Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside Stafford on Thursday 4 December 2025 at 6.30pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Members are asked to note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "I. Curson".

Head of Law and Governance

COMMUNITY WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 DECEMBER 2025

Chair - Councillor A P Edgeller

AGENDA

1 Minutes of 24 September 2025 as previously published on the Council's website.

2 Apologies

3 Public Question Time - Nil

4 Councillor Session - Nil

5 Members' Items -

ITEM NO 5(a) **Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
(verbal update)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR A ORLANDI-FANTINI

ITEM NO 5(b) **Update from the Task and Finish Group (Food Waste Collections)** (verbal update)

COUNCILLOR M PHILLIPS

6 Called-In Items - Nil

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7 Officers' Reports

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ITEM NO 7(b) **Freedom Leisure Annual Report 2024-25** 34 - 61

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ITEM NO 7(c) **Quarter 2 Performance Update** 62 - 72

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ITEM NO 7(d) **Work Programme** 73 - 76

HEAD OF WELLBEING

Membership

Chair - Councillor A P Edgeller

A P Edgeller
A D Hobbs
E G R Jones
P A Leason
B McKeown

D M McNaughton
L Nixon
M Phillips
J T Rose
J Thorley



Veolia Stafford Annual Report and Service Improvement Plan 2024/25

Date: 30th April 2025

Version: 1.0

Due for Review: N/A

Purpose of the Document

This document has been prepared with reference to Paragraph 2.36 of 'Part One: General Requirements', Paragraph 1.35 of 'Part Two: Service Requirement - Waste and Recycling Collection Services' and 1.16 of 'Part Three: Service Requirement - Processing of Dry Recycling and Other Recyclables' of 'Schedule A Service Specification - Part 1: Technical Specification' of the 'Call-Off Contract for Waste & Recycling Collection Service & Processing of Dry Recycling' ('the Contract') between Veolia ES (UK) Ltd ('Veolia') and Stafford Borough Council ('SBC').

This seventh Veolia Stafford Annual Report and Annual Service Improvement Plan ('Annual Report') covers the year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

This report is broken down into the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Charges Summary
- Resources
- Health and Safety Summary
- Collection Operations Summary
- Waste Transfer Station Operations Summary
- Action Plans
- Annual Performance 2023/24
- Annual Service Improvement Plan 2024/25

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Appendices

1. Executive Summary

The seventh full Contract year (April 2024 to March 2025) saw the partnership between Stafford Borough Council ('SBC') and Veolia achieve several successes and overcome challenges to the Services:

Veolia Stafford achieved record-breaking charity collection performance during the seventh contract year (2024/25), representing the most successful charitable contributions since the contract began:

- Easter Egg Collection: Collected over 1,000 Easter eggs, which were distributed among three local charities:
 - A Child of Mine
 - Hearts and Hands
 - Rising Brook Foodbank
- Christmas Foodbank Collections: Over £4,000 worth of food and goods donations were collected and split between two local charities:
 - Hearts and Hands
 - Rising Brook Foodbank
- Christmas Tree Recycling for Katherine House Hospice: Raised over £13,000 for Katherine House Hospice, Stafford, through the collection and recycling of real Christmas trees

These milestones represent the best year for charity collections since the start of the contract, demonstrating Veolia Stafford's strong commitment to community engagement and support for local charitable organisations serving vulnerable populations in the Stafford Borough area. The combined charitable impact exceeded £17,000 in monetary value, plus over 1,000 Easter eggs donated to families and individuals in need.

- Absence Rates: Average absence rate improved significantly to 3.72% in 2024/25, down from 6.22% in 2023/24, representing a 40% reduction
- Health and Safety: Zero RIDDOR incidents reported throughout the year, with 5 accidents, 18 incidents, and 152 near misses recorded. The increase in near-miss reporting (152 vs previous years) reflects improved safety culture driven by the StreetKind program and Health & Safety Committee meetings
- Missed Collections - SLA Performance: 93% of missed collections were resolved within the Service Level Agreement, the best performance since contract inception
- Staff Development: Significant training investments, including Operations Manager John Higginson starting Certificate of Professional Competence in Transport Management, and Acting Chargehands completing Level 2 Team Leader courses
- Fleet Investment: New narrow access recycling vehicle (PN73GHU) added, bringing total narrow access vehicles to three for improved operational resilience
- Environmental Compliance: No Environment Agency visits in 2024/25 (annual visit scheduled August 2025), zero litter complaints received, maintaining full compliance with environmental standards
- Missed Collections: Reported missed collections decreased by 6.57% from 1,674 in 2023/24 to 1,564 in 2024/25, achieving a 99.96% first-time collection success rate
- Waste Transfer Station: Processed 11,579.13 tonnes of recyclable waste (1.38% increase from 2023/24), with an output recycling rate of 45.42% compared to 47.60% the previous year

- Leadership Changes: Former Operations Manager Dave Kitchen left the company; John Higginson assumed the Operations Manager role via secondment in October 2024 with a team restructure
- Total Waste Collected: 50,349 tonnes collected, representing a marginal 0.11% decrease from 50,406 tonnes in 2023/24
- Annual Charges: Total contract charges ranged from £361,616.38 to £413,557.35 per month (excluding VAT) across the reporting period
- Recycling Rate: Collection-based recycling rate was 45.50%, a 0.92% decrease from 47.43% in 2023/24, primarily due to a 4.78% decrease in garden waste volumes
- Containers Not Returned Correctly: Complaints increased by 11% from 121 in 2023/24 to 136 in 2024/25. A new investigation process was introduced, requiring disciplinary action for operatives failing to return containers twice in a calendar year
- Missed Assisted Collections: Increased by 28.64% from 194 to 206, partly due to a new system for marking garden waste subscriptions with assisted flags

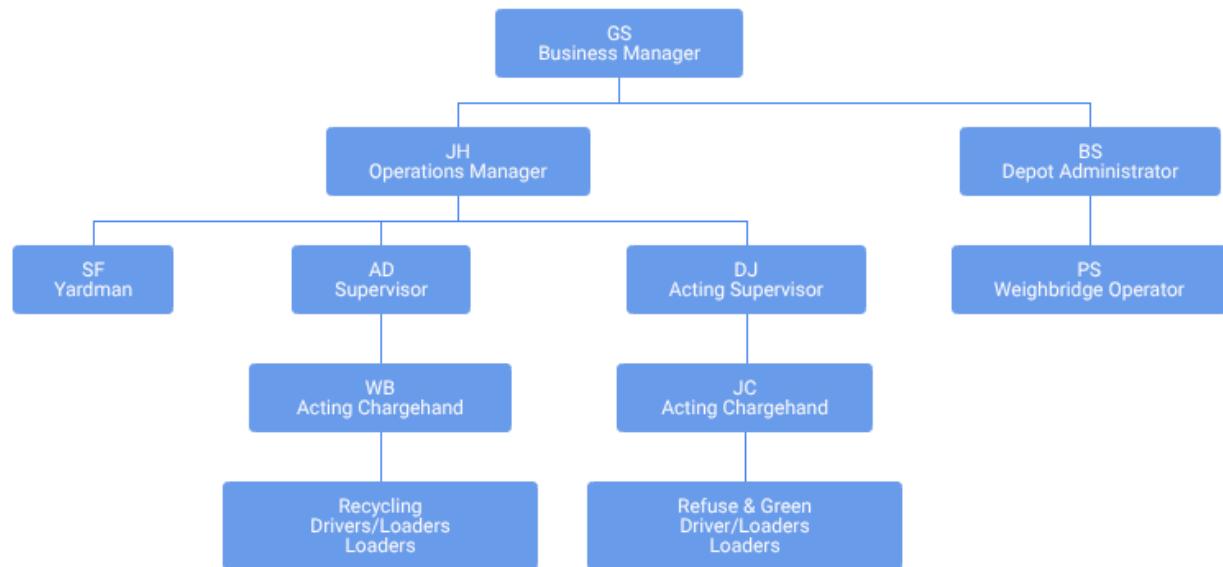
2. Charges Summary

The following table summarises all charges made by Veolia to SBC relating to the services provided under the Contract. Each monthly report acts as 'backing data' for the invoice that includes the reporting month's Core charge and the previous month's Variable charge.

Reporting Period Charges	Value (Ex-VAT)
April 2024 Core Mar Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
May 2024 Core Apr Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
June 2024 Core May Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
July 2024 Core Jun Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
August 2024 Core Jul Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
September 2024 Core Aug Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
October 2024 Core Sep Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
November 2024 Core Oct Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
December 2024 Core Nov Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
January 2025 Core Dec Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
February 2025 Core Jan Var	£xxx,xxx.xx
March 2025 Core Feb Var	£xxx,xxx.xx

3. Resources

The structure as of March 2025 is as follows. Former Operations Manager Dave Kitchen has left the company, and John Higginson has taken up a Secondment as the Operations Manager in October 2024. The team was restructured to report directly to John.



We continued to invest in staff training and development throughout 2024/25, as can be seen below. Training of particular note includes [REDACTED], starting his Certificate of Professional Competence in Transport Management, jointly developed by Logistics UK, and Acting Chargehands [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], completing their Level 2 Team Leader course in 2025. This investment adds value to the contract, strengthens operational delivery, and improves staff retention.

The core hours of work for each role are provided in the table below. Note these are not necessarily contractually mandated working hours in all cases and are provided for reference only.

Role	Core Hours
Business Manager	08:30 - 17:00
Operations Manager	08:30 - 17:00
Supervisor x 2	08:30 - 17:00
Depot Administrator	08:30 - 16:00
Acting Chargehand	06:30 - 14:30
Driver / Loader	06:30 - 15:00
Loader	06:45 - 15:00

The responsibilities allocated to each role are documented in the table below. Please note that these responsibilities are shown for reference only and do not necessarily reflect all of the duties listed in contracts of employment.

There have been no fundamental changes to responsibilities since the previous annual report, with the following exceptions.

- The Contract Performance Manager role was replaced by the Operations Manager in 2024. John has responsibility for all operations staff. All responsibility for contractual matters and all reporting has been handed over to Business Manager Graeme Smith.

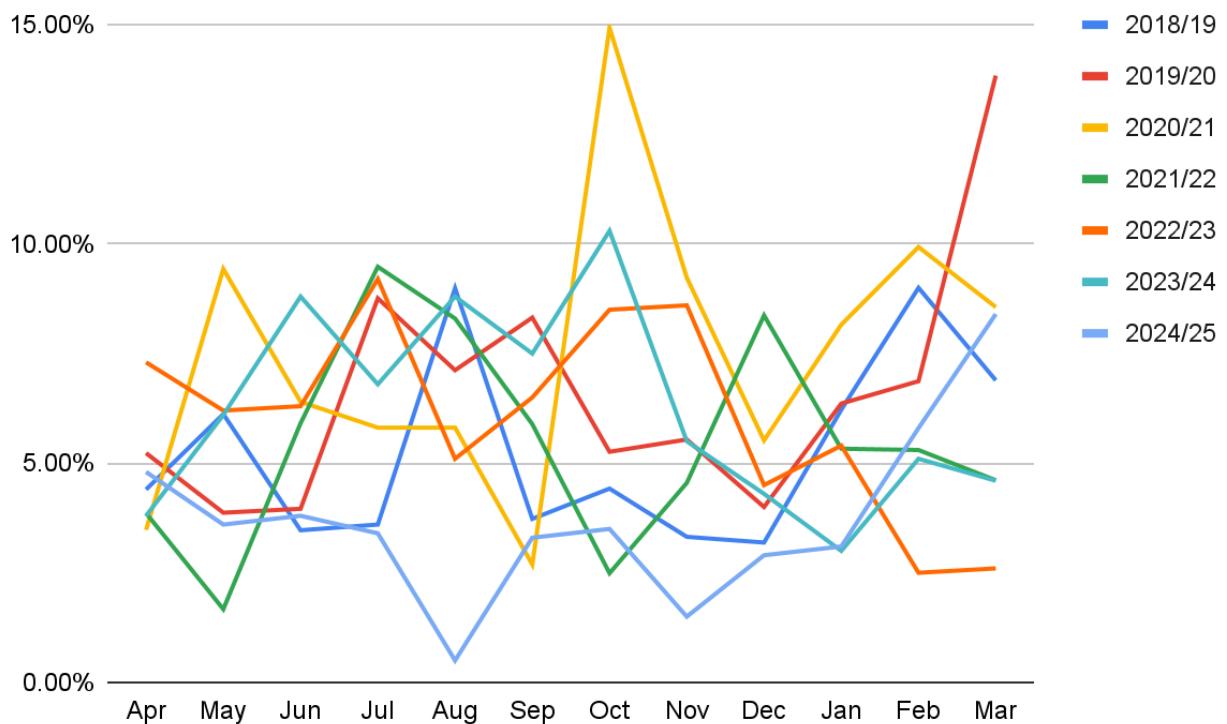
Role	Responsibilities
Business Manager [REDACTED]	Responsible for all aspects of service provision, legal compliance, including health and safety and environmental statutes, and financial and transport management. Responsible for all aspects of Contract compliance, data analysis to identify opportunities for improvement and client reporting.
Operations Manager [REDACTED]	Responsible for service delivery. All operations staff report to this role. This position is jointly responsible for transport management compliance as TM2. Reports directly to the Business Manager.
Supervisor [REDACTED]	Service management, including resource allocation. Also responsible for vehicle compliance, investigations, and supervision of crews. Reports to the Senior Supervisor. Responsible for delivering training to all depot staff in line with programmes and reactive training following incidents (within Veolia or elsewhere).
Depot Administrator [REDACTED]	The role includes payroll input, purchasing, and invoicing. Bev is also the depot's Mental Health First Aider.
Acting Chargehand [REDACTED]	Distributing keys, folders, and documents at the start of the day. Assisting with the timely dispatch of crews to begin collections at 0700 hours each working day. Monitoring of service throughout the day to ensure completion of tasks within the Contract's Service Level Agreements (SLAs), escalating issues to the Supervisor and Senior Supervisor where required. Completing driver/loader debriefs at the end of the day.
Acting Chargehand [REDACTED]	Distributing keys, folders, and documents at the start of the day. Assisting with the timely dispatch of crews to begin collections at 0700 hours each working day. Monitoring of service throughout the day to ensure completion of tasks within the Contract's Service Level Agreements (SLAs), escalating issues to the Supervisor and Senior Supervisor where required. Completing driver/loader debriefs at the end of the day.
Acting Yardman [REDACTED]	Responsible for arranging haulage and loading of recyclable materials to ensure compliance with the Environmental Permit and relevant Waste Exemptions, and for the general upkeep of the yard.
Driver / Loader	Driving refuse and/or recycling collection vehicles (RCVs) per relevant licences and regulations, in addition to the collection of waste.
Loader	The collection of waste follows relevant regulations, Contractual standards, and training instructions.

Generally, there have been few staff issues throughout the seventh full year of operations.

Absence Rates

The following chart shows absence rates by month in 2024/25 for all Contract Years in the format required in the Specification. The ensuing chart shows this data annualised for ease of reference.

The average absence rate was 3.72% in 2024/25 compared to 6.22% in 2023/24, 6.06% in 2022/23, 5.48% in 2021/22, 7.50% in 2020/21, 6.59% in 2019/20, and 5.28% in 2018/19. Short-term sickness improved from 3.3% in 2022/23 to 3.0% in 2023/24. Long-term sickness increased from 2.8% to 3.0%.



Vehicles and Plant

The following table shows the vehicles employed on the contract in March 2024:

Vehicle Type	Count	Utilisation*
26-tonne RCV	14	100%
26-tonne '70:30 split' RCV	8	100%
12-tonne Narrow Access RCV	3	100%
12-tonne Cage Vehicle	1	100%
JCB Telescopic Material Handler	1	100%
Ford Ranger (Supervisor Van)	1	-
Vauxhall Van (Supervisor Van)	1	-
Total	28	100%

*Utilisation is taken to mean the capacity of the vehicle used. All vehicles are filled to capacity at least once per day so utilisation is given as 100%. The JCB Telescopic Material Handler is used daily.

The following table shows the vehicles employed on the contract in March 2024:

Vehicle Type	Count	Utilisation*
26-tonne RCV	14	100%
26-tonne '70:30 split' RCV	8	100%
12-tonne Narrow Access RCV	1	100%
12-tonne Narrow Access split-body RCV	3	100%
12-tonne Cage Tipper Vehicle	1	100%
JCB Telescopic Material Handler	1	100%
Peugeot Van (Supervisor Van - Replacement Van)	1	-
Peugeot Van (Supervisor Van - Replacement Van)	1	-
Ford Transit (Supervisor Van)	1	-
Total	31	100%

4. Health and Safety Summary

Veolia's health and safety performance in 2024/25 is summarised in the table below.

2024/25	Incidents	Accidents	RIDDOR	Near Misses
Apr	6	2	0	8
May	1	1	0	9
Jun	0	0	0	12
Jul	0	0	0	9
Aug	2	1	0	12
Sep	3	1	0	11
Oct	5	0	0	9
Nov	1	0	0	13
Dec	0	0	0	11
Jan	0	0	0	25
Feb	0	0	0	12
Mar	0	0	0	21
YTD Total	18	5	0	152

For reference, a 'Near Miss' is defined by the Health and Safety Executive ('HSE') as 'an event not causing harm, but has the potential to cause injury or ill health'. Veolia encourages all staff to report Near Misses for investigation, action, and feedback to address potential issues before an accident occurs, facilitating a proactive safety culture.

During the review period, five accidents resulting in personal injuries were reported between April and September 2024. The incidents included two slip, trip and fall accidents caused by uneven ground and raised kerbs from tree roots, one manual handling injury where a loader sustained a sharp stabbing pain to the palm when handling waste bags, one incident where a falling hammer struck an employee's head while returning equipment at the HWRC, and one alleged accident by an agency loader with unconfirmed details regarding time, location, and circumstances. These accidents highlight ongoing risks related to ground conditions, manual handling practices, and housekeeping standards that require continued attention and preventative measures.

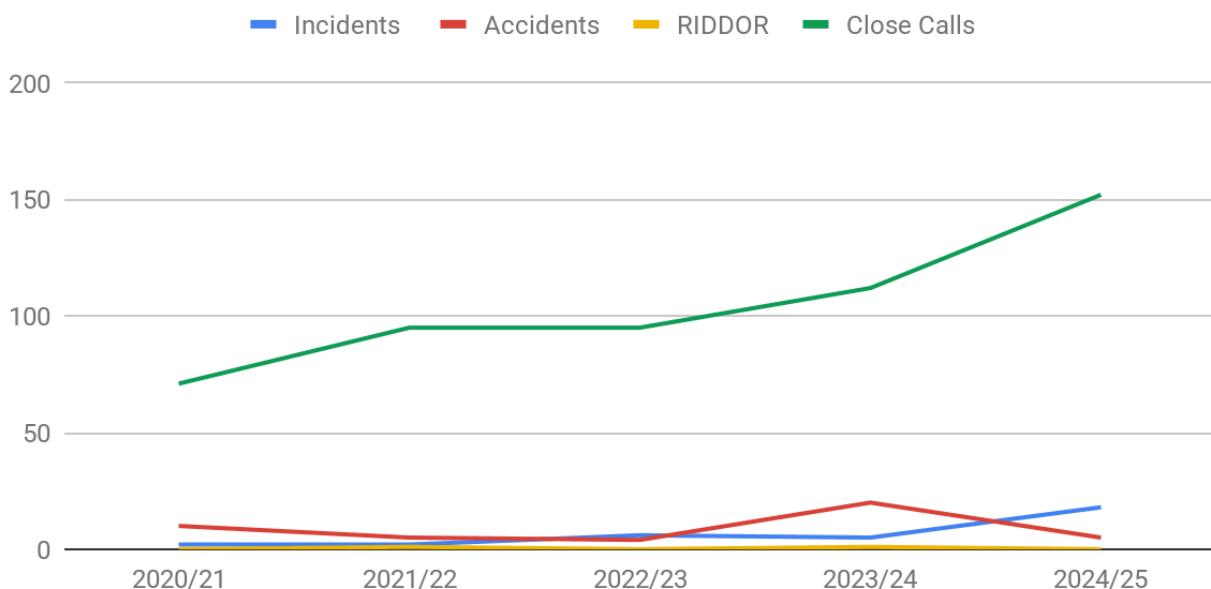
During 2024/25, a total of 152 close calls, 15 incidents, and 5 accidents were reported across waste collection operations. The most prevalent safety concerns included third-party vehicles mounting pavements and kerbs to pass collection vehicles (occurring in approximately 25% of reports), this was in response to the StreetKind campaign rolled out the previous year (Feb 24), overgrown hedges and trees restricting visibility and access (reported in over 30 locations), and contaminated waste presenting health hazards to loaders. Vehicle defects and maintenance issues were recurring problems, particularly with trucks requiring frequent resets and safety equipment needing replacement. Site safety concerns at the depot included inadequate signage, pedestrians not using designated walkways, contractors failing to wear hi-viz equipment, and infrastructure issues such as potholes and damaged flooring. Manual handling risks were identified at multiple properties with difficult access, steep steps, and improperly maintained bin stores. Additional hazards included aggressive driver behaviour, blocked access points requiring dangerous reversing manoeuvres, rats at collection sites, and unsafe waste presentation, including syringes and broken glass.

Veolia Stafford is committed to Health and Safety compliance. As a result of this, Veolia Stafford continued the Health and Safety Committee, started in September 2021, to bring together Trade Union representatives

and other members of the workforce with the depot Supervisory and Management teams, along with relevant experts from across Veolia (including Risk & Assurance, and Supply Chain) to raise issues and agree on solutions through open conversation and honest dialogue. This has resulted in the number of 'near misses' raised by the workforce increasing and improvements in staff engagement, with several prominent issues identified and resolved.

Veolia's health & safety performance over 5 years is summarised in the graph below.

Incidents , Accidents, RIDDOR and Close Calls over a 5 Year Period



2024/25 has continued to see an increase in close call reports from previous years; this has been driven by the rollout of the StreetKind program. In addition to this, the ongoing conversations during Health & Safety Committee meetings, we have improved the reporting culture within the depot. This has increased the reporting of close calls and incidents, which in turn has reduced the number of accidents.

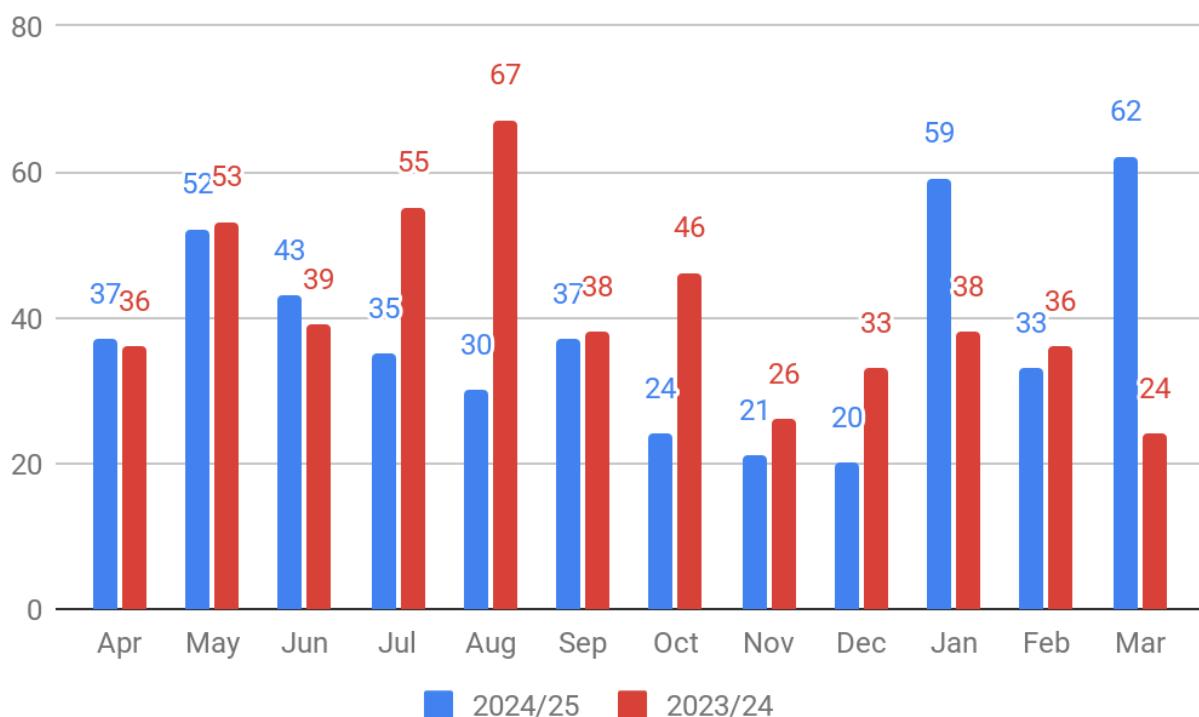
Investment in the fleet continued in 2023/24 with a new Narrow Access recycling RCV, PN73GHU. This brings the total number of Narrow Access vehicles to three, providing greater operational resilience when Narrow Access vehicle issues arise.

5. Collection Operations Summary

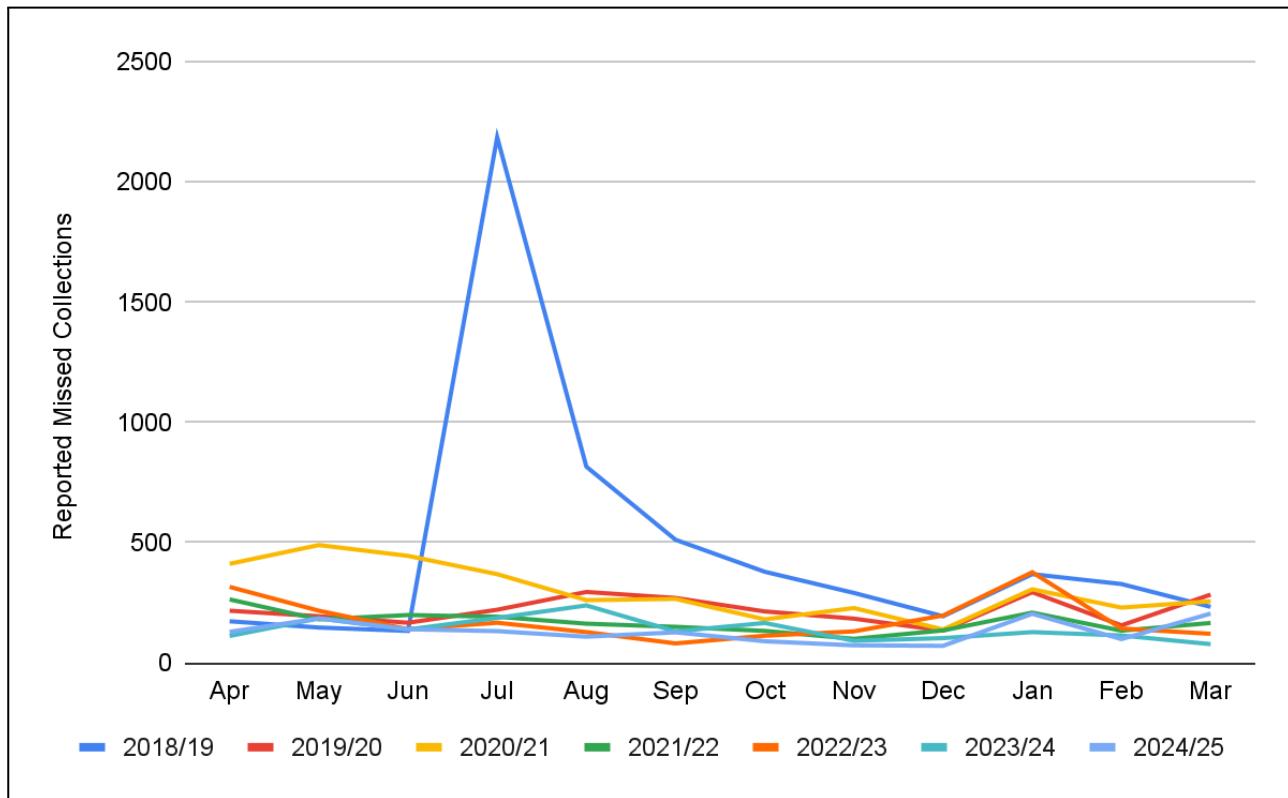
Missed Collections

The number of reported missed collections decreased by 6.57% in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. Reported missed collections decreased from 1,674 in 2023/24 to 1,564 in 2024/25. This equates to a 'strike rate' of 99.96% of collections successfully completed first time.

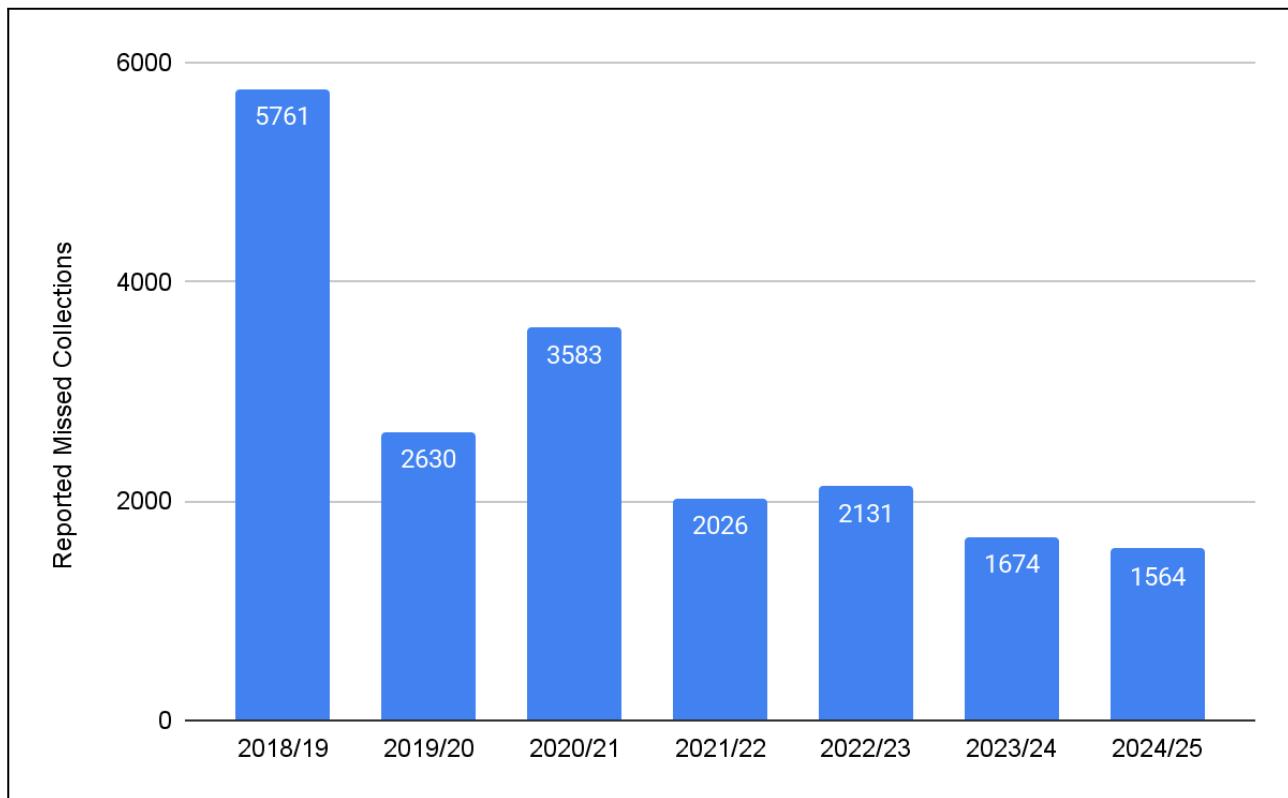
Despite this significant improvement, missed collection performance has consistently fallen below the expected standards, breaching 'Band 3' performance levels in all quarters of 2024/25. We are determined to improve performance through the implementation of the action plans outlined later in this report, in partnership with SBC. The Performance Indicators for the waste and recyclables collections element of the contract are detailed below, beginning with the reported missed collections. The following chart shows reported missed collections in 2024/25 vs. 2023/24.



The following chart shows the number of reported missed collections year-on-year from 2018/19 to 2024/25 in the format required in the Specification. It is noted that, with the increasing volume of data, the format requested in the Specification may need to be adjusted. On this basis, aggregated charts are also provided where possible for ease of reference.

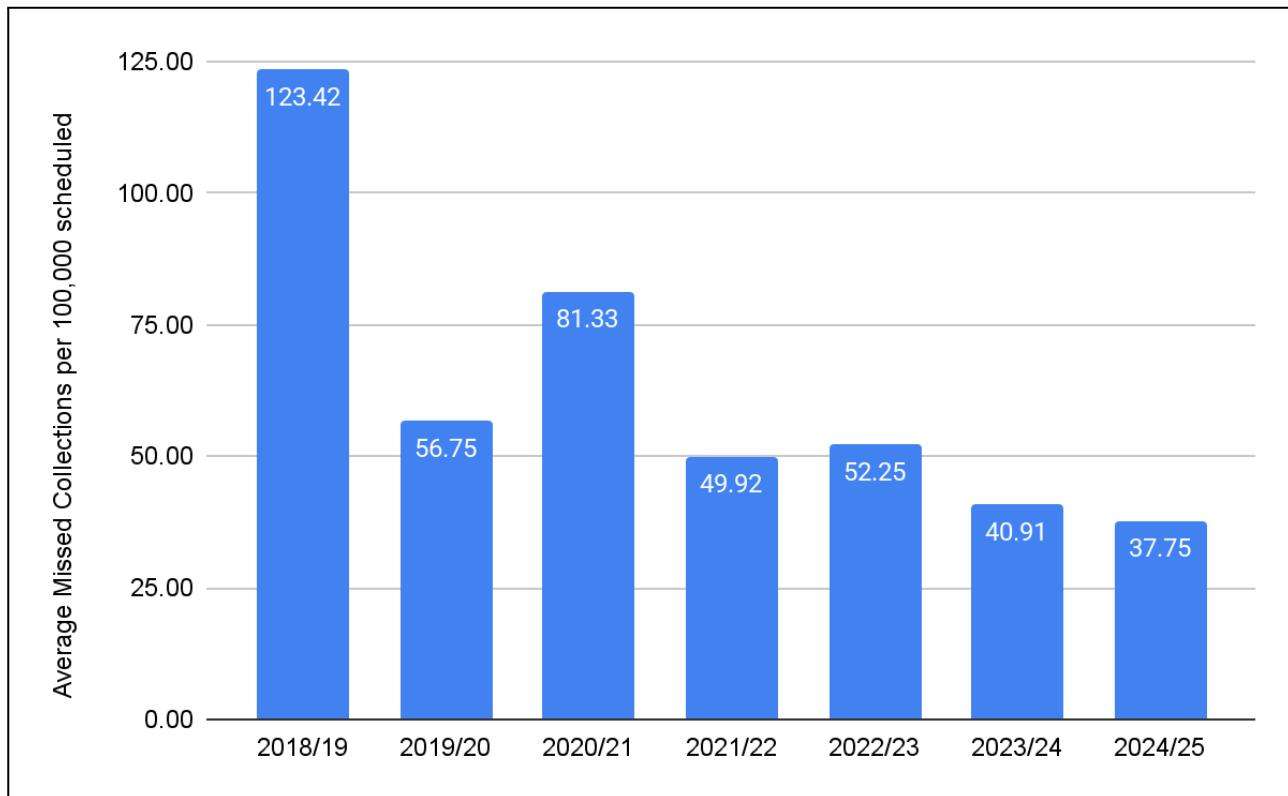
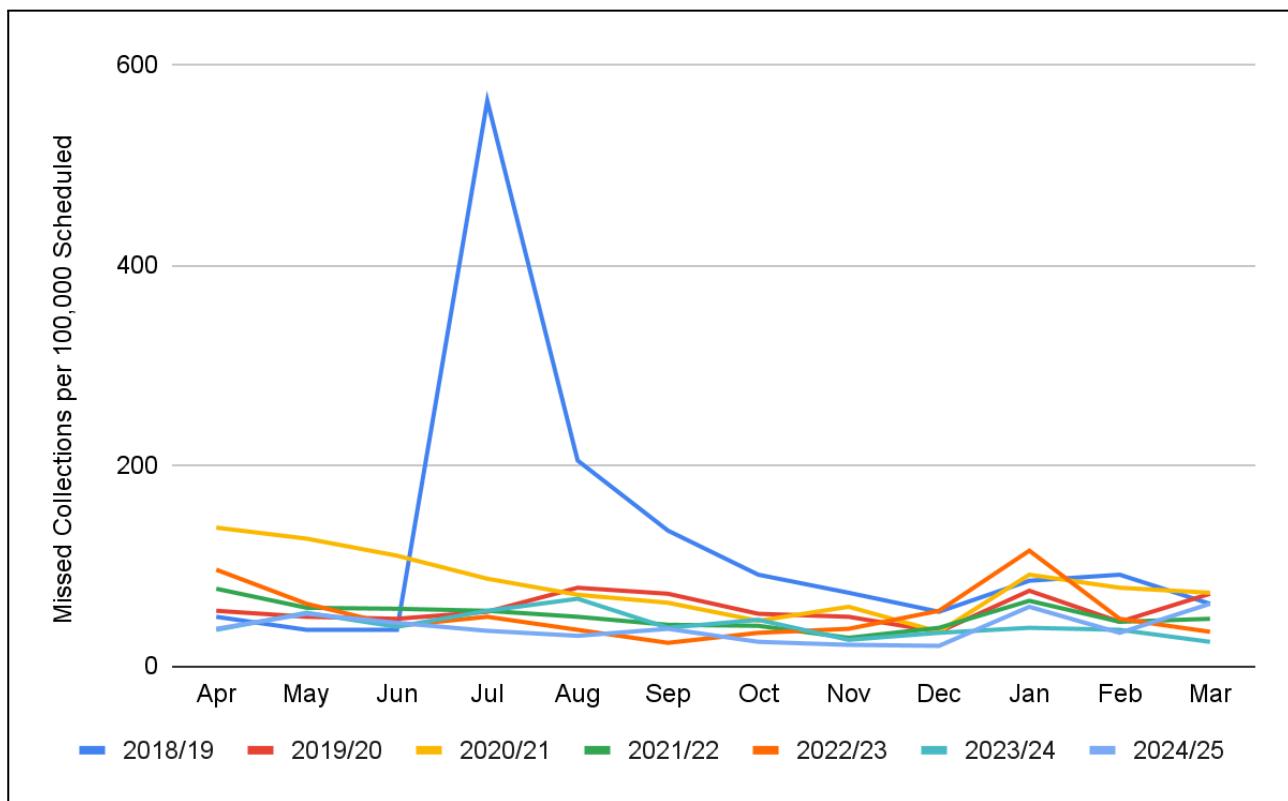


The following chart shows this information on an annualised basis for ease of reference.



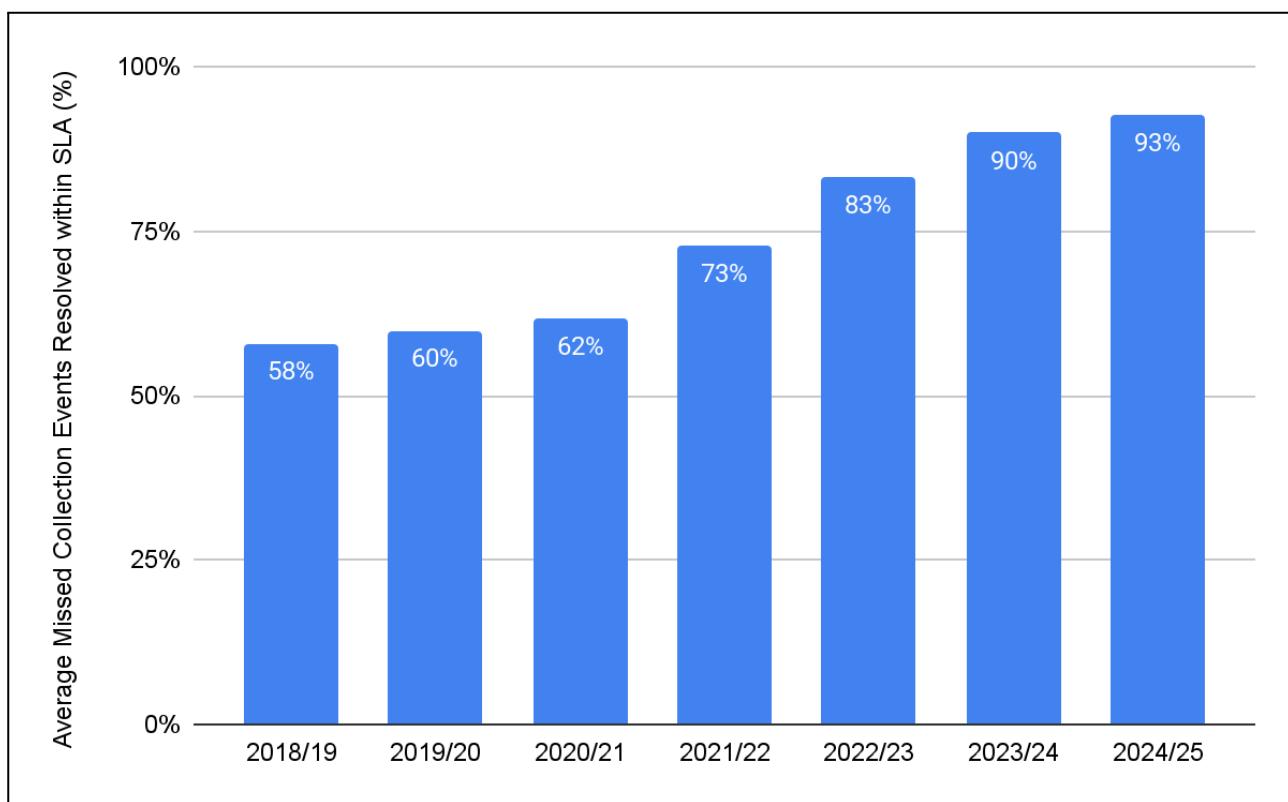
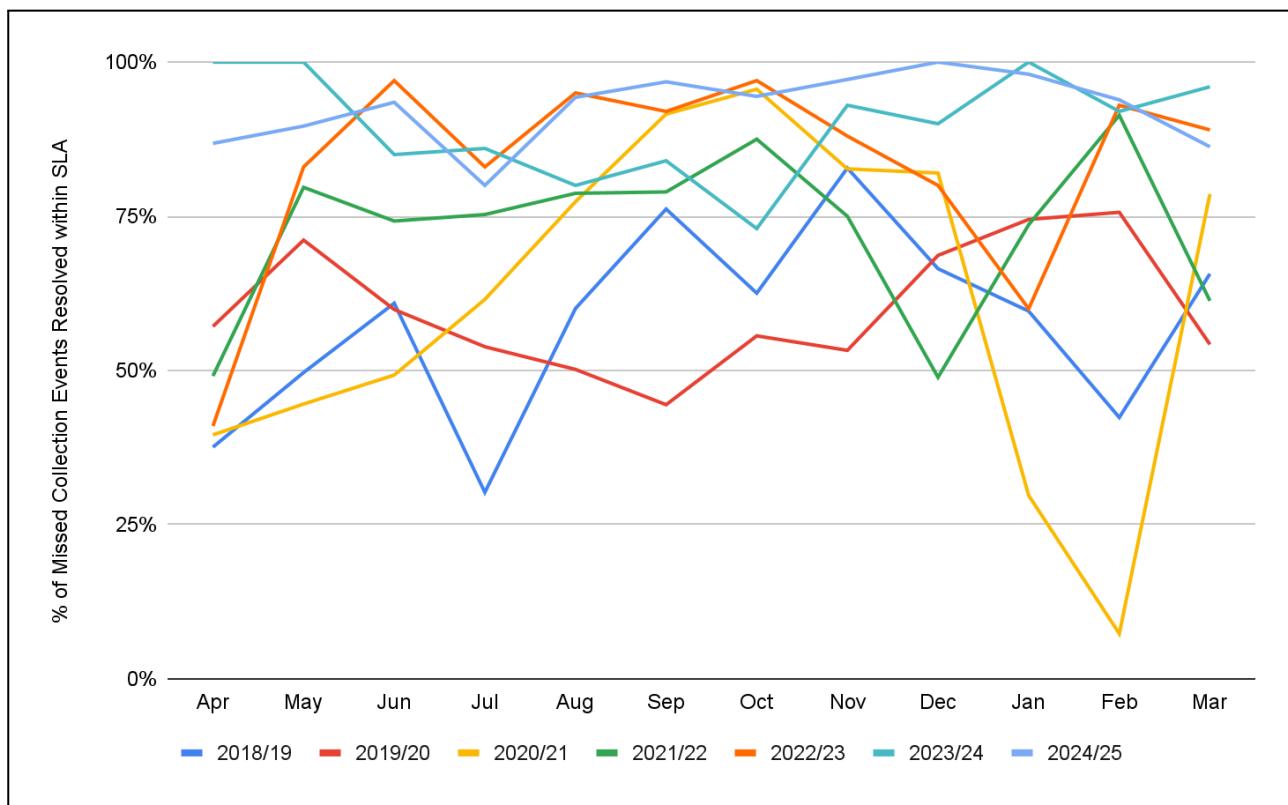
Veolia Stafford Annual Service Improvement Plan - 2024/25

The following chart shows missed collections per 100,000 scheduled collections from 2018/19 to 2024/25. The average 'missed collections per 100,000 scheduled' value decreased from 40.92 in 2023/24 to 37.75 in 2024/25, as shown in the ensuing 'aggregated' chart below.



Veolia Stafford Annual Service Improvement Plan - 2024/25

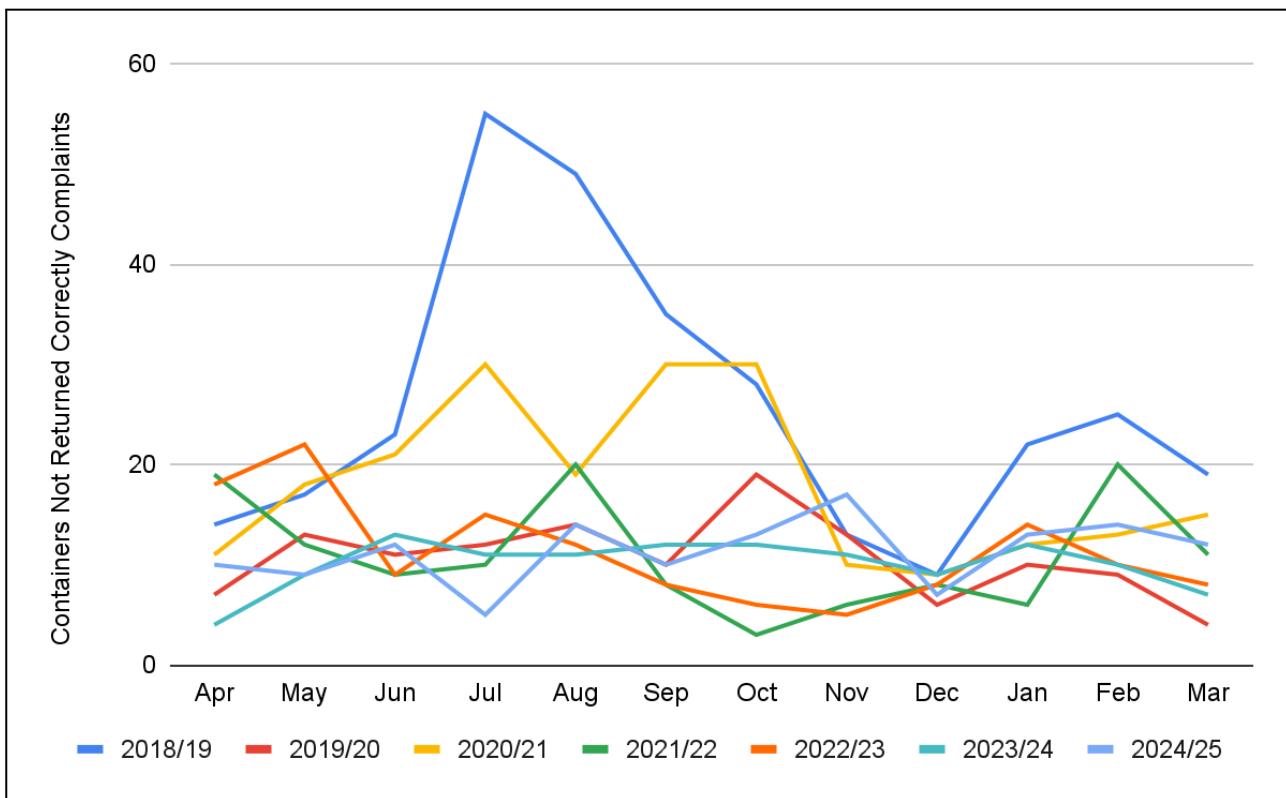
The Operations team has focused on resolving more missed collections within the Contract's Service Level Agreement ('SLA') during 2024/25. The following chart shows a comparison year-on-year from 2018/19 to 2024/25. 2024/25 represents the most successful year for achieving the missed collections SLA at an average of 93% of reported events resolved within SLA.



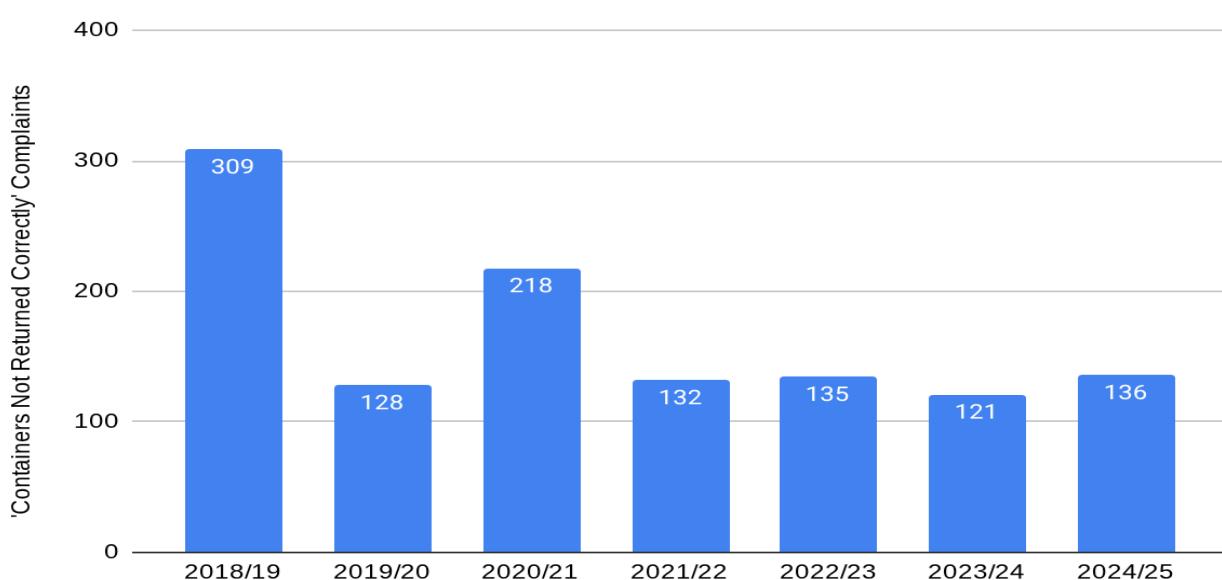
Containers Not Returned Correctly

There were 136 reported complaints about containers not being returned correctly in 2024/25, compared to 121 in 2022/23. This represents an 11% increase. Details of the initiatives undertaken to reduce the number of 'containers not returned correctly' complaints are included in the 'Action Plans' section of this report. The following chart shows the comparison year-on-year from 2018/19 through to 2024/25.

Further to the action plans, Veolia Stafford has introduced a new initiative in which each 'Container Not Returned' reported is now investigated, and following any operative failing to return the container to the collection point twice in a calendar year, they may face disciplinary action.

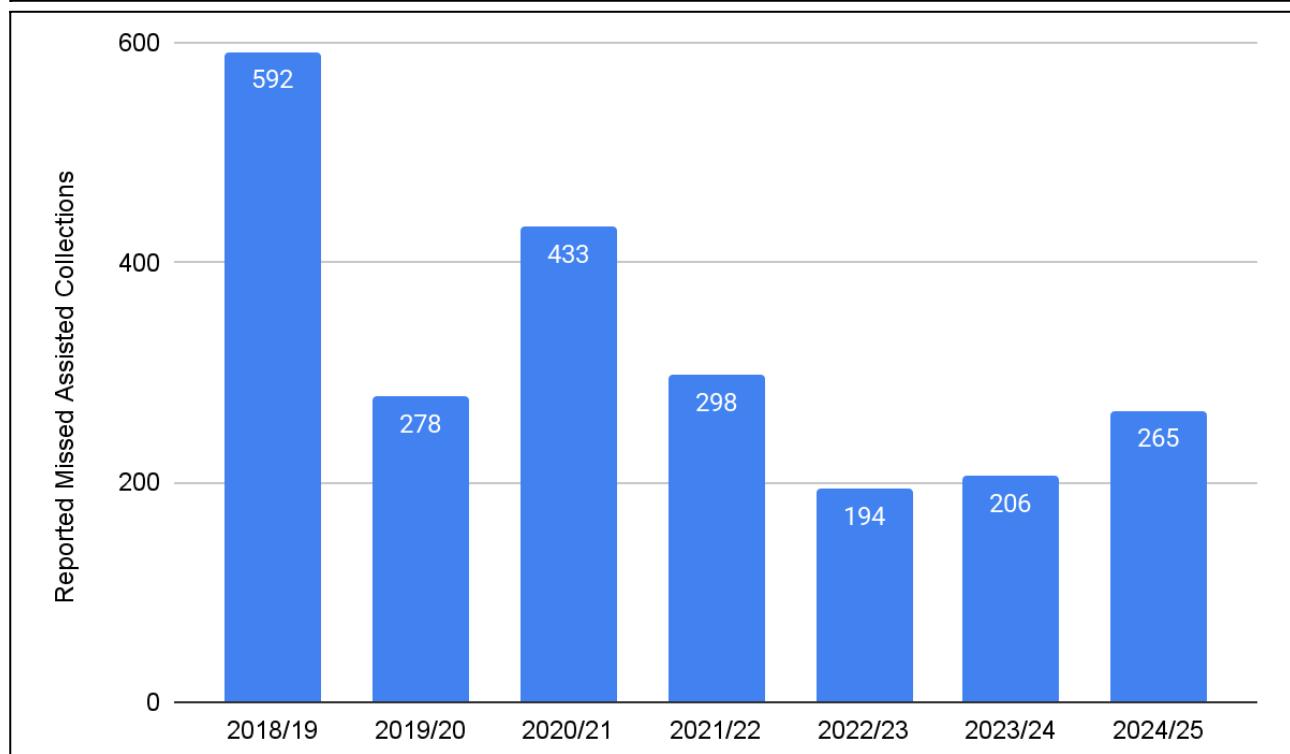
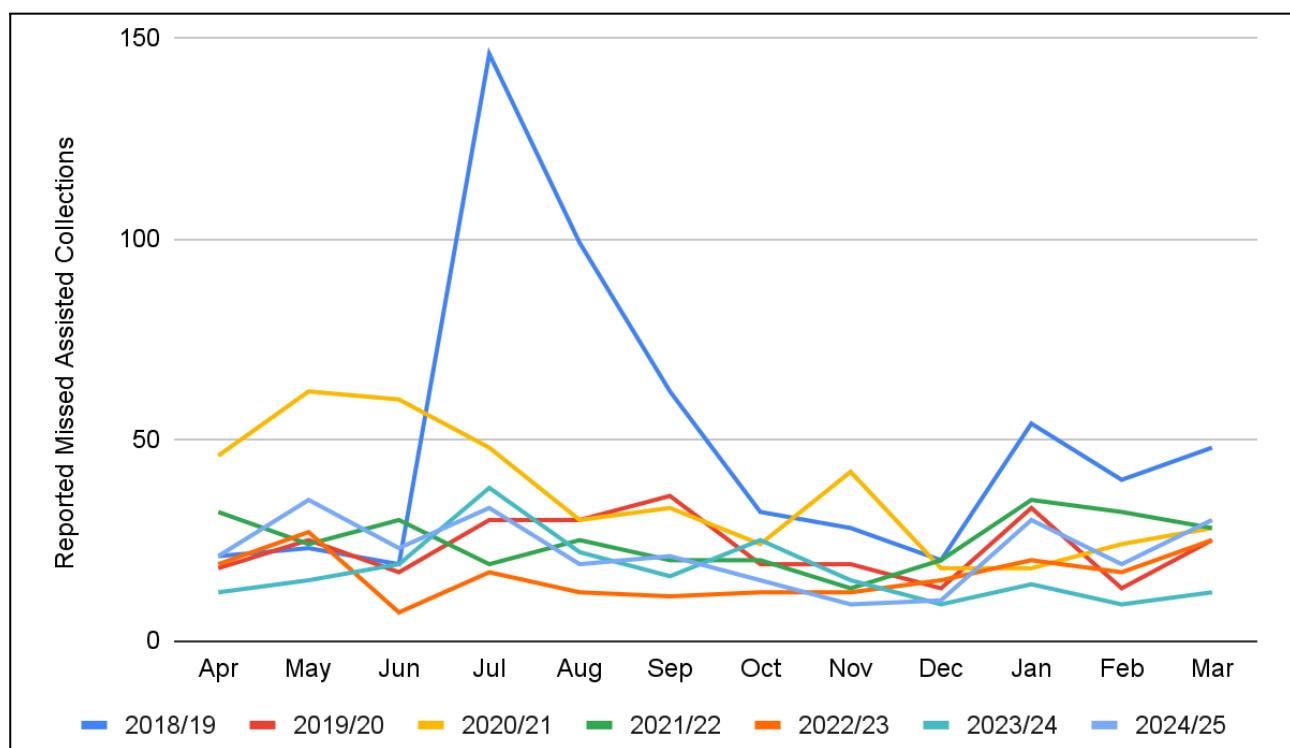


The following chart shows the aggregated number of such complaints per annum since the contract started.



Missed Assisted Collections

The following chart shows the number of missed assisted collections compared to previous Contract years. 2024/25 saw a 28.64% increase in missed assisted collections compared to 2023/24 (from 194 reported missed assisted collections to 206). This is in part due to a new system introduced to the marking of new Garden Waste Subscriptions. To ensure the collection crew are aware of the new subscription to the garden waste service, an assisted flag was put on the property. This increased missed assisted collections.

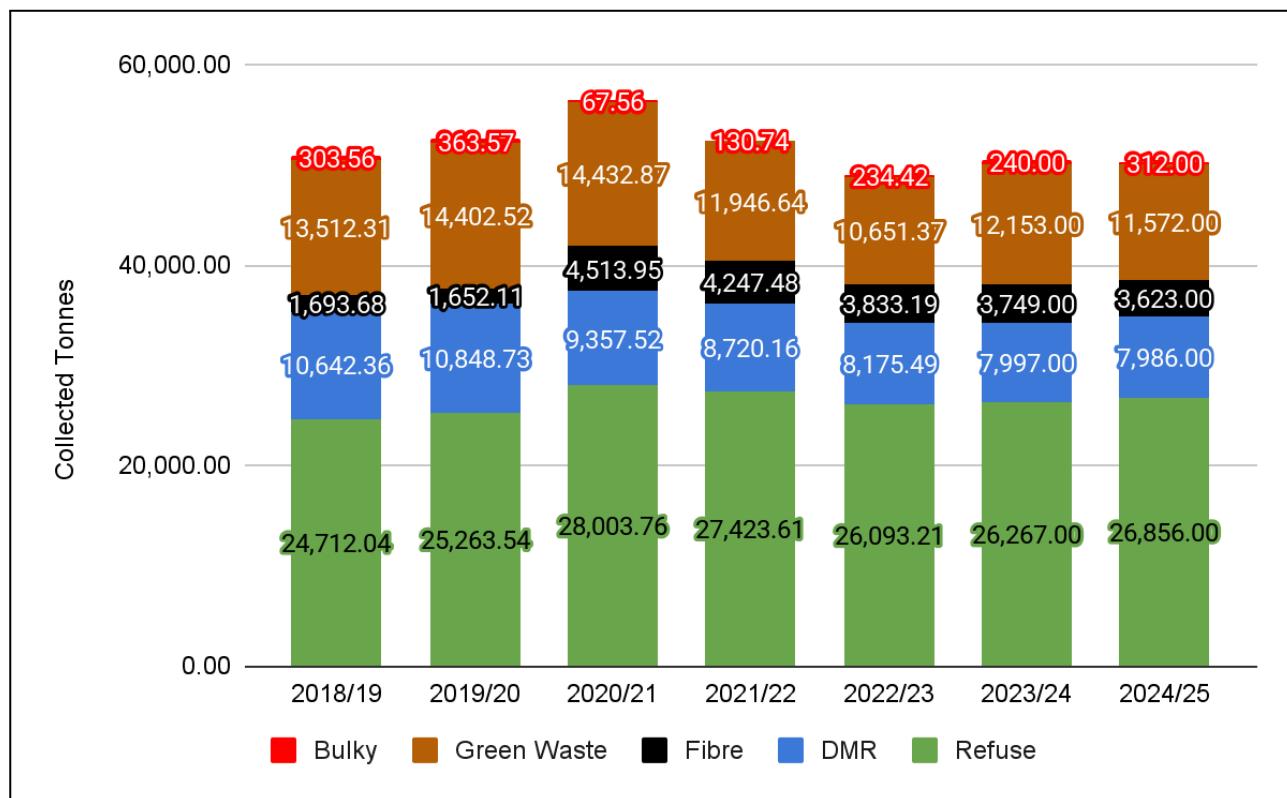


Collected Weights

Overall, Veolia collected 50,349.00 tonnes of recyclable materials and waste from Stafford Borough properties between April 2024 and March 2025. This compares to 50,406.00 tonnes in the previous year, representing a 0.11% decrease.

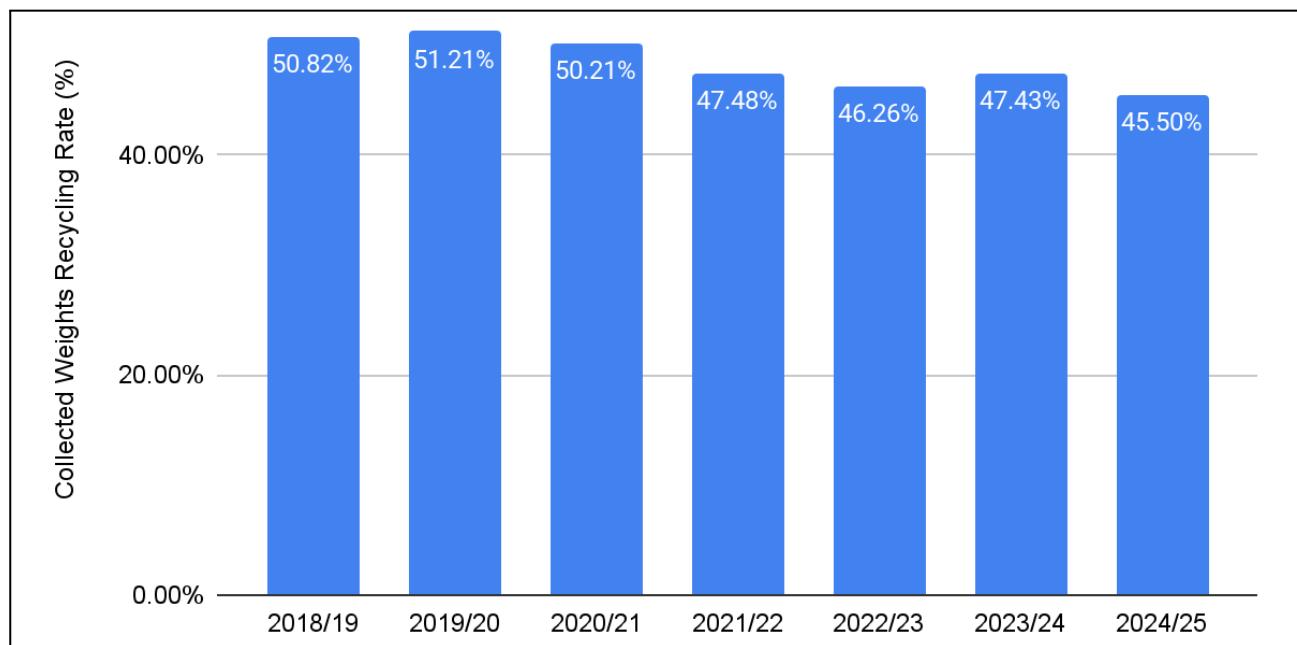
	Refuse	DMR	Fibre	Green Waste	Bulky	Total
2018/19	24,712.04	10,642.36	1,693.68	13,512.31	303.56	50,863.95
% Change	2.23%	1.94%	-2.45%	6.59%	19.77%	3.28%
2019/20	25,263.54	10,848.73	1,652.11	14,402.52	363.57	52,530.47
% Change	10.85%	-13.75%	173.22%	0.21%	-81.42%	7.32%
2020/21	28,003.76	9,357.52	4,513.95	14,432.87	67.56	56,375.66
% Change	-2.07%	-6.81%	-5.90%	-17.23%	93.52%	-6.93%
2021/22	27,423.61	8,720.16	4,247.48	11,946.64	130.74	52,468.63
% Change	-4.85%	-6.25%	-9.75%	-10.84%	79.30%	-6.63%
2022/23	26,093.21	8,175.49	3,833.19	10,651.37	234.42	48,987.68
% Change	0.67%	-2.18%	-2.20%	14.10%	2.38%	2.90%
2023/24	26,267.00	7,997.00	3,749.00	12,153.00	240.00	50,406.00
% Change	2.24%	-0.14%	-3.36%	-4.78%	30.00%	-0.11%
2024/25	26,856.00	7,986.00	3,623.00	11,572.00	312.00	50,349.00

The following chart shows the collected weights from 2018/19 to 2023/24 for reference.



Collected Weights Recycling Rate

The recycling rate based on collected weights over this period was 45.50%, a 0.92% decrease from the 47.43% rate recorded in 2023/24. The decrease is mainly due to the 4.78% decrease in garden waste collected.

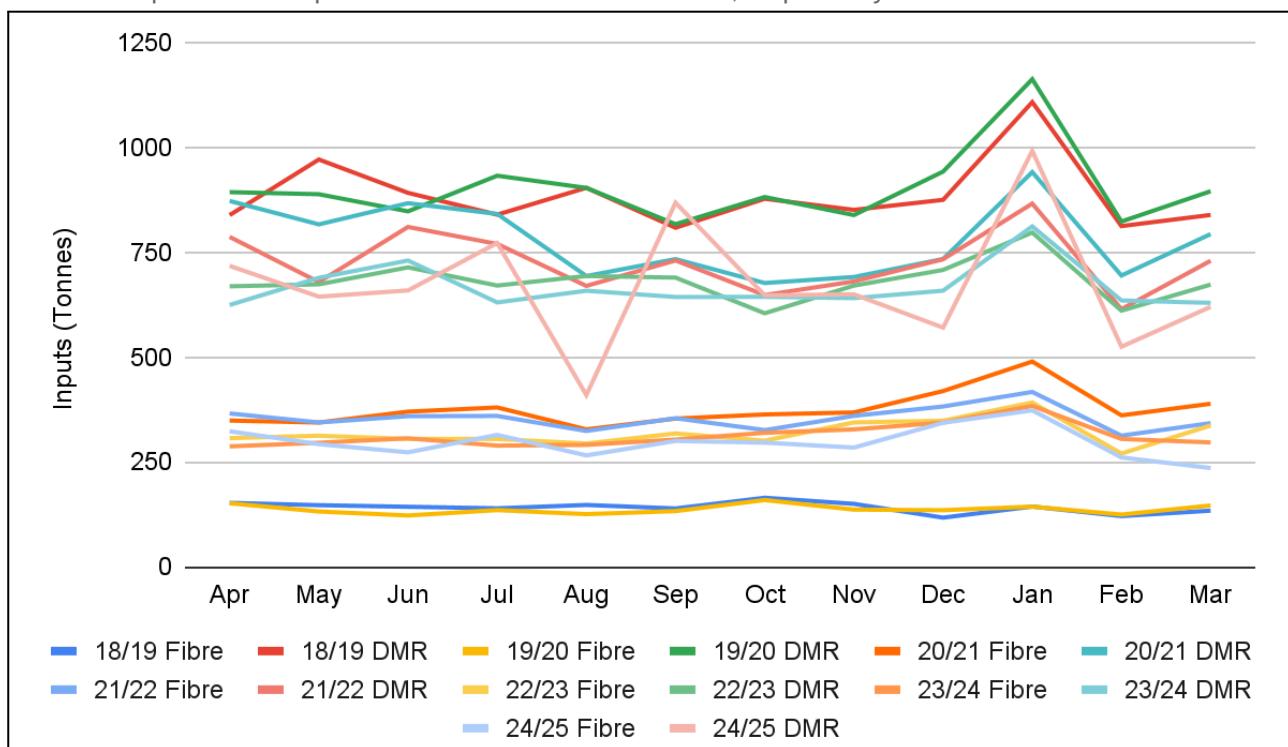


6. Waste Transfer Station Operations Summary

Waste Inputs

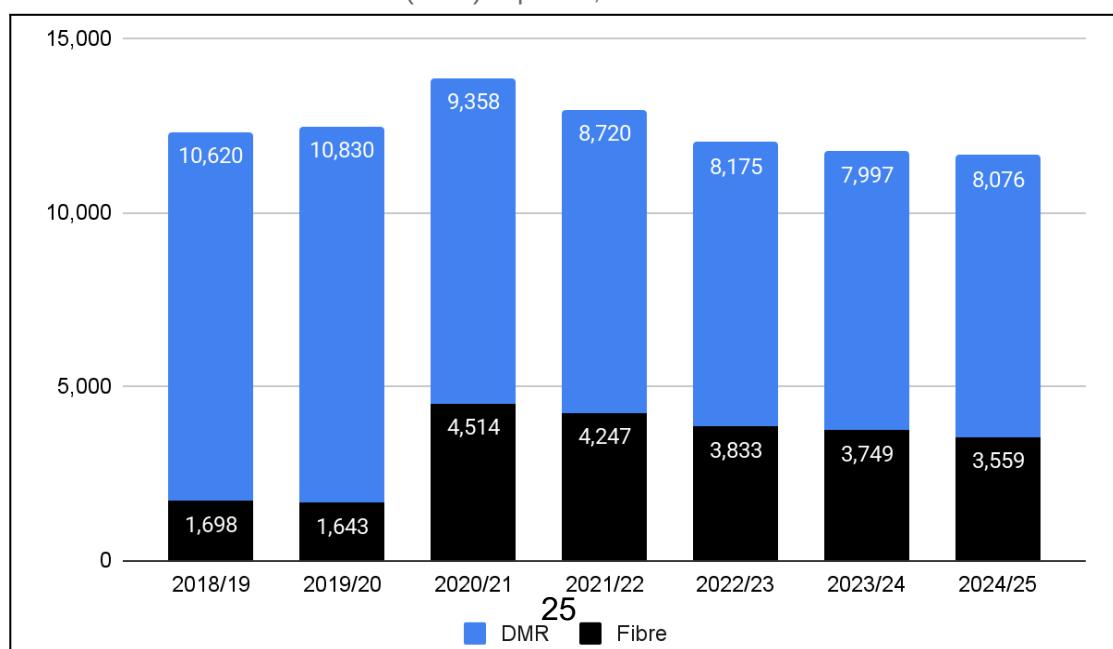
11,579.13 tonnes of recyclable waste (3593.12 tonnes of paper and card from Stafford's blue bags and 7,986.01 tonnes of mixed plastics, metals, and glass from the blue bins) were weighed into Stafford WTS in 2024/25, compared to 11,741.37 tonnes in 2023/24. This represented a 1.38% increase.

For reference, the Site's Environmental Permit allows less than 25,000 tonnes of mixed recycling to be accepted at the Site per annum. The Site's Waste Exemption allows 15,000 tonnes of fibre (mixed card and paper) to be stored on-site per annum. The following charts show the inputs every month for all Contract Years as required in the Specification and on an annual basis, respectively.



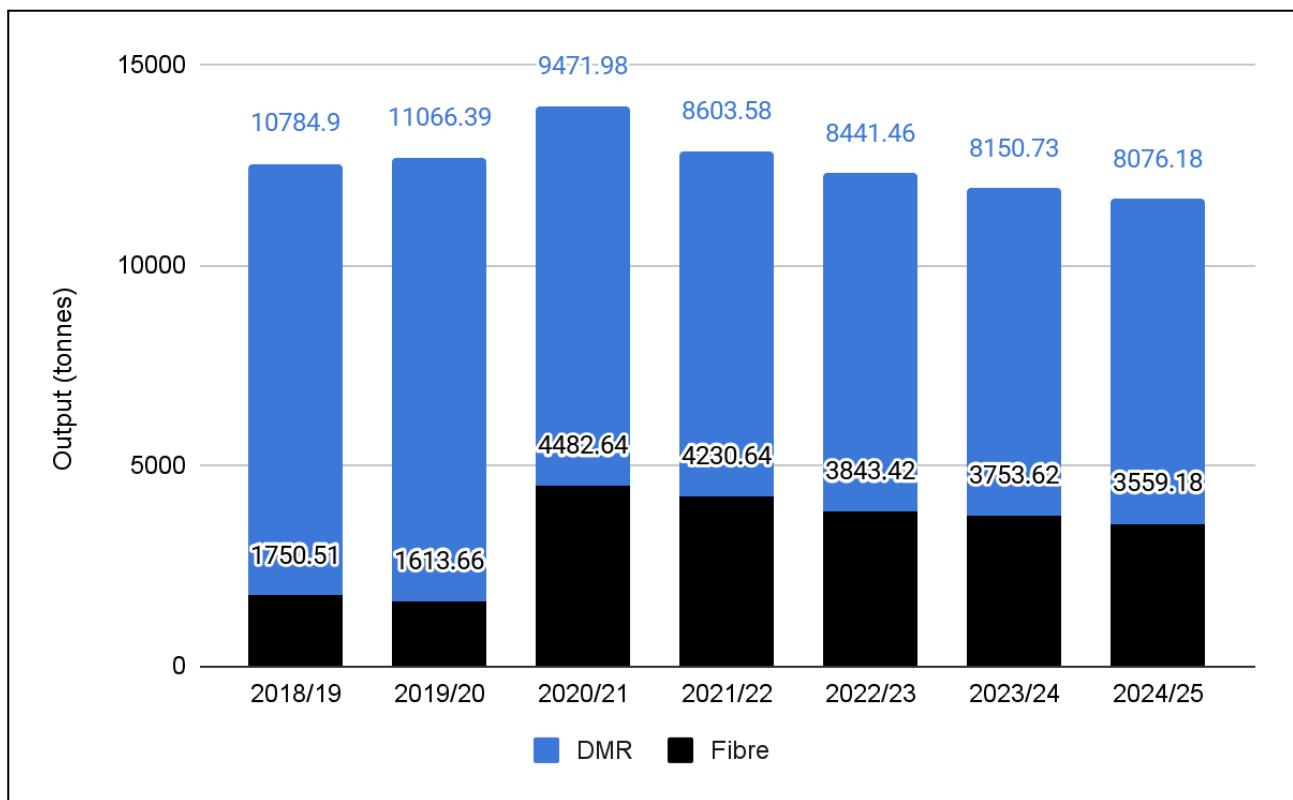
Waste Outputs

Stafford Waste Transfer Station saw a total of 11,635.36 tonnes of recyclable waste leave the Site in 2024/25. This represents a 0.93% decrease compared to the 11,745.31 tonnes of recyclable waste in 2023/24. Stafford Waste Transfer Station (WTS) exported, in 2023/24:

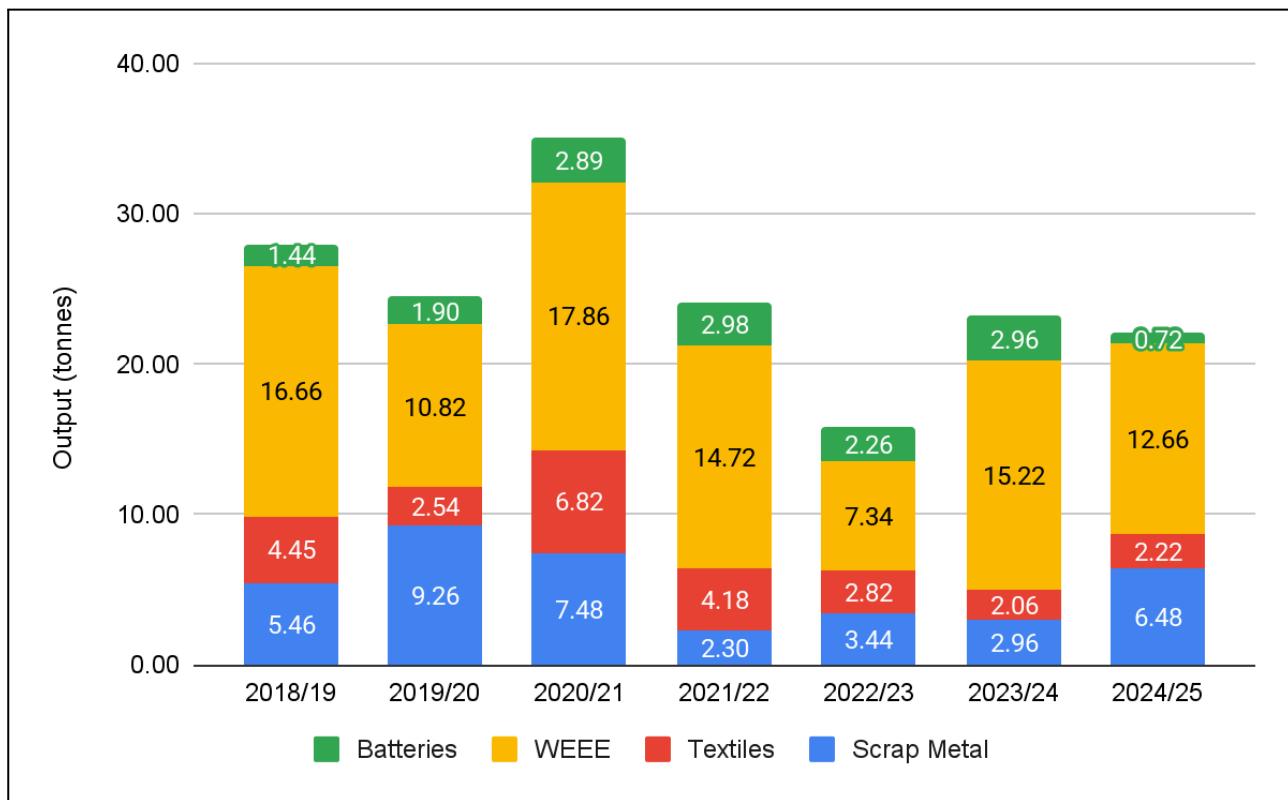


Movement	Waste	Destination	Tonnes
Output	Batteries - Non haz	Wastecare - Birmingham Depot	0.72
	Metal - Non Haz	Enablelink Ltd	6.48
	Paper	Smurfit Kappa - Dordon Tamworth 1	615.56
		Smurfit Kappa UK Ltd	2,943.62
	Recyclate	Four Ashes MRF	7,909.46
		Suez - Landor Street	166.72
	Textiles - Non-Haz	Jmp Wilcox & Co Ltd - Bilston	2.22
	WEEE 2 Small HH - Non Haz	EMR Darlaston	12.66
Output Total			11,657.44

The following chart shows the paper and card volumes exported from site aggregated into years.

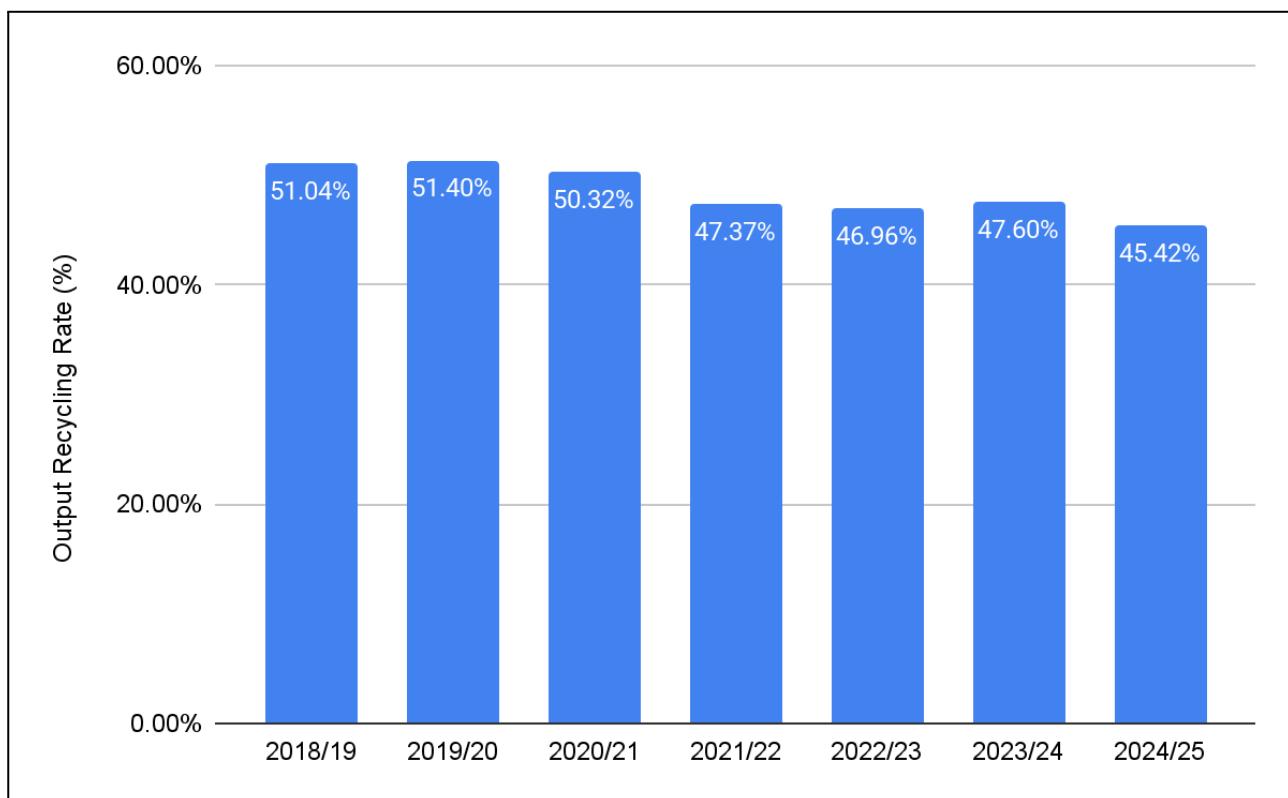


The following chart shows waste volumes to leave Stafford Waste Transfer Station other than DMR and paper by month by each Contract Year.



Waste Outputs Recycling Rate

The recycling rate based on waste outputs from Stafford Waste Transfer Station for 2024/25 was 45.42%, compared to 47.60% in the previous year. The chart below shows the output recycling rate by contract year.



Environmental Performance

Veolia has worked to maintain compliance with all relevant standards at Tollgate Drive:

- The Environment Agency ('EA') have not made a visit to Tollgate Drive in 2024/25, the annual visit is booked in for August 2025.
- Veolia did not receive any complaints in respect of litter in 2024/25.

7. Action Plans

We have either continued or introduced initiatives through 2024/25 which will continue to improve performance in the coming months. We will strive to develop additional initiatives in partnership with SBC to improve service quality throughout 2025/26, as described in the Annual Service Improvement Plan (ASIP) section of this report. Whilst only one new action was implemented during 2023/24 concerning 'containers not returned correctly' complaints, existing measures were also reinforced. These include weekly monitoring and feedback to crews, instructing crews to return to replace bins, and Supervisor visits to witness collections and container returns.

'Containers Not Returned Correctly' Complaints Action Plan

Ref	Action	Owner	Start Date	Implemented?
27	Appointment of Operations Manager and Associated Restructure	GS	October 2024	Yes - Former Senior Supervisor [REDACTED] assumed the role of Operations Manager in October 2024. John will have responsibility for all operational performance within the depot. The associated restructure will follow in due course.

The following table shows the performance throughout the Contract Year. Efforts will be focused in the coming year on reducing the number of complaints regarding the return of containers.

Target	Target Date	Actual	Achieved
26-30	April - June 2024	31	No
26-30	July - September 2024	29	Yes
26-30	October - December 2024	37	No
26-30	January - March 2025	39	Yes

'Missed Collections' Action Plan

Ref	Action	Owner	Start Date	Implemented?
36	Appointment of Operations Manager and Associated Restructure	GS	October 2024	Former Senior Supervisor [REDACTED] [REDACTED] assumed the role of Operations Manager in October 2024. John will have responsibility for all operational performance within the depot. The associated restructure will follow in due course.

The following table shows that, despite ongoing efforts, missed collections per 100,000 scheduled collections remain too high. We will work with Stafford Borough Council to implement further initiatives to reduce the number of missed collections in 2024/25 as per the ASIP section of this report.

Target	Target Date	Actual	Achieved
26-30	April - June 2024	132	No
26-30	July - September 2024	102	No
26-30	October - December 2024	65	No
26-30	January - March 2025	154	No

8. Annual Performance 2024/25

Three key performance criteria detailed in Schedule 8 ISFT Updated Performance Framework of the Contract are monitored during the year, with potential performance deductions applied annually. These are:

- Contamination in Garden Waste
- Customer Satisfaction
- Household Recycling Rate

Two other key performance criteria are 'Missed Collections' and 'Containers Not Returned to Collection Point', which have potential performance deductions applied on a quarterly basis, which are summarised in the relevant Monthly Report. The performance against these two criteria is also detailed in sections 5 and 7 of this report.

Performance against the annual criteria detailed above is as follows:

Contamination in Garden Waste

As detailed in the 'Performance Summary' presentations provided by Veolia at the Monthly Contract Meetings held with SBC, there have been no instances of garden waste contamination reported for Contract Year 2024/25. The Contamination Rate performance target of less than 8% has therefore been achieved, and no Contract Performance Deductions apply.

Customer Satisfaction

The 2024 Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey demonstrates strong overall satisfaction with Veolia's waste collection services in Stafford Borough. The survey achieved a 15% response rate with 5,494 responses from 36,000 residents contacted via Gov.Notify between 6th August and 31st August 2024. This represents 531 additional responses compared to the previous survey conducted in October 2022, though the response rate decreased by 3 percentage points.

Key satisfaction metrics show that 98% of residents use two-wheeled bins for waste collection. Service satisfaction levels include 92% satisfied with recycling bin collection, 85% satisfied with garden waste bin collection, and 82% satisfied with recycling bag collection. Additionally, 81% of residents expressed satisfaction with the attitude and helpfulness of Veolia collection crews, indicating positive resident perceptions of both the service delivery and staff interactions.

Household Recycling Rate

Revised Household Recycling Rate Targets were agreed with SBC in August 2021 (Contract Correspondence Reference 9) for Contract Year 2021/22 and ensuing years. The revised targets removed garden waste from the recycling rate calculation to account for the impact of the charged-for-garden-waste collection service.

9. Annual Service Improvement Plan 2024/25

The seventh Annual Service Improvement Plan seeks to continue the good work in certain elements of the collection service delivery, whilst looking to make significant progress with elements that have not improved.

Review of Previous ASIP

As has been previously referenced elsewhere in this report, 2024/25 has seen an evolution that will bring long-term benefits to both SBC and Veolia, including the microsite, the progression of the 'additional bins' project, and the strengthening of ties with social housing providers across the Borough.

Proposal	Summary	Achieved?	Comments
Anti-contamination project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted contamination campaign being developed via Communications meetings. Dangerous Waste Campaign 	Ongoing	This is ongoing and is due to be completed in 2025/26
Additional bins project (e.g. Oxford Gardens, Belasis Street, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bins removed from selected areas. Further areas identified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Veolia is working with SBC to remove additional bins. Echo crew reports analysed in Power BI to inform future target areas. 	Ongoing	This is an ongoing project and will continue into 2025/26
Missed collections focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance is reviewed daily with the Traffic Office team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on inconveniencing collection crews to prompt behavioural change. 	Ongoing	This is an ongoing project and will continue into 2025/26
Assist SBC with the Environment Act and other service changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Veolia will keep SBC informed of legislative developments relating to the Environment Act and associated potential service changes. Continued support & consultation on the introduction of food waste 	Ongoing	<p>This is an ongoing project and will continue into 2025/26</p> <p>Food waste is due to be rolled out in 2025/26. Discussions and planning are still ongoing.</p>

2025/26 ASIP

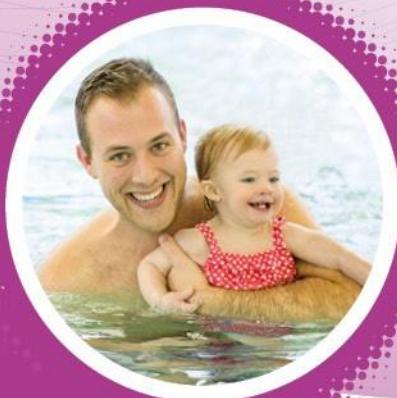
The following proposals are made to drive forward the improvements that Veolia and SBC have achieved through close partnership working. The proposals include:

- Introduction of Food Waste Collections.
 - Ongoing discussions in relation to delivery of liners, caddies & literature
 - Deliver the roll-out of Food Waste collections to Stafford Borough Residents by April 2026
- Improvement on Containers Not Returned Correctly
 - TBT is to be created and rolled out to all crews to significantly reduce the number of containers not returned correctly
 - Continued monitoring of individual crews to obtain consistency of collections.
- Minor changes within the depot to improve safety
 - Review depot layout to encompass all tipping & loading activities at the top of the yard
 - To establish a temporary 'pop-up' workshop on site
- Introduction of Anti-contamination Campaign in 2025
 - Targeted campaign to be delivered in 2025 to reduce contamination
- Continued discussions of adding Container Management & Delivery to the contract
 - To facilitate the improvement of container management and delivery

Stafford Borough Council

Leisure and culture operating contract annual report
April 2024 - March 2025

“ improving lives
through leisure ”



an introduction to the uk's second largest genuine charitable leisure trust:

2024/25 has been a positive year for Freedom Leisure with significant progress on our core mission; improving lives through leisure. Despite broader economic challenges for our customers and inflationary pressures on the business we have continued to deliver enhanced services for our customers and clients, making investments in facilities and services while supporting the growth and development of our colleagues. We're proud of what we've achieved this year and are excited about the opportunities ahead. With momentum on our side, we look forward to making an even greater impact in 2025/26.



133

Leisure and Cultural Facilities, including 2 theatres, on behalf of 28 individual clients across England and Wales.



not for profit

freedomleisure is a not-for-profit leisure trust which manages leisure and cultural facilities on behalf of partners across the UK to realise our vision of "improving lives through leisure"



focus

Committed to providing and developing inclusive leisure facilities for everyone. Delivering a service to exceed our customers' expectations

freedomleisure ethos

- Provide affordable and accessible health, leisure and sport facilities for everyone, therefore having a positive impact on the local communities in which we operate and serve – we aim to inspire people to be more active more often
- Reinvest surplus into quality services
- Exceed our partners' desired outcomes for local communities
- Enhance our reputation and status
- Grow and develop as a company in a sustainable way
- Develop our people
- Renew existing contracts and win new ones

freedomleisure corporate vision





Freedom Leisure strengthened its position within the UK Leisure Sector moving from 119 facilities to 133 adding facilities in Gloucester including The University of Gloucestershire Sports Facilities, the acquisition of 1610 leisure including 4 facilities in Somerset and Dorset, 2 partnerships in Essex at Southend and Braintree and the renewal of the Guildford Borough Council contract (Surrey) for up to another 15 years.

Freedom Leisure have also been successful in extending all of their partnerships that were coming to the end of their natural initial period, these have included most recently Wrexham, Powys, Worcester, Brighton, Rother, Arun, Bridgwater and Forest of Dean.

Freedom Leisure bid for, and were successful in securing, its first Agency Agreement Model procurement through a competitive tender at Tenterden in Ashford, Kent. Since then we have added a further 14 facilities across the UK under current partnerships to operate under an Agency Model allowing significant financial savings and investment opportunities for those local authority partners.

Freedom Leisure will be moving another two partnerships across to an Agency Model at the beginning of 2026 with the potential of a total of 8 partnerships operating under an Agency Model by the start of the next financial year in April 2026.

Introduction to Stafford partnership

freedomleisure commenced a 10-year contract to manage Stafford Borough Council's leisure and cultural facilities on 1 December 2017.

This report covers year 7 of the contract from April 2024 to March 2025.

The facilities and services managed include:

Stafford Leisure Centre

Stone Leisure Centre

Rowley Park Sports Stadium

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

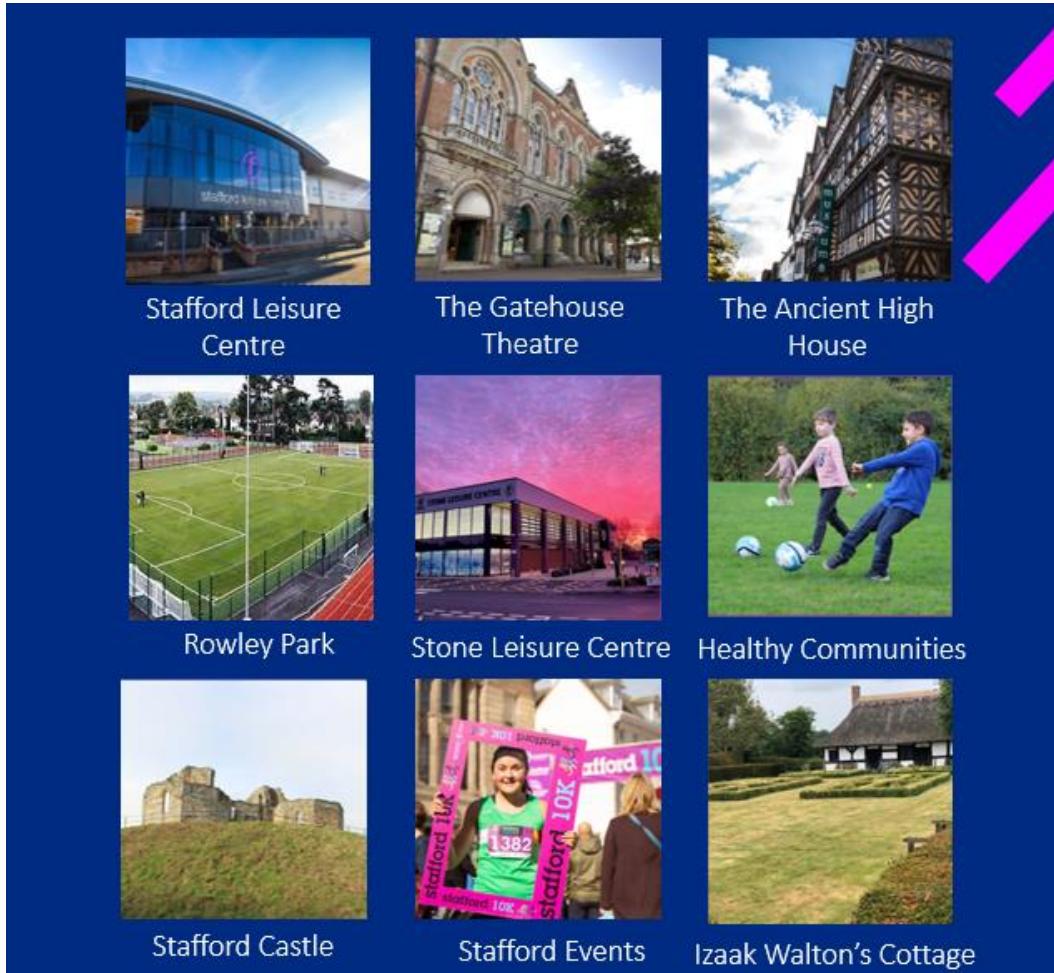
The Ancient High House

Stafford Castle

Izaak Walton's Cottage

Active Communities programme

Annual large-scale community events - Including Stafford Half Marathon, Party in the park, Stafford 10k, Christmas Light Switch On, Pancake Race



STAFFORD PARTNERSHIP



freedomleisure
where you matter

finance summary:

This section provides a summary of financial performance for the period April 2024 to March 2025.

Income:

Operational revenue from each venue (excluding management fees) has grown year-on-year.

Gatehouse was the largest increase contributor, driven by an increase in show performances and higher occupancy rates.

Stone also saw a significant uplift, primarily due to rising membership numbers and growth in Learn to Swim participation.

Other venues reported income gains linked to improved overall participation.

Expenditure:

Costs include all venue-related expenses such as payroll, utilities, and maintenance. Expenditure rose sharply compared to the previous year, mainly due to:

- Higher staffing costs following National Minimum Wage adjustments
- Increased repairs and maintenance, including Gatehouse boiler replacement, extensive pipework repairs at Stafford LC, and heating pump replacements at Stone
- Persistently high utility costs adding further pressure

Overall Surplus/Deficit

The final position reflects all income streams, including management fees. Contract recharges incorporate funding for specific initiatives

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for Stone
- Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF) for Stafford Leisure Centre

	Stafford LC	Rowley	Active Comms	Gatehouse	AHH	Castle	IWC	Events	Stone	Total
Income	£2,049,160	£191,550	£468	£1,948,541	£25,513	£49,410	£983	£154,246	£1,613,817	£6,033,688
Expenditure	£3,045,800	£373,556	£11,359	£2,665,318	£246,119	£125,641	£19,118	£258,645	£1,570,925	£8,316,482
Operating Surplus/Deficit	-£996,639	-£182,006	-£10,891	-£716,777	-£220,606	-£76,231	-£18,136	-£104,399	£42,892	-£2,282,794
Management Fee										£1,406,701
Grants and Funding										£34,455
Extraordinary Income and Contract Recharges										£354,950
Total Surplus/Deficit										-£486,688

Stafford partnership year in numbers - visitors

When comparing total participation year on year, there is a 8% increase.

Active participation displays an increase of 5% on the previous year 2023-24.

1,172,384

total venue participation

849,038

total active participation

My son came out of swimming lessons buzzing! Ocean made learning fun, stopped them after every length of the pool and offered improvements. played games that allowed the children to meet the objectives but in a fun way!

Stone Leisure Centre User

I go to the Pilates class that Di teaches ... she is perfect always gives precise instructions and always checking everyone is ok ... really enjoy her classes 10 out 10

Stafford Leisure Centre User



Tim Phillips

Local Guide · 315 reviews · 114 photos



Super evening at the Gatehouse last Friday and the ELO show. Great venue, first time here and everyone was really helpful and friendly.



Stafford partnership year in numbers – Heritage

43,022
Admissions



During the year we saw a 4% increase in overall admission vs the previous year, up from the previous figure of 41,306.

Major events at Stafford Castle this year included the Wildlife Fair in May and the Vikings event in August, both of which attracted significant visitor numbers to the site. Feedback is routinely gathered for all events, including workshops, to support ongoing evaluation and enhancement of our offerings.

This process also enables us to measure success against broader criteria such as accessibility, age inclusivity, social isolation, and mental health impact.



2,875
Attendance – Wildlife Fair



The Wildlife Fair welcomed 2,875 visitors this year.

While we retained the successful format from last year, we enhanced the event by adding more stalls and improving the food area with increased seating and tables adjacent to the music tent. The upper section of the site featured outdoor games, encouraging families to settle in for picnics. Inside the keep, visitors enjoyed armour and weaponry demonstrations, along with refreshments including ice cream and drinks.

Visitor Feedback:

“Just wanted to say we had a fantastic time at the castle today, the kids are worn out as are we. It was so well organised and just lovely to enjoy — thank you.”

“The house is silent – a very good sign of a great day! We loved it last year, so it’s already in the diary. Thanks again and keep doing what you’re doing — it’s brilliant.”

Stafford partnership year in numbers – Heritage

4,151

Attendance –
Vikings



The second of our two-day Viking event drew an impressive 4,151 attendees.

This year, the Viking camp expanded to feature 20 tents, each highlighting a different aspect of Viking life. Skirmishes and battle re-enactments took place at the top of the site, adding to the immersive experience.

The event was designed to cater to varied audiences across the two days. Saturday focused on educational engagement through “Kidde Vike,” a hands-on experience tailored for children. It allowed young visitors to interact directly with Viking life—including mock battles—and supported term-time learning by bringing classroom topics to life. Additional attractions included woodland archery and a birds of prey display, enhancing the overall experience.

Visitor Feedback:

“My first time today with my family and a very little girl who thoroughly enjoyed it and now wants to be a Viking full time. Will definitely be at the next one.”

“Another fantastic weekend—great fights, enthusiastic and knowledgeable Vikings. Well done, everyone!”

From The Red Haired Stokie:

“What a day at the Viking Re-enactment at Stafford Castle! The sun was shining, the event was packed, and the turnout was incredible! I tried my hand at archery with the Six Towns Company Of Archers, explored the historic castle and its stunning grounds, and learned so much about Viking life from the amazing Friends of Y Ddraig Stoke Vikings. The event was interactive, educational, and fun for all ages. A truly brilliant day out! Huge thanks to Historic Stafford for organising such a fantastic event.”

Stafford partnership year in numbers – Heritage

Across the heritage portfolio we delivered continued increases in workshops, events, tours and continued to engage with local schools, as well as increasing the involvement within the local community.

Some of the key highlights are captured below



Schools - Bookings began to slow in 2024, which we anticipated as many schools operate on a two-year trip cycle. However, we also recognize that pupil premium funding is increasingly being allocated to other priorities, and rising transport costs have become a significant barrier to visits.

To address this, we have started developing a dedicated home education offer for 2025, with the first sessions scheduled to take place at the Castle in April. In addition, we are exploring new schemes and initiatives aimed at attracting more schools and broadening participation.

Our new Early Years tour was fully launched in 2024 and received seven bookings, all accompanied by excellent feedback. Interestingly, teachers reported that their initial expectations were modest due to the low pricing, which highlights the importance of building confidence in our product.

To reinforce quality assurance, we have successfully completed the Learning Outside the Classroom assessment and achieved certification for both the High House and the Castle. This accreditation, combined with our existing Sandford Award for Educational Excellence, demonstrates not only the high standard of our educational provision but also the robust processes and procedures that underpin it—providing schools with reassurance and trust in what we offer.

The Ancient High House hosted a series of successful events throughout the year: **Halloween:** Two evenings of themed activities attracted 473 visitors, building on the popularity of previous years.

Christmas Through the Ages: The house was decorated to reflect different historical eras, featuring traditional displays, food and drink demonstrations, storytelling, and children's workshops. **Book Trail:** In celebration of World Book Day, rooms were themed around popular children's books with interactive clues. The trail was extended into the Easter holidays to provide additional family engagement.

History Day: This inaugural event exceeded expectations, offering house and town tours, conservation insights, and interactive experiences in the Market Square, including armour displays and coin minting. High demand led to additional tours, and the event received BBC coverage.

Accreditation - Remains delayed due to post-COVID backlogs. Site closures prompted a strategic shift toward resilience, including updated collection policies and new IPM and cleaning routines with staff training.

Collections - We launched a Textile Collection project to preserve unique Borough Broderers' works for future generations.

A £1,902 grant funded specialist conservation equipment and training, now extended to staff and volunteers, ensuring improved care and longevity of collections.



Stafford partnership year in numbers – Heritage

Izaak Walton Cottage had another successful year and displayed an increase of 11% on 2023-24 visitors with an increase of 66 visitors

This year, we began an exciting project to produce detailed condition reports for every item in our collection, starting with the Fishing Museum.

To assist with this, we invited Terry Coggins—an expert fisherman—to help identify several pieces that were either missing labels or incorrectly labelled.

His expertise proved invaluable in ensuring the accuracy of our records. In addition to his support, Terry generously donated a rod once owned by renowned fishing author Bill Tagg.

As chairman of the Trent Valley Fly Fishing Group, Terry and his members joined us on opening day, offering captivating demonstrations of fly fishing and fly tying for our visitors.



623
Visitors



Building on last year's goal of creating new opportunities at Izaak Walton Cottage, we were delighted to host our very first outdoor wedding at the historic venue.

This milestone event showcased the cottage's unique charm as a picturesque setting for special occasions. Working closely with the couple, we captured a stunning collection of marketing photographs that highlight the beauty of the grounds and the versatility of the space. These images now feature on a newly dedicated page of our website, designed to inspire future couples and promote the cottage as an exceptional wedding destination.



Stafford partnership year in numbers – Gatehouse

Over the past year, our programme of events has continued to grow in range and ambition, offering residents opportunities to celebrate creativity, heritage, and local identity. From film and music to crafts, dance, and history, each event has played a part in strengthening our sense of community and showcasing local talent.

There were many highlights throughout the year and below are some of the key highlights

Christmas Wreath - Making Workshop

Our festive wreath-making session once again proved to be one of the most popular community activities of the year. Participants enjoyed creating their own natural wreaths guided by local artists, with a strong focus on sustainability and traditional techniques. The event fostered a warm and welcoming atmosphere, encouraging new friendships and seasonal spirit.

Due to space limitations, not everyone who expressed interest could attend, which highlighted ongoing demand for creative craft sessions. In future, we plan to offer multiple sessions or pre-booking options to accommodate wider participation.

Dappa Dance Showcase

Dappa Dance delivered a lively and engaging performance in the Coffee Shop space, transforming it into an informal stage for young dancers. The event demonstrated the value of using community venues in creative ways and allowed local families to see children's achievements in a relaxed setting.

While attendance was strong among families of the performers, general footfall from the wider community was modest. Future promotion through social media and collaboration with local schools could help expand reach.



Vibe 1 Live Broadcast from the Coffee Shop

Vibe 1's live broadcast from the Coffee Shop brought local radio directly into the heart of our community. The event showcased local voices, interviews, and live music, offering listeners a flavour of our space and activities.

While the broadcast attracted attention from regular customers and passers-by, we recognised the potential to build on this partnership by scheduling future broadcasts alongside other events to boost audience interaction.

Classic Film Afternoons at The MET

Throughout the year, our Classic Film Afternoons continued to provide a relaxed and nostalgic experience for audiences. Screenings featured a range of well-loved titles, encouraging regular attendance from older residents and film enthusiasts.

Although participation remained steady, attracting new audiences continues to be a challenge.

Stafford partnership year in numbers – Gatehouse – Shakespeare

The much-anticipated annual Shakespeare production made a triumphant return with a captivating rendition of Twelfth Night – A Cornish Tale. The event officially opened on 21st June, culminating in a celebratory gala night on 25th June.

This year's performance was met with enthusiastic audience engagement and benefited from a robust promotional campaign, including strategic marketing, public relations efforts, and active outreach by the cast themselves.

Despite the artistic success and strong promotional push, ticket sales totalled 4,066, representing a 19% decline compared to the previous year's attendance figures. While the drop in numbers is notable, the production continued to uphold its reputation for delivering high-quality theatre and remains a cornerstone of the cultural calendar.



Looking ahead to Shakespeare 2025 – The focus is to bring Stafford back into the Shakespeare production, with a aim to remain with a high profile cast, but also looking to cast based on their connection to Stafford.

We are optimistic that this positive shift will enable the ability to put the community back into this production, whilst maintaining the high quality production and upholding the reputation.

Stafford partnership year in numbers – Gatehouse – Panto and Summer School

The Gatehouse Theatre celebrated an outstanding year for audience engagement, marked by the phenomenal success of its 2024/25 pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk.

Running for four weeks, the production drew an unprecedented crowd of more than 18,800 attendees—the highest in the theatre's history—cementing its reputation as a leading cultural destination. This record-breaking achievement reflects not only the popularity of the show but also the theatre's commitment to delivering high-quality, family-friendly entertainment that resonates with audiences of all ages.

In addition to its commercial triumph, the pantomime garnered critical acclaim, with The Stage, one of the industry's most respected publications, praising the production as "clever and witty." This recognition underscores the creative excellence and professional standards that define the Gatehouse Theatre's programming, continuing the benchmark for future seasons.



THE STAGE

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Topics

CHOOSE YOUR DRAMA SCHOOL MY FAVOURITE PLAY SUSTAINABLE STAGES BACKSTAGE & TECHNI

Jack and the Beanstalk review



"Clever and witty"

REVIEWS DEC 16, 2024 BY NEIL BONNER STAFFORD GATEHOUSE THEATRE, STAFFORD



The annual Summer School continued to flourish, attracting an impressive audience of over 1,500 people across three completely sold-out performances of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. This year's production not only entertained but also highlighted the remarkable talent, dedication, and creativity of the young participants, offering them a platform to develop their skills and share their passion for the performing arts. The event has become a cornerstone of the community's cultural calendar, fostering confidence, collaboration, and artistic expression among the next generation.

Stafford Partnership - year in numbers - Leisure

Across the Stafford Partnership, we have seen strong growth in membership, Learn to Swim programmes, and gymnastics participation. Actions are in place to further accelerate progress in these key areas while continuing to build on the positive trends already underway.

3,769
Fitness Members
March 25

3,026
On the learn to
swim programme

746
Gymnastics
Members

82
Exercise referral
throughput



Overall fitness membership levels –

- An increase of 5% on March 2024
- Stone increase of 2% on previous year
- Stafford increase of 9% on previous year
- Some of the contributing factors for success have been the improved level of service, as well as the increased group exercise programme.

Learn to Swim programme –

- An increase of 3% on March 2024 heads on scheme
- Stone sustained a similar level of performance on previous year
- Stafford increased by 5% on previous year

Gymnastic Members –

- An increase of 1% on March 2024
- One of the major successes has been the enhancement of the Gymnastic hub offering early level gymnastics by the way of Gym tots, this has helped provide gymnastics all the way to parent and baby sessions, creating a smoother throughput into Gymnastics over the foreseeable years.

Exercise Referral –

- Launch of exercise referral August 2024
- Between August 2024 – March 2025 – 82 individuals have joined the exercise referral programme

Actions and plans moving into 2025-26

- ✓ Further development of the group exercise programme across both venues with plans to launch new additional classes
- ✓ Improved links to be created with local GPs, social prescribers and physio groups to support the development of the exercise referral programme
- ✓ Improve Junior offering for gym and group exercise classes
- ✓ Expand learn to swim at Stafford Leisure Centre, increasing exit routes from higher stages to improve length of stay.
- ✓ Focus on reward and recognition across Gymnastics and Learn to Swim with improved rewards, and reward focused sessions



Stafford Partnership - year in numbers – Stafford LC

In 2024–25, our primary objective was to enhance previously affected services by delivering consistent, high-quality programming and offering a diverse range of options for local communities.

The figures below highlight the positive growth achieved at Stafford Leisure Centre compared to 2023–24.

1,626

Fitness Members
March 24



1,535

On the learn to swim programme



737

Gymnastics Members



0

Exercise referral throughput



1,777

Fitness Members
March 25

1,619

On the learn to swim programme

746

Gymnastics Members

82

Exercise referral throughput



Overall fitness membership levels –

- Stafford increase of 9% on previous year growth of 147 members

Learn to Swim programme –

- Stafford increased by 5% on previous year – growth of 84 swimmers

Gymnastic Members –

- An increase of 1% on March 2024 – growth of 9 members
- One of the major successes has been the enhancement of the Gymnastic hub offering early level gymnastics by the way of Gym tots, this has helped provide gymnastics all the way to parent and baby sessions, creating a smoother throughput into Gymnastics over the foreseeable years.

Exercise Referral –

- Launch of exercise referral August 2024
- Between August 2024 – March 2025 – 82 individuals have joined the exercise referral programme

Stafford Partnership - year in numbers – Stone

Stone has experienced steady growth since relocating from Alleynes.

Participation numbers have continued to rise year after year, and although the pace of growth has slowed, the overall upward trend remains positive.



1,948

Fitness Members
March 24



1,992

Fitness Members
March 25

1,404

**On the learn to
swim programme**



1,407

**On the learn to
swim programme**

152,956

Gym Visits



165,935

Gym Visits

34,301

**Group Exercise
Visits**



34,570

**Group Exercise
Visits**

Overall fitness membership levels –

- Stone increase of 2% on previous year – Growth of 44 members

Learn to Swim programme –

- Stone sustained a similar level of performance on previous year +3 growth

Gym Visits

- An increase of 8% on individuals using the gym compared to 2023-24

Group Exercise Visits –

- A 1% increase on 2023-24 year in group exercise users

Stafford Partnership - year in numbers – Rowley Park

Throughout the year 2024-25 Rowley Park delivered a hugely successful year with some key highlights including

- ✓ 10 community Sports Days
- ✓ Swim-Bike-Run programme launched
- ✓ Record-high customer feedback
- ✓ Bowling Green Pavilion reopened as a vibrant hub
- ✓ A fantastic year of growth and community impact!

85,956

**Park Users –
2023-24**

32,273

3G pitch users

320

**Special
Olympics**

1,120

Bowls users



100,074

**Park Users -
2024-25**



42,130

3G pitch users



420

**Special
Olympics**



3,426

Bowls users



Overall park users, including visitors –

- A large increase of 16% on the previous year 2023-24, with 14,118 further visits in 2024-25.

Learn to Swim programme –

- A 31% increase on 3G pitch users when compared to the same period of the previous year – equating to a further 9857 users in 2024-25

Special Olympics

- An increase of 100 individuals taking part in these events providing a 31% increase on the previous years performance

Bowls Green Users –

- A significant increase of over 2000 users when compared to the previous year providing over 200% increase in participants

Stafford partnership year in numbers - Events

The Stafford Partnership delivers a diverse portfolio of annual events, each demonstrating sustained growth and success in recent years. Key events consistently achieve year-on-year improvements, reinforcing their contribution to the community and enhancing the overall positive impact across Stafford.

2,201
Party in the Park



1,742
Stafford 10k



11,000
**Christmas Light
Switch On**



230
Pancake Race



2,575
**Stafford Half
Marathon**



The event calendar saw all events providing an uplift on 2023-24 with particular highlights being the large increase in participants at the running events

- ✓ Party in the Park displayed a 20% uplift in previous with an estimated increase of 400 attendees
- ✓ Stafford 10k displayed a 25% increase in overall participants with an increase of over 300 runners
- ✓ Christmas light switch on – Footfall increased by 1000 individuals on the previous year providing a 10% increase on 2023-24
- ✓ Pancake Race – This delivered a similar performance to previous year, but had an overall increase in engagement from local businesses
- ✓ Stafford Half Marathon – Overall attendance including runners and spectators increased by 10% on the previous year, with a particular highlight being the successful fun run, with families and children taking part

Our Colleagues - Development

With colleagues always at the forefront of providing activity to the community, there has been some fantastic successes during 2024-25:

Colleague development:

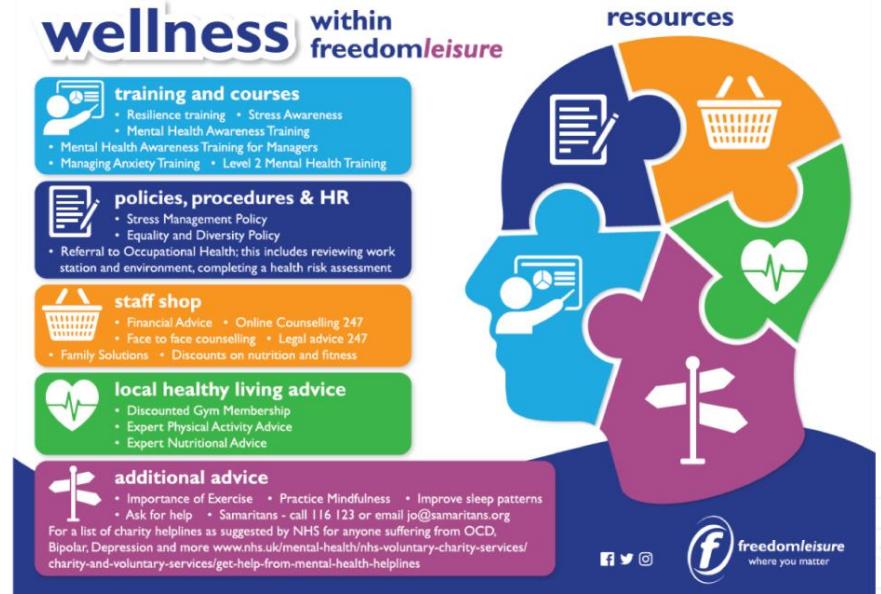
- Duty Manager Roles
- Operation Manager roles
- Events roles
- Swim Teachers
- Artiste Manager

Our recruitment through the 2024-25 year has seen a number of colleagues recruited without the required qualifications for their respective roles, we have invested into the development of these colleagues by providing the industry recognized qualifications. These roles have included Swim Teachers, Lifeguards and various other roles.

In 2024 we launched an internal colleague working group, with a clear focus on developing, supporting and rewarding our teams across the venues.

The internal working group continues to work on interventions and ideas to improve colleague retention. The below are a few examples of actions that are taking place

- Ongoing regular colleague feedback surveys to gain real time feedback
- Expanded offering of MyStaffShop
- Workforce active week



Our Colleagues – Volunteers and workplace development

Volunteer Engagement and Projects

With our new Volunteer Coordinator in place, several exciting projects are underway. The Castle Herb Garden is our first priority, focusing on the removal of invasive ground elder and replanting the beds to restore and enhance the space.

Recruitment has begun for room guides at the High House, and in 2025 we will be seeking additional support for gardening at Izaak Walton Cottage.

Volunteers have played a vital role in supporting events, including managing customer liaison points, distributing maps and event information, collecting feedback, and assisting with eco-friendly seed planting workshops in the herb garden.

Their contribution has been instrumental in creating welcoming, informative experiences for visitors while advancing our sustainability goals.



Training and workforce development

Training and development continues to be a focus for the venues across the Stafford partnership, the continued focus on developing the teams remained a strength through 2024-25 and included some key highlights

- Funded training courses for Level 1 and 2 Swim Teachers;
- Funded training course for NPLQ (Lifeguard courses)
- CPDs for a variety of key roles
- Externally funded training courses for specific areas, including Good Housekeeping and Conservation Café, Developing Evaluation Plans for Museum and Heritage
- Carbon literacy training for venue managers and local leads
- Sales and Customer Service Training

Marketing

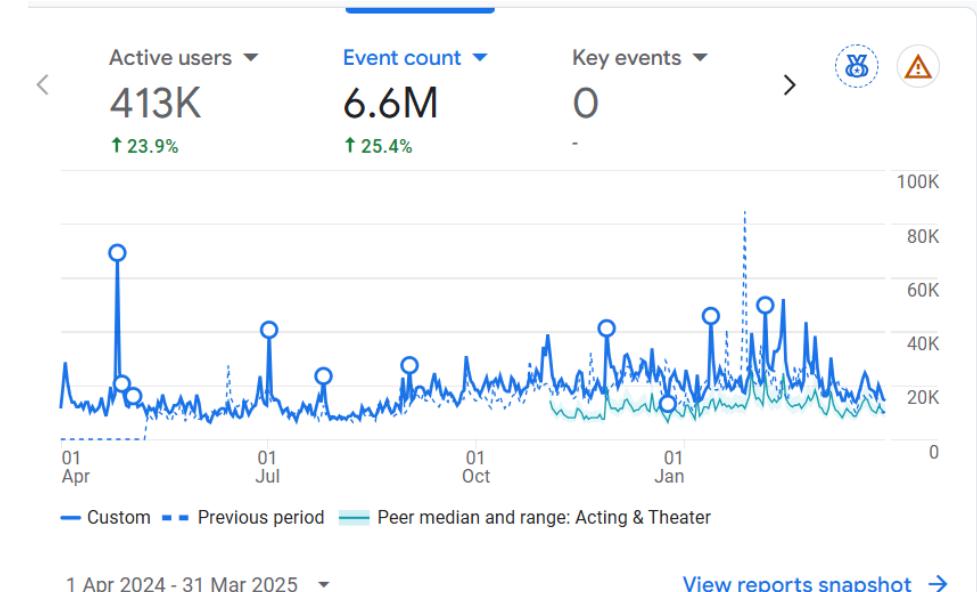
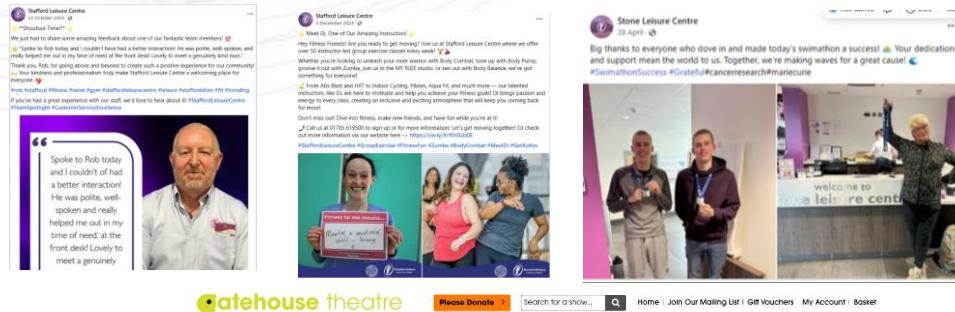
651,537 unique opens of Gatehouse emails; an increase of 60 per cent

Website - Leisure

Our website continues to be a key communication channel for us, between the 2 leisure centres we recorded 746,687 views from 162,988 users over the year.

Social Media - Leisure

The importance of social media remains a key part of our marketing strategy and allows us to engage with customers as well as promote our facilities. Centres are able to post local content and positions ourselves as the heart of the community. Posts that include our colleagues and customers always give us great reach and engagement. In addition we utilise social media for a lot of our central campaigns including adverts on these platforms. This year saw us start using Hootsuite which allows us to monitor feedback, schedule posts across the contract much easier and provide improved analytics



Digital Marketing – Gatehouse

The Gatehouse launched 457 digital marketing campaigns over the period, sending a total of 1.6million emails (up 65 per cent) to 60,451 subscribers (up 28 per cent). Of those, engagement was up 60 per cent, with 651,537 unique opens, while interaction was also up by 67 per cent, with 40,043 unique clickers. See charts below (source: DotDigital).

Website - Gatehouse

Traffic to the Gatehouse Theatre website www.gatehousetheatre.co.uk hit new highs over the 12 month period with a 23.9 per cent increase in users (413,000) viewing a total of 6.6million pages (up 25.4 per cent). See chart right. (source: Google analytics)

15,678 following our social media pages
5.3% Increase in 12 months!

Historic Stafford Achieves Prestigious Badge of Quality

Stafford Historic Sites have been awarded the esteemed Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge for both Stafford Castle and the Ancient High House.

This national accreditation recognises excellence in both educational provision and risk management, ensuring a high standard of learning experiences beyond the classroom.

[Historic Stafford Achieves Prestigious Badge of Quality | Stafford Borough Council](#)



Freedom Leisure Becomes First UK Leisure Operator to Achieve Bronze Carbon Literacy Accreditation

Carbon Literacy is defined as, “An awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis,” and revolves around a day’s worth of learning and action on climate change.

[Freedom Leisure Becomes First UK Leisure Operator to Achieve Bronze Carbon Literacy Accreditation | Freedom Leisure](#)

Record-breaking success for the Stafford 2024 10K run

Despite heavy rain and challenging conditions, the Stafford 10K was a resounding success, with a record-breaking 1,724 runners taking part in this year’s race.

[Record-breaking success for the Stafford 2024 10K run | Express & Star](#)



Park makeover in preparation for an Olympic summer

The staff at Rowley Park which is operated by Freedom Leisure, one of the UK's leading charitable not-for-profit leisure trusts that manages the leisure and cultural venues in Stafford on behalf of Stafford Borough Council, have been working hard giving one of Stafford's much-loved parks some 'TLC' over the Spring.

<https://www.expressandstar.com/your-world/2024/06/28/park-makeover-in-preparation-for-an-olympic-summer/>



Refurbishing public toilets and bowling pavilion at Stafford park

A £20,000 investment to improve public facilities at a park in Stafford has been completed.

The upgrade to the public toilets (pictured) at Rowley Park includes new sinks, flooring, and vanity units, as well as a fresh coat of paint. These improvements have been prioritised to enhance the overall visitor experience at Rowley Park.

[Refurbishing public toilets and bowling pavilion at Stafford park | Stafford Borough Council](#)

Stafford panto breaks records for venue - with extra dates due to demand

The venue saw more than 19,000 people see the show over the festive period, with an extra week added due to demand as many performances sold out before closing on January 5.

Critics and audiences poured praise on the pantomime, which starred CBBC legend Mark Rhodes, The Sooty Show's Wink Taylor and award-winning dame, David Phipps-Davis, and the theatre has now revealed that the show has produced the highest receipts for any show since the Gatehouse opened in 1982.

[Stafford panto breaks records for venue - with extra dates due to demand | Express & Star](#)



Projects and Investment

SPSF Phase 2 – Stafford leisure centre

Stafford Borough Council were successful in an application for the swimming pool support fund at Stafford Leisure Centre, the government funding was to support the reduction required in overall energy consumption. The overall project value was £205k

This project included - 21 Kelda Showers (Flow reducing, energy reducing) Installed across Wet-side changing rooms

Solar – 184kw PV System – With 69kw battery storage system

Predicted annual generation of 126,112 KwH



Further investments delivered include (but not limited too) -

- Refurbishment of Rowley Park public toilets - c£20,000
- Gymnastics hub expansion at Stafford LC - c£7,000
- Bowls pavilion refurbishment project – Joint project with Bowls club – c£2,000 invested
- Stafford Leisure Centre – Gutter clean and repair - c£6,000
- Stafford Leisure Centre – Water boost pumps – c£9,200
- Stone CT Pump head 1 and VSD – c£4,200



UKSPF – Stone Leisure Centre

Stafford Borough Council were successful in accessing UKSPF to the value of £100k for solar panels.

The system that has been installed compromises of 111kw solar PV System

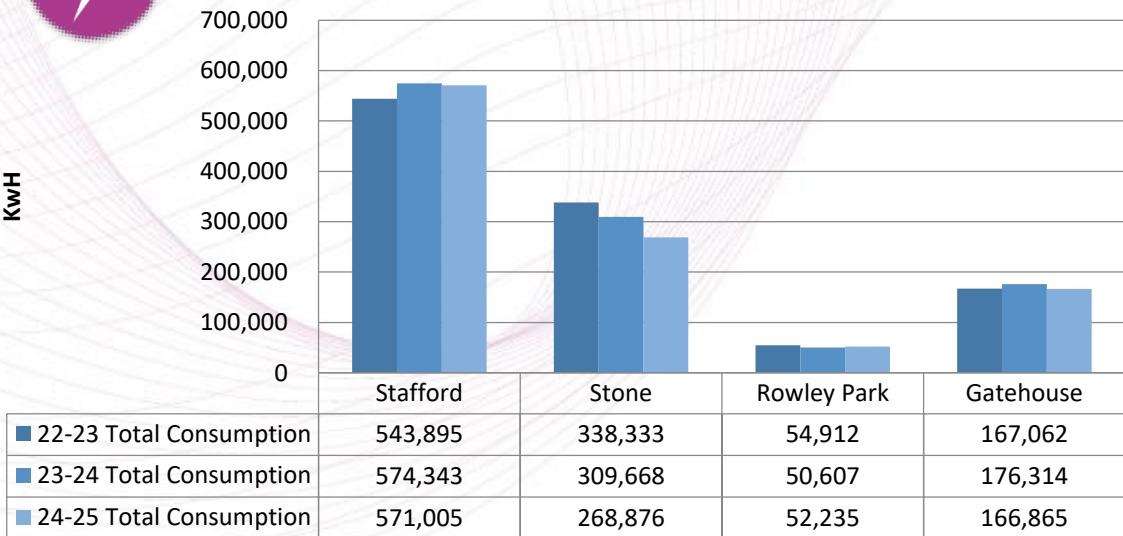
Predicted annual generation of 85,543 KwH



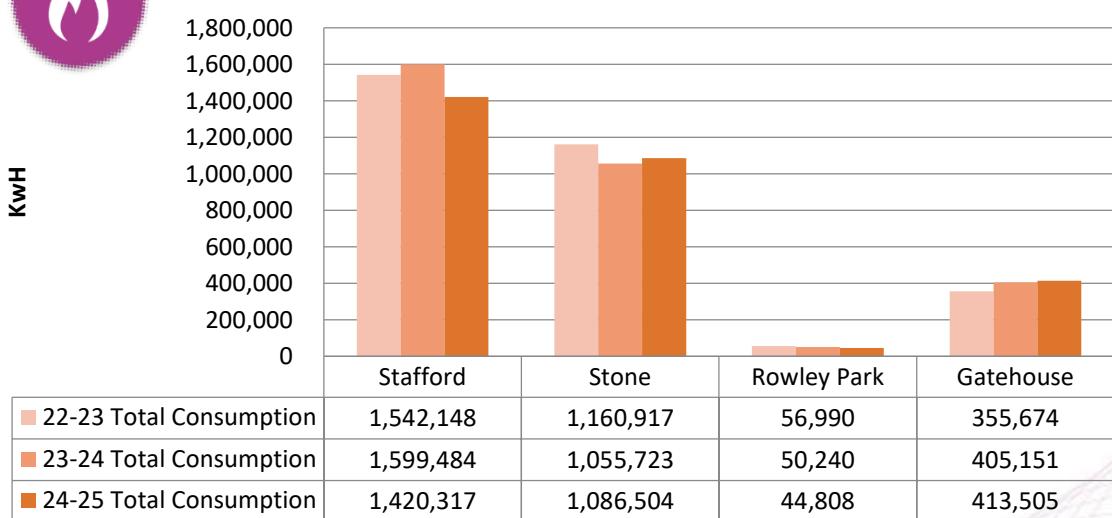
Energy performance



Electric



Gas



Key points to note –

- Solar install at Stone and Stafford LC – completed Feb 2025 providing 6 – 8 weeks worth of generation – supporting electricity consumption decreases at both venues in Quarter 4 Stafford - Predicted annual generation of 126,112 KwH Stone - Predicted annual generation of 85,543 KwH
- Air powered eco showers installed in July 2024 for wet-side area of Stafford LC – Compromising of 21 showers in total – these are high pressure flow reducing showers, that maintain customer experience, whilst reducing overall water and gas consumption.
- Stone – CHP (Combined heat power unit) continued issues on reliability impacting utility performance

Sites have utilized different methods to reduce both areas, including:

- Continued close management of BMS (building management systems), revised implementation of internal consumption control measures
- Reactive energy management plans in place to identify abnormal readings and actions to improve performance
- Enhanced carbon literacy training to support upskilling of colleagues

Looking ahead to 2025-26

- Revision of waste management and reporting based on sustainability and environmental impact
- Improved and revised focus on water consumption
- Continued review and resolution in relation to Stone CHP

Health and Safety

Our training aims to educate our colleagues on identifying and mitigating potential hazards to prevent accidents and injuries. Topics covered in Health and Safety training include the proper use of equipment, working at heights, emergency procedures, fire safety, Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), Lifeguarding, First Aid and Catering.

In addition to keeping colleagues safe, this training is essential for reducing the risk to our valuable customers. Through our platform of IHASCO the required colleagues undergo Safeguarding training for children and vulnerable adults, which is detailed as one of the requirements of our safeguarding policy. By ensuring that our colleagues are appropriately trained in health and safety, we are investing in our team's well-being and, ultimately, safer sites and venues to serve the communities.

Accidents are reported through the STITCH national database system.

The national average for accidents/incidents reported on STITCH is 0.04% of a venue/facility's monthly usage.

Freedom Leisure as a whole at 0.16% and the Stafford Partnership at 0.04%.

		Group	Group RIDDOR	Stafford	Stafford RIDDOR
April	2024	562	0	39	0
May	2024	443	3	35	0
June	2024	326	2	7	0
July	2024	503	0	34	0
August	2024	661	1	11	0
September	2024	350	1	14	0
October	2024	457	0	36	0
November	2024	323	1	36	0
December	2024	296	1	18	0
January	2025	297	1	32	0
February	2025	426	1	28	0
March	2025	389	0	39	0
		5033	11	329	0
Site/Venue		Total Accidents	Reportable to RIDDOR	% of monthly usage	
National		33710	164	0.04	
Freedom		5033	11	0.16	
Stafford		329	0	0.04	



2025-26 – Looking ahead

Throughout the 2024–25 period, discussions have been undertaken to shape the annual business and development plans for the Stafford Area.

These plans are scheduled for launch in partnership with Stafford Borough Council for the 2025–26 financial year.

The forthcoming plans will incorporate clear, measurable targets aligned with the contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These targets will serve as a benchmark for monitoring and evaluating performance throughout the year, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Some of the future projects include, but are not limited to the below:

➤ **Health and Safety Platform**

Throughout 2025-26 we will be transitioning across to a new digital platform for all health and safety processes, including accidents, checks, and compliance – this will be a phased approach throughout the year.

➤ **Digital Improvements**

Throughout 2025-26 we will be improving the Leisure Management system across the Leisure venues, with migrations to the cloud planned to increase digital security.

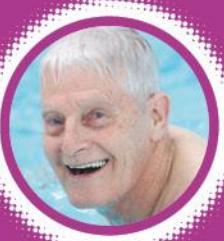
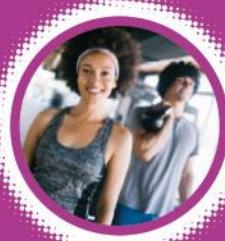
➤ **Rowley Park Developments**

We will be continuing to work with Stafford Borough Council closely on the development of Rowley Park



freedomleisure

where you matter



www.freedom-leisure.co.uk

Priority Delivery Plan for 2025-26

Priority 2 - Communities and Wellbeing

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
	3			5	8

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

All actions due are being progressed

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

None

Priority 2 - Communities and Wellbeing

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Delivery of council owned temporary accommodation	Scope the acquisition of council owned temporary accommodation and options for management of the properties.		X			Scoping work is underway on what the delivery of council owned temporary accommodation will look like, including ways to acquire properties as well as options for contractors to manage the repairs/maintenance and compliance of the units.	✓
	Cabinet approval for the acquisition and management of temporary accommodation units			X			
	Start of property acquisition				X		
Strategic Housing and Homelessness	Start procurement of a Stafford Housing Strategy.		X			Staffordshire County Council are supporting on the procurement of a Housing Strategy and a specification is in the process of being agreed	✓
	Award contract for Housing Strategy			X			
Community Wellbeing	Work with partners and the Integrated Care Partnership to develop priorities for reducing health inequalities	X				Community Wellbeing Partnership and wider partners including NHS primary care network representatives have continued to refine shared priorities under the CORE20+5 framework.	✓

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Complete Community Wellbeing Strategy, setting out priorities across community safety and health (2025-2028).			X			
	Deliver a small grant scheme to voluntary, community and social enterprises, to support delivery of the corporate plan and Community Wellbeing Strategy			X			

Priority Delivery Plan for 2025-26

Priority 3 - Climate Change, Nature Recovery and the Environment - Extract for Community Scrutiny

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

★	✓	▲	✗	N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
4	1			7	12

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

Tree management - Funding for the new integrated tree management system was secured following a report to Cabinet in July 2025, with its procurement being commenced shortly afterwards and sign off expected early in Q3.

Work continued during Q2 on the multi-phase master plan for Rowley Park, Stafford, as an inclusive main/destination park. A report has been prepared, that is scheduled for Cabinet early in Q3, including a proposal around s106 funding allocation. In addition to that report a further report has been drafted for Cabinet early in Q3, proposing the allocation of funding from reserves to four other play areas that were prioritised for investment / improvement, due to a lack of s106 funding availability.

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

None

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Nature Recovery	Produce a nature recovery strategy				X		
	Develop an action plan to deliver the nature recovery strategy				X		
Minimise Household Waste - Introduction of Mandatory weekly food waste collections	Complete procurement of food waste caddies	X				Food waste caddy procurement has been completed with orders placed with the successful bidder. Deliveries expected late 2025/early 2026.	
	Launch of communications plan for food waste introduction with residents			X			
	Distribute new food waste caddies and new service information to residents				X		
Tree Management	Secure approval and funding for integrated tree management system and tree inspections		X			Completed - Funding for the new integrated tree management system was secured following a report to Cabinet on 24 th July 2025.	
	Begin procurement of joint tree management system (including Open Customer Facing Public Portal)		X			Completed - procurement of the joint tree management system was commenced following the above Cabinet meeting and is due to be signed off early in Q3.	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Commence procurement of outsourced routine health and safety tree inspections			X			
	Implement joint tree management system				X		
	Prepare joint investment strategy and work programme as part of the budget setting process				X		
Investment in Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces	Carry out play area development in accordance with play area improvement programme, agreed by Cabinet during 2024/25	X	X	X	X	Work is continuing on the multi-phase master plan for Rowley Park, Stafford, as an inclusive main/destination park. Report prepared, ready for Cabinet early in Q3.	✓
	Prepare Cabinet Report to identify S106 and other capital funding to enable the implementation of the Councils play area/parks improvement programme	X	X	X	x	Report prepared for Cabinet early in Q3, allocating significant s106 and other funding to Rowley Park and four other play areas that were prioritised for investment / improvement.	★

Summary of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - Quarter 2 2025/26

KPIs for Priority 2 - Communities and Wellbeing

Symbol	Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
★	Performance exceeds target	2				
✓	Performance on target		2			
▲	Performance < 5% below target					
✗	Performance > 5% below target					
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable	4	4			
	TOTAL	6	6			

Priority 2 - Communities and Wellbeing

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Strategic Housing, Homelessness and Assistance									
% households had a positive outcome and secured accommodation for 6 + months	62%	39%	58%	42%				✓	The target is the national percentage, allowing comparison to local performance
Delivery of affordable housing per year working with Registered Providers, Developers and Homes England (Annual)	200 homes	210 homes						N/A	Annual figure rather than quarterly reporting
No of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) completed	160	125	28	30				✓	
Annual report on delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants service	N/A							N/A	
Leisure, Culture & Heritage									
Annual Report from Freedom Leisure setting out the performance of all facilities and the wider wellbeing work and events they facilitate.	N/A							N/A	To be produced at year end.

Agenda Item 7(c)

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Health and Wellbeing									
Total value of financial outcomes achieved as a result of the Citizen's Advice contract	£4,797,117	N/A Measure only	£674,929	£544,177				N/A	Contextual information only

KPIs for Priority 3 - Extract re Climate Change, Nature Recovery and the Environment

Symbol	Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
★	Performance exceeds target	5	4			
✓	Performance on target					
▲	Performance < 5% below target		1			
✗	Performance > 5% below target					
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable	2	2			
	TOTAL	7	7			

Priority 3 - Extract re Climate Change, Nature Recovery and the Environment

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Waste and Recycling									
% collections completed first time	99.97%	99.90%	99.96%	99.97%					
Number of missed bin collections (including assisted) / 100,000 / qtr.	38 per 100,000	<40 per 100,000	38.12	28.66					.
% Household waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting	46.23%	48%	49.20%	45.83%					SBC figures continue to follow national recycling patterns
Amount of household residual waste collected per household (Kgs)	449.05 Kgs Ave. 112.26 kgs	<448 kgs or 112 kgs / qtr.	103.88 kgs	106.20 kgs					
Streetscene									
% residents' satisfied with the appearance of town centres (Stafford, Stone and Eccleshall)	95%	90%	98.3%	94.0%					
Satisfaction with the quality of our parks, play areas, and open spaces.		New						N/A	Annual Measure

Agenda Item 7(d)

Work Programme - Resources Scrutiny Committee

Committee: Community Wellbeing Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 4 December 2025

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Portfolio: Community

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The first stage in achieving a Member-led Overview and Scrutiny process is to develop a Work Programme for the Members of the Committee to own.
- 3.2 Accordingly, an up-to-date copy of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme is provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report is most closely associated with the following Corporate Business Objective 1:-

To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Members will recall that one of the fundamental philosophies behind the creation of Overview and Scrutiny is that the process should be Member-led and the first stage in achieving this is to develop a Work Programme that is:-
 - Owned by all Members of the Scrutiny Committee
 - Flexible to allow the Committee to react to urgent items
 - Contain aspects of both Overview and Scrutiny
- 5.2 Therefore, at each scheduled meeting of the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, an up-to-date copy of the Work Programme will be provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.
- 5.3 The Work Programme includes provision for the Committee to scrutinise appropriate items delivered through the Council's Service Delivery Plan up to twelve months in advance, whilst maintaining the flexibility to respond to any issues that may arise.
- 5.4 Accordingly, attached at **APPENDIX** is the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's current Work Programme to consider or amend as appropriate.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

Appendix: Work Programme

8 Previous Consideration

None

9 Background Papers

File available in Law and Governance

Contact Officer: Jackie Allen

Telephone Number: 01785 619552

Ward Interest: Nil

Report Track: Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee - 4 December 2025 (Only)

Key Decision: N/A

Appendix

Work Programme - Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 18 March 2026 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline	4 March 2026
Officer Reports:	Task and Finish (Food Waste Collections) - update
	Q3 Performance Report
	Streetscene Update
	Food Safety Annual Report
	Air Quality Status Annual Report
	Work Programme 2025/26
	Head of Law and Governance

Future Items:

Obesity and Diabetes - joint with County Council

Provision of properties for independent living (large scale development)

Biodiversity / Air Quality in Town Centre and outside schools

Simpler Recycling - C Grade Plastics

Bereavement and Loss

Children in Care / Housing

Turning Point Presentation

Community Wellbeing Partnership

Tree Management and Tree Protection Orders