

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (co-located meeting with Dover District Council)

Held at: Council Chamber, Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Dover Kent CT16 3PJ.

Date Monday, 29 November 2021

Present Councillors Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius (Chairman), Patricia Rolfe and Rebecca Shoob (Vice-Chair)

Apologies for Absence Councillor Miss Susan Carey, Councillor Connor McConville, Councillor Terence Mullard and Councillor John Wing

Officers Present: Ewan Green (Director of Place) and Andrew Rush (Regulatory Services & Corporate Contracts Lead Specialist)

Others Present: **Veolia**
David Fitzgerald – Senior Operations Manager
Ben Velmans – Senior Contract Manager
Gary Morrison – Contract Manager
Chris Curtis – Dover representative and Street Cleansing worker.
Terry Harman – GMB Union Representative and Garden Waste Officer

Dover District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members and officers were also present at the meeting.

25. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

26. **Update on Veolia Performance and Recovery Plan**

The Chairman of Dover District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chairman Folkestone and Hythe District Council's Overview and Scrutiny welcomed those present to the meeting.

Representatives from Veolia introduced themselves, and gave a presentation which updated Members on the East Kent Status Update and Schedule Improvements. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

The Chairman then invited the two Veolia workforce representatives to speak. They made points including the following:

- More consultation with staff was now happening with regard to route changes.
- Although a 12% pay increase sounded like a lot, the pay was low, and therefore this did not work out as much of an increase. This also made it difficult to attract new staff.
- The main issues had been related to the changes in days, and crews working in areas that they were not familiar with, leading to confusion, particularly if some roads did not show up on tablets.
- The household tonnage had increased due to the Covid lockdowns, more home working and deliveries and had continued.
- There was also a street cleansing issue with purple sacks where litter bins are being misused and used for domestic or commercial waste.

Members then commented on various issues and made points including the following:

- How were the staff finding the echo system to use?
- Were there any 'black out spots', in rural areas, where the Echo system would not work?
- In terms of the pilot starting in the Dover District that day, how much consultation had taken place with staff?
- What percentage of missed collections were food waste?
- At the point when the issues arose, Covid had been around for a year, and we had known Brexit was coming since 2016. What improvements to planning have been made in order to be better prepared, rather than reactive?
- In terms of resourcing, what is the level of resilience now, and what percentage of agency workers were used?
- Are there any plans in terms of business continuity and resilience following the outcome of the pay negotiations ballot, particularly in the event of industrial action?
- With regard to the peak in tonnage growth, would this plateau?
- Had the Ashford transfer station issue been resolved?
- Was good practice shared with other areas, and are there any other improvements to be made in addition to what has been put forward?

The Veolia staff representatives then responded to points raised, and made points including the following:

- The Echo system was intuitive and straightforward to use, although the information on the system had been incorrect on occasions.
- Some long term members of staff had left the organisation, but the turnover seemed to have reached a steady state.
- Staff had been consulted on the latest pilot, including union staff. A better effort had been made all round.

The Chairman thanked the workforce representatives for their attendance at the meeting.

Representatives from Veolia responded to the various issues raised and made points including the following:

- Pay negotiations had been an ongoing negotiated process for six months. The ballot was due to close the following day, and it was hoped that GMB would advise the outcome on Wednesday 1 December.
- There were signal blackspots for the echo tablets, but operators always had sight of their work. Any updates to the system are applied once signal returned.
- Advanced business continuity planning had taken place over the summer months. Veolia had put extra resource into East Kent from across the country, impacting on other contracts. The issues had been taken seriously by the company at national level, and local management had felt supported in doing all that they could. The action plan, which involved providing additional resource to resolve the issues, had been in place, but the frustration had been the challenge in finding additional staff resource. Mistakes were made and this had been recognised.
- With regard to food waste collection rates, they did not have the breakdown of this information to hand, but they but accepted that missed food waste collections may be higher.
- A team of 12 drivers had been created, who could be deployed where required. The organisation was looking at recruitment and retention at a national level. Successful engagement had also taken place with four agencies. In terms of the level of agency workers, this was around 5% for drivers, and around 20-25% for street cleansing and refuse operatives. The previous contract had not used agency employees, and it was an aspiration to get back to this.
- It was hoped the pay negotiations offer would be accepted by the union, but if not, further discussions would take place. Industrial action was the worst case scenario, and would be avoided as much as possible. If industrial action did take place, resources would need to be deployed from other contracts.
- In terms of the extra household waste/tonnage, additional resources had been deployed, and there were six additional vehicles used on a day to day basis to collect food and recycling waste. Overtime payments had lessened.
- The quality of recycling was good across East Kent, and contamination rates low. Participation in food waste was lower, but there had been a noticeable increase over the last two years. Further campaigns would take place to promote food waste recycling.

- It was hoped that the increased tonnage had plateaued, recycling rates had increased by 24% and food waste 16% since the pandemic started. With people continuing to work from home, and the changes in society, rates were likely to remain high. This also included a higher use of food delivery apps, and more home deliveries, which also resulted in a change to the type of waste, such a higher rate of cardboard being recycled.
- In terms of housing and population growth, planning was based on a 2-3% increase per year.
- The contract with KCC for the transfer station would operate until 31 March 2022. It was unclear if KCC intended to extend this contract, or if there were any long term aspirations for a transfer station in Folkestone.
- Veolia continued to look for improvements to the service. Building resilience was the priority, and one of the options being considered was to employ drivers as both drivers and loaders, resulting in a highly skilled and resilient workforce. The 22 staff in the 'grow your own' scheme would be able to operate in a dual role. Good practice was monitored elsewhere, but things that worked well in some areas did not necessarily work well in other areas.

The Cabinet Members for both DDC and FHDC were invited to make comments, and Councillor Peall, FHDC Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste and Building Control made points including the following:

- The latest version of the presentation was an improvement to what had been provided previously.
- Any proposed changes to routes would need to be approved by both officers, and Overview and Scrutiny Members before he would sign them off.
- He liaised with the Cabinet Member at DDC on a regular basis, so consistent messages to both authorities were important.

Both the Chairman of DDC and the Chairman of FHDC thanked those in attendance at the meeting.

East Kent Status Update and Schedule Improvements

November 2021



EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS OVERVIEW

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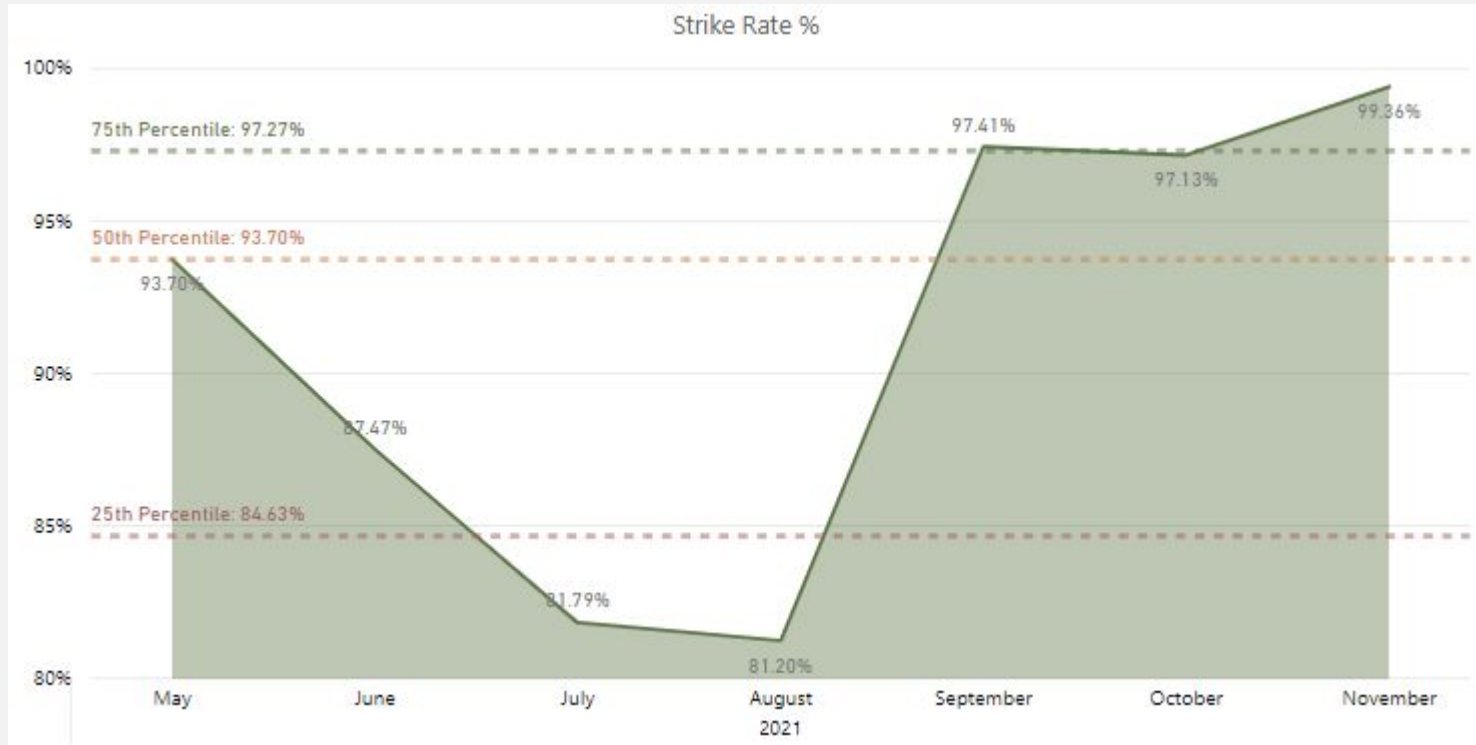




1. Performance

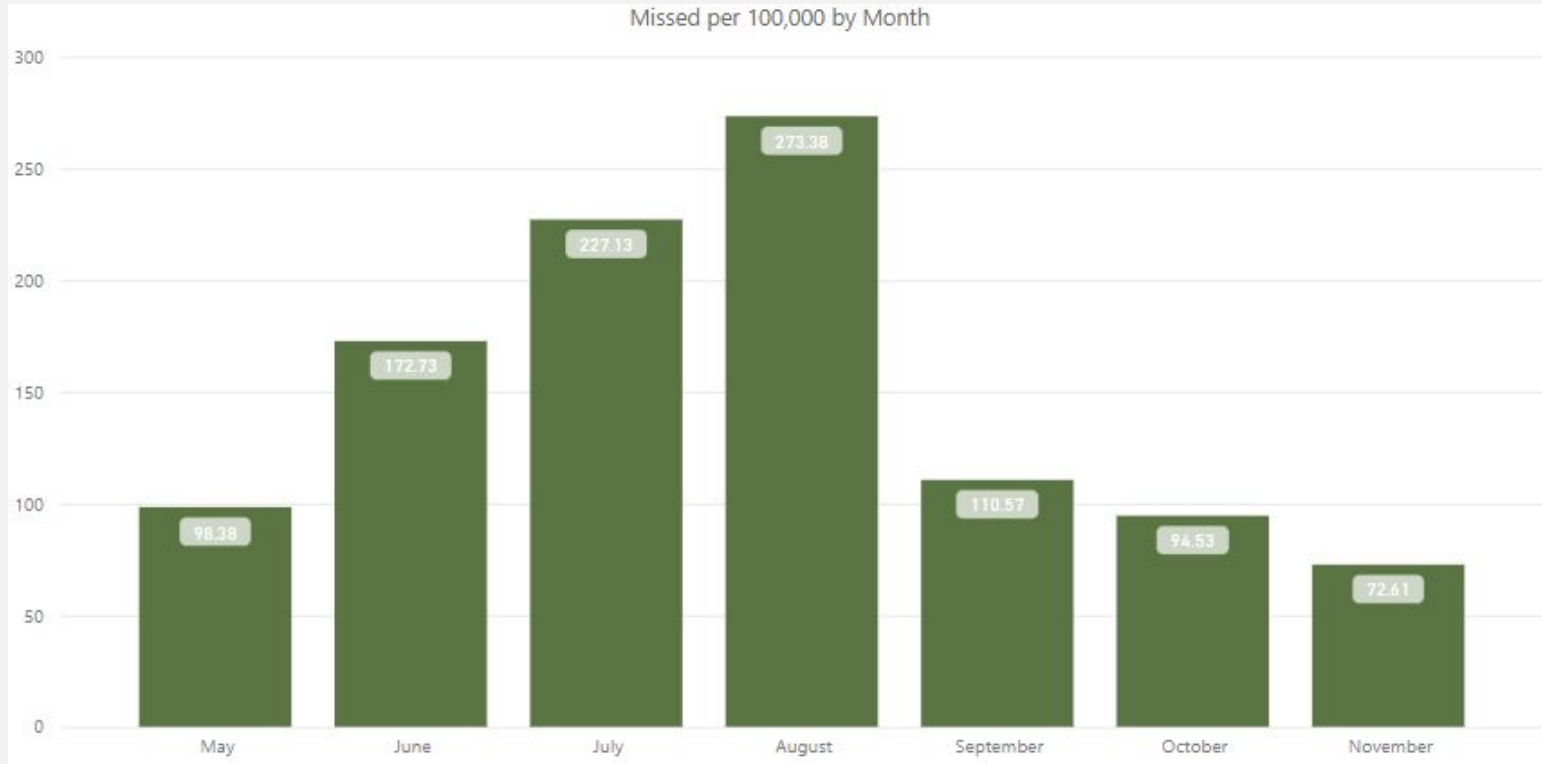
EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

STRIKE RATE



EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

MISSED COLLECTIONS PER 100K





2. Lessons learnt

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

LESSONS LEARNT

Since the service rerouting in spring, there has been ongoing disruption to services in East Kent. This was caused by a variety of contributing factors including:

- Scheduling issues
- Introduction of new digital system (ECHO) at same time as rescheduling exercise
- Delayed arrival of new vehicles
- Nationwide driver shortage
- Tonnage growth
- Transfer station delays/ disposal infrastructure



3. Addressing issues

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

NATIONAL DRIVER SHORTAGE

VEOLIA ACTION PLAN:

- National working group and action plan
- Increased advertising, e.g. Facebook advertising campaign
- 22 employees East Kent HGV fastrack/ HGV apprenticeships
- Referral, retention and welcome financial incentives (c£100k)
- Kickstart scheme - up to 10 18-24 year olds deployed
- TU negotiations - 2 year 12% pay deal out to ballot
- Working group to be established for driver pay
- Successful recruitment of 22 drivers since start of crisis in East Kent

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We are looking for HGV drivers to join our team. Whether you are an experienced driver or newly qualified, apply now to launch a driver career that works for your lifestyle. Apply today and become a key part of the Dover community.

90,066
Reach - 50% of population

5,321
Clicks

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

NEXT STEPS AND PLAN FOR FULL RECOVERY

The two districts are in different positions with the current schedules, largely due to the fact that issues were identified during the Dover launch period which were corrected prior to the Folkestone and Hythe changes.

Proposal: stage one pilot

- Mainly affecting narrow, ultra-narrow and rural collections in Dover
- In Dover, resolving non-aligned communal collections

Proposal: stage two

- Dover is affected by unbalanced days - in particular Tuesdays and Fridays, these issues will be resolved in early 2022
- Communal collections in Folkestone & Hythe

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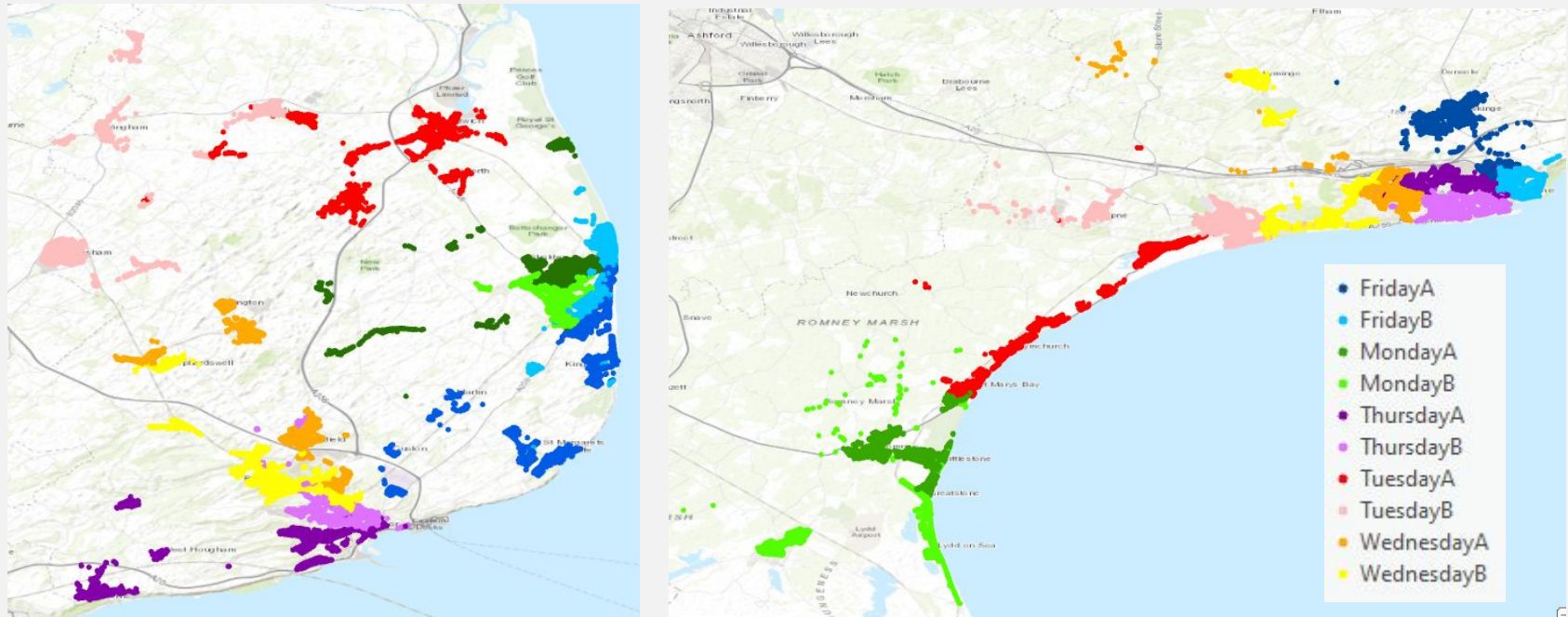
4. Schedule improvements

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEDULES

Originally, the scheduling changes in spring 2020 were designed to make positive improvements to rounds in order to increase efficiencies. These were developed around “core rounds” with the aim of creating compact, efficient rounds for the majority of East Kent’s households.

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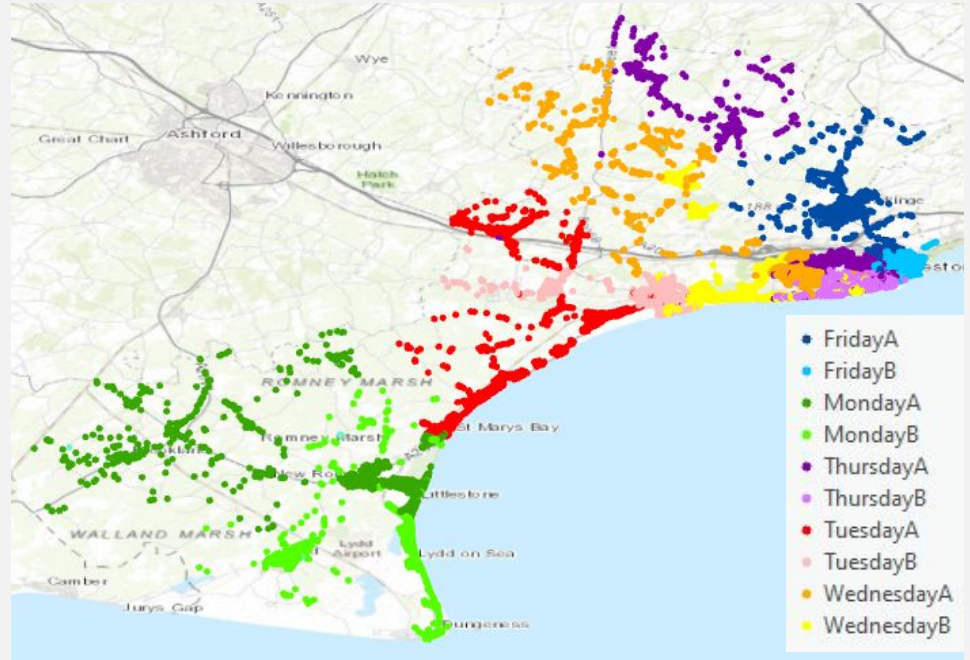
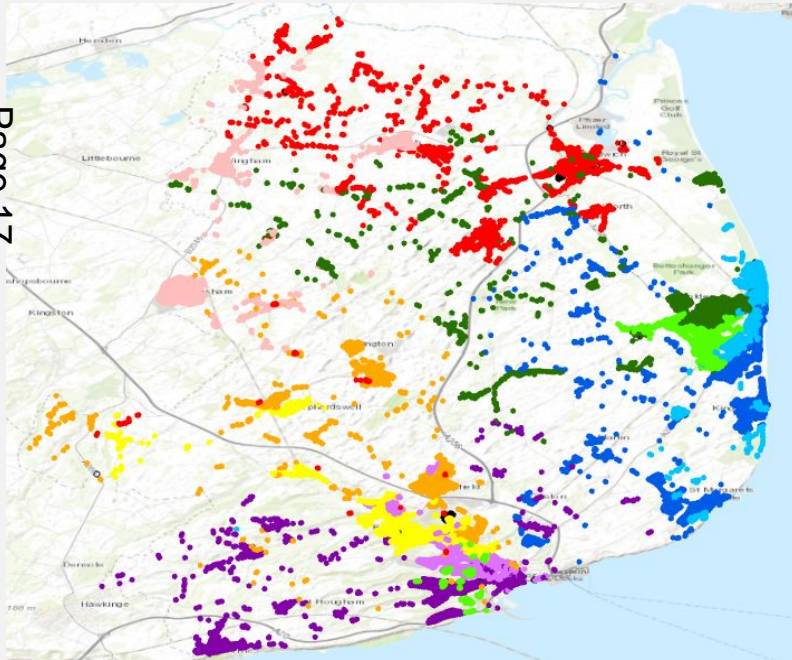


EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHEDULES

However, the non-core households (narrow, ultra-narrow, rural) were developed separately and did not as easily follow the more efficient routing - which has led to confusion. This was identified as an issue in Dover and improvements were made in Folkestone prior to the change.

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EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

PILOT PROJECT - DOVER ONLY

The pilot is a stepping stone in the right direction for the full solution for schedules, which will:

**Narrow access
rounds**



Correct schedules for properties mis-allocated to the narrow access service

Move collections into newly defined day boundary areas, and test future rounds

**Communal
recycling**

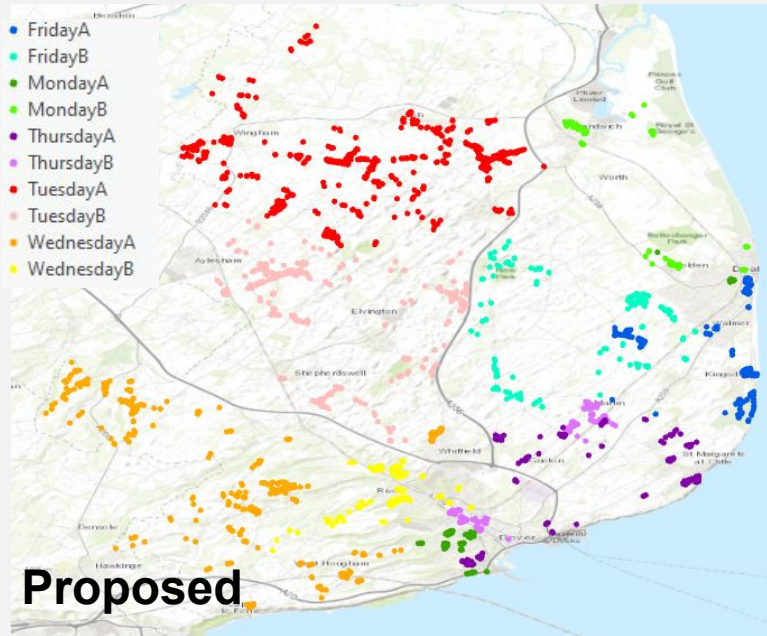
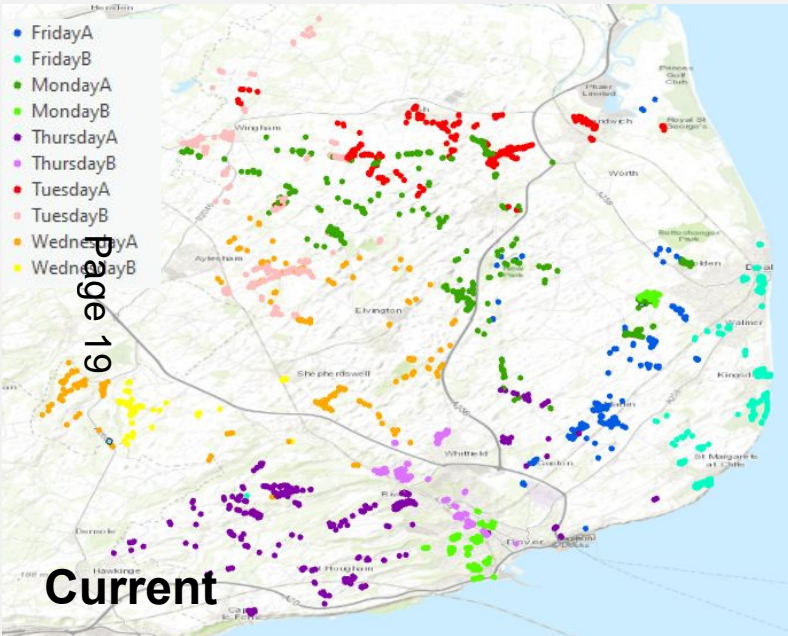


Align communal properties with core kerbside collection rounds

Match recycling collections with refuse service to allow a regular schedule

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

NARROW ACCESS ROUNDS



Day changes

1,242

Week changes

1,232

Day and Week changes

1,063

4,873 narrow access properties

487 average collected per day

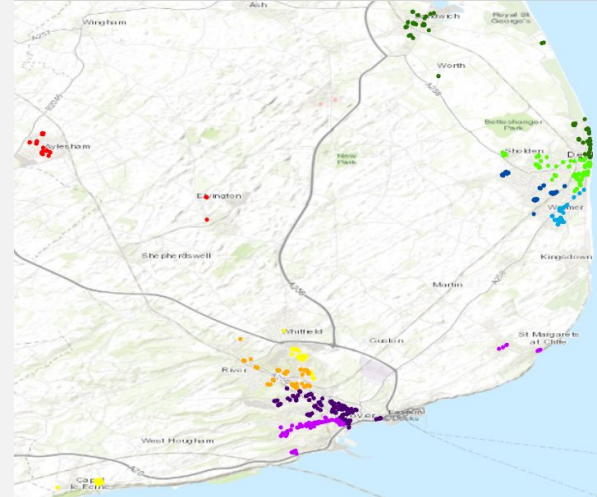
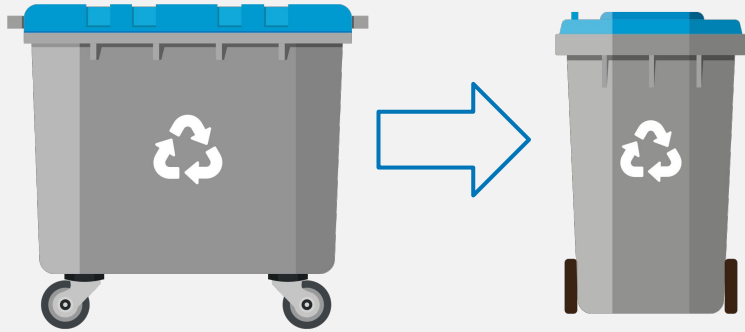
3,134 narrow access properties

313 average collected per day

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

COMMUNAL HOUSEHOLDS

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194

blocks will
have bin
exchanges

273

bulk bins will
be replaced

530

containers
will be
delivered

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

BENEFITS OF CHANGES

- Reverting to previous model for communal collections:
 - Aligned service with refuse/recycling on same schedule - easier for residents to understand
 - Communal collected by core rounds - so neighbours share schedule with neighbours
 - More regular, reliable service
- Fewer vehicles passing households without collecting - reducing confusion for residents
- More reactive to missed collections as greater presence - service does not rely on one vehicle
- Collections made by local crews with greater knowledge of areas
- Reducing vehicle movements means less distance travelled and fewer emissions

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

PHASE TWO IMPROVEMENTS

To take place in 2022, aiming for early May

Dover

- Clear day boundaries for all collections services
- Work rebalanced to solve issues, particularly on Tuesdays and Fridays
- Remove instances of towns split into different schedules in rural areas
- Redefine clear boundaries in urban areas in Dover and Walmer / Deal

Folkestone and Hythe

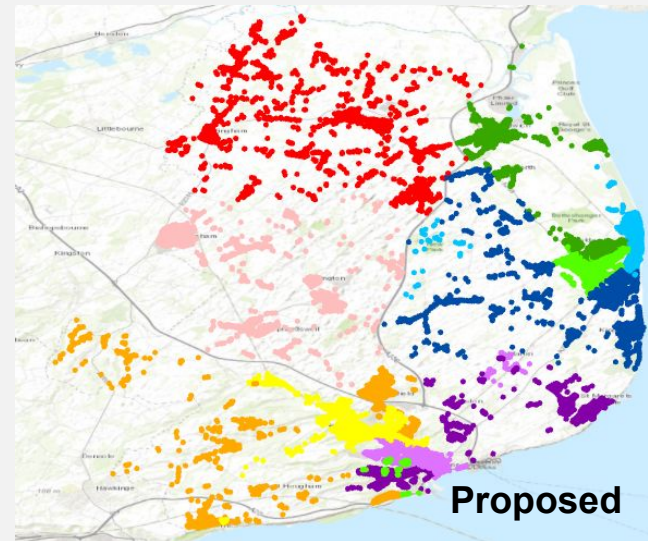
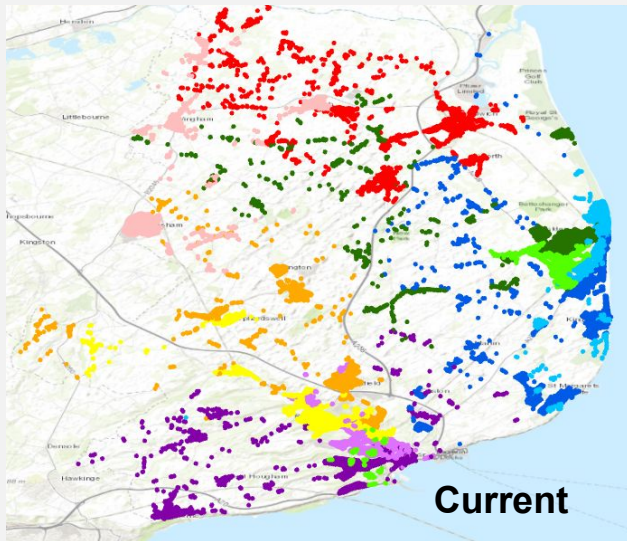
- Move communal properties back onto core services
- This can only be achieved by re-balancing days on core services
- Will be further refined to minimise changes

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

SCHEDULE ALTERATION: DOVER

The improvement will enable the heavier Tuesdays and Fridays to be rebalanced. This impacts particular areas, with the whole of Sandwich moving to a Monday, and Capel and St Margarets changing only by one day. This creates clearly defined boundaries, where neighbours' schedules match with neighbours, and non-core service schedules match core services, as shown on the maps below.

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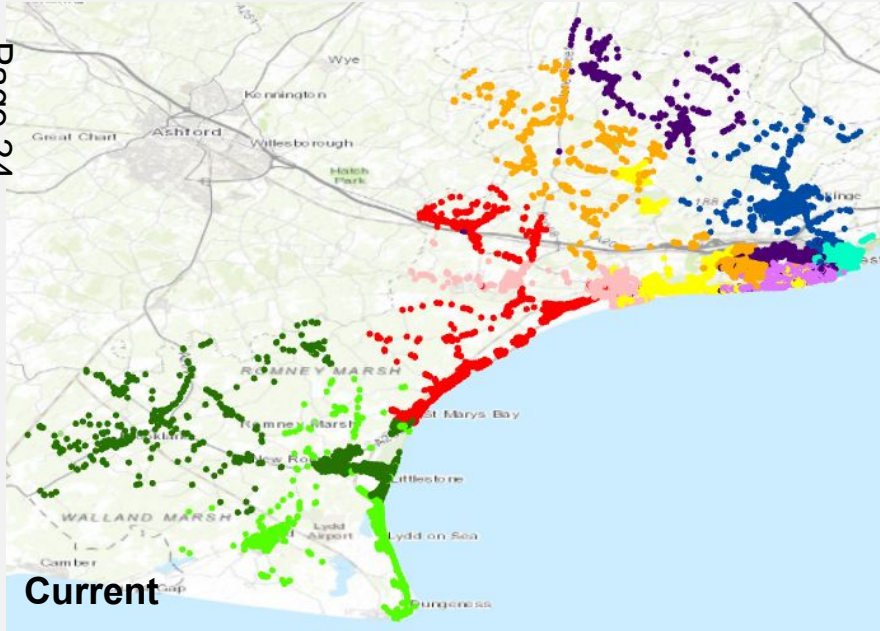
- FridayA
- FridayB
- MondayA
- MondayB
- ThursdayA
- ThursdayB
- TuesdayA
- TuesdayB
- WednesdayA
- WednesdayB

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

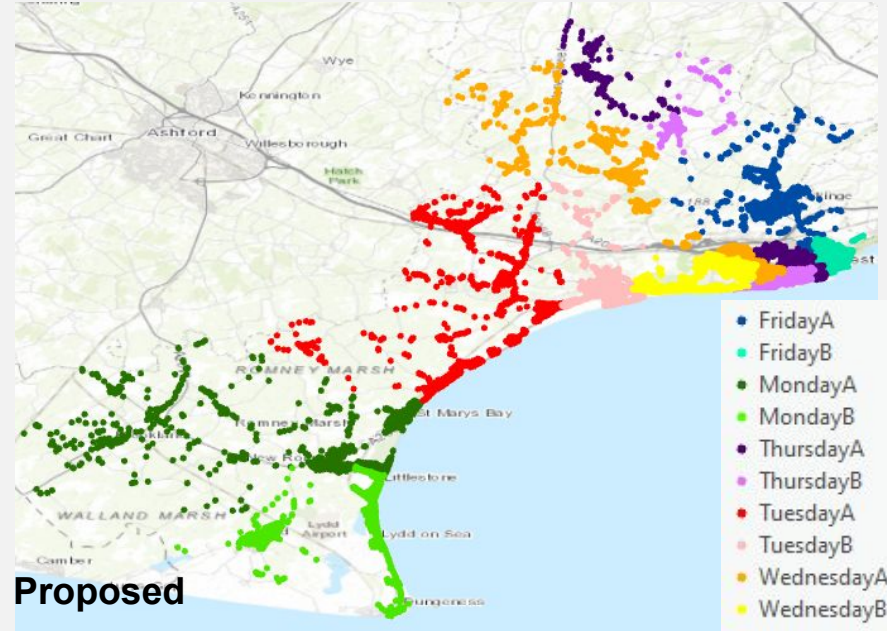
SCHEDULE ALTERATION: FOLKESTONE & HYTHE

As shown by the maps below, particular areas of Folkestone & Hythe are impacted, with part of St Mary's Bay moving to a Tuesday. This enables communal properties to be absorbed into the core rounds later in the week:

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Current



Proposed

- FridayA
- FridayB
- MondayA
- MondayB
- ThursdayA
- ThursdayB
- TuesdayA
- TuesdayB
- WednesdayA
- WednesdayB



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5. Mitigating risks

EAST KENT STATUS UPDATE AND SCHEDULE IMPROVEMENTS

RISK MITIGATIONS FOR PILOT

- Less than 7% of Dover's population affected
- A greater familiarity with Echo than when changes first implemented in spring
- Increased management and administration resource
- New vehicles have arrived and are live on these services
- Little change for crews who are working in similar areas - rounds have been reviewed by drivers
- Core rounds supplemented with additional resources to support changes
- Additional collections for households requiring week change can be well resourced on a Saturday
- Have more resilience in our baseline resources, particularly drivers
- Learning from previous schedule change - including communications methodology