



Cabinet

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Thursday, 3rd December 2015 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Cabinet are:-

Cllr Clarkson – Leader of the Council

Cllr N Bell – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Responsibility for Government Policy Interface & Democracy

Cllr Mrs Bell – Portfolio Responsibility for Public Interaction and Borough Presentation

Cllr Bennett – Portfolio Responsibility for Planning, Development and Enforcement

Cllr Mrs Blanford – Portfolio Responsibility for Culture, Leisure and Environment

Cllr Clokie – Portfolio Responsibility for Housing and Home Ownership

Cllr Galpin – Portfolio Responsibility for Town Centres Focus and Business Dynamics

Cllr Heyes – Portfolio Responsibility for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety

Cllr Miss Martin – Portfolio Responsibility for Information and Communications

Cllr Shorter – Portfolio Responsibility for Finance, Budget and Resource Management

NB: Under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, members of the public can submit a petition to the Cabinet if the issue is within its terms of reference or ask a question or speak concerning any item contained on this Agenda (Procedure Rule 9 refers)

Agenda

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| 2. Declarations of Interest:- To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: | 1 |
| a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) | |
| b) Other Significant Interests (OSI) | |
| c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests | |
| See Agenda Item 2 for further details | |
| 3. Minutes – To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12 th November 2015 | |
| 4. To receive any Petitions | |
| 5. Leader's Announcements | |

Part I – Matters Referred to the Cabinet

None for this Meeting

Part II – Consideration of Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

None for this Meeting

Part III – Ordinary Decision Items - Key Decisions Annotated*

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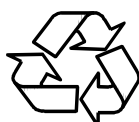
Part V – Cabinet Member Reports

None for this Meeting

Part VI – Ordinary Decision Items

None for this Meeting

KRF/AEH
25th November 2015



Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct as adopted by the Council on 19 July 2012, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted). However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency reasons alone, such as:

- Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc; OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI].

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240134/Openness_and_transparency_on_personal_interests.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, with revisions adopted on 17.10.13, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12th November 2015**

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Britcher, Clarkson, Hicks, Mrs Martin, Chief Executive.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bradford, Buchanan, Burgess, Link, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Smith, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury.

Head of Communities and Housing; Housing Resources Manager; Head of Personnel and Development; Head of Finance; Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development; Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager; Facilities Development Manager; Principal Accountant; Cultural Projects Manager; Communications and Marketing Manager; Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

198 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Smith	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item No. 6 as he was a retired Unison member.	200

199 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8th October 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

200 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015 - 2045

The report provided Members with the annual update of the HRA Business Plan financial projections and the affordability of agreed plans and priorities. Due to the four year rent reduction announced in the July 2015 Budget, Ashford was currently

anticipating an income loss of £10 m over the next four years and a loss of £160 m over the 30 year Business Plan cycle. A cost recovery programme had been actioned to recover the financial position of the HRA to ensure it remained affordable.

The Portfolio Holder referred to paragraph 20 of the report and said that in his view it was very unlikely that if a new Government was elected it would return the rent increases to their previous levels. He also explained that the recommendations within the report would allow the process of consultation with staff to commence which stemmed from the reduction in the work of the Building Maintenance team.

A Member referred to the issue regarding potential redundancies and said it appeared that the Council was not following its adopted policies and correct procedures and he therefore asked the Cabinet to consider deferring those elements of the report regarding the proposed redundancies to allow time to consider the potential for voluntary redundancies across the board.

The Chairman indicated that he did not support the request made by the Member and confirmed that following adoption of this report, the Council's normal processes would be followed. The Head of Personnel and Development confirmed that no decisions had been taken or were proposed regarding redundancies in the report and that a further report would be submitted to the Joint Consultative Committee in due course and appropriate due procedures.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and Financial Projections be agreed.**
 - (ii) the savings programme to recover the financial position be approved.**
 - (iii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to review the HRA Business Plan Financial Projections as part of the budget scrutiny process.**

201 Spearpoint Community Sports Pavilion: Request for Additional Capital Funding

The report advised that the lowest acceptable tender received exceeded the anticipated estimate by £49,000 and by allowing a prudent 10% contingency the revised estimated cost was £918,000 which represented a revised total project cost of £130,000 above the anticipated level. The report sought Cabinet's approval for a capital budget allocation of £130,000 to address these costs.

The Portfolio Holder said that the tenders had come in higher than expected which was largely attributable to the upturn in the economy and the fact that building skills were now more in demand. Subject to the Cabinet and Council approving the recommendations, it was hoped to start on site in February/March 2016.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the tenders had been submitted on a fixed contract basis.

A Member said he wished to place on record the work undertaken by the Ward Member for Little Burton Farm in bringing the project to fruition.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) entering into a contract for the demolition and construction of a new building be approved within the revised project budget of £918,000 subject to approval by the Council.**
 - (ii) an additional capital contribution of £130,000 be agreed for the renewal of the Spearpoint Pavilion to be funded from strategic 106 contributions and/or New Homes Bonus as detailed within the report.**
 - (iii) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be given authority in consultation with the Head of Culture and the Environment to:**
 - (a) execute and complete all necessary documentation, and**
 - (b) in consultation with the Chief Executive take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.**

202 Gambling Act 2005 – Policy Revision

The report presented a revision to Ashford Borough Council's Gambling Policy for public consultation which had been prepared in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

The Portfolio Holder advised that there were no significant implications associated with the latest revision of the policy.

A Member referred to paragraph 6 of the report and said that he believed that it should be clarified that the majority of the establishments listed were in the urban areas of Ashford.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the revised Gambling Policy Statement be approved for the purposes of issuing for consultation.**
 - (ii) the Cabinet notes that the majority of gambling related businesses were located in the Ashford urban area (with one betting shop in Tenterden).**

203 Budget Monitoring Report – Second Quarter 2015/16

The report presented the Second Quarter Budget Monitoring Report for the current year for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, and the Collection Fund. The report indicated that this quarter the General Fund was projected to be £30,000 over its original budget, a £16,000 movement from the last quarter where a slight overspend of £14,000 had been projected.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Budget Monitoring position as at 30th September 2015 be noted.
- (ii) the New Homes Bonus Schedule in Appendix A be noted.

204 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2015/16

The report advised Members and the public of the performance of the Council during the Second Quarter. This included information on what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision-making, key performance data on front line services and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacted upon the Council's work.

The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the fact that the average number of families requiring temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation during the quarter had risen slightly to just under 15 a month. He acknowledged the significant contribution made by the Christchurch Road accommodation but believed that the overall situation needed to be closely monitored.

Resolved:

That the performance for Quarter 2, 2015/16 be noted.

205 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28th September 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28th September 2015 be received and noted.

206 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 20th October 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 20th October 2015 be received and noted.

207 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 23rd October 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 23rd October 2015 be received and noted.

208 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

(KRF/AEH)

MINS:CAXX1546

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees

Agenda Item No: 6
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 03 December 2015
Report Title: Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Neil Shorter Holder for Finance & Budget, Resource Management and Procurement
Report Author: Ben Lockwood – Head of Finance
Maria Seddon – Principal Accountant



Summary: This is the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The Comprehensive spending review is yet to be announced, due on 25th November, however if there is time after the announcement but before the Cabinet meeting a tabled paper will be available on the day.

There has been communication that has indicated that the draft supplement will be released on 16th December.

The draft budget outlined in this report will form the basis of budget scrutiny and budget consultation processes. Overall the General Fund draft budget has a variance of £76,000 against the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The report also includes the draft Housing Revenue Account budget which includes the reduction in rent of 1% for 2016/17.

Key Decision: YES

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **The Cabinet be asked to:-**

1. Note the budget context (Section 1 Context)
2. Approve the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 (noting that it is submitted before the government's announcement of the provisional grant settlement) (Section 2 - Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17).
3. Approve the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2016/17 (Section 3 Housing Revenue Account).
4. Agree that this report will be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, parish councils and staff.

5. Agree the preliminary draft budget as set out in the report should now be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.

Policy Overview: The council's revenue budget is intended to support the priorities set out within the Business Plan and flows through from the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Business Plan is geared to ensuring that priorities are delivered and that the council's service activities are managed within the constraints of the forecast cuts in government funding.

Financial Implications: The council has a requirement to produce a MTFP and a balanced budget. Members must note that the settlement figures have not yet been announced, so this report contains an assumed level of government funding.

The Medium Term Financial Plan forecast has signalled significant budget pressures and a strategy to manage this, with budget savings of £1.6m was reported to Cabinet in July.

The HRA budget has been prepared on the basis of the priorities agreed by Council. The plans for maintaining investment in housing stock are affordable within the current resource forecasts.

Risk Assessment YES – this paper contains advice on the risks to the budget.

Equalities Impact Assessment NO - not at this stage, however an assessment will be included in the February report.

Other Material Implications: The Council underwent significant public consultation when the Business Plan was developed.

Further consultation will be undertaken with the Joint Consultative Committee and business community, with findings reported back in February.

Contacts: Maria.seddon@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330547

Report Title: Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17

Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary draft budget for 2016/17. The report explains the important background and contextual information to the medium term financial plan (MTFP) and next year's budget.
2. This is a preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 as at the time of writing this report there is no final statement from Government about the council's levels of grant support for next year, expected to be announced during November therefore the announcement will be tabled at the meeting.

Issue to be Decided

3. Members are asked to consider the contextual information against which the MTFP and preliminary draft budget have been developed.
4. To approve the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 for the purpose of public consultation, consultation with the parish councils, and for the basis of budget scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Executive Summary

5. The Council has agreed the corporate plan covering the period 2015-20 outlining the four proposed priorities for the Council. The underpinning Medium Term Financial Plan has also been approved and is in line with the Council's business plan. This draft budget has been built based on the MTFP and reflects the corporate plan priorities.
6. The corporate plan sets the broad context for financial planning over the medium and short term.
7. The national context for this budget (Section 1 Context) is one of improving economic data but with the Governments deficit remaining stubbornly high. The comprehensive spending review is due to be announced on 25th November, with the detail of the announcement being published a few days later. There will be a further update at the meeting if possible.
8. This has been reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reported to the October Cabinet meeting, that forecasts government grant to be reduced to zero (as a worst case assumption) by 2018. In response to this in 2014 the Council has developed and agreed savings proposals totalling £1.6m, sought ways to reduce the levy paid on business rates, developed a Borrowing and Acquisitions Policy to support the council with income generation. The MTFP forecast shows that the budget gap is manageable for the first 3 years of the plan and then there is an increasing gap in the latter years that will need to be managed. The MTFP report in October outlined a strategy for managing these pressures up to 2020/21.
9. The detailed budget for 2016/17 (Section 2 - Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17) has now been drafted which is broadly in line with the targets

established within the MTFP. The budget is based upon a 2% increase in Council Tax which will see still the Council maintaining its position as the lowest in Kent

10. The report includes the draft budget for the Housing Revenue Account (Section 3 Housing Revenue Account) that is in line with the HRA business plan that was reported to members in November.
11. The forecast for the Councils capital reserves (Section 4 - Capital Resources) included in shows that these resources remain scarce, as a consequence borrowing will need to be used to fund the majority of capital investments which carries a higher revenue budget cost.
12. This report seeks Cabinets approval to the draft budget that will then form the basis of the budget scrutiny and consultation processes with the final budget due to be reported to the February Cabinet for approval and recommendation to Full Council.

Structure of the report

13. For ease of consideration this report is split into sections;
 - i. Context
 - ii. Preliminary draft budget
 - iii. Housing Revenue Account
 - iv. Capital resource forecast and capital programme implications
 - v. Next steps

Section 1 Context

Background

The Business Plan

14. In October the council agreed the Corporate Plan that contained the key themes as areas of important focus over the period 2015 - 2020. These are:
 - a. Enterprising Ashford
 - b. Living Ashford
 - c. Active and Creative Ashford
 - d. Attractive Ashford

The Economy

Inflationary pressure

15. Inflation of £667,000 is built into the MTFP for 2016/17 with a budget requirement of £13.9m, despite inflation being around (0.1%) this indicates a real inflation of 4.8%. Included within this inflation figure are the increase to employee NI contributions and contract inflation.
16. The September RPI figure, upon which many of our contracts will set their inflation increases and that the Business Rates Multiplier will be based upon was 0.8%. The MTFP had allowed for 0.9% for contractual inflation and 2% for increases in Business Rates income so there is a potential negative impact on the budget as we could achieve less income.

The Medium Term Financial Plan

17. The Medium Term Financial plan was reported to members in detail in October. This highlighted a growing budget gap driven by reducing revenue support grant (the 'staple' of local authority funding) reducing to a *de minimis* level by 2018, and the inflationary effect on costs whilst growth in funding and income streams is pegged to below inflation levels.
18. The plan shows that by 2019/20 further action will be needed to manage the developing budget gap and there is a strategy outlined in the MTFP reported at the October Cabinet meeting.

Table 2: MTFP 2016-2021

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Revenue Support Grant	(1,391)	(834)	0	0	0
S31 Grant NNDR reliefs	(575)	(596)	(617)	(638)	(659)
Retained Business Rates	(3,289)	(3,630)	(4,671)	(5,011)	(5,352)
NNDR Growth	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus (50% allocated to support base budget)	(3,471)	(3,939)	(3,808)	(3,479)	(3,043)
Total Government Funding	(8,726)	(8,999)	(9,096)	(9,128)	(9,054)
Council Tax	(6,313)	(6,528)	(6,787)	(7,026)	(7,294)
Total Income Receipts (Including Specific Grants)	(46,859)	(46,902)	(46,959)	(47,105)	(47,252)
Base Budget Gross Expenditure	60,931	61,648	62,714	63,672	64,780
Budget Increases	1,152	1,082	1,158	1,379	1,529
Budget Reduction Strategy	(360)	(41)	0	0	0
BUDGET GAP	(175)	260	1,030	1,792	2,709
Quantified savings proposals					
Income from Acquisitions Policy	0	(100)	(200)	(271)	
Pooling Business Rates	(200)				
Grounds Maintenance	125	125			
Allocation to/from reserves	250	(285)	(424)		
	0	0	406	1,521	2,709

19. Overall the Council needs to be mindful of the Comprehensive Spending Review. It is believed that the MTFP assumptions are reasonably robust and the Council can look forward to a stable couple of years however consideration needs to be given to closing the future budget gap.

Local Government Funding

20. The MTP assumes a total reduction of government funding over a 3 year period of 30%. The Comprehensive Spending Review and subsequent settlement will highlight how this is to be accomplished. The Council will need to review the MTFP assumptions after the announcements to ensure it is still robust and achievable plan.

Council Tax Support scheme

21. As part of the welfare reform agenda Government abolished council tax benefit in 2013 and replaced this with the requirement for councils (the billing authorities) to introduce locally agreed schemes offering council tax discounts to residents. The Government transferred 90% funding to local authorities and last year the Council consulted on and introduced its local scheme with:
- Full protection to pensioner claimants
 - 95% protection to eligible disabled claimants
 - a 10% contribution to council tax from working-age claimants (those that had previously received full council tax benefit).
22. A full report on the proposed scheme for 2016/17 is elsewhere on the agenda. This preliminary budget and the Tax Base (the Council Tax Support Scheme has the effect of reducing the tax base) has been prepared on the basis of an unchanged scheme.

Local Retention of Business Rates (Still to be updated)

23. Under the current scheme government retain 50% of business rates with 40% being retained by the district council and the remaining 10% being allocated to the county council and fire authorities. Local authorities then either pay tariffs (ABC's is circa £15.5m out of £18.0m retained) or top-ups in a system to equalise resources between authorities. Finally a levy is paid on growth over a baseline figure (ABC's levy rate is 50%) and a government safety net is offered to authorities who's income falls by 7.5% below the baseline.
24. Last year the Council joined the Kent Business Rates Pool, which sought to reduce the levy paid on business rates growth. However membership also meant that pool members would support each other rather than rely on the government safety net, should income levels drop. Any gain was shared between the districts, county council and used to set up an economic development fund with 10% ring-fenced to cover safety net risks. The Council did not assume any gain in the first year of membership but decided to utilise any gain achieved in the following year. Due to previously reported changes in business rates appeals for doctors surgeries we are seeing only a slight gain, however there is an expectation that this should grow if business rates appeals levels fall. This is shown in more detail in **Appendix A**.
25. In his conference speech the Chancellor signalled an intention to allow authorities to retain 100% of business rates whilst retaining the system of tariffs and top-ups and safety net. There is little detail on how this proposal will work or what is expected in return for this funding. Business Rates generates £26bn and local government retains £10bn, formula grant costs £11bn and new homes bonus under £2bn. With 30-40% reductions expected in that figure we will need to understand what additional burdens are to be funded from business rates before drawing any firm conclusions on this announcement. It must however be noted that for a long time Local government has lobbied for a greater control over business rates and any increase in our ability to control and influence our own funding should be cautiously welcomed.
26. The Chancellors announcement will mean that the benefits for pooling will be diluted in the long term however until the new system is in place pooling still offers the Council potential benefits. Government is uncertain how to treat new pooling applications after the announcement, but if un-altered the Kent Pool can continue. There has however been one application to join the pool and one to leave the pool. A letter has been sent to Government requesting that should changes to pools be acceptable then Dartford can join and Dover leave the pool, should changes not be acceptable to pool should continue unchanged.

New Homes Bonus

27. The new homes bonus (NHB) was introduced by Government in 2011-12, with a view to it becoming a powerful incentive for local authorities to deliver growth in housing numbers. The Government committed to pay six years of the national average band D council tax for each new property, split 80% to the district authority and 20% to the County. It is important to remember that at a national level the funding for NHB is top-sliced from total government

funding available for local authorities the balance of which then is allocated as formula grant.

28. New homes bonus is measured on the number of properties that have been completed for a year October to September using data submitted on the council tax base return to government. This return has been completed showing 385 new properties and 3 conversions of long term empty properties, giving a total of 388 for new homes bonus, this equates to circa £407,000 potential payment from next April. This is less than the number estimated in the MTFP which was 400 properties or to circa £420,000.
29. The Council has a new policy for allocating new home bonus funding with the following splits:
 - 50% base budget
 - 25% Corporate Project Priorities
 - 25% Income generating projects
30. This split enables the Council to continue its current operations, deliver the Corporate Plan and to invest in projects that will generate a future annual income enabling the Council to become less dependent on government grant in future years.
31. Members and Management Team will be presented with project proposals from Services to be funded from the new homes bonus allocation soon and recommendations reported to Cabinet. Currently there is £285,000 available for corporate projects and £758,000 available for income generating projects.

Council Tax and Local Referendums on Council Tax

32. The MTFP has included a Council Tax increase of 1.99% for 2016/17 and this is reflected in the Draft Budget.
33. The Localism Act replaced the Secretary of State's powers to cap council tax increases with a requirement for councils, who are minded to agree 'excessive increases' in council tax, to hold a local referendum, with the result determined by a simple majority.
34. The level of increase that triggers a referendum is set by the Secretary of State and for 2016/17 the level is expected to remain at 2%. The form of the question to be put in any local referendum is also determined by the Secretary of State. Should a referendum be necessary councils must have a shadow budget in place in the event that a referendum does not support the proposed council tax increase.
35. There have been no Government announcements to encourage local authorities to freeze council tax for 2016/17

Section 2 - Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17

36. The detailed preliminary draft budget has been built without the benefit of the final local government finance settlement and so this leaves some uncertainty over the level of funding that can be expected.
37. The draft budget presented below includes a 1.99% increase in council tax, with the borough Council's element of the charge now being £148.35 (2015/16 was £145.45) for a band d property, this will still leave the council with the lowest council tax in Kent, the next lowest is Tunbridge Wells with a band d equivalent in 2015/16 of £158.63, over £10 greater than our proposed figure for 2016/17.
38. Services were given targets from the MTFP against which they had to build their budgets. Budgets have then been built in detail and services have largely been able to manage within the expenditure limits set. Some pressures have come out during the process but these have mainly been managed within the services.
- 39.
40. The preliminary draft budget is summarised below.

Table 4 – Preliminary Draft Revenue Budget 2015/16

ACTUALS 2014/15 £	ESTIMATE 2015/16 £	PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16 £	DETAIL	ESTIMATE 2016/17 £
12,662,382	13,468,570	13,530,610	Service Expenditure	14,159,230
2,357,724	265,120	248,120	Contribution to/(from) Balances	850,970
(2,947,755)	(2,106,830)	(2,106,830)	Government Grant	(1,390,510)
(2,183,239)	(2,628,370)	(2,628,370)	Retained Business Rates	(3,289,100)
(953,730)	(554,000)	(554,000)	Business Rates S31 Grants	(575,050)
(2,875,218)	(2,324,000)	(2,339,000)	New Homes Bonus	(3,471,050)
62,110	41,500	41,500	Parish CTS Payment	41,500
(6,105,813)	(6,161,990)	(6,161,990)	Council Tax	(6,490,310)
16,461	0	30,040	Budget Gap	(164,320)

41. The details of service expenditure are attached at **Appendix** . Subject to Cabinet's approval this budget will then be scrutinised and form the basis of the budget consultation process that will be completed in time for a final draft budget to be presented to Cabinet in February.

Section 3 Housing Revenue Account

HRA Business Plan

42. A full HRA business plan and the proposed savings programme were presented to Cabinet in November. This preliminary draft budget is created from the plan. As the November report highlighted Government proposals to reduce the national cost of Housing Benefit as part of its deficit reduction programme announced in the July 2015 Budget highlight significant change to rent policy in the social housing sector, reducing rents by 1% each year for the next 4 years.
43. Following the government proposal work has been done to reduce future HRA expenditure which includes a reduction in staff and scaling down the new build programme.
44. Cabinet agreed that the HRA business plan should be scrutinised alongside the general fund preliminary budget as part of the budget scrutiny process. Further a member lead task group will oversee the HRA Business Plan and as appropriate make recommendations to Cabinet about future investment within the HRA.

Draft HRA Budget 2016/17

45. The HRA Budget has been built to enable the council to: maintain Decent Homes Standards, service the debt as a result of the HRA subsidy reform, and the 1% rent reduction announced earlier this year.

Table 5 – Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2016/17

ACTUALS	ESTIMATE	PROJECTED	DETAIL	ESTIMATE
2014/15	2015/16	OUTTURN		2016/17
£	£	2015/16		£
		£		
(25,017,571)	(24,794,010)	(24,756,070)	Income	(24,272,210)
(4,307,835)	4,584,800	4,602,500	Supervision and Management	4,684,310
3,642,766	3,622,340	3,622,340	Repairs	3,449,760
773,311	880,920	961,020	New Build	844,910
24,937,190	16,075,770	15,867,180	Other Expenditure	18,462,620
27,861	369,820	296,970	DEFICIT/ (SURPLUS) IN YEAR	3,169,390

46. These figures are in line with the position forecast within the HRA business plan that was reported to cabinet last month, with a deficit anticipated. This is due to capital expenditure on existing projects and the impact of the 1% rent reduction.
47. Members are asked to approve the preliminary HRA budget for 2016/17 for scrutiny purposes.

Section 4 - Capital Resources

48. The Council prepares a capital programme annually and approves capital projects throughout the year. Financing of these projects are proposed during the project plans however final financing will be approved at the end of the year.
49. Due to the nature of some reserves it is best to utilise these first and retain flexibility for the Council, for example, capital receipts can only be used on capital purposes therefore it is better to use these reserves first and keep revenue reserves, which can be used for any purpose.
50. The Housing Revenue Account has two kinds of capital receipts, general capital receipts that can be used for any capital purpose, and one-for-one receipts that can only be used for the provision of new affordable housing. To ensure the Council has enough flexibility in its capital financing and complies with the one-for-one commitment to government, these latter receipts will always be used first before capital receipts and revenue reserves.

Capital Resource Forecast

51. Capital investment is currently made from the following funding streams:
 - a. Internal resources such as capital receipts and revenue reserves.
 - b. Prudential (external) borrowing. The Medium Term Financial Plan provides specific support to borrow £500,000 in each year for General Fund property projects for 5 years with a further £2m for strategic acquisitions that must be supported by a business plan. The allocation for 2014/15 has not been fully utilised, therefore the borrowing allocation has been brought forward into 2015/16.
 - c. Third party grants and contributions from government, other authorities and other grant bodies.
 - d. Section 106 developer contributions – as at 31 March 2015 contributions amounting to £4m (capital & revenue) were held in reserves. The current capital programme includes around £3m of developer contribution funding.
52. The table below shows the forecast based on current assumptions including that supported by revenue resources to support spending of a capital nature. The table does not include activity on the Borrowing & Acquisition Policy.

Table 6 – Capital resource forecast

Resources available	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Resources brought forward:				
Capital receipts	0	1	5	12
Repairs and renewals reserve	254	139	129	119
Borrowing limit unapplied	500	500	0	0
	754	640	134	131
Potential resources				
Estimate of capital receipts	189	192	195	199
Estimate of reserve contributions to the repairs & renewal reserve	0	40	40	40
Approved borrowing limit supported by the revenue budget	2,513	357	0	0
Total potential resources	3,456	1,229	369	370
Current planned outlay financed by:				
Use of capital receipts	188	188	188	188
Use of the repairs & renewal reserve	115	50	50	50
Use of prudential borrowing (principally for the asset maintenance programme)	2,513	857	0	0
Total outlay	2,816	1,095	238	238
Uncommitted resources carried forward	640	134	131	132

Capital Resource Allocation

53. The corporate plan including the Borrowing and Acquisition Policy, have been discussed and approved by Cabinet. Projects relating to the plan will be developed, with all financial implications and risks assessed, £200,000 has been set aside to facilitate this and investigate sites coming forward.

Capital Investment to Generate Income

54. This year the Council purchased Wilkinsons in the Town Centre and this will contribute £178,000 per annum to the revenue budget after financing from 2016/17.
55. The Council continues to look at ways to generate income to support the revenue budget and has allocated 25% of New Homes Bonus to be spent on income generating projects which will be around £758,000 in 2016/17.

Section 5 - Next Steps

Next Steps

56. Once approved by Cabinet it is proposed to submit this preliminary budget for formal scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Budget Scrutiny Task Group. This will include an examination of the base budget, assumptions on inflation, growth items and budget reduction proposals. The scrutiny process will continue throughout December and January with conclusions reported to the Cabinet in February.
57. This report will form the basis of consultation with the business community, the public and parish councils. A summary document will be produced and sent to key stakeholders and posted on the website for comment.
58. The Chancellor is due to announce the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25th November and sometime after this, the provisional local government finance settlement will be published for consultation. Officers will need to study this carefully and where necessary respond to the consultation. The implications of the settlement can then be modelled into the draft budget and strategies for closing any remaining budget gap be identified.
59. The final budget report will be presented to Cabinet in February which will include any additional proposals for the budget and recommend to Cabinet the measures necessary to bridge any remaining budget gap. If there is a need to report any financial issues arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review to Cabinet in January.

Risk Assessment

60. A full risk assessment of the council's budget will be undertaken and reported as part of the final draft budget report to Cabinet in February.

Community Impact Assessment

61. A Stage 1 screening tool will be completed for the February draft budget report, although it is expected that any changes to service delivery will be assessed and reported separately.

Consultation

62. An extensive consultation process was undertaken as part of the development of the Corporate Plan; this included a customer satisfaction survey to identify residents' priorities and help allocate resources within the budget. Decisions flowing from that consultation are reflected in the preliminary draft budget.
63. All service managers and budget holders have been consulted in the budgeting process with views sought on the assumptions incorporated into the MTFP and have built service budgets on a zero based approach.
64. It is proposed to include a budget consultation document on the council's website as soon as possible following this meeting. A summary will be sent to business community and parish councils' representatives.

Conclusion

65. This budget is set against a background of continued government cuts to grant funding and controls on income levels. This balanced preliminary budget will now be used as a basis for the budget consultation and scrutiny processes.
66. Until the local government settlement is finally known and understood it is not possible to give definite advice on the strategy to manage any possible additional budget gap.

Portfolio Holder's Views

67.

Contact: Maria Seddon

Email: Maria.seddon@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix A

Kent Business Rates Pool

The Council has undertaken to join the Kent Business Rates pool for 2015/16. It is the intention of the pool to reduce the levy payable by authorities on growth and to promote economic development.

The membership of the pool would reduce the levy due to 1%, the savings achieved would be distributed 30% to this Council, 30% to Kent County Council, 30% would be allocated for economic development within the borough and 10% would be earmarked to provide for risks to the pool.

The Performance of the pool has been effected by the Doctors Surgery's appeals issue that was previously reported and the impact of a major employer in TMBC entering liquidation. Ashford has had to manage Doctors Surgery appeals of £1m reducing the forecast gain from £600,000 to £58,000.

Kent Business Rates Pool

Local Authority	Top up/ Tariff	Baseline Need (£m)	NDR Baseline (£m)	Top up/ (Tariff) (£m)	Levy %	Total Income (£m)	Amount above baseline (£m)
Kent CC	Top up	170.540	47.601	122.939	0%	173.834	3.294
Kent Fire	Top up	13.526	6.173	7.353	0%	13.848	0.322
Ashford	Tariff	2.612	18.106	-15.495	50%	2.670	0.058
Canterbury	Tariff	4.254	20.726	-16.472	50%	4.466	0.212
Dover	Tariff	3.363	13.880	-10.517	50%	3.548	0.185
Gravesham	Tariff	2.691	9.090	-6.399	50%	3.685	0.994
Maidstone	Tariff	2.959	22.450	-19.491	50%	4.829	1.871
Shepway	Tariff	3.388	9.739	-6.351	50%	5.461	2.074
Swale	Tariff	3.894	15.413	-11.519	50%	6.443	2.549
Thanet	Tariff	4.587	13.142	-8.555	50%	4.844	0.257
Tonbridge and Malling	Tariff	2.089	22.239	-20.150	50%	1.894	-0.195
Tunbridge Wells	Tariff	2.155	19.957	-17.802	50%	3.418	1.262
Total	Tariff	216.058	218.516	-2.458	1.125%	228.941	12.883

The pool will have a levy rate of 1.12% (outside the pool Ashford pays a levy of 50%).

Appendix B Budget Summaries

REVENUE BUDGET

SUMMARY

ACTUALS 2014/15 £	ESTIMATE 2015/16 £	PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16 £	DETAIL	ESTIMATE 2016/17 £
1,602,600	1,743,850	1,775,210	Corporate, Strategy & Personnel	1,756,140
1,134,554	1,310,700	1,303,630	Legal & Democratic	1,375,280
1,748,960	1,821,590	1,821,180	Planning & Development	1,948,800
2,101,315	2,167,060	2,167,010	Financial Services	2,552,570
241,023	298,540	348,550	Communications & Technology	393,270
775,617	888,690	903,250	Housing Services	915,710
451,022	891,010	838,450	Health, Parking & Community Safety	825,970
4,450,502	4,627,570	4,562,760	Environment and Customer Services	4,821,510
(936,132)	(1,060,370)	(1,049,960)	Corporate Property & Projects	(1,519,720)
2,499,885	2,604,870	2,685,470	Culture & the Environment	2,294,270
14,069,346	15,293,510	15,355,550	SERVICE EXPENDITURE	15,363,800
(1,694,370)	(2,106,200)	(2,106,200)	Capital Charges & Net Interest	(1,475,830)
50,180	40,260	40,260	Concurrent Functions Grant	30,260
237,227	241,000	241,000	Drainage Board Levies	241,000
2,357,724	265,120	248,120	Contribution to Balances	850,970
15,020,107	13,733,690	13,778,730	ABC BUDGET REQUIREMENT	15,010,200
			INCOME	
(2,947,755)	(2,106,830)	(2,106,830)	Government Grant	(1,390,510)
(2,183,239)	(2,628,370)	(2,628,370)	Retained Business Rates	(3,289,100)
(953,730)	(554,000)	(554,000)	Business Rates S31 Grants	(575,050)
(2,875,218)	(2,324,000)	(2,339,000)	New Homes Bonus	(3,471,050)
62,110	41,500	41,500	Parish CTS Payment	41,500
(6,105,813)	(6,161,990)	(6,161,990)	Council Tax	(6,490,310)
16,462	0	30,040	Budget Gap	(164,320)

GENERAL FUND SUMMARY 2016/17 BUDGET

ACTUALS	ESTIMATE	PROJECTED	DETAIL	ESTIMATE
2014/15	2015/16	2015/16		2016/17
£	£	£		£
			Corporate, Strategy & Personnel	
(245)	70	70	Audit Partnership	40
828,188	677,570	724,860	Corporate Allocable Costs	757,290
339,479	327,880	322,180	Corporate Management	328,580
18,953	152,800	138,160	Personnel & Development	90,070
127,853	175,160	179,570	Policy & Performance	161,300
288,371	410,370	410,370	Single Grants Gateway	418,860
1,602,600	1,743,850	1,775,210		1,756,140
			Legal & Democratic	
810,970	857,290	841,870	Democratic Representation	903,220
277,479	395,580	395,580	Electoral Services	422,920
(9,237)	0	8,350	Legal	(190)
55,342	57,830	57,830	Mayor	49,330
1,134,554	1,310,700	1,303,630		1,375,280
			Planning & Development	
116,381	120,730	127,360	Building Control	144,580
777,919	866,170	935,210	Development Control	860,670
458,621	349,370	349,760	Economic Development	404,000
1,074	(21,360)	(20,600)	Land Charges	(8,620)
(1,474)	0	(8,070)	Planning Administration	0
396,440	506,680	437,520	Strategic Planning	548,170
1,748,960	1,821,590	1,821,180		1,948,800
			Financial Services	
28,058	500	500	Accountancy	40
756,816	615,000	589,730	Benefits Administration	823,710
194,671	323,470	348,690	Council Tax Collection	442,070
(281)	(1,010)	(1,010)	Debtors/Debt Recovery	(1,130)
13,090	(20)	(20)	Exchequer	10
(248,196)	(245,290)	(245,290)	Housing Benefits Payments	(256,000)
(113,900)	(2,590)	(2,590)	Miscellaneous Expenditure	71,240
(56,751)	(88,580)	(88,580)	NNDR Collection	(82,120)
1,527,808	1,565,580	1,565,580	Non-Distributed Costs	1,554,750
2,101,315	2,167,060	2,167,010		2,552,570
			Communications & Technology	
229,243	204,030	202,480	Communications & Marketing	279,260
(108)	470	(11,430)	Telephony	(10)
(87,465)	2,440	65,900	ICT	16,680
99,353	91,600	91,600	Emergency Planning	97,340
241,023	298,540	348,550		393,270

ACTUALS	ESTIMATE	PROJECTED	DETAIL	ESTIMATE
2014/15	2015/16	2015/16		2016/17
£	£	£		£
			Housing Services	
1,367	17,870	63,730	Private Sector Housing	51,620
135,475	141,280	141,280	Housing Strategy and Enabling	145,770
640,056	713,080	690,520	Housing Options	721,460
(1,281)	16,460	7,720	Gypsy Site - Chilmington	(3,140)
775,617	888,690	903,250		915,710
			Health, Parking & Community Safety	
455,895	505,190	535,130	Community Safety ,AMC, Licencing	550,410
676,368	692,680	689,180	Environmental Health	650,680
(681,241)	(306,860)	(385,860)	Parking & Engineering	(375,120)
451,022	891,010	838,450		825,970
			Environment and Customer Services	
(2,558)	(10)	10,390	Visitor & Call Centre	(20)
486,063	598,320	606,430	Street Scene	597,670
2,871,340	2,997,850	2,914,530	Refuse, Recycling, Street Clean	3,006,470
1,095,658	1,031,410	1,031,410	Parks And Open Spaces	1,217,390
4,450,502	4,627,570	4,562,760		4,821,510
			Corporate Property & Projects	
25,756	35,990	33,900	Project Office	41,560
(961,888)	(1,096,360)	(1,083,860)	Corporate Property & Projects	(1,561,280)
(936,132)	(1,060,370)	(1,049,960)		(1,519,720)
			Culture & the Environment	
334,163	237,820	237,820	Cultural Services Management	219,070
1,488,095	1,700,590	1,779,190	Leisure Centres	1,343,460
163,066	159,560	159,560	Conservation	161,590
171,856	129,490	131,490	Tourism	146,340
342,706	377,410	377,410	Cultural Projects	423,810
2,499,885	2,604,870	2,685,470		2,294,270
14,069,346	15,293,510	15,355,550	Net Expenditure on Services	15,363,800
			Other Items	
(1,694,370)	(2,106,200)	(2,106,200)	Capital Charges & Net Interest	(1,475,830)
50,180	40,260	40,260	Concurrent Functions	30,260
237,227	241,000	241,000	Levies & Precepts	241,000
2,357,723	265,120	248,120	Contributions to/from Reserves	850,970
15,020,106	13,733,690	13,778,730		15,010,200

Agenda Item No: 7
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 3rd December 2015
Report Title: The Next Five Years:
The Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020 (final version)
Report Author: John Bunnett, Chief Executive
Kirsty Hogarth, Policy & Performance Manager
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Clarkson, Leader of the Council



Summary:

In October Cabinet considered a suite of reports entitled, 'The Next Five Years', which included an initial version of The Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020.

At that October meeting Cabinet agreed the four priorities for the Corporate Plan and the underpinning principles which supported them and the work of the Council generally.

This report now attaches the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020 for Cabinet's approval; it has been amended to reflect Cabinet's feedback from the first document and has been designed and produced so that it is publication-ready. It also has an accompanying appendix (entitled 'Context & Facts') which includes some of the statistical evidence used to back up our priorities.

Key Decision: YES

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **The Cabinet be asked to agree the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020 (and the accompanying appendix) so that it can be published and made available in both printed and digital media.**

Policy Overview: In line with the Council's commitment to develop a new Corporate Plan on the expiry of the previous Plan (Focus 2013-2015)

Financial Implications: The Corporate Plan drives resource allocations (in both financial and staffing terms) and affects resource planning on both financial and staffing.

Other Material Implications: None identified at this stage

Exemption Clauses:

Contacts: kirsty.hogarth@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330413)

Report Title: The Next Five Years: The Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020
(final version)

Purpose of the Report

1. To obtain Cabinet approval for the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020: The Next Five Years and its publication.

Issue to be Decided

2. To agree the Corporate Plan for the next five years, to support budget and other resource planning and programming across the authority.

Background

3. Members will be aware that the Corporate Plan for 2015 to 2020 has been an evolving piece of work, involving Cabinet Members, Management Team and Heads of Service covering the breadth of services across the Council.
4. This work resulted in a developing Corporate Plan (agreed by Cabinet: 8.10.15) as part of a suite of reports entitled, 'The Next Five Years', comprising:
The Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020
The Medium Term Financial Plan 2016 to 2021
Succession Planning Phase 2
5. The intention of having a summary version for Cabinet to approve was to allow the various planning streams of the organisation to tie in together: knowing the priorities would enable staff to start the budgeting and resource planning processes to ensure that the Corporate Plan's priorities could be programmed and met.
6. The Corporate Plan 2015 to 2020 has now been amended to reflect Cabinet's feedback and has been finalised – still as a concise document, but with an accompanying appendix which includes some of the statistical evidence used to back up our priorities. This is entitled, 'Context & Facts' and will be presented as Appendix A to the report.
7. It is a short appendix, designed to show some of the background evidence to support both the national and local manifestos and the Administration's direction of travel.

Consultation

8. Members and Officers have been involved, since May's election, in the compilation of the new Corporate Plan, as well as in the production of the new Medium Term Financial Plan.
9. O&S will also have the opportunity to scrutinise the budget through the normal Budget Scrutiny Task Group process.

Handling

10. Cabinet is requested to approve the report in line with the recommendation.

Portfolio Holder's Views

11. The Leader, as Portfolio Holder, is supportive of the Corporate Plan for the coming five-year period, with its four priorities and its underpinning principles.

Contact: Kirsty Hogarth

Email: kirsty.hogarth@ashford.gov.uk

CONTEXT & FACTS

Priority 1: ENTERPRISING ASHFORD: Economic Investment & Growth

ASPIRATION: To promote growth & achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford borough. We will work to secure inward investment to create a wide range of jobs carried out by a highly skilled workforce.

This priority reflects the Administration's manifesto commitments to build on connectivity and national and international links; to work for vibrant high streets; to contribute to skills development by helping to fund a new college; which, in turn, leads on to our priority to build quality homes to address the housing shortage and to encourage home ownership.

Economic growth and investment are key in creating financial autonomy and sustainability and to allow the borough to become a vibrant place which attracts businesses, residents and visitors.

Below are some of the reasons, and the data, behind choosing economic investment and growth as ABC's first priority:

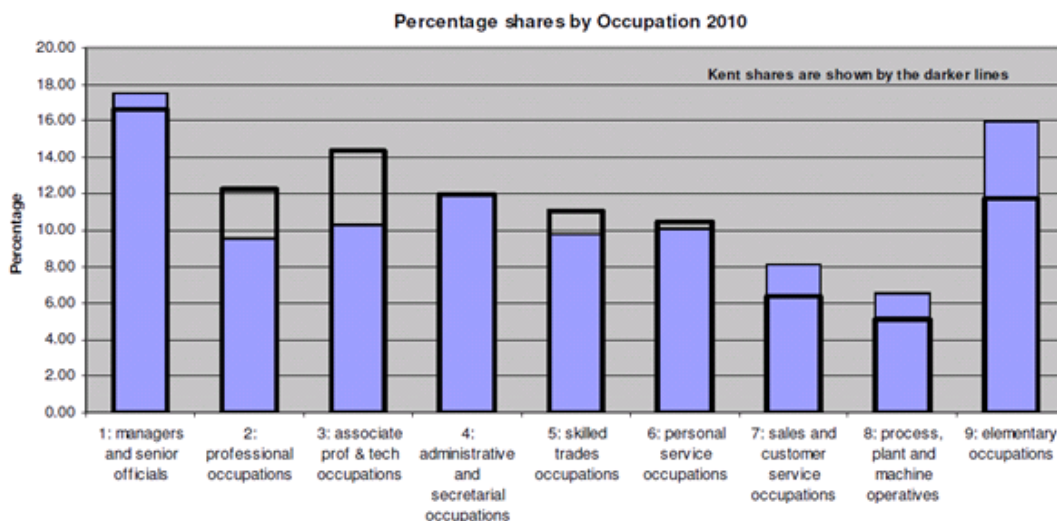
❖ **Ashford named no 1 place to do business in Kent****

Locate in Kent's survey (July 2014) showed that Ashford was rated as the first choice for business relocation in Kent. It's important that ABC builds on this to attract investment from further afield and to stimulate growth.

❖ **Ashford has lower unemployment levels than Kent or England averages and Ashford's economically active population is higher than Kent's, but the employment base is lower skilled and also attracts lower pay than either the rest of Kent or the rest of England.**

FIGURE 1:

Occupations of Ashford & Kent Residents (including those who live in Ashford but work elsewhere)



Although Ashford has more people employed as managers and senior officials than the rest of Kent, Ashford employs fewer people in professional and technical occupations and skilled trades' occupations.

This data is reflected in the following Classification of Employment, showing the difference between Ashford, Kent and the rest of England.

FIGURE 2:

Classification of Employment – Ashford, Kent & England

Group Classification	Ashford (numbers)	Ashford (%)	Kent (%)	England (%)
Groups 1 - 3: managers, directors, senior officials, professional occupations, associate professional & technical	23,200	38.0	43.4	44.8
Groups 4 – 5: administrative & secretarial, and skilled trades	12,900	21.6	23.6	21.3
Groups 6 – 7: caring, leisure & other service occupations + sales and customer services	10,500	17.7	18.4	16.9
Groups 8 – 9: process plant & machine operatives + elementary occupations	12,900	21.7	14.6	17.0

Skills development is, therefore, important; the new college in Ashford will assist in providing those skills, and help to increase the numbers of apprentices and apprenticeships available. The presence of the college should play its part in attracting more technical and professional businesses to the borough.

Low skills result in low pay, as shown in the following table.

FIGURE 3:

Comparisons of Gross Weekly Pay: Ashford, Kent & England

Gross weekly pay: full time workers: 2014			
Area	25 percentile	75 percentile	
	£	£	
Ashford	335.4	684.2	
Kent	353.1	690.4	
England	372.4	744.4	

Addressing the skills gap will address the pay differentials, as well as contributing to economic growth.

Priority 2: LIVING ASHFORD: Quality Housing & Homes for All

ASPIRATION: To secure quality homes across the borough, catering for a range of ages, tenures and need, in well-planned and attractive new places

This priority reflects the Administration's commitment to address the housing shortage by building quality homes in and around the borough and also to encourage home ownership.

In line with its 2013 introduction of a Quality Agreement, ABC will continue to promote quality standards with developers who build in the borough, ensuring that those who live in Ashford's homes can be confident of space standards and quality across the range of build types.

Linked to Priority 1, ABC will seek to secure and encourage the building of quality apartments in Ashford town centre for those who use the HS1 link to London and who want to live in a vibrant town centre.

To ensure that everyone's needs are catered for, we need to have a mix of homes to buy and homes to rent – whether through a private or a social landlord. And bearing in mind the ageing population of the borough, the Council will link housing provision to care needs in terms of assisted living and total care provision. The following table shows the projected population growth for the over 65s over the next 15 years.

TABLE 4:

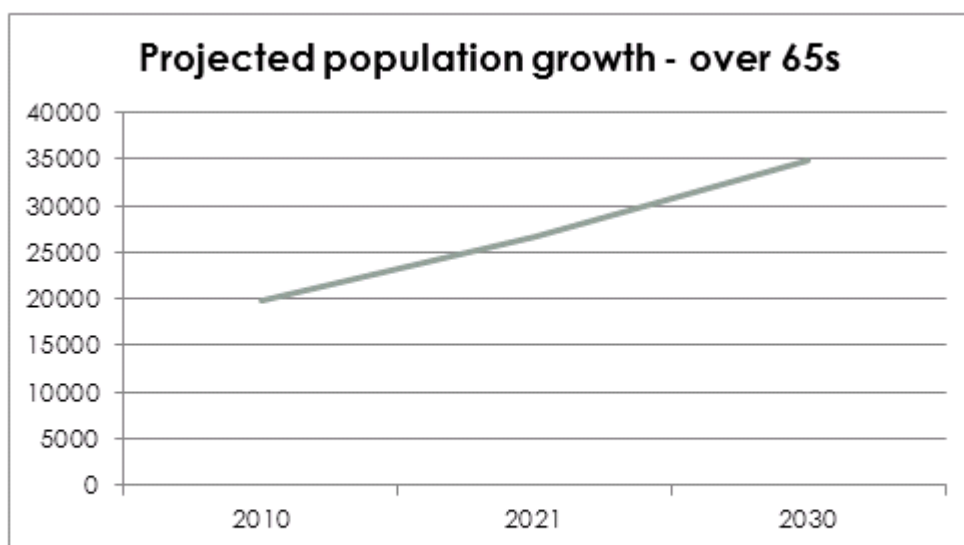


FIGURE 5:

Figure 5 shows the specialist housing need – estimated in 2014 for the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) as part of the Local Plan

Specialist Housing	Current Need	Additional Need to 2030	Total Need
Sheltered	635	1160	1795
Extra Care	211	199	410
Residential Care	345	880	1225
Total	1191	2239	3430

- ❖ **Approximately 25% of the population will be 65+ by 2037**
- ❖ **1530 sheltered care properties in Ashford = 167 per 1000 population 75+ (compared with Maidstone = 145 and T&M = 133 per 1000 pop 75+)**
- ❖ **Ashford listed in the top 50 places to live in the UK**
- ❖ **Ashford's population growth is 3rd highest in Kent**
- ❖ **Four out of every 10 rural affordable homes built in Kent are in Ashford, with 140 more planned for the next year**

Priority 3: ACTIVE & CREATIVE ASHFORD: Healthy choices through physical, cultural & leisure engagement

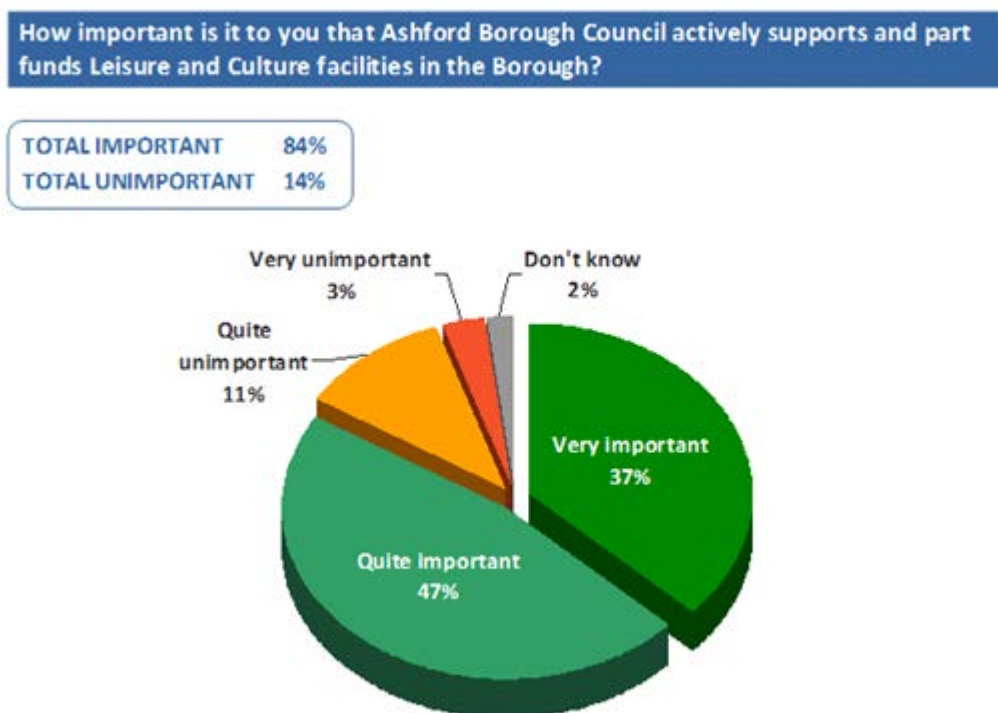
ASPIRATION: To provide or enable a range of quality leisure and cultural activities where people can make healthy & affordable lifestyle choices and enjoy assets that create attractive, desirable and active communities

An important part of Active and Creative Ashford's agenda is to support economic growth – for example by ensuring that new developments (such as the Commercial Quarter and Dover Place) include creative space and public works of art. ABC believes in promoting Ashford as an excellent location with opportunities for cultural industries and artists to connect, collaborate and produce high quality work.

For some years now, ABC has worked closely with partner organisations to provide a range of youth facilities and activities across the borough. Although work on this continues, in line with our manifesto commitments we will also help our senior citizens to work, rest & play.

Evidence shows that everyone needs to have opportunities to have a healthy lifestyle; physical activity is key to that achievement and ABC's focus ranges from provision of facilities and activities to ensuring that new developments are designed with exercise in mind.

FIGURE 6:



- ❖ 84% of residents believe it is important for ABC to support and part fund leisure & cultural facilities in the borough

- ❖ Ashford has higher levels of physical activity than national average
- ❖ 50% of inactive adults in Ashford want to take part in sport
- ❖ 65% of residents are satisfied with sporting provision in the area (60% UK)
- ❖ Total direct economic value of sport = £33.5m
- ❖ £25.4m from people participating in sport
- ❖ 883 people work in sports related jobs
- ❖ £47.9 m = economic value of improved quality and length of life

Priority 4: ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD: Countryside & townscape, heritage & conservation

ASPIRATION: To achieve an environment that creates higher standards of public space design, alongside improved standards of presentation of key green spaces. To safeguard and conserve our local heritage & areas of outstanding landscape quality to ensure the very best attractive environment with thriving and vibrant town centres.

The Council's Administration is committed to providing, safeguarding and improving the quality and presentation of Ashford's unique countryside, heritage and environment.

As a council we have made significant improvements in recent years: for the future, master planning will guide our actions for our new country parks and will help us to improve some existing facilities as well.

We will also focus on improving our important green spaces – especially the 'gateways' from our motorways and main roads, as well as prestige parks, town centre floral displays. Our new focus on landscape management and grounds maintenance will improve the borough's presentation, in keeping with the council's growing international reputation as a place to invest, work and live.

- ❖ **Geographically the largest borough in Kent at 224 square miles**
- ❖ **Ashford is 38 minutes from London on HS1 with fast international connections to Paris, Brussels and Lille**
- ❖ **3.3 million people passed through Ashford International Station between April 2012 and March 2013**
- ❖ **Ashford is now directly connected to France's three largest cities with the new routes to Marseille via Lyons and Avignon (5x a week)**
- ❖ **Ashford to Heathrow by car is 1hr 35mins, Gatwick 1hr and Channel Tunnel and Port of Dover just over 30 mins**
- ❖ **Total number of visitors per year - 4,194,000**
- ❖ **Total value of tourism to the borough - £270,722,000**
- ❖ **Jobs supported by tourism - 5,296 (11% of all employment)**
- ❖ **An estimated 2,000 bed spaces – from country house hotels to 5 star holiday parks to B & B and self-catering in traditional Kentish oast houses**
- ❖ **Ideally located - just 13 miles from Canterbury Cathedral with one million visits per year and 16 miles from Leeds Castle with over 573,000 visits per year.**
- ❖ **Ashford Designer Outlet welcomes 3.1 million visitors per year; (likely to increase to 7.2 million p.a. with Designer Outlet expansion)**
- ❖ **Twice host to the biggest cycling race in the world – the Tour de France in 1994 and 2007**

The
Five Year
Corporate Plan
for **ASPIRATION, ACTION** and **ACHIEVEMENT**
2015-2020



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



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224.5 sq MILES
58,000 ha

.....
the largest borough in

KENT

65+ AGE GROUP
.....
is projected to grow to
35,000 PEOPLE
BY 2030

almost **22,000**
ASHFORD'S
POPULATION (2015 DATA)

POPULATION
.....
is predicted to increase to

149,200 BY 2031

POPULATION
.....
is predicted to increase to
129,900 BY 2021

the largest rural area in

KENT

.....
WITH TWO TOWNS

rural urban
ASHFORD and **TENTERDEN**

43

ASHFORD BOROUGH
COUNCIL
WARD MEMBERS

7 COUNTY MEMBERS and **2** MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
plus **38** PARISH COUNCILS in the borough

.....
the number of **JOBS** PREDICTED to grow by at least
12,400
.....
over a 20 year period to **2030**

Introduction



Ashford Borough Council's (ABC) new Corporate Plan for 2015 to 2020 shows the context and sets the direction for the next five years.

It is a five-year-period which is likely to change the face of local government as we know it, with local authority funding becoming less certain and councils being expected to 'fend for themselves' by generating income and becoming self-sufficient. The manifesto, set by the new Administration in the run-up to the May elections, is in line with the Queen's Speech, and our wish to be 'Aspirational Ashford' through the Council's (and others') actions and achievements is demonstrated, we believe, in this Corporate Plan and in all that we do.

Ashford, of course, has a growing population, which means greater demands on services while we are coping with ever-reducing funding and the challenges of finding ways to generate income.

This document sets out our priorities for the future ... and our aspirations to have a borough where people do want to live and where businesses do want to locate.

We have developed a suite of priorities – all of which are important to us because they're important to the wellbeing of the borough, its residents and its businesses.

Our priorities (which we will review each year, just to check we're still 'on track') are to have a borough that:






-  Promotes and delivers economic growth, including investment, jobs and skill levels
-  Delivers on quality housing and planning
-  Recognises the value of tourism and the benefits it brings to our towns, villages and the borough as a whole
-  Supports our growing senior population to lead full and independent lives
-  Provides healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities for all ages
-  Maintains its environments attractively, responsibly and safely
-  Is effective, efficient and sustainable in terms of finance, resources, service delivery and enforcement

This Corporate Plan – covering the period from 2015 to 2020 – looks at the nature of the borough and its location and sets a direction for the next five years.

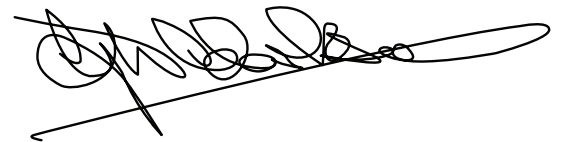
The next five years might, however, signal further substantial change. From what we now know (at the time of writing), the comprehensive spending review scheduled for November 2015 may well produce substantial reductions in funding available to public services in general and local government in particular.

To this end, ABC is developing trading companies, with an eye to generating income so that we can offer support to businesses and the borough's economy. This, however, may not be sufficient, and we may also have to consider closer collaboration with other public sector agencies – either within the borough, or on a basis of cross-border co-operation for service delivery and, ultimately, possibly integration.

The big issues for the life of this Corporate Plan are, therefore, to:

-  Keep Ashford and its projects on track – particularly driving the 'Big 8' - for the benefit of the borough
-  Continue to find and exploit new funding opportunities
-  Take a new approach to delivery and a new emphasis on compliance (making clear what is permitted and enforcing against what is not)
-  Achieve – and maintain – independence from central government funding
-  Strengthen our focus in rural areas

Whatever we do, or have to do, over the course of the next five years, it is fairly certain that local government will not remain in the form in which we currently know it. ABC, however, is committed to its priorities and principles as set out in this our new Corporate Plan, and committed to be an Aspirational, an Active and an Achieving Borough.



Gerry D Clarkson, CBE BA (Hons)

Leader
ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
October 2015

PRIORITY 1

ENTERPRISING ASHFORD: ECONOMIC INVESTMENT and GROWTH

Our Aspiration:

To promote growth and achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford borough. We will work to secure inward investment to create a wide range of jobs carried out by a highly skilled workforce.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

A vibrant town centre and a supporting business centre.

By actively seeking inward investment in new jobs, homes, hotels and leisure attractions in the town centre and, where needed, using council resources to help trigger these major new investments.

Creating new daytime and evening activity in the town centre by promoting the development of a cinema, restaurants, a hotel and new homes at Elwick Place.

Kick-starting major new office development in the Commercial Quarter north of the railway station by partnering with a developer to deliver the first new office building.

Bringing new life to the Park Mall Shopping Centre. The Council has recently purchased the centre and will now work to attract a range of occupiers, including independent retailers, to make it a lively and attractive shopping destination.

Blending exciting new architecture with the best of the traditional buildings in the town to create a vibrant place to work and spend leisure time.

A range of jobs with an emphasis on increasing skills levels.

Work with partners to help fund and deliver the new Ashford College on Station Road to deliver excellent new facilities for students and also to support the development of apprenticeship schemes.

Creating a new local plan that provides for economic growth by allocating sufficient space for new businesses and encourages a range of jobs, especially higher skilled jobs.

Provision of high quality office space in the Commercial Quarter and elsewhere.

Invest in new business space for 'high-tech' companies.

Create incubator units for entrepreneurial residents to develop new enterprises.

1.7 MILLION
EMPLOYEES
Live within a
60 MINUTE drive time 

Well-planned and well-resourced infrastructure to maintain Ashford's prime location status.

Focus on delivery of infrastructure projects essential to Ashford's growth and connectivity: Junction 10A (M20), A28 improvement, station signalling upgrade for Eurostar.

A thriving rural tourism economy and successful rural enterprise.

Encourage rural business projects in the rural areas which complement their surroundings and help to create local jobs.

Work with the tourism industry on existing and new projects to continue to realise the full potential of the borough as a major centre for tourism.

Continue to secure high speed broadband improvements with operators, especially to tackle areas with slow speeds.

Continue active support for rural business.





HOUSE PRICES 
34% LOWER
than
GREATER LONDON



PRIORITY 2

LIVING ASHFORD: QUALITY HOUSING AND HOMES FOR ALL

Our Aspiration:

To secure quality homes across the borough, catering for a range of ages, tenures and need, in well planned and attractive new places.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

Identify an adequate supply of housing to meet the range of housing needs

Make sure that the Local Plan meets the need for market housing, identifying specific development sites and broad locations for growth over the next five, 10 and 15 years.

Recognise the aspiration for home ownership by developing a staircase to ownership and supporting extension of the Right-to-Buy.

Build on the council's record as a front runner in delivering affordable housing in the rural and urban areas of the borough and help people meet their housing aspirations.

Create a supply of town centre housing to suit emerging new markets

Encourage new private rented accommodation in purpose-built new apartments and houses - Elwick Place and Park Mall – for commuting 'professional singles and couples'.

Help people meet their housing needs and aspirations

Work with partners to deliver the best housing choices for older people in well designed accommodation that meets their needs, including assisted living and specialist provision (dementia-friendly scheme at Farrow Court and Danemore).

Continue to push for quality development, using the Council's local standards and the independent Ashford Design Panel to help achieve the best places possible. To include space and quality standards as requirements for development.

Continue local needs housing provision while also ensuring supply of rural high value housing.

Housing management companies managed by local residents where possible.

Maintain assurance of confidence in the Planning system

Strengthen approach to enforcement and take a tougher line on compliance.

Maintain a creative approach to facilitating delivery.

PRIORITY 3

ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD: HEALTHY CHOICES THROUGH PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND LEISURE ENGAGEMENT



Our Aspiration:

To provide or enable a range of quality leisure and cultural activities where people can make healthy and affordable lifestyle choices and enjoy assets that create attractive, desirable and active communities

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

Delivery of the best mix of sports, cultural, recreational experiences supporting a range of health and wellbeing benefits for residents of all ages and abilities

Invest in new provision and refurbishment of existing facilities to provide a high quality sports, culture and leisure offer [Substantial investment in Stour Centre].

Improve the quality of the management of leisure and cultural facilities so that they are among the best in the UK.

Extend the cultural, sport and recreational offers at key sites: Conningbrook, Julie Rose.

Innovative ways for people to choose active lifestyles

Ascertain and support best solutions for providing healthy and active communities in new developments – Repton Park, Chilmington.

Strengthen culture and sport in the Local Plan and through Master Planning.

Develop a 'cycle town' strategy.

Recognising the growing elderly demographic, embed a new approach to activities for the 60+ group across the borough.

Grow our cultural offer to be a successful and alternative destination

Deliver town centre cinema and associated attractions.

Continue to support Revelation St Mary's.

Develop Create and exploit its brand.

Attract cultural industries.

Support Tenterden's leisure and cultural offer.

Work with the private sector on cultural and leisure provision.



Maximise the value of our key green sites

Masterplan future development at Conningbrook.

Planned improvement to key public space and parks – Victoria Park, Memorial Gardens and Willesborough Dykes.

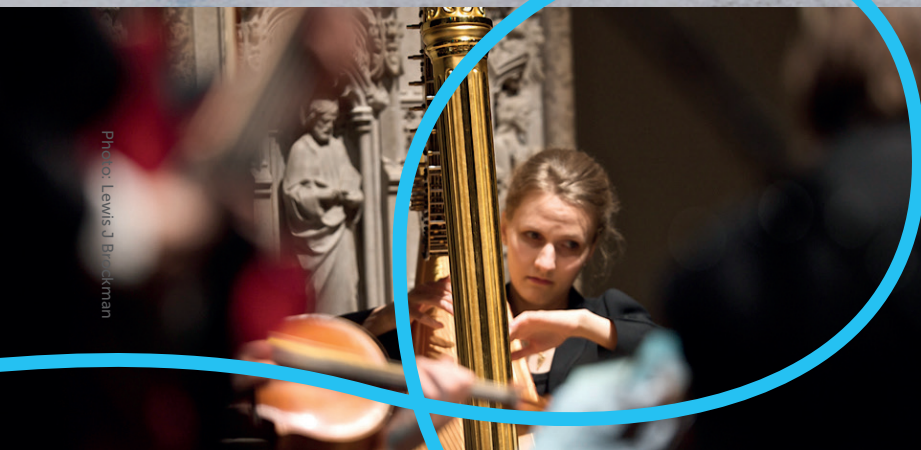


Photo: Lewis J Brakman

TOURISM brings
in over
4 MILLION
VISITORS PER
YEAR



PRIORITY 4

ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD: COUNTRYSIDE AND TOWNSCAPE, TOURISM AND HERITAGE

Our Aspiration:

To achieve an environment that creates higher standards of public space design, alongside improved standards of presentation of key green spaces. To safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape quality to ensure the very best attractive environment with thriving and vibrant town centres

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

Improve and safeguard the quality and presentation of the borough, recognising its unique environment, countryside, local heritage and tourism offer

Create Landscape Action Team and implement higher maintenance standards.

Respond to growth and associated land management issues through quality, flexibility, control and cost management.

Deliver quality gateways and approaches to the town centre.

Bring forward a new green corridor action plan to improve presentation, signage, planting and better water quality.

Delivery of best mix of new and existing parks and green spaces, incorporating quality public art and cutting edge design

Develop cycle town strategy and connections between green spaces via cycle and footpath links.

Strengthen tourism and local heritage offer

Build on the success of the tourism symposium.

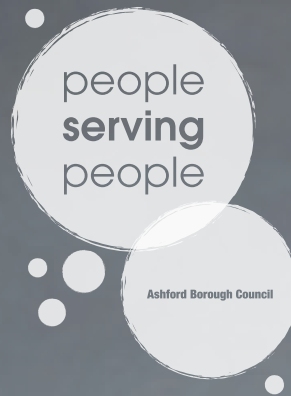
Provide modern visitor information service, including building on website tourism activity.

TO OVER



attractions
across the borough

ASHFORD'S UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES FOR OUR FOUR PRIORITIES



Our Aspiration:

To remain a well-resourced council, with effective governance, high quality services, good communications, safe surroundings, demonstrating good compliance and high standards

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

A viable and sustainable replacement for Formula Grant, generating an additional £2m per annum by 2020 through:

Promoting business growth and investment, through actively marketing the borough and delivering the 'Big 8' projects.

Investing in the borough ourselves, in line with the borrowing and acquisitions policy.

Housing growth delivering New Homes Bonus generated by the building programme in line with the Council's Local Plan.

Managing our costs and inflation.

Maintain a strong and effective governance framework by:

Maintaining focus on the strong community outcomes agreed in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans through monitoring and review.

Having focussed decision making and accountability processes in place.

Managing the key strategic risks for the council.

Maintaining ABC's direction of travel and knowing when to change course.

A fair deal for all our residents and business through the use of council powers to ensure quality and compliance by:

Being a high performing local authority.

Holding statutory providers to account.

Ensuring that enforcement powers are used effectively and appropriately.

Handling complaints effectively, fairly and in a timely manner.

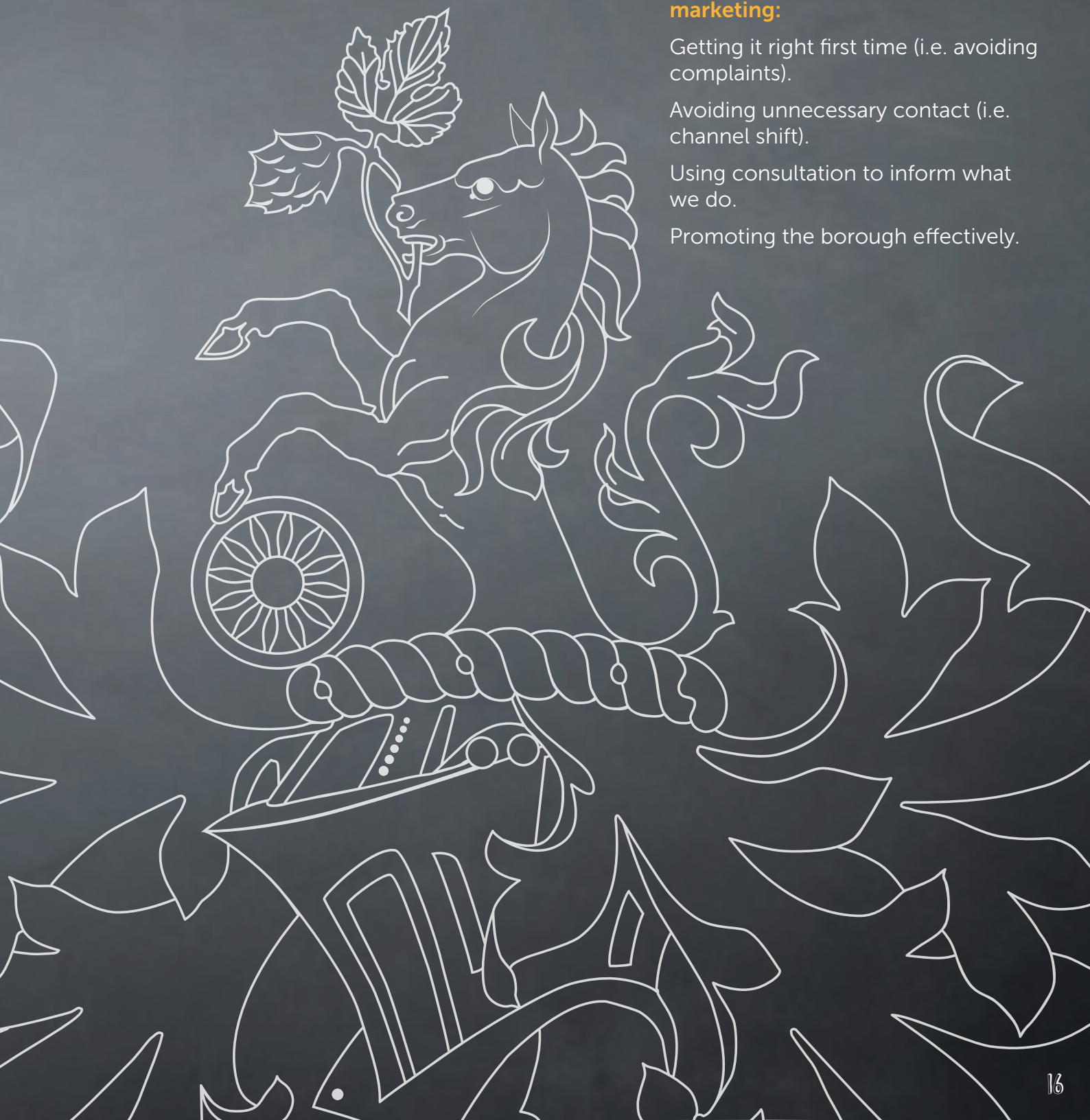
Proactive, useful, relevant and accessible communications and marketing:

Getting it right first time (i.e. avoiding complaints).

Avoiding unnecessary contact (i.e. channel shift).

Using consultation to inform what we do.


Promoting the borough effectively.





ASHFORD

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 @AshfordCouncil

 AshfordBoroughCouncil

Agenda Item No: 8
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 3 December 2015
Report Title: Council Tax Base 2016-17
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Shorter
Finance, Budget and Resource Management
Report Author: Jo Stocks
Senior Accountant



Summary: This Council is required to approve the tax base, used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2016-17. It is calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast of new properties), which are then converted to Band D equivalents.

The tax base has been calculated at 43,750 band D properties, and is an increase of 1,385 (or 3.17%) on the current year.

Key Decision: YES

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **The Cabinet be asked to:-**

1. Agree the 2016-17 'Net' tax base of 43,750 Band D equivalent properties
2. Agree the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grant to parish councils to help compensate for the negative impact caused by the council tax support scheme on parish councils' tax bases (see appendix D totalling £40,900).
3. Note the possibility of further cabinet and council decisions being required, before the end of January, should any material change in the tax base be required, as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from government.

Policy Overview: The Council Tax base is required to be set in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculations of Tax Base) Regulations 1992.

Financial Implications: The tax base recommended will be used to calculate the level of Council tax requirement that will be recommended to the Council on 14th February 2016.

Equalities Impact Assessment NO – a stage 1 screening tool will need to be completed for the budget.

Other Material Implications: None

Contacts: Jo.stocks@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330548

Report Title: Council Tax Base 2016-17

Purpose of the Report

1. To set the Council Tax Base for 2016-17

Issue to be Decided

2. The Council Tax Base for 2016-17 and its distribution across parished and un-parished areas needs to be agreed.

Background

3. By 31st January 2016 the council as the 'billing authority' is required to notify its major precepting bodies (Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority and Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority) and the parishes of the relevant council tax base for the 2016-17 financial year.

Council Tax Support

4. In 2013-14 Government abolished Council Tax Benefit and replaced it with a requirement for councils to introduce (from April 2013) locally agreed schemes of discounts for Council Tax support. The Government transferred 90% of funding to local authorities, effectively tasking local government with delivering a 10% reduction in the cost of this benefit or discount. Government required that when designing schemes authorities fully protected pensioners (those eligible to council tax support) and have regard for other vulnerable groups.
5. In 2013 the council consulted on a scheme that fully protects eligible pensioners, provides a partial protection to the disabled (at the time the only council in Kent to provide such a protection), and by taking up the government's one-off offer of a special transitional grant, was able to limit working-age claimant contributions (for those previously not paying any council tax) to 8.5% of their council tax liability. Without the special grant the contribution level would have been 17.5%. For 2014/15 the scheme was amended setting the contribution level at 10% for working age claimants (the same level as the cut in grant). Council Tax Support is a discount against council tax therefore the lower the level of taxpayer contribution rate the greater is the negative impact for the council tax base.
6. In order to protect the disabled, parish councils and lower the level of contribution the council decided to reduce the level of council tax discounts offered to short-term empty properties from 6 months to 6 weeks, introduce a premium on long-term empty properties and remove the 10% discount for second homes. The major preceptors agreed that this revenue would be used to support the scheme for 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. We are asking members once again to endorse the proposal that we ask the major preceptors to continue this arrangement for 2016-17. It is necessary to consult the preceptors each year on the totality of our scheme.

Protection for Parish Councils

7. The introduction of Council Tax Support effectively reduced the tax base for many if not all of the parish councils. If no action was taken this would have resulted in tax payers suffering increases in their tax towards parish precepts, even in circumstances where the cash amount of precept was unchanged. Following government guidelines the council introduced a grant (a total of £82,000) that paid parish councils the equivalent of the revenue they lost due to the changes in the tax base.
8. In 2014/15 a working group of parish and borough councillors met to discuss funding of this grant and recommended that the total funding for the grant be reduced in line government cuts to formula grant. Accordingly the grant available for parish councils is proposed to be a total of £40,900 in 2016-17 to be allocated based on the level of their precept and the CTS discounts for their parish. The proposed allocation is detailed in **Appendix D**.

The Tax Base (adjusted for various allowances)

9. The council has already submitted a tax base return to central government, which will be used in the calculation of Revenue Support Grant. This figure is 48,205 (2015-16 47,691), but is based on the number of properties on the valuation list as at 1st October 2015 and excludes provisions for new properties, Council Tax Support discounts, and allowances for non-collection.
10. The tax base calculation made in this report allows for new properties anticipated to be coming on to the Valuation List. It is forecast that 554 properties will be completed during the 18 months from October 2015 to March 2016.
11. In calculating the tax base the authority must also have regard to discounts, exemptions, non-collection and appeals. For the purposes of this calculation 1.0% has been estimated for losses on collections and appeals, this is consistent with the collection levels that are being achieved.
12. For 2016-17 the tax base has been calculated at 43,750 (2015-16 42,365) as detailed at **Appendices A, B & C**.

Implications Assessment

13. The Council Tax base is an important element of the budget setting process, estimating the number of properties upon which council tax will be levied.

Handling

14. Once agreed by the Council the tax base will be notified to the County Council, Kent Police, Kent and Medway Fire Authority and the Parish Councils.

Conclusion

15. The 2016-17 tax base is higher than assumptions within the Financial Strategy and the calculation results in a tax base of 43,750.00 band D

equivalent properties. This will be used in the detailed budget and council tax setting calculations.

Portfolio Holder's Views

16. To be given at the meeting

Contact: Jo Stocks

Email: jo.stocks@ashford.gov.uk

**TAX BASE 2015/2016
BAND D EQUIVALENTS**

BAND		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
PARISH										
Aldington and Bonnington	0.00	17.20	10.60	113.30	88.00	82.20	124.10	147.20	3.00	585.60
Appledore	0.00	6.20	9.30	48.70	75.50	49.00	63.90	70.50	2.00	325.10
Bethersden	0.00	24.90	47.20	59.70	100.20	141.10	104.40	217.50	13.50	708.50
Biddenden	1.10	81.90	28.60	187.00	104.10	161.20	205.30	314.60	14.00	1,097.80
Bilsington	0.00	7.70	5.20	9.90	20.80	24.90	33.60	47.30	0.00	149.40
Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	0.00	8.20	64.90	104.00	224.70	260.50	265.80	118.30	8.00	1,054.40
Brabourne	0.00	4.20	16.90	49.70	126.80	172.40	134.10	82.40	9.50	596.00
Brook	0.00	2.20	0.80	2.40	17.60	60.10	36.40	34.20	0.00	153.70
Challock	0.00	1.00	6.40	20.20	72.50	81.80	128.40	91.70	7.50	409.50
Charing	0.00	72.90	106.30	181.90	185.60	220.70	250.60	245.10	8.00	1,271.10
Chilham	0.60	7.50	33.10	110.80	167.50	150.30	119.10	137.10	22.00	748.00
Crundale (PM)	0.00	1.30	3.10	5.30	11.80	15.10	20.20	34.60	2.00	93.40
Egerton	0.00	7.20	21.20	33.30	78.70	96.80	130.40	136.70	3.50	507.80
Godmersham	0.00	-0.30	4.50	16.20	28.40	59.30	30.30	36.30	3.50	178.20
Great Chart with Singleton	0.00	94.00	371.50	647.20	709.70	342.10	177.20	99.00	4.00	2,444.70
Hastingleigh	0.00	3.30	1.30	5.30	26.20	10.40	35.80	29.60	4.00	115.90
High Halden	0.00	78.40	30.50	150.90	54.30	86.30	136.70	179.70	6.00	722.80
Hothfield	2.80	14.00	81.70	65.60	26.70	28.70	22.80	41.70	6.00	290.00
Kenardington	0.00	2.90	0.80	21.00	8.50	21.40	16.50	32.50	3.50	107.10
Kingsnorth	0.00	10.40	259.00	833.80	1,044.50	1,045.60	1,071.00	111.90	2.00	4,378.20
Little Chart	0.00	4.80	3.30	11.30	17.80	17.40	16.50	47.90	6.00	125.00
Mersham and Sevington	0.00	7.20	20.50	51.90	92.50	176.70	167.50	119.70	7.50	643.50
Molash	0.00	2.50	4.80	8.70	17.60	15.90	17.10	36.30	2.00	104.90
Newenden	0.00	0.00	0.80	13.50	18.00	14.40	21.20	34.20	2.00	104.10
Orlestone	0.00	3.70	27.00	189.00	140.00	56.20	125.70	22.00	2.00	565.60
Pluckley	0.00	7.90	12.00	67.00	63.60	63.40	92.80	162.70	4.00	473.40
Rolvenden	0.00	9.90	16.10	136.60	106.10	124.20	102.80	161.30	29.00	686.00
Ruckinge	0.00	9.90	5.30	21.70	26.10	92.30	103.90	59.70	2.00	320.90
Shadoxhurst	0.00	12.30	18.80	55.50	62.70	156.30	149.90	47.10	0.00	502.60
Smarden	0.00	13.20	23.20	51.70	69.80	82.70	113.60	250.40	22.00	626.60
Smeeth	0.00	6.50	13.50	68.70	55.60	95.30	61.10	57.50	2.50	360.70
Stanhope	0.00	130.50	546.60	108.70	1.00	1.60	0.00	0.00	2.00	790.40
Stone	0.00	3.20	3.70	31.40	26.50	26.00	36.80	71.50	3.50	202.60

Tenterden (TC)	1.10	33.00	134.20	493.90	670.20	723.80	750.60	611.30	55.00	3,473.10
Warehorne	0.00	2.80	6.40	24.10	29.50	41.10	28.40	44.10	2.00	178.40
Westwell	0.00	10.70	11.40	25.80	58.50	82.60	52.70	73.50	7.50	322.70
Wittersham	0.00	5.40	20.30	86.40	53.10	120.70	85.20	140.60	19.00	530.70
Woodchurch	0.60	92.10	17.00	105.80	141.00	112.70	156.70	204.20	8.00	838.10
Wye with Hinxhill	0.00	40.30	93.90	160.70	204.10	174.40	222.50	140.80	19.00	1,055.70
Unparished Area	0.60	1,089.60	4,904.30	4,652.40	2,330.00	1,576.40	1,454.10	254.20	8.00	16,269.60
	6.80	1,930.60	6,986.00	9,031.00	7,355.80	6,864.00	6,865.70	4,746.90	325.00	44,111.80
Contributions in Lieu					78.60					78.60
Less 1% Provision	(0.10)	(19.30)	(69.90)	(90.30)	(72.70)	(68.60)	(68.70)	(47.50)	(3.30)	(440.40)
	6.70	1,911.30	6,916.10	8,940.70	7,361.70	6,795.40	6,797.00	4,699.40	321.70	43,750.00

ANALYSIS OF PROPERTIES FOR WHOLE AUTHORITY

		A No.	B No.	C No.	D No.	E No.	F No.	G No.	H No.	TOTAL No.
Dwellings	0.00	4,056.00	12,185.00	12,352.00	8,600.00	6,314.00	5,169.00	3,047.00	185.00	51,908.00
Exemptions	0.00	(150.00)	(108.00)	(92.00)	(131.00)	(29.00)	(24.00)	(15.00)	(3.00)	(552.00)
Disabled reductions	0.00	(12.00)	(41.00)	(58.00)	(45.00)	(61.00)	(48.00)	(28.00)	(12.00)	(305.00)
Effectively chargeable	12.00	41.00	58.00	45.00	61.00	48.00	28.00	12.00	0.00	305.00
Total Chargeable Dwellings - Line 4	12.00	3,935.00	12,094.00	12,247.00	8,485.00	6,272.00	5,125.00	3,016.00	170.00	51,356.00
Full Charge	4.00	1,753.00	7,132.00	8,275.00	6,170.00	4,868.00	4,232.00	2,549.00	145.00	35,128.00
Class C	0.00	24.00	69.00	35.00	22.00	19.00	6.00	5.00	1.00	181.00
Discount	2.00	2,017.00	4,623.00	3,753.00	2,145.00	1,293.00	791.00	378.00	16.00	15,018.00
Discount (Disregard Disc)	6.00	7.00	9.00	6.00	13.00	5.00	17.00	19.00	2.00	84.00
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Discount on 2nd Homes	0.00	77.00	103.00	91.00	74.00	60.00	44.00	46.00	6.00	501.00
Full Charge on LT Empties	0.00	36.00	127.00	72.00	44.00	17.00	33.00	14.00	(2.00)	341.00
Premium on LT Empties	0.00	21.00	31.00	15.00	17.00	10.00	2.00	5.00	2.00	103.00
Total number of Properties	12.00	3,935.00	12,094.00	12,247.00	8,485.00	6,272.00	5,125.00	3,016.00	170.00	51,356.00
Total Equivalent Number - CTB1	12.00	3,389.75	10,811.25	11,243.25	7,906.75	5,913.25	4,907.75	2,904.50	164.00	47,252.50
Adjust for Council Tax Support	0.00	(656.80)	(1,815.45)	(1,322.49)	(722.29)	(282.92)	(142.61)	(49.07)	0.00	(4,991.63)
New Properties		238.00	40.00	285.00	237.00					800.00
Exemptions Factor		(75.00)	(54.00)	(46.00)	(65.50)	(14.50)	(12.00)	(7.50)	(1.50)	(276.00)
	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	2	
BAND D EQUIVALENTS - ABC	6.80	1,930.60	6,986.00	9,031.00	7,355.80	6,864.00	6,865.70	4,746.90	325.00	44,111.80
<u>Adjustments</u>	-									
UNBANDED @ 100%				0.00	0.00					
Adjusted Band D equivalents	6.80	1,930.60	6,986.00	9,031.00	7,355.80	6,864.00	6,865.70	4,746.90	325.00	44,111.80
Contributions in Lieu	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	78.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	78.60
Losses In Collection	0.00	(19.00)	(69.70)	(90.60)	(73.80)	(68.50)	(68.60)	(47.20)	(3.00)	(440.40)
Tax base	6.80	1,911.60	6,916.30	8,940.40	7,360.60	6,795.50	6,797.10	4,699.70	322.00	43,750.00

TAX BASE 2015/2016
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)

LOCAL TAX BASE 2014/2015	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.0% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016
		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00
	<u>PARISH</u>					
550.90	Aldington & Bonnington	609.40	23.60	(5.80)	(47.40)	579.80
326.00	Appledore	378.70	0.00	(3.30)	(53.60)	321.80
676.80	Bethersden	755.20	15.00	(7.00)	(61.70)	701.50
1,078.40	Biddenden	1,173.70	7.60	(10.90)	(83.50)	1,086.90
143.10	Bilsington	161.20	0.00	(1.50)	(11.80)	147.90
1,038.10	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,124.50	0.00	(10.50)	(70.10)	1,043.90
586.10	Brabourne	625.40	0.00	(5.90)	(29.40)	590.10
150.30	Brook	156.90	0.00	(1.50)	(3.20)	152.20
414.30	Challock	425.30	0.00	(4.10)	(15.80)	405.40
1,204.00	Charing	1,346.90	42.40	(12.80)	(118.20)	1,258.30
716.70	Chilham	785.10	28.30	(7.50)	(65.40)	740.50
92.70	Crundale (PM)	94.50	0.00	(0.90)	(1.10)	92.50
499.80	Egerton	534.00	0.00	(5.10)	(26.20)	502.70
173.80	Godmersham	182.90	0.00	(1.80)	(4.70)	176.40
2,307.00	Great Chart with Singleton	2,628.90	16.00	(24.50)	(200.20)	2,420.20
113.20	Hastingleigh	120.10	0.00	(1.20)	(4.20)	114.70
715.20	High Halden	775.00	0.00	(7.30)	(52.20)	715.50
276.00	Hothfield	348.90	0.00	(2.90)	(58.90)	287.10
102.00	Kenardington	117.20	0.00	(1.00)	(10.10)	106.10
4,076.50	Kingsnorth	4,456.80	181.30	(43.70)	(259.90)	4,334.50
124.10	Little Chart	129.00	0.00	(1.30)	(4.00)	123.70
627.9	Mersham and Sevington	675.00	0.00	(6.40)	(31.50)	637.10
107.2	Molash	116.30	0.00	(1.10)	(11.40)	103.80
104.2	Newenden	108.60	0.00	(0.90)	(4.50)	103.20
554.9	Orlestone	590.40	28.30	(5.70)	(53.10)	559.90

473.6	Pluckley	509.40	0.00	(4.60)	(36.00)	468.80
654.6	Rolvenden	728.70	14.10	(6.90)	(56.80)	679.10
326.3	Ruckinge	343.80	0.00	(3.20)	(22.90)	317.70
489.6	Shadoxhurst	528.80	12.20	(5.10)	(38.40)	497.50
603	Smarden	666.70	0.00	(6.10)	(40.10)	620.50
349.1	Smeeth	392.10	0.00	(3.70)	(31.40)	357.00
711.7	Stanhope	1,024.30	0.00	(7.90)	(233.90)	782.50
209.6	Stone	224.10	0.00	(2.00)	(21.50)	200.60
3433.1	Tenterden (TC)	3,766.30	0.00	(34.60)	(293.20)	3,438.50
171.4	Warehorne	186.50	0.00	(1.70)	(8.10)	176.70
321.6	Westwell	340.10	0.00	(3.20)	(17.40)	319.50
524.1	Wittersham	586.40	0.00	(5.40)	(55.70)	525.30
818	Woodchurch	897.30	0.00	(8.40)	(59.20)	829.70
984.5	Wye with Hinxhill	1,127.90	12.20	(10.40)	(84.40)	1,045.30
15,535.60	Unparished Area	18,149.30	299.00	(162.60)	(2,100.10)	16,185.60
42,365.00		47,891.60	680.00	(440.40)	(4,381.20)	43,750.00

Proposed allocation of CTS grant

Parish	Discounts for Council Tax Support (Band D Equivalents)	Proposed Council Tax Support Grant 2016-17
Aldington & Bonnington	(47.40)	850
Appledore	(53.60)	960
Bethersden	(61.70)	1110
Biddenden	(83.50)	1500
Bilsington	(11.80)	210
Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	(70.10)	1260
Brabourne	(29.40)	530
Brook	(3.20)	60
Challock	(15.80)	280
Charing	(118.20)	2120
Chilham	(65.40)	1170
Crundale (PM)	(1.10)	20
Egerton	(26.20)	470
Godmersham	(4.70)	80
Great Chart with Singleton	(200.20)	3590
Hastingleigh	(4.20)	80
High Halden	(52.20)	940
Hothfield	(58.90)	1060
Kenardington	(10.10)	180
Kingsnorth	(259.90)	4660
Little Chart	(4.00)	70
Mersham and Sevington	(31.50)	560
Molash	(11.40)	200
Newenden	(4.50)	80
Orlestone	(53.10)	950
Pluckley	(36.00)	650
Rolvenden	(56.80)	1020
Ruckinge	(22.90)	410
Shadoxhurst	(38.40)	690
Smarden	(40.10)	720
Smeeth	(31.40)	560
Stanhope	(233.90)	4190
Stone	(21.50)	390
Tenterden (TC)	(293.20)	5250
Warehorne	(8.10)	150
Westwell	(17.40)	310
Wittersham	(55.70)	1000
Woodchurch	(59.20)	1060
Wye with Hinxhill	(84.40)	1510
	2,281.10	40,900

Agenda Item No: 9
Report To: CABINET
Date: 3 DECEMBER 2015



Report Title: Council Tax support scheme for 2016/17
Report Author: Peter Budden, Revenues & Benefits Operations Manager
on behalf of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Neil Shorter

Summary: The Council has a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Council Tax Support local scheme (complete details of the current scheme are published on the council's website¹) or replace it with another scheme and consult with interested parties if it wishes to revise or replace it.

An agreement has been reached in principle by all Kent districts and the precepting authorities to recommend the extension of current schemes for one further year. It is therefore recommended that we consult on retaining the current scheme that Cabinet approved last year, with some slight amendments based on changes to Housing Benefit from April 2016. Our financial, operational and customer service performance based on the current local scheme allows us the opportunity not to pass on further reductions in council tax support to claimants. This recommendation has been made by the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group, chaired by Councillor Shorter.

Following the period of public consultation, the final scheme for 2016/17 must be finalised by 31 January 2016. For this purpose the report recommends a delegation to agree any final amendments to the proposed scheme.

Key Decision: YES

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet be asked to:-

- (i) **Agree the proposed local scheme for 2016/17 as set out in the conclusions to this report – there are no major changes to the existing scheme, but some minor changes are proposed.**
- (ii) **Agree that public consultation on the proposals should run until 11th January 2016.**

¹ Website link: <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport>

- (iii) **Agree that delegated authority be issued to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader, to make any adjustments to the final scheme by 31st January 2016, in relation to the level of grant notified by central government in December 2015 and following consideration of consultation responses**

Policy Overview:

From April 2013 all billing councils were required to implement localised council tax support schemes, and review these annually and formally adopt schemes for each subsequent year. The government's conditions remain that grant funding is less than under the previous council tax benefit scheme (which ended on 31 March 2013) but that protection from reductions in council tax support be mandatory for all pensioner claimants. This report brings forward the third annual review and proposals for the 2016/17 scheme.

Financial Implications:

The scheme as designed limits the financial risks directly to the council's budget and to the council tax payer as a whole. This meets one of the principles agreed by Cabinet in December 2012. As council tax support operates as a discount and affects the council tax base, the largest financial risks are with the precepting authorities. It is for this reason that the Kent precepting authorities and district councils developed the basis for a county-wide agreement that provides districts with important guarantees to limit districts' and preceptors' risks. This agreement was adopted for three years and is continue for one more year at least. The first year scheme was adopted following wide-spread public consultation; it required working-age claimant contributions of 8.5% to their council tax liability (in those cases where claimants had previously had all of their liability met by benefit) and a 5% contribution for disabled claimants and their carers. These levels of contribution were made possible by the government's one-off transition grant and extra council tax achieved through the council deciding to vary some council tax exemptions and discounts. With the government funding removed the contribution rate would default to 17.5% unless extra income were possible in 2014/15 and 2015/16. A review two years ago showed that the added yield from changes made to other council tax discounts was sufficient to cover the government grant loss and allowed for a more modest rise, to 10%, in the working age claimant contribution. This remains the case and the 10% contribution is still sufficient for 2016/17.

Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment was carried out as part of the introduction of the first year scheme. Now that the scheme has operated for over 2 years the council has some real experience of the risks. The scheme designed for the first year including all the publicity and direct communication, and in particular the help afforded to first-time council tax payers has helped to contain risks of escalating arrears levels.

Equalities Impact Assessment

A full impact assessment for the scheme was submitted to cabinet in 2012. It is considered the conclusions from that

assessment remain valid for this review.

Agenda Item No.9

Report Title: Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2016/17

Strategy agreed across Kent

An agreement has been reached by all Kent districts and Kent County Council to recommend the extension of current schemes for one further year. This would include maintaining the existing contribution levels for claimants (for Ashford this means 10% for working-age claimants, with the exception of disabled and carers who have a 5% contribution), as well as maintaining the existing discounts in council tax – for Ashford this means the 50% long-term empty property premium, the removal of the second home discount, and the 6 week exemption period for unoccupied properties.

The reason for this agreement is because a fundamental review of the scheme is needed as a result of the impact of welfare reform changes - but as these changes are not yet fully implemented or understood, then an additional 12 months to review the impact of these changes is needed in order to allow a more robust scheme to be devised.

There are a significant number of welfare reform changes about to be introduced (as well as those already introduced), and these changes will have an effect on local council tax reduction schemes. The most notable change is the reform to tax credits – at the moment it is not clear when these changes will be implemented – more detail is expected shortly. But reductions in tax credit incomes will result in an increase in council tax support entitlements – though the extent of this impact is not fully known, given the added introduction of higher tax thresholds and the national living wage. As such, it is considered prudent to allow more detail on these changes to be understood before fundamentally changing our local scheme – hence the agreement across Kent to continue with our schemes for one further year.

Whilst the working-age welfare reforms are expected to produce some financial pressures in 2016/17 - both on claimants and also on the Council - these pressures will be financially compensated by an expected continued reduction in the CTS caseload (see section later in the report), resulting in a reduction in cost of the CTS scheme which reflects in a higher taxbase calculation.

Whilst a one year extension has been agreed, there is a commitment across Kent districts that a fundamental review of all local schemes will take place over the next six months, in readiness for an entirely new scheme from April 2017. The outcome of this review may lead to a higher contribution level for working-age claimants.

Background

1. The key points of the Council's current scheme and its funding for 2015/16 are (unless highlighted with a note in italics, these form part of the Kent standard scheme):
 - All pensioner claimants entitled to council tax benefit are protected (by central government) from any reduction in support.
 - Disabled claimants (those receiving disability allowances) and carers are afforded a 95% protection (*not part of the Kent standard scheme*).
 - Working-age claimants' reduction in support is limited to 10% of their council tax liability.
 - otherwise the adoption of all the detailed parameters and 'protections' within the former national scheme of council tax benefit, including a commitment to uprate allowances in line with the annual uprating of allowances to housing benefit.
2. To fund the scheme beyond the core grant available from DCLG, the following was adopted:
 - Removal of the 10% second home council tax discount
 - Short term empty property council tax exemption period reduced from 6 months to 6 weeks, but the income from the reduction to 3 months is all to be paid over to the major precepting councils in return for their guarantees (see below) (***so the added reduction from 3 months to 6 weeks is not part of the Kent standard scheme***).
 - Long term (over 2 years) empty property council tax premium of 50% (***not part of the Kent standard scheme***).

Major preceptors' guarantees (for 3 years from 1 April 2013):

3. If a district incurs a cost on new council tax discounts (other than as a result of local decisions to increase Council Tax) from the local scheme that is higher than their share of the grant from government, then major precepting authorities (jointly) will reimburse the district the difference.
4. Major Precepting Authorities (jointly) will pay £125,000 to each district each year as a contribution to the increased administrative, collection and recovery costs of the new scheme.
5. Major Precepting Authorities (jointly) will reimburse each district reasonable increased administrative costs necessarily incurred if the case load on the local scheme (during the period of this agreement) exceeds the case load of the council tax benefit scheme (as at 31 March 2013) by more than 15%.

Preceptors Agreement

6. The existing 3 year agreement with the preceptors comes to an end on 31 March 2016. However, discussions with the preceptors have led to an agreement that

the terms set out above will be extended for one more year, i.e. for 2016/17. This allows us to continue with our existing local scheme for 2016/17.

7. However, an agreement has also been made that there will be a fundamental review of the CTS local scheme in readiness for 2017/18 - this may mean a move away from a means-tested 'benefit-type' scheme, to a more 'discount-type' scheme, where income bands are used as opposed to using specific income amounts. This would be administratively more simple and be less resource intensive.
8. The reason for the need for this fundamental review is because of the impact of the welfare reform changes being made by central government. In particular, the impact of certain changes - most notably tax credit reductions – may have a significant financial effect on the cost of local CTS schemes and therefore a review is needed. In addition, the continued roll-out of Universal Credit will have an impact, although at this stage it remains unclear how quick this roll-out will be.
9. This issue was set out in the The Medium Term Financial Plan 2016-21 report that went to Cabinet on 8 October 2015, specifically paragraphs 58-60 of that report.

Local scheme impacts to date and estimates for 2016/17

Payments

10. As at 16 October 2015, CTS awarded so far in 2015/16 is £7,029,795 (this compares to £7,164,852 in 2014/15; £7,436,901 in 2013/14; and £7,897,983 in respect of CTB in 2012/13), so there continues to be an ongoing reduction year-on-year.
11. This reduction in expenditure is due to a fall in the caseload, as well as the implementation of the CTS local scheme (where working-age claimants had to pay 8.5% of their liability in 2013/14, and 10% of their liability in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The exception to this is working-age disabled and carers, who had to pay 5% of their liability in all three years).

Caseload

12. CTS caseload – which in October 2013 stood at 8,833 and in October 2014 stood at 8,521 - currently stands at 8,204, so if this trend continues then the forecasted CTS expenditure for the whole year should be around the £7 million mark. This would be better than the original forecast.

Principles

13. The Council's principles for the scheme are (as set in the cabinet report of 6 December 2012):
 - Cost neutrality
 - All working age claimants to contribute something toward the cut

- Preserving current principles of protection (from previous CTB scheme)
- Preserving work incentives
- Fairness
- Transparency and avoidance of complex and disproportionate administration

14. All of the above principles have been followed, in 2013/14 and subsequent years, without any general negative consequences, and therefore there is little need to amend them for 2016/17. Indeed the main focus of the scheme has been supporting people back to work, and this seems to be working.

Collection

15. In terms of council tax collection rates, in 2013/14 (the first year of the CTS scheme), collection rates were maintained – at year-end it was 98.34%. This was better than expected, bearing in mind the new changes and in particular asking 2,500 claimants to pay council tax for the first time. In 2014/15 this collection rate was maintained at 98.27%. So far in 2015/16, as at 30 September 2015, collection continues to hold up; it is currently just 0.12% lower than at the same time last year.
16. In terms of collection specifically for CTS claimants, it continues to be the case that recovery action against CTS claimants is not disproportionately higher than for non-CTS accounts. This shows that, in general terms, the local scheme is not causing undue hardship or ill-feeling. Where there are individual cases of hardship then these are being referred to the Welfare Intervention Officers. But again the focus has been on supporting people back to work.

Funding

17. The cabinet report of 4 December 2014 outlined the scheme for 2015/16 and the financial estimates. £7.2 million was estimated for CTS expenditure for 2015/16, and as stated earlier, we currently expect to pay about £7 million, so we are well under the budgeted forecast. However, it should be remembered that this benefit (of lower expenditure) is shared between preceptors and we only receive 10% of the benefit. But the lower expenditure does help ease any pressures regarding the number of new builds estimated in the budget in terms of New Homes Bonus income.
18. As well as CTS, the other elements of our scheme affect the tax base calculations, those being removal of second home discounts, the implementation of long-term empty property premiums, and the reduction of empty home exemptions (formerly 'class C') from 6 months to 6 weeks. The income generated from these policies helps to support the CTS scheme and there is no evidence to support the need for any changes to these. In particular, the 'class C' exemption of 6 weeks is now bedded-in and seems to cause few issues, either administratively or with landlords.

Options

19. Whilst there are always options to increase or decrease support for claimants (such as changing the contribution level from 10% / 5%, or by changing some of the individual elements of the entitlement calculation), as previously set out in this report it is recommended that our current scheme is extended by one year. This is because an agreement has been reached across Kent to do this, because of the unknown impacts of the welfare reform changes to be introduced - most notably around tax credits & Universal Credit roll-out.
20. By retaining the core elements of our current scheme for 2016/17 then we will be fulfilling our part in this agreement. There are a few minor amendments recommended for 2016/17 for working-age claimants, in order to mirror Housing Benefit from April 2016, as set out below:
21. **Uprating of working-age allowances frozen, i.e. applicable amounts used in the calculation of entitlement are frozen** (*as it happens it is unlikely the allowances would have been uprated next year in any case, due to the current CPI calculation*).
22. **Backdating of working-age claims reduced from 6 months to 1 month**** (*this would mean any new claim for council tax support could only be backdated for a maximum of 1 month if good cause was shown. This is forecasted to affect in the region of 50-100 claims and result in a reduction in CTS expenditure of approximately £10,000*).

*** Whilst the 1 month maximum period is recommended for the majority of cases, it is recommended that a discretion to extend this maximum period to a maximum of 3 months is available for particular cases that meet an 'exceptional circumstances' test.*

Each case would be decided on its own merit - but if it is decided that there are exceptional circumstances as to why a claim was prevented from being made at the appropriate time, and that continuous good cause is shown throughout, then the maximum period can be extended beyond the 1 month.

Examples of such exceptional circumstances may include:

- *Long-term hospitalisation of member of household*
- *Bereavement of member of household*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Terminal illness*

This list is not exhaustive – other cases of exceptional circumstances may apply.

Any backdating request beyond the 1 month period will firstly be considered by an Officer. If the Officer recommends that an exceptional award beyond the 1 month be made, then this recommendation will be passed to the Head of Service for approval. Any such awards will be recorded in order that they can be monitored.

23. **Removal of the 'family premium' from the applicable amount for new CTS claims** (*this will have the effect of reducing – by £3.50 per week - the entitlement to CTS for families making a new claim from April 2016. It will not*

affect existing CTS claimants. The number of new claims next year from families is difficult to forecast, but this measure would likely affect in the region of 250 claims).

Financial implications

24. In considering the preferred option of no major changes to the scheme for 2016/17, the task group reviewed the following financial indicators:
 - Council Tax Base calculation
 - and collection fund performance.
25. In terms of the tax base, the draft tax base calculation (reported elsewhere on this agenda) has been prepared assuming that there are no major changes to the scheme and for 2016/17 shows that an allowance for 5,623 band D-equivalent properties has been made for Council Tax Support. At this year's tax levels and with a 10% reduction level for CTS this means a total discount for CTS of £7.2 million. As previously stated, we are currently forecasting to spend less than that (£7 million) so this 10% level can be maintained for 2016/17. This has then been used to construct the draft budget; the council tax yield with an unchanged scheme is in line with that estimated in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
26. Council tax collection rate. For 2013/14, we exceeded our collection target of 98%, by 0.34%. For 2014/15, we exceeded it by 0.27%. We should slightly exceed this target once again in 2015/16.
27. However, with funding announcement still outstanding there is a risk that the government will further reduce funding on welfare support for 2016/17. However, the government has not yet informed us of the level of potential grant reduction and any announcement is likely to be in December. As a final scheme must be decided by 31 January 2016 it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader, for any amendments to the recommended scheme to be made, except if there is a material need in which case a further report would be submitted to the January meeting.

Consultation

28. The public consultation that took place in 2012 (in relation to the 2013/14 scheme) stated that the proposed scheme for 2013/14 was a 17.5% contribution to council tax liability for working-age claimants (with disabled and carer claimants' contribution level protected at 5%). Subsequently the government special grant meant that the actual contribution level could be restricted to 8.5% - the level needed to qualify for the transition grant. The scheme for 2014/15 and 2015/16 was less of an increase than that originally proposed (10% rather than 17.5%).
29. Subject to Cabinet agreeing the recommendation in this report, the contribution will remain at 10% for 2016/17, which remains less than the amount previously consulted on. However, public consultation is still

considered necessary, particularly as there will be some first time claimants who have come into council tax support since the consultation carried out last year. Accordingly it is appropriate to advertise on the council's website the proposed scheme for 2016/17, including details of the minor amendments detailed above, and invite comments relating to the proposal. It is advisable that consultation should run for a period of six weeks from the publication of this report until 11th January 2016.

Conclusion

30. Retaining the contribution of CTS claimants at 10% for 2016/17 will be possible. This unchanged scheme has been used in the draft tax base calculation and is sufficient to generate the Council Tax income assumed in the Medium Term Financial Plan. However, this advice may be altered once the Government announces the funding arrangements for 2016/17 in December.
31. Retaining the 10% level will assist Council Tax collection rates and maintain a lower level of arrears.
32. The 10% level can be easily associated with the Government funding cut of 10%. The 5% contribution for those in receipt of a disability benefit or carers allowance may be more acceptable if seen as half of the standard contribution.
33. The freezing of allowances and the amendments to the Housing Benefit scheme for 2016/17 should be replicated in the CTS scheme to assist the processing of claims and understanding of the scheme.
34. A period of public consultation to run until 11th January 2016.

Portfolio Holder's Views

35. As chair of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group I have been fully involved in the monitoring of the progress of the scheme during the year and in the development of the proposals contained in this report. I will comment further on the report at the meeting.

Contact: Peter Budden, Revenues & Benefits Operations Manager

Email: peter.budden@ashford.gov.uk

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 3 December 2015
Report Title: Ashford Dark Sky and International Observatory
Report Author: Mark Carty and Sarah Barber
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Gerry Clarkson and Cllr Clair Bell



Summary:

To update members on the Phase 1 feasibility study (copy placed in the members' room) carried out by the Fourth Street Consultancy to consider deliverable options for the future provision of an international observatory in the borough and the inter-related issue of securing a 'dark sky community designation' from the International Dark Sky Community Association (IDSA).

To assist in securing this international designation it is proposed that Phase 2 of the proposal would be for the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS) to lead a community consultation on the application and this report details the exciting and innovative way in which this would be undertaken.

If members approve this course of action, an international dark sky community designation would have the status of being the very first such designation in mainland UK.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: Appledore, Hamstreet, Kenardington and Woodchurch

Recommendations: **The Cabinet be asked to:-**

- a) **Welcome and support the approach by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS).**
- b) **Approve the proposal to commission the AAS to work closely with the Council to undertake public consultation to enable an 'International Dark Sky Community Designation to be submitted to the International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) on behalf of the Council and the AAS.**
- c) **Approve a capital budget of £25,000 to meet the costs of this proposal as set out in the cabinet report.**
- d) **Authorise the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council to take any further actions required to give effect to these recommendations.**

Policy Overview:	The proposal supports Priority 1 – ‘Enterprising Ashford – Economic Investment and Growth’ of the Corporate Plan and in particular will help to deliver ‘a thriving rural tourism economy and successful rural enterprise’. It also supports Priority 4 – ‘Attractive Ashford- Environment, Countryside, Tourism & Heritage’ and in particular the action to ‘strengthen tourism and the local heritage offer’.
Financial Implications:	A one off cost of £25,000 funded from the 2016/2017 New Homes Bonus budget.
Risk Assessment	YES
Equalities Impact Assessment	YES
Other Material Implications:	None
Exemption Clauses:	None
Background Papers:	International Observatory Business Plan, Ashford Borough Council, Sept 2015 (report by Fourth Street Consultancy)
Contacts:	<u>mark.carty@ashford.gov.uk</u> , <u>sarah.barber@ashford.gov.uk</u> Tel: (01233) 330477, 01233 330345

Report Title: Ashford Dark Sky and International Observatory

Purpose of the Report

1. This report addresses the proposals by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS) to consider the provision of an astronomical observatory and the closely and inter-related matter of Ashford's Dark Sky and approved Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
2. The report summarises the detailed findings from the 'Fourth Street' consultancy (phase 1- copies of which have been placed in the members' room) and recommends next steps (phase 2).

Issue to be Decided

3. To welcome and support the approach being taken by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS).
4. To approve the proposal to commission the AAS to work with the Council to undertake public consultation to enable an 'International Dark Sky Community Designation to be submitted to the International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) on behalf of the Council and the AAS.
5. To approve a budget of £25,000 to meet the costs of this proposal as set out in the cabinet report.
6. To authorise the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the Leader of the Council to take any further actions required to give effect to these recommendations.

Background

7. The AAS approached the Council in 2013 with a proposal to create a space science centre, planetarium, and observatory.
8. The AAS is a thriving and active amateur astronomy society led by Drew Wager (Chairman) and Jason Hall (Secretary). It has over 200 members and a typical meeting, which includes indoor and outdoor stargazing, regularly attracts between 60 -100 people.
9. As membership of the AAS has grown in recent years, the society has experienced a need for larger and more suitable premises for hosting astronomy meetings and events. At the same time, the society identified the uniqueness of the dark skies, which are particularly good for stargazing, in some areas of the Ashford Borough. Armed with these two premises the society approached the Council for funding for an observatory.

10. The AAS informed the council that what makes this particular proposal so exciting and unique is the fact that the area to the south of Ashford and particularly around Woodchurch has the darkest night skies in the whole of the South East of England.
11. To ensure that Ashford continues to benefit from this unique advantage a Dark Skies SPD (Preserving our skies: Light pollution and the need for darkness) was adopted by the Council in July 2014.
12. With the planning policy in place to safeguard Ashford's dark skies members also agreed at the July 2014 Cabinet that a feasibility study be commissioned and funded which would include a fully costed business plan and delivery options as well as a proposal for achieving International Dark Sky Community Designation status. The Fourth Street consultancy was appointed in November 2014 to carry out this work.
13. Key drivers of the project also include the aim to advance the borough's tourism, education and cultural agendas and also the project's potential ability to communicate key signals about the borough that reinforce its economic, housing and inward investment strategies.

Phase 1 - Findings from the 'Fourth Street' Feasibility Study - Observatory

14. **Consultation**
An extensive range of consultations and site visits took place to inform the Market Analysis, Vision and Concept and Business Plan. This included discussion with the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, the Observatory Centre Herstmonceux and a number of universities, astronomical societies and local stakeholders.
15. **Market analysis**
Market analysis revealed that there is a relevant residential catchment of more than 4 million people and that the unique part of this particular project is the fact that a high quality, dark sky observation site could be so close to major population areas. Most other well-known dark sky areas in the UK are located in more remote areas with much lower population densities than Kent, its surrounding counties and London.
16. Astronomy tourism is also gaining in popularity as urbanisation has led to increased light pollution so that half the world's population can no longer see the stars, while celebrity stargazers such as Brian Cox and Dara O'Brian have helped to popularise astronomy.
17. Potential users and visitors of an observatory would be both the amateur astronomical community as well a wider market of newcomers and first timers, including the local community, schools and colleges. Interestingly, amateur astronomers stated they would be willing to travel to an observatory location if both the dark skies and the facilities were of sufficient quality to make the trip worthwhile.
18. The market analysis has demonstrated that operators are picking up on this trend and are catering to astronomy enthusiasts by providing telescopes and

on site accommodation facilities and proactively marketing dark sky sites as stargazing destinations. Kielder Observatory (owned by the Forestry Commission and leased to Kielder Observatory Astronomical Society) in Northumberland has been particularly successful in this respect.

Strategic Aims

19. The study proposes that the observatory should aim to be ‘the best destination in the South East for celestial observation by amateur astronomers and stargazing by a wider public’. Its core ‘attractor’ being the dark sky itself. It should be an education and learning platform for schools, universities, colleges and other astronomical societies. It should bring the stargazing experience, more commonly associated with remote destinations, within easy reach of London, the South East and continental markets.
20. It should be accessible, but not trivial, providing facilities for seasoned astronomers and a programme that aids the initiation of newcomers and the progression of those that develop an interest in the subject. It should also act as a signal of Ashford’s emerging identity as the ‘smart’ location in the South East.
21. There are four key aims: **Astronomy** – improving awareness about astronomy beyond the academic and amateur astronomical community through the initiation of newcomers; **Education** – providing a platform for the delivery of formal astronomy education in partnership with schools, colleges and universities; **Economy and Marketing** – changing and improving the perception of Ashford that is held by different markets – residents, investors, visitors; **Astro Tourism**- increasing the number of staying and day visits to Ashford by becoming one of the top stargazing sites in the UK.

Business Model and Options

22. The observatory model is based on a moderately sized, but well-equipped observatory serving a dedicated market of amateur astronomers, hobbyists and leisure learning visitors. It would be comparable in size and scope to Kielder Forest in Northumberland and the Scottish Dark Sky Observatory in the Galloway Forest. The focus should be as much on its programming as on product with other academic, cultural and professional organisations providing courses, lectures and special events.
23. A key element would be an accommodation offer allowing for residential courses for enthusiasts as well as a unique experience for stargazers.
24. It is likely that the building in addition to the observatory space would also include a classroom/meeting space, gallery/foyer, café and some element of retail and be in the region of 340 sq metres.
25. The basic business model comprises four main components – land, capital funding, an accommodation operator and observatory operator.
26. **Option 1 - Partnership Approach** - Through the consultation process and subsequent discussions a potential partnership with the Forestry Commission has been put forward. This would be working with the Forestry Commission and Kielder Observatory. In this option the Forestry Commission would be the landowner, Forest Holidays (a trading subsidiary of the Forestry Commission)

would be the accommodation provider and the operator would be Kielder Observatory who have the track record and experience of operating a successful dark skies observatory. In as much as these organisations have some pre-existing relationship, there is a theoretical simplicity to this option, however it is dependent on the decisions of third parties.

27. **Option 2 – ‘Go it alone’**- In this option there would be no agreement with the Forestry Commission and instead the Council could purchase the land and fund all the capital costs. Kielder Observatory could remain as the observatory operator as this is not dependent on a deal with the Forestry Commission, although it would be possible to agree a management contract with another organisation (ie the Royal Observatory) or recruit a new operating company. The accommodation provider may be Forest Holidays or some other leisure operator of similar calibre and pedigree.
28. A comparison of the two options along with detailed costings, both capital and revenue, can be found in the main business plan.

Phase 1 - Findings from the Fourth Street Feasibility Study – Dark Sky Community (DSC) Designation

29. The International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) is a recognised authority on light pollution and works to promote sensitive lighting and to safeguard dark skies around the world. It does this through the International Dark Sky Places Program which grants recognition of certain locations according to the quality of their dark sky and commitment to minimising light pollution.
30. There are three types of designation.
 - 1) International Dark Sky Parks and Reserves are places with exceptionally dark and pristine skies ie Galloway Forest and Exmoor.
 - 2) International Dark Sky Communities (DSC) also have dark skies but they need not be as dark to achieve community status since the designation is more focused on citizens’ commitment to preserving dark skies in the community.
 - 3) Dark Sky Discovery Sites are away from the worst of local light pollution and have two ratings - Orion sites and Milky Way sites, which need to be visible to the naked eye.
31. The IDSA states that a DSC is a ‘town, city or municipality that has shown dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting codes, dark sky education and citizen support of dark skies’.
32. Significantly, a DSC in Ashford would have the status of being the very first such designation in mainland UK.
33. The feasibility study emphasised the uniqueness, environmental, social, educational and economic potential of safeguarding and promoting the benefits of Ashford’s dark skies. As part of their work Fourth Street managed a visioning process for a proposed ‘Dark Sky Community Designation’ from the IDSA which demonstrated that this is achievable, potentially beneficial and an important step in its own right.

34. The benefits of achieving DSC status include international prestige and profile, promotion of eco and astro tourism, place marketing and place branding as well as health and well-being and quality of life advantages.
35. The process for securing the designation is set out in a specific draft action plan (see appendix A) prepared as part of the business plan. It includes ensuring partners are supportive of the idea and see the benefits that can be achieved, defining the proposed boundary, aiming for a cluster of parishes around Woodchurch and devising a name that accurately reflects the geographical coverage of the proposed DSC.
36. Once this is in place, the DSC status requires a lighting code for the applicant area with the current SPD being amended and produced as a local guidance document; a series of Dark Sky Discovery Sites would need to be identified and consulted on and a series of local events and activities planned.

Phase 2 (Next Steps) - Community Consultation Proposal

37. To assist in securing the International designation the application requires a community consultation exercise which the AAS has agreed to lead.
38. It is proposed that the AAS do this by using a mobile, inflatable 'planetarium' which comprises a lightproof dome, a projector and a range of teaching and audio visual content (see appendix B). It is also proposed that a dedicated 'Ashford Dark Sky' software app is produced.
39. The mobile 'planetarium' can be easily and quickly erected in most schools, village halls and community centres with space for up to 50 people. The consultation process will also help to provide learning opportunities for local people by exploring science, astronomy and space in an interactive, educational and entertaining way. Importantly, it will also help to promote membership of the AAS and act as a useful barometer to gauge public interest for a possible observatory in future years.
40. The project cost of £25,000 which includes the inflatable 'planetarium', all equipment, the preparation of a bespoke app and the consultation is detailed in the 2016/17 New Homes Bonus Project Bidding Form.

Handling

41. At this stage, however, the international dark sky community designation application should not be viewed as a precursor to an 'observatory' project. The consultation process and the mobile planetarium should be given approximately three years to help to build community involvement and interest in astronomy and in Ashford's Dark Sky before considering embarking on a possible observatory.
42. It is proposed that the Fourth Street Consultancy uses the outcome of local consultation to complete and submit, as per their draft action plan, a 'Dark Sky Community Designation' to the IDSA on behalf of the Council and the AAS.

Consultation

43. The AAS has been consulted and fully supports this measured, but innovative approach to securing a DSC designation and further educating local people about Ashford's dark skies.

Risk Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment

44. The risks for this proposal are minimal. While the community consultation will be delivered by the AAS, the process will be overseen, monitored and evaluated by the Council with support from the Fourth Street Consultancy in preparing and submitting the final DSC designation to the IDSA.
45. In fact the project will also 'test the water' in relation to the establishment of a permanent observatory and will enable the AAS and the council to consult with and receive feedback from a wide range of potential stakeholders. Access to the mobile planetarium consultation sessions will be free and open to all the community.

Conclusion

46. It is therefore proposed that the Council (through the Fourth Street Consultancy) secures a Dark Sky Community designation and that the AAS undertakes community consultation to support the application using a mobile, inflatable planetarium as a means to engage with and consult a range of stakeholders.

Portfolio Holder Views

47. **Leader of the Council, Cllr Gerry Clarkson CBE** – "I welcome the findings of this report and the fact that while an observatory should aim to be the 'best destination in the South East for celestial observation by amateur astronomers and stargazing by the wider public' including schools, colleges, universities and other astronomical societies, its core 'attractor' at all times is the dark sky and in this particular case, the dark skies in and around Woodchurch.

To that effect, I wholeheartedly support the innovative approach being proposed, which will see the Council working closely with the Ashford Astronomical Society to develop an exciting and interactive community consultation programme that will ultimately enable an International Dark Sky Community Designation to be submitted to the prestigious International Dark Sky Association.

Significantly, A Dark Sky Community in Ashford would have the status of being the very first such designation in mainland UK and would well and truly cement Ashford's international credentials.

In addition this paves the way to examine over time, just how popular this is before we encourage any longer term investment.”

48. **Portfolio Holder for Public Interaction and Borough Presentation, Cllr Clair Bell** – “This proposal has a number of key benefits, but of particular note would be the impact of ‘astro tourism’ on the rural economy. A Dark Sky Community Designation would bring the stargazing experience, more commonly associated with remote destinations, within easy reach of London, the South East and continental markets.

This would increase the number of day and staying visits to Ashford and a key element could be the development of an accommodation offer and the ability to work with a range of existing hospitality providers to extend the traditional tourism season.”

Contact: Mark Carty/Sarah Barber

Email: mark.carty@ashford.gov.uk/sarah.barber@ashford.gov.uk

APPENDIX A
DRAFT DARK SKY COMMUNITY DESIGNATION ACTION PLAN

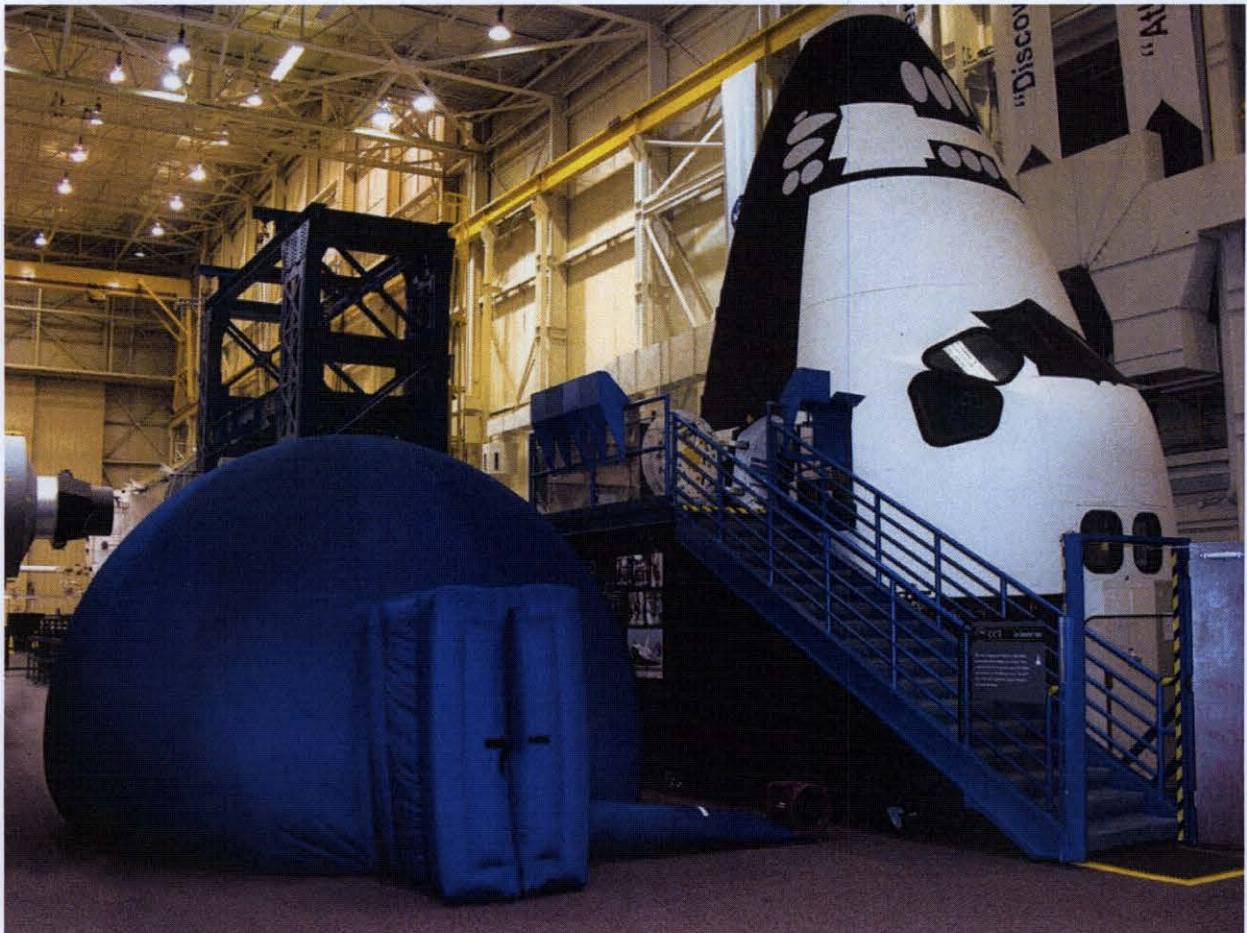
<u>Objective</u>	<u>Actions</u>
1.Ensuring the potential partners are all supportive of the idea and see the benefits that can be achieved	a. Create an outward facing version of the vision and concept document for the DSC
	b. Engage with the Parish Councils and other local stakeholders (e.g. High Weald AONB) to generate support for the proposal
	c. Engage with KCC to ensure that they will operate in the spirit of the revised SPD
2.Define a boundary and establish a working title for the DSC	a. Through the Parish engagement process, define a boundary based on an unbroken series parishes and collectively agree a name for the DSC
3. Fulfilling the obligation to produce an outdoor lighting code	a. Produce a locally tailored draft appendix to the lighting code which meets IDA requirements
	b. Consult on the SPD Appendix
4. Enable people to enjoy dark stars in a way which bolsters the DSC application and increases community awareness of dark skies issues.	a. Establish a programme of events and activities for the coming year, through contact with local astronomy groups
	b. Identify and consult on a network of Dark Sky Discovery Sites to promote stargazing opportunities locally and add value to the DSC application. Engage with astronomy groups on selection
	c. Complete application for DSDS
	d. Identify resources needed to support events and activities (publications, materials, stargazing kits etc.) engaging with astronomy groups.
	e. Establish the extent to which dark skies resources are currently available or desired in a sample of local schools. If desirable, identify how the materials produced under action 4d could be used to support dark skies work in schools.

	f. Create a simple dark sky awareness publication and/or web resource alongside the promotion of star-gazing events and the Dark Skies Discovery Sites, highlighting opportunities to enjoy dark night skies in the DSC area.
5. Establish the support of a broad range of local groups beyond the Parishes, KCC and the astronomy groups	a. Provide an opportunity for local organisations to engage in the process with a view to providing letters of support – this could be a stargazing event targeting potential supporters
	b. Provide guidance on potential letters of support content, without simply producing a template
6. Identify a night-time sky darkness baseline and monitoring programme	a. Provide guidance on undertaking a night sky darkness monitoring programme with local astronomy groups
	b. Meet with the local astronomy groups, as part of the overall engagement process, to seek their support and input to monitoring. Identify repository of the records
	c. Implement programme with local astronomy groups
7. Generate examples of a minimum of 10 projects built under the lighting code, or agreeing an alternative with IDA	a. Initial action action - Confirm with the IDA what might be acceptable in this regard, given the timing of production and the presence of the current SPD
8. Secure the Dar Sky Community Status	a. Ongoing liaison with the IDA to ensure the process is on the right track
	b. Gather the supporting material
	c. Complete the application form

Example of mobile, inflatable planetariums



About Go-Dome



Go-Dome™, a division of the Avela Corp., is the preeminent manufacturer of portable dome theaters and the mirror-projection equipment that these theaters use to bring the night sky into focus at any time, in any place. Thanks to a dedicated team of international distributors, Go-Domes™ are bringing the immersive, full-dome planetarium experience to schools, museums, science centers, and public venues of all kinds, worldwide.

Go-Dome™ theaters range in size from such architectural masterpieces as the Rose Center in New York to compact, lightweight 4- to 10-meter domes. Go-Dome's™ newest offering, the Zodiac line of large domes, features permanently inflated walls and doors. Go-Domes™ of all sizes and styles share the same hemispherical shape and deliver the same immersive, exciting experience. Each Go-Dome™ incorporates state-of-the-art screen quality, interior airflow to maximize viewer comfort, and a full-sized door similar to that of a permanent theater.

Each Go-Dome™ meets international fire-safety standards as well as rigid California flame-retardant standards, and is constructed to exacting U.S. quality-control specifications. Go-Domes™ are shipped in cargo duffel bags for easy transport.

Go-Dome™ also manufactures a convex mirror-projection system called the Newtonian2™. This compact, lightweight projection system is a lower-cost and more convenient alternative to bulkier fish-eye projection systems. In fact, the Newtonian2™ is so compact it can be carried on to some airplanes! Newtonian2™ technology enables small planetariums everywhere to complement their existing mechanical optical star projectors by offering digital movie content. The large, scratch-resistant, coated, convex GO-Vex™ mirror used in Newtonian2™ is housed in an integrated case that protects it during travel and during operation. During use, the case sits on an adjustable stand in the back of the dome, leaving the best seats in the house — the center seats — free for the audience!



The Standard Dome

Go-Dome's first product — the one that put the company on the map and took the astronomy world by storm in 2004 — continues to be its best-selling product.

The Standard Go-Dome remains popular with customers of all kinds due to its extreme versatility and portability, without compromising on comfort or image quality.

As with the complete line of Go-Domes, the Standard dome uses positive air pressure, and is inflated by turning on a simple carpet fan. The dome's door acts as an airlock, keeping the dome fully inflated even as visitors enter and exit at their leisure. The positive-pressure dome provides a constant supply of fresh air, keeping audiences cool and comfortable while they are inside the dome.

Standard domes are available with an exterior color of blue or black, and in sizes ranging from 3 to 9 meters in diameter.



Standard 6 meter blue Go-Dome™

Once inside the dome, audiences first see unique flocked-grey interior “walls.” When the projection system is turned on, those inflatable walls do double duty by acting as a superior projection surface for movies and star fields. The surface displays images impeccably, for a sharp, detailed visual.

Having first been introduced in 2005, Go-Dome has been able to tweak its popular product — making improvements that largely have been driven by their customers’ input. As a result, today’s Standard Go-Dome boasts features that earlier versions didn’t have.

Today’s Standard Go-Dome has input air vents in the door and along the wall to increase the flow of fresh air. It also has front air vents that let air out of the dome to prevent the dome from becoming over-inflated and lifting off the floor. The door has been heightened to create a 6-foot interior clearance so most people can enter and exit without having to duck down.

Though the Standard dome was Go-Dome’s first product, continual enhancements and improvements have helped it retain its position as a top-seller. Its versatility and portability make it attractive to customers of all kinds.



Standard Go-Dome™ Pricing



Go-Dome™ Rings

For customers needing a more traditional planetarium theater experience, Go-Dome™ offers domes with rings. These rings give the dome a vertical wall below the projection surface. The rings are inflated by the same fan that inflates the dome. Each ring has a diameter of 30 cm (1 foot) and up to 5 rings can be provided for the spring line desired by the customer. The primary purpose of the rings is to raise the projected horizon in the dome. By using 3 or more three or more rings standard folding chairs can be used in the dome for seating and the fulldome image is projected above the heads of the seated audience.

One or two Rings hold the dome diameter and adds to stability. Three to five Rings provide a wall against which chairs can be placed. Customers wanting a dome structure with chairs often choose the ring dome.

These domes are heavier and therefore not as portable as the standard dome, but find many applications where a dome is set up for more than one day or even as a temporary theater in museums or other public spaces such as malls, lobbies, and common areas. Ring domes have been made in sizes ranging from 4-meter domes fitting in trade shows or classrooms with tall ceilings to 8-meter portable theaters.

The rings are permanently attached to the dome and are not detachable in any way. Likewise Rings can not be added to a standard dome.

Ring domes are available in blue or black standard cloth.



4 ring 7 meter Go-Dome™



Newtonian™2

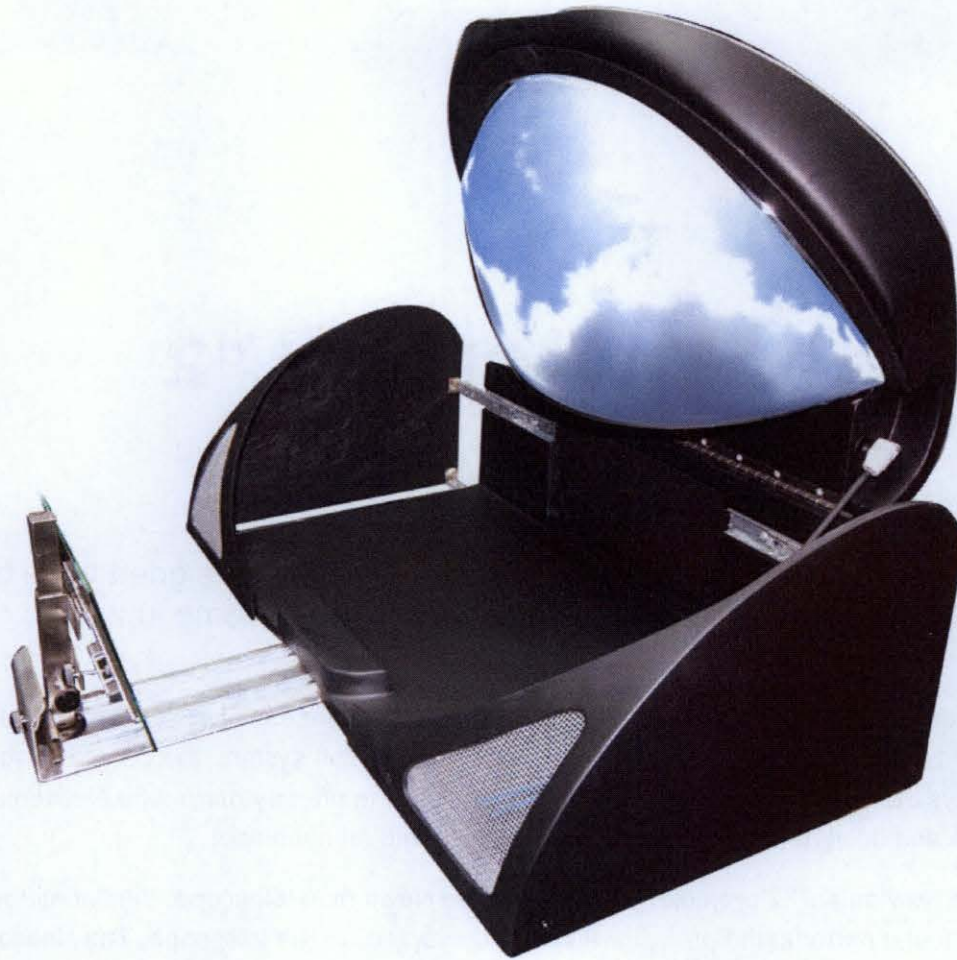
The Newtonian™2 is an optical projection system designed to be both portable and optically accurate in delivering a full-dome image.

Like the Newtonian telescope, the Newtonian projection device uses two first-surface mirrors: a curved mirror and a flat mirror. In the Newtonian™2 projection system, the curved mirror is convex and displays the image from a projector over a dome. (The primary mirror of a Newtonian telescope is concave and designed to gather light and focus it onto an eyepiece).

In both the Newtonian™2 projector system and the Newtonian telescope, the flat mirror transfers the image to the mirror in the projector and to the eyepiece in the telescope. The Newtonian™2 projection system uses the Go-Vex™ first-surface convex mirror. It's most critical design criterion is protection of the primary mirror during transport and while in projection mode.

The Newtonian™2 mirror projection system serves the function of a fisheye lens at a fraction of the cost for the resolution on the dome (similar to the advantages of the reflecting telescope over the refractor). Also the Newtonian™2 has a small footprint -- 60 cm wide and 30-45 cm deep (2 feet by 12-18 inches) -- and is placed along the back wall of the dome, leaving the center of the dome free for visitors. It produces hemispheric coverage with a small area of shading and distortion at the back, directly above the mirror.

The Newtonian™2 is designed to use an HD projector with a resolution of 1920 by 1080 or 1200 although higher resolution projectors for portable systems may become available in the future. Most of the current brands will fit in the Newtonian™2 system, but retail distributors will have complete and current lists of projectors. Brighter projectors usually have superior performance -- especially in larger domes. Unlike the fisheye, which must be installed in a specific projector, the Newtonian™2 takes a range of standard HD projectors found in home theaters and conference rooms. In the HD projection over 84% of the projector's pixels reach the dome with over 95% of the dome covered. When a projector needs repair, a second projector can replace it immediately. The Newtonian™2 rarely needs repair, but customers may change out the primary Go-Vex™ convex mirror after several years of use.



Newtonian 2™ Spherical Projection System

The Newtonian™2 is very portable and normally travels on top of a rolling case containing the projector, laptop and sound system – for easy transport to a school or community setting. An operator with practice can set up a Go-Dome™ and Newtonian™2 system in less than 30 minutes, with similar amount of time required for takedown. The dome, fan, and projection system can all fit on one hand-truck.

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Advantages:

1. The Newtonian™2 is **less expensive** than fisheye solutions. There is no debating this fact.
2. The Newtonian™2 **eliminates chromatic aberration** associated with the horizon of fisheye lenses.
3. Newtonian™2 projection solutions are **resolution independent** with the only limitation to the resolution being the projector you have chosen to use.
4. Newtonian™2 projection solutions are **infinitely upgradable**. You are not stuck with the initial projector you have chosen. As projector technology continues to improve in lumens and resolutions, you are free to change out for a new projector while repurposing the original projector for classroom or other uses without penalty. This makes Newtonian™2 mirror solutions green and better for the environment.
5. **More pixels on the dome!** A fisheye lens coupled with a high definition projector loses over 50% of the available pixels due to the round nature of the dome master that the fisheye lens must project. A warped image, designed for a mirror captures 84% of the available pixels giving you more pixels on the dome and higher resolution regardless of what ever apples to apples projector comparison you choose to make. The image below clearly illustrates this.



[Newtonian™2 Pricing](#)



Honest pixel/ resolution comparison

Missinformation:

Newtonian™2 projection solutions offer so many advantages, competitors are publishing misinformation that we would like to take this opportunity to clear up.

1. The Newtonian™ 2's Go-Vex Mirrors are *criticized for being so delicate that you can not even blow on them*. Not true. We maintain a caucus approach to the care and maintenance of the Go-Vex™ Mirror, but it is the only cleanable first surface mirror available to the market today.
2. *The Newtonian™2 coverage is distorted and not complete at the back of the theater*. We want to point out that with the Newtonian™2 system, when properly aligned in portable domes, cover over 95% of the dome without distortion. And in fixed domes using, Newtonian™2 systems ALL distortion and coverage issues can be eliminated by careful alignment. As evidence, note the photo below provided by Paul Bourke. Using a Newtonian™2 projection system, with a Go-Vex Mirror. Paul is covering 100% of the dome without distortion and is projecting at the cove line allowing for the star ball projector to be used without causing a shadow.



Newtonian 2™ image projection in a 12 meter dome- Image courtesy of Paul Bourke

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Go-Dome® Dome Covers





Dome Covers™ give your Go-Dome® personality, perhaps a space ship or an Earth, and attract attention. They provide a theme to match the experience inside the dome and encourage visitors to come over and investigate. The Dome Cover™ comes to the bottom of the dome and around the entry airlock door.

Available artwork includes an Earth and a space ship, but other treatments, including other planets, can be created with the cost dependant on the complexity of the artwork.

The Dome Cover™ is very light weight and is placed over the dome as it is inflated. The dome cover then stays in place until the dome itself is deflated. It cannot be viewed from inside, but a complementary projection is supplied as a fisheye or warped fisheye for you to use in your projection system, perhaps as visitors enter the dome and take their seats.

The Dome Cover™ can also be customized or commercialized depending on your audience and the availability of photographs or original artwork.

 Go-Dome™ Dome Covers

Trading and Enterprise Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held in Committee Room 1 (Fougères Room), Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **9th November 2015**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);

Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Galpin.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Powell, Shorter, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, (Company Secretary to both Companies).

Also Present:

Head of Communities and Housing (in her capacity as Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Head of Finance (in his capacity as a Director of a Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd), Head of Development Delivery (in his capacity as a Director of A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd), Strategic Housing and Property Manager, Principal Accountant, Business Support Manager, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

191 Declarations of Interest

The Head of Communities and Housing, (in her capacity as Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd), the Head of Development Delivery (in his capacity as Director of A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd), and the Head of Finance (in his capacity as a Director of A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd) declared interests in respect of matters on the Agenda.

192 Appointment of Auditors

Prior to the consideration of this item those present explained the role of the Trading and Enterprise Board in relation to its scrutiny role of the two Companies established by the Council and their individual responsibilities in terms of the respective Companies.

The report asked the Board to ratify the appointment of Grant Thornton as Auditor for both Companies for the Financial Year 2014/15 and to approve their appointment, subject to approval, at the Annual General Meeting, for the Financial Year 2015/16.

Resolved:

That (i) the appointment of Grant Thornton as Auditor for both Companies for the Financial Year 2014/15, as agreed by the Companies at their Annual General Meetings in 2015, be ratified.

- (ii) subject to the approval of the Shareholder at the 2016 Annual General meetings the appointment of Grant Thornton as the Auditors for both Companies for the Financial Year 2015/16 be approved.

193 A Better Choice for Property Ltd and A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd - Annual Reports

The report provided the Board with the Companies Annual Reports which gave an overview of their activities, future plans and their financial statements.

In response to a question regarding the key priorities for A Better Choice for Property Company, the Head of Communities and Housing explained that the initial agreement under which the Company operated provided for property to be let at an affordable rent level. The changes to the Business Plan outlined later on the Agenda for the meeting was proposing that the Company moved to renting property on a market rent basis. She also clarified that the Companies' activities were separate to the activities of the Council generally in terms of housing provision.

With reference to the 2014/15 Financial Statements set out on page 11 of the Agenda, the Principal Accountant advised that this document should have been shown as Draft.

Resolved:

That the Companies' Annual Reports be received and noted.

194 A Better Choice for Property Ltd - Updated Business Plan

Under the Shareholder Agreement between the Council and A Better Choice for Property Ltd, the Company was required to submit an updated Business Plan to the Board for approval. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was an Exempt Business Plan for 2015-2018 and circulated separately from the Agenda was the Exempt Appendix 3 – Property Company Business Case.

The Head of Communities and Housing, in her capacity as a Director of the Better Choice for Property Ltd Company, explained the current activities of the Company and also highlighted the nature of the future types of properties the Company was looking to acquire.

In response to a question, the Head of Finance advised that if any Company wished to bring forward proposals which were outside of their approved Business Plans, then these would need to be considered by the Trading and Enterprise Board together with the associated financial modelling. If required, special meetings of the Trading and Enterprise Board could be arranged if a matter needed to be dealt with urgently.

The Board considered the Business Plan in detail and questioned the Officers on the content and future proposals.

The Chairman advised that he was supportive of the direction of the company as it was investing in property.

Recommended:

That the Companies' Updated Business Plan as set out in Exempt Appendices 1 and 3 to the report be approved.

195 Draw-down of Loan for A Better Choice for Property Ltd

The report requested that the Board ask Cabinet to recommend to the Council that the next tranches of loan money be made available to the Company.

A tabled paper set out an amended recommendation.

Recommended:

That the Cabinet be requested to recommend to Council that the next two £2m tranches of the £10m loan facility be made available to the Company following the approval of the Business Plan.

196 A Better Choice for Property Ltd and A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd – Amendments to Shareholder's Agreements

The report asked the Board to approve a number of amendments to the Shareholder's Agreements which were in place between the Council and the two Trading Companies. Details of those changes were set out in Exempt Appendix 1 to the report.

Resolved:

- That (i) the recommended amendments set out in Exempt Appendix 1 to the report to each Shareholder's Agreement between the Council and the two Trading Companies be approved.**
- (ii) the Head of Legal & Democratic Services be given delegated authority to agree and enter into the necessary documents to bring the amendments into effect.**

197 Next Meeting

The Head of Development Delivery (in his capacity as a Director of A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd) explained the reasons why it had not been possible to

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submit that Company's revised Business Plan to this meeting and said he would hope to be in a position to submit such a plan to the Board early in the New Year.

(KRF/VS)

MINS:CA-TEB1546

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Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the **28th October 2015**.

Present:

Councillor Clarkson (Chairman);

Councillor Bennett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Burgess, Clokie, Heyes, Hicks, Michael, Shorter.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) Councillors Burgess and Hicks attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Galpin and Wedgbury respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Galpin, Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Cllr. Sims.

Richard Alderton – Head of Planning & Development, Simon Cole – Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, Andrew Osborne – Economic Development Manager, Ian Grundy – Principal Policy Planner, Daniel Carter – Principal Policy Planner, Jeremy Baker – Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Catherine Hughes – Planning Consultant, Danny Sheppard – Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Burgess made a Voluntary Announcement as an Ashford Borough Council appointed representative on the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board, which employed Kent Wildlife Trust in various roles.
- 1.2 Councillor Clarkson made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd.
- 1.3 Councillor Hicks made a Voluntary Announcement as an Ashford Borough Council appointed representative on the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board, which employed Kent Wildlife Trust in various roles.
- 1.4 Councillor Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of Kent Play Clubs and A Better Choice for Consultancy Ltd and as a Tenant Farmer of Council land at Tudor Farm and West Hawk.

2 Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 28th September 2015

- 2.1 The Chairman said he had agreed with Officers that as they moved forward with a reduced number of shortlisted sites, they should meet with individual Ward Members to allow them to have input in to the sites in their Wards. Officers could then come back to this Task Group with that input already incorporated. A Member suggested that the four Ward Members for Tenterden might like to meet with Officers together as there would inevitably be some overlap of sites for discussion. It was also agreed that a composite list of all shortlisted sites would be sent out to all Task Group Members as soon as possible.
- 2.2 The Task Group Members agreed that the Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Meeting held on 28th September 2015 were an accurate record.
- 2.3 It was also noted that the Notes of the 16th September 2015 meeting of this Task Group had now been sent out to Members and had been considered by the Cabinet on the 8th October 2015. They included some important points about windfall sites.

3 Local Plan to 2030 – Strategic Employment Policy

- 3.1 The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development introduced the item. He advised that some of what Members would see here was a continuation of current policy but there were also a number of issues that needed to be considered to arrive at a more nuanced policy.
- 3.2 The Economic Development Manager and one of the Principal Policy Planners then gave a presentation on employment requirements and site provision. It covered: - the policy position; key drivers; growth sectors; existing strategic employment allocations (Commercial Quarter; Eureka Business Park; Sevington; Orbital Park; Waterbrook) and Rural Sites; and considerations around existing business parks, choice of sites and infrastructure requirements.
- 3.3 The item was then opened up to Members and the following points were raised: -
- The number of small employers and people working from home in Ashford meant that good broadband would become an even bigger issue. It was considered that developers should be leaned on to provide good broadband on new developments.
 - With regard to employment figures – 1500 jobs had been created between 2010 and 2014 which, when extrapolated to 2030, would leave a shortfall in the overall jobs target. Was there any cause for concern? It was noted that in developing targets for the Local Plan, the employment figure would go up and down in the years up to 2030 through different national economic cycles. 11,100 jobs would need to

be delivered between 2014-2030 and the requirement for employment land could be met from existing site allocations.

- Could policies for businesses in the rural area be more flexible? There was forecast to be a shortfall of space based on existing trends continuing in terms of floor space requirements and the rural area did have an important part to play in the economic prospects of the Borough.
- With regard to power supplies, the Chairman said that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been discussing how it may operate more effectively and one of the things they had considered was the option of calling in utility companies to discuss their plans for Ashford and how they tied in with what the Council was doing.

4 Local Plan to 2030 – Biodiversity Policy

- 4.1 One of the Principal Policy Planners introduced the report which outlined a draft policy approach to the protection and promotion of biodiversity and set the context for where that may sit in the Local Plan 2030. In simple terms, biodiversity referred to the variety of plant and animal life that populated the many and diverse habitats of the Borough. The intention was that this would fall within a wider Green Infrastructure chapter of the Local Plan which would be shared with the Task Group in due course when drafted.
- 4.2 He outlined the current requirements in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other legislative requirements and explained that in light of those it was proposed to keep a hierarchical approach in place for the Local Plan 2030, whereby the most sensitive sites or assets were afforded the greatest protection. It was also important to note that the emphasis should be on improving, as opposed to merely avoiding harm so the policy would seek to enhance biodiversity rather than simply seeking to preserve it. Greater emphasis was also placed on Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) which indicated where the delivery of BAP targets should be focussed in order to secure maximum biodiversity benefits (there were currently seven BOAs in the Borough). BOAs were not 'designations' and were therefore not in themselves statutory instruments, but they were helpful in showing how networks could be promoted in a wide area should the opportunities present themselves. A full summary of the policy was contained within the papers.
- 4.3 In response to a question about BOAs and the potential for people to build on them and cause harm, the Principal Policy Planner advised that there was no absolute restraint and an assessment would be carried out in the same way as on any other site. A survey would take place to assess the potential impact on that habitat but there would be an additional layer of detail required demonstrating the potential effect on the BOA.
- 4.4 A Member suggested that the Millennium Wood at Singleton should be included in the list of sites covered by the Policy.

5 Local Plan to 2030 – Feedback from Review of Existing Development Plan Policies

- 5.1 The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development gave a verbal update on some of the Member feedback that had been received so far on the existing Development Plan Policies. This had demonstrated that many of the existing policies would not require significant change and Officers could begin to use them to start populating large sections of the Local Plan 2030 document. It had also become clear that some content was out of date as it had been superseded by the NPPF so could simply be deleted. There were also opportunities to consolidate and reduce some of the content as a result of this and as some were only one page long. He advised that each Policy would come back to the Task Group as it was re-drafted.
- 5.2 One of the Principal Policy Planners highlighted some of the initial comments that had been received. He advised that the main message was certainly to slim down and consolidate the Plan Policies to avoid duplication. It had certainly been a very useful exercise and he thanked those who had responded. The feedback would help Officers and they would be reporting back to Members in due course.
- 5.3 During the course of discussion the following additional points were made: -
- The use of ‘subjective’ wording should be avoided where possible so as not to leave uncertainty.
 - Some of the policies in the NPPF were very precise and categorical and where this was the case the Council had little option but to follow them. There were some areas that were less prescriptive and there may be opportunities to explain why the Council considered a certain approach may be appropriate and acceptable in a certain context, and this may allow the Council a little flexibility in those areas.
 - Significant levels of consultation were scheduled for the Local Plan 2030, and indeed much had been undertaken already. It was a long process and there had been and would be opportunities for engagement and dialogue all the way through. That was not to say that everybody would be happy with the outcome and it would not be possible to incorporate everybody’s wishes but it would certainly not be due to a lack of opportunity to engage. The Council was also duty bound to give a response to all comments received. An eight week period of formal consultation was planned, which was in excess of the minimum six week period, but Officers would be guided by Members over the length and form of consultation. The indicative timetable showed that Officers were looking to get the Plan to the Inspector by the end of 2016. They were therefore aiming to present the draft Local Plan 2030 to the Cabinet at its April 2016 meeting.

6 Dates of Next Meetings

- 6.1 The dates of the meetings to the end of the current Municipal Year would be: -

All at 2pm

Monday 23 November 2015
Wednesday 9 December 2015
Wednesday 13 January 2016
Wednesday 10 February 2016
Wednesday 9 March 2016
Wednesday 13 April 2016

6.2 **Post Meeting Note: The meeting on the 23rd November has now been cancelled. The next meeting will be Wednesday 9th December 2015.**

Councillor Clarkson (Chairman) –
Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk
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NOTES OF THE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION BOARD

18th November 2015

Attending: Cllr. Gerry Clarkson (Chair)
Cllr. Graham Galpin
Cllr. Noel Ovenden

John Bunnett (JB) (part of the meeting)
Ben Lockwood (BL)
Paul McKenner (PMcK)
Stewart Smith (SS)
Andrew Osborne (AO)
Steve Parish (SP)
Dean Spurrell (DS)
Keith Fearon (KF) – minutes

Apologies: Richard Alderton, Sarah Hartles

<p>1. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>John Bunnett declared an interest in respect of the Conningbrook Site and left the meeting during consideration of that item.</p>	
<p>2. Notes of the Meeting held on 20th October 2015</p> <p>The Notes of the Meeting held on 20th October 2015 were agreed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>3. Confirmation of Programme of Works for Proceeding Three Months</p> <p>PMcK had produced a report for consideration by the Board which recommended that over the next 3 months the Commercial Quarter, Elwick Place and Conningbrook projects be given priority to allow the appropriate amount of Officer time and resource to be allocated to them. PMcK emphasised the significant workload associated with progressing each of these projects.</p> <p>JB considered that this recommendation was extremely timely but was indicative of the very ambitious plans the Council had for the town. He advised the Board of the current projects included within the Capital Programme together with their respective allocations and said that the Board needed to be mindful of this in terms of future calls for capital support.</p> <p>The Chairman said that he was supportive of the approach outlined in</p>	

<p>the report and considered that the Chief Executive's time should be used wisely prior to him leaving the authority.</p> <p>In terms of the Capital Programme he accepted that this may restrict potential acquisitions but expressed the view that investors or development partners may be in a position to take such acquisitions forward. Having said that he believed that the Council should be in a position to respond to any potential 'windfall' opportunities which may arise. He asked for a definitive list of sites to be produced to enable a decision to be made in terms of which ones to pursue and which ones to place on the back burner.</p> <p>In terms of Park Mall, PMcK said that in due course he would bring a report to the Board to consider how to take forward this site.</p> <p>The Board agreed the Programme of Works for the next 3 months, which prioritises, at the exclusion of other matters, the following three projects: The Commercial Quarter; Elwick Place and Conningbrook.</p>	<p>PMcK</p> <p>All Project Officers</p>
<p>4. The Commercial Quarter - Update</p> <p>SS reported that the Heads of Terms was close to agreement and that a new planning application would be submitted later this month or early December to deal with a number of changes. The planning application would be determined in Spring 2016. SS also gave an update on the situation regarding the tenants of the 2 buildings in the Commercial Quarter.</p> <p>PMcK advised that the land transfer from KCC was also to be finalised.</p> <p>In terms of this site and the Island Site the Board accepted that there were synergies between them and as part of the work on the project JB suggested that a further marketing exercise be undertaken.</p> <p>With reference to future car parking spaces SP referred to a plan produced by the Council's Consultant for additional parking provision on the South Park.</p>	<p>SS</p> <p>PMcK</p> <p>PMcK/SS</p>
<p>5. Elwick Place – Update</p> <p>JB advised that negotiations were still ongoing with the HCA regarding the land purchase but was expected to be completed by the end of November.</p> <p>In terms of the outline application for 200 private sector residential units the update report set out the various options the Council needed to consider for the delivery of those units on the site. The report suggested that the developers' agent be invited to the next meeting to discuss</p>	

<p>these options in more detail.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the developers agent be invited to the next meeting of the Board in December to discuss the options in more detail.</p>	<p>PMcK</p>
<p>6. Conningbrook Lakes Country Park and Residential Development - Update</p> <p>JB left the meeting during consideration of this item.</p> <p>SP gave an update in terms of the residential site adjacent to the country park and also advised of the interest expressed by a Kent based pub operator regarding the acquisition of land for a public house, restaurant and hotel. The land needed for this would require the council's masterplanning for the site to be reviewed by the Cultural Services team and planning issues also needed to be considered . SP also updated on discussions with the Environment Agency regarding their future proposals for measures in the area to help alleviate potential flooding in Canterbury.</p>	<p>SP</p>

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Agenda Item No: 14
Report To: CABINET
Date: 3RD DECEMBER 2015
Report Title: SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN
Report Author: Head of Legal and Democratic Services



Summary:	To set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet of Ashford Borough Council.
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Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: Where appropriate, individual Wards are indicated.

Recommendations : **That the Cabinet receive and note the latest Schedule of Key Decisions.**

Policy Overview: Under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no longer a legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, however there is still a requirement to publish details of Key Decisions 28 clear days before the meeting they are to be considered at. The Council maintains a live, up to date rolling list of decision items on the Council's website, and that list will be presented to the Cabinet each month, in its current state, for Members' information.

Financial Implications: Nil

Other Material Implications: Nil

Exemption Clauses: Nil

Background Papers: None

Contacts: danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 01233 330349

**CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

The following Key Decisions will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet on the dates stated.

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Gerry Clarkson; Neil Bell; Clair Bell; Mike Bennett; Jessamy Blanford; Paul Clokie; Graham Galpin; Bernard Heyes; Jane Martin; Neil Shorter.

Copies of the reports and any other relevant documents that are submitted to the Cabinet in connection with a proposed decision will be available for inspection, or on screen, five clear days before the decision date at the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford and at Tenterden Gateway, 2 Manor Row, Tenterden, during opening hours, or at www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors_and_committees.aspx

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
3rd December 2015					
Draft Budget 2016/17	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Paul Naylor/Ben Lockwood	Open	5/12/14
Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (Full Text)	<i>Following approval of 'The Next Five Years', a summary version of the new Corporate Plan for 2010 to 2020, an amended (full) version of the Corporate Plan is being submitted for consideration.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Kirsty Hogarth/John Bunnett	Open	24/9/15

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Council Tax Base	<i>To present for approval the estimated 2016/17 Council tax base calculation for the Borough and each parished area, on which the major preceptors and local Parish Councils will base their requirements.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Ben Lockwood	Open	5/12/14
Council Tax Support Scheme	<i>To recommend retaining current scheme contribution levels, making changes in line with known welfare announcements, and seeking approval to go to public consultation.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Ben Lockwood	Open	24/9/15
Ashford Dark Skies and International Observatory	<i>This report addresses the proposal by the Ashford Astronomical Society to consider the provision of an astronomical observatory and the closely and inter-related matter of Ashford's Dark Skies and approved SPD.</i>	Cllr Mrs Blanford/Cllr Mrs Bell	Mark Carty	Open	4/11/15
14th January 2016					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Peter Purcell	Open (Exempt Appendix)	16/1/15
Ashford International Model Railway Education Centre – (AIMREC): Proposed new Major Visitor Attraction		Cllr Mrs Blanford	Ben Moyle	Open	17/3/15

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
11th February 2016					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Seddon	Open	12/2/15
Revenue Budget 2016/17	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2016/17 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Paul Naylor/Ben Lockwood	Open	12/2/15
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nicholas Clayton	Open	12/2/15
Climate Change and Sustainable Environment – Annual Progress Report	<i>This report summarises actions and initiatives undertaken throughout the authority during the last year in the complementary areas of a sustainable environment, carbon and energy reduction and responding to the threat of climate change. These had been brought together previously within the Council's Position Statement.</i>	Cllr Mrs Blanford	Paul Naylor	Open	12/2/15
Chilmington Design Code – Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document		Cllr Bennett	Mark Chaplin	Open	31/7/15

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Gambling Policy Revision	<i>Report back following consultation</i>	Cllr Heyes	James Hann	Open	18/11/15
10th March 2016					
T-CAT Update		Cllr Mrs Blanford/ Galpin	Kirsty Hogarth	Open	9/5/14
14th April 2016					
Annual Pay Policy Statement	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance.</i>	Cllr Miss Martin	Ian Smith	Open	13/3/15
Rural Speed Limits		Cllr Heyes	Sheila Davison	Open	23/7/15
12th May 2016					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Seddon	Open	13/3/15
9th June 2016					
Section 106 Agreements – Annual Progress Report	<i>Focus on s106 contributions received in the last year, contributions secured in new agreements and projects that have been supported by s106 funding</i>	Cllr Bennett	Lois Jarrett	Open	12/6/15

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Final Outturn 2015/16	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year</i>	Cllr Shorter	Ben Lockwood	Open	12/6/15
Annual Report	<i>The Annual Report will build upon the contents of quarterly performance monitoring, but will also include the following information – An Introduction from the Leader and Chief Executive; Facts and figures about Ashford; Timeline of key achievements in the Borough over the calendar year; Borough achievements; and a Financial Summary.</i>	Cllr Miss Martin	Nicholas Clayton	Open	10/7/15
14th July 2016					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Peter Purcell	Open (Exempt Appendix)	10/7/15
11th August 2016					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nicholas Clayton	Open	28/7/15
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Seddon	Open	28/7/15
8th September 2016					

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
13 th October 2016					
10 th November 2016					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Seddon	Open	13/11/15
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance ‘snapshot’</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nicholas Clayton	Open	13/11/15

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first name.surname@ashford.gov.uk***

24/11/15