

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:

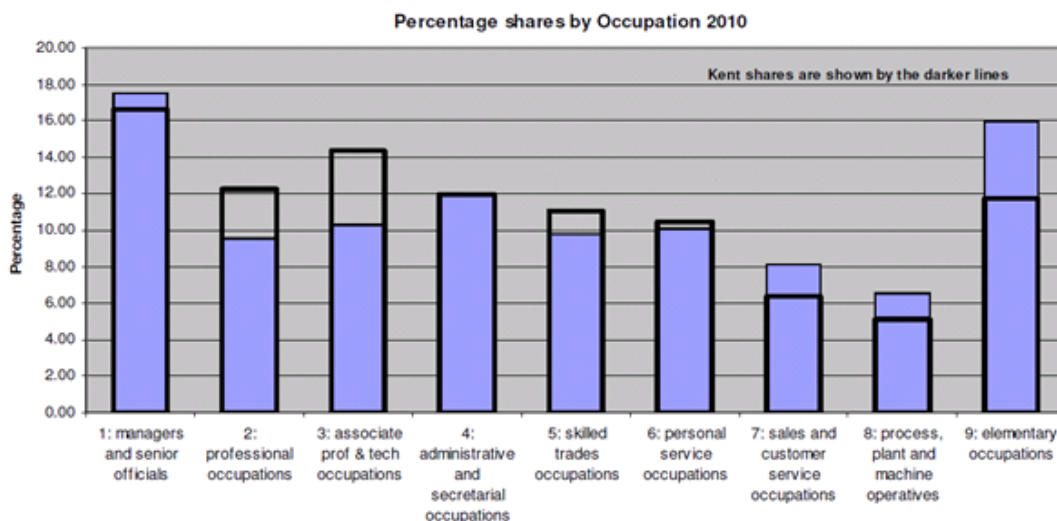
❖ **Ashford named no 1 place to do business in Kent****

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:

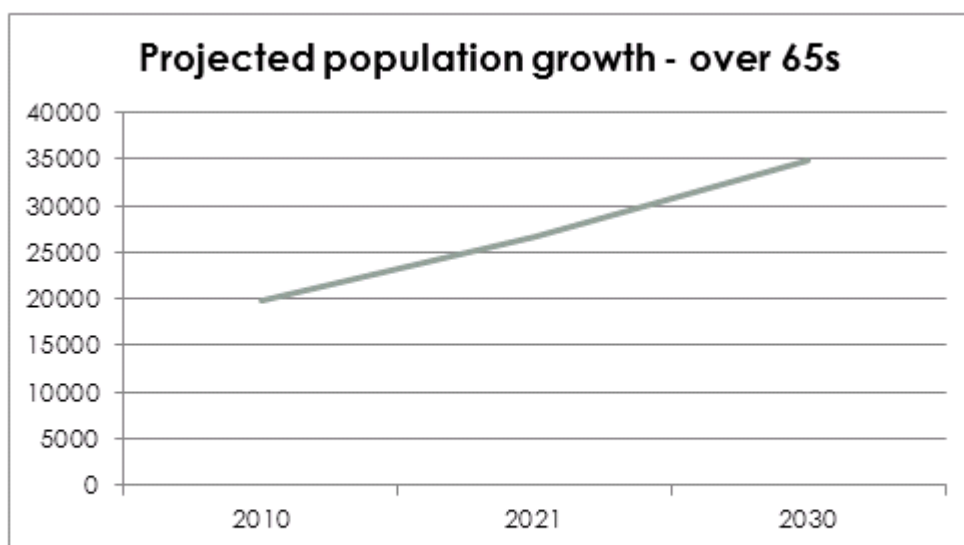


FIGURE 5:

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



Contents

PRIORITY 1 ENTERPRISING ASHFORD: ECONOMIC INVESTMENT <i>and</i> GROWTH	7
PRIORITY 2 LIVING ASHFORD: QUALITY HOUSING AND HOMES FOR ALL	9
PRIORITY 3 ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD: HEALTHY CHOICES THROUGH PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND LEISURE ENGAGEMENT	11
PRIORITY 4 ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD: COUNTRYSIDE AND TOWNSCAPE, TOURISM AND HERITAGE	13
ASHFORD'S UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES FOR OUR FOUR PRIORITIES	15



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.

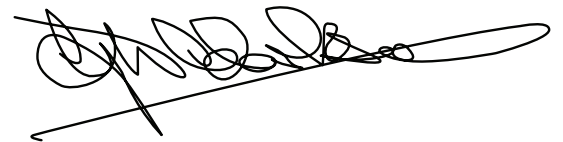
The next five years might, however, signal further substantial change. From what we now know (at the time of writing), the comprehensive spending review scheduled for November 2015 may well produce substantial reductions in funding available to public services in general and local government in particular.

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.

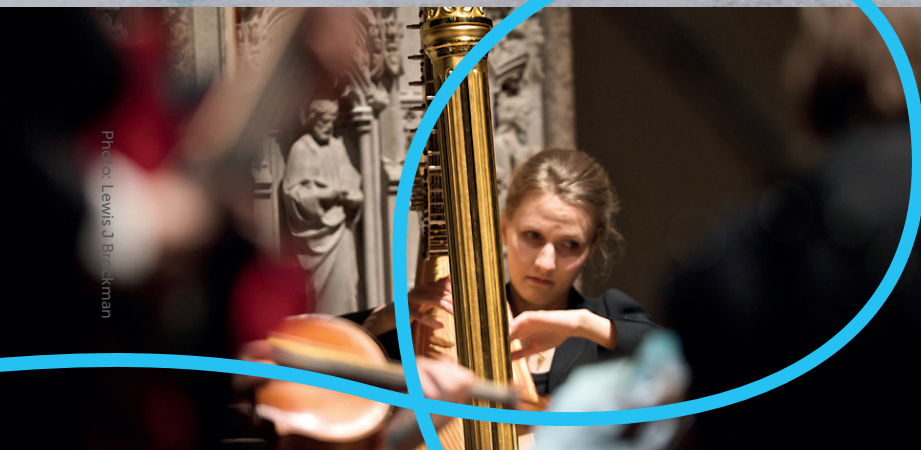


Photo: Lewis J Brakman

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.

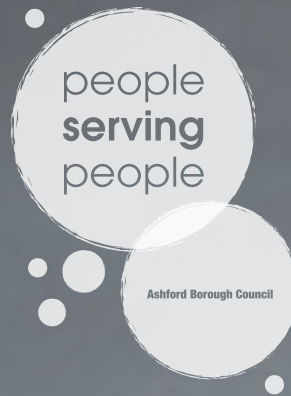
Provide modern visitor information service, including building on website tourism activity.

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.

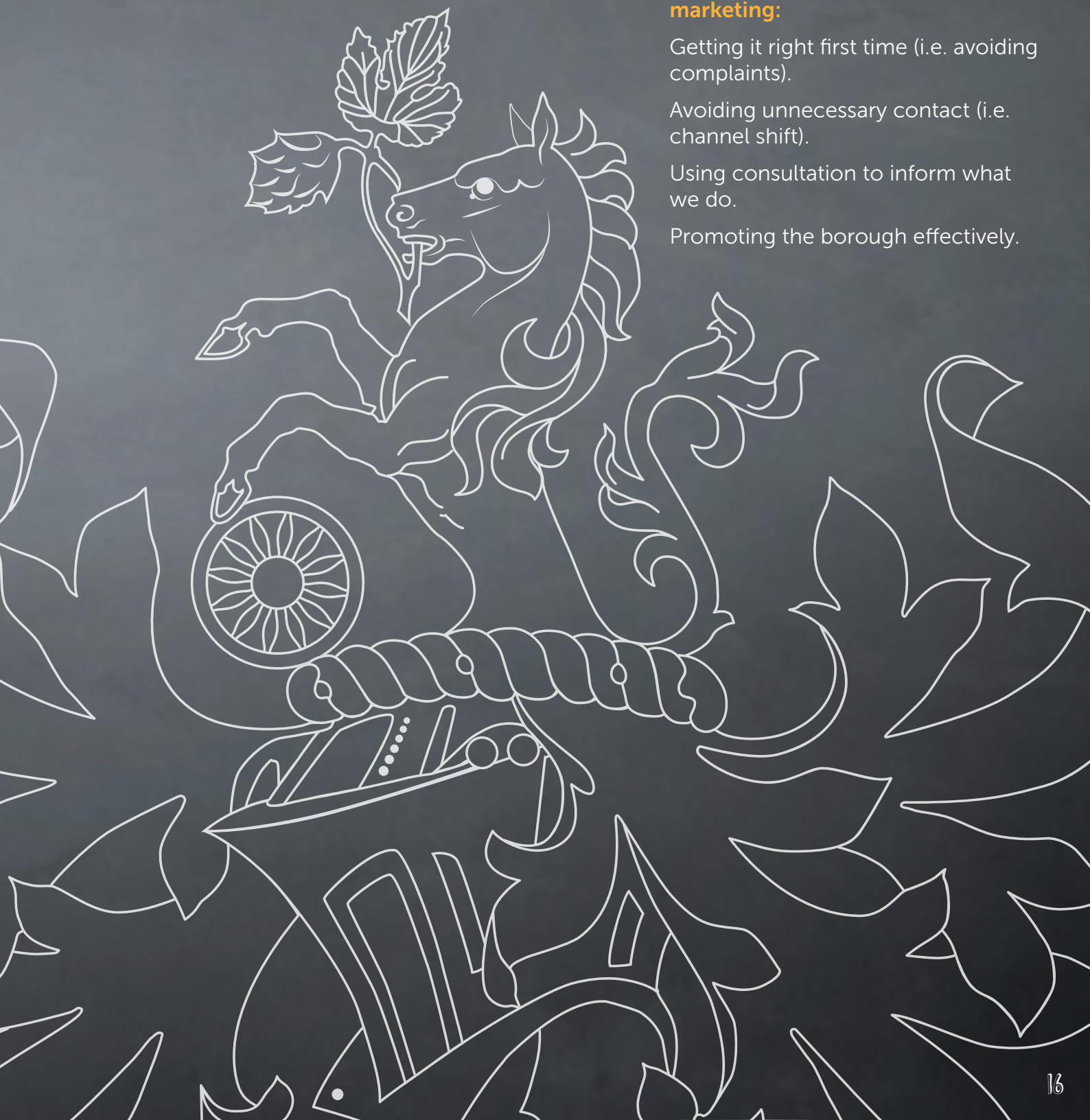
Proactive, useful, relevant and accessible communications and marketing:

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

www.ashford.gov.uk

 @AshfordCouncil

 AshfordBoroughCouncil