

Agenda Item No: 16
Report To: Management Team 25.8.2016
Cabinet
Date: Thursday 8th September 2016
Report Title: Cabinet Task Groups, Steering Groups & Boards:
Terms of Reference & Membership - September 2016
Report Author: Policy & Performance Manager, Kirsty Hogarth
Portfolio Holder: The Leader, Cllr G D Clarkson



Summary:

The Cabinet is responsible for the formation of Cabinet approved Portfolio Task Groups and Cabinet Steering Groups and Boards. It is also responsible for approving the Terms of Reference of such Groups and determining the membership and appointment of the Chair.

This report sets out revised Terms of Reference for existing Groups, established in 2015, and also presents Terms of Reference and membership of new Groups.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: N/A

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

(i) agree to the Terms of Reference and membership of the various Groups and Board(s) as set out within the report and as attached at Appendix A.

Policy Overview: To assist the work of the Cabinet, and the wider work of the Council, the report is presented in accordance with the Constitutional requirement for the Cabinet to approve the Terms of Reference of Cabinet Member Groups.

Financial Implications: None directly through the formation of Task or Steering Groups.

Risk Assessment N/A

Impact Assessment This report relates to the organisation of Task Groups and Steering Groups within the organisation; there are no impacts on those with protected characteristics stemming from the recommendations.

Other Material Implications: N/A

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

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Report Title: Cabinet Task Groups, Steering Groups & Boards: Terms of Reference & Membership - September 2016

Purpose of the Report

1. In line with a provision in the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet is required to approve Terms of Reference of Cabinet Member Groups. The new and revised Terms of Reference for the Groups are attached at Appendix A.

Issue to be Decided

2. To agree the Terms of Reference and membership details of seven Task/Steering Groups and one Board.

Background

3. Various Cabinet Member Groups were set up following the election of the new Administration in May 2015; this report reflects changes to the Cabinet made in May of this year.

Boards, Steering Groups and Task Groups

4. Details of new and revised Groups are included:
 - (i) Ground Water Management & Flood Protection Task Group (new)
 - (ii) Compliance & Enforcement Board (formerly Policy & Compliance Task Group)
 - (iii) Development of Conningbrook Lakes Country Park & Victoria Park Steering Group (formerly Conningbrook Lakes Country Park Steering Group)
 - (iv) Stour Centre Redevelopment & Leisure Management Steering Group (formerly Stour Centre Regeneration Steering Group)
 - (v) Public & Voluntary Transport Liaison Task Group (formerly Public Transport Liaison Task Group)
 - (vi) Council Tax & Welfare Reform Task Group
 - (vii) Environment, Conservation & Heritage Task Group (formerly Environment & Conservation Task Group)
 - (viii) Housing Aims & Objectives Task Group (formerly Hothfield Regeneration Task Group)

Equalities Impact Assessment

5. Because this relates to the organisation of Task Groups and Steering Groups within the organisation, there are no impacts on those with protected characteristics stemming from the recommendations.

Consultation

6. All relevant Portfolio Holders, Lead Members and Heads of Service have been consulted on the Terms of Reference

Contact: Kirsty Hogarth: 01233 330413

Email: kirsty.hogarth@ashford.gov.uk

TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP: September 2016

APPENDIX A

| | TITLE OF GROUP | TYPE OF GROUP | MEMBER CHAIR | OFFICER LEAD | NOTES |
|----|---|--|---------------------|--|---|
| 1. | Ground Water Management & Flood Protection | Task Group (new) | Cllr Hicks | James Hann: TOR 1, 2 & 3 Martin Kempshall: TOR 4 Ashley Taylor: TOR 5 & 6 | Multi-disciplinary TG covering different ABC areas, so different leads for different subject areas |
| 2. | Compliance & Enforcement (formerly Policy & Compliance TG) | Board | Cllr Dehnel | Richard Alderton | Lead scheduled to change to TWM |
| 3. | Development of Conningbrook Lakes Country Park & Victoria Park (formerly Conningbrook Lakes Country Park SG) | Steering Group | Cllr Blanford | Christina Fuller | |
| 4. | Stour Centre Redevelopment & Leisure Management (formerly Stour Centre Regeneration SG) | Steering Group | Cllr White | Christina Fuller | |
| 5. | Public & Voluntary Transport Liaison (formerly Public Transport Liaison Task Group) | Task Group | Cllr Bradford | Jo Fox | |
| 6. | Council Tax & Welfare Reform | Task Group | Cllr Shorter | Ben Lockwood | Remit to complete review of CT support by autumn 2016 |
| 7. | Environment, Conservation & Heritage (formerly Environment & Conservation TG) | Task Group | Cllr Blanford | Christina Fuller | |
| 8. | Housing Aims & Objectives (formerly Hothfield Regeneration TG) | Task Group | Cllr Clokie | Sharon Williams | |
| * | Economic Regeneration & Investment Committee (formerly Town Centre Regeneration Board) | Public Committee: requires Selection & Constitutional Review approval | Cllr Clarkson | Paul Mckenner | *Now outside the scope of this report |

GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT & FLOOD PROTECTION TASK GROUP

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

With the recent and unexpected advent of floods (in Cumbria and Somerset), Ashford has been fortunate to date in not suffering unduly from the effects of flooding. However, although the Authority has been prudent in various ways – e.g. SUDS schemes for new housing and flood attenuation in some parts of the borough – there is no certainty that buildings and land in the borough will not suffer at some point in the future.

The Ground Water Management & Flood Protection Task Group has been set up in this vein, to work to prevent future unnecessary flood damage or to ameliorate its effects as far as possible.

This Task Group will be chaired by Councillor Hicks, working as a Lead Member, who will liaise with the relevant Portfolio Holders and report to Cabinet.

Terms of Reference:

1. To ensure that the needs of our local communities, the economy and the environment are all balanced in the consideration of measures to manage ground water and protect against floods
2. To monitor the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for the area and support its continued relevance and fitness-for-purpose.
3. To liaise with Ashford Borough Council's Emergency Planning team and KCC's Resilience Team/Forum to ensure that there is an interface between the work of this Task Group and emergency planning which is meaningful and productive.
4. To ensure that this Authority is liaising with, and monitoring, all agencies responsible for waterways (rivers, lakes, holding ponds, culverts, ditches, and reservoirs) to ensure that proper and regular maintenance is being undertaken.
5. To adopt adaptive management techniques so that as new technical information associated with flood risk management evolves, the Authority is able to use it to best effect. Adaptive management for flood risk reduction requires high quality, well organised and accessible technical information and the Task Group should ensure that this is a high priority.
6. To consider, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Environment & Heritage, the ongoing and predictable effects of climate change and what measures the Council can take to reduce or ameliorate these effects.

COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT BOARD

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

The “**Compliance & Enforcement Board**” is formed to strengthen compliance and enforcement to emphasise the importance this Administration places on underpinning public confidence in the approvals and regulatory standing of this Council.

The Board, under the direction of the Chairman, Cllr Dehnel, and assisted by the Senior Administrative Officer, will report to the Cabinet and Council, as appropriate. There will be a need for formal regular reporting to Cabinet of progress, actions taken and recommendations to be made and a requirement for Cabinet and/or Council approval in certain circumstances.

Given the nature of this role there will also be a need for the Chairman to ensure that the Leader and CEO are kept informed of the more serious or involved cases.

Case Reviews will be subject to report to the Leader, who has a formal responsibility for, among other matters, Legal and Corporate Governance issues.

Terms of Reference (Internal):

1. To establish a good understanding of not only our policies, procedures and practices, but also to understand the frustration that exists when our policies, procedures and practices appear to be knowingly and wilfully disregarded by people who are employing tactics often aimed at clouding and frustrating our ability and will to act decisively.
2. Without losing the need to be reasonable and understanding in these matters, there is a need to strengthen our approach in order to show a firm determination, particularly where there are clear and obvious intended breaches. These breaches often have an adverse impact on genuine members of the community, who quite properly have an expectation that these matters will be addressed in an effective way.
3. To consider just how we might monitor the areas where approved permissions have been granted or where rules and approvals are required. Also to examine how we might improve how we monitor and control the implementation of approvals and conditions.
4. To work with the relevant Portfolio Holders and Service Heads including Legal to critically examine just how we might significantly improve our compliance and enforcement practices, thereby promoting a far greater degree of public confidence.
5. To call for reports and the release of any documents or other material that may assist in understanding the intent or purpose and impact of any action, delay, inaction or circumstance that creates a situation that is unacceptable to this borough.

6. To conduct as necessary “Case Reviews” of any complaint and our handling thereof, especially if considered to have significant policy or operating practice implications or if it has been ongoing for some time. This review can be useful when complainants are reluctant to accept that we have properly exhausted what we are able to do, or where they appear to be vexatious.
7. To meet, as appropriate, and to invite attendance from any officer of the Council in order to establish the facts, understand the issues, and endeavour to improve our operating policies and procedures.
8. To undertake any action that is in keeping with and in support of the proper discharge of the important work of this Compliance & Enforcement Board.

Terms of Reference (External):

1. To hold to account external agencies and bodies whose activities impact on the residents, businesses and visitors within the Borough of Ashford .
2. To establish the operating policies of external agencies, public bodies, private companies, other regulatory bodies and any other person or group whose work or decisions could impact upon this Borough.
3. To seek written explanations and clarification from external agencies on all relevant matters when examining any issue.
4. To call for reports and the release of any document or other material from external agencies that may assist in understanding the intent or purpose and impact of any action, delay, inaction or circumstance that creates a situation that is unacceptable to this borough.
5. To call meetings as appropriate and to invite attendance from external agencies, in order to establish the facts, understand the issues and to endeavour to improve operating policies and or to resolve any matters of concern.
6. To seek authority for legal or regulatory action in the pursuit of any person, corporate body, local, regional or central Government department or agency, private company or any other legal entity, for failure to perform or comply.
7. To proffer changes and improvements to promote the quality of service being delivered and to thereby promote a greater degree of public confidence.
8. To undertake any action that is in keeping with and in support of the proper discharge of the important work of this Compliance & Enforcement Board.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONNINGBROOK LAKES COUNTRY PARK & VICTORIA PARK STEERING GROUP

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

The Conningbrook Lakes Country Park Steering Group (a Members' led Steering Group) was formally set up under the new Administration's arrangements in May 2015, and has been revised in 2016 to reflect the Council's wider focus.

The Steering Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Environment & Heritage and will report from time-to-time on progress and on any other appropriate matters, and on matters for decision beyond that delegated to the Group or the Portfolio Holder.

Terms of Reference:

1. To deliver a range of co-ordinated improvements and to develop the two parks to provide an open air environment to be enjoyed by all in the Borough and beyond.
2. This Steering Group processes will inform the decision-making structure and will help to formulate recommendations to Cabinet. The Group will also work with partners to maximise opportunities afforded by the two parks, including all appropriate sports and leisure.
3. The Steering Group will have an input into and will consider any plans being advanced for commercial leisure or catering facilities associated with either of these two parks.
4. To ensure that these parks are user friendly for all including those with disabilities.
5. To monitor progress and be responsible for ensuring all appropriate steps are in place to deliver the approved proposals for the development of these two parks.
6. To consider, in conjunction with others, any other longer term use of parts of the two parks that the Council may put forward over time, unrelated directly to the leisure offer. In this context to consider, in conjunction with the Economic Regeneration & Investment Committee, any proposals being made.
7. To take all actions to improve the two parks, including recommending the acquisition of additional land to expand the parks, where appropriate, and where funding permits.

8. Monitor the progress of the delivery of the final plans for the two parks, and all the related facilities associated with this sporting & leisure offer to the public. In doing so, take all positive actions to promote and market, with others, the whole range of facilities on offer.
9. To monitor the use and views of the local people using the facilities to ensure we respond thoughtfully by providing appropriate enhancements or modifications wholly in keeping with the environmental setting.
10. Discuss and agree practical and pragmatic solutions to problems of delivery that fall within the scope of the delegated authority of this group.

Stour Centre Redevelopment & Leisure Management Steering Group

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting

Developed as a Member-led Steering Group, the *Stour Centre Regeneration Steering Group* was set up in May 2015. With the recent development of the Conningbrook Lakes Country Park and other leisure facilities, there is now a need to re-examine leisure management for the borough, which will be done through the reconfiguration of the original steering group to incorporate leisure management across the borough more generally.

The Steering Group will be chaired by Cllr White, working as a Lead Member, who will liaise with the relevant Portfolio Holder and report to Cabinet.

Terms of Reference:

1. This group will be a key part of the decision making structure and will help to formulate recommendations to Cabinet.
2. To work with the Ashford Leisure Trust, under the existing agreements, to ensure that all the sporting and leisure facilities under the Trust's direction remain fit-for-purpose and viable, and that they maximise income streams, as far as possible.
3. Members will monitor progress and be responsible for ensuring all appropriate steps are in place to deliver the approved proposals for the redevelopment of the Stour Centre and other leisure facilities.
4. ABC, in conjunction with Ashford Leisure Trust, should seek to establish and market test the most effective way of delivering leisure services through the private sector.
5. To monitor and aim to improve the cultural and leisure offer in the borough, making a significant economic impact to the town, in keeping with the place making of a vibrant and exciting town with international connections.
6. To ensure that ALT provides appropriate documentation (business plans, health & safety policies and procedures and other relevant policies) to be scrutinised by the Steering Group.
7. The Steering Group should seek to be notified of any equipment malfunction and any hazard that may affect public safety, and be made aware of all steps to deal with incidents, including relevant policy/procedural changes.
8. To check the complete suite of relevant policies and procedures in place, in line with ABC's legal and moral responsibilities.

PUBLIC & VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT LIAISON TASK GROUP

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

The "Public Transport Liaison Task Group" was formally set up under the new Administration's arrangements in May 2015 and revised in May 2016 to include transport within the Voluntary Sector.

The Task Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Wellbeing & Safety, Cllr Bradford, and it will report to Cabinet from time-to-time on progress and on matters for decision beyond that delegated to the Group and on other matters.

Terms of Reference:

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|-----------|---|
| 1 | To liaise with the Ashford Quality Bus Partnership and with the Rail Network to improve the public transport offer for local residents, visitors and the business community. |
| 2 | To support the increase of public and voluntary transport that is sustainable and reliable for Ashford as a modern international town as well as Tenterden and the surrounding rural villages. |
| 3 | To work alongside operators to achieve public and voluntary transport which is sustainable and reliable. |
| 4 | Support Traffic Regulation Orders that seeks to facilitate the free movement of public transport. |
| 5 | To work with the Planning, Development & Enforcement service in to identify projects for the promotion of public and voluntary transport in and around Ashford and explore how this could be funded, included through CIL receipts. |
| 6 | Support operators in promoting timetable information via clear communications |
| 7 | To work with that access groups to promote the needs of all public transport users. |
| 8 | To work with operators to promote the use of ticketing and payment methods. |
| 9 | To consider the use of new technology and fuel types in the context of reducing vehicle exhaust emissions and improving air quality. |
| 10 | To consider all other related public transportation matters that would assist in enhancing the availability and use of modern public transport. |
| 11 | To consider all matters related to the highway management including parking, signage, signalling, traffic flows and other related matters that could impact upon public transport in the widest sense and liaise, report and recommend accordingly to the JTB as appropriate. |
| 12 | To support and encourage greater interconnectivity between transport modes. |
| 13 | All considerations and recommendations to be in line with Ashford Borough Council's Transport Strategy. |

Council Tax Support and Welfare Reform Task Group

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

The Council Tax Support & Welfare Reform Task Group was set up in June 2013 to review the impacts of the Council's local council tax support scheme; to recommend to Cabinet schemes for subsequent years; and to review local impacts of the government's welfare reforms.

The Council Tax Support & Welfare Reform Task Group is a Cabinet Task Group of up to eight members, with representation drawn from elected members who have had previous input to the council's position on the subject matters. There is also officer representation of a similar number drawn from the services most involved, including Department of Work & Pensions and ABC officers.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources (Councillor Neil Shorter) is chair of the Task Group. The Task Group will make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate; the frequency and timing of meetings is at the final discretion of the chair.

Terms of Reference:

- To review impacts of the council's local council tax support scheme and recommend to Cabinet a scheme for subsequent years; and
- To review local impacts of the government's welfare reforms. This involves overseeing progress of the Cabinet-approved 'welfare reform action plan, recommending any necessary changes to policy, including in response to the effects of Universal Credit

Local council tax support scheme

1. The Council Tax Support Scheme was introduced in April 2013 as part of the coalition government's welfare reforms and deficit reduction programme.
2. Under the reform, the national scheme for council tax benefit (CTB) ceased on 31 March 2013 and was replaced by locally determined schemes from 1 April 2013. Local schemes were funded within a grant cap, which was 10% less than assumed subsidised expenditure under the CTB regime.
3. Councils are not totally free to design support schemes, but should observe some principles:
 - a) Localised schemes should provide support for the most vulnerable, including vulnerable pensioners. Legislation protects eligible pensioners from any cut to their benefit. Pensioners will be protected as national rules will be maintained with eligibility rates defined by regulations.
 - b) Localised schemes should assist with lifting the poorest off benefits and supporting them into work.

4. With the ending of the three-year grant period, a review of the scheme will be undertaken, to be adopted on 1st April 2017. The purpose of the review is to:

- a) Reduce the overall cost of the scheme
- b) Consider how to make the scheme more efficient
- c) To create a framework of common principles for a new Kent-wide scheme, maintaining the protection to pensioners and the vulnerable.

2. Welfare Reform

- 1. To be aware of external factors which could impact upon the scheme, including economic influences, housing supply, and increasing rents coupled with decreasing tax reliefs.
- 2. To ensure that communication with Ashford residents is maintained so they are kept informed of any changes to Welfare Reform and in what ways the Council can offer assistance and support.
- 3. To commission/receive reports on relevant initiatives – e.g. the Partnership Hub and the Job Club.

ENVIRONMENTAL, CONSERVATION & HERITAGE TASK GROUP

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

The ‘*Environmental & Conservation Task Group*’ (A Members’ led Steering Group) was formally set up under the new Administration’s arrangements in May 2015 and revised in May 2016 to include reference to the borough’s heritage.

The Task Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Environment & Heritage, and will report to Cabinet from time-to-time on progress and on matters for decision beyond that delegated to the Group and on other appropriate matters.

Terms of Reference:

1. To consider material facts, views, and opinions on all aspects of the environment in as far as they may affect the ability of Ashford Borough Council to create and service a high quality growing and sustainable community.
2. To liaise on matters of an environmental, conservation or heritage nature with a wider audience at the discretion of the Chairman, but always having a reasonable regard to staff resource implications.
3. To liaise with the Kent Highway Services and the Highways, Wellbeing & Safety Portfolio Holder to promote a more environmentally acceptable approach to road traffic and highway management while having due regard to Government edicts and Department for Transport’s advisory documentation.
4. To consider recommending the introduction of innovative environmental, conservation and heritage ideas that can enhance and enrich the Borough.
5. To specifically examine our approach to energy conservation and benchmark against best practice and innovation by others. To also review, examine and promote ways in which we can reduce the use of finite resources, with particular regard to the use of sustainable and renewable energy.
6. To work with external agencies and other groups to promote the protection, enjoyment, enhancement and maintenance of our countryside and its biodiversity, together with the Borough’s heritage and rich historical architecture.
7. To promote proper and effective liaison between all Council Services in order that they are working in unity and in an integrated and sustainable way.
8. To liaise with the Lead Member chairing the Ground Water Management & Flood Protection Task Group.

9. To take a close interest in the possible effects of “**Climate Change**” and its wider implications, in as far as it may affect Ashford Borough Council. We need to liaise with the Climate Change Group and support their work in developing sound strategies to address possible detrimental effects. We will all need to have regard to the impact of the changing Climate Change Levy in relationship to delivering carbon reductions.

10. To liaise with external agencies in an endeavour to improve all aspects of the environment within the growing Borough of Ashford.

11. To review, examine and consider any other valid environmental and conservation issues as introduced from time to time and scheduled into our deliberations.

HOUSING AIMS & OBJECTIVES TASK GROUP

Background, Chairmanship & Reporting:

With the need to focus on a wide range of housing matters, catering for differing needs and varying tenures, there is a requirement for a Task Group led and chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Home Ownership, who will liaise with other Portfolio Holders, as appropriate, and report to Cabinet.

Terms of Reference:

1. To ensure the continuation of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities by reinforcing the role of the local authority and its partners (including registered providers, private landlords and developers) in ensuring good quality housing continues to be provided across the borough for all housing tenures.
2. To assess and facilitate easier access to housing within Ashford borough, through an understanding of housing market characteristics and the level of housing requirement in the borough.
3. To examine and proffer ways in which we can further encourage home ownership. In addition we should continue to also encourage and 'staircase' to home ownership within the borough.
4. By having a continuous overview of what affordable housing is being built in the borough, determine how the council might support and encourage the production of new affordable homes in the borough.
5. To promote and be involved with the private housing rental sector, including the provision of management facilities. We should also realise that there will be a significant number of people wishing to remain in the public rented sector who may not be in a position to move into home ownership.
6. To focus on assisted living and care for the elderly, and consider the provision or facilitation of suitable accommodation, particularly in accordance with the Council's Military Covenant, for both retired military and emergency personnel, particularly those who have been injured as a result of their public duties
7. To ensure that disabled adaptations are a priority for the Council and are a focus during the life of the Corporate Plan (2015-2020). The objective must be the elimination of any waiting list.

8. To consider any area where within the Borough where housing regeneration needs to be a focus and to formulate an appropriate plan and to make recommendations accordingly.
9. To consider the regeneration needs of the rural areas of the borough, where appropriate. Where this is undertaken, the Task Group should consider the option for an independent external analysis that could assist in the overall regeneration assessment and analysis.
10. In all matters for consideration, an analysis of funding needs and other integrated matters should be undertaken and included in any recommendations.