

**Agenda Item No:**

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date:** 10/11/2016

**Report Title:** Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2016/17

**Report Author:** Nicholas Clayton-Peck, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer

**Portfolio Holder:** Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget & Resource Management, Neil Shorter



**Summary:** This report seeks to update members and the public on the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan during Quarter 2 2016/17. This includes information on what the Cabinet has achieved through its decision-making, key performance data, and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacts upon the Council's work.

The organisation's approach to the monitoring of its performance against this plan has been revised. Accordingly, attached are summary highlights from the new online Performance 'Dashboard' for each of the Council's Corporate Plan areas.

**Key Decision:** NO

**Affected Wards:** N/A

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

- 1. Note the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 2 of 2016/17.**

**Policy Overview:** In December 2015 the Council agreed a new Corporate Plan - "*The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement*".

This also provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was measured, presented and engaged with by officers and members.

**Financial Implications:** N/A

**Risk Assessment** N/A

**Equalities Impact  
Assessment**      N/A

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## **Report Title: Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2016/17**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a headline overview of performance against the Council's Corporate Plan for Quarter 2 2016/17.
2. This report provides a summary of the main developments affecting performance during the quarter, whilst the attached highlight summaries provide key trend data underlying this.

### **Background**

3. Each quarter the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committees receive an update on how the Council is achieving its objectives.
4. In December 2015 the Council agreed a new Corporate Plan - "*The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement*". This provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was monitored, presented and engaged with by officers and members.
5. Whilst this approach is naturally an evolving one, the aim is for this Performance Dashboard (the Dashboard) to inform the work of both officers and members, providing an ongoing tool which facilitates insight and understanding across the organisation on the state of progress against our goals.
6. As part of the Council's wider governance arrangements, such performance information is used to reflect on the organisation's approach – leading to doing things differently where needed In order to offer efficient services and effective outcomes. As such, in September the Dashboard was also presented to the Audit Committee.
7. It should also be noted that this is the first version of the Dashboard, with an emphasis on making sure the core data, components and insight begin to work as a management tool. As such, analysis is constantly being added as the latest data is added to the system and interventions are made. Alongside an ongoing user group which will meet regularly over the next year, feedback from more regular use of the site, and further integration of service planning and programme management data – as this comes on stream before the end of the year – will provide further developments (and a deepening) of the overall performance picture.

## Summary of Performance Developments in Quarter 2 2016/17

8. The majority of performance goals the council is working towards remain either on-target or near-target.
9. Quarter 2 saw activity on a variety of initiatives which will have a positive impact on the outcomes set out in the Council's corporate plan –

### July

- a. The tenth anniversary of Tentertainment, whilst the Create Festival celebrated its 21st birthday, with around 12,000 people enjoying the various activities available throughout the day -
  - 78% were regular attendees and 22% were new to the event
  - £149,000 estimated spend in the local economy by Create attendees on associated travel, accommodation, food and drink
  - 67,000 people viewed Create's online video campaigns leading up to the event, with the Official Create 2016 film being viewed by over 4,000 people in just 48 hours
  - A large social media presence, with 46,000 tweets about Create in and around the day itself
  - A new young person's Sculpture Trail was unveiled in Victoria Park, to engage residents in the natural heritage of the area which hosts Create every year.
  - A business network, hosted by the mayor, has met to explore the opportunities created by the festival.
- b. The Farmers' Market also celebrated an anniversary, turning two years old.
- c. Cabinet considered a review of T-CAT, and agreed a set of further improvements to the service.
- d. Cabinet agreed a set of recommendations, including providing additional funding support, to help the delivery of the new College campus to come forward sooner. The 'Topping Out' Ceremony was held in late September 2016, and the site is due to open to students in a year's time.
- e. Cabinet approved a set of revised eligibility criteria to widen the scope of affordable housing delivery in the Borough to meet local housing needs. This will allow for a wider range of models to be considered in the future whilst maintaining quality development and management, opening up opportunities to explore alternative delivery models to boost supply where traditional forms of affordable housing delivery may not be viable - whilst safeguarding the Council's reputation and financial needs.

### August

- f. A total of 40 new parking terminals were installed across Ashford and Tenterden. These new machines include a larger screen and can accept a wider variety of payment methods.
- g. Initial preparation building work began at the Commercial Quarter site. The work will continue until approximately February 2018.

## September

- h. Cabinet received a review of the first year of the Council's strong involvement in the national government's Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme. It was agreed that the work has been rewarding at that the Council's firm commitment should continue.
  - i. Cabinet approved an updated enforcement policy for Revenues and Benefits, taking into account changes in legislation (including a greater focus on revenues as well as benefits) and the introduction of the Department of Work and Pensions' Single Fraud Investigation Service.
  - j. The Council approved new regulations (set out by government legislation) to require all dogs in the borough to be microchipped.
  - k. The Council approved a revised Food Safety Policy, which ensures a consistent approach to food safety inspections, enforcement and food sampling in line with current nationally accepted standards.
  - l. The Community Toilet Scheme, which sees local businesses including shops, cafes and restaurants working in partnership with the Council to open up their toilet facilities to the public free of charge, rolled out across Ashford.
  - m. A special ceremony and a community picnic took place on Saturday 24th September 2016 to mark the start of building work for Repton Connect.
  - n. Litter and dog fouling enforcement provided through "Kingdom" began on a 12-month pilot.
  - o. To assist with phase 2 of the Revelation St Marys project, its Trust recently used Arts Council funding to appoint a marketing consultant.
  - p. Ashford's new state of the art sports centre, Spearpoint Pavilion, was officially handed over. The new sports pavilion features a wealth of modern facilities including a new kitchen and eight male and female changing rooms.
  - q. During the quarter, the Planning Committee received and decided upon around 15 applications including -
    - Approved the demolition work at Danemore in Tenterden to make space for a new Sheltered Housing Scheme consisting of 34 apartments, four chalet bungalows and associated landscaping and car parking.
    - Approved the first mixed-use office space, totalling 7,477 m<sup>2</sup> and 220 car parking spaces at the Commercial Quarter.
    - Approved a grounds maintenance depot and a ready mix concrete and satellite aggregate depot at the former Rimmel site.
    - Approved proposals to extend the Cineworld cinema complex at the Eureka Leisure Park, including three extra screen including an IMAX screen
10. As noted above, the information included within this report provides merely a high-level snapshot of the information available constantly through the live Dashboard site management tool, which also includes live links to the data behind each graph or table.

11. The majority of the trends captured within the summaries attached to this report have remained broadly steady over the last quarter. Unemployment remains relatively unchanged, although unemployment amongst those 18-24 is still above the average seen across the rest of the county. Throughout the over 1,000 food businesses across the borough, the percentage compliant with hygiene standards when inspected has remained within a half percent range during the last six months.
12. By the end of the quarter the number of households in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) had increased to just over 20, although there was a similar increase at the same time last year. In response, a review of homelessness (and public consultation) ran for 12 weeks until July 2016. In October Cabinet agreed to incorporate the findings of this engagement in order to inform and approve a new Homelessness Strategy. This Strategy was developed around the 10 local challenges set by government to deliver an effective and efficient approach to preventing homelessness locally, and sets out an action plan for tackling the issue into the future.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

13. N/A

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

14. Overall, Ashford Borough Council's performance remains steady, with many activities and initiatives, led or supported by this council. In time this will make our corporate plan a reality and deliver real impact across the borough. In particular, I am pleased to see that efforts to support our high street and local businesses, such the purchase of Park Mall and free evening parking, are already supporting a fall in vacancy rates and an increase in footfall traffic. The topping out of the new town centre College campus heralds an exciting future for skills and employment for Ashford's young people, and it is pleasing to see a start to the ambitious work in transforming the Commercial Quarter site.
15. It is also good to see that, when areas such as temporary accommodation show an increase, the council is already well-prepared with engagement, revised policies and procedures in order to stay on top of matters and make the appropriate interventions.
16. The highlight summaries included in this report present merely a top line snapshot of our performance, and I would urge all colleagues to take the opportunity of consulting with the online Dashboard itself for further context, analysis and data.

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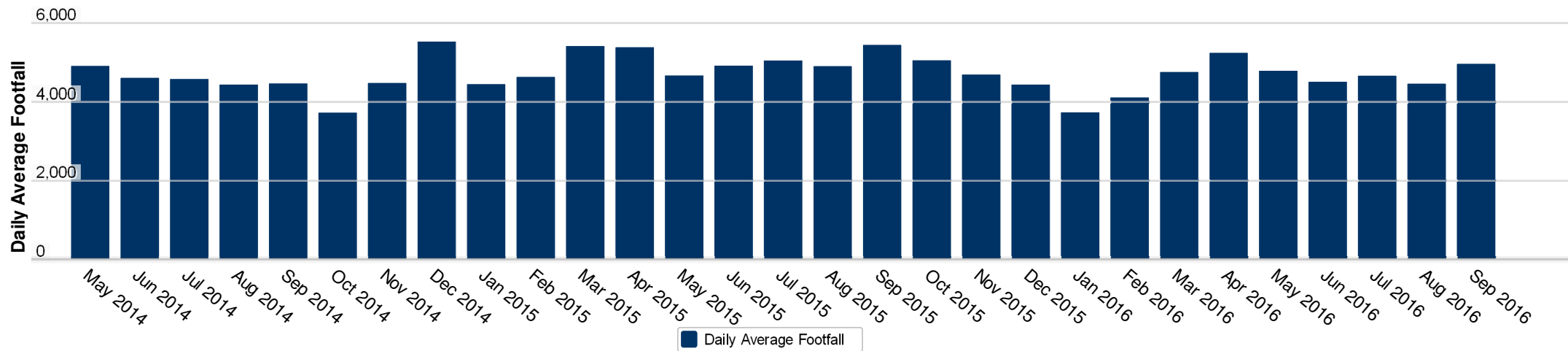


# Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

## Headline Report

## Enterprising Ashford

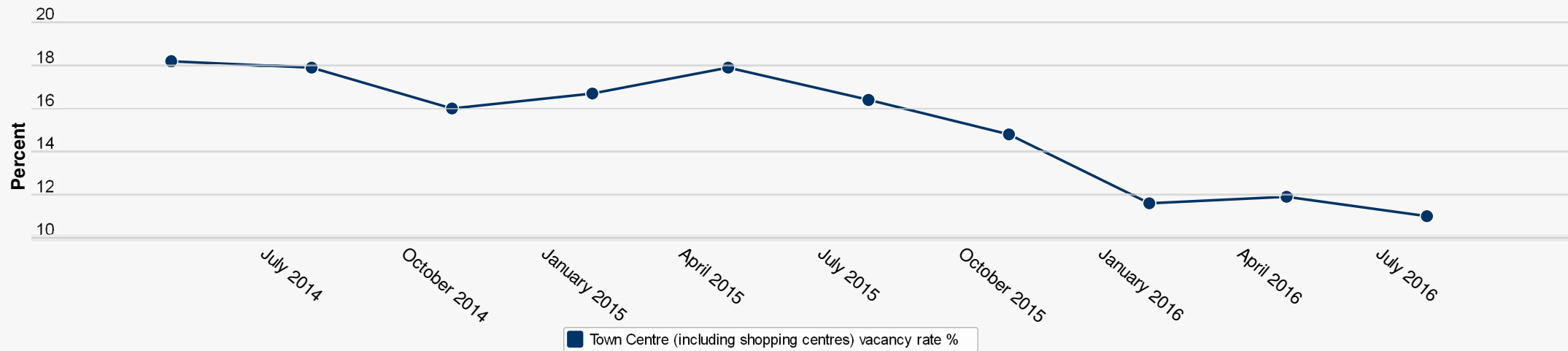
### Town Centre Footfall



Whilst footfall fell during the winter and early spring, this has been attributed partly to the poor and unsettled weather during and after the Christmas period, and has remained steady over the last few months.

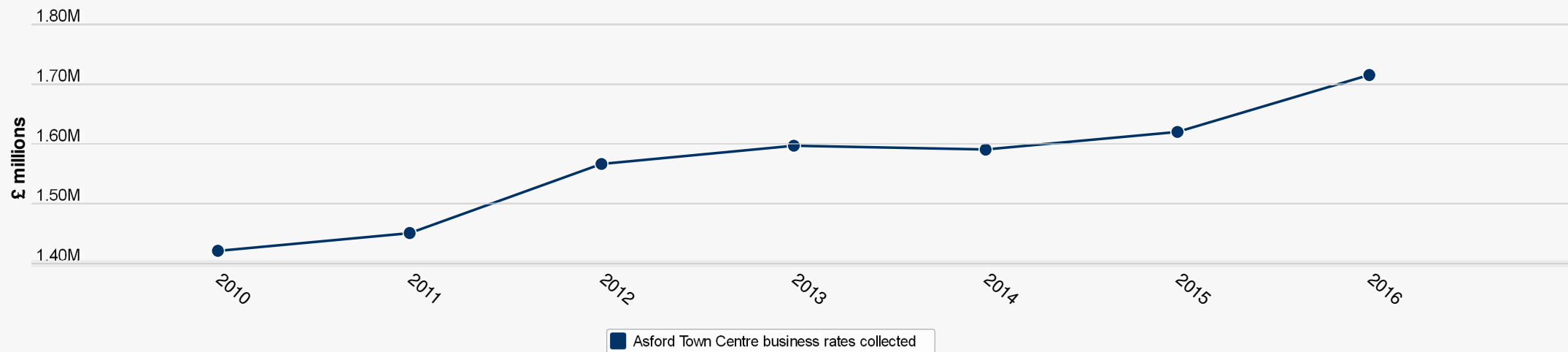
The wider state of Ashford town centre remains generally strong, with footfall during 2015 bucking the national trend and increasing by **5%** against to the year before, compared to a national trend of a **1.6%** decrease. The number of visitors parking has increased slightly, in some part due to the free parking initiative. In August 2016 a total of 40 new parking terminals were installed across Ashford and Tenterden. These new machines include a larger screen and can accept a wider variety of payment methods.

## Ashford Town Centre Vacancy Rates



Vacancy rates have fallen across the town centre overall over the last year. Park Mall's historically higher rates have also begun to fall since the Council took over direct operations in 2015, with over half of the vacant units now full and footfall up by around 7%. The rejuvenation has been directly attributed with improving customer spend in neighbouring stores such as Wilko.

## Town Centre Development and Future Plans

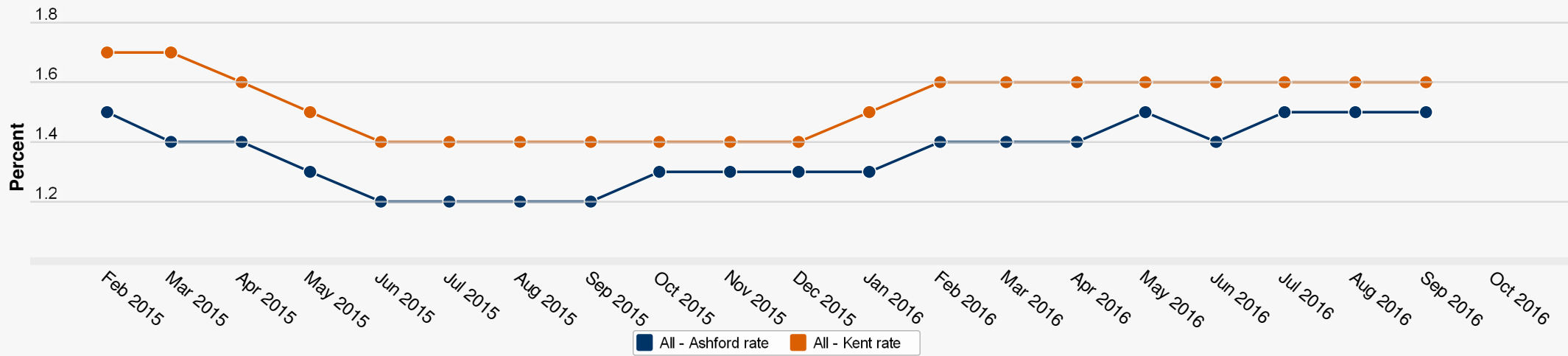


In July 2016 Cabinet approved Phase 1 of the Commercial Quarter Office Development, including the transfer of key parcels of land.



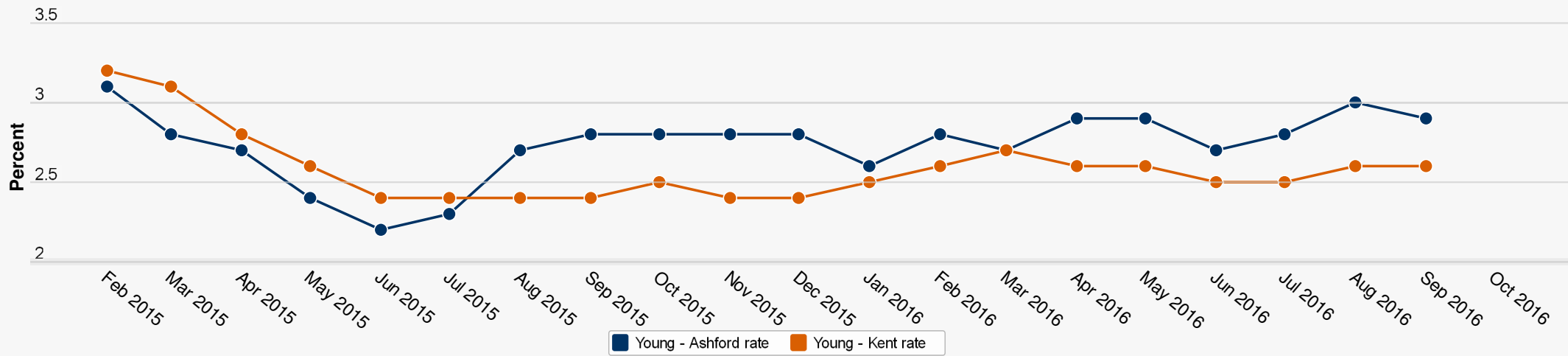
# Unemployment

All

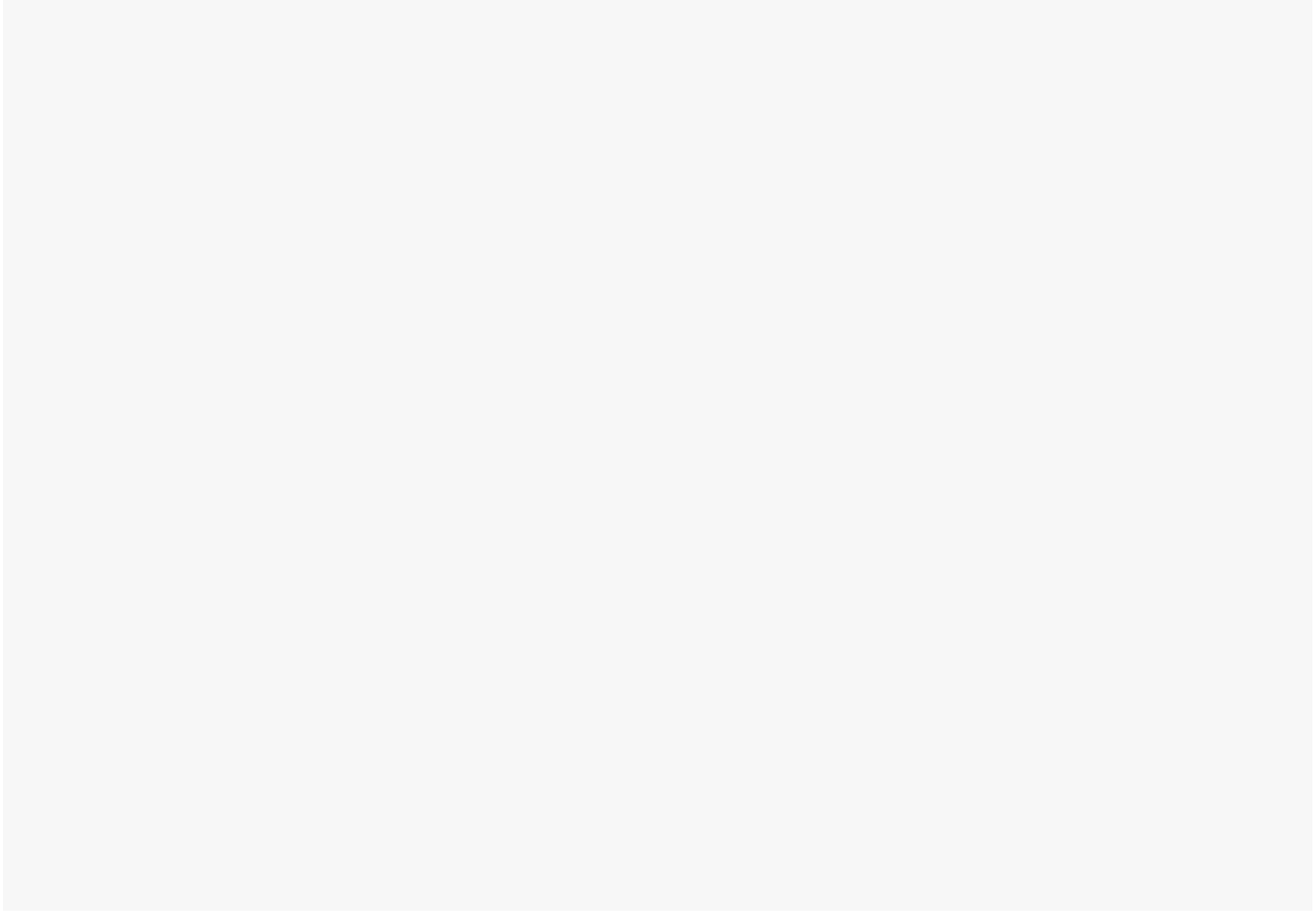


Following a small rise in the previous quarters, the total number claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed has levelled out and now stands at just above **1,100**. This is around 10% more than at the same time last year, constituting around **1.5%** of Ashford's working age population.

## Young People



The number of young people (18-24) claiming unemployment benefit has also remained steady at around **300**, still slightly higher than the Kent average.





# Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

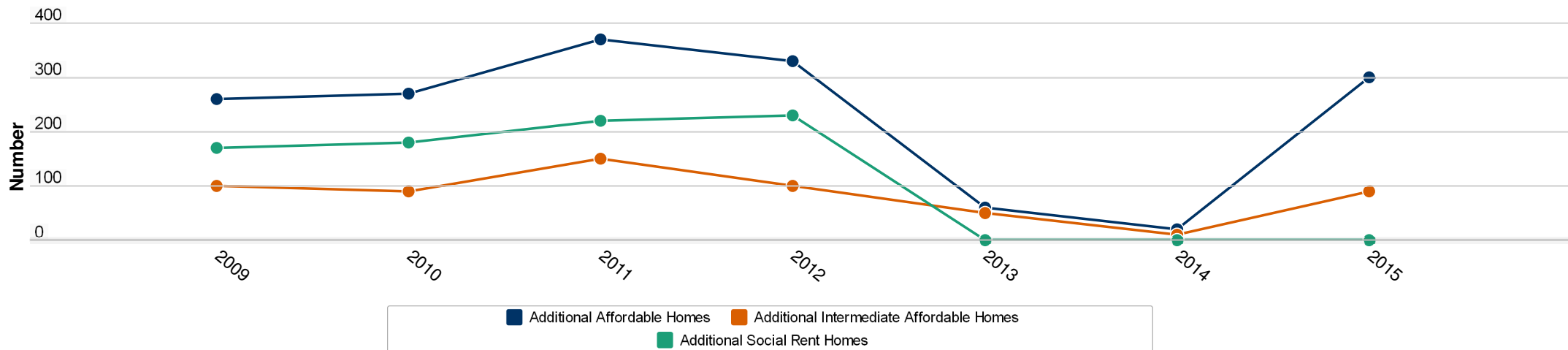
## Headline Report

## Living Ashford

### Affordable Housing

The total additional Affordable Homes is made up of the following two main areas -

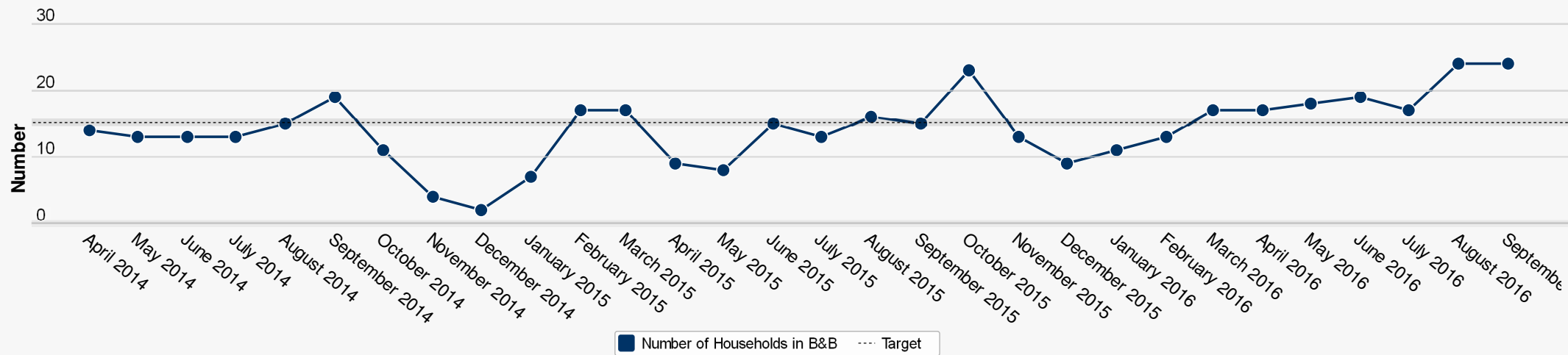
- Intermediate Affordable Homes, which includes intermediate rent and affordable home ownership; and
- Social Rent Homes, which include affordable rent homes



The economic downturn that occurred in 2008 had negative consequences for the housing market, though impacts for affordable housing completions were not felt until later - with a low point occurring in 2013. This position has since somewhat reversed.

In July 2016 Cabinet approved a set of revised eligibility criteria to widen the scope of affordable housing delivery in the Borough to meet local housing needs. This will allow for a wider range of models to be considered in the future whilst maintaining quality development and management, opening up opportunities to explore alternative delivery models to boost supply where traditional forms of affordable housing delivery may not be viable.

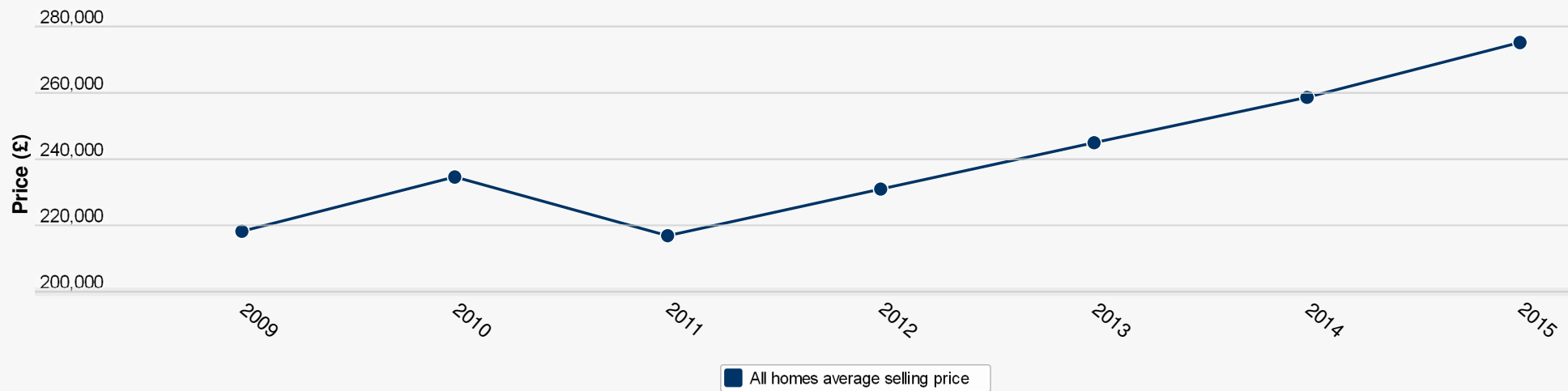
## Temporary Accomodation



By the end of the quarter the number of households in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) had increased to just over **20**, (although there was a similar increase at the same time last year). B&B costs for 2015/16 were very marginally below budget, however pressure still remains going forward on the service. In response, a review of homelessness (and public consultation) ran for 12 weeks until July 2016. In October 2016 Cabinet agreed to incorporate the findings of this engagement to inform and approve a new Homelessness Strategy.

## House prices and the number of homes sold

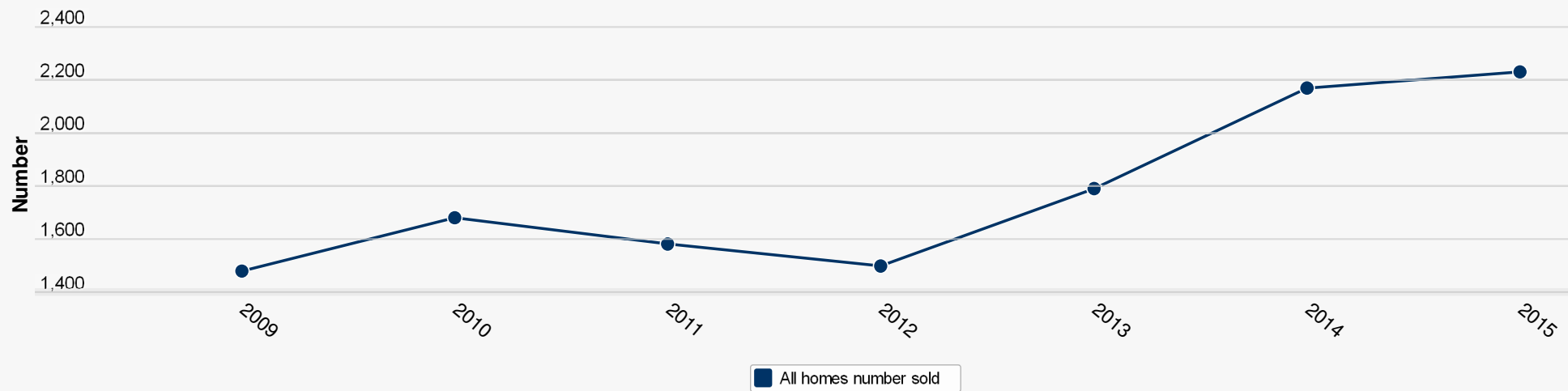
### House Price



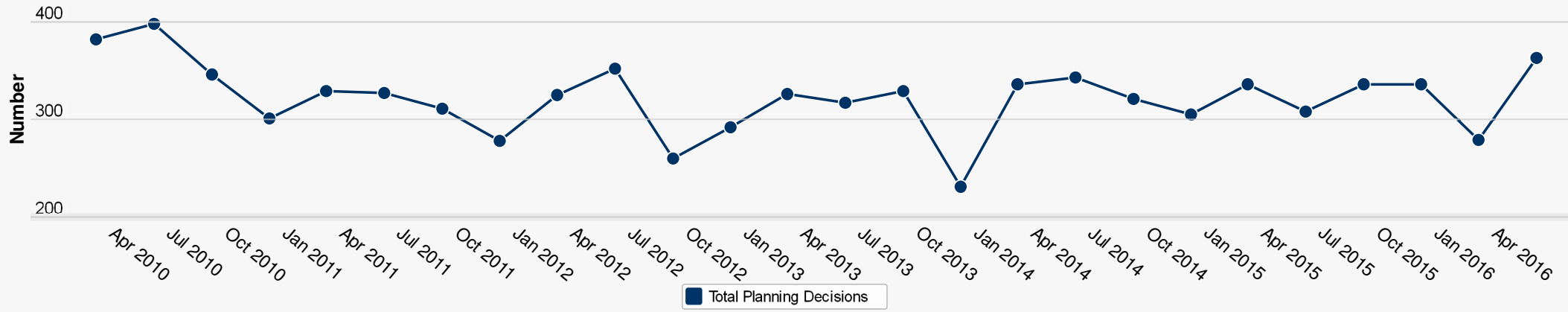
More widely, the average house price in Kent (KCC area) during 2015 was **£283,323**. The average price in Kent (KCC area) has increased for four consecutive years and is now **21%** higher than where they were in 2008.

There were **26,455** property transactions in Kent during the year, **2.87%** lower than in the year before.

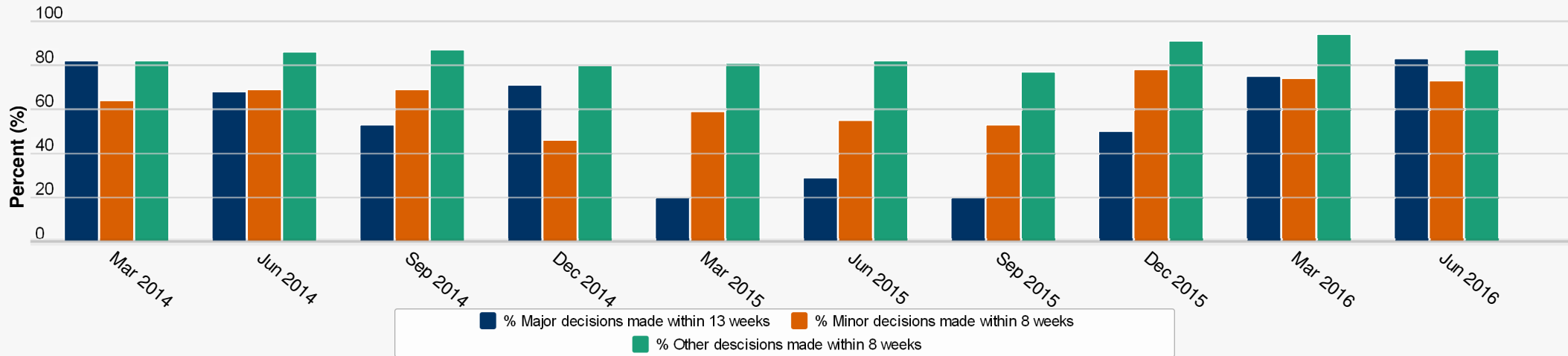
### Number of Houses Sold



# Planning



The number of planning applications considered by the council has remained relatively steady, whilst the last year has seen significant improvement in the percent of decisions made within target.





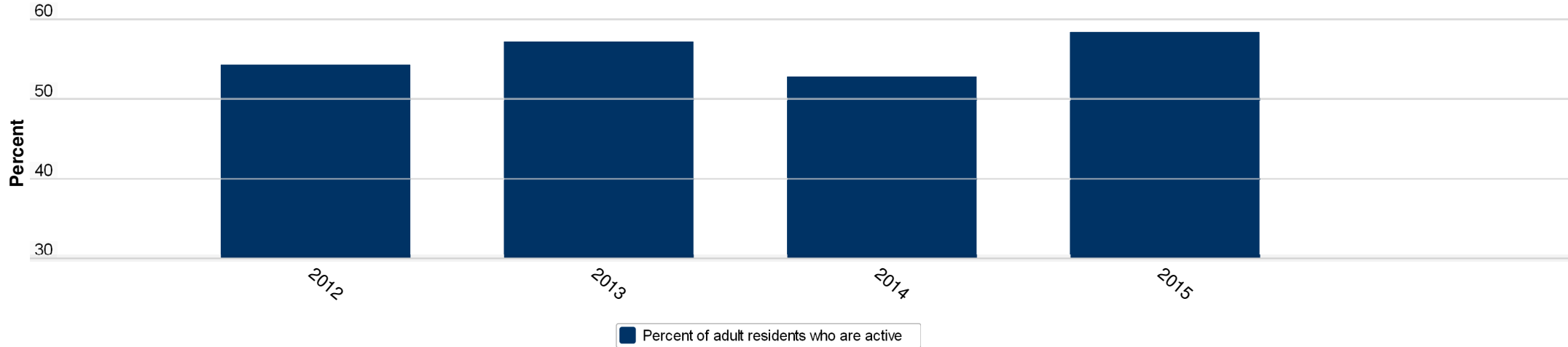


# Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

## Headline Report

# Active & Creative Ashford

## Healthy Lives & Active Living





## Sport

The borough provides a wide range of leisure facilities covering a wide range of sports, including -

- **119** grass football pitches
- **3** 3G football pitches
- **4** 2G football pitches
- **32** tennis courts across 12 locations
- the Julie Rose Stadium's world-class athletics track
- **5** golf courses

### ***Courtside***

Since opening in 2006, Courtside provides outside space for six tennis and six netball courts. It is used regularly by the John Wallis Academy and the Ashford Netball league. Current usage (excluding school use and casual bookings) -

- Average winter weekly usage - 431
- Average summer weekly usage - 811
- Average Annual Usage - 28,288

### ***Pitchside***

Since opening in 2008, Pitchside provides a full 3G football pitch (with space for two mini pitches), two five-a-side pitches, three six-a-side pitches and two seven-a-side pitches. The site also contains a Multi Use Games Area. Current usage (excluding school use and casual bookings) -

- Average winter weekly usage - 1,030
- Average summer weekly usage - 510
- Average Annual Usage - 41,260

Ashford currently boasts **63** *Talented Performers* who are supported in a number of ways to help them excel at their chosen sport.

## Supporting Culture and Creativity

### ***The Voluntary and Community Sector***

The Council's Ward Member Grant Scheme and Single Grants Gateway provides support to groups on projects and initiatives across the borough. In 2015 these two schemes helped 142 groups in total -

- **27** through community grants
- **115** through member grants

The Council also levered in just over £1 million in external funding to support its cultural efforts.

### **The Create Festival**

July 2016 saw Tentertainment mark its ten year anniversary, and Create celebrate its 21st birthday, with around **12,000** people enjoying the various activities available throughout the day -

- 78% were regular attendees and 22% were new to the event
- £149,000 estimated spend in the local economy by Create attendees on associated travel, accommodation, food and drink
- 67,000 people viewed Create's online video campaigns leading up to the event, with the Official Create 2016 film being viewed by over 4,000 people in just 48 hours
- A large social media presence, with 46,000 tweets about Create in July, with 3512 individual visits and 225 mentions
- A new Young person's Sculpture Trail was unveiled in Victoria Park, to engage residents in the natural heritage of the area which hosts Create every year
- A business network, hosted by the mayor, has met to explore the opportunities created by the festival

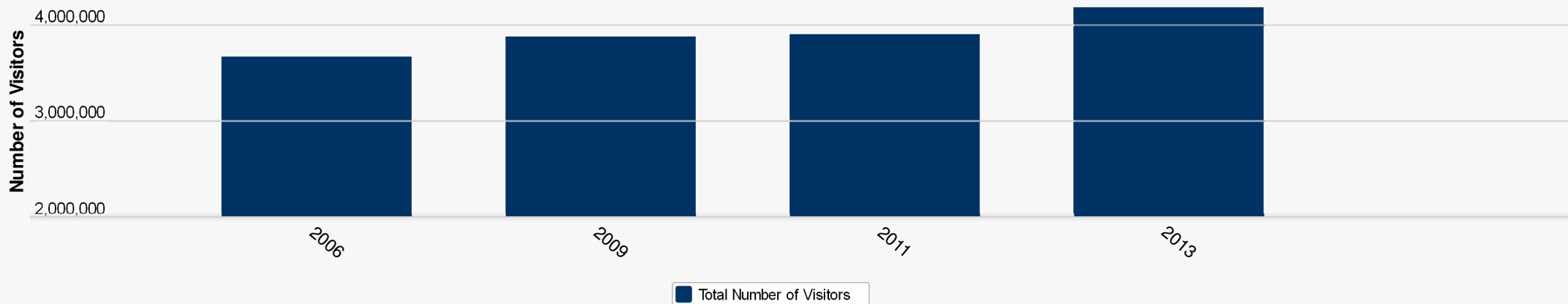
### **Revelation St Mary's**

Delivered by the St Mary's Arts Trust, Revelation St Mary's is Ashford town centre's award winning venue. The Trust delivers -

- a broad scope and regularity of events, with well-known names and emerging artists
- dynamic programming with interconnecting strands of work
- a year-round artist development and schools programme
- artistically-driven audience development, backed by targeted campaigns

In 2015 the venue welcomed **8,924** visitors to their productions, and now begins work on phase two of the project. To assist with this, the Trust recently used Arts Council funding to appoint a marketing consultant.

### **Tourism**



Ashford continues to show steady growth in the number of those visiting the borough. The number of overseas trips rose by **20%** between 2011 and 2013 (the most recent survey), with 433,000 people staying overnight. This places Ashford as the third most visited destination in Kent for overseas staying visitors. The latest visitor survey, covering the last couple of years, is currently being undertaken by Visit Kent and tourist partners.





# Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

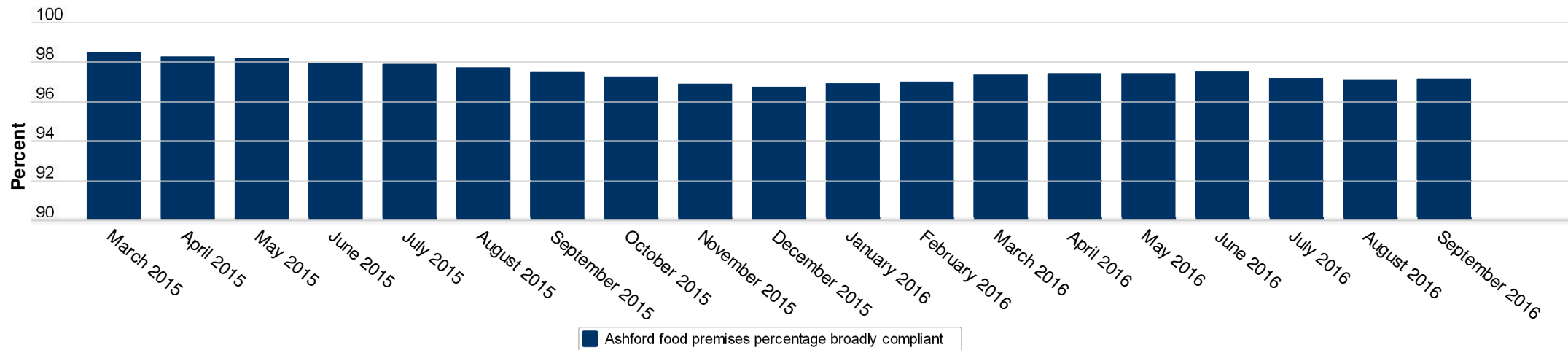
## Headline Report

## Attractive Ashford

### Quality across the borough

#### *Food Business Hygiene*

There are almost **1,300** registered food businesses within the Borough. All are inspected on a regular basis according to their risk category.



This graph shows the percentage of businesses that are broadly compliant with food hygiene standards. Any business found to be non-compliant either receives a formal letter or a revisit. The percentage compliant upon inspected has remained within a half percent range during the last six months.

Guidance is provided to food businesses in the first instance and notices are service if conditions do not improve. Food businesses are also given a food hygiene rating which can view at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/food-hygiene-rating-scheme>.

In September 2016 the Council approved a revised Food Safety Policy, which ensures a consistent approach to food safety inspections, enforcement and food sampling in line with current nationally accepted standards.

### ***ASPIRE - Improving the presentation of the borough***

A new in-house ground maintenance service was rolled out during early October 2016. The new service, called Aspire Landscape Management, will cover the day-to-day work of mowing, pruning, planting, clearing and litter picking on various spaces owned by the Council including open green space, parks, floral beds, cemeteries, areas around housing sites, open green space, hedges, sports pitches and associated footpaths.

This initiative is a key part of delivering the adopted Land Management Improvement Plan, which aims to make the borough a pleasant and enjoyable place to live, work, visit and enjoy, enhance Ashford's overall appearance and attractiveness and raise civic pride and make the borough more attractive for residents, visitors and businesses.

### ***Other measures to improve the look of the borough***

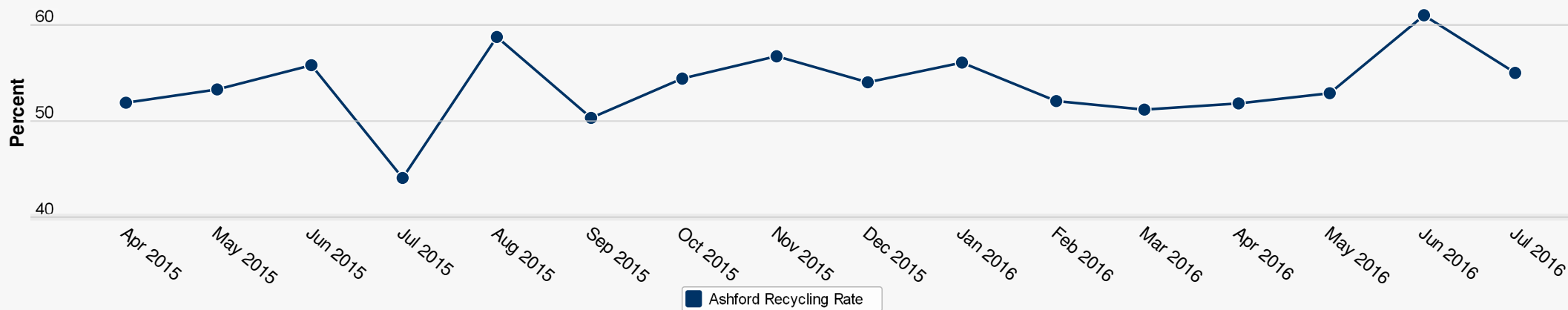
In July 2016 Cabinet considered a review of the Town Centre Action Team (T-CAT), and agreed a set of further improvements to the service.

TCAT was formed three years ago with the intention of having a flexible and reactive resource to keep the town centre attractive and well-looked-after. Since that time, T-CAT has extended its role, to encompass work in both Ashford (as the 'urban' centre) and Tenterden (the rural centre), ensuring that the two towns remain clean and tidy, with street furniture kept in state of good repair.

T-CAT's efforts have also been extended, expanding to include support to the council's economic development function: fitting out/decorating shops (particularly in Park Mall), supporting the monthly Farmers' Market (setting up and dismantling), plus constructing planters and bus stop 'libraries'.

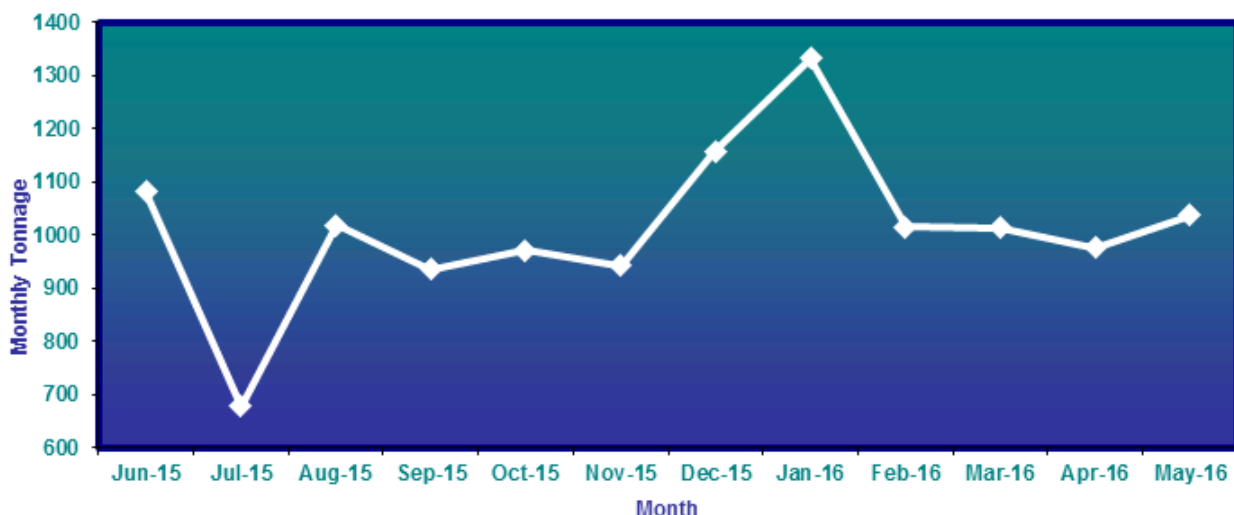
In September 2016 the Community Toilet Scheme, which sees local businesses including shops, cafes and restaurants working in partnership with the Council to open up their toilet facilities to the public free of charge, rolled out across Ashford.

## Recycling



As expected, following two straight years of impressive increases in recycling rates, recycling rates have levelled-out over the last year, with the important next step to consolidate this improved performance.

**KCC - Ashford - Monthly Tonnage**



## Increasing the range of things to do

In July the Planning Committee approved proposals to extend the Cineworld cinema complex at the Eureka Leisure Park, including three extra screen including an IMAX screen.

