

Agenda Item No: 9

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14/09/2017

Report Title: Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 1 2017/18

Report Author & Job Title: Nicholas Clayton-Peck, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer

Portfolio Holder **Cllr Neil Shorter**
Portfolio Holder for: **Finance and IT**



Summary: This report seeks to update members and the public on the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan during Quarter 1 2017/18. 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 online Performance 'Dashboard' for each of the Council's Corporate Plan areas.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: N/A

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. Note the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 1 of 2017/18.**

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

Legal Implications N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment	Not required because the report relates to a summary of past performance rather than any item requiring decision.
Other Material Implications:	N/A
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	N/A
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Report Title: Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 1 2017/18

Introduction

1. The report seeks to provide a headline overview of performance against the Council's Corporate Plan for Quarter 1 2017/18.
2. This report provides a summary of the main developments affecting performance during the quarter, whilst the attached highlight summaries provide the key trend data underlying this (**Appendix 1**).

Background

3. Each quarter the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committees receive an update on how and how well 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 2016 the Dashboard was also presented to the Audit Committee.

Summary of Performance Developments in Quarter 1 2017/18

Activity

7. Quarter 1 saw successful activity on a variety of initiatives which will have a positive impact on the outcomes set out in the Council's corporate plan –

April

- a. At the mid-way point of the Corporate Plan, Cabinet received a review which confirmed that good progress was being made against the council's Delivery Programme. This includes major progress on the strategic, 'Big 8' projects identified as being key priorities for the administration. Most of these major projects are now underway, or very soon will be, and the cumulative effect of these in terms of benefits to the Borough's residents will be considerable. The report also set out the direction for future work
- b. The latest recycling figures demonstrated the excellent recycling achieved across the borough. The latest quarterly statistics from DEFRA confirmed that Ashford remains the best recycler in Kent – In October 2016 the recycling rate was 55% - a 1% rise on last year. November 2016 figures came in at 59% - a 2% increase compared to last year, and recycling rates for December 2016 were 60% - a 6% improvement on last year.

May

- c. Cabinet agreed to continue to maintain the electric vehicle charging points across Ashford and Tenterden. This will retain the five double electric vehicle charging points in the borough for another three years, with no additional charge for the electricity consumed. Further review of charging arrangements will happen every three years, in line with the overall review of parking charges
- d. Two draft sports strategies were agreed by Cabinet, with a focus on protecting, enhancing and extending local pitches, sports halls and buildings. The draft strategies set out a variety of short and long term projects that aim to be delivered through partnership working – and following consultation will receive full adoption in September
- e. Cabinet noted the progress made to date in reducing the council's greenhouse gas emissions, and adopted an Energy Efficiency Strategy which will see further reductions
- f. Work began on the Danemore, Tenterden sheltered housing scheme – a £9m project to rebuild 34 dementia-friendly units set to be completed in summer 2018
- g. The Create Music Festival scooped Cultural Event of the Year at the 2017 Kent Creative Awards

June

- h. Cabinet approved (for consultation) a Heritage Strategy. The strategy outlines the aspirations of the council and stakeholders, including local historic and community groups, Parish Councils and statutory bodies, to strengthen the local heritage offer and support the tourism potential

that heritage can provide. The strategy was produced with significant stakeholder engagement, including a series of workshops and exhibitions

- i. Cabinet welcomed the progress made since the original District Deal was signed with KCC, and agreed a focus for the forthcoming year which includes delivery of a comprehensive Chilmington protocol and delivering broadband through BDUKs phase 2 programme
 - j. Cabinet noted that in the 2016-17 financial year £3.3m of section 106 money had been spent by Ashford Borough and KCC. This includes £705,000 that has been spent by KCC on new schools, libraries, adult social services and funding the local primary care trust. Projects that have either been funded by, or made possible as a result of s106 agreements include a range of affordable housing schemes in rural areas (The Spires, in St Michael's Tenterden and Quarry House in Aldington) as well as Kestrel Park, a play facility in south Ashford that opened in June
 - k. Cabinet received an update on the organisation's financial outturn for 2016/17, which confirmed an almost balanced position (a small overspend of £38,000)
 - l. The OneYou Health Shop has been given the go-ahead to continue for a further two years following a successful initial trial.
8. An online timeline of achievements and milestones in delivering the Corporate Plan is now available through the website, alongside the latest Annual Report - <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/transparency/our-performance/our-annual-report/>

Commentary on performance trends

9. Whilst the majority of the trends captured within the summaries attached to this report have remained broadly steady over the last quarter, the following trends are worth highlighting –
- a. Footfall over the last two quarters has improved, with the monthly average steady at around +/- 5% 4,500 visitors per day.
 - b. Vacancy rates for both the high street and Ashford's shopping centres have fallen over the last year, settling at a level of around 9% in June
 - c. Following a long period of relatively stable levels, the overall unemployment rate has increased slightly over the last few quarters, and now stands at just under 1,300. This is around 30% more than at the same time last year, constituting around 1.7% of Ashford's working age population. Whilst unemployment amongst the 18-24 year olds still remains above the average seen in the rest of the county, it has fallen slightly (3.5 – 3.2%) over the last couple of quarters
 - d. By the end of the last quarter with data the number of households in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) had risen to 25, although the average for the quarter was only slightly higher than the previous quarter's 20. The overall trend, however, has remained steadily increasing since the beginning of 2016
 - e. Across the over 1,000 food businesses across the borough, the percentage compliant with hygiene standards when inspected has remained stable over the last year, remaining within half a percent during that period and on a generally slightly upward curve.

Conclusions

10. The majority of performance goals the council is working towards remain either on-target or near-target, and (a) to (e) above demonstrate a continuing healthy growth profile for Ashford.
11. The information included within these reports provide merely a high-level snapshot of the information available constantly through the live Dashboard site, interactive Annual Report page and timeline of achievements.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. N/A

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. N/A

Other Options Considered

14. N/A

Portfolio Holder's Views

15. Overall, Ashford Borough Council's performance remains strong, with many activities and initiatives, led or supported by this council which will significantly help to deliver our corporate objectives. More specifically, efforts to support our high street and local businesses, such the purchase of Park Mall, have helped support a sustained fall in vacancy rates.
16. Good progress is being made in delivering on the council's delivery programme – projects that are making a real difference to the borough. This is borne out in the extension of the popular OneYou initiative, and work beginning on the innovative sheltered scheme at Danemore.
17. It is important that our resources are used effectively and efficiently to meet our ambitious plans, so it is heartening to see that the annual budget returned at the expected level.
18. 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.

Contact and Email

19. Nicholas Clayton-Peck, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer,
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Appendix 1



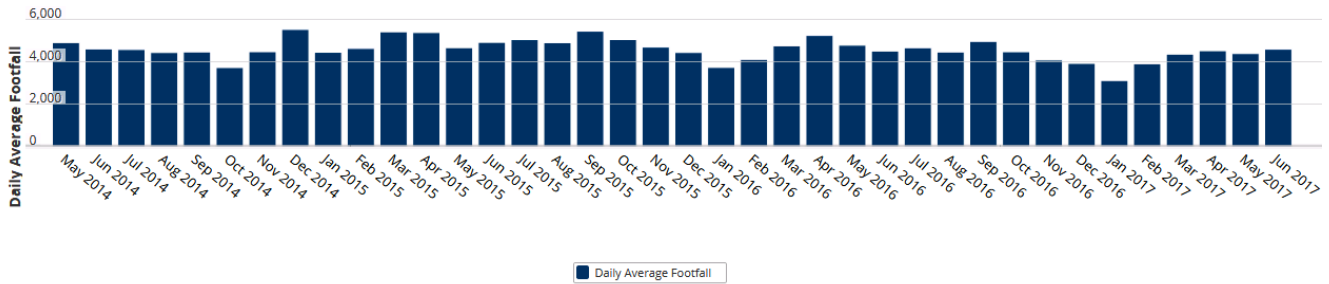
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Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

Headline Report

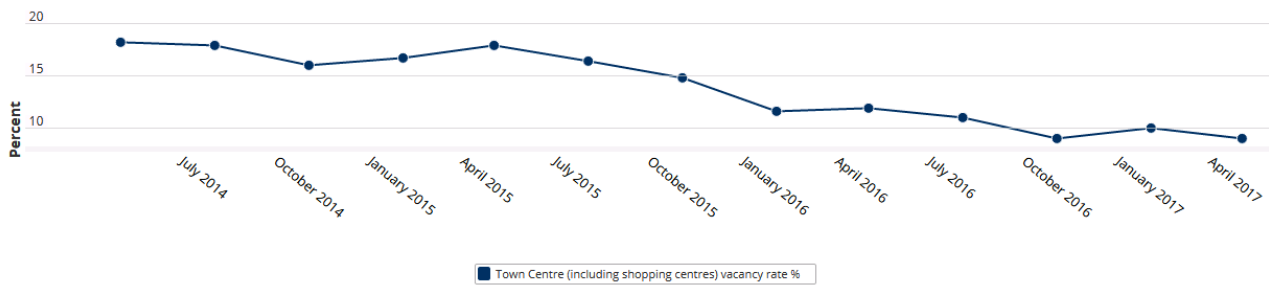
Enterprising Ashford

Town Centre Footfall



Footfall over the last two quarters has improved, with the monthly average steady at around 4,000 per day.

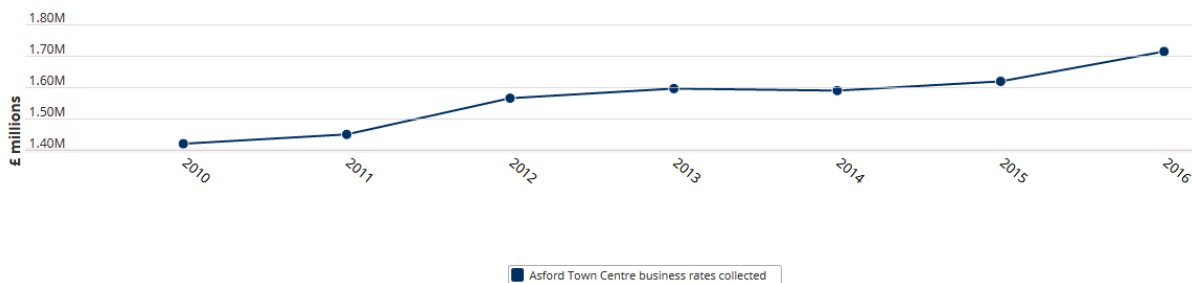
Ashford Town Centre Vacancy Rates



The latest vacancy rate is just under 9%. This is below the national average of 9.5%, and is the lowest since rates were first recorded in 2008.

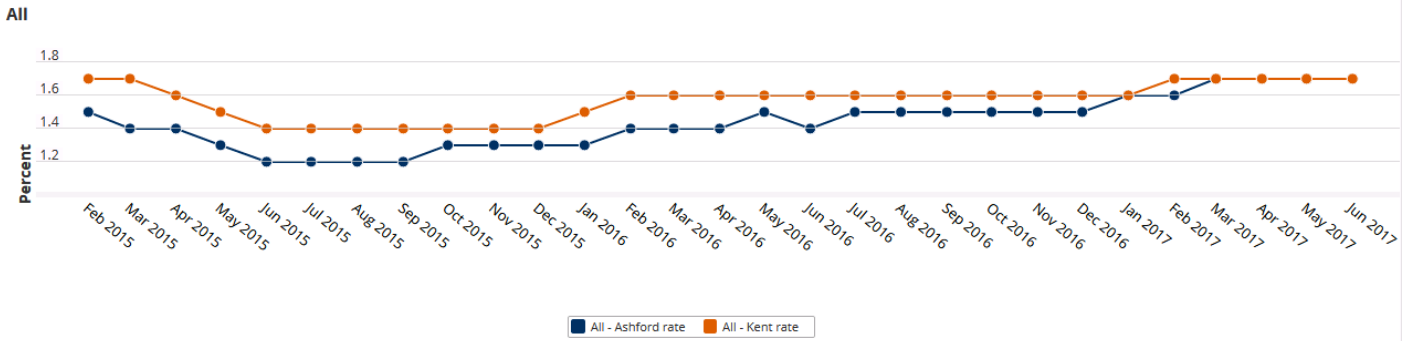
Vacancy rates have fallen across the town centre overall over the last year. Park Mall's historically higher rates have also begun to fall since the Council took over direct operations in 2015, with over half of the vacant units now full and footfall up by around 7%. The rejuvenation has been directly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

Town Centre Development and Future Plans



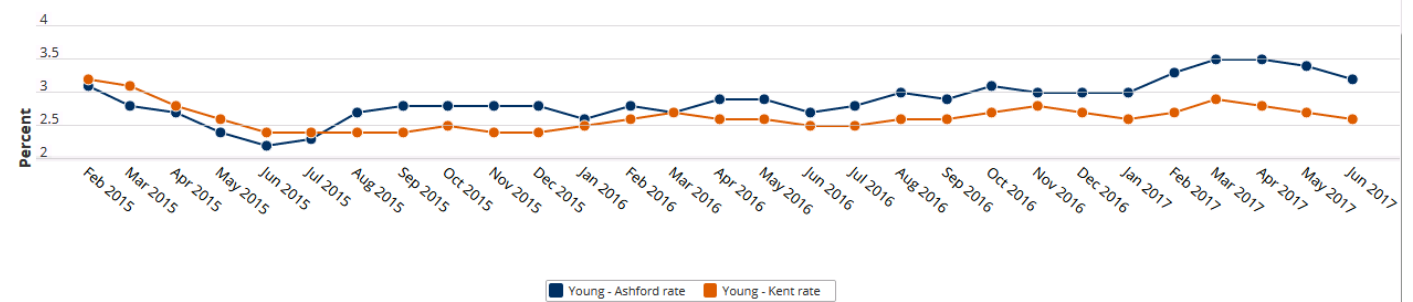
In May Virgin Media announced that homes and businesses in Kent will be next to benefit from an ultrafast broadband and entertainment boost. Work has already begun in Ashford to connect up to 8,000 new premises and is expected to be completed across the county before the end of 2018.

Unemployment



Following a long period of relatively stable levels, the total number claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed has increased slightly over the last few quarters, and now stands at just under 1,300. This is around 30% more than at the same time last year, constituting around 1.7% of Ashford's working age population.

Young People



The number of young people (18-24) claiming unemployment benefit has fallen slightly, although it remains slightly higher than the Kent average.



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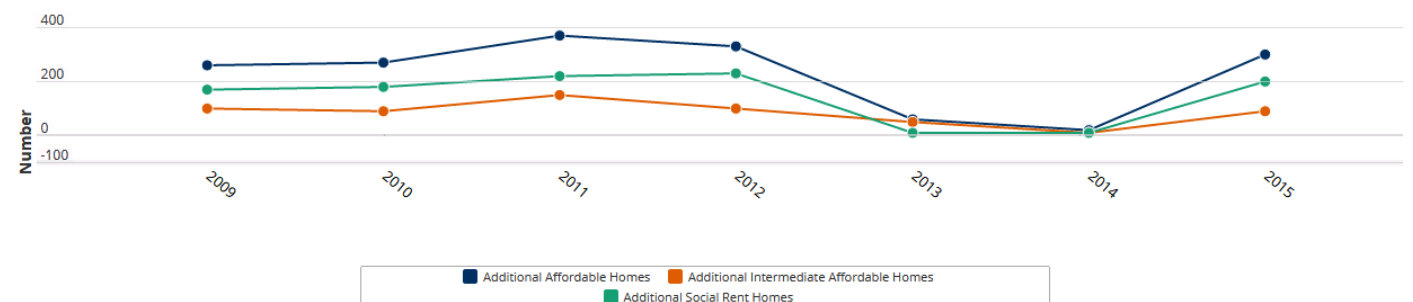
Headline Report

Living Ashford

Affordable Housing

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

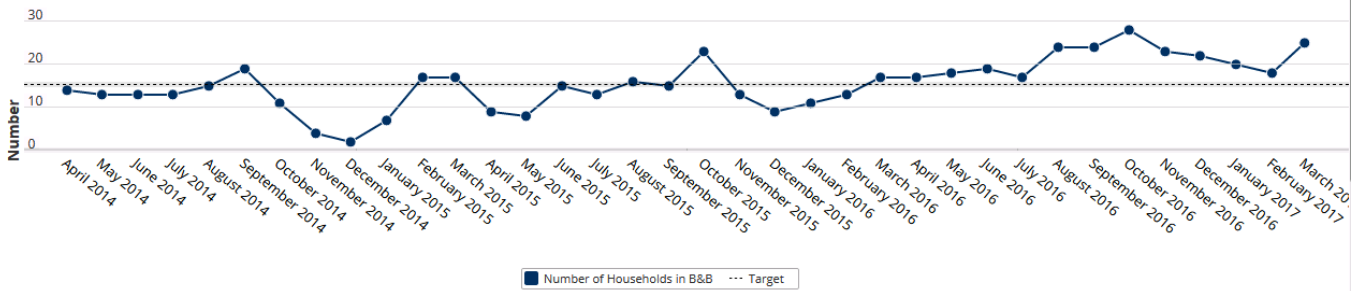
- Intermediate Affordable Homes, which includes intermediate rent and affordable home ownership; and
- Social Rent Homes, which include affordable rent homes



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.

During 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 Accommodation

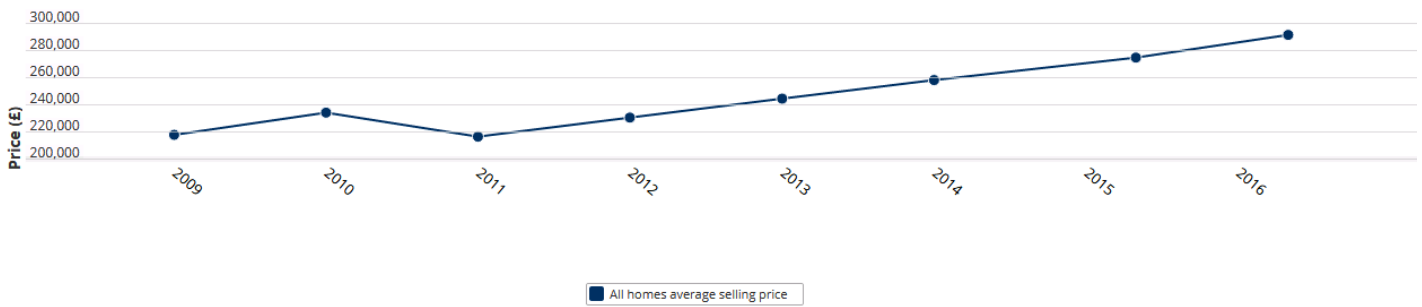


By the end of the quarter the average number of households in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) had increased to around 25, (although there was a similar increase at the same time last year).

In response, in October 2016 Cabinet agreed to incorporate the findings of a recent consultation to inform and approve a new Homelessness Strategy. This Strategy sets a 10-point action plan to address local challenges. These include not placing any 16 or 17 year olds in B&B accommodation and enhancing prevention work and engagement across the private and public sectors.

House prices and the number of homes sold

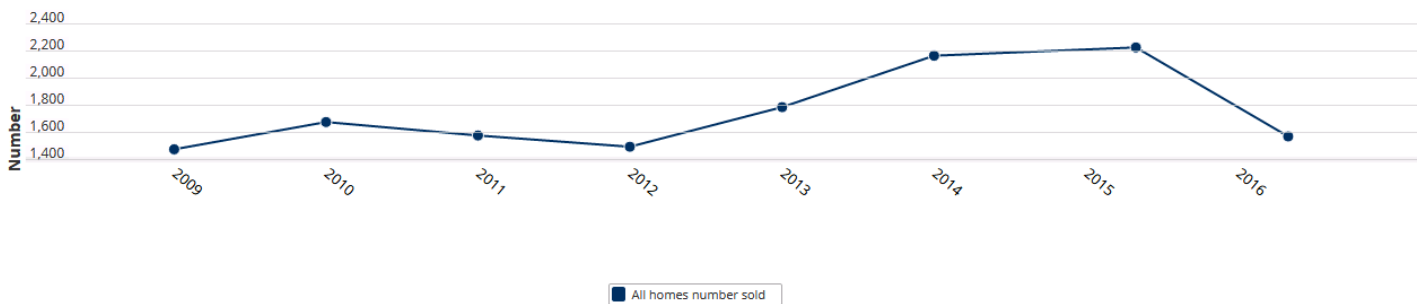
House Price



The average house price in Kent (KCC area) during 2016 was **£283,323**. The average price in Kent (KCC area) has increased for five consecutive years and is now **30%** higher than where they were in 2008.

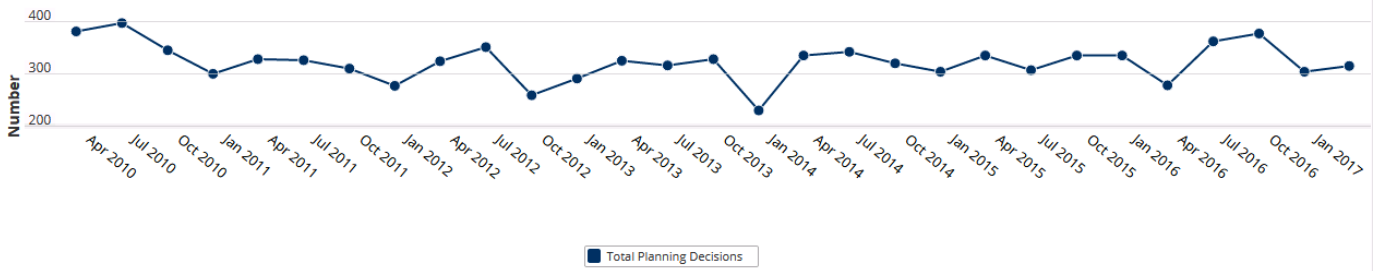
There were **19,117** property transactions in Kent during the year, **28%** lower than in the year before and reflecting the fall in sales seen in Ashford.

Number of Houses Sold

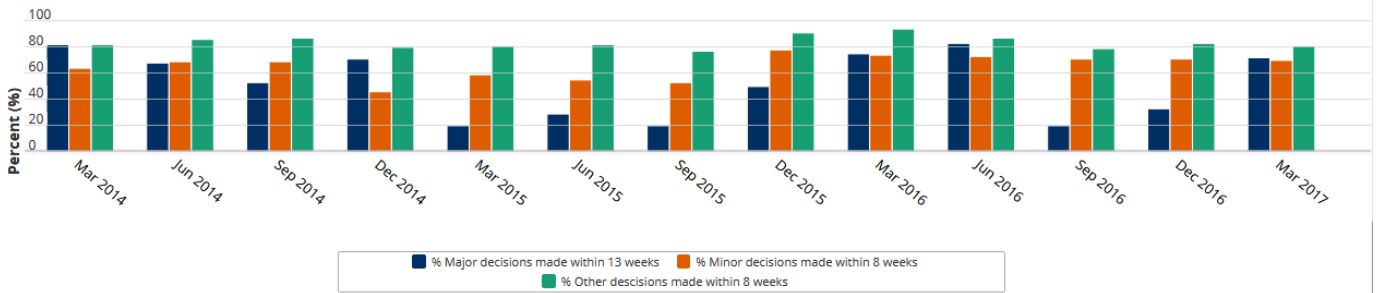


In April work commenced on the construction of 34 sheltered scheme apartments for local residents and 4 bungalows for private sale at Danemore, Tenterden – a £9m project to rebuild 34 dementia-friendly units set to be completed in summer 2018

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.



In June Cabinet noted that in the 2016-17 financial year £3.3m of s106 money had been spent by Ashford Borough and Kent County Council (KCC). This includes £705,000 that has been spent by KCC on new schools, libraries, adult social services and funding the local primary care trust. Projects that have either been funded by, or made possible as a result of s106 agreements include a range of affordable housing schemes in rural areas (The Spires, in St Michael's Tenterden and Quarry House in Aldington) as well as Kestrel Park, which is a play facility in south Ashford that opened in June and is already proving hugely popular.



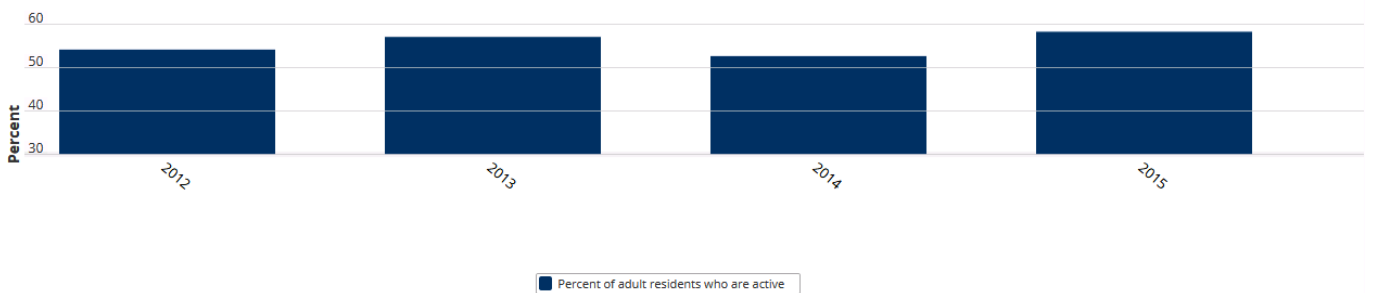
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Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

Headline Report

Active and Creative Ashford

Healthy Lives and Active Living



Sport and Health

In May two draft sports strategies were agreed by Cabinet, with a focus on protecting, enhancing and extending local pitches, sports halls and buildings. The draft strategies set out a variety of short and long term projects that aim to be delivered through partnership working – and following consultation will receive full adoption in September

In June the OneYou Health Shop has been given the go-ahead to continue for a further two years following a successful initial trial.

Supporting Culture and Creativity

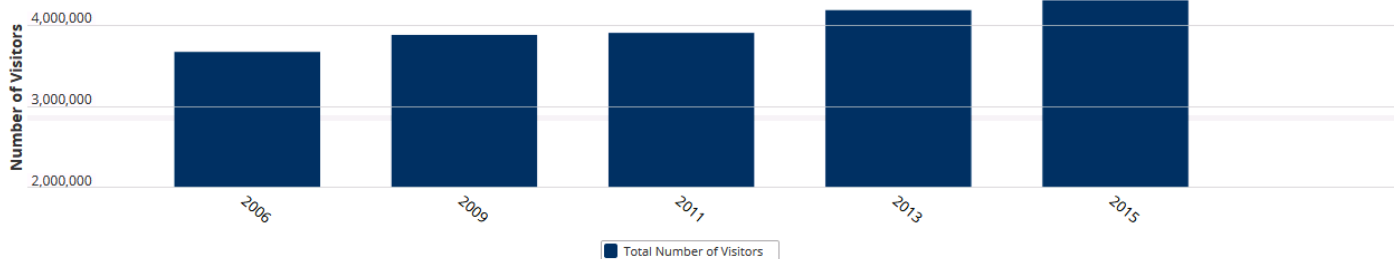
Create Festival

In May the Create Music Festival scooped Cultural Event of the Year at the 2017 Kent Creative Awards

Heritage

In June Cabinet approved (for consultation) a Heritage Strategy. The strategy outlines the aspirations of the council and stakeholders, including local historic and community groups, Parish Councils and statutory bodies, to strengthen the local heritage offer and support the tourism potential that heritage can provide. The strategy was produced with significant stakeholder engagement, including a series of workshops and exhibitions

Tourism



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Ashford Borough Council Performance Dashboard

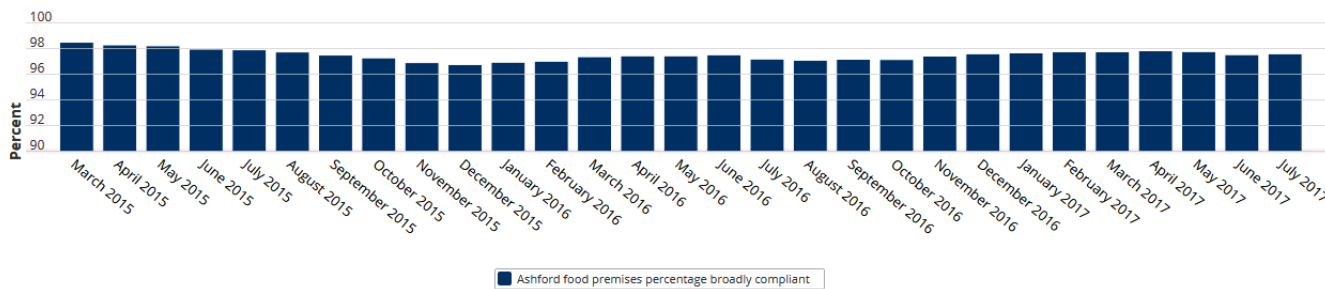
Headline Report

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>.

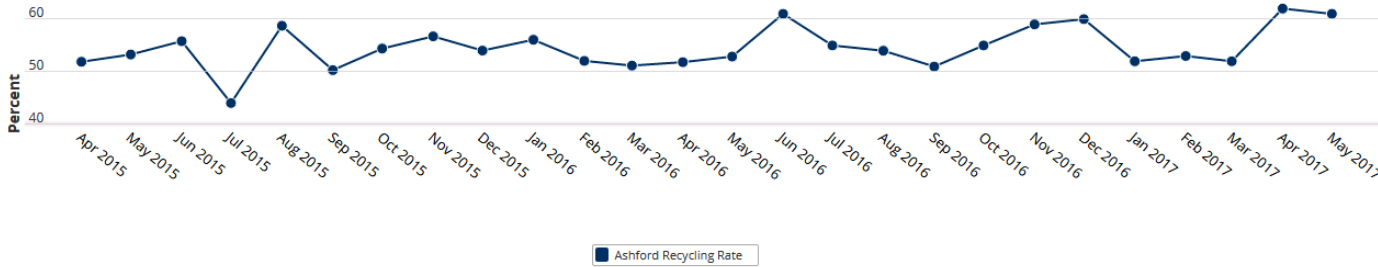
In September 2016 the Council approved a revised Food Safety Policy, which ensures a consistent approach to food safety inspections, enforcement and food sampling in line with current nationally accepted standards.

Other Measures to Improve Ashford

Cabinet agreed to continue to maintain the electric vehicle charging points across Ashford and Tenterden. This will retain the five double electric vehicle charging points in the borough for another three years, with no additional charge for the electricity consumed. Further review of charging arrangements will happen every three years, in line with the overall review of parking charges.

In the same month Cabinet adopted an Energy Efficiency Strategy which will see further reductions in the use of energy and carbon emissions.

Recycling



The latest recycling figures demonstrated the excellent recycling achieved across the borough. The latest quarterly statistics from DEFRA confirmed that Ashford remains the best recycler in Kent- In October 2016 the recycling rate was 55% - a 1% rise on last year. November 2016 figures came in at 59% - a 2% increase compared to last year, and recycling rates for December 2016 were 60% - a 6% improvement on last year.