



To the Members of the Borough Council

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Thursday the 11th December 2014 at 7.00 pm.

Yours faithfully

T W Mortimer
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

	Page Nos.
1. Apologies	
2. To consider whether any items should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of Exempt or Confidential Information.	
3. Declarations of Interest:- To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document:	1
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)	
b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)	
c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests	
See Agenda Item 3 for further details	
4. To confirm the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 16 th October 2014	
5. To receive any announcements from the Mayor, Leader or other Members of the Cabinet	
6. To receive any petitions	
7. To receive any questions from, and provide answers to, the public (being resident of the Borough), which in the opinion of the Mayor are relevant to the business of the Meeting	
8. To receive, consider and adopt the recommendations set out in the Minutes of the Meetings of the Cabinet held on the 13 th November and 4 th December 2014.	2-8

9. To receive, consider and adopt the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 9th December 2014 (to follow)
10. To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 2nd December 2014
11. To consider Motions of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 11

“The KCC Community Warden Service is currently under review. Huge reductions and radical reorganisation will see Ashford’s complement of Wardens dramatically reduced, and those that remain will be shared with Shepway as a mobile service. Given that the Wards of many Members in this Council will be affected, I propose that Cabinet look to explore ways in which Ashford Borough Council might be able to support the Warden Service, including undertaking a feasibility study as to whether or not Ashford Borough Council may be able to undertake the delivery of a Community Warden Service. Councillor B Chilton.”

This shall stand referred to the Cabinet.

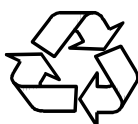
12. Questions by Members of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 10

NOTE:- If debate on any item included within this Agenda gives rise to the need to exclude the press and public due to the likelihood of Exempt or Confidential information being disclosed the following resolution may be proposed and seconded and if carried, the press and public will be requested to leave the meeting for the duration of the debate.

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item as it is likely that in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to the appropriate paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

KRF/VS
3rd December 2014

Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Keith Fearon:
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk
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Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

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

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **16th October 2014**.

Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. J Link (Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clark, Claughton, Clokie, Davey, Davidson, Davison, Mrs Dyer, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, Hodgkinson, Howard, Marriott, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Mortimer, Ovenden, Robey, Sims, Taylor, Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Development, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Aaby, Adley, Clarkson, Mrs Heyes, Shorter, Yeo.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting;

1. His Worshipful the Mayor asked Members to remain standing in silence in respect of the late Roger David Greenfield who was the representative for the Tenterden South East Ward between 1983 and 1987.
2. The Reverend Eileen Harrop said prayers.
3. His Worshipful the Mayor welcomed Lady Brabourne, Countess Mountbatten to the meeting.

195 Exempt or Confidential Information

The Mayor asked whether any items should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of exempt or confidential information. There were none.

196 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as he lived in Sevington.	199

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Howard	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as some members of his family lived in Kingsford Street, Mersham and that he would shortly be living in the area as well	199

197 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 17th July 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

198 Announcements

(a) Deputy Leader of the Council

The Deputy Leader said that he would like to take a few moments to draw to the attention of Members a number of matters of interest and information. He said he was very pleased to report that the Willesborough Dykes foot and cycle path had opened to the public on the 19th September. The path stretched just over a mile and connected the existing cycle path in Sheepfold Lane in Park Farm directly to Ashford's Asda Store providing a safe walking/cycling route between Park Farm, Ashford International Station and the town centre making it a cheaper and healthier alternative to car travel. The Deputy Leader said that not only would the path give Park Farm residents and those beyond, an easy, traffic free route, it would also serve as a picturesque leisure path for families who wanted to explore the countryside.

The Deputy Leader explained that the Council's green credentials had also been reinforced by the news that the Borough's recycling figures continued to rise as a massive 60% of materials had been sent for recycling in June. The Borough's recycling rates had shot up from 14% to an average of around 55% following the introduction of the new service in July 2013. Residents had continued to embrace the new scheme and figures continued to improve, placing Ashford amongst the best recycling Authorities in the country.

The Council would be introducing cheaper parking fees in certain Council owned car parks across the Borough. The free and discounted parking scheme would be rolled out from Sunday, 19th October in numerous Council run car parks across Ashford and Tenterden. The parking scheme had been developed following an extensive review of car parks, research on what other towns were doing and consultation with various stakeholders. It also took into account the changes to parking technology and Government guidance. The changes aimed to support the Borough's retailers by attracting more visitors into the town centres. It was hoped that the initiative would also increase the footfall in Ashford and Tenterden which would help boost trade for local businesses and make the high streets an attractive option for new

business ventures. He also welcomed a report which identified the town as the best business location in Kent. The study, commissioned by Locate in Kent proved what the Council already knew that the advantage of locating business in Ashford outweighed any other town in Kent. It was great news and would help in the Council's efforts to drive economic growth, boost employment and generate greater prosperity for all of the residents.

The Deputy Leader said that Members who may not have already seen it might be interested to know that Ashford had received some favourable press coverage in recent weeks, with particular focus on the Borough as a place in which to invest on a regional, national and even international scale. This had included the Guardian, Le Monde, the KM Business Supplement and Kent Profile Magazine. The Deputy Leader said it was pleasing to see such positive coverage that reinforced the fact that Ashford was the place for business location. It was also clear that Ashford was emerging as a truly international town with many French businesses prospering in the town and direct Eurostar services to Lyon, Avignon and Marseille being introduced from May 2015. The Deputy Leader said that from this news it could be seen that there was a real momentum to the work the Council was undertaking to attract inward investment and a real interest in Ashford. This excellent coverage was raising the profile in, and well beyond, the Borough of Ashford as a place to invest in. The Council would be doing all it could to continue this good work and use this positive coverage as a real impetus for the betterment of the Borough's residents and its future prosperity.

The Deputy Leader said that given what he had just said it would come as no surprise to know that the Leader and the Chief Executive were not at the meeting this evening because they were in London at a property exhibition MIPIM UK promoting Ashford as an important and advantageous economic hub. He explained that his colleague, Cllr. Galpin would say a few words about this shortly. However, in giving their apologies they had asked that a short video be shown to Members to indicate just how Ashford was being marketed at the highest level to the industrial and commercial world.

Members then viewed the video.

(b) Councillor Galpin - the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management

Councillor Galpin said that the Leader had asked him to speak this evening regarding the MIPIM exhibition. He said that he had been at the event with the Chief Executive and Leader and a number of other Officers to tell the Ashford story either by the video Members had just viewed or through meeting visitors. Damian Green MP had also been at the event assisting Ashford in delivering its message. During the event he said there was a continual stream of very interested people and he had confidence that it had enhanced Ashford's reputation and in the long term he said there would be a very positive result. He said that Borough Council representatives had been collected from St. Pancras International by a new livered taxi that showed that Ashford was only 38 minutes from London. In conclusion he said that he was very proud to be part of the deputation and he was sure that the Leader and Chief Executive would also confirm what he had said this evening when they returned.

(c) Councillor Hicks, Portfolio Holder for Social, Local Needs and Special Care Housing

Councillor Hicks said there had been a number of interesting developments she would like to report to Members. She said that there were three particularly important projects that she had recently been involved with, all of which required climbing ladders and wearing a safety hat. The first scheme was when Christchurch House had been purchased. This had been a derelict builder's office and was ideal for conversion. She said she had visited the site at the commencement of the work and then again just before it had opened. The building had become a secure haven for those families who had found themselves homeless. A roof had been removed from an old rear workshop to create a lovely open space for little ones to play in safety. Furthermore the community spirit itself had also shown positive ideas from the church located next door to the building. Councillor Hicks said in previously abandoned workshop areas secure storage cages had been provided for residents to place their possessions. In all the building was providing accommodation for up to eight families passing through on their way to securing permanent housing.

The second visit involved climbing three floors of scaffolding at Chamberlain Manor, near Drovers Roundabout where she had laid a tile on the roof in a topping out ceremony with Councillor Claughton, the Ward Member. They had been shown around the bare bones with particular emphasis on the communal areas on the ground floor. She said that this project was being delivered by Pentland Homes for Housing and Care 21 who would run this older person's accommodation. She said that on the visit they had had to imagine all of the walls and furnishings being in place, but when completed the project would provide 50 apartments with good services for older people who could no longer manage their own homes.

Councillor Hicks said the final scheme was one which had received national acclaim and one of which she had visited on a regular basis. This was the new Farrow Court in Stanhope. In her last visit she said it was astonishing how this had moved from a mere conception to becoming first class accommodation. The best thing she had seen was the huge shell which would be used as a day centre, as well as giving the opportunity for Age UK to expand their services to their clients and the community. Councillor Hicks said she believed that this was an extraordinary building which promised to deliver a new way of living for the elderly. In conclusion Councillor Hicks said there were many other building works the Housing Department were involved with but she hoped that Members would share the success, in particular of the three projects she had outlined, namely Christchurch House, Chamberlain Manor and Farrow Court.

(d) The Mayor

His Worshipful the Mayor said that a few weeks ago the Mayoress and himself had been invited to join the Twinning Association on a visit to Bad Münstereifel to celebrate 50 years of Ashford being twinned with Bad Münstereifel and Ashford's 30 years of twinning with Fougères. Also on the trip were students from Highworth School who represented Ashford Youth. The school representatives had to do a presentation about twinning and speak fluently in German and French. The Mayor

said he was extremely proud and he believed that the presentation that they had given was the best of the three schools that took part. He said he had invited them to the meeting this evening with a view to presenting them with a voucher each, but unfortunately they had to attend an event at their school. He said therefore he would be inviting them to the Parlour with their teacher at a later date.

(e) Councillor Davidson

Councillor Davidson said he would like to put on record the attendance at the Julie Rose 10K on the 12th October which he explained had been widely supported and he believed that over 950 runners from all over Kent had taken part in the 10K race and in addition there were many others for the children's races. He said it was a huge and positive turn out and he wished to thank the Julie Rose staff and Members who had participated in organising the event.

(f) Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader advised that he had one further announcement which he had neglected to mention to Members earlier. He said that on the 22nd October at 12 noon the next Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting would take place. He said the meeting would focus on obesity and healthy living, but would also feature a report on the recent report on the William Harvey Hospital, which he was sure Members would find particularly interesting. He explained that the meeting was open to the public and all Members.

199 Petitions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Arthur, a member of the public wished to present a petition regarding the Ashford Local Plan 2015-2030 and objecting to Site WE15. Mrs Arthur said that the petition objected to any development east of Highfield Lane, Mersham. She said there was overwhelming objection to the horrendous proposal to cover this green field site with warehouses, not only from Mersham and Sevington, but from concerned residents who lived in the Ashford Borough. She said that no-one wanted to see rural villages destroyed.

Mrs Arthur explained that the owners AXA/DMI would like to extend the proposed U19 warehouse development to Mersham and were misleadingly calling it Sevington Park. She said that they had heard DMI and some Council Members talk about a green buffer but this should not mean a green strip at the edge of a field. A strategic gap or green buffer should adequately protect the village from urban development and in the case of Mersham there should be no development east of Highfield Lane and Cheeseman's Green Lane. Development on this site went against the 2006 Parish Plan for Mersham. Mrs Arthur said it was important to protect and retain the integrity of the Borough's lovely villages as they were one of the reasons why people wanted to come and live in the Borough. She quoted from Damian Green's website:- "although known as an expanding urban area, much of Ashford was made up of beautiful villages and protected countryside. We need to manage the growth of Ashford so that we do not lose the green fields we value so much.....". Mrs Arthur also said that on the website it stated "long term, it seemed to me essential that Mersham is preserved as a village rather than a suburb". She then quoted from the

Council's "Ashford 2030 – A Framework" which had been adopted by the Cabinet on the 8th December 2011: "We are adamant that "growth"...should create outstanding legacies and support strong viable local communities – we aspire to communities in Ashford Borough that we are all proud of". Mrs Arthur considered that Mersham was a vibrant, rural community and that Site WE15 went against Policy CS1 – Guiding Principles of Core Strategy "Protection for the countryside, landscape and villages from adverse impacts of growth and the promotion of strong rural communities".

Mrs Arthur explained that Highfield Lane was a natural barrier protecting the village of Mersham. In 2008 Ashford Borough Council had guaranteed support for the "Mersham Wall" and she questioned whether the Council would continue to do so now. The land to the east of Highfield Lane had been farmed for generations and AXA/DMI wanted to cover 30 acres of this farmland with more warehouses right up to Mersham. She believed their intentions were made clear in the Utility Network Assessment document dated 23rd November 2011 attached as supporting documents to the recent planning application for Kent Woolgrowers.

Mrs Arthur said that the Village Alliance, which represented over 300 members, the Parish Council and over 450 petitioners were totally opposed to WE15 being adopted under the 2030 Plan. She said that they had already seen what inappropriate development was proposed by AXA/DMI on U19 "The Gateway to Ashford and Europe". She considered there should be no extension of Site U19 and that Ashford Borough Council should stand up to AXA/DMI and not allow a developer to destroy the ancient community of Mersham. In conclusion she said that she trusted that "Localism" was alive and the Council's Planning Policy Department and elected Members of the Council would listen to the voices of the Borough's residents.

Mrs Arthur then presented the petition to His Worshipful the Mayor who then advised that it would be referred to the Head of Planning and Development for a response.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that there should be no debate on the petition at the meeting but said that he would allow Councillor Bartlett to make a short statement.

Councillor Bartlett said that the petition demonstrated the strength and depth of views held by residents on the risk that the Core Strategy Review proposed to the Borough's rural communities. He said that he knew that the Planning Policy Task Group would take the petition very seriously and would seek to understand the concerns by a careful review of all responses. Councillor Bartlett considered it should cast a shadow over some of the points raised earlier in the evening and those raised by the Strategic Delivery Board, of which Damian Green MP was a member, and its enthusiasm to act as a "honeypot" for the South East's development plans. He said that sometimes one could regret getting what you asked for and it was often better to protect what was valued in the heritage of the villages encircling Ashford, rather than to seek out development. In conclusion he said he was sure he was not alone in noting the irony of the Deputy Leader's video and the Leader's sojourn in London at MIPIM and what was being said by the residents of Mersham this evening.

200 Cabinet 4th September and 9th October 2014

(a) 4th September 2014

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 4th September 2014 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 117, 123 and 129.

(ii) Minute Nos. 117, 123 and 129 be approved and adopted.

(b) 9th October 2014

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9th October 2014 may be called in, i.e. 22nd October 2014:-

(i) the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on the 9th October 2014 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 180, 181, 182, 186 and 187.

(ii) Minute Nos. 180, 181, 182, 186 and 187 be approved and adopted.

201 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 4th September and 9th October 2014

(a) 4th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 4th September 2014 be received and noted.

(b) 9th October 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 9th October 2014 be approved and adopted.

202 Audit Committee – 25th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 25th September 2014 be received and noted.

203 Standards Committee – 30th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 30th September 2014 be received and noted.

204 Annual Report of the Council's Monitoring Officer 2013/14

The Meeting considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which was the annual report to both the Standards Committee and the Council on activity in terms of probity matters including complaints about alleged breaches of approved protocols and Codes of Conduct by Borough and Parish Councillors.

Resolved:

That the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report be received and noted.

205 Questions by Members of which notice had been given

(a) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Mr Mayor, following the last Council Meeting the Portfolio Holder for Planning was unable to answer my questions off-line on strategic development areas. I still seek an answer and now address my questions to the Leader of the Council or the Deputy Leader as he is standing in. Since the questions relate to a single topic I trust Mr Mayor you permit me to ask them together.

Once an area is given strategic development status does it make refusal of ensuing planning applications more difficult, if not impossible. In respect to strategic development designation and land found suitable by the present Sites Submissions process, then dropped to surplus to requirement under this scenario is a subsequent planning application for the site more likely to succeed than if the area had no such designation, and finally what is the process to remove strategic development status once it has been given? Thank you Mr Mayor."

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Can I thank Councillor Michael for his opening gambit this evening. Mr Mayor quite often there is a difference between the answer you want and the answer you actually receive and while I have some regret

that Councillor Michael considers he has been short changed, I am aware that his question was answered by my colleague at the last Council meeting and that a full written response was given in respect of his last question on this point. However, having said that I will do my best to explain the situation. The diagram which forms a part of the Core Strategy shows the broad strategy for development and strategically important developments by virtue of and in relation to their scale, and wider importance to Ashford as a whole. i.e. in line with the approach the Government expects Local Plans to take. Subsequent parts of the Local Plan have included detailed site specific policies for these areas. Councils can of course change their strategy when they produce updated Local Plans and seek to justify this to an independent inspector with robust evidence and a clear rationale when the plan is formally examined. Something Councillor Michael may indeed be aware of. If the Inspector subsequently supports the changes then it is reasonable to expect support for this position if unsuccessful applicants for planning permission appeal against the Council's decisions. The recent Site Submissions process is a step towards drawing up the next Local Plan. Only as many sites as needed to meet the Government's guidance on meeting the objectively assessed needs for Ashford will be identified in the new Local Plan. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

"Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank the Deputy Leader for that explanation although I still don't think it answers the question although the question is misunderstood. I asked the question in relation to a particular area where Ashford Borough Council were considering extending the area of strategic development. There were no planning sites I was particularly involved with that. I am talking about an area that is expressed as that. Mr Mayor it is extremely important for Members to understand the planning implications for areas marked as strategic development. With land submissions for the revised Local Plan amounting to circa 22,000+ homes I am sure Members will want to know what areas in their Ward are classed as strategic development proposals on the table to give such designation to areas and the land submissions falling within these areas. Please may I ask the Leader to circulate such a list to Members during the course of the next few days? Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Mr Mayor, I will certainly talk to the Leader, hopefully tomorrow, and address Councillor Michael's request and again express regret of the fact that he considers he has not had his point sufficiently answered. Thank you Mr Mayor".

(b) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Regarding the Leader's recent articles it is reassuring to Members to know that Ashford is seeing the green shoots of economic

recovery. We all hope it continues, and certainly the video tonight was a great step in that direction. The articles reported the Leader to state that Ashford had 3.2 million visitors I seem to recall, over the past year which equates to 8,767 visitors for every one of the 365 days in the year. At first glance this appears extraordinarily high so please will the Leader inform Members who is deemed to be a visitor, how this number is captured and how the number is substantiated? Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Thank you Mr Mayor, and thank you again to Councillor Michael for his question. First of all can I say I am delighted to note that Councillor Michael is supportive of the economic drive being led by this administration and indeed engendered by this Council as a whole, and while there is absolutely no cause for complacency there, the shoots are most definitely verdant with some promising signs of major investment in the town. With regard to the quote from the Leader, I understand this related to the number of visitors to the Designer Outlet Centre, where counts have been carried out by the operators of the Centre for some years. Now if Councillor Michael would like more information how McArthur Glen carried out these counts I am sure it can be provided in a full written response. Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Michael

“Yes thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you to the Deputy Leader for that I would like that written response. The reason why I raised the question was to do also with the footfall counters in the town centre and I would ask the Deputy Leader if he could also give us a view on how those counts are taken. Thank you.”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Happy to oblige Mr Mayor.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Galpin

“I would ask the Deputy Leader whether he was aware that those counts are clearly and well defined and are included now in the quarterly report?”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Yes I am grateful to Councillor Galpin for pointing out that invaluable piece of information”. Thank you Mr Mayor.

(c) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Thank you again Mr Mayor. Can the Leader inform Members as to why the direction of the revised Local Plan is towards more land and housing, since it is at odds with the Government Ministers, sorry what Government Ministers

are openly saying? Members are led to believe a zero increase to overall housing numbers in the present Local Plan is not an option when the converse seems true for ministerial comment. I quote Nick Clegg, Eric Pickles and Brandon Lewis. It is the house build rate that needs increasing, not the overall housing number in Local Plans. Protecting the countryside and green spaces is as important. Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl or see the vital green lungs around their towns unnecessarily developed. Local Plans should use the safeguards in the National Planning Policy Framework to protect against over development. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you to Councillor Michael again. As I would expect he chooses his ministerial comments with due diligence. However, perhaps I could direct him to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework which provides guidance to local Councils on how they must plan for their areas. This framework clearly sets out that Councils must meet what is called their "objectively assessed housing need" and further Government guidance explains how this is to be calculated. Failure to produce a plan that responds by making sufficient land available for new homes and jobs will, in all probability be found unsound by an Inspector when the plan is examined. A failure to have a sound plan is as I am sure we can envisage an open door to developers to promote development where they want it with the possibility of Local Councils and the community losing crucial control over key planning decisions. Mr Mayor it was Mark Twain who said about the countryside "that they don't make it any more". That is indeed the case but we are where we are and the situation we find ourselves in is that all the major brownfield land in the town has already been allocated for development and counted against our future housing needs. Something Councillor Michael is aware of from previous debates and his membership of the Planning Task Group. Sadly Mr Mayor this does not amount to sufficient capacity for the new homes needed to 2030 to avoid the need for some green field development which must be handled in a sensitive, responsible and a considerate fashion. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

"Yes thank you Mr Mayor. I would just like to say that those quotes were the exact quotes, they're recent quotes and in fact that because of what is happening around the country there is some new policy guidelines that have been issued by the Government and I suggest people should read that. Mr Mayor the Leader last night stated that at times hard choices had to be made, and I agree. I therefore submit the hard choice here is to say no to a never ending increase in housing numbers. In the light of what residents said last night I ask the Leader to call a halt to moving forward with the GL Hearn recommendation to seek land for a further 4,000 homes but instead support the Cambridge Economic Matrix proposal that requires no more land and yet offers a substantial increase to current build rate. In addition I ask the Leader to include a green belt all the way around the town and its urban areas to

provide a safeguard to our countryside from further development. Something residents wish since this removes the continual uncertainty brought about by five year plan revisions. Mr Mayor to clarify why I seek such a commitment, could you please permit me to briefly give the Leader a few facts for his deliberation?"

At this point in the meeting and in response to a point of order raised by Councillor Galpin, His Worshipful the Mayor asked Councillor Michael whether he had a question to ask. Councillor Michael confirmed there were three questions at the beginning of his question and he was just providing more information to enable an answer to be given. His Worshipful the Mayor permitted Councillor Michael to continue asking his question.

Councillor Michael

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, I will do my best to be as quick as possible. Ashford build rate declined to 137 new homes last year from the 284 the year before with circa 10,000 unbuilt homes. In the present Local Plan a 20 year supply exists taking the Cambridge Economic Matrix 518 homes for Ashford. G L Hearn, using the less up to date data looks at 730 homes per annum and a study of that revealed that a huge provision of 427 homes per annum for inward migration, with just 307 for resident organic population. The arguments about inward migration have no substance and this is not wanted by residents. The argument that housing numbers in the present Local Plan have to be increased is flawed because, this is why I am asking the question, the John Prescott target was abolished by the present Government and with it ABC released to make its own determination. We should not be fearful to go down the path to not increase present Local Plan Housing Numbers and Land Requirements but instead underpin a higher build out rate from what we have already got. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Yes I think the question was at the beginning rather than at the end. Mr Mayor as Councillor Michael's points were specifically addressed to the Leader I will do precisely as I said in answer to question 1 and am more than happy to take the points that he raises to the Leader and discuss this with the Leader and makes sure the Leader responds to Councillor Michael."

Supplementary Question by Councillor Wedgbury

Can the Deputy Leader allow us or give us the answer to all the District Councils across the country who's Local Plans are being found unsound because they have insufficient housing numbers in them I think it is quite a considerable number?"

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"The answer simply is no Mr Mayor. I do not have that information to hand. However as I have responded to Councillor Michael I am more than happy to respond to Councillor Wedgbury and obtain that information asap".

(d) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Subsequent to projecting and planning capacity demand for M20 Junction 10A Kent County Council has cited the lorry park for expansion to accommodate operation stack. This has material consequences for the new junction and will seriously erode the spare capacity set aside as a safety margin for M20 Junction 10A. Put together with the rumoured Distribution Operation it looks as though M20 Junction 10A will fail before it gets off the ground. Will the Leader inform Members as to what action has been taken to examine the impact of KCC proposal, when Members will see details of capacities should the full scenarios play out for M20 Junction 10A and whether ABC will openly oppose KCC should available capacity and safety margins be compromised? Thank you Mr Mayor."

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you again to Councillor Michael for his question. Mr Mayor Councillor Michael refers to the "rumoured distribution operation". I have to tell him that I do not deal in rumours. While there may be speculation, dipping your toe in the water on something based primarily on rumours is a precarious methodology to follow. Rumours can be dangerous and invariably lead to counter rumours which can lead to mis-information and uncertainty so where possible I try only to deal with the facts. Now as regards to the remainder of his question I am slightly unclear as to the basis of Councillor Michael's expertise in traffic modelling of motorway junctions. But the national body that is responsible for evaluating all such proposals, the Highways Agency, will be designing and fully testing the full Junction 10A scheme. I repeat Mr Mayor the full Junction 10A scheme over the coming months. This is a project promoted by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Government, not Kent County Council. Of course it will need to be proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the junction will provide the capacity needed for future development proposed in the new Local Plan. I am pleased to report that a community consultation group bringing together local people, Parish, Borough and County Councillors has already been set up and held its first meeting with the Highways Agency. This group will provide a sounding board for the Highways Agency as they design the scheme, so that we can achieve the best possible outcome for local people. This is absolutely essential. The Highways Agency are required to produce a statement of community consultation which explains how they will carry out wider consultation and this is expected Mr Mayor later this year. The Council will be formally consulted under the NSIP, the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project procedure that is being used by the Highways Agency to bring forward the scheme. Members will receive further reports on this process in the coming months. In addition Mr Mayor, Kent County Council has identified land at Waterbrook, next to the existing truck stop, as a potential overnight

lorry park to help deal with the problem of overnight parking that afflicts a significant number of areas. As a result the Council will decide whether to include such a proposal in the new Local Plan. Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

“Thank you Mr Mayor and I thank the Deputy Leader for a full explanation there and I am pleased to hear that in fact it will be put on the agenda for Highways to look at that site but I asked the question because one particular Council has already rejected the site that KCC nominated for the same reason, and that’s why I asked the question what is Ashford Borough Council doing at the moment? Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Nothing to add to that but I am grateful for Councillor Michael’s point that he just made”.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Bartlett

“I think I may just ask the question that if the Deputy Leader cares to check regularly the planning applications that are submitted from time to time he might already have noticed that a planning application has been submitted for the distribution operation. I do feel that it behoves the Deputy Leader to be somewhat more up to date in matters in the Council rather than dismissing good and valid questions from colleague Councillors?”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Mr Mayor I try my best like every Member to keep up to date. I will not bring my personal circumstances of late, which have been extremely difficult, into this meeting tonight.”

(KRF/VS)

MINS:CXXX1442

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **13th November 2014**

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Cloughton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, Howard, Robey, Shorter.

Apology:

Cllr. Marriott.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bennett, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Clokie, Davison, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Head of Communities and Housing, Head of Finance, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Assistant Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Principal Accountant, Policy and Performance Manager, Environmental Contracts and Operations Manager, Senior Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

227 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clokie	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item 13 as he was a member of Tenterden Town Council, and	237
	made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item 12 as he was a Director of the Local Authority Mutual Investment Trust.	236
Davison	Announced an "Other Interest" in respect of Agenda Item 13 as he owned a small piece of land in the Hamstreet area.	237

228 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9th October 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

229 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that a formal planning application had been received and registered for the Designer Village Outlet extension. This would now be subject to the normal planning process.

230 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2014-2044

The report provided Members with an update on the financial projections associated with the HRA Business Plan, highlighting material changes and issues relating to the Plan. Tabled at the meeting was a set of revised recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Social, Local Needs and Special Care Housing referred to the Tabled Paper and advised that Recommendation (vi) within the original report had been removed as it was considered to be superfluous given that all individual projects would be brought before the Cabinet in due course. The Portfolio Holder explained that apart from the views which had been set out within paragraph 57 of the report, she wished to comment further on Recommendation (iii). She explained that there would be a Member-led Working Group set up to update and review the priorities of the HRA. She indicated that she would chair the Group, assisted by the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management. She also advised that paragraph 6 of the report was also relevant in that it would be individual Members who would determine the appropriate finance for projects and they would have to delegate powers to the appropriate Officers. The Portfolio Holder further explained that she anticipated that such a Member-led Working Group would concentrate on the future delivery of new homes for the residents of Ashford by way of Council houses, sheltered accommodation and local needs on rural exception sites, whilst keeping a close eye on the numbers of householders on the waiting list, and the plight of those who found themselves homeless through no fault of their own.

The Portfolio Holder considered that homelessness caused by non-payment of rent was self-inflicted. Furthermore she said that the Council was already working with the Department of Works and Pensions with a view to helping tenants manage their financial affairs better so that they would be in a position to pay their rent when Universal Credit was established next year. The Member-led Working Group would also review how the Council worked with other agencies and the effectiveness of the Tenants' Panel. She also referred to paragraph 53 of the report which suggested further topics which could be considered. When the Working Group had been established it would examine such areas and investigate as appropriate and bring recommendations back to subsequent Cabinet meetings.

The Chairman said that he would wish to see the Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the Group to come back to the Cabinet for approval.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management said he believed the Working Group would have a good opportunity to comment and prioritise issues for the future and furthermore it would also be able to examine the Housing Revenue Account in greater detail.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education referred to paragraphs 27 and 28 of the report which dealt with welfare reform. He said it was right to draw attention to the risks and uncertainties for the future and it was appropriate to make provision now for any further uncertainties that might arise.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the conversion of void properties from social rents to affordable rents, the Head of Housing and Communities said that the rent level would be changed to an affordable level which was still below the Housing Benefit level. She confirmed that in the region of 100 properties a year would be converted to affordable housing.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and Financial Projections be agreed and it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to review the Plan on an annual basis as part of the Budget Scrutiny process.**
 - (ii) the next annual update include an overview on progress since the introduction of self-financing on the number of new Council properties.**
 - (iii) a Member-led Working Group be set up to revise and update the priorities of the HRA.**
 - (iv) the transfer of garages to the General Fund as agreed at the 10th July 2014 Cabinet Meeting be noted.**
 - (v) the potential future accounting issue surrounding impairment and revaluation of the HRA be noted.**

231 Renewal of LASER Contract for the supply of Gas and Electricity

The report identified the different options available to the Council when it came to the procurement of utilities and explained the advantages of entering into a new LASER Contract so that the Council could continue to procure its utilities through the LASER Consortium for the next three years. The Portfolio Holder said he supported the recommendation and advised that under the current contract the Council saved in the region of £39,900 per annum for the provision of utilities.

Resolved:

That the Council enter into a new LASER Agreement so that it can continue to procure its utilities through the LASER Consortium until November 2018.

232 The EU Waste Framework Directive

The report enclosed a Briefing Paper and provided the Cabinet with an overview of the key requirements of the EU Waste Framework Directive as it affected Ashford Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that all Councils within the country would need to comply with the Directive which had been transposed into English Law. She advised that she had visited a Material Recycling Facility in Crayford with the Environmental Contracts and Operations Manager, which had been very informative. There all items were separated and recycled with less than 2% of the items rejected. She said that there would be a further report to the Cabinet which would set out the work that the Council would need to do to achieve compliance with the Directive.

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder said that a further leaflet would be distributed to residents setting out the Christmas collection arrangements and providing further recycling information.

In response to a question from a Member the Portfolio Holder explained that all Material Recycling Facilities needed to be licensed.

Resolved:

- That (i) the key requirements of the legislation and the work undertaken to date be noted.**
- (ii) it be noted that further work determined as appropriate by Officers would be undertaken prior to a further report to Cabinet in December.**

233 Licensing Act 2003: The Revision to Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Licensing Policy

The report presented a revision to the Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Licensing Policy which had been prepared in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 following a public consultation. It was noted that only minor legislative amendments had been made to the version of the Policy previously presented to the Committee prior to the consultation exercise.

Recommended:

That the revised Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

234 Street Naming and Numbering for CHAR2 – Land to the South West of A20 Roundabout, Maidstone Road, Charing

The report advised that the Street Naming and Numbering Policy required that any requests for naming a new road after a person, deceased or living, should be agreed by the Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the two names proposed were to commemorate local military personnel, which was particularly relevant given the 100 year anniversary of the Great War.

The Chairman also advised that the link road 'Poppyfields' had been chosen by the local primary school. He also advised that the DCLG would be giving a commemorative paving stone to honour those persons who had been awarded the Victoria Cross. The only recipient of the VC in the Borough had lived in the Charing Ward.

Resolved:

That the use of the names as set out in paragraph 4 of the report be approved.

235 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2014/15

The report advised Members and the public on the performance of the Council during the quarter. This included information on what the Council had achieved through its decision making key performance data on frontline services and consideration of the wider Borough picture which impacted upon the Council's work.

The Portfolio Holder said that in his view the report presented a story of success for both Officers and Members involved in the various initiatives.

In response to a question from a Member the Portfolio Holder agreed to check the figures set out on page 79 of the Agenda regarding the level of visitors which had been dealt with by the Customer Service Agents at the Gateway.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property referred to the reduction in figures in respect of unemployment, it being noted that it was now 1.4% of Ashford's working age population.

The Deputy Leader said that he wished to thank Officers for their work on disabled adaptations which he believed had been undertaken in a sensitive manner.

The Chairman, whilst commenting on an issue raised by a Member regarding the interpretation of footfall figures for the town, said that he had information from the County Square Manager who had indicated that their performance was 0.9% up on the same figure for last year and therefore, although he accepted that footfall could be interpreted in different ways, believed that there was an upward trend which had been identified by the trade.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management referred to the recently published report on shopping centres across the country and said he did not think it was appropriate for Ashford to be compared with the likes of Harrods or Knightsbridge.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property advised that figures had now been collected for footfall within the town centre over the past 14 or 15 months and therefore comparison data would soon be available.

Resolved:

That the Performance for Quarter 2 of 2014/15 be noted.

236 Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 2 2014

The report presented the second Budget Monitoring Report for the current year based on the first half of the year, April to September. The report showed an overall outturn of £4,000 above budget for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account was also over budget with a pressure of £2,000.

A Member referred to the estimated number of dwellings for which the Council would receive New Homes Bonus for in 2015/16 and said that he was surprised that this was lower than the estimate and asked whether this was a result of any actions by the Council.

The Portfolio Holder said that the reduction related to a reduced level of completions, for example the Panorama development which had been delayed by the finding of asbestos. However, he believed that the following year the Borough would see a spike in completions.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Budget Monitoring position as at 30 September 2014 be noted.**
 - (ii) the New Homes Bonus Schedule (NHB) including approved projects for 2014/15 and carried forward projects from 2013/14 in Appendix A of the report be noted.**
 - (iii) the replacement of 45 parking machines over the next 3 years at a total cost of £270,000 as detailed in paragraphs 29-34 of the report be approved.**
 - (iv) the Growth Area Funding capital funding position as set out in paragraph 35 of the report be approved.**
 - (v) the proposed projects to be funded from Growth Area Funding as set out in paragraphs 36 & 37 be approved.**
 - (vi) the added £1m treasury management investment made in the CCLA Property Fund above the Council's Treasury Management limit be noted so as to take advantage of an opportunity to improve investment returns while maintaining good security (paragraphs 41-42 of the report refers).**
 - (vii) the Mid-Year Treasury report as set out in Appendix C of the report be noted.**

237 Planning Task Group – Notes of the Meeting held on the 8th October 2014

A Member explained that the exhibitions held within his Ward in terms of the Rural Sites submissions had been attended by a relatively few number of people from the area and furthermore he said that he had spoken to the Chairman of the Parish Council who had advised that he had not had a face to face discussion with Officers over the sites submitted in respect of the Parish. He also explained that he was surprised when he had seen the retention of a site, which the residents of Orlestone had not wanted to proceed, still included with a report.

The Head of Planning and Development said that Officers would be happy to meet the Member on a one to one basis but explained that consideration of the sites was a two stage process with sites being listed on the 'long list' prior to the application of set criteria to filter out those sites which were not considered appropriate to take forward. The 'long list' had been sent to Parish Councils for reasons of transparency.

The Chairman also said that at the most recent meeting Members of the Planning Task Group had been unanimous in their wish to see the proposed Park and Ride site next to the Drovers Roundabout removed from the Plan. In terms of the sites in Hamstreet and Orlestone the Chairman said that the Head of Planning and Development would take up the Members' request for a meeting in due course.

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 8th October 2014 be received and noted.

238 Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken

The report set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet.

Resolved:

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

239 Items for Future Meetings

A Member referred to earlier discussion regarding the reduction in house completions and asked for further information on this issue. The Chairman said that he was sure the Head of Planning and Development would be able to provide that information outside of the meeting.

(KRF/VS)

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **4th December 2014**

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Claughton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Galpin, Heyes, Howard, Robey, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Hicks, Sims.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bell, Bennett, Britcher, Chilton, Davison, Miss Martin, Mortimer, Ovenden, Smith, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Culture and Environment, Head of Communities and Housing, Head of Environmental and Customer Services, Head of Finance, Cultural Projects Manager, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Customer Services Manager, Communications and Marketing Manager, Policy and Performance Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

255 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th November 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

256 Leader's Announcements

The Leader gave an update on the various developments relating to the town centre and the Borough. In particular he drew attention to the news that a planning application was expected to be submitted to develop the land opposite Debenhams for use as a cinema, eateries and parking. He also explained that the promoters of the proposed model railway museum would be making a presentation shortly to Members and a planning application was expected to follow. In terms of Dover Place, the Public Realm Works would start shortly after Christmas and in the New Year the Planning Committee would be considering the application for the expansion of the Designer Outlet. In terms of the Dark Skies/Observatory he explained that consultants had been appointed to look into the viability of such a project prior to further consideration being given to the proposal.

The Leader also explained that the recent Farmers Market and the Outlet and shops such as Dobbies and John Lewis appeared to be very busy and he said it was good to see all this activity happening within the town.

257 Council Tax Support Local Scheme for 2015-16

The report advised that the Council had a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Council Tax Support Local Scheme or to replace it with another scheme and consult with interested parties if it wished to revise or replace it. The report recommended that the Council consult on retaining the current scheme which had been approved by the Cabinet in 2013. The Portfolio Holder said that the original scheme had been developed two years ago and had worked well since then and he commended the report to the Cabinet.

Recommended:

- That (i) **the proposed Local Scheme for 2015/16 as set out in the conclusions of this report, i.e. there be no change to the existing scheme, be approved.**
- (ii) **public consultation on the proposals should run until 12th January 2015.**
- (iii) **delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader, to make any adjustments to the final scheme by 31st January 2015 in relation to the level of grant notified by Central Government in December 2014 and following consideration of the consultation responses. (Note: in the event a further Cabinet decision is needed a report can be brought to the Cabinet Meeting on the 15th January 2015.)**

258 Council Tax Base 2015-16

The report advised that the Council was required to approve the Tax Base which would be used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2015-16. It was calculated with regard to the number domestic properties (including a forecast of new properties), which were then converted to Band D equivalents. The Tax Base had been calculated at 42,365 Band D properties, and was an increase of 519 (or 1.24%) on the current year.

Recommended:

- That (i) **the 2015-16 "Net" Tax Base of 42,365 Band D equivalent properties as set out in the table below be agreed.**
- (ii) **the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grants to Parish Councils to help compensate for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Council Tax bases (Appendix D to the report refers), totalling £40,900 be agreed.**

- (iii) the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required, before the end of January, be noted should any material change in the Tax Base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government.**

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

LOCAL TAX BASE 2014/2015	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.0% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016
		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00
	<u>PARISH</u>					
572.00	Aldington & Bonnington	603.10	4.70	(5.60)	(51.30)	550.90
320.90	Appledore	372.30	9.30	(3.30)	(52.30)	326.00
660.30	Bethersden	731.50	19.80	(6.90)	(67.60)	676.80
1,057.50	Biddenden	1,172.20	9.30	(10.80)	(92.30)	1,078.40
147.00	Bilsington	157.00	0.00	(1.60)	(12.30)	143.10
1,030.70	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,117.90	1.90	(10.40)	(71.30)	1,038.10
590.00	Brabourne	619.00	1.90	(5.90)	(28.90)	586.10
147.10	Brook	153.70	0.90	(1.40)	(2.90)	150.30
411.00	Challock	432.10	2.80	(4.20)	(16.40)	414.30
1,165.70	Charing	1,334.40	27.30	(12.20)	(145.50)	1,204.00
714.80	Chilham	778.90	17.90	(7.20)	(72.90)	716.70
92.40	Crundale (PM)	94.50	0.00	(0.90)	(0.90)	92.70
499.00	Egerton	531.60	1.80	(5.10)	(28.50)	499.80
170.90	Godmersham	182.90	0.00	(1.80)	(7.30)	173.80
2,318.60	Great Chart with Singleton	2,581.70	1.90	(23.30)	(253.30)	2,307.00
112.60	Hastingleigh	119.90	0.00	(1.10)	(5.60)	113.20
690.10	High Halden	769.20	15.00	(7.20)	(61.80)	715.20
275.00	Hothfield	346.90	0.00	(2.70)	(68.20)	276.00
104.90	Kenardington	110.20	3.70	(1.00)	(10.90)	102.00
4,074.90	Kingsnorth	4,373.70	0.00	(41.20)	(256.00)	4,076.50
120.80	Little Chart	129.20	0.90	(1.30)	(4.70)	124.10
650.4	Mersham and Sevington	660.80	1.90	(6.20)	(28.60)	627.90
103.3	Molash	117.10	0.00	(1.10)	(8.80)	107.20
101.7	Newenden	107.10	1.90	(0.90)	(3.90)	104.20
518.9	Orlestone	575.40	37.70	(5.60)	(52.60)	554.90
464.1	Pluckley	516.70	3.80	(4.70)	(42.20)	473.60
658.2	Rolvenden	726.80	1.80	(6.60)	(67.40)	654.60
320.1	Ruckinge	342.80	3.70	(3.20)	(17.00)	326.30
481	Shadoxhurst	524.50	13.10	(5.10)	(42.90)	489.60
605.4	Swarden	653.20	3.70	(6.10)	(47.80)	603.00
341	Smeeth	386.30	0.90	(3.50)	(34.60)	349.10
692.5	Stanhope	1,020.90	6.60	(7.10)	(308.70)	711.70
195.7	Stone	221.60	6.60	(2.00)	(16.60)	209.60
3449.8	Tenterden (TC)	3,735.00	37.20	(34.60)	(304.50)	3,433.10
173.2	Warehorne	182.50	0.00	(1.70)	(9.40)	171.40
306.3	Westwell	343.70	1.90	(3.20)	(20.80)	321.60
510.7	Wittersham	585.60	0.90	(5.40)	(57.00)	524.10
800.9	Woodchurch	898.40	0.00	(8.40)	(72.00)	818.00
982.2	Wye with Hinxhill	1,097.40	1.90	(9.90)	(104.90)	984.50
15,214.40	Un parished Area	17,902.30	259.30	(156.20)	(2,469.80)	15,535.60
41,846.00		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00

259 Preliminary Draft Budget 2015-16

The report set the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary Draft Budget for 2015-16 and explained the important background and contextual information to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and next year's budget. The budget was preliminary as at the time of publication there was no final statement from the Government about the Council's level of support for next year, although the Government announced a provisional settlement for 2015-16 giving a clear indication of significant funding cuts for the next two years.

The Portfolio Holder referred to his comments set out within the report and said that he wished to say that he considered the draft Budget to be one of a successful Council. He explained that Council Tax had been frozen during the current year and would be frozen again for 2015-16. He said that he believed that the Council had taken steps to still deliver high quality services despite the reduced funding. He also referred to improvements which had been undertaken in the town centre. The report and budget would, however, need to reflect any changes arising from the Autumn Statement. The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Culture, Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces referred to the proposed increase in budget for the Create Festival and advised that she considered this entirely appropriate as it would be the 20th Anniversary of the event which she considered would be a very special occasion.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education said that he believed that the success of the Create Festival, which had put Ashford on the map in terms of being the largest free festival in the south-east, rested with the enthusiasm and drive of the Arts and Cultural Industries Manager.

He also referred to Appendix E to the report which advised of the purchase by the Council of International House and said that he was pleased to report that all the voluntary and community sector groups had found suitable alternative accommodation.

In response to a request from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management undertook to ensure that the Committee and Task Group be provided with any additional information which arose during the scrutiny of the draft Budget proposals.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) **the Budget context and the proposed discussion with the Leader and Cabinet Members to review new homes bonus allocations (paragraph 47 of the report), prior to reporting to the February Cabinet Meeting, be noted.**
 - (ii) **the preliminary draft Budget for 2015-16 be approved (noting that it is submitted before the Government's announcement of the provisional grant settlement),**
 - (iii) **the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2015-16 be approved.**

- (iv) it be agreed that the report be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, Parish Councils and staff.**
- (v) the preliminary draft Budget as set out in the report should now be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**

260 Customer Service Strategy 2014-19

The report outlined the Customer Service Strategy for the next five years taking into account changes in customer behaviour, their preferred methods of contact and how developments in technology would facilitate the future service provision.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the action plan had not been included within the agenda papers for the meeting but advised that she did have spare copies with her if Members wished to refer to them. She indicated that the strategy would be further reviewed in a couple of years' time.

Resolved:

That the Customer Service Strategy 2014-19 be approved.

261 Land Management Improvement Plan

The report set out the Land Management Improvement Plan and a range of priority early works for approval. It also introduced potential delivery models which would be subject to detailed assessment in a subsequent report.

The Portfolio Holder said that she was pleased the report had come before the Cabinet and explained that it was important to gather all the different strands associated with the management of the various types of landscape within the Borough. Work would also be undertaken to prioritise the key activities and residents would be involved in the consultation. The report also set out the options for delivering the Landscaping Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Chairman said that the issue had also been the subject to a Members' Seminar in November which assisted in the development of the plan.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Land Management Improvement Plan attached as an appendix to the report be approved noting the positive endorsement of a Members' Workshop on 10th November 2014 and Officers be authorised to engage further with key partners and agree any changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.**
 - (ii) the Heads of Service be authorised to put in place required staff resources and contracts to deliver the prioritised landscape improvement works using the approved allocation of New Homes Bonus in 2014/15 and other funding sources where appropriate.**

- (iii) the Head of Culture and Environment be authorised to bring forward, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, a further investment plan that looked to deliver the remaining Land Management Improvement Plan areas of work, to be considered by Management Team as part of the future New Homes Bonus bidding rounds.**
- (iv) the on-going financial implications with funding be noted subject to further discussions with the Leader and Cabinet Members before the February Cabinet Meeting.**
- (v) a detailed further report be submitted to Cabinet to consider the preferred service delivery model, providing a business case and a 3 Year Business Plan.**
- (vi) the use of reserves (up to a cost of £50,000) be approved to enable Management Team to engage the required expertise to complete the Business Planning work as required.**
- (vii) subject to recommendations (iv) and (v) above, further consideration of funding will be included in the Budget Report to the February Cabinet Meeting.**

262 Stour Centre Regeneration Project Update

The report gave an update on the progress being made on the Stour Centre Regeneration Project including the creation of the Jasmin Vardimon International Academy. The report also sought approval for the early construction of a dedicated Spin Bike studio at the Stour Centre.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the current location used for the spin bike sessions was within the current gym and that a number of complaints from gym users had been received regarding noise.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education explained that he was a former member of the gym and he believed the location of the spin bike studio in the gym was not appropriate. He supported the proposed construction of a new spin bike studio and he said it was important that the Stour Centre remained an attractive venue in view of the competition with facilities in the private sector.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property referred to recommendation (iii) and said it was pleasing to note that Ashford Leisure Trust were agreeing to replace the existing gym equipment from its own operating trading account.

A Member asked for a copy of the most up to date layout plan of the refurbishment works planned for the Stour Centre and also enquired as to whether the Business Plan had been produced regarding the Jasmin Vardimon facility.

The Chairman said that he was sure that the Head of Culture and the Environment would supply the Member with a plan. The Head of Finance advised that

consultants had been commissioned to conduct the work on the Business Plan and they were due to report back to the Council prior to Christmas.

The Chairman advised that he had used an element of his Ward Member grant to help in the purchase of an additional piece of equipment for the Stour Centre which was for the exclusive use of the disabled. He thanked those colleagues who had also agreed to allocate an element of their Ward Member grant for the acquisition of this particular piece of equipment.

Resolved:

- That (i) the work of the Stour Centre Regeneration Member Steering Group and Project Team and the early progress that had been made on the project be noted.**
- (ii) it be noted that Ashford Leisure Trust were agreeing to replace the existing gym equipment from its operating trading account.**

Recommended:

That the construction of a new spin bike studio be financed from reserves for the Stour Centre plant and equipment.

263 Ashford Borough Tourism Review 2013-2014

The report set out the outcomes of the 2013/2014 Tourism Review which included a programme of short-term “quick win” projects and sought approval to a range of longer term actions.

The Portfolio Holder explained that during the process there had been widespread consultation but she explained that the review did not cover all aspects of tourism. She drew attention to one particular area, namely business tourism which she said would be explored further. She said she wished to thank the Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager for all her assistance in this process and her valuable input.

A Member referred to page 20 of the Action Plan and in particular to the promotion of the rural “gastro” pub network and said that there were particular issues in terms of the costs for businesses of the provision of the brown tourism promotional signs. She asked whether the Council could work with Kent County Council on this issue and she also said that furthermore some village signposts were poor. She considered that in addition to promoting the “gastro” pubs in the rural areas with accommodation, there was also a need to promote ordinary pubs that sold straightforward bar meals.

The Portfolio Holder said that the issues of village signs and signage to villages were different matters but said she was happy to work with Kent County Council on the latter point. She said she understood the issue with the failing viability of certain rural pubs which she said had been caused by a number of reasons such as the smoking ban and also the fact that people were staying at home and having their drinks there. Tourism South East were encouraging suitable pubs to provide accommodation facilities.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 10.5 of the report (the Tourism Societies National Conference) and said it was pleasing that he could report that for the 2015 Tourism Symposium there was a proposal being put forward by Visit Kent with the support of Kent County Council and Medway to win the event for Ashford in 2015.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) the outcomes of the Ashford Borough Tourism Review 2013/2014 carried out by the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Rural Focus and Customer Services be noted.**
 - (ii) a programme of short-term “quick win” projects was proposed to be funded from the £20,000 New Homes Bonus which was originally earmarked for undertaking the review be noted.**
 - (iii) a range of longer term actions as set out in the Action Plan and the main review document be agreed.**
 - (iv) the Head of Culture and Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to bring forward the costed programme of longer term prioritised actions (recommendation (iii) above) to be considered by Management Team as part of a future New Homes Bonus bidding round with a view for it to be included in the budget report to Cabinet in February 2015.**
 - (v) a proposal for an improved Ashford Tourist Information Service taking account of funding opportunities presented by the expanded Designer Outlet Section 106 Agreement be developed.**

264 Transparency Code 2014

The report provided an update on the Transparency Code 2014 which was effective from the 17th November 2014 and placed requirements on all Local Authorities to begin publishing a range of data on their services over the coming months.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) the implications of the Transparency Code 2014 be noted.**
 - (ii) authority be delegated to Management Team, in consultation with the departments responsible for each data return and the Portfolio Holder, to ensure the ongoing publication of the data included within the code by whichever means is suitable and compliant in each instance.**

265 Re-provision of the Charing Sports Pavilion

The report sought approval for the Section 106 Contribution from a Ward's development of 61 homes in Charing (CHAR2) to be used for the re-provision of the pavilion at Arthur Baker Playing Fields.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Charing Playing Fields Committee were seeking funding to ensure that the new pavilion building under construction could be made watertight in time for Christmas. She also advised that the forward funding would also be subject to consideration of a business plan which would demonstrate that there were sufficient funds to complete the construction of the pavilion.

Resolved:

- That (i) the forward funding of the re-provision of a pavilion at Arthur Baker Playing Fields be approved subject to:-**
- (a) Prior completion of a Funding Agreement on terms agreeable to the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holders and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance up to a maximum of £116,815.**
 - (b) Prior submission to, and approval by the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the Head of Finance, of a Business Plan demonstrating that there are sufficient funds to complete the construction of the pavilion.**
 - (c) Advances be made in two instalments with the first instalment of £30,000 being released on completion of a Funding Agreement and a second instalment being released on a future date to be agreed by the Head of Service.**
- (ii) the expenditure of the Section 106 Sports Pitches Contribution from the CHAR2 site be approved once it has been received for the same purpose as the above.**

266 Educational and Vocational Skills Advisory Committee - 12th November 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Educational and Vocational Skills Advisory Committee held on the 12th November 2014 be received and noted.

267 Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee – 27th October 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee held on the 27th October 2014 be received and noted.

268 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 24th October 2014

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 24th October 2014 be received and noted.

269 Planning Task Group – 12th November 2014

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 12th November 2014 be received and noted.

270 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

The Chairman referred to the tabled paper which advised of a number of changes to the Key Decisions Schedule.

Resolved:

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

(KRF/VS/AEH)

MINS:CAXX1449

Audit Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **2nd December 2014**.

Present:

Cllr. Clokie (Chairman);
Cllrs. Davey, Galpin, Sims, Smith, Yeo

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) Councillors Davey and Galpin attended as a Substitute Members for Councillors Michael and Shorter respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Link, Michael, Shorter, Deputy Chief Executive.

Also Present:

Head of Audit Partnership, Head of Finance, Audit Partnership Manager, Funding & Partnerships Officer, Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

Emily Hill, Lisa Robertson - Grant Thornton.

250 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 25th September 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

251 Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions

The report updated on the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2013/14 Annual Governance Statement.

A Member asked about the Council's approved Investment and Borrowing Strategy and whether the associated risks from the new projects would be added to the Risk Register. The Head of Finance advised that this would be decided on a case by case basis as the individual projects came forward over the next 12/18 months.

Resolved:

That progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the Annual Governance Statement as detailed in the report be noted.

252 External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter 2013/14 and External Audit Update

The Chairman introduced Emily Hill who was Grant Thornton's new Engagement Lead for Ashford and welcomed her to the Committee. Grant Thornton had submitted two reports, the first of which was the Annual Audit Letter which looked back at the past year's external audit work, and the second was an update reporting on work in progress or work due to be completed as part of this year's audit.

In response to a question the Head of Finance confirmed that the Council was comfortable with the level of fees charged.

The Chairman mentioned the adequacy of the Council's reserves and balances and asked what the External Audit view on this was. Emily Hill said this was really an issue for each Local Authority and Section 151 Officer to decide. There used to be a benchmark figure of a percentage of gross expenditure, but that view had changed in recent years with less predictability around Local Government finance. The Head of Finance explained that the Council's own benchmark figure was around 7.5% of its net budget requirement, but the point about volatility was an important one. Reserves and Balances were reviewed regularly with the Portfolio Holder and last went to Cabinet in July. In response to a question the Head of Finance advised that in the light of CIPFA's updated guidance on Local Authority reserves and balances, he was comfortable with the Council's levels and more information would be provided in the budget report to Cabinet/Council in February. Members considered that this Committee should receive an Annual Report on reserves and balances, including a breakdown of the different reserves and what they were earmarked for. It was agreed that this should be added to the Audit Committee report tracker for each December.

A Member asked about the new arrangements for valuation of assets and the Head of Finance said that he had reviewed the proposed amendments and assessed the potential impact and did not foresee any detrimental impact for the Council.

In response to a question about whether Grant Thornton considered the Council's income streams were diverse enough, Emily Hill advised that this was not something they had looked at in any great detail. The issue would have been looked at more generally as part of their Value for Money conclusion but not really analysed any further than that. She said she had no significant concerns in terms of Ashford though and she knew that Local Authorities generally were looking at more diverse ways to increase income. They would be happy to share any ideas that came forward with Officers. The Head of Audit Partnership also advised that volatile income streams was Risk No. 2 on the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

With regard to the changes regarding fraud and the adequacy of the Council's arrangements, the Head of Finance advised that the Committee had recently received a report on the future of fraud and the Council's intention to set up a corporate counter-fraud team. The initial bid for funding to the CLG had unfortunately been unsuccessful so there would be a need to re-examine elements of that plan.

Resolved:

- That (i) the two external audit reports be received and noted.**
- (ii) the Committee receive an Annual Report on reserves and balances.**

253 Internal Audit Interim Report

The report set out the Internal Audit Interim report for 2014/15. The Head of Audit Partnership advised that the report was a summary of Internal Audit work up to 30th September 2014. As the plan was flexible it had been necessary to make two changes to the original plan in respect of Elections and Courtside.

The Chairman advised that in terms of the Council's risk register the Committee would like to see a revision to the way they examined the risks currently. Rather than receiving six monthly updates on the whole register twice a year, they would like to examine two or three risks in some detail at each meeting. Updates could also include any risks where there had been a recent change in score.

The item was opened up for discussion and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- With regard to ICT Disaster Recovery, in the event of a complete loss of systems, the new supplier (Kent Connects) did provide for an instantaneous back up, including half-finished transactions. The previous assurance had been 'Weak' as, at the time of the review, they had not been able to subject the new system to a test and the previous system did not appear to have been tested for some time. The Council had now fully completed the change over to the Kent Connects system and a full test was planned for early in 2015. Therefore, although the recommended test had not yet taken place, Members could take some assurance from the system itself.
- The breakdown of work completed/in progress/not started was in line with the plan for the year.
- In terms of whether the Committee could be happy with the assurances given by Officers, Members said they did have reasonable confidence in what was written in the reports and the standard of the Council's financial reporting had risen greatly in recent years.
- Greenov Claims 1-3 were subject to audit by the European Commission audit team. The review covered the period when the Ashford's Future Company were responsible for the scheme. Responsibility for the scheme passed to the Council in Autumn 2011 and whilst there were still some outstanding issues under discussion, these dated back to before the Council took responsibility.
- In terms of performance, for the first time the report included a Partnership wide performance table. It was an assurance to both Members and Chief

Officers that performance was being monitored and gave an indication of future plans.

The Chairman said he would like to agree with the comments in the report about the continuing efforts of the Audit Team who had worked extremely hard over the last six months during a period of significant change and transition. He wanted to record the Committee's thanks to those Officers.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the results of the work of the Internal Audit team for the first half of the year as shown in the report be noted.**
 - (ii) the revised operational audit plan for the remainder of the year as outlined in the plan be noted.**

254 Report Tracker and Future Meetings

Following discussion earlier in the meeting it was agreed that Strategic Risk Management should be examined at each meeting. Additionally the December meeting of the Committee would receive an annual report on reserves and balances.

Resolved:

That subject to the above the report be received and noted.

DS