

# Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **18<sup>th</sup> May 2017**.

## **Present:**

His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor S J G Koowaree (Chairman);

Cllrs. Barrett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Bradford, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clarkson, Clokie, Mrs Dyer, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, W Howard, Knowles, Krause, Link, Macpherson, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter, Sims, Wedgbury, White.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Alan Dinnie said prayers.

## **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Aaby, Bartlett, Dehnel, Mrs Heyes, Murphy, Smith, Waters, Mrs Webb.

## **Also Present:**

Chief Executive, Director of Law & Governance, Strategic Officer Lead for the Chilmington Management Organisation, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Finance, Communications and Marketing Manager, Senior Member Services Officer.

## **1 Election of Mayor**

Councillor Ovenden nominated Councillor Winston Michael for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Clarkson.

Councillor Ovenden said that it was a privilege to propose Councillor Winston Michael to be the next Mayor of Ashford.

He said that Winston had started off life in Welling, Kent where he gained his education and had been a keen sportsman representing his school and the District in several disciplines. His sporting prowess was to prove useful later in life whilst working at Lloyds of London when he was challenged to run from the top of the Lloyds building in Leadenhall Street, to the top of the Monument and back in less than ten minutes. Substantial betting took place, although he was sure no money changed hands, and the race was on and the whole of Lloyds took a deep breath. Winston completed the challenge well within the time, no doubt with a substantial reward from those who had backed his success! Throughout his working life his diligence and hard work led him to a number of notable achievements. Working in the finance department in Lloyds he was the youngest manager in their 200-year history. In 1963, a career change led him to NCR, at that time one of the top three computer manufacturers in the world. His new role involved development and installation of cutting edge business solutions to major banks and financial institutions. Whilst working in the City, every evening Winston took the 17.23 from Cannon Street to Dartford – he and his friends always travelling in the same

compartment, the one that stopped opposite the exit gate for the platform. Sharing their part of the carriage was a small group of young ladies and a conversation was struck up between the groups. One girl in particular had caught Winston's eye who he discovered was called Doreen and worked for the Anglo Portuguese Bank. Winston thought Doreen was gorgeous so eventually plucked up the courage to ask her for a date. Doreen was 17 then and after three years' engagement and saving the deposit for a house (having to sell his beloved Triumph in the process!) Winston and Doreen married in October 1967 and started life together in a new house at Barming near Maidstone. In 1972 Winston moved on to form an IT Consultancy with colleagues which over the next 25 years, with his strong leadership, became a major provider of finance, logistics and manufacturing solutions to companies across the globe. His work in the industry led him to becoming an acknowledged expert rubbing shoulders with the likes of Frankie Howerd, Richard Branson and Alan Bond. In 1976, now with four children, Winston and Doreen moved to a large house with grounds at Charing – Doreen running a playschool at Pluckley before taking a job at the William Harvey Hospital where she remained until retirement.

Councillor Ovenden said that during the Great Storm of 1987 Winston had arrived home during the early hours to find his house and garage obstructed by many fallen trees. Fearing that the remaining precarious tree would topple on his neighbour's house and with a tree surgeon unable to reach him, Winston sprung into action and saved the day by crawling in to his garage, retrieving a chainsaw and doing the job himself, becoming the hero of the hour. A few years later on their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, after making the impulsive decision to check some masonry on the outside of the house before going out to celebrate, Winston was standing on a ladder outside the bedroom window and he still swears Doreen opened the window to push him off! Lying on the ground, broken and unable to move, his cries for help were answered by his youngest daughter. So where was Doreen? Looking for his life insurance no doubt!

He had asked Winston to tell him something about Doreen and he said "she has skills far beyond mine – useful ones! She is a good artist, poet, seamstress, an excellent cook and she has great patience". Councillor Ovenden thought that was a useful quality when you got to know Winston!

Councillor Ovenden said that having taken a keen interest in the local community, on retirement Winston's involvement increased, becoming Chairman of the Parish Council. As an active campaigner on local issues, in 2011 he was elected as a Borough Councillor and since then he had worked tirelessly to represent the residents of his Ward and the surrounding areas. His devotion and energy were something others could only aspire to. He was passionate about helping young people who may have struggled against misguided preconceptions, regardless of their background or abilities, feeling that their capabilities were often underestimated. He believed that our young people were exceptional and very much the future of Ashford. Winston and Doreen had recently thrown themselves into an event – The Kent Challenger Games - that would help young people find their inner strengths and encourage them to be the best that they can be.

Councillor Ovenden said that he was sure Winston would excel in this challenging new role and he hoped that he would have a thoroughly enjoyable year as Mayor.

Councillor Clarkson said he was pleased to second the nomination of Councillor Winston Michael.

He said he had known Winston for about 15 years or so when they had both lived in Charing and when Winston had joined the Council he realised that they were going to have someone who was astute, challenging and in the nicest possible way, a bit of a Rottweiler! That was Winston to a tee, but what everyone had to realise was that he was passionate about everything he embraced and entered into and he knew that he would enter his Mayoral year in the same spirit. Inside Winston was a heart of gold and he was devoting his Mayoral year to the children and young people of the Borough.

Councillor Clarkson said if Winston used his energies half as well as he had used them with the Council then everybody would be in for a great year. Winston was a character, and he was honoured, proud and pleased to be seconding the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

**Resolved:**

**That Councillor Winston Michael be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2017/18.**

## **2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor**

Councillor Michael made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The retiring Mayor, the Chief Executive, the newly elected Mayor and his Chaplain then left the meeting. Upon their return, having been invested with his chains of office His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Winston Michael assumed the Chair.

## **3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain**

His Worshipful the Mayor said that his Chaplain for the coming year would be the Reverend John Mackenzie. The Reverend Mackenzie then said prayers.

## **4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for His Election**

His Worshipful the Mayor began by welcoming the High Sheriff of Kent George Jessel, the visiting Mayors and Mayoresses from other areas as well as invited guests, fellow Councillors, ABC Officers and all others present and thanking them for attending his inauguration. He advised that following the meeting all were invited to join him for refreshments in the reception area downstairs.

He said that on behalf of Doreen and himself, he thanked George and Gloria for sharing the last twelve months with them. It had been magical and they would treasure their friendship. He thanked them both on behalf of everyone for being such great ambassadors for Ashford.

He said he needed to savour this moment for a while as he had never in his wildest dreams expected this and he was not sure if Members fully appreciated what they had gifted him – an opportunity for him to always have the last word! He said he saw some worried faces around as to where this might lead but he wanted to reassure everyone that he would not have a 'Donald Trump moment'. Or would he?! But seriously, he thanked everyone for the gift of being the First Citizen of Ashford which he said was an honour and a privilege. He wanted to thank the residents of his Ward

for bringing this opportunity to him by electing him as their representative in 2011. He assured them that he would continue to act on their behalf and look after their interests regardless of his Mayoral duties and to keep them informed as he had always done in the past.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that there was one other person that he must thank and that was his wife Doreen. Since they married she had quietly accepted his involvement with the community which had at times seen him out every night fundraising or organising community activities. As all Councillors would know in work you experienced highs and lows and in his life, he was blessed with Doreen as she was the one who always pulled him through another day. In October, he and Doreen would celebrate 50 years of marriage and in accepting the Mayor's Office he could say thank you for 50 wonderful years and show the huge love he had for her. He would have a great Mayoress by his side. A truly remarkable wife, mother, grandmother and friend as all who knew her would testify.

He said his position as a Borough Councillor brought him in to contact with schools and a recent visit to Wyvern School had brought home to him the incredible work done by all of our teachers. Teaching was no longer solely about education but embraced every component of a young person's life – entering the realm of social welfare. When he saw the challenges that teachers faced each and every day, he realised that it took a very special person to be a teacher and he wanted to thank every teacher on behalf of our young people. The same thing could be said about another group of very special people that they should thank - our nurses and doctors and this had been brought home to him recently when he had opened the new Celia Blakey cancer unit at the William Harvey Hospital. He came across many other people in the community doing such great work to improve the lives of others in their own quiet way. Ashford should be proud that as a Borough it had such great people who were the unsung heroes and he thanked them. He said he wanted to know more about these people and see if, through his office, he could make a difference to what they delivered, so he invited anyone to come forward and tell him their story and he would try to help.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that his year would be both exciting and challenging. The Council had achieved much and the developments in Elwick Road, Victoria Way and the Commercial Quarter should do much to regenerate the town. He was proud to have been part of a Council that had been innovative in its approach to falling government subsidies and to not follow where the path may lead, but instead to go where there was no path and leave a much sought after trail. Yes, inevitably some things may fail, but anyone who said they had never made a mistake had never tried anything new. It took both sun and rain to make a rainbow and he was sure that if they all worked together in the best interests of their residents and the Borough, then there would be many more rainbows to come.

He said there were many young people in the community who were struggling in the face of misguided preconceptions about what they were capable of. Past focus had been geared towards academic prowess but this was changing with a cracking new College campus in Ashford offering a wide range of vocational training and life chances for many young people would be much improved. They should however not rest on their laurels because there were people who would still find it hard to obtain a 'piece of paper' and they must find a way to embrace their needs with on the job training alongside experienced workers, where skill at doing the actual job counted for more than that 'piece of paper', just as it had in bygone years. They needed to work with local businesses to realise this for the Borough's young people. Continuing

with the theme of young people, the purpose of the Kent Challenger Games on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017 was to show those who did not normally participate in sporting or physical activity due to disability, medical conditions or additional needs, their true inner strengths as well as giving them self-worth. They would experience something out of the ordinary, challenging, exciting and that would give them a sense of achievement. They would come to realise that what they thought was impossible was entirely possible – the impossible is impossible for them! Disabled military veterans would be at the Games to inspire the young and as part of the Games the Military Covenant would be affirmed. This was fitting as this year they would also remember the First World War and Paaschendaale. They all owed what they had today to the brave military personnel who put their lives on the line for all of us every day and whenever it came to a defining moment, without hesitation they were prepared to define that moment, often with their lives. So, everyone may have gathered that he was passionate about helping the Borough's young people - they were after all the future of Ashford, Kent and the country and it was theirs to shape.

As was customary, His Worshipful the Mayor said he had two nominated charities for the year which would both engage those young people who faced adversity to give them self-esteem and self-worth and to let them know that they were valued. His nominated charities were Wyvern School Foundation Trust and Uprising and he gave a warm welcome to their representatives who were present. Wyvern was a school for young people with special needs and their new addition of a large two storey building would allow them to deliver the incredibly good work they did to many more people. Uprising was another incredible organisation helping young people to achieve their true potential through projects such as Aspire, CATS, Hang 10, House, Purple and Stanhope Community Hub. This was the 'baby' of the late Tom Pelham and he was pleased to see his outstanding work continuing. He looked forward to working with his charities and helping them achieve much more which he knew was their passion. He thanked them on behalf of the Borough for the good work they did and said long may it continue.

He said that the forecast growth for Ashford would bring many employment opportunities and he said they must do all they could to give their young people a fair crack at filling those places. He therefore asked fellow Councillors and every Ashford business to support him by making this year a special one for all of the Borough's young people regardless of their personal circumstances. People would forget what you said and people would forget what you did, but people would never forget the way you made them feel and because of that they must all make young people feel good about themselves and wanted.

His Worshipful the Mayor concluded by saying that he had had a huge responsibility placed on his shoulders and been given everyone's trust and he said he would be the best he possibly could be on behalf of the Borough and all its residents. Yes, there would be challenges ahead, but let us all be optimistic about the future as the Council had an incredible team of Officers and Councillors. Thinking about where Ashford was now, and its future, he was reminded of the story of the Lion King and the magnificent production he had attended last year at Phoenix School. There was a phrase in that story that says you should have 'no worries' about your future, so he wanted to end by saying to all – "Ashford – *Hakuna Matata*".

His Worshipful the Mayor said he did also want to draw attention to the fact that this would be the last Council meeting attended to by Andrea Collard before her retirement. Andrea had been PA to Mayors for several years, providing great support and service. In the Mayoral fraternity, she was well respected and seen as an

efficient and effective PA, giving the Ashford Mayor's Office a very good name. On behalf of all Mayors he thanked Andrea and gave his sincere wishes for a retirement filled with enjoyment and many wondrous things.

## **5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayoress**

Councillor Galpin began his speech by congratulating Councillor Michael on his elevation to the Mayoralty. He looked forward to a year of excitement, but perhaps not too much as they were not all as fit as Winston!

Councillor Galpin said it was his pleasure to propose a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Councillor George Koowaree and his loyal and rather lovely Mayoress Gloria.

George had already served his apprenticeship as Mayor in 1996/97 so they expected great things and a polished performance and they had not been disappointed. He had been a great servant to the Ashford Borough throughout the 26 years he had served his Ward and it had been his pleasure to get to know him a bit better this year. As ever there had been a lot going on in Ashford town centre recently and they had met on a number of occasions. These included openings of shops where George had cut countless ribbons, the Create Festival and many other joyous occasions such as the recent 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mrs Dawes where George and Gloria had made her and other residents of Chamberlain Manor feel very welcome and it had been a lovely day.

He said that this was what marked George and Gloria out, they loved people and in return people loved them back. George had a popularity streak built in to his personality and people, both local residents and dignitaries from other Boroughs had been delighted to meet both he and Gloria. As a result of their approachable manner they had become the most excellent ambassadors for our wonderful Borough. They were always willing to sing the praises of Ashford's successes to Mayors in other Districts and they were still invited back! He felt that commerce lost a potentially great salesman to nursing and politics! Gloria herself had become a world class 'schmoozer' which was quite rare after initially being quite shy, and she had become a remarkable asset to George as Mayor and the Borough itself this past year. Ever present with a right word and a regal smile of encouragement, the vote of thanks went to her too, and not only because she was able to keep George under control, something very few people could actually manage. This appeared particularly true when music and dancing were involved as George was actually a demon on the dancefloor! Perhaps now he had a little more time he should sign up for Strictly Come Dancing!

Councillor Galpin said he wanted to add his own congratulations to all that had been said before because during the year George had also retained his seat on Kent County Council. This spoke volumes about him as a man because as Mayor he would have obviously been limited in the time available to him to campaign. In this case, it was not about what you said on the doorstep it was about how you had served your community and that was remembered. He had spoken earlier about joyous occasions but they had also needed the support of George and Gloria on some sad ones too. They had lost some remarkable people this past year, most recently Councillor Harold Apps and others including Tom Pelham and George had stood with them all shoulder to shoulder demonstrating the honour in which such remarkable people were held and his sober and thoughtful countenance had provided the necessary tenet to proceedings.

Councillor Galpin concluded by saying that George had been Ashford Borough Council's number one citizen twice, so how about a third time?! But seriously he wanted to thank George and Gloria for being two very special people.

Councillor Clokie said that he did not think that many of the Mayors they had had in the Borough would have made quite as big a mark as George, so it was with great pleasure that he seconded the motion of a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor and Mayoress.

## **6 Response by the Retiring Mayor**

Councillor Koowaree said he first wanted to congratulate the new Mayor on his appointment and he was sure he would enjoy his year. He also wanted to welcome the High Sherrif of Kent George Jessel, the Chairman of Kent County Council David Brazier, Mayors from other areas, fellow Councillors and everyone present this evening.

Councillor Koowaree said that all good things came to an end and there had been so many good things that he and Gloria had experienced over the last year. From meeting special individuals, school groups, being invited to other Mayor's functions, meeting Royalty, having access to the Houses of Parliament and even walking on the same ground that President Lincoln has walked on, these were just some of the highlights of the year. He said he would like to briefly run through his year, picking out key functions along the way.

Starting last May, one of the first events they had been invited to was the Royal Garden Party. They had left about 9.30am in order to arrive at Buckingham Palace in plenty of time, allowing for enough time to have a picnic in the park first. That particular morning though God was against him! Both the Blackwall Tunnel and the Dartford Tunnel were shut and there was so much traffic all trying to cross the river to get in to the city. Peter, the driver, knew London like the back of his hand, but every way he tried was blocked and they eventually parked and arrived at the Palace at 3.55pm, just in time to see the Queen and the rest of her entourage arrive and walk down the steps. They were obviously right at the back, about four rows deep, and just about saw her going past. However, there was always a silver lining and as they turned around at the back of the group they were the first people to come across Prince William and Kate walking the other way! William had suddenly turned to him, shook his hand and asked him where he was from. Councillor Koowaree said he was initially speechless but soon recovered and told him "I am the Mayor of Ashford". William then asked "How is Ashford?" and he told him "Ashford is great you should come and visit". The Garden Party was lovely but because of all the delays they had still not had anything to eat nor drink. Afterwards the traffic was just as bad so Peter had suggested they go to the park and have their picnic then. He had brought food, drink, tables and chairs and they had a lovely time and got home very late!

In June he had planted a tree in the Memorial Gardens to commemorate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday, funnily enough something he had also done 20 years before in his previous Mayoral year to commemorate an anniversary for the Women's Institute. July had brought another special function that the Leader would not soon forget – the fire walk to raise money for the Charing Sports Pavilion. He agreed to do it but only if he could keep his socks on! However, the Leader and others had been braver and done the walk and raised a lot of money and he was proud to come back later in the year and officially open the new Pavilion. August had been emotional

when they had been invited to the Civic Centre to meet the Syrian refugees who had been brought to Ashford to re-settle. Their stories were so emotional and the conditions they had left behind were horrific and they were so pleased to be here. Credit should go to the Leader and the whole Council for accepting a quota above and beyond most other areas. In September, he had attended the annual fun day for one of his charities – Riding for the Disabled. He had picked this charity because as Deputy Mayor he had witnessed the joy experienced by those who attended and how much they learned and that was again very moving this year. He also wanted to thank the representatives from Riding for the Disabled as they had attended and supported nearly all of his Mayoral functions this year as well. In October, he had attended a 'Taste of Africa' event which had been amazing and colourful with extremely good food and entertainment - rhythmic drum music, dancing and people attending from London and all over to promote BAME communities in Ashford. Of course, December brought Christmas and an unforgettable experience when he and Gloria had attended the Salvation Army Christmas morning service and then helped to serve the Christmas lunch to over a hundred homeless and lonely people. Talking to those people and realising the impact that event had on them was a credit to the Salvation Army.

He said that moving into the New Year, February had brought an invitation from the Mayor of Lewisham to spend the day at the House of Lords and the Houses of Parliament. An experience they would never have expected topped off with a cream tea on the famous terrace. The day then got even better when his driver Sandra had taken them to The Shard. The views were fantastic and entrance to the first 32 floors was free, but if you bought a drink – well that was a different matter! Just two weeks ago on the 8<sup>th</sup> May they had experienced the icing on top of the cake of their Mayoral Year. They had received an invitation from the Mayor of their twin town in Hopewell, Virginia, USA for a visit marking the 20-year anniversary of his previous visit which was a pre-cursor to the formal twinning arrangement of the two towns in 1999. It had been a great way to celebrate the friendship between the two towns and although Gloria had initially been reluctant to go because of the long flight, they had both had a fantastic time. Each day they had been given a unique experience by different people including visiting the sites of some of the key battles of the American Civil War, including City Point - the harbour that was key in changing the path of the War in favour of the Union, located in Hopewell. He had also attended a Council meeting where he had been presented with a proclamation and he had brought that to the Council Chamber that evening, along with a press cutting from the local newspaper in Hopewell about their visit for any colleagues who were interested in seeing them. He had been pleased to renew that link and he knew the Mayor of Hopewell was keen to visit Ashford so he hoped perhaps the Leader and the new Mayor could arrange something.

Councillor Koowaree said it was only right that he gave some thank yous. First of all, he wanted to thank Andrea Collard his PA for all her hard work, organising events, giving advice and being so fantastic in keeping him organised. He did have a tendency to lose his paperwork so she had done a great job! He also wanted to thank his Attendant Sandra and her other drivers. She was always on time, always there with advice and guidance, making sure he was properly dressed and presentable, accompanying him, bringing an umbrella if it was raining and looking after the things he had to carry - always supportive and she would be a great asset to the new Mayor and all after him. Perhaps his biggest thanks though should go to his Gloria – what would he have done without her?! She had always kept track of what they were doing each day when he had forgotten, she had been alongside him, supporting him, holding his hand and giving advice. He knew that when he first had

to tell her the news that he had accepted the nomination for them to become Deputy Mayor and Mayoress two years ago she had not reacted too well and she had been a little nervous, but after two years she had been amazing. She had also not initially wanted to fly to America but when they had landed at Heathrow she said “I did that for you, but don’t ever ask me to do it again!” However, any fear and anxiety she had initially had about the role had gone and she would now go and talk to anyone and she may even be willing to do it for another year!

Finally, Councillor Koowaree said he wanted to thank everyone involved in the past year very sincerely.

## **7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Bell proposed that “Councillor Mrs Jessamy Blanford” be elected Deputy Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the ensuing year”.

This was seconded by Councillor Shorter.

There were no other nominations.

### **Resolved:**

**That Councillor Mrs Jessamy Blanford be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2017/2018.**

## **8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Mrs Blanford made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with her chains of office.

## **9 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **10 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2017/18 by the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, said that the new Cabinet had actually come in to effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017, as previously advised, but he was conscious of the two upcoming By-Elections and the new Members that would be coming in. He therefore advised that there may be changes to overall membership and the Committee structure to come forward in due course.

## **11 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

His Worshipful the Mayor directed Members attention to the tabled papers which proposed an amendment to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved:**

**That subject to the amendment in the tabled paper, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be approved and adopted.**

## **12 Cabinet – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Resolved:**

**That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 may be called in, i.e. 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017: -**

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 409 and 410.**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 409 and 410 be approved and adopted.**

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MINS:

## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **15<sup>th</sup> June 2017**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Clokie, Galpin, Pickering, Shorter, White.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Bradford, Mrs Martin.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Bartlett, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Dehnel, Heyes, Hicks, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Link, Miss Martin, Michael, Ovenden, Smith.

Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Law and Governance), Director of Place and Space, Head of Culture, Head of Finance and IT, Head of Planning Policy, Accountancy Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer, Senior Communications Officer, Open Space Planning Development Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

## **31 Declarations of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Bartlett	Made Voluntary Announcements that he was a Shareholder of the Farriers Arms Public House and a Governor of the East Kent Hospitals Trust	34
Clarkson	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Director of A Better Choice for Property Company Ltd.	34
Shorter	Made a Voluntary Announcements that he was a Shareholder of the Farriers Arms Public House.	34

## **32 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **33 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader said that everyone at the Council had been saddened to hear of the recent passing of The Countess Mountbatten of Burma, who had died at the age of 93 this past Tuesday at her home in Mersham. She was of course Prince Phillip's Cousin and Godmother to the Prince of Wales and had several ties to the Borough – indeed she was known locally as Lady Brabourne and lived at Newhouse in Mersham. She was involved in so many local organisations, in particular the Ashford Borough Museum Society.

He said he also wanted to express the Council's sadness on the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower fire in London. Thoughts were with all those families so grievously affected. Ashford Borough Council did not have high rise blocks within its Housing Revenue Account, however there were a number of blocks of flats and maisonettes within the Ashford area together with sheltered housing schemes. He said he would like to assure everyone that all of the appropriate safety policies and procedures were up to date, in place and fully adhered to, however they were currently reviewing matters in the light of this disaster. The Council would obviously take notice of the investigation into this tragic incident and take action if that investigation identified any recommendations needed to continue to ensure the safety of all residents. It had also been pointed out to him just that evening that Kent Fire Brigade were undertaking a scrutiny of all high rise buildings in terms of their cladding.

The Leader said he also wanted to take the opportunity to congratulate Ashford's MP Damian Green on his recent election victory and his appointment as First Secretary of State. He also welcomed Councillor Simon Howard-Smith as the new Ward Member for Bockhanger and Councillor Charles Suddards as the new Ward Member for Victoria.

## **34 Ashford Borough Draft Local Plan 2030 (Regulation 19) Proposed Revisions**

The Leader introduced the item which he said he had brought forward on tonight's Agenda due to the levels of public interest. He said that he wanted to make it clear that the report from Officers proposed revisions and new policies in the Draft Local Plan and sought authority to go out to a second round of formal public consultation for a six week period. This was the next step in the formation of the draft plan that had already seen more than two years of concentrated work. During the second consultation period, the Council would welcome responses from across the Borough. The comments received would be fully analysed, considered, responded to and where appropriate actioned. The Plan would be adjusted once again and come back to the Cabinet later this year. The revised Plan would then be sent to the Planning

Inspector for an Examination in Public, where once again, anyone in the Borough be they a business, resident or other organisation would be welcome to attend and make their views known directly to the Inspector. The Council had already held one round of public consultation during 2016 and indeed many of the points raised then had now been added in to the draft Plan. Such items at Cabinet Meetings were normally limited to two public speakers, but given the level of interest and importance of this matter, he had agreed to increase that to eight individuals. Each speaker would be allowed the usual three minutes. He did wish to advise though that this was not a debating Chamber this evening. The Cabinet would listen and note those views expressed and would be happy to do so, but they would not be entering into any debate. He strongly recommended everybody to also respond to the consultation and put their thoughts, expressions, comments and views to the formal consultation process in writing. He advised that Appendix 1 to the papers included the agreed changes to the original draft plan following the comments received as a result of the 2016 consultation; Appendix 2 detailed new policies and new sites that did not form part of the 2016 draft Plan; and Appendix 3 outlined all responses to all points put forward during the first consultation in 2016. He also directed attention to the tabled papers which included an addition to the report which had not been re-produced during formatting and the comments of Orlestone Parish Council.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Williams, a local resident, spoke on this item. She advised that the impact of development sites in and around the villages of Brabourne and Smeeth would be extensive. The Otterpool development and new houses at Sellindge and Mersham would all bring extra traffic to the A20, but what infrastructure improvements had the Council planned to ease the impact of traffic on the A20 from all the proposed sites in the area? Brabourne and Smeeth was a rural area between Mersham-Le-Hatch Deer Park and the North Downs and from all directions could only be approached through narrow, winding rural lanes thus making it totally unsuitable for anything other than very small evolving developments of under ten houses. For this reason she considered that any development to the North East of the A20 was ill-advised. At present they potentially had in the Plan: - a site at Church Road; Caldecott and possibly the Hospital Field. If the playing field and builders yard did not get put in to the Plan they would appear as 'windfall sites' so the village could be completely swamped with about 300 extra houses. She asked how the Council was going to limit these submissions so that over time they would not just 'add another one on'? The cumulative effect of both planned developments and windfall add-ons would be enormous to a village of that size. There was also the cumulative effect of development in all villages to consider. They had thought that their present Village Protection Policy would help to formulate rural policies and preserve rural characteristics, but that appeared to have been watered down in the Plan. The Church Road development at Smeeth would exit near a one-lane pinch point. The road was little more than a lorry width at this point with a narrow S bend by the Church and again narrowed on to the dangerous Smeeth crossroads. Six cars waiting to join the A20 from Church Road would block the access in to Church Road from the A20, in that case you would have cars waiting on the A20 to turn in to Church Road. If you then added the additional traffic coming from Aldington because of development there to the further 150 properties from just the Church Road and Hospital sites alone, the consequences could be catastrophically dangerous at this crossroads. The alternative route along the Ridgeway was one lane for much of the length of the existing houses because of parked cars. On Church Road there was no

pathway as far up as the Church with no room to put one, there was major traffic congestion at school times as demonstrated by the photos she had circulated and cars would be parked by the proposed exit to Church Road. The visual impact of the houses would be substantial. Light pollution at night would remove the tranquillity which was why a large proportion of people either moved to or stayed in the village. In February 2014 Church Road was impassable to traffic because near to the proposed development, for nearly a week, flood water was more than 18 inches deep. Two brownfield sites had been put forward within the Parish boundary and she said she could not understand why the Council was considering building on a greenfield site such as Church Road or the playing fields before allocating both brownfield sites. Caldecott was one of these brownfield sites, but she strongly recommended that the main existing house called the Paddocks was preserved because of its historical and architectural interest and it was part of their village heritage. Concluding on the Church Road site, for all of the reasons mentioned it was difficult to understand why it had been deemed as suitable, apart from 'making up the numbers'. She considered that the fulfilling of numbers was not a good enough reason to outweigh the very negative effect it would have on their special village.

Mr Yeomans, a local resident, had applied to speak but was not present.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Cunningham, a local resident, spoke on this item. She said she was very concerned at the scale and pace of development in the rural areas around Ashford, in particular Policy HOU4 which seemed to make uncapped development possible in every village. She asked what the Council was going to do to ensure that development did not go unchecked and that rural villages were protected. It seemed to her that an overwhelming proportion of housing in the Local Plan was being proposed for Kingsnorth, Woodchurch and Shadoxhurst and that the normal planning policies and guidelines that were meant to protect rural villages from being swamped by an urban conurbation no longer applied. She asked how the Council was going to contain the urban sprawl of Ashford and protect the rural villages. Where were the green belts and buffer zones to protect villages from being a part of urban Ashford and, in addition, why was the Council not prioritising brownfield sites and denser urban housing within Ashford town itself?

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Ledger, of Shadoxhurst Parish Council, spoke on this item. He advised that the updated Draft Local Plan in front of Members considered Policy Site S36 still to be viable and sustainable. The Parish Council and residents disagreed and their previous objections had been dismissed. S36 was the field beside the Kings Head Public House in Shadoxhurst. Members present who were also at the March 2017 Planning Committee agreed a development nearby on what he considered an unsuitable field in the village due to the hole in Ashford's Five Year Housing Supply. Although there was now important case law on the National Planning Policy Framework which needed to be considered for each development site, alas it came too late for Shadoxhurst. However, he considered there was something seriously wrong when the last green space in the middle of a village, which was also an important community asset and which the Planning Officers should be helping them to protect, was being encouraged for development and maximising the housing haul of developers. This was rather than minimising the impact on this part of the community by having the site put to a village amenity and

proper village green status. He considered that Shadoxhurst needed help from the Borough Council and for them to listen to local residents who were not happy. Rushing headlong to fill the five year supply would not just ruin Shadoxhurst, but other villages too. He said that the Local Plan should protect rural areas with measured and balanced growth but also consider the clear lack of infrastructure in the villages. The cumulative effects of small developments that appeared to be 'easy wins' were not being considered in conjunction with neighbouring developments and certainly with no regard or contribution to infrastructure needs. Defendable green belts were needed around every village and the value of green spaces within every community must be recognised by Ashford Borough Council. He said that the Council Members were at a crossroads. It either led to greatness or disaster. He asked if they would help Shadoxhurst get its village green and what was their message to Shadoxhurst and every single village and Parish in the Borough? Would they have the courage to protect them or would they bow to developer pressure and tarnish the beautiful rural gems in Ashford's crown?

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Hickmott, of Brabourne Parish Council spoke on this item. He advised that over six generations of his family had lived in the village and he cared passionately about his birthplace but he wanted to make some more general comments as Brabourne Parish Council and local residents were deeply concerned at the potential adverse impact of any development in open countryside beyond the confines of villages. The Parish Council was vigorously and unanimously opposed to such developments and regarded it as its duty to take every possible step to protect its village from their devastating impact. They were under no doubt that development outside the confines of their village would irrevocably destroy the character and rural tranquillity of the village. They considered that any such development would breach the countryside protection and spatial distribution standards of the Ashford Development Plan. Although there were no sites within the Parish of Brabourne in the draft Local Plan, the Parish Council's view was that the Development Plan Policies remained of paramount importance and relevance and therefore significant or full weight should be given to them. This Strategy also had the expressed purpose of protecting rural settlements such as Brabourne Lees from inappropriate or speculative development. To this end Brabourne and Smeeth had commissioned a Village Protection Policy jointly covering both villages. This had been submitted to Ashford Borough Council and he understood that the principles in the document would be incorporated in to the new Plan.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Crawley, of Charing Parish Council spoke on this item. She said that residents of Charing were dismayed by the substantial increase in the number of dwellings proposed for Charing. This said, they fully acknowledged the pressures on Ashford Borough Council to provide substantial additional housing, but far more additional housing seemed to be coming Charing's way than outlined in the draft plan. The report proposed three sites for Charing together with providing 235 dwellings. This was a 17% increase in the number of dwellings in the Parish and nearly a fifth for Charing Village. There were however another 160 dwellings in the pipeline, either with planning permission granted, applications underway or very likely. This included notably 51 dwellings in the Orbit age restricted scheme due before the Planning Committee at their next meeting, with approval recommended. 160 plus 235 dwellings would equal a 29% increase of the Parish housing stock and a third on Charing village itself. On top of that there were

the developments proposed by Gladman for 245 houses. Whilst nobody was in favour of that, Gladman's reputation was well known. Even without Gladman, the numbers mentioned would substantially increase pressure on Charing's facilities and infrastructure - pressure that nearby developments, including the two closest by in the A20 Corridor totalling 225 dwellings, would add to. The Plan seemed to contain virtually nothing about improving facilities and infrastructure and she asked how the Council could propose a substantial increase in housing without looking at the impact on local facilities? She said they would of course comment on the draft when issued for consultation, but she asked Members of the Cabinet for two things. Firstly that there be proper discussions between Ashford Borough Council's Planners and Charing Parish Council concerning the amount of housing proposed for Charing and the necessary upgrades in facilities as this was to date yet to happen. They appreciated that there were only so many hours in the day and drawing up a Local Plan was an onerous task, but the proposed impact on Charing was huge. Secondly, they asked for three additions to the draft Plan before it went out for consultation – Greater acknowledgement of the impact on Charing and a commitment to considering related infrastructure and amenity needs properly; a clear commitment that if other more suitable sites come forward for development that they would be considered instead of, not in addition to, those already proposed; and a commitment that there would be no progress on the land adjoining the Poppyfields site for 180 houses, until the threat from the Gladmans proposal was completely over and a clear commitment received from the landowners that they would not put that site forward again for housing development.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Garrard, of Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council spoke on this item. She said she believed that Aldington residents should not be called upon to bear further major impacts of development to help Ashford Borough reach its Five-Year Housing Supply shortfall. That shortfall had not arisen because of Aldington and they called for a complete rest from development in the Parish in the near term. There had been a 27% increase in Aldington's population as a result of development between 2001 and 2011, compared with just 1.6% in Tenterden and the increase was estimated to 58% to this year. There was a human cost to this. Assuming just one car per three people that would mean a further 200 cars moving around the village which would put immense pressure on the village's narrow poorly maintained lanes. The main route from the A20 was a C Road which had already been used by most of the construction traffic for the 85 new dwellings over the last five years and included several pinch points and two narrow bridges that were truly for single file traffic. Two new projects would add 14 new houses and several cars to the same end of the village and some young residents knew nothing of the tranquillity of village life, just noise and disturbance from building. The Council's proposals included 50 houses in Smeeth in Policy S50, accessed from Station Road and this was the under pressure main route in to Aldington. There was also Otterpool Park Garden Town to consider. It was in Shepway District but it brought 12,000 houses to within 270 yards of Aldington's east boundary. Any west bound traffic not exiting via the A20 would route through Aldington. Whilst Members may not feel that a Shepway development was their concern, and certainly Aldington residents had no say on Shepway District Council, the threatened extra pressure on Aldington's roads, lanes and residents. Turning to infrastructure, she said that long standing shortfalls had not been addressed, services had not kept pace with the population increase, broadband was poor,

mobile phone signal sometimes non-existent, one of the two Pubs had closed and one of the two shops was for sale. She also questioned the ability of utility and service companies to cope with the increased demand and there was no mains gas supply. Developers claimed sustainability because there was a bus service, but the bus service ran mainly to school times, was of no use to London commuters or those working outside the village and did not run at evenings or weekends. There was no public transport for those who needed to go to the Doctors at Sellindge or Hamstreet or to the Hospital. Developers also claimed sustainability because they put bike sheds in each garden but this did not make the lanes any less dangerous to cycle on. Finally, she said that sites SS4 and SS5 in the first draft plan were filtered out as unsuitable so she asked why they were back in now albeit in a reduced form. Was Aldington again to provide for the Borough's housing shortfall? She considered it was time for the Council to give Aldington breathing space from development to absorb the houses and people they had gained and instead help Aldington and its pressing infrastructure issues.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Tomkins, of Brook Parish Council spoke on this item. He said that the Parish Council had written a site submission for SS12 on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and given some of the following reasons why the site was unsustainable and the Council agreed: - the site was prone to flooding; drainage and sewerage was an issue in Brook and more households would make the problem worse; the village was a ribbon or linear development and there was no backfilling in Brook as this particular site would be; Brook was an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and this would destroy the beauty of the village; the site was some 100m from a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its geology; it had no public transport; the local school caused a huge parking problem at either end of the day causing a safety risk for access to emergency vehicles who already found it impossible to pass the parked cars. Furthermore, the village had no infrastructure – no shops, poor mobile phone signal and they often had powercuts in Winter because electricity came from overhead. The roads to the M20 and Wye were already difficult and the proposals threatened to make that worse in conjunction with the proposed major development at the rear of the William Harvey Hospital. There were also no brownfield sites in the village at all and these were just some of the reasons why they wished to reject the proposed plan and as far as they were concerned nothing had changed since the last time they made a submission. He considered that any development in Brook was totally unsustainable for the reasons stated previously. Nothing had changed, no views had changed. These were material considerations for sustainable development that reflected the guidance laid down in the National Planning Policy Framework which became effective in 2012. For those reasons, he asked for Brook to be removed from the Plan.

The Leader said that he and colleagues had listened attentively to what had been said and again advised all speakers to put their comments to the Officers as part of the consultation and assured that they would be examined very carefully. The Government had made it clear that development was needed but he said he was very passionate about this Borough and wanted to defend it as much as possible and this process would assist with that.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning said he also wanted to urge all present to feed their comments in to the consultation. He thanked the Planning Officers for the huge

amount of work that had gone in to compiling the Plan which was successful. He considered it was logically sound and although he understood that not everyone would agree with everything in it, everybody had the opportunity to not do so. One of the Ward Members for Weald South Ward said she wanted to congratulate Officers as they had proposed Policy SP7 – Separation of Settlements which would be absolutely essential in ensuring some sort of buffer zone around the local villages. She hoped this policy would be enacted and be able to stand up strongly to developers.

One of the Ward Members for Saxon Shore Ward said it was fair to say there was a huge amount of concern and residents felt that they had not really been listened to and perhaps that was a general message the Cabinet could take away from this process and act on what residents were saying. With regard to the issue at hand she asked why particularly the Council had followed a strategy of delivering a large proportion of the Five-Year Housing Supply in the rural areas, as opposed to some other Boroughs and Districts in Kent that had chosen to find strategic sites outside rural areas such as Canterbury, which she considered would have made the process easier. There was concern, particularly in Aldington's case, about cumulative growth. The current plan had proposed 40 new dwellings for the village, in the same period plan up to 2018 there would have been 179 built – in terms of population over a 63% increase from 2001 to 2017 and 28% increase since 2011. She said that nobody in the villages in her Ward had a problem with development, they understood that they needed to be part of the process of delivery for the whole Borough, but large numbers of housing were being proposed in Aldington and Brabourne and Smeeth which were only tertiary development areas and villages such as Brook, Bilsington and Hastingleigh were not even in the plan as they were not considered to be sustainable areas and yet development was being proposed in Brook. In Aldington's case, they had already delivered far more housing than their tertiary status suggested it should do, with seemingly more to come. Looking at Tenterden, the Borough's second town, in the same period as Aldington had experienced its 28% population increase, Tenterden's had increased 1.6% which she considered quite shocking for an area which was in the plan to bear some of the brunt of development. She said that this had all now happened, but what the residents of Saxon Shore had been asking for since 2013 was to give their area a rest from development and this had seemingly previously been agreed. Nothing had changed in planning policy and the way things were viewed, other than the Five-Year Housing Land Supply issue and quite frankly in her view that showed the Council was being reactive rather than responsive and not properly thinking about the serious impact this had on rural areas. In her view, the major concern of residents and the issue that the Cabinet needed to consider most carefully was that cumulative small developments in rural areas did not qualify for Section 106 or other funding and thus saw no significant improvements in infrastructure. There needed to be discussions with the villages about how this situation could be improved, how things could be planned properly and the positives that could come out of development and there also needed to be serious consideration of the effects of the Otterpool development on this part of the Borough. In conclusion, she asked if Policy TRA 9 regarding Public Transport could be reviewed to mention routing for HGVs and Policy TRA 3 regarding Parking to potentially allow for more parking spaces for 3 and 4 bedroom houses in rural areas. She also hoped to see more dialogue and reference in the

Plan on Landscape Protection Policies in order to mitigate the effects of cumulative development.

The Ward Member for Boughton Aluph and Eastwell said that residents had asked him to make some general comments on the Local Plan. This would be the most important decision to come before this Council and whilst in part the plan was commendable, some proposals would have a detrimental impact upon the character and landscape of the Ashford Borough and affect the quality of life of many residents. The proposal was in many ways on a par with that of some years previous that in his view had seen the loss of the character of the town and its remarkable heritage and what was here had the potential for further loss but this time across the Borough. When people talked about sustainability they normally pointed to infrastructure but residents believed the character and landscape of a place was an integral part of its sustainability. Beautiful landscape so close to the town centre was what made Ashford stand out from anywhere else – Canterbury and Maidstone may have more heritage buildings and more thriving shopping centres, but they had nothing on their doorstep like Ashford's landscape character. The two most incredible examples were by the Willesborough Road and the lower end of Trinity Road where the views were priceless and provided considerable enjoyment to both residents and visitors. He said that some of the proposals coming forward would never have seen the light of day in previous eras, and indeed some had already been previously rejected and the new stance of the Council in proposing sites that had well founded objections did worry residents. The Five-Year Land Supply issue seemed to be skewing thinking for all the wrong reasons. He had always said he was proud to be a Member of this Council in terms of its innovative approach, but residents believed the Council could do much better with this Local Plan. From the beginning the approach to housing numbers had been questioned and appeared to be flawed because they perpetuated more of the same regardless of all other considerations. One figure that stood out was nearly 44% or 6600 homes to serve inward migration, but this was based on past data. When did inward migration cease to be a factor or would this go on ad infinitum? He considered that with so many residents and villages opposed there was a real threat that proposed local plan sites might be dropped during examination resulting in an unsound plan and where would this leave Ashford? Residents believed this Local Plan had been created in haste because of the Five-Year Land Supply issue and that thinking was affected by this and they were saddened that for once the Council had not taken the lead on this and put the needs of residents first by fighting for what was right for Ashford, even if that meant challenging national planning policy for the residents.

The Ward Member for Weald East said he was greatly encouraged by the work that had been done and he thought it would be helpful if the consultation documents included some clarity about potential future additions to the Green Corridor. This was detailed elsewhere on the Agenda for this meeting under the Open Spaces Strategy item in a rather bland and potentially misleading fashion and there was a strategic policy map that showed more detail on the potential future additions. This whole issue was clearly subject to further discussion by Councillors and residents would have an opportunity to comment on the affects for their own areas.

In response to the comments made, the Head of Planning Policy said that the strategy that underpinned the revisions to the plan had been formulated during the

last year in response to the changing circumstances in terms of the Council having to find additional housing over the whole of the plan period to meet an increased need, but also the question of the Five-Year Housing Supply. In his view, it was essential for the Council to produce a plan that demonstrated they would deliver a Five-Year Housing Land Supply and be able to supply that to the Planning Inspectorate on appeals and at the Local Plan Examination. If they could not, then the consequence was that the Council could potentially lose the weight they attached to their policies. In order to help the Council do that, they needed to find and allocate sites that they were confident could be come forward within that five-year period. In the main, evidence had shown that relatively small sites, spread out and those in areas of higher demand which largely were in the rural parts of the Borough, were those that were more likely to be successful in coming forward over that five-year period. However, they did need to be judicious in terms of the sites chosen and the scale of those sites so that allocations and applications were appropriate in their context. The alternative of allocating larger sites ran the risk of taking longer to come forward and this was what put the Council in a difficult position in the first place. They may also have their own infrastructure problems which would need to be resolved first so he was confident that the strategy proposed was the right one.

In conclusion, the Leader said he was aware that this was the most important issue the Council would consider and that it affected almost everyone in the Borough in one way or another. They would now be going out to consultation and he was conscious that people would be away during the summer period, therefore he and Cabinet colleagues would like to propose that the consultation period be extended until 31<sup>st</sup> August, which was beyond the statutory period, but would allow more time for people to get their comments in and for Officers to properly examine them.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the proposed revisions to the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan (June 2016) and the additional proposed new policies set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be agreed for public consultation until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017.**
- (ii) the proposed responses to the representations made on the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan (June 2016) as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be agreed.**
- (iii) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make any necessary additional minor changes needed prior to the start of the public consultation period.**

## **35 Final Outturn 2016/17**

The report presented the outturn revenue position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. It also presented the Capital Outturn for the Authority, how capital works had been financed and a Treasury Management update. The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and thanked the Finance Team for their hard work in producing such a clear set of papers in a timely fashion. He also drew

attention in particular to the collection rate outturn which he wanted to congratulate the Revenues and Benefits team on.

In response to a question from a Member about the Kent Business Rates Pool, the Head of Finance and IT confirmed that it was the Council's intention to remain in the Pool, but the issue of pooling was very much in flux with the reforms to Local Government Finance, so it would be important to understand the direction of Local Government funding over the coming years and membership was only for one year at a time. However, it was fair to say that membership had proved beneficial over the past two years.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the financial outturn for 2016/17 be noted.**
  - (ii) the Head of Environment and Land Management be given a delegation in conjunction with the Head of Finance and IT, to approve drawdown from the Repairs and Renewals reserve up to the maximum allocated for asset management and bin replacement (paragraphs 17a and 17b of the report refers).**
  - (iii) carried forward requests for New Homes Bonus in year underspend shown in Appendix A of the report be approved.**
  - (iv) the Annual Treasury Management position be noted.**
  - (v) the revised Treasury Management Strategy limits be approved.**
  - (vi) the breach in the Treasury Management Strategy limits be noted.**

## **36 Annual Report and Quarter 4 Performance Report 2016/17**

The report updated Members and the public on the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan during Quarter 4 2016/17. The report also included the Council's Annual Report and detailed how this would be presented digitally on the Council's website. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT introduced the report and drew attention to his comments within the report. It was confirmed that there would be on-line access via a dedicated area on the Council's new website including a readable copy of the Annual Report, the interactive timeline of successes and links to associated websites. A very small number of additional copies of the report could also be made available to any Members interested and the dashboard facility was also available to all Members to drill down in to.

In response to a question the Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer agreed to supply more information to a Member on food businesses' compliance with hygiene standards and how that compared to previous periods.

A Member asked about the One You, healthy living facility in Park Mall and wondered if it needed to be more conveniently located to secure its future. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property advised that there were discussions over further funding and a longer lease in Park Mall and that was the perfect location for them.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 4 of 2016/17 be noted.**
- (ii) the Annual Report be approved and endorsed.**

### **37 Section 106 Agreements – Annual Monitoring Report 2016/17**

The report provided an annual update showing how contributions were being collected and applied in a proper way and that the monitoring of Section 106 contributions remained robust. It reinforced the point that Section 106 was an important resource stream and that Officers were prepared for any legislative changes. The report also included details of new contributions negotiated, an accounts update, funds received from existing agreements; and updates on projects being funded by Section 106 obligations.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be endorsed and made available online to provide information to the public and provide a transparent record of Section 106 activity over the last financial year.**

### **38 Draft Open Spaces Strategy 2017 to 2030**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which outlined a draft strategy produced by Allen Scott Landscape Architecture which would enable the Council, in partnership with key stakeholders, to ensure current and future demand for public open space was met in terms of quality, quantity, value and access. It sought endorsement of the draft strategy and authority to complete public consultation.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the draft Open Spaces Strategy be approved and consultation via the Council's public consultation portal be authorised.**
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Culture, in consultation with the Director of Place and Space and the Portfolio Holder for Culture, to incorporate any changes and complete the final version of the strategy.**

- (iii) **the final version be received for adoption at a future Cabinet meeting.**

## **39 Ground Water Management and Flood Protection Task Group**

The report advised that the Ground Water Management and Flood Protection Task Group had been set up as a task and finish group to consider how the Council worked to prevent flooding in the Borough. The Group met four times during 2016 and 2017 and made several recommendations in relation to flooding. The report responded to those recommendations.

The Chairman of the Task Group said that Chairing the Group had been a really useful and interesting experience. Officers had been able to exchange technical data and she looked forward to continuing to work with the Water Group.

A Member, who was also a Member of the Task Group, said that it had been disconcerting to hear that as part of the discussions on the Otterpool development they seemed to think that flooding and excess water could be pushed towards the Aldington reservoir, rather than towards Hythe, so she hoped that would be kept under review.

The Chairman said that from his point of view he was pleased with how the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) were working on the new developments throughout the Borough. During the severe flooding in 2014 he had toured the Borough and he was pleased that none of the new housing developments had suffered flooding in the housing areas themselves.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the existing Water Group, comprising Officers and partner organisations, be the focus for considering groundwater and flood protection issues in the future and that Councillor Hicks be invited to become a member of that group.**
  - (ii) the helpful work carried out by the Task Group be noted and thanks be given to the Members involved.**

## **40 Ashford Heritage Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which outlined a draft Heritage Strategy for inclusion within the Local Plan 2030. He wanted to commend the Officers involved, led by the report author, for the work undertaken and endorsed the report for consultation. He invited all Parish Councils, Forums, local history groups and individuals to read the strategy very carefully and respond to the consultation as he believed there may be more that could and should be included. All views would be considered and additions and updates included in the final document, hopefully to the September Cabinet meeting.

A Member said he welcomed the document and found the content fascinating. He felt the most important heritage building in the Borough was the locomotive shed at the Ashford Railway Works. A lot of people in the Borough associated with this unique building and the railway in general and he hoped the Council would do everything it could to save it. The Leader assured that this was indeed the case.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the contents and recommendations of the current draft of the Ashford Heritage Strategy be endorsed.**
- (ii) approval be given for the formal consultation on the strategy for a period of six weeks.**

## **41 The District Deal 2017/18**

The report reviewed progress against the targets set in the District Deal which had been in place for a year and considered what areas to prioritise for attention next year.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the report be noted and the progress made since the original District Deal was signed be welcomed.**
- (ii) the focus for next year's refreshed District Deal as set out in the report and Appendix to the report be agreed.**

## **42 Land at Priory Way and the Rear of Tilden Gill Road, Tenterden – Proposed Sale**

The report considered the advice on the valuation of the land at Priory Way and the options available to the Council.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the disposal of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land at Priory Way as shown on the plan attached as Appendix 2 to the report be approved in principle on the basis that the buffer strips shown at Appendix 3 to the report are retained in the ownership of the Council.**
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing to achieve the best price in her view based on the valuations and to agree the terms of the disposal of the land at Priory Way, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, Heads of Corporate Property and Finance and their Portfolio Holders.**

- (iii) the capital receipt be ring-fenced to support the delivery of the HRA capital programme.
- (iv) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised in consultation with the Head of Housing to execute and complete all necessary documentation to give effect to the above recommendations on such detailed terms and conditions as contained in the report and those considered appropriate.
- (v) the Head of Housing be authorised, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, to dispose in the future of any parts of the existing buffer strip at market value to adjacent properties if the land becomes redundant due to the layout of the development.

#### **43 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 7<sup>th</sup> April, 18<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017.**

**Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meetings of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 18<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be received and noted.**

#### **44 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

**Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017 be received and noted.**

#### **45 Trading and Enterprise Board – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be received and noted.**

#### **46 Joint Transportation Board – Nomination of Membership**

**Resolved:**

**That the following Members be appointed to the Joint Transportation Board: -**

**Councillors Bradford, Burgess, Feacey, Heyes (Ch), Mrs Martin, Ovenden, Mrs Webb.**

## **47 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken**

**Resolved:**

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

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:  
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: [danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.gov.uk/committees](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/committees)

## Appointments Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Appointments Committee held in Committee Room 1, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017**.

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Clokie (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Koowaree, Pickering.

### Apology:

Cllr. Mrs Dyer.

### Also Present:

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Place and Space, Head of HR and Customer Services, Human Resources Manager, Senior Member Services Officer.

Mark Bearn, Jamie Houlders - Hays

## 51 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 52 Exclusion of the Public

### Resolved:

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, as it is likely 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 paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## 53 Post of Director of Finance and Economy – Long Listing of Candidates

Hays had provided a summary of the applications received including ratings. 21 applications had been received. The Committee was asked to produce a long list of

candidates to be interviewed by Hays (preliminary interviews) together with the Chief Executive, and they would then provide a further set of recommendations to assist in the short listing process.

The Committee selected candidate numbers 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 for the purpose of the long list.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) six candidates for the post of Director of Finance and Economy be long listed for preliminary interview by Hays, applicant numbers 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9.**
- (ii) the next Meeting of the Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 will consider the shortlisting of candidates for the post of Director of Finance and Economy following the receipt of feedback from Hays.**

## **54 Post of Head of Legal and Democracy – Long Listing of Candidates**

Hays had provided a summary of the applications received including ratings. 14 applications had been received. The Committee was asked to produce a long list of candidates to be interviewed by Hays (preliminary interviews) together with the Director of Law and Governance, and they would then provide a further set of recommendations to assist in the shortlisting process.

The Committee selected candidate numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13 for the purpose of the long list.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) seven candidates for the post of Head of Legal and Democracy be long listed for preliminary interview by Hays, applicant numbers 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13.**
- (ii) the next Meeting of the Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 will consider the shortlisting of candidates for the post of Head of Legal and Democracy following the receipt of feedback from Hays.**

## **55 Post of Head of Policy, Economic Development and Communications – Long Listing of Candidates**

Hays had provided a summary of the applications received including ratings. 30 applications had been received. The Committee was asked to produce a long list of candidates to be interviewed by Hays (preliminary interview) together with the Chief Executive, and they would then provide a further set of recommendations to assist in the shortlisting process.

The Committee selected candidate numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 17 for the purpose of the long list.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) ten candidates for the post of Head of Policy, Economic Development and Communications be long listed for preliminary interview by Hays, applicant numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 17.**
- (ii) the next Meeting of the Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 will consider the shortlisting of candidates for the post of Head of Policy, Economic Development and Communications following the receipt of feedback from Hays.**

## **56 Post of Head of Planning and Development – Long Listing of Candidates**

Hays had provided a summary of the applications received including ratings. 11 applications had been received. The Committee was asked to produce a long list of candidates to be interviewed (preliminary interview) by Hays together with the Director of Place and Space, and they would then provide a further set of recommendations to assist in the shortlisting process.

The Committee selected candidate numbers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 for the purpose of the long list.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) five candidates for the post of Head of Planning and Development be long listed for preliminary interview by Hays, applicant numbers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.**
- (ii) the next Meeting of the Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 will consider the shortlisting of candidates for the post of Head of Planning and Development following the receipt of feedback from Hays.**

## **57 Proposed Selection Tests**

The Committee received a variety of options for potential selection tests for each post. Following discussion on the options the Committee agreed to pursue Option 2 for each of the four posts, but with an additional service specific element for the Head of Legal and Democracy and Head of Planning and Development posts. Candidates would have 30 minutes of preparation time and would be asked to present for up to ten minutes followed by a question and answer session.

**Resolved:**

**That the discussion detailed above forms the basis of the Selection Tests for each of the four posts.**

## **58 Future Meetings/ Final Job Descriptions/ Final Adverts/ Psychometric Testing**

The report presented the Committee with further details concerning the recruitment process for information. The Committee also had a general discussion with Mark Bearn and Jamie Houlders from Hays over their experience of the process so far. Mark and Jamie wished to place on record their thanks to the HR Officers at the Council who had been a huge assistance in the efficiency of the process so far.

The Committee then discussed the suggested questions for the next stage of the process (preliminary interviews) and made some proposed additions and amendments on the questions for each specific post for Hays to incorporate. Mark Bearn also gave an explanation of the psychometric testing that would be used as part of the selection process.

Finally, the Committee were advised of the dates of future Appointments Committee meetings which made up the timetable for the rest of the process.

**Resolved:**

**That the additional information be received and noted.**

## Audit Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017**.

### Present:

Cllr. Waters (Chairman);  
Cllr. Barrett (Vice-Chairman);  
Cllrs. Buchanan, Galpin, Shorter, Sims, Smith.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Galpin attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Burgess.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Mrs Dyer, Head of Audit Partnership.

### Also Present:

Cllr. Howard-Smith

Head of Finance and IT, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Deputy Head of Audit Partnership, Audit Manager, Policy and Performance Manager, Accountancy Manager, Property Building Services Manager, Senior Policy Performance and Scrutiny Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

Terry Blackman - Grant Thornton UK.

## 59 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Galpin	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he had been part of the due diligence process and Member Monitoring Group on the Elwick development.	61, 62
Shorter	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he had been part of the due diligence process and Member Monitoring Group on the Elwick development.	61, 62
Smith	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he drew and received added years for a Local Government Pension	63

## 60 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 61 Presentations from Strategic Risk Owners

The Chairman explained that these would be the next in a series of regular updates from Risk Owners that would form part of the training and interaction process for this Committee.

The Head of Corporate Property and Projects gave an update on the risk theme - Key Project Failure, focusing on the major commercial development at Elwick Place. He circulated some images of the scheme and advised that the team had been working on this for the past 18 months. This was an extensive and impressive development consisting of a hotel, eight restaurants and a picture house cinema and signalled a complete departure from the normal type of projects undertaken by his team and incorporated commercial aspects, land, procurement and state aid. He then gave a presentation which gave a broad overview of progress over the last 18 months and re-iterated the risk elements and potential consequences of failure. To mitigate the risks he explained there were regular due diligence meetings involving Officers and Senior Members and there were regular updates to both Council Directors and the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board. They had reached an unconditional contract with the developer on 4<sup>th</sup> May and were now working towards completing the works by December 2018. As the project had now reached a number of key milestones, the risk had now significantly reduced, but would clearly not be eliminated until project completion. Future schemes would be dealt with in the same sort of way.

The Head of Finance and IT then gave an update on the risk theme of Resource Limitations. This was primarily a risk around losing funding, income streams and this creating pressure in the Council's revenue budget. The Council's accounts showed that the level of revenue reserves had actually increased quite significantly over the last financial year and the underlying need to borrow had decreased so both of these indicators suggested that the Council's financial position was strengthening and improving the ability to withstand shocks within this risk area. The Council had a balanced budget for the coming year and a strong Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position although they would be reviewing the MTFP over the summer as usual and reporting back to Cabinet in the autumn. There were still a number of risk areas to consider including: - increasing inflation (including impact on the Council's refuse contract); macro-economic uncertainty over Brexit negotiations and their impact on the economy; and political instability with regard to any potential reforms to Local Government finance where key areas of uncertainty had been the future of business rates retention and the Fair Funding review. He said that when looking at the risk in its totality he was comfortable with the current rating. Both likelihood and impact remained moderate but they would keep an eye on the economy and the risk to investments any significant downturn may cause.

The Chairman then opened the item up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- The Vice-Chairman suggested that the outlook was for a low growth environment with moderate inflation. The Head of Finance and IT advised that the Council's financial planning was very much in line with forecasts for at least the next two years. There were some uncertainties over how long the current inflationary position would continue and the impact of that on UK

taxation, but this would continue to be closely monitored by both the Council's Finance Team and treasury management advisors Arlingclose. The Medium Term Financial Plan showed a balanced budget for the next two to three years but there would be pressures in years four and five (starting in 2021) and these would have to be carefully managed.

- The Council was continuing on its path to be self-sufficient and absorb the withdrawal of Government grant and its revenue raising activities had significantly aided that programme. There was currently no indication that the Government was going to enact its powers to limit Local Government borrowing. All borrowing and investment would be a decision for Members. Risks were spread in a portfolio sense (for example across offices, housing, leisure etc.) which was monitored.
- Advice indicated that the base rate of interest was expected to remain stable in the short to medium term with the Bank of England keen to stimulate the economy, so any sudden increases were seen as unlikely. In terms of any impact on the Council's investment strategy, the majority of the Council's investments were currently cash related so changes in interest rate would be proportionate. There were also however investments in stocks and shares and it would be necessary to keep a close eye on impacts on the FTSE and property funds.
- The waste and recycling contract was a ten year one, shared with three other Local Authorities, so did not lend itself well to procuring fixed price contracts in terms of fuel and labour costs. The contract had served the Council well in terms of inflation levels over the last two/three years although it was true there had been more of an impact this year.

The Chairman considered that any long term financial modelling was extremely challenging in the current climate and uncertain times leant themselves to reducing levels of risk, so he was heartened by the updates.

**Resolved:**

**That the presentations be received and noted.**

## **62 Corporate Property Management – Audit Report and Follow Up**

This item was brought to the Committee in-line with the protocol that the relevant Head of Service for any audit report receiving a weak or poor assurance rating should attend the next available Audit Committee meeting to answer questions and discuss what was being done to put things right. The Audit Manager introduced the report and advised that the initial audit report was issued in May 2017 with a conclusion that controls offered only weak assurance and required further support to operate effectively. The outcome of initial follow up work confirmed that those recommendations which were due had all been implemented and good progress had also been made towards implementation of the remaining recommendations. The overall assurance rating would be assessed in the next quarter starting July 2017.

The Head of Corporate Property and Projects conceded that as a Service they had 'taken their eye off the ball' to an extent and apologised to the Committee. They had understood and taken on board all of the recommendations of the audit and it was now a matter of ensuring that the good governance practices were embedded across the operation. The move of the team to concentrating on securing income had been a significant and radical change in a relatively short period of time and perhaps led to a loss of focus over the last 18 months in terms of properly documenting and understanding the correct policies and procedures around reconciliation. Colleagues were working hard on this and he was confident that the results of the follow up would see all recommendations fully implemented.

The Chairman raised questions on the particular variances within the report and the Head of Corporate Property and Projects responded to the points raised.

The Vice-Chairman asked about procedure notes and whether those which the staff worked with on a day to day basis were sufficiently detailed and up to date. The Head of Corporate Property and Projects advised that the team was a diverse group of professionals who all had their own discreet areas of specialism and responsibility. In terms of resources, there was cover for the vast majority of work in case of absence. Procedure notes needed to be up to date and in place to reinforce that message and the recommendation was about embedding procedure notes throughout the team, not just in income collection.

The Chairman said it was clear that there had been some fairly lax processes in place, but these should be 'quick wins' in terms of putting the situation right and he looked forward to seeing that come forward fairly promptly in any follow ups.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and the progress towards implementation of the recommendations be noted.**

## **63 Statement of Accounts 2016/2017 (including Member Training)**

This report presented the 2016/17 draft Statement of Accounts for audit purposes and the Accountancy Manager gave an explanatory presentation for Members. The slides for the presentation were contained within the Agenda papers.

The Chairman thanked the Accountancy Manager for the presentation and said it had been extremely helpful to the Committee in the light of the work it would have to do at its next meeting in July.

Following the presentation the Vice-Chairman asked why the pension liability had increased by £16m in the past year (from £65m to £81m). The Head of Finance and IT explained that this was mainly around the complicated way in which pension liability had to be accounted for. Authorities were required by accounting standards to value their pension liability by working out how much it would cost the Authority to borrow to buy itself out of its pension liability on the corporate bond market. In reality this would not apply to Local Authorities. As corporate bond yields changed, the amount needed to borrow and the value of the liability fluctuated, so small changes

in the discount factor could have large knock on effects on the pensions liability. The actual valuation of the Council's pension fund had been received last Autumn and had been at its highest level for many years. This was part of the December 2016 draft budget report. That actual valuation also appeared at Note 28 to the Accounts.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee note the draft Statement of Accounts 2016/2017 which was sent for external audit and the training given**

## **64 Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2016/17**

The Deputy Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report which presented the 2016/17 Head of Internal Audit's Opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control, corporate governance and risk management processes. The conclusion was a positive one on all three aspects and set out the detail behind drawing that opinion together. The report also made a declaration that the Internal Audit team had worked independently and objectively and in accordance with their own Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

He further advised that the report provided a wide-ranging update on the Audit Service and progress against its work plan for the year along with their own performance indicators and quality improvement programme. They continued to see positive responses to the recommendations they made and good engagement across the Authority and with this Committee.

The report was then opened up to the Committee for discussion and the following points were raised: -

- The Chairman asked if in the future there could be some consistency around the allocation of audit planning days (planned and actual).
- There was a typographical error on the table showing Plan Days and Actual Days which would need correcting.
- Projects undertaken by Mazars were contracted out at a set fee per project so any time overrun would not present a risk to the Service.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the Head of Audit Partnership's Opinion that the Council's system of internal control, corporate governance and risk management arrangements have operated effectively during 2016/17, be noted.**
  - (ii) the work underlying the Opinion and the Head of Audit's assurance that it was completed with sufficient independence and conformance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, be noted.**

## **65 Audit Committee Annual Report 2016/17**

The Audit Manager introduced the 2016/17 Annual Report of the Audit Committee which summarised the Committee's discharging of the responsibilities set out for it in the Council's Constitution. The Committee was also asked to consider the proposed programme of briefings to support Member development as well as the Committee's current Terms of Reference and whether they needed to be updated or if any further assurances were needed by the Committee over the fulfilment of the duties therein.

The Chairman considered that a programme of Member development briefings would be vitally important going forward and the list of suggested topics in the report should form the basis of that programme. In terms of timings the Committee considered they should perhaps look at an upcoming topic one meeting cycle ahead, so for example 'Reviewing an Audit Plan' in December ahead of Plan approval the following March. He was also keen that the briefings took place as part of the Audit Committee meetings themselves rather than having to identify a separate session, but that all Members would be invited to attend. The Chairman and Key Officers were encouraged to set the programme on that basis.

In response to questions about whistleblowing it was explained that this was not something the Internal Audit team was heavily involved in at Ashford. The Council's HR team was responsible for whistleblowing and the Council's policy had been updated in the last couple of years. The view was that the policy was well understood and staff did have the opportunity to use it if they felt the need. There was currently one case ongoing. The Chairman said he did not think this Committee should get involved in the detail of whistleblowing reports, but merely assess whether the policy was in place and had been adhered to or not. It had been mentioned as part of the Committee's Annual report, but only to show that a process was in place. The Head of Finance and IT said that as he understood it, staff had a choice of three options to report whistleblowing incidents depending on how they felt most comfortable: - firstly HR; then the Corporate Fraud team; and also Internal Audit would be happy to receive any reports as a third option. The Head of Finance and IT and the Deputy Head of Audit Partnership said they would report back outside of the meeting on where the output of any whistleblowing incidents were reported.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the Audit Committee's Annual report for 2016/17 be agreed.**
  - (ii) the Committee agree to provide the Annual Report to Full Council, demonstrating how the Committee has discharged its duties.**
  - (iii) the briefing sessions proposed within the report be agreed and a programme be worked up on the basis of discussions at the Meeting.**
  - (iv) the Committee's Terms of Reference are up to date and no further assurance needs to be sought by the Committee at this time.**

## **66 Annual Governance Statement 2016/17**

The report explained that each year the Council must produce and approve an Annual Governance Statement that summarised its approach to governance and showed how the Council fulfilled the principles for good corporate governance in the public sector. The Statement also drew conclusions about the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements, based on evidence throughout the past year. The Statement would be published alongside the Council's formal audited financial statements. This year's Statement built on previous statements but, for the first time, had been prepared in accordance with the Council's revised 2016 Local Code of Corporate Governance. It concluded that governance arrangements remained appropriate, effective and adaptive to change as circumstances dictated. The Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer introduced the report and made reference to additional governance areas which would be monitored throughout the coming year.

### **Resolved:**

**That the 2016/17 Annual Governance Statement be approved.**

## **67 External Audit Fee Letter 2017/18**

The Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK had submitted an Audit Fee Letter for 2017/18 which outlined their proposed fee. The scale of those fees was set by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and the scope of the audit was determined by the National Audit Office. The fee for Housing Benefit certification was yet to be determined by the PSAA, but the Council would be updated as soon as that was set.

### **Resolved:**

**That the fee scale for 2017/18 and the External Auditor's outline of planned audit work for the year be noted.**

## **68 External Audit Update Report**

A report had been received from the Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK to update the Committee on progress against the audit plan to date. Mr Blackman advised that Auditors were currently engaged on the final accounts audit that started on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and the Value for Money conclusion work and these would be reported on at the next meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Progress so far had been good and they anticipated no problems with meeting this year's deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> July for the accounts to be signed off.

The Chairman encouraged all Members to read their papers for the 11<sup>th</sup> July meeting quite thoroughly and prepare any questions they may have in advance. The deadline was quite tight but it was important to come out of that meeting ready to sign off the accounts.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report from External Audit be received and noted.**

## **69 Report Tracker and Future Meetings**

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

DS



## **Audit Committee**

# **Annual Report 2016/17**



## **Introduction by Chairman of Audit Committee**

*The municipal year 2016/17 has been a year of change and development for the Audit Committee, not least for me in my first year as Chairman after previously supporting Councillor Link as Vice Chairman. I am pleased to report the continued good work of the Committee in providing an independent review of the Council's governance.*

*During the year, I have aimed to broaden the range of contributions in the Committee, including working with officers to look at new ways to present information to Members. For example, at our last meeting, a report delivered by presentation and an innovative cover report to help point Members towards the key considerations.*

*As a Committee, we have continued to offer robust but encouraging challenge to officers, including continued engagement on specific areas such as data protection and safeguarding. We also noted, among the highlights, further unqualified opinions from our external auditors on our financial statements, value for money conclusion and benefits certification. Also, we received a positive conclusion from our internal auditors on the Council's internal control, governance and risk management.*

*Looking ahead to 2017/18 I am keen to continue development of the Committee; seeking to focus our range of skills and experiences towards providing an ever more effective review of the Council's governance. This means both challenging where there need to be improvements and offering our support to officers seeking to develop new approaches in making us fit for the challenges set out in our Five-Year Corporate Plan.*

*I also wish to express my thanks, supported by the Committee, to all the officers who contribute to and help us carry out our work.*



*Christopher Waters*

*Councillor Waters  
Audit Committee Chairman (2016/17)*

## Introduction

Ashford Borough Council supports and understands the value and benefits of having an independent Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee is an essential check on the corporate governance framework; providing an independent and high-level overview of the internal control, governance and risk management for the Council.

The Committee monitors internal and external audit activity, reviews and comments on the effectiveness of the Council's regulatory framework and reviews and approves the Council's annual statements of accounts.

The Committee is independent from the Council's Executive and Scrutiny functions and has clear reporting lines and rights of access to discharge its responsibilities in line with its Terms of Reference (Appendix I). This includes direct access to the Council's Appointed Auditor and Head of Audit Partnership without the presence of other officers where appropriate.

The Committee is not a substitute for the Executive function in the management of internal or external audit, risk management, governance, or any other review or assurance function. It is the Committee's role to examine these functions, and to offer views and recommendations on the way the management of these functions is conducted.

## Statement of Purpose

*The purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.*

*Audit Committee Terms of Reference*

## Meetings & Attendance

The Audit Committee met six times in 2016/17:

16 June 2016	29 September 2016
30 June 2016	6 December 2016
28 July 2016	21 March 2017

On all occasions the Committee was quorate and able to fulfil its duties.

The Audit Committee is comprised of 8 Members whose attendance throughout 2016/17 was as follows:

Members	16 June	30 June	28 July	29 Sept	6 Dec	21 Mar
Cllr Waters (chair)	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Cllr Buchanan (vice chair)	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆
Cllr Link	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Cllr Shorter	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Cllr Smith	◆	◆*	◆	◆	◆	◆
Cllr White	◆				◆	◆
Cllr Farrell **		◆	◆		n/a	n/a
Cllr Powell				◆	◆	
Cllr Krause **	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		◆

\* Cllr Ovenden acting as substitute

\*\* Membership changed October 2016 with Cllr Farrell leaving and Cllr Krause being added

The Audit Committee is supported by senior officers of the Council who regularly attended meetings, including:

- Head of Finance (Section 151)
- Head/Deputy of Audit Partnership
- Policy and Performance Manager

Further support was provided to the Committee, as required, from the other officers within the Council.

In addition, the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton) regularly attended meetings of the Audit Committee during 2016/17.

All of the Audit Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the Council's [website](#).

## Business

During the year the Audit Committee has commented on, examined and reviewed the following:

<b>Audit Activity</b>
• Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion
• Internal Audit Interim Report
• Internal Audit Plan
• Safeguarding – Follow up of Internal Audit Findings
• Data Protection – Follow Up of Internal Audit Findings
• Governance Report
<b>External Audit (Grant Thornton)</b>
• External Audit Fee
• Annual Audit Letter
• External Audit Findings Report
• Certification of Grant Claims
• External Audit Progress Reports
<b>Finance</b>
• Financial Statements
• Statement of Accounts
• Fraud Investigations and Debt Recovery Annual Report
• Procurement and Appointment of External Auditors
<b>Governance</b>
• Annual Governance Statement
• Local Code of Corporate Governance
• Annual Governance Statement – Progress of Remedying Exceptions
• Strategic Risk Management
• Annual Staff Appraisal Process
• Audit Committee Report Tracker and Future Meetings

The work of the Committee during 2016/17 has resulted in recommendations which have enhanced the operation of the Committee and wider Council functions. In particular:

- Challenge and oversight on the implementation of recommendations arising from the 2015/16 Safeguarding and Data Protection internal audit reviews
- Risk owners to attend future Committee meetings on a rotation basis to provide an update on their risk area
- Endorsement to officers to continue to improve Risk Management processes
- Assurance over the Councils senior management arrangements

## Terms of Reference

The business outlined above has been fulfilled in accordance with the Committees agreed Terms of Reference (detailed in Appendix I). The following table summarises those Terms and whether the Committee has fulfilled the functions outlined. The Terms were last reviewed in May 2011.

<b>Audit Activity</b>	<b>Fulfilled by Committee?</b>
1. Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion	✓
2. Internal Audit reports summary	✓
3. Management and performance of Audit Partnership Agreement	✓
4. Reports on agreed Internal Audit recommendations	✓
5/6. External Auditor's Annual Management Letter	✓
7. External Auditor reports	✓
8. Scope and depth of external audit work	✓
9. Appointment of the Council's External Auditor	✓
10. Commissioning of work from internal and external audit	✓
<b>Regulatory Framework / Risk Management</b>	<b>Fulfilled by Committee?</b>
1. Overview of Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulation	✓
2. Development and operation of elements of corporate governance within the remit of the Audit Committee	✓
3. Council policies on "raising concerns at work"	Policy approved 2015/16 Intention to enhance reporting in 2017/18
4. Annual Governance Statement	✓
5. Financial standards and controls	✓
6. External Auditor's report from Audit of the Accounts	✓
7. Ability to refer matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	No referrals were made but the ability remains

## **Sources of Assurance**

In drawing a conclusion for the year, the Audit Committee gained assurance from the following sources:

### ***The work of Internal Audit***

The Head of Audit Partnership issued an unqualified Head of Audit Opinion for 2015/16 which concluded that the Council was operating an effective sound system of internal control, governance and risk management. Throughout the year the Committee has been kept up to date with delivery of the Internal Audit plan, implementation of audit recommendations, and has been kept aware of emerging risks.

The Internal Audit plan for 17/18 included a breakdown of internal audit assurance for the coming year, and the Committee were given the opportunity to comment on the work of internal audit prior to endorsing the plan for delivery.

On request the Committee have been provided with regular progress updates on the implementation of audit recommendations from adverse audit opinions. Specifically the Committee has considered the responses to the Safeguarding and Data Protection audits issued in 15/16. No adverse audit opinions were issued during the 2016/17 meeting cycle, but processes remain in place to report these to Members.

The Committee has continued to show its support to the Internal Audit team throughout the year, and has recognised the role, responsibility and authority of the service within the Audit Charter, agreed by the Committee in March 2016.

### ***The work of External Audit (Grant Thornton)***

The external auditors report back to the Audit Committee providing regular updates on their programme of work. During the year, the External Auditors presented an unqualified value for money conclusion and an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.

The Audit Committee has provided effective challenge to the External Auditors as appropriate and gained assurance from the reports and updates provided during the year.

### ***Finance & Governance Reports***

The Committee provided challenge prior to approving the statements of accounts and financial statements in July 2016.

The Committee specifically gains assurance from the Annual Governance Statement which is a statutory document that explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively.

The statement is produced following a review of the Council's governance arrangements and includes actions address any significant governance issues identified. The Committee reviewed and approved the 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement.

The Committee has received regular updates on the Council's strategic risk management arrangements, and provided challenge to the action for mitigating the risks.

While the Committee received a report on fraud investigations it received no updates on "raising concerns at work" (i.e. whistle-blowing) in the context of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and the council's complaints process.

## Member Development

As part of reviewing the Councils Draft Statement of Accounts, in June 2016, Members of the Committee received training on how to interpret the accounts.

All Council Members have access to a training programme but, with the exception of the training outlined above, the Committee has not undertaken further training specific to its' function in 2016/17. The table below sets out a proposal for a programme of updates and briefings that could be delivered 2017/18, in part reviving a practice of the Committee in previous years.

The programme themes are derived from areas recommended to be of interest to Audit Committees by CIPFA's Better Governance Forum, as adapted to the specific terms of reference at Ashford. Other areas, including those of more specific local interest, could be added or adapted on demand.

Briefing theme & potential specific topics	Suggested timing
<b>Reviewing an audit plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Member roles in relation to internal audit</li> <li>○ Ensuring effective internal audit</li> <li>○ Performance measures in audit</li> </ul>	Possible March 2018 to align with plan approval
<b>Role of internal and external audit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Differences in internal/external audit role</li> <li>○ Assuring effective external audit</li> <li>○ External auditor appointment</li> </ul>	To be determined, but not a priority in 2017/18. Potentially examine if the Council has new auditors appointed by PSAA later in 2017.
<b>Internal Audit Standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How standards are set and monitored</li> <li>○ Specific work on IA conformance</li> </ul>	Not a priority in 2017/18. Potentially examine in lead up to next External Quality Assessment (due before 2020).
<b>Assurance on value for money</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How external audit assess VfM conclusion</li> <li>○ Measuring value for money in local government</li> <li>○ Data quality and performance measurement</li> </ul>	Not a priority in 2017/18. Potentially examine in 2018/19 if there are changes to National Audit Office Approach.
<b>Risk Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Risk appetite</li> <li>○ Specific strategic and operational risks</li> <li>○ Risk management strategy</li> <li>○ Local government risk outlook</li> </ul>	Possibly September 2017 to align with work to refresh Framework and agree Appetite Statement
<b>Reviewing the Annual Governance Statement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The AGS within the Council's governance</li> <li>○ Specific topics within the AGS</li> <li>○ Comparative review of AGS across local government</li> </ul>	Possibly June 2017 to align with AGS approval

Briefing theme & potential specific topics	Suggested timing
<b>Countering Fraud</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whistleblowing</li> <li>○ Investigative practice</li> <li>○ Fraud risks and the Councils response</li> <li>○ Governance polices</li> </ul>	Possibly March 2018 depending on service developments and CIPFA Local Government Counter Fraud Standards
<b>Understanding local authority accounts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General understanding of accounts</li> <li>○ Specific update/annual issues</li> <li>○ Comparative review of LG accounts</li> </ul>	Possibly June 2017 to align with accounts approval or early 2018 to focus on changes to Standards.
<b>Treasury Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investment and borrowing options for local authorities</li> <li>○ Prudential Code</li> <li>○ Financial outlook for local authorities</li> </ul>	Delivered every 4 years by Arlingclose (last delivered September 2015)

## Conclusion

The Audit Committee, in partnership with the Council’s Internal and External Auditors, and with the support of Officers has provided robust and effective independent assurance to the Council on a wide range of risk, governance and internal control issues.

The Audit Committee can demonstrate that it has appropriately and effectively fulfilled its duties during 2016/17.

## Terms of Reference & Responsibilities

The purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process (Minute No. 408/12/06 refers).

To consider/monitor or advise the council as appropriate upon:-

### Audit Activity

1. The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report and Opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the council's Corporate Governance arrangements.
2. The summary of internal audit reports issued in the previous period.
3. Reports on the management and performance of the Audit Partnership Agreement.
4. Reports from the Head of Internal Audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.
5. The External Auditor's Annual Management Letter and relevant reports.
6. Any detailed responses to the External Auditor's Annual Letter.
7. Specific reports as agreed with the External Auditor.
8. The scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
9. Liaison with the Audit Commission on the appointment of the Council's External Auditor.
10. The commissioning of work from internal and external audit.

## Regulatory Framework / Risk Management

1. An overview of the council's Constitution in respect of Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations.
2. The effective development and operation of financial management, risk management and those elements of corporate governance within the remit of the Audit Committee.
3. Council policies on "raising concerns at work" i.e. whistle-blowing in the context of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and the council's complaints process.
4. To recommend the Authority's Annual Governance Statement for approval to the Executive. (Minute No. 531/5/10).
5. The council's compliance with its own and other published financial standards and controls.
6. The External Auditor's report on issues arising from the Audit of the Accounts.
7. The ability to refer matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration (Minute No. 62/6/09).

**Note:** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a similar provision to refer matters to the Audit Committee.

## Delegations

To exercise the powers and duties of the council relative to:-

1. The approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts in line with the statutory requirements including those relating to the publishing deadlines. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the Audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.



# Ashford Borough Council

## Overview and Scrutiny 2016/17 Annual Report

And

## 2017/18 Work Programme

## Foreword from the Chairman

The previous 12 months has seen the Overview and Scrutiny Committee effectively develop its responsibilities as one of the most important committees at Ashford Borough Council. Through agreeing a thematic work programme for the coming year Members have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to positively improve the work of the Committee, building on the success of the past year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee already makes a substantive and positive contribution to the work of the Council and through refocusing our work programming we aim to develop the Committee's role in the Council and deliver improvements for residents in terms of both the services provided by the Council and external organisations.

In the past year the Committee has examined a wide range of subjects and has made meaningful, action based recommendations to Cabinet. I would like to offer the Committee's thanks to the Officers and Members who have attended sessions to give their insight in support of our work. I would further like to thank my Committee colleagues for their enthusiasm and attention to detail in scrutinising the information brought before them, and I look forward to the year ahead.

We need to ensure that the Committee undertakes meaningful work that leads to recommendations and outcomes that add value to the work of the Council and improve the quality of life for residents in our Borough and improve the experience visitors to Ashford enjoy.

The Committee welcomes any input from residents and members, whether in suggesting topics for scrutiny or providing contributions to inform scrutiny reviews. Information on how to get involved in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is contained in this report.

Cllr Brendan Chilton  
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Overview and Scrutiny at Ashford

The Local Government Act 2000 (the Act) introduced a requirement that Councils with a 'Leader and Executive' arrangement must include the provision of one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees within their Council structure.

Under section 21 of the Act, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has power to submit reports and make recommendations to the Cabinet or full Council on any aspect of Council business or any matter affecting the Borough or its residents.

The constitution of Ashford Borough Council contains provisions for a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out the functions detailed in the Act, although the Committee may assemble task groups from its membership for specific reviews.

In the 2016/17 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had 12 members, appointed in line with the broad political balance of the Council. The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee were appointed to opposition members, although the Committee operates apolitically in its discussions, with all members of the Committee working together to ensure that the Council and its services are acting effectively and efficiently.

### Issues Scrutinised by the Committee

Since June 2016 the Committee has considered a number of items related to the Council's operations and wider issues affecting the Borough and its populations, including:

- Quarterly updates on the Council's performance against its corporate objectives

- Sickness absence figures for 2015/16
- The Council's Housing Framework
- Implementation of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
- Presentations from Southern Water
- Anti-Social Behaviour in the Borough
- Infrastructure planning related to the draft Local Plan to 2030
- Education provision in the Borough (presentation from the County Council's Area Education Officer)
- Ways to increase the profile of the Committee's work

The Committee considers a number of important standing items per year. These items are:

1. Scrutiny of the Council's Budget, carried out by a Committee Task Group

2. The annual report of the Ashford Community Safety Partnership

3. The Council's annual report on Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk

### Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budget. The Committee assembled a task group whose remit included ensuring that the draft 2017/18 budget was achievable and delivered in line with the Council's 5 year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Council's adopted corporate priorities.

The task group held sessions covering all budgetary areas and Council services and were grateful for the attendance and contributions of Portfolio Holders, Directors, Heads of

Service and the Council's Accountancy team.

Heads of Service presented their department service plans for the coming municipal year alongside up to date risk information; and on the basis of these reports and the budget documents the task group made seven recommendations which the main Committee supported and relayed to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet supported the recommendations, which were that it:

- (i) Be advised that the O&S Committee regards the Council's draft 2017/18 budget as legal and achievable.
- (ii) Endorse the Service Plans and Risk Registers for each service.
- (iii) Request that services include staff resource as a separate and individual risk within the Risk Register for each service.
- (iv) Enhance the consideration of staffing within the strategic Risk Register.
- (v) Require the Project Initiation Document (PID) process to be a compulsory first step for determining the viability of all Council projects.
- (vi) Consider that an overview of progress made in delivering the Council's project programme be added as a regular item to the Cabinet and O&S Committee agendas.
- (vii) Give greater consideration to cross-service and strategic interdependencies and the maintenance of an authority-wide skills register to build resilience and reduce dependence on external consultancy.

- (viii) Seek to continue the existing apprenticeship schemes in place across the Council and extend these where possible.

Through the continued use of the tracker, presented to the Committee each month, Members will ensure that these recommendations are carried out during the 2017/18 year.

#### Annual Report of the Community Safety Partnership

At least once a year the O&S Committee operates as the designated Committee responsible for Crime and Disorder issues (as required under the Police and Justice Act 2006). In line with this designation the Community Safety Partnership for Ashford present an annual report on their work within the Borough and set out their priorities for the coming year.

In February 2017 The Committee received a presentation on the Community Safety Partnership's work from the Borough Council's Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety; Portfolio Holder for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety and Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager; along with Detective Inspector Andrew Bidmead of Kent Police and Elizabeth Tweed, Chair of the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum.

The update outlined positive developments with regard to pursuit of the Partnership's objectives, including:

- Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet agreeing the permanent funding of the One Stop Shop and Freedom Programme Co-ordinator post to continue the partnership's excellent work in tackling domestic abuse.
- The total number of people killed or seriously injured on roads in

Ashford falling by 17% from 2014 to 2015.

- Support programmes run for victims of domestic abuse are well attended, and the Ashford One Stop Shop is well attended.
- Significant work has been undertaken in schools and across other sectors to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation.
- The reported number of anti-social behaviour incidents in the Borough remaining the lowest in the County.

The Community Safety Partnership representatives also outlined the priorities for the coming year, which the Committee endorsed. These are:

- Road safety
- Safeguarding
  - Child sexual exploitation
  - Human trafficking
  - Modern slavery
- Domestic abuse and sexual offences
- Organised crime
  - Drugs
  - Gangs
  - Serious acquisitive crime
  - Digital crime
- Prevent

### Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk

In 2015 the audit partnership recorded the Council's safeguarding activities, procedures and policies as "weak". Following on from this assessment, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve and update the Council's approach to safeguarding, resulting in a subsequent audit review in 2016 recording the Council's safeguarding as "sound".

As a recommendation of the initial audit, a requirement for reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny was made, and

in March 2017 the Committee received a presentation from the Council's Designated Safeguarding Officer, Safeguarding Champion and Portfolio Holder for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety. This presentation outlined the work undertaken in the 15 months following the "weak" audit.

The Committee were pleased to note that the most recent bi-annual audit on safeguarding (required under section 11 of the Children Act 2004) showed that the Council was at 100% compliance. In discussing the report the Committee commended the progress made so far and made three recommendations which Cabinet agreed. These were:

- (i) That safeguarding training form part of the induction training package for new Councillors.
- (ii) That level 2 safeguarding training sessions are made available for Borough Councillors.
- (iii) That consideration be given to making safeguarding training available to Parish Councillors.

In order to maintain focus in this crucial area of the Council's work, a similar report is now an annual item in the Committee's forward plan.

### 2017/18 work programme

In suggesting topics to form a work programme for 2017/18, the Committee agreed three themes for its work going forward. These are:

1. **Air Quality** – to be the subject of a specific task group review
2. **The Wellbeing Agenda for Ashford**
3. **Futureproofing the Borough**

A draft timetable for the year's meetings is included below. This gives an indication of how the work programme can be incorporated alongside the Committee's standing item reports and other requirements.

### Getting involved in Overview and Scrutiny

You can get involved in the Committee's work by:

- Making a suggestion for scrutiny
- Coming to a Committee meeting to hear the debate
- Putting forward your views as part of a scrutiny review

For more information about how to get involved you can email the scrutiny team at:

[overviewandscrutiny@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:overviewandscrutiny@ashford.gov.uk)

or go to:

[www.ashford.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny).

<b>Month</b>	<b>Standing Agenda Items</b>	<b>2017/18 Work Programme</b>
June	Q4 Performance report	<b>Air Quality</b> - <i>Task Group meetings</i>
July	Housing Framework Annual Report	<b>Air Quality</b> - <i>Task Group meetings</i>
August		<b>Air Quality</b> - Task Group report back
September	Q1 Performance report	<b>Wellbeing</b> - AHWB updates/Priority Health Issues (overview)
October		<b>Wellbeing</b> - Rented Accommodation conditions (overview)
November	Q2 Performance report	<b>Wellbeing</b> - Youth engagement (overview)
December	<i>Budget Scrutiny Task Group meetings</i>	<b>Wellbeing</b> - Review meeting
January	Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group	<b>Wellbeing</b> - Review report back
February	Community Safety Partnership update Q3 Performance report	<b>Futureproofing</b> - Infrastructure provision; education; broadband (overview)
March	Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk	<b>Futureproofing</b> - Major Transport projects; rail; roads; watercourses, flooding and drainage (overview)
April		<b>Futureproofing</b> - Review meeting
May	O&S Annual Report O&S Programme Setting	<b>Futureproofing</b> - Review report back