



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012 at 7.00pm.

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The Members of this Committee are:-  
(subject to any change notified at Council 19 July 2012)

Cllr. Adby (Chairman)  
Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllrs Apps, Bartlett, Bell, Mrs Bell, Bennett, Davison, Feacey, Galpin, Mrs Heyes, Hodgkinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Robey, Shorter, Smith, Yeo, (Conservative Vacancy)

### Agenda

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|---|----------------------|
| 1. <b>Apologies/Substitutes</b> – To receive notification of substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii)   |                      |
| 2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>  |                      |
| (a) <u>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)</u> under the Localism Act 2011 relating to items on this agenda. The <u>nature</u> as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.  |                      |
| (b) <u>Other Significant Interests (OSI)</u> under the Kent Code of Conduct for Members circulated as part of the agenda for the Council Meeting on 19 July 2012, relating to items on this agenda. The <u>nature</u> as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.                     |                      |
| (c) <u>Other Interests</u> not required to be disclosed under (a), e.g. stated for transparency reasons alone, such as membership of other bodies who may be affected by decisions on agenda items or where Councillors themselves or their family or close associates may be affected by such decisions. |                      |

<p><b>Advice to Members:</b> If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI – which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, <u>and in advance of the Meeting</u>.</p>
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3. **Minutes** – To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012

## **Part I – Matters Referred to the Committee for a Decision in Relation to Call-in of a Decision Made by the Cabinet**

None for this Meeting

## **Part II – Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

None for this Meeting

## **Part III – Ordinary Decision Items**

None for this Meeting

## **Part IV – Information/Monitoring Items**

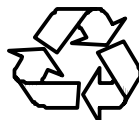
- |    |   |         |
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| 4. | Ashford Shared Space – 3 year post implementation report                                  | 1 - 10  |
| 5. | Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report – Quarter 1 2012/13 (to end May) | 11 - 17 |
| 6. | Future Reviews and Report Tracker   | 19.- 23 |

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HC/JV  
13 July 2012

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Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Hayley Curd:  
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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **26<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

### Present:

Cllr. Adby (Chairman);  
Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Bennett, Feacey, Galpin, Hodgkinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Robey

### Apologies:

Cllr. Yeo

Cllr. Shorter (received after the meeting)

### Also Present:

Cllr. Taylor

Head of Personnel and Development, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 60 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 61 Sickness Absence

The Head of Personnel and Development introduced the report. She explained that there had been an error in the figures contained within paragraph 18 of the report, and tabled a paper containing the correct figures.

In addition to some comparison data, the report provided an overall picture of sickness absence at the Authority for the previous year. The average number of days per full time employee had reduced to 5 days which was in line with the national trend of reducing sickness absence rates. The Head of Personnel and Development highlighted the key points contained within the report before the Chairman invited Members to debate the item.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:

- It was accepted that managing short term absence was still very much based on trust and respect. Whilst there potentially could be individuals who would take advantage, there was no evidence to support this and managers and the

Human Resources team routinely looked for patterns in absence. Few members of staff were off for more than 1 or 2 days, and as the report highlighted, this too was on the decline.

- The 7 day self certification rules were based on statutory sick pay legislation. With regard to the suggestion of reducing this to 3 days, it was unclear as to what this would achieve as there was no evidence of a pattern of absence amongst staff. Insisting on Doctor's certificates for less than 7 days would incur a cost from GP's, for which the Authority would be responsible. Members debated this at length. Some Members felt that it could send a negative message to staff if the self certification rules were altered without justification. The process of change would involve costly consultation and there was little financial gain to be achieved.
- A Member in favour of this change suggested that there was a cost to the Authority incurred when members of staff were off between 3 and 7 days. The Authority was very efficient at covering for short term sickness absence without incurring any cost to the Authority. It was the covering of long term sickness that was a bigger cost to the Council. A 3 day self certification arrangement would mean more work for staff, managers and doctors.
- There was a suggestion that a further report come back to Committee detailing the implication of reducing self-certification to 3 days. This motion was not supported.
- Members agreed that it would be useful to have an idea of the cost of absence to the Authority in terms of temporary cover and overtime. The Head of Personnel and Development agreed to circulate these figures.
- The Authority should be congratulated on the reduction in sickness absence that had been achieved and the Committee wished the report to be presented to Cabinet so that they too could consider this achievement.

**Resolved:**

**That the Sickness and Absence report come back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in one year and that it contain the costs of covering the sickness absence.**

## **62 Future Reviews and Report Tracker**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer introduced the report which suggested 3 further items to be included in the tracker. Members agreed that these should be added. It was also suggested that it was preferable to have more items on the agenda. The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that the aim was to have more on the agenda but it was not always possible due to the time demands on those needing to prepare reports and the availability of supporting documentation.

In view of their being no Cabinet meeting in August and the likelihood of Members and Officers taking holiday, it was suggested that the August meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be cancelled.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- (i) That the items Apprentices, Listed Buildings in the Borough; and Sports and Leisure, be added to the tracker.**
  - (ii) That subject to the comments made being noted, the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be noted.**
  - (iii) That the August meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be cancelled.**
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HC

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Hayley Curd:  
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Overview and Scrutiny Committee 24 July 2012

**Ashford Ring Road -  
Report on Three Years of Two-Way Operation**

In August 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny committee was presented with an update report by Mr Bob White (KCC Planning Development Manager) on Ashford Shared Space monitoring.

During the course of the debate the Committee were advised that the scheme was in the final stages of its three year post implementation monitoring, with a report expected early in 2012.

The attached document, which was circulated to Members of this Authority in May 2012, reports the results of that three year post implementation monitoring and Mr White will again be at the meeting to present it.

Julia Vink  
Senior Scrutiny Officer

# **ASHFORD RING ROAD REPORT ON THREE YEARS OF TWO-WAY OPERATION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ashford ring road scheme was one of the proposals agreed through consultation for the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) process. The ring road had long been identified as a constraint to the growth and development of the town.

A number of reports dating from the 1990s identified the ring road as a barrier, separating the town from the station, the Civic Centre and Stour Centre, Victoria Park and so on. These reports successively identified the need to 'calm' or 'break down' the ring road in order to provide better connections and a more attractive public realm. Ultimately the expansion of the town would provide a better shopping offer for both residents and visitors, create better freedom of movement and attract an improved quality of development into the future.

Growth Area status provided Ashford with the means to take a transformational approach to the breaking down of the ring road.

The original proposal was to take a four stage approach to the project:

- Stage 1 - Convert the one-way ring road to two-way use
- Stage 2 - Transform the Church Road to New Street section as Shared Space
- Stage 3 - Transform New Street/Wellesley Road as a high quality route
- Stage 4 - Transform Station Road as '21<sup>st</sup> Century High Street'

Stages 3 and 4 have yet to be undertaken, and it is likely that the aspiration for these areas will change and adapt as Ashford's growth proceeds. Furthermore, vacant sites between Elwick Road and the railway mean that a significant length of the Shared Space has yet to reach its full potential as a place.

The entire ring road was converted to two-way flow in July 2007. The opportunity was taken to minimise 'vehicle-only' areas, increase public space where possible and reduce street clutter. Work was then commenced on the south west quadrant, between Church Road and New Street, and including Bank Street up to Tufton Street, to create a slow speed, pedestrian friendly, high quality public realm. This work was completed in November 2008. This section is known as the Ashford Shared Space. The speed limit for the Shared Space is 20 mph, with the remainder of the ring road being 30 mph, as was the case for the original one-way ring road.

The Shared Space has attracted an enormous amount of interest, especially from local authorities, and visits have been made by groups coming from as far away as Japan.

The scheme has been a major award winner, capturing ten awards in the year after completion. These included the prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute award for Town Regeneration.

This report looks at the recorded casualty incidents on the ring road 'before and after' the implementation of the changes, and considers traffic flows and vehicle speeds in the Elwick Road part of the Shared Space. This information will contribute to a longer-term assessment of the ring road scheme in relation to the overall objectives.

## SAFETY

In Table 1, the Personal Injury Crash (PIC) record for the three full calendar years (2004 to 2006) **before** conversion to two-way use is compared with the first three year period (December 2008 to November 2011) **after** completion of the overall scheme.

Three separate parts of the scheme are considered in Table 1, before the PICs for the whole of the ring road (plus Bank Street) are compared. These are the Shared Space, the Elwick Road/Station Road/Station Approach/Dover Place junction (S.E. Junction), and the remainder of the ring road. The S.E. Junction is considered separately because it was reconfigured without guard railing.

**Table 1  
THREE YEARS BEFORE AND AFTER SAFETY RECORD**

LOCATION	Personal Injury Crashes	Casualties	Involving Pedestrians	Involving Cycles	Number of Vehicles
<b>SHARED SPACE – before</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SHARED SPACE – after</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>
CHANGE	<b>-7</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>-11</b>
<b>S.E. JUNCTION – before</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>S.E. JUNCTION – after</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
CHANGE	<b>-5</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>-9</b>
<b>REMAINDER – before</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>REMAINDER – after</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>39</b>
CHANGE	<b>-13</b>	<b>-16</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>-22</b>
<b>RING ROAD – before</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>RING ROAD - after</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>61</b>
CHANGE	<b>-25</b> <b>(-41%)</b>	<b>-27</b> <b>(-36%)</b>	<b>-10</b> <b>(-63%)</b>	<b>+1</b> <b>(+20%)</b>	<b>-42</b> <b>(-41%)</b>

Safety on the ring road has improved significantly as a result of making it two-way and introducing the Shared Space. The greatest improvement is seen in PICs involving pedestrians. The one recorded pedestrian incident in the Shared Space occurred in Bank Street and was not related to the street design.

The minor increase in PICs involving cyclists warrants further consideration. It could simply be a product of more cycling in the area, but there are no cycle traffic counts to confirm or dismiss this idea. However, in all six cases it appears that lack of concentration on the part of the cyclists caused the collision. As such, the increase cannot reasonably be attributed to the new layout.



It is inevitable that the seven PICs in the Shared Space section will be of the greatest interest. For this reason, they are summarised below.

**Table 2  
SHARED SPACE PERSONAL INJURY CRASHES**

LOCATION	SUMMARY
1. Bank Street, at junction with Tufton Street	Car pulled away from stationary and hit pedestrian walking past closure barrier.
2. Forge Lane, close to New Street junction	Motorcyclist weaving in and out of stationary traffic hit kerb and pillion passenger fell off.
3. Elwick Square (Elwick Road/Bank Street junction)	Cyclist from Bank Street crossed eastbound traffic and hit westbound car.
4. Elwick Square	Westbound car hit lighting column.
5. Elwick Road, between Bank Street and Church Road	Cyclist riding “head down and not looking” hit side of car emerging from private car park.
6. West Street, at junction with Northwood Gardens	Southbound car hit brick wall in central garden. Driver failed breath test.
7. Elwick Road, west of Elwick Square	Passenger fell over as bus pulled away.

Incidents 4 and 6 above involved collisions with Shared Space design features. As such, it could be argued that they exposed design flaws. However, it seems more likely that they were both a product of lack of concentration, albeit apparently for different reasons.

It is clear that the two-way ring road, with its Shared Space section, is considerably safer than the old one-way layout. The reduction in crashes involving pedestrians is particularly impressive, demonstrating that certain key objectives have been met.

It is interesting to compare Table 1 above with Table 4.1 of Ashford Town Boulevard: Report on the Transport Environment, Safety, Accessibility and Integration Objectives (Jacobs, July 2005). Using PIC data from 2002 to 2004 and a very slightly different extent of coverage in the south east corner, the report suggests that a 34% (21 out of 61 recorded incidents) reduction in PICs could be achieved. Table 1 shows that this has been exceeded (41%), against a matching baseline of incidents.

**TRAFFIC FLOWS AND VEHICLE SPEEDS**

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify any speed checks on the one-way ring road such that meaningful comparisons can be made with the use of the new layout. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many drivers exceeded the 30 mph limit at various locations, with some people referring to the ring road as a ‘race track’.

It is nonetheless interesting to consider the average vehicle speed information taken in the Elwick Road Shared Space between Bank Street and Church Road in 2009, 10 and 11. This information is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**SHARED SPACE**  
**(MAXIMUM) 12 HOUR TRAFFIC FLOWS AND AVERAGE SPEEDS (mph)**

	WEST	BOUND	EAST	BOUND	TWO	WAY
DAY – YEAR	TRAFFIC	SPEED	TRAFFIC	SPEED	TRAFFIC	SPEED
W/DAY – 2009 <sup>A</sup>	4817	20.7	4679	19.9	<b>9432</b>	<b>20.4</b>
SAT – 2009 <sup>B</sup>	4772	21.0	4259	20.2	<b>9031</b>	<b>20.6</b>
SUN – 2009 <sup>B</sup>	2684	23.6	2922	22.2	<b>5606</b>	<b>22.9</b>
W/DAY – 2010 <sup>C</sup>	4694	19.5	5112	20.0	<b>9204</b>	<b>19.4</b>
SAT – 2010 <sup>D</sup>	4196	20.0	4273	22.2	<b>8469</b>	<b>21.1</b>
SUN – 2010 <sup>D</sup>	2659	21.6	2048	24.8	<b>4707</b>	<b>23.2</b>
W/DAY – 2011 <sup>E</sup>	5172	20.1	5506	19.1	<b>10678</b>	<b>19.6</b>
SAT – 2011 <sup>B</sup>	4761	19.2	4924	17.7	<b>9685</b>	<b>18.5</b>
SUN – 2011 <sup>E</sup>	3332	20.9	3090	23.7	<b>6422</b>	<b>22.3</b>

- A     Eight survey days in July
- B     Two survey days in July
- C     Four survey days in June/July
- D     One survey day in June
- E     One survey day in July

A single weekday traffic count taken in Elwick Road in October 2002 shows a one-way 12 hour flow of over 19,600 vehicles. Table 3 shows that there has been a dramatic reduction since the two-way and Shared Space schemes were implemented. The effect of the 2011 opening of Victoria Way, which provides an alternative route parallel with Elwick Road south of the railway, has yet to be assessed.

In section 1.5 of the Ashford Town Centre Model: Interim Options Cases 1-8 – REPORT (Jacobs, March 2006) it was stated that:

*“The ‘shared surface’ aspiration for Elwick Road can only be achieved if traffic flows can be reduced to approximately 1,000 vehicles per hour at peak times. Also, enough pedestrians need to be encouraged to use the road, as driver(s) will not see the need to slow down and give some priority to pedestrians.”*

It is evident from Table 3 that the Shared Space is coping well with around 10,000 vehicles between 07:00 and 19:00 on weekdays. Not surprisingly, vehicle speeds tend to be higher when there is less traffic. The highest hourly two-way flows are around 1,000 vehicles.

It is disappointing to note that, in the main, more drivers (marginally) exceed the speed limit than stay within it. That said, an average speed of around 20 mph is proving to be relatively safe, according to the PIC records. There is no evidence that pedestrians are avoiding key crossing areas, such as Elwick Square, and the ‘driver give way rate’ reported in previous research is commensurate with a lower speed environment. (See NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND OTHER RESEARCH)

Development of the southern side of Elwick Road, and greater recreational and retail use of Elwick Square, will almost certainly reduce vehicle speeds through the Shared Space, if only by a few miles per hour. More pedestrian activity will emphasise the sense of place, over and above the current greater emphasis on the Shared Space as a link with key crossing/sharing locations.

Section 1.5 of the Jacobs report goes on to draw parallels with the Exhibition Road scheme which was then under consideration for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. That scheme was completed in Autumn 2011.

## NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND OTHER RESEARCH

The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/11: Shared Space (DfT, October 2011)<sup>1</sup> has within its evidence base, research carried out by MVA Consultancy at Ashford. A subsequent research report "Shared space – implications of recent research for transport policy" (Moody, S. and Melia, S., University of the West of England, 2011)<sup>2</sup> challenged aspects of the MVA work, with particular reference to Ashford.

The MVA research indicated that the driver/pedestrian rate of giving way to each other in Elwick Square was observed to be around 50/50. Moody and Melia observed a similar rate of ease of crossing the square by pedestrians, albeit by adding the percentage of pedestrians who did not stop to those to whom drivers gave way. Both reports demonstrate that Elwick Square is relatively easy to cross on foot.

A separate Briefing Note<sup>3</sup> was prepared in December 2011 as a response to the 'Moody and Melia' report, with particular reference to the Local Transport Note. This note also included, as an appendix, an earlier Interim Briefing Note, which considered Positive Outcomes and Learning Points as they were understood at the time.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Strong public engagement prior to and during construction of the ring road scheme was not followed through into ongoing communication with the wider community following completion. This is recognised as a weakness in the management of the project (see Communication section in the Briefing Note). However, formal and reactive communication has included the following:

- Two workshops, aimed primarily at Access Groups.
- Engagement with users referred to in MVA Consultancy's evidence base work for the Local Transport Note.
- Engagement with pedestrian users referred to in the Moody & Melia report.
- Press releases.

The two workshops were held in November 2008 and December 2009<sup>3</sup>. Delegates considered the Ashford Shared Space scheme and, on the second occasion, other relevant public realm schemes, with the aim of identifying positive aspects and areas for improvement in future schemes.

Outcomes from the first workshop included the identification of positive and negative features listed below:

**What positive features were there in the scheme?**

- The Puffin crossing
- Generally smooth path and road surfaces
- Guidance path
- Lower traffic speeds than before
- Removal of clutter
- Dramatic improvement in breakdown of ring road barrier

**What negative features are there for people with impaired mobility?**

- Lack of kerb lines
- Inconsistent Guidance path
- Lack of contrast in materials – lack of visual clues
- Misleading blister paving arrangements
- Low level seating without back support and arm rests
- Lack of colour contrast - creating trip hazards

Similarly, outcomes from the second workshop included identification of most liked and most disliked features listed (as relevant to Ashford) below:

**Shared Space Layouts – Most liked features**

- Reduced speed
- Reduced impact from traffic
- Greater pedestrian priority
- Good quality materials
- Even, uncluttered surfaces
- Low kerbs (where provided)

**Shared Space Layouts – Most disliked features**

- Lack of legibility for users
- Feeling of vulnerability – lack of kerbs or other orientation clues
- Specific designs – curved lamp columns, pavement uplighting
- Inappropriate seating

MVA Consultancy engaged with 12 drivers and 12 pedestrians in Ashford as part of the “Shared Space: Qualitative Research” (October 2010)<sup>4</sup>. In Section 3, “Findings: Drivers and Pedestrians”, there is a full discussion of the opinions expressed, along with the same approach for three other locations under consideration.

Uncertainty among users was a key finding in respect of the Ashford scheme.

The Moody and Melia research refers to interviews with 144 people at Ashford, with Section 8, “Results”, being the main presentation of the outcomes. Table 1 in that Section summarises the interview responses, and includes the following:

- 72% had “worried about sharing space in Elwick Square”.
- 64% said they would “prefer traditional pavements and traffic light crossings”.
- 80% said they felt “safer in the previous scheme”.
- 78% felt they had “less priority over vehicles”.

It is clear from these statistics that there is work to be done in terms of communicating the positive aspects of the ring road scheme. However, the ‘age/gender’ analysis included in the report appears to be consistent with long term continental experience with Shared Space. As such, attitudes towards the Ashford scheme are likely to take some time to adjust. Crucially, there is no clear evidence that pedestrians are avoiding it.

Publication of the Moody and Melia research prompted renewed media interest in the scheme. Opening of the Exhibition Road scheme in London, continuing interest in pursuing similar schemes among some local authorities, and an incident in a West Midlands scheme have also prompted responses consistent with the Briefing Note, and additional information contained in this report.

## MATERIALS AND MAINTENANCE

Some of the materials used in the Shared Space have been criticised for their cost, source and/or appropriateness. With the benefit of experience, it is apparent that a much tighter approach to design and specification should have been followed.

Allied to problems associated with the choice of materials are the maintenance issues that need to be addressed. Oil staining and flume damage in Bank Street are the most obvious of these.

These materials and maintenance issues are now being considered separately from the operational performance of the ring road scheme. Relevant Learning Points contained in the Interim Briefing Note are the subject of detailed investigation and the formulation of options for action to address concerns.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Ashford ring road scheme, with its Shared Space element, has achieved a 41% reduction in crashes involving personal injuries overall, and a 63% reduction in those involving pedestrians. Within the Shared Space itself, the reductions are 50% and 83% respectively.

The average speed of vehicles in a key part of the Shared Space is around 20 mph, which is also the speed limit. Weekday two-way traffic over the main 12 hour period is around 10,000 vehicles. Average speeds tend to be higher when there is less traffic at weekends. However, it is important to recognise that Elwick Square is not

yet utilised as a civic space and the southern side of Elwick Road is substantially undeveloped. As such, the full potential of the Shared Space as a place is yet to be realised.

Considerable research and scrutiny has not shown that any particular pedestrian groups are avoiding the Shared Space, and its performance appears to match that of lower speed environments. The interaction between pedestrians and drivers in Elwick Square is particularly encouraging.

It is recognised as a weakness of the management of the project that substantial engagement with the public prior to and during construction was not followed through after completion, other than with representatives of Access Groups. However, the reported opinions of users are consistent with experience with Shared Space elsewhere, and it is hoped that the positive aspects of this report will facilitate further beneficial engagement.

The first two stages of the transformational approach to Ashford town centre and its ring road have been successfully implemented, and even greater benefits are likely to be seen as further development occurs and as the later stages are implemented. While there are maintenance issues to be addressed, and the overall acceptance of the concept among local people may take more time, after three years Ashford can reasonably be described as 'living with Shared Space'.

## LINKS

<sup>1</sup> Local Transport Note 1/11: Shared Space (October 2011)  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/ltn-01-11>

<sup>2</sup> Shared space – implications of recent research for transport policy (2011)  
<http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/16039/1/Shared%20Space%20-%20Implications%20of%20Recent%20Research%20for%20Transport%20Policy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Briefing Note, and other documents  
Available from [bob.white@kent.gov.uk](mailto:bob.white@kent.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Shared Space: Qualitative Research (October 2010)  
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/ltn-01-11/ltn-1-11-qualitative.pdf>

The two Jacobs reports are not currently available in electronic form.

Bob White  
Development Planning Manager  
Kent County Council Highways & Transportation  
2 May 2012

O&S 24 July 2012

Agenda item 5

Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report -  
Quarter 1 2012/13 (to end May)

The attached report was presented to Cabinet on 12 July 2012 and O&S are invited to consider it.

**Agenda Item No:** 20  
**Report To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 July 2012



**ASHFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Report Title:** Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report – Quarter 1 2012/13 (to end May)

**Report Author:** Policy and Performance Officer

<b>Summary:</b>	The report seeks to give Ashford's residents an overview of how the council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.
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**Key Decision:** NO

**Affected Wards:** ALL

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

**Note performance against the Business Plan and frontline services for Quarter 1 to end of May.**

**Policy Overview:** The quarterly performance report presents progress achieved against the council's strategic objectives – enshrined within the 'Ashford 2030' Vision and the council Five Year Business Plan. It is important that the council keeps residents and members informed of these activities to demonstrate transparency in how its' strategy – formed in consultation with residents – is implemented.

**Financial Implications:** None specifically arising from this report

**Risk Assessment** Not specifically applicable, but the report notes the progress with our review of strategic risks, and that no major business plan priority is highlighted with 'RED' status at this time.

**Equalities Impact Assessment** N/A

**Other Material Implications:** N/A

**Background Papers:** Quarter 4 Performance Report

**Contacts:** Nicholas.clayton@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330208)





# ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN

## Performance Report

Quarter 1 2012/13 (to end May)

### Purpose of this report

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The following report, the third of its kind, seeks to give Ashford's residents an overview of how the council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot' on three areas –

- Those key projects which the council has prioritised, following the 'Have Your Say' consultation with residents in 2010 - our Five Year Business Plan.
- Our principal front-line services. This data will be common to each quarterly performance report to allow comparison over time.
- Other changes that affect how the council delivers services, such as the local economic outlook and central government legislation.

### Executive Summary

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Most projects brought together through the 2010 consultation with residents (five year business plan) remain on course. These are subject to monthly review by the council's senior management team.

Although the wider outlook - both locally and nationally - remains difficult, the performance of most council services remains steady or slightly improving in the short to medium term, with no services currently particularly at risk. A good financial outcome is also demonstrated in the latest budget.

Significant pressures remain, though, in key external factors – principally the continued difficulties in the wider economic landscape. Although the historically-high levels of unemployment (as measured by numbers of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants) have not continued, numbers remain high and continue to exert pressure on some frontline council services. Continued pressures on some key workloads, especially with regard to reactive services such as homelessness, social housing and the provision of benefits are therefore expected.

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## 1. Business Plan Progress highlights:

During the summer of 2010 the council consulted with its residents on what priorities it should focus on for the next 5 years. The Five Year Business Plan reorganised the council's priorities to three areas, providing a clear focus that will help to ensure that the council continues to provide residents with decent, cost-effective services.

2012/13 Priorities	Quarter 1 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
<b>RECYCLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>New Waste and Recycling Contract</b>	Currently on course, with the recent emphasis being on procurement-phase discussions with interested contractors. The anticipated Contract Award date is now October 2012 and the project is still on target for a contract operational start on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2013.	GREEN	Head of Environmental Services / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Blanford (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services)
<b>Solar Photovoltaic Project</b>	The council took advantage of a shift in the government's deadline for reducing the Feed-In Tariff from December to March to install 180 Solar Panels on the Civic Centre roof. These panels currently generate around £25,000 per year.	FIRST PHASE COMPLETE	Strategic Housing and Property Manager / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Blanford (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services)
<b>Open Spaces and Public Realm Review</b>	The review has had input in to a new public space SPD <sup>1</sup> , which has been agreed by the Cabinet. This SPD now gives a presumption that the Council will not adopt new open space.	GREEN	Deputy Chief Executive
<b>ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HOUSING</b>			
<b>Review of the Core Strategy<sup>2</sup></b>	Final version of National Planning Policy Framework approved by government April 2012. Consultation on potential housing and job numbers due to start in the next couple of months.	GREEN	Planning Policy Manager / Cllr Wood (Leader) + Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader)
<b>Introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy<sup>3</sup></b>	The Council is a pilot for CIL, and officers are currently developing the detail behind its' use.	GREEN	Principal Policy Planner / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader)
<b>Regeneration in Bockhanger and Broomfield Road</b>	Public consultation, with 50 attendees, took place in May. Main risk is that if project does not proceed, the community centre will become vacant.	AMBER	Housing Project Manager / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Hicks (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Services)

<sup>1</sup> Supplementary Planning Document - This is an important planning document that once approved sets down council policy for this area in the future

<sup>2</sup> The council's strategic land use policy.

<sup>3</sup> Allows local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development.

2012/13 Priorities	Quarter 1 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
<b>Repton Park Community Facilities</b>	A community consultation on these community facilities has recently finished.	GREEN	Deputy Head of Cultural Services
<b>New park and wildlife project at Conningbrook Lake</b>	DPD <sup>4</sup> Policy U22 (Conningbrook) has been submitted to the Secretary of State. Public examination expected in May / June 2012. The Council expects a planning application on this to be submitted in the near future.	GREEN	Head of Cultural Services / Cllr Wood (Leader) + Cllr Heyes (Portfolio Holder for Culture and Recreation)
<b>Commercial Quarter – Dover Place area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline Planning Application for the Phase II office development gained the approval of Planning Committee on 19th October 2011.</li> <li>• The impact of the local economy is still being felt, although public sector utilisation is currently under discussion.</li> </ul>	AMBER	Economic Development Manager
<b>Local Authority New Build of social housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 3 - (Orion Way) practically complete.</li> <li>• Phase 4 - Number of sites currently in pre-Planning advice stage.</li> </ul> Continued support from the Homes and Communities Agency is vital	AMBER	Housing Project Manager
<b>ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE</b>			
<b>New Youth Café at the Stour Centre, mobile youth facility and offer mapping</b>	<i><b>No change to previous report.</b></i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HANG 10 mobile youth outreach launched and up and running.</li> <li>• HOUSE Youth Cafe completed and opened on 11th November</li> </ul>	COMPLETE	Cultural Projects Manager / Cllr Howard (Portfolio Holder for Youth and Sport)
<b>THE BEST SERVICES RESOURCES ALLOW</b>			
<b>Increasing the number of services available online</b>	Work on updating the website is progressing well, with a new site set to go 'live' in the late summer.	GREEN	Head of Business Change and Technology / Cllr Taylor (Portfolio Holder for Core Services)
<b>Arts Programming</b>	The second season of St Mary's arts programme finishes in June, with a third season announced for the autumn.	COMPLETE	Arts Development Officer

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<sup>4</sup> Development Plan Document - outlines the key development goals of the project

## **2. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY (TO END OF MAY UNLESS STATED)**

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The council operates a number of important public-facing services. The following indicators give an indication of how well these functions are performing, although a lot more information is available upon request.

Symbols against each indicate if this quarter's performance is better (↑), worse (↓) or generally equal to (↔) performance in the previous quarter.

### **Customer Service:**

- ↔ Since the switch to the Ashford Gateway+ the number of enquiries handled by Customer Service Assistants has increased significantly, putting a pressure on current resources, made worse by the continued economic uncertainty all residents face. A review on these pressures and future resourcing is currently being carried out.

### **Housing:**

- ↔ 26 affordable properties were built (to May). 245 were delivered last financial year, compared to 266 the year before.
- ↔ 99% of council tenant's rent was successfully collected.
- ↔ 100% of council housing currently has a valid gas safety certificate.
- ↔ Average of 19 households in B&B accommodation at the end of the month. This reflects the tough housing market effecting households in the borough.

### **Planning (all for Quarter 4):**

- ↑ Received over 200 'other' (i.e. householder) development applications, and 82% were decided in under 8 weeks.
- ↑ Received around 80 minor development applications, such as from small businesses, with 70% decided within 8 weeks.
- ↑ Received around 500 Land Charge Searches, with 99% completed within 2 days.

### **Environment:**

- ↔ 255,000 cars used council car parks in Quarter 4 2011/12. Income has dropped slightly accordingly due to this seasonal variation.
- ↔ Since the expansion of the Blue Box recycling scheme by 9,000 in spring 2011, two thirds of the borough (37,000 homes) now have a Blue Box.
- ↑ 95% of businesses are broadly compliant with hygiene inspections (to May).
- ↑ Since the launch in August 2011 of the 'Recycle for Ashford' a smartphone "app" to help residents with their waste collection, so far it has been downloaded by 1,100 people.

### **Culture and Community Support:**

- ↑ Directly delivered 2,400 children's sports courses through Courtside or school outreach.
- ↔ To the end of 2011/12, the Single Grants Gateway has allocated £170,000 to local voluntary and community groups, leveraging other funding in at a ratio of 4:1. The council also rolled out an additional £2,500 Member Grant Fund to individual ward members, and £250 to support community activities to celebrate the Jubilee.

### **Revenues and Benefits:**

- ↔ By the end of 2011/12, over 98% of Council Tax and Business Rates had been collected – a level equitable with the same time last year.
- ↔ The benefits caseload continues to rise – from 9,650 at the start of the financial year to 10,200 by the end of it, with an average of 300 new cases a month. This is the highest caseload level ever and reflects increasing levels of unemployment (section 3 of this report).

### 3. GOVERNANCE, RISK AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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#### ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12–

- This statement summarises the Council's approach to good governance, and draws conclusions about their effectiveness for the past financial year.
- The report was approved by the Audit Committee in June, concluding that governance arrangements are appropriate, effective and adaptive to change. The Audit Commission continue to regard financial governance as a strength.
- Good progress was made on risk management and partnership governance, both highlighted as weaknesses in last year's statement. One area (Data Protection) has been highlighted for review.

#### NEW HOMELSSNESS PREVENTION SCHEME–

- Approved by the June Cabinet, the scheme assists households who would not normally be able to access private rented housing due to lack of deposit or rent in advance.
- The scheme aims to secure good quality accommodation which will help in stabilising the costs of providing emergency bed and breakfast placements for homeless families.

#### JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS-

- The Council helped publicise all events in the borough (around 150), and directly supported a range of Jubilee and Olympic projects totalling £13,500.
- The council agreed to introduce a Diamond Jubilee Civic Award Scheme to recognise and celebrate the achievements and activities of those that have had a positive impact on the borough.
- As noted above, ward councillors were also allocated £250 to support local community Jubilee celebrations.

#### CURRENT GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS / COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS –

1. Community Infrastructure Levy – Consultation completed
2. National Planning Policy Framework – Introduced April 2012
3. Government's Housing Strategy – Consultation completed

The Council responded to these major consultations.

#### Local Economic Information:

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- Average selling prices on the housing market have fallen by 2% in Ashford over the last year (to March). [source = <http://www.home.co.uk>]
- The number of residents unemployed – those claiming Job-Seekers allowance – stands at around 2,030 (to May), representing 2.9% of the working-age population. This is 100 lower than the highest rate recorded in February. A year ago the number was around 100 fewer. The greatest rise has been seen in young people, 16-24 years old.

#### Budget Monitoring:

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- Against the overall budget for 2011/12 of £14 million a total underspend of over £200,000 was achieved. Reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 totalled £7.2 million, with half earmarked for future purposes.

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**If you would like any further performance information, please contact  
Nicholas Clayton, Policy and Performance Officer - [nicholas.clayton@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:nicholas.clayton@ashford.gov.uk)**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 July 2012

Scrutiny Reports/Reviews on the Forward Plan

Update

August meeting - cancelled

September meeting:

Post Mayoralty review – update on effect of changes

Apprentices

October

Community Safety Partnership – update on Strategic Assessment Document

ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report

O&S forward plan

All three items put to the committee last month have been added to the tracker: Apprentices, Listed Buildings in the Borough, and Sports & Leisure, the reports will come forward in due course.

Year Plan 2012/13

Month	items	Task Group
May	O&S annual report. Membership of Budget Scrutiny Task Group	
June	Sickness & Absenteeism annual report.	
July	ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report. Shared space 3 year post implementation report.	
August	Cancelled	
September	Post Mayoralty review – update on effect of changes. Apprentices	<b>BSTG meeting</b>
October	Community safety partnership – update on Strategic assessment document ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report	
November	Presentation by Stour Valley Arts	
December		<b>Scrutiny of Council's draft 2013/14 budget – Budget Scrutiny TG meetings</b>
January	Report of Budget scrutiny Task Group ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report	<b>Budget Scrutiny TG meetings</b>
February	Presentation from Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group re Health Care Provision in Ashford Borough	
March	Update report on Community Engagement and Consultation	
April	ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report	

## O&S Committee – Report Tracker – Current position

Minute No.	Report Title	Officer	Date due	Current position	Recommended action
299/10/06	Stour Centre	Head of Cultural & Project Services	TBC -After completion of legal recovery proceedings	Officers are continuing to pursue the Council's claim and a report to Members is anticipated.	Await report to Cabinet
62/06/11	Housing Strategy Action Plan Monitoring Report	Head of Housing /Housing Strategy Officer		Housing Strategy under review. New Strategy/Action Plan not yet in place. Monitoring will recommence One year after adoption of new Strategy.	Timetable for one year after adoption of new Strategy.
432/03/11	Annual Review of Homelessness Strategy	Head of Housing		The Homelessness Strategy to be included in the Housing Strategy in future.	
61/06/12	Sickness and Absenteeism – annual report	Head of Personnel & development	June 2013		Timetable for June each year.
14/05/12	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	Senior Scrutiny Officer	May/June 2013		Timetable for May/June each year
197/10/11	Community Safety Partnership – update on Strategic Assessment Document	Head of Environmental Services and Chair of Ashford CSP	October 2012		Timetable for October 2012



270/11/10	Post Mayoralty review - effect of changes implemented from May 2011 on the functioning of the Mayoralty		Sept 2012		Timetable for Sept 2012
196/10/11	Shared Space 3 year post implementation report	KCC officers	July 2012	On agenda for July 2012	
312/01/12	Transport, travel expenses and lease car arrangements	Head of Personnel & Development	TBA	Report requested, date TBA	
312/01/12	Council's preparations for the Universal Credit & Council tax benefit changes	Revenues & Benefits Manager	TBA	Report to be provided once legislation in place, date TBA	
312/01/12	Street Markets	Licensing Manager		O&S may wish to review once report has been to Cabinet	Await report to Cabinet
389/03/12	Update report on Community Engagement and Consultation	Communications & Marketing Manager; Head of Business Change & Technology	February 2013		
429/04/12	Presentation by Stour Valley Arts	Stour Valley Arts, Arts & Cultural Industries Manager	November 2012		

431/04/12	ABC Business Plan performance report – quarter 1 2012/13	Policy & Performance Manager	Quarterly – next - July 2012		
62/06/12	Apprentices		Sept 2012		
62/06/12	Sports & Leisure		TBA		
62/06/12	Listed Buildings		TBA		

Low Priority & other proposed reports

	Report Title	Officer	Date due	Current position	Recommended action
57/06/08 199/10/11	Recycling and the Blue box scheme	Head of Environmental Services	TBC	To be considered when procurement process completed and new contract in operation.	
135/08/08	Cultural strategy.	Head of Cultural & Project Services			
291/12/08	The effectiveness of a single O&S committee		TBA		