



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 23rd October 2012 at 7.00pm.

The Members of this Committee are:-

Cllr. Adby (Chairman)

Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bennett, Davison, Feacey, Galpin, Mrs Heyes, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Robey, Shorter, Smith, Yeo.

Agenda

1. **Apologies/Substitutes** – To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii)
2. **Declarations of Interest (see “Advice to Members” overleaf)**
 - (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011 relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the Council Chamber for the whole of that item, and will not be able to speak or take part (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

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

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

- (c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests not required to be declared under (a) or (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency reasons alone, such as:
 - membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or
 - where Members know a person involved, but do not have a close association with that person, or

- where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, etc, but not his/her financial position

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

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI's is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/2193362.pdf>
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found with the papers for that Meeting.
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

3. **Minutes** – To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 25th September 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. | ABC Business Plan Performance Report Q2 to end September 2012 | 1 - 8 |
| 5. | Transportation Costs | 9 - 10 |
| 6. | Listed Buildings | 11 - 13 |
| 7. | Future Reviews and Report Tracker | 15 - 20 |

HC/JV – 15 October 2012

Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Hayley Curd:
 Telephone: 01233 330565 Email: hayley.curd@ashford.gov.uk
 Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees

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 **25th September 2012**

Present:

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

Cllrs. Bartlett, Bennett, Feacey, Galpin, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Smith.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Apps, Davison, Hodgkinson, Robey, Shorter, Taylor, Yeo.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Davidson, French

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

140 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Davidson	Declared an 'Other Interest' as he was the current Mayor	142
Feacey	Declared an 'Other Interest' as his son had gone through the Kent County Council apprenticeship programme.	142
Smith	Declared an 'Other Interest' he was the current Deputy Mayor.	142
Link	Announced an 'Other Interest' as a member of the Tenterden & District Residents Association but this did not directly refer to any item on the agenda.	

141 Minutes

A Member considered that the minutes did not fully reflect the wording of the KCC Officer who presented the report on Ashford's Shared Space to the Committee with regards to the funding of the scheme. It was agreed that this would be discussed with the Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer and that the notes from the meeting be reviewed to see if this fact had indeed been omitted. Any proposed amendments considered necessary would be discussed at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Resolved:

That subject to the possibility that an amendment may be proposed at the meeting on the 23rd October 2012 the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 24th July 2012 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

142 Review of Changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S Review in 2010.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer reported that due to a printing error, paragraph 22 had been omitted from the papers and read the paragraph to the Committee. It should have read "*However, in the opinion of the current Mayor, these conditions are not onerous and he has found no difficulty working within the guidelines and budget of the new system*". In addition she gave a quick overview providing the history to the Task Group Review of the Mayoralty and the recommendations that had come from it, and been approved. Overall the cost of the Mayoralty had been steadily reducing over the years due in part to the reduction in transport costs.

The Chairman opened the debate during which the following issues were raised:

- The past Mayor, who had been the first Mayor to be affected by the changes made to the Mayoralty following the review, explained that he had no concerns on the budget and had not found it onerous, but had concerns over the decision to not permit the Mayor to attend events outside the Borough. He agreed that local events and engagements needed to take priority over those outside the Borough, and understood that a Mayor could fund their own attendance at outside events, but said that not all would be in a financial position to do so. He considered the Mayor should be permitted to attend events at neighbouring Boroughs. It was essential that the Mayor network with others to learn about neighbouring areas, but also to identify what perceptions others held about Ashford, which, he said was a very large and influential Borough in Kent. In his opinion, the absence of the Mayor at events outside the Borough was being noted. Following this, he suggested that the budget restrictions may prevent people putting themselves forward for becoming Mayor.
- A Member was concerned that the reductions in budgets and the constraints on the Mayor's attendance at events had fundamentally "demoted" the role of the Mayor and considered this to be inappropriate.
- Some Members supported the idea that the Mayor ought to reasonably be entitled to attend events outside of the Borough. It was suggested that the Mayoralty was a tool to promote Ashford during very difficult times and the opportunities brought about through Chamber of Commerce Meetings was being limited by budget restraints. The money invested in the civic role would grow by return and it was suggested that this in turn may assist in the Borough recovering from a difficult economic situation. Other Members considered it was the right decision to limit the movements of the Mayoralty to within the Borough, staying local ie visiting schools, hospitals and businesses etc. Any events outside the Borough would need to be agreed.

- In terms of the role of the Mayor being an ambassador, it was reported that the Ashford Mayoralty was an ever present “force” at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce events, whilst others merely paid flying visits. An ambassadorial role required the Mayor to be passionate, committed and dedicated. It should be remembered by all that the Mayor was the “public face” of the Council.
- Further concerns were raised that a non-driving Member could be deterred from taking on the role of Mayor and that the policy needed to be fair and appropriate for all Members. The Member Services and Scrutiny Manager reported that the budget had had to be reduced as part of the 5 year Business Plan, but said there was a budget for hire cars where necessary and the policy could be reviewed for a year if a non driving Member took Office as Mayor.
- In terms of the increased use of the Parlour, the Member Services and Scrutiny Manager said whilst there were no specific figures available it was being used far more frequently. The Mayor was very proactive in bringing people into the Civic Suite for events to showcase the Council and since the Leader had given up his office, he too was holding prestige meetings in the Parlour as were senior Officers of the Council.

The current Mayor addressed the Committee and said he was in a fortunate position as he had been Mayor previously and as such was able to give his views on the role before and after the changes to the Mayoralty. He accepted that in his previous term as Mayor there were a lot of events that were very much social fundraisers, but the cost to attend was high and therefore valuable “Ashford” money was being spent on other Boroughs. With the changes in place during this term, he considered that the role was still as important, but that he was happy to be an ambassador under the new system. He only attended a non civic event outside of the Borough if he paid for it himself and considered that was the purpose of his Mayoral allowance. He supported the cuts to the transport provision for Mayors, driving himself where possible and using his personal allowance to cover costs. The Mayoralty was still perceived in good light in the community and by fully using Media provision he had increased the amount of interest in the Mayoralty, and had attended some 100 events already, therefore raising awareness of the Mayor’s Charity and associated events.

The Mayor restricted himself going to events outside of the Borough unless it was a Civic event or an event at which his attendance to represent Ashford was essential. He considered certain ceremonial visits were justifiable in terms of the cost to the Council, and indeed very important. Any other non ceremonial visits outside the Borough were definitely funded out of his personal Mayoral Allowance and he considered this an appropriate use of this tax free allowance.

With regards to the increased use of the Mayor’s Parlour, the Mayor considered that the increased use was beneficial, as it was an opportunity to showcase the Council and show the Civic Suite to be welcoming and accommodating.

His only concern overall was the yearly 15 percent reduction to the budget, in line with the Council’s proposed 5 year business plan. He was advised that this was an overall saving and not a yearly target. The changes to the provision of a permanent car and attendant had created the savings and there was evidence to show that the

Mayoral Budget was reducing annually without any further reductions being necessary.

The Mayor considered he was well supported by the Civic Engagement Officer and the private hire chauffeur both of whom were very helpful and professional and wished his thanks to be noted.

He concluded that a car had always been made available when required and that he had not been disadvantaged as a result of the Task Group review recommendations from 2010. All Boroughs were facing the same restrictions this was not specific to Ashford.

The Deputy Mayor also supported the changes to the Mayoralty although he considered that there were occasions where taking his own vehicle to an event was inappropriate as there was still a degree of stigma from some other Boroughs and on these occasions he would choose to use a taxi, paid for from his allowance if using the private hire vehicle was inappropriate.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer read a letter which had been sent from a Member of the Committee who had been unable to attend, but who had been a Mayor in 1979/80. He considered that the review had taken the Mayoralty full circle as when he had been Mayor he drove himself and funded events and attendance at events from his own Mayoral Allowance. He made suggestions as to ways to ensure the proposed amalgamation of allowances could not be the subject of abuse and suggested the Mayoralty be reviewed every 3 years. He concluded that it must be remembered that the Mayor was the Queen's representative and the First Citizen of the Borough, and therefore the Council's main ambassador.

A Member proposed that the present situation be maintained subject to the Mayor not being restricted to the point that they were unable to satisfactorily carry out their role as ambassador for the Borough. This was supported, as was the decision to review the Mayoralty every 3 years.

Resolved:

That the report be noted subject to it being acknowledged that the Committee would not wish to see the Mayor restricted by the budget in their role as Ambassador to the Borough and that the Mayoralty be further reviewed in 3 years time.

144 Apprenticeships

The Head of Personnel and Development introduced the report of the Personnel Officer which informed Members of the current situation regarding the employment of apprentices within Ashford Borough Council including the recruitment process, number employed, those who have gone on to secure employments within ABC, how the scheme was promoted and how much apprentices were paid.

The Chairman opened the debate and the following issues were raised:

- Once an apprentice had left the Council, was there any further feedback gained as to how they fared following their training. It was reported that this information was not pursued, in the same way that students leaving colleges were not monitored. The important issue for the Authority was to ensure that the training given was suitable and effective.
- In terms of how Ashford Borough Council's Apprentice Scheme compared to others, this information was not known, but a comparison could be carried out if Members wished it to be.
- The Apprentices' contract ran on a 1 or 2 year term, at the time of the meeting, there was one apprentice on a 2 year programme with the remainder being on a 1 year contract.
- A Member suggested that this was a terribly important area. It was difficult for the youth of Ashford to enter the employment market. Apprentices were a vital part of the employment structure and having an apprentice programme would assist with the recession recovery for Ashford albeit that he considered the current programme to be just a start. Young people needed all the encouragement to work that could be offered in the present economic climate.
- It was suggested that there were far more areas where apprentices could be taken on within the Authority. IT, Fitness, Environmental, Planning and Human Resources were amongst those suggested. This was supported by the Committee. Members were reminded that there were other training programmes available within the Authority in addition to the Apprentice Scheme.
- The salary that Apprentices were being paid created considerable debate. There was some disappointment that it was not the National Minimum Wage. It was suggested by one Member that a modest increase would not be too onerous on the Authority but could make a huge difference to the Apprentices. Others considered that for young people the figures paid were satisfactory. Had they chosen college to train they would not receive a salary, and through the apprenticeships were being paid to learn a trade. If the scheme became too costly, then the Authority might decide not to continue with so many Apprentices.
- In terms of supporting the Apprentices further, Members discussed the options for helping with travel costs, and suggested this was a realistic area where further support could be given. A Member said that he was happy to make a recommendation to Kent County Council to propose that Apprentices be included in the Freedom Pass Scheme.
- A Member who was on a working group, which was considering youth employment, reminded Members that the number of Apprentices employed had to reflect what there was for them to do and how available other members of staff could be in order that they could be trained. It took patience to train an individual and the impact on existing staff should be taken into consideration. The number of Apprentices, therefore, needed to be monitored. In order to meet the learning criteria for their studies, Apprentices had to be offered good

quality work to enable them to demonstrate their competence to be able to gain their qualifications.

- Apprentices in the most part were given the opportunity to go for vacancies if appropriate, however this was not always the case.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer considered the recommendations that had been moved and seconded and compiled recommendations for the Committee to agree on. These were supported.

Recommended:

- That: (i) The number of Apprentices be reviewed and increased if possible.**
- (ii) The Council to consider working towards paying its Apprentices the National Minimum Wage.**
- (iii) Consideration be given to ways that the Council could assist with Apprentices' travel costs.**

145 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

Members considered the report and tracker and discussed a couple of areas that potentially could be reviewed by the Committee. Members were reminded that the appropriate way to do this was for the request to be put in writing to the Chairman.

Resolved:

That the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be noted.

HC

O&S 23 October 2012

Agenda item 4

Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report –
Quarter 2 2012/13 (to end September 2012)

The attached report was presented to Cabinet on 11 October 2012 and O&S are invited to consider it.

Agenda Item No: 14
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 11 October 2012



Report Title: **Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report – Quarter 2 2012/13 (to end of August)**

Report Author: Policy and Performance Officer

Summary:	The report seeks to give members and the Borough'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 2 (to end of August).**

Policy Overview: The quarterly performance report presents progress achieved against the council's strategic objectives – enshrined within the Cabinet's 'Ashford 2030' framework and the Council's Five Year Business Plan. It is important that members are informed and that residents are updated of progress with our plans – formed in consultation with residents.

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: None

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ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN

Performance Report

Quarter 2 2012/13 (to end August)

Purpose of this report

The following report, the third of its kind, seeks to give members and the Borough'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

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 it is showing signs of improvement, and the performance of most council services remains steady or slightly improving in the short to medium term, with no services currently particularly at risk.

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) fell in the last quarter, 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, whilst the Council is currently consulting on a new local council tax benefit scheme.

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 in 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 2 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
RECYCLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT			
New Waste and Recycling Contract	The tendering process has been completed, with a decision on the awarding of the contract in October. Following contract completion the process would then move to the implementation stage. The project is still on target for a contract operational start on 1 st April 2013 and physical roll-out of new collection arrangements, once fully agreed, within the first three to six months.	GREEN	Head of Environmental Services / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Blanford (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services)
Solar Photovoltaic Project	180 Solar Panels were installed on the Civic Centre roof in March. These panels currently generate around £25,000 per year, exceeding target by around 10 per cent. Other potential installations are being evaluated and proposals will be reported to cabinet in due course.	FIRST PHASE COMPLETE	Strategic Housing and Property Manager / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Blanford (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services)
Open Spaces and Public Realm Review	A new policy position for the adoption of public open spaces was approved earlier this year with a new SPD ¹ . This now gives a presumption that the Council will not generally adopt new open space. As an example, the Chilmington Green development application (currently under evaluation) includes proposals for local community management of public spaces and local facilities.	GREEN	Deputy Chief Executive
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HOUSING			
Review of the Core Strategy²	Final version of National Planning Policy Framework approved by government April 2012. Initial consultation on local growth and numbers of homes needed is currently ongoing.	GREEN	Planning Policy Manager / Cllr Wood (Leader) + Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader)
Introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy³	The Council is a pilot within Kent for CIL, and officers are currently developing the detail behind its use, with an initial focus on the overarching infrastructure needed, as guided by the <i>Ashford 2030</i> framework. The full CIL policy and detail will be approved in or by 2014.	GREEN	Principal Policy Planner / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader)

¹ Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (Public Spaces and the Water Environment) – this is an important planning document that, once approved, sets down council policy for this area in the future

² The council's strategic land use policy.

³ 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 2 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
Regeneration in Bockhanger and Broomfield Road	Initial public consultation, with 50 attendees, took place in May, and the results considered by a steering group, with further consultations planned. Main risk is that if a regeneration scheme does not proceed, the existing community centre could become vacant.	AMBER	Housing Project Manager / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Hicks (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Services)
Repton Park Community Facilities	A community consultation on these community facilities is ongoing.	GREEN	Deputy Head of Cultural Services
New park and wildlife project at Conningbrook Lake	DPD ⁴ Policy U22 (Conningbrook) has been submitted to the Secretary of State. Public examination was undertaken in July 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)
Commercial Quarter – Dover Place area	Discussions with key stakeholders are ongoing and a report on progress is now expected to the Council's Cabinet in November.	AMBER	Economic Development Manager
Local Authority New Build of social housing	<i>No change to previous report</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 3 - (Orion Way) practically complete. Phase 4 - Number of sites currently in pre-Planning advice stage. Continued financial support from the Homes and Communities Agency is vital for other phases.	AMBER	Housing Project Manager
ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE			
New Youth Café at the Stour Centre, mobile youth facility and offer mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HANG 10 mobile youth outreach launched and up and running. HOUSE Youth Cafe completed and opened on 11th November 	COMPLETE	Cultural Projects Manager / Cllr Howard (Portfolio Holder for Youth and Sport)
THE BEST SERVICES RESOURCES ALLOW			
Increasing the number of services available online	Impacts of the government's planned welfare reforms and other services and systems requirements are being investigated as part of the development of the new website. In frontline service terms there are issues associated with potential demands arising from the various welfare reform, particularly with short time to prepare fully for implementation. The council's new website is due to go live in December, this will provide enhanced capability for residents to access services, information and transact online.	AMBER	Head of Business Change and Technology / Cllr Taylor (Portfolio Holder for Core Services)
Arts Programming	The second season of the St Mary's arts programme finished in June, with a third season starting this autumn. Outcomes from the past two seasons were hugely encouraging.	COMPLETE	Arts Development Officer

⁴ Development Plan Document - outlines the key development goals of the project

2. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY (TO END OF AUGUST UNLESS STATED)

The council operates a number of important public-facing services. The following indicators give an indication of how well these functions are performing, although 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, exacerbated by the continued economic uncertainty all residents face. A review of these pressures and future staff resourcing is being carried out, with some changes about to be made to add to the staff capacity, this should reduce wait times and further improve customer service.

Housing:

- ↔ 44 affordable properties were built (to June). 245 were delivered last financial year, compared to 266 the year before.
- ↔ 99% of council tenants' rent was successfully collected.
- ↔ 99.9% of council housing currently has a valid gas safety certificate.
- ↓ An average of 24 households in B&B accommodation at the end of the quarter. This is an increase on the previous quarter, reflecting the tough economic climate.

Planning (all for Quarter 4 2011/2012):

- ↑ Received around 230 'other' (i.e. householder) development applications, and 81% were decided in under 8 weeks.
- ↔ Received around 85 minor development applications, such as from small businesses, with 69% decided within 8 weeks.

Environment:

- ↑ 471,000 vehicles used council car parks in the period April – end of August 2012.
- ↑ 96% of businesses are broadly compliant with hygiene inspections.
- ↑ Since the launch in August 2011 of the 'Recycle for Ashford' - a smartphone "app" to help residents with their waste collection - has been downloaded by 1200 people to date

Culture and Community Support:

- ↓ Directly delivered 1,700 children's sports courses through Courtside or school outreach. Due to the summer holidays there is a natural downturn in the latter.
- ↔ 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 September, over 49% 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 10,200 at the start of the financial year to 10,275 6-months through it, with an average of 300 new cases a month. This is the highest caseload level ever and reflects increasing levels of unemployment, however

the increase is more gradual than for the same period last year (it increased by 225 the first 6-months of the last financial year).

3. GOVERNANCE, RISK AND ACCOUNTABILITY

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER–

- The Council is a multi-faceted organisation responsible for many £ millions of public expenditure. Its actions have a major impact on the community it is responsible for, so it is very important that the key risks to the Council are identified and managed properly.
- An updated register setting out the key risks to the Council - from financial to resource or staffing - was approved by the Audit Committee earlier this year, with mitigation plans approved by the committee in September.
- Updated risk profiles, which include further details and planned actions to lessen these risks, were submitted in September.

TENANCY STRATEGY–

- In line with the Localism Act, the Council has developed a new Tenancy Strategy, following common principles that were developed at a Kent working group.
- The strategy allows the Council and other social housing providers in the borough to be flexible - to offer new tenants either fixed term or lifetime tenancies as appropriate.

OLYMPIC AND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS-

- The Olympic Flame arrived in the borough on day 61 and 62 of the Torch Relay, and it is estimated that 28,000 people (including 8,000 schoolchildren) lined the route.
- Another record crowd attendance of 13,000 gathered at this year's Diamond Jubilee Create Music Festival.

COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT -

- During August and September the Council consulted on a new scheme for council tax benefit, to come into force from April 2013 when the current government system ends.
- Details of the proposed scheme can be found at www.ashford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport

Local Economic Information:

- Average selling prices on the housing market have increased by 5% in Ashford over the last year (to June). [source = <http://www.home.co.uk>]
- The number of residents unemployed – those claiming Job-Seekers allowance – stands at around 1,940 (to August), representing 2.7% of the working-age population. This is 100 lower than in the previous quarter. A year ago the number was around 40 fewer.

Budget Monitoring:

- Overall during quarter one there has been a slight pressure on budgets, mainly due to an expected change to planning fee income as the government has decided not to localise the setting of planning fee levels at this time.

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

Agenda Item No: 5
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 October 2012
Report Title: Transportation costs
Report Author: Senior Scrutiny Officer



Summary:

As part of the budget scrutiny review of the 2012/12 budget the Task group wanted to be able to take a closer look at transportation costs to understand how costs varied from year to year.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **The Committee is asked to note the report.**

Policy Overview: None

Financial Implications: N/A

Risk Assessment No

Background Papers: none

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Report Title: Transportation costs

Purpose of the Report

1. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group considered a report from Personnel and Finance on costs under the various transport budget headings and looked at variations in costs from year to year. This report summarises the Task Group's findings for the O&S Committee.

Background

2. During the scrutiny of the council's 2012/13 draft budget, the Task Group noted that, in some areas, transportation costs varied from year to year. This was not a concern, but the Task Group considered it would be useful to have more detail of the background costs behind the final figures.
3. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group met on the 17th September 2012 and considered a report from Personnel and Finance which provided information on transport expenditure and cost variations

Transportation Costs

4. Transport costs incurred by the council include lease car subsidies/cash alternatives, essential user allowances, business mileage expenses and public transport costs. These costs are part of each service's budget.
5. Some officers in the council are designated as 'essential users' – the primary reason for this designation is that, in order to do the job they are employed to do, the use of a car is essential. Those officers are entitled to choose either a lease car subsidy/cash alternative or an essential user allowance. These benefits are taxed. Officers are also allowed to claim travel expenses for business use – either the cost of public transport or mileage.
6. Since 2009, the number of 'essential users' has been reducing every year – as roles are replaced the opportunity is taken to review the designations for that role. In addition, the total amount claimed for business mileage has been reducing every year and may be expected to reduce further if officers, when working out of the office, are enabled to work more generically (i.e. being able to co-ordinate tasks for more than one service department).

Conclusion

7. Having considered and discussed the report, the Task Group were satisfied that the Council was working to make the best and most economical use of travel costs and have no doubt that this was being done efficiently and that the issue was under constant review.

Contact: Julia Vink
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Agenda Item No: 6
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 October 2012
Report Title: Listed Buildings
Report Author: Development Control Manager



Summary: This report provides information on listed buildings as requested by the committee on 26 June 2012.

Key Decision: No
Affected Wards: All wards
Recommendations: The committee is asked to note the information provided
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Agenda Item No.6

Report Title: Listed Buildings

Purpose of the report

1. To provide information requested by the committee and in particular to respond to the following questions:
 - how many Listed Buildings there are in the borough;
 - what are the duties/responsibilities of owners, and
 - what duties/responsibilities/powers rest with the council.

Number of listed buildings

2. When a building is described as "listed", it means that it is included in a list of buildings that are considered to be of sufficient historical or architectural interest to merit special protection. This list is drawn up by the Department of National Heritage, on the advice of English Heritage. Current legislation relating to listed buildings is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listed buildings are divided into three categories (most important first); grade I, II* and II. Nationally grade I and II* star represents about 6% of all listed buildings and they are of national importance. 2% of Ashford listed buildings are grade I and 5% grade II*.
3. All buildings constructed before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition are included on the list.
4. The precise number of listed buildings is not known although there are over 3000 in the Borough. All of the listed buildings are known and capable of being identified on the maps that we hold which of course are available over the Internet. The reason why the precise number is not known is that when buildings are included on the list, several buildings can be included in one list entry. For example 23, 25 and 27 High Street Tenterden is three properties, one listing and originally one building. The process of providing a precise total is therefore complicated and is not a job for which it seems worth spending time on.

Duties and responsibilities of owners of listed buildings

5. Listed buildings form a very important part of the national heritage and owners of such buildings should see themselves as caretakers of that heritage. There is however no statutory duty that listed buildings should be maintained by their owners. Obviously it is a benefit for an owner to maintain their asset and maintain its value.
6. Should they fail to do so then the Council may take action which ultimately could result in them losing ownership of the building altogether.
7. Works which affect Listed Buildings are controlled by The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and Listed Building Consent will

be necessary for any works for demolition, alteration or extension which affects the character both inside and out. Carrying out works without the appropriate consent is, unlike planning controls, a criminal offence. Owners should therefore consider the issues involved and the implications very carefully before carrying out works to listed buildings.

Duties, responsibilities and powers of the local planning authority

8. Listed buildings are a finite resource and an irreplaceable asset. The government has placed great importance to the protection of the historic environment. When considering whether to grant listed building consent or planning permission, local planning authorities have a legal duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
9. If the building is not being properly looked after, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act states that a planning authority has the power to intervene to carry out urgent works to keep the wind and weather out. It may then seek to recover the cost of such works from the owner.
10. The service of a repairs notice is another option, but only if the authority is prepared to buy the property. In effect, issuing a repairs notice tells the owner that the authority considers that it is necessary to carry out certain works, specified in a schedule to the notice, if the building is to be preserved. That in turn enables the owner to see what he has to do if he is to avoid the property being compulsorily purchased and sold on to someone who will do the works.
11. A further piece of legislation which can be useful is section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. This allows for the local planning authority to require works to be carried out to land or buildings where they believe their condition is causing "substantial injury to public amenity". This type of notice can be served whether or not the building is listed.
12. The notice specifies the works required to comply with it which, for example, can include painting and window repairs, removal of rubbish and clearing of undergrowth. If the works are not carried out within the specified time then the Council can have the works done and charge the owners of the property. Very often it is not necessary to reach this stage as the suggestion of a notice is sufficient.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 October 2012

Scrutiny Reports/Reviews on the Forward Plan

Update from Community Safety Partnership – this item was due to be on the October agenda but has had to be deferred until early next year as it may be affected by the election of the Police Commissioner and also so that the Police Chief Inspector may be able to be present.

November:

Presentation by Stour Valley Arts – this has had to be deferred to early next year as Stour Valley Arts have yet to appoint a director.

December/January

The Budget Scrutiny Task Group will be meeting during December and January. Members are welcome to attend these meetings.

January

Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group
ABC Business Plan Quarterly Performance report

February

Presentation from Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group: Health care Provision in Ashford Borough.

Year Plan 2012/13

Month	items	Task Group
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&S annual report. • Membership of Budget Scrutiny Task Group 	
June	Sickness & Absenteeism annual report.	
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report. • Shared space 3 year post implementation report. 	
August	Cancelled	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Mayoralty review – update on effect of changes. • Apprentices 	BSTG meeting
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report • Transportation costs • Listed Buildings 	
November		
December		Scrutiny of Council's draft 2013/14 budget – Budget Scrutiny TG meetings
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of Budget scrutiny Task Group • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report 	Budget Scrutiny TG meetings
February	Presentation from Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group re Health Care Provision in Ashford Borough	
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update report on Community Engagement and Consultation • Community safety partnership – update 	
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	Deferred to March 2013.	Timetable for March 2013

142/09/12	3 year review of Mayoralty		Sept 2015		
312/01/12	Transport, travel expenses and lease car arrangements	Head of Personnel & Development	Sept 2012 to BSTG	BSTG will report back to committee – October 2012	
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		Deferred to spring 2013
431/04/12	ABC Business Plan performance report – quarter 1 2012/13	Policy & Performance Manager	Quarterly – next - July 2012		
62/06/12	Sports & Leisure		TBA		
62/06/12	Listed Buildings	Development Control Manager		On October 2012 agenda	

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		