



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 26th March 2013 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

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Nos.

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, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the 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, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the 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 a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
 - where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, but not his/her financial position

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

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5962/2193362.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 26th February 2013

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. | Update report on Communications | 1 - 5 |
| 5. | Updated ABC Business Plan Performance report, Q3 2012/13 | 7 - 14 |
| 6. | Future Reviews and Report Tracker | 15 - 19 |
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HC/JV – 18 March 2013

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 **26th February 2013**

Present:

Cllr. Aaby (Chairman);

Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Bennett, Davison, Galpin, Mrs Hutchinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Feacey, Hodgkinson, Robey, Smith, Yeo

Mr Nick Sandford (Godinton Estate Manager).

Also Present:

Cllrs. Claughton, Blanford, Burgess, Marriott, Sims

Dr Navin Kumta – Clinical Lead and Designate Clinical Chair, Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group, Mr Simon Perks – Accountable Officer (Ashford and Canterbury & Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group)

Mr Peter Slender – Slender Winter Partnership, Mr Matthew Morris – Woodfuel Development Manager and Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder

Head of Cultural and Project Services, Environmental Health Manager (Commercial), Finance Manger, Principal Accountant, Project Office Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Building Surveyor, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Officer.

343 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Galpin	Declared an "Other Interest" as he was a Member of the East Kent University Hospitals Trust	346
Mrs Hutchinson	Declared an "Other Interest" as she was a Trustee on the Tenterden Leisure Centre Trust	345
Shorter	Declared an "Other Interest" as he was a member of the Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group, Patient Participation Forum	346

344 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 22nd January 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

345 Stour and Civic Centres: Review of either Biomass Boilers or Combined Heat and Power (CHP) for heat provision to the buildings.

The Chairman introduced the item which presented a reappraisal of the two heating methods being considered for the Stour and Civic Centres. The report gave the key outcomes of the review and two possible recommendations for the Committee to consider, recommending either Combined Heat and Power or a Biomass Plant. The Chairman explained that present at the meeting, was Mr Peter Slender, a partner at Slender Winter Partnership which provided a mechanical and electrical design service and had advised the Authority on the sizing of the two heating options, and Mr Matthew Morris, Woodfuel Development Manager and Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder to speak in support of the Biomass option.

Mr Morris addressed the Committee. Britain was one of the largest users of gas and explained how the supply of fossil fuels was under pressure with increased international competition. The security of supplies was very important. The Head of Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) had issued a warning of higher prices. Ashford was heavily wooded in chestnut coppice, providing sustainably managed woodland opportunities. Whilst there would be an additional cost to the Authority, installing biomass plant could create jobs, with the potential for using local fuel being a key opportunity. Britain was targeted to reduce carbon emissions and Ashford Borough Council's Green credentials were poor and this would address some of these concerns.

The Head of Cultural and Project Services addressed the Committee. He explained that initially the train of thought was that Biomass was the obvious choice, however, further consideration and sensitivity analysis were carried out, the details of which were all contained within the report, and this identified that the CHP plant was more suitable to the needs of the Stour Centre. It was a heavily electrically dependent building and the decision had to be based on practical business efficiencies. Producing its own electricity had to be considered the best option for the Council. It appeared that Biomass boilers did not cope well with rapid changes in heat demand. As service and heating continuity were important factors, there was not a convincing argument that Biomass, in this type of building, would provide a practical heating solution. In addition the quantity and cost of wood fuel required was significant to the extent that a contract for supply would be subject to meeting open competition rules in Europe and could result in wood fuel supply from Europe and not the local economy. He concluded that Biomass was still a suitable solution in general and one that the Authority would support the use of for more suitable applications.

The Principal Accountant added that following the sensitivity analysis, choosing Biomass would significantly restrict the funding potential for the rest of the Stour Centre Refurbishment.

During the debate the following issues were discussed:-

- Members were assured that they weren't being presented with a fait accompli, and that the purpose of the review coming to Committee was so that it could be debated fully.
- The principle of using Biomass Plant was supported by Members but it was accepted that it was not appropriate for this type of installation.
- The decision should be based on achieving an outcome that was efficient, effective and economic. Whilst the creation of jobs had to be endorsed wholeheartedly, the overall picture was not in favour of biomass.
- It was considered unfortunate that at 2 of the leisure centres visited, the biomass plants were not functional, it was explained that this was more to do with the management of the facilities but added a concern that the plant was not reliable in such large, purpose built structures. Mr Slender added that the plant was not good with fluctuating loads.
- A Member explained that he had requested further information on the heat/cooling plant. This was presented to him at the meeting, and he considered there were further issues for discussion. He undertook to discuss these issues with Officers outside of the meeting. The Head of Cultural and Project Services thanked the Member for his support and challenges on this matter.

Overall the debate highlighted that the principles of Biomass plants were to be commended and that they be used where economically viable, and where the decision could be deemed credible. Members were keen to seriously consider Biomass in the future. In this case, however, it was clear that the Combined Heat and Power plant presented the more acceptable option as the economic facts were clear.

Recommended:

That the Cabinet be asked to:-

- (i) Confirm the Cabinet decision (10.1.13) to proceed with the Stour Centre Essential Repairs and Proposed Invest to Save Project (including the choice of a CHP plant for heating and power supply to the buildings) based principally on the significant saving.**
- (ii) Consider using biomass boilers for other more suitable and less sensitive buildings.**

346 Presentation by Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group (ACCG): Health Care Provision in the Borough, now and going forward,

The Chairman introduced Dr Navin Kumta – Clinical Lead and Designate Clinical Chair, Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group. Dr Kumta gave some background as to how and why the Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group (ACCG) had been formed and confirmed it would be a statutory body from April 2013. Members were then given a short presentation on some of the key elements of the Group's structure, strengths, priorities, risks and aspirations set against the current healthcare issues and demographics of the Borough. This presentation was published on the Committee Services section of the Council's Website under the document section of the agenda for this meeting: <https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/cgi-bin/committee/index.cfm?fuseaction=DocTrack.getDocument&DocID=5021>

Dr Kumta explained that most of the borough's population was aged between 0-19 and 40-69 years and whilst in the most part the Borough was relatively wealthy, there were pockets of deprivation. In terms of the ACCG's strengths, there were 16 practices in Ashford who would be members of the ACCG and this group represented a vital source of information.

The presentation illustrated that compared to the National and Eastern and Coastal Kent Averages, Ashford performed well in terms of mortality and major disease prevalence rates, but there were variations between wards regarding health, in addition to the impact of the growth of Ashford.

The priorities for the ACCG were set out, namely: maintaining the health status of the population, reducing health inequalities across wards; and maintaining clinical effectiveness. There was a heavy emphasis on integration of services to ensure joined up working, resulting in effective changes being made for the benefit of the people of Ashford.

Dr Kumta, then introduced Mr Simon Perks, - Accountable Officer, (Ashford and Canterbury & Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group) responsible for Statutory Functions. He continued the presentation and explained the organisational structure, which was considerably smaller than that previously in place for the PCT. Their key responsibility was to support the clinicians and provide a dedicated team for Ashford.

By encouraging integration of services, there would be budget savings, increased efficiency, and better managed service provision. There was more and more emphasis on making savings and the money available was unlikely to increase, so spending money in the right places to achieve the best clinical care was a priority.

The presentation concluded with a summary of the need to determine how the ACCG could operate moving forward, to ensure the arrangements were strong, robust and effective, working collectively and incorporating the views aired and feedback received. There were some key goals to be achieved, namely:

- To deliver the 13/14 Commissioning Plan, better reflecting local need
- Secure provider performance for the long term
- Establish a new approach to quality and safety
- Hold conversations with key providers
- Transform urgent care
- Plan for contract renewal
- Local Health and Wellbeing Board
- Fully engage with HealthWatch
- Complete recruitment and OD Plan

During the debate the following issues were discussed:-

- Members were in agreement that the care of the elderly should take place in their homes where possible. GPs should be included more, and support any care plan assigned to a patient. It was explained that this view was supported by GPs and that friends and family should also be involved in any care meetings. Mr Perks added that it was accepted that the GPs may be the most appropriate co-ordinator of a health plan but that this was a new way of working. It was also essential that relatives be involved in key decisions and the delivery of care.
- Many of the concerns raised were in relation to the Accident and Emergency provision particularly with regard to the insufficient numbers of doctors available. Dr Kumta added that because the hospital computer system did not share the information from the surgeries' systems, this caused delays. The aim was to get transparency for the clinical providers, so that they could share and view, important patient information.
- There were not sufficient facilities in the Borough to provide support and care for children and young adults suffering with Mental Health issues. Dr Kumta explained that there was a "programme of needs team" with regard to Mental Health to make them closer and more available to those with mental health issues.
- There was some discussion over the buildings previously occupied by PCT staff. Of the 3 premises, Trinity House had gone to the Kent Community Trust so was no longer a liability to the ACCG. Templar House was to be handed back to the landlord, Kent House was to be used by the Kent and Medway Commissioning Group. The ACCG had temporarily taken over the lease at Inca House but this was a short term solution.
- The desired outcome was to have a good quality service, where health and social work services work together.
- With regard to the Children Centres within the Borough, clinicians were already working with the managers of these centres to avoid duplication and to get the best service for children and the young.

- The issue of drugs within the Borough was raised. It was clear that the ACCG would need to work with education providers and that this could be considered further by the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board. It was important that the bigger picture was identified and taken into consideration and that all the relevant agencies worked in a co-ordinated manner.
- There was some debate regarding making complaints. Whilst there was some negative publicity surrounding the process in some areas, the complaints system was quite clear and straight forward. If a complaint had previously gone to the PCT, it now went to the ACCG. The ACCG did not, however, have the power to commission regulation. The complaints procedure was, according to Mr Perks, clear and worked well. The problems referred to were specific to one area where the relevant providers “failed to link the dots” and was not reflective of the majority. Dr Kumta added that the member practice GPs would be best placed to gather “soft intelligence” which could be addressed via the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to the provider organisation.
- A Member who had been part of the Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group, Patient Participation Forum from the onset explained that there had been a lot of scepticism from both patients and GPs but over the last year, the GPs in Ashford had really embraced the opportunity. It was a radical change but he was confident that the population of Ashford would see an enormous improvement in service and provision. The Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing agreed with the points raised and reassured Members that it was a great time of change, and that the principle of providing joined up care should be embraced. There would be scrutiny and accountability but overall the intention was to ensure engagement, outcomes, joined up commissioning to secure better health, wellbeing and quality provision.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) concluded the item by explaining that much of the work undertaken by the Council directly influenced health and wellbeing. The Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board (AHWB) (which was a sub committee of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board (KHWB) presented the Council with a unique opportunity to work closely with other partners and help ensure the decisions made supported the improvement and protection of the public’s health. The AHWB would be informed by the priorities of the KHWB.

Resolved:

That the presentation was received and noted.

347 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

Members considered the report and Forward Plan. A Member advised that he had requested that the Committee be able to debate the Stage 2 Refurbishment of the Stour Centre. The Head of Cultural and Project Services explained that Officers would be happy to report to O&S with some options - to get a feel from O&S and then to work on the business case.

It was agreed that this would be on the 26th March 2013 O&S Committee Agenda.

Resolved:

That subject to the above, the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be noted.

MINS:O&S Mins 26-02-13

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees

Agenda Item No: 4
Report To: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 26 March 2013
Report Title: Update report on Communications
Report Author: Dean Spurrell – Communications & Marketing Manager
Rob Neil – Head of Business Change & Technology



Summary: Following consideration of a report “Community Engagement & Consultation: Progress Report”, submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in February 2012, this report provides an update on the work of the communications department over the past year.

The scope of this report has been expanded from community engagement and consultation, which was the focus of the previous report, to cover the broader work of the communications department incorporating major projects, highlighting key achievements and setting out priorities for the coming year.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards:

Recommendations: **That the Committee be asked to note the progress made and provide any feedback as to future actions.**

Policy Overview: The council has an obligation to ensure residents and the wider community are aware of the services the council provides and are engaged with the local decision making process. It is also important that new initiatives are shaped by community feedback.

Financial Implications: NONE

Risk Assessment NO

Other Material Implications:

**Exemption
Clauses:**

None

**Background
Papers:**

Community Engagement & Consultation: Progress Report,
February 2012

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Report Title: Update report on Communications

Purpose of the Report

1. Following consideration of a report “Community Engagement & Consultation: Progress Report”, submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in February 2012, this report provides an update on the work of the communications department over the past year.
2. Following on from this previous report and after discussion with the Chairman, the scope has been expanded from community engagement and consultation to cover the broader work of the communications department incorporating major projects, highlighting key achievements and setting out priorities for the coming year.

Background

3. The council and the communications department have seen a number of changes over the past few years including: the restructuring of the corporate centre (reported to JCC on 2nd February 2012), several changes in personnel, the adoption of the council’s five year business plan and the launch of the Ashford 2030 document.
4. The communications team oversees all external and internal communications and is responsible for: media relations, PR campaigns, marketing, branding/corporate identity, website and online and social media, design, strategic communications, internal communications, producing the Voice e-zine and business newsletter, copy writing, leaflets/brochures and other printed material and events/public consultation.
5. The department’s aim is to consistently provide proactive communications to protect and enhance the council’s reputation through targeted and measured communications activities using a range of channels most appropriate to the audiences we wish to reach.

Progress

6. Over the last year, progress has been made on several key aspects including:
 - The bedding in of the new structure within the Business Change and Technology service
 - Recruiting two new members to the department to return the team to a full complement of four

- Providing communications support for the five year business plan projects and other key campaigns
 - Supporting nationally significant events such as the Queen's Jubilee, the Olympic torch relay and the Portas Pilot town bid
 - Delivering a new website to make accessing information and services from the council quicker and easier
 - Ensuring residents, staff and members are kept informed of the council's work
7. Since the department returned to full strength we have been able to work more closely with other services and provide a dedicated point of contact, so we are aware of upcoming work, and can to plan ahead, resource accordingly and proactively promote services.
8. High profile campaigns the communications department has supported in the last 12 months include:
- The core strategy/local plan planning consultation
 - Conningbrook Lakes and Chilmington Green developments
 - The successful Portas Pilot bid campaign
 - Olympic torch relay and Jubilee events
 - The affordable housing/new build programme
 - Council tax localisation consultation
 - Welfare reform changes
 - New recycling and street cleansing service
 - A new website launch and channel shift
 - Major arts/cultural events including the Arts at St Mary's Church programme, Create Festival and Jasmin Vardimon launch
 - Youth activities/events including the HOUSE and HANG 10 launch and various play park consultations
9. In December 2012 the new www.ashford.gov.uk website was launched. The new-look site makes accessing our services quicker, and it is easier for our residents to find information about the council. It also supports our digital by default objectives which are part of the channel shift project.
10. Using our website to get the right information, as well as using it to pay, report and apply for things online, is much quicker and easier for residents. The feedback has been positive, with people telling us that the new website looks great, is a real improvement and is simpler to navigate.
11. The way residents access council information is shifting away from more traditional channels such as local newspapers and radio towards online and social media. The council has almost 1,700 followers on Twitter, over 2,000 subscribers to our monthly residents' e-zine Ashford Voice and almost 1,500 businesses subscribing to our quarterly business newsletter.
12. The communications department is ensuring it strikes the right balance between meeting these changing needs while still maintaining strong relationships with the

local media to protect and enhance our reputation and publicise the good work that we do.

13. Members and staff are important ambassadors for the organisation and the communications department ensures they are kept up to date with key council decision and issues. Recent initiatives include the weekly Members' Update, Chief Executive walkabouts and all-staff briefings.
14. In the next 12 months the communications department will focus on supporting the roll out of a new recycling service, promoting the welfare reform changes and communicating the council's future aspirations for the borough as well as continuing to support the five year business plan projects.

Conclusion

15. The communications department has made great strides forward in the past year following a restructure and several changes in personnel.
16. The department has risen to the challenges faced and has played a key part in supporting the council's five year business plan and helping to protect and enhance the reputation of the council and the services it provides for our residents.
17. Members are asked to consider the progress made by the communications department and indicate any further steps they would wish to see taken.

Portfolio Holder's Views

18.

Contact: Dean Spurrell, Communications & Marketing Manager

Email: Dean.spurrell@ashford.gov.uk

Agenda Item No: 5



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny
Date: 26 March 2013
Report Title: Updated Ashford Borough Council Business Plan Performance Report – Quarter 3 2012/13
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'. This report was received by the Cabinet on 14th February. Unfortunately, due to scheduling, this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the first which the report was able to come to.

In order to keep Members properly informed of the current state of performance, Officers have gathered updated performance information where available. Updated information is presented (in italics) alongside the original information, **with bold to indicate amended pieces of data.**

Key Decision: NO
Affected Wards: ALL
Recommendations: **The Cabinet noted performance against the Business Plan and frontline services for Quarter 3**

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

Portfolio Holder's Comments This report is a key element in our approach to transparency in highlighting the Council's overall performance. I believe it shows not just the considerable number of projects being undertaken, but also the effective way the majority are progressing

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



ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN

Performance Report

Quarter 3 2012/13

Purpose of this report

The following report, the fourth 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

The council is over half way through its five year business plan, brought together through consultation in 2010 with residents. Good progress continues to be made in delivering the priorities identified. 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, such as steadying house prices and a flattening unemployment picture. The performance of most council services remains strong in the short to medium term, with no services currently particularly at risk.

Significant pressures remain on some frontline council services. The relatively high numbers of families currently declaring as homeless reflects an uncertain local economic situation, with large-scale changes such as welfare reform and council tax support due from April 2013. Continued pressures on some key workloads, such as social housing and the provision of benefits are therefore expected.

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 3 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
RECYCLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT			
New Recycling Contract	Tendering was successfully completed and a decision made to award the contract. Discussions continue on organising implementation with the new contract starting on 1 st April 2013. The new service will be rolled out by the end of July 2013.	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 2012. While the panels are projected to generate around £25,000 per year, a full annual report will be included in the end of year performance report. 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 in 2012 with a new SPD ¹ . Work is focussing on the proposed Chilmington development project and associated open space issues.	GREEN	Deputy Chief Executive
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HOUSING			
Review of the Core Strategy²	Initial consultation on local growth and numbers of homes needed continues.	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. Initial focus will be on the overarching infrastructure needed, as guided by the <i>Ashford 2030</i> framework. While the scope of this has been agreed, officers are currently developing the detail behind its use. The full CIL policy and detail will be approved in or by 2014.	GREEN	Principal Policy Planner / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader)
Regeneration in Bockhanger and Broomfield Road	The lease is currently up for review. A second consultation is set for early 2013 with the local community to agree a way forward.	AMBER	Housing Project Manager / Cllr Clarkson (Deputy Leader) + Cllr Hicks (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Services)

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 3 Performance	'Traffic Light' Status	Lead Officer / Lead Member(s)
Repton Park Community Facilities	A community consultation on these community facilities is complete, a project brief is in place and the Cabinet has approved the allocation of s106 ⁴ funding to deliver the project.	GREEN	Deputy Head of Cultural Services
New park and wildlife project at Conningbrook Lake	DPD ⁵ Policy U22 (Conningbrook) has been submitted to the Secretary of State. Planning application for the park submitted November 2012, alongside a Park Early access application.	GREEN	Head of Cultural Services / Cllr Wood (Leader) + Cllr Heyes (Portfolio Holder for Culture and Recreation)
Commercial Quarter – Dover Place area	A context report was presented to the council's Cabinet in November showing some progress already, and work continues with the Homes and Communities Agency on the site.	AMBER	Economic Development Manager
Local Authority New Build of social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 3 - (Orion Way) practically complete. • Phase 4 - Number of sites with consent and a number in the planning process. Continued financial support from the Homes and Communities Agency is vital for other phases and discussions are ongoing.	AMBER	Housing Project Manager
ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE			
New Youth Café at the Stour Centre, mobile youth facility and offer mapping	HANG 10 mobile youth outreach and HOUSE Youth Cafe completed and up and running. The membership at Ashford HOUSE consists of around 250 young people who access the centre, with a core group of 80 who are regular weekly attendees. Total Attendances stood at around 4,000 after the first year of operation.	COMPLETE	Cultural Projects Manager / Cllr Howard (Portfolio Holder for Youth and Sport)
THE BEST SERVICES RESOURCES ALLOW			
Increasing the number of services available online	The council's new website went live in December, providing enhanced capability for residents to access services, information and transactions online. A review of this new functionality will be carried out in due course.	AMBER	Head of Business Change and Technology / Cllr Taylor (Portfolio Holder for Core Services)
Arts Programming	The third season of the St Mary's arts programme began in the autumn. Outcomes from the past two seasons were hugely encouraging.	COMPLETE	Arts Development Officer

⁴ Section 106 agreements are contributions by developers towards community facilities

⁵ Development Plan Document - outlines the key development goals of the project

2. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

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:

- ↔ With changes to welfare reform and council tax, alongside the Council's new waste and recycling scheme, 2013 is anticipated to bring high volumes of work for front-line staff. To help staff focus on the most complex cases, from the start of 2013 a target of 10% will be set for customers using 'self-help'. This is using automated machines to answer queries. Currently the rate is 5% but is expected to rise throughout the year.

Housing:

- ↓ 56 affordable properties were built (to November). 245 were delivered last financial year, compared to 266 the year before.
67 affordable properties were built (to February). 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.
99.9% of council housing currently (to February) has a valid safety certificate.
- ↓ An average of 28 households in B&B accommodation at the end of the quarter. This is an increase of four on the previous quarter, reflecting the tough economic climate.
An average of 26 households in B&B accommodation (over the last 3 months to end of February). This is an increase of two on the previous quarter, reflecting the tough economic climate.

Planning:

- ↔ Received around 220 'other' (i.e. householder) development applications, and around 80% were decided in under 8 weeks.
Received around 200 'other' (i.e. householder) development applications (over the last 3 months to end of February), and around 80% were decided in under 8 weeks.
- ↔ Received around 103 'minor' development applications, such as from small businesses, with 68% decided within 8 weeks.
Received around 75 'minor' development applications, such as from small businesses, (over the last 3 months to end of February), and around 70% were decided in under 8 weeks.

Environment:

- ↔ 280,000 vehicles used council car parks.
270,000 vehicles used council car parks over the last 3 months to end of February.
- ↑ 97% 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 1,650 people to date

Culture and Community Support:

- ↑ Directly delivered 2,100 children's sports courses through Courtside or school outreach. This is a good figure bearing in mind the school Christmas holiday period.

- ⇔ Since the start of 2012/13, the Single Grants Gateway has allocated £42,500 to local voluntary and community groups, leveraging other funding in at a ratio of 4:1.

Revenues and Benefits:

- ⇔ By the end of December, 87 and 88% of Council Tax and Business Rates respectively 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 10,375 nine months through it, with an average of 200 new cases a month. This continued high caseload reflects higher levels of unemployment, however the increase continues to be more gradual than for the same period last year (it increased by 325 the first nine months of the last financial year).

*The benefits caseload continues to rise – from 10,200 at the start of the financial year to **10,450 eleven** months through it, with an average of 250 new cases a month (**although this average is currently skewed by the large number of new cases always experienced at the start of the new calendar year**). This continued high caseload reflects higher levels of unemployment; however the increase continues to be more gradual than for the same period last year (it increased by **500** the first eleven 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.
- Risk, where managed correctly, is not necessarily undesirable. Riskier models of delivery can often be the most innovative and effective.
- Following approval for an updated register and mitigation plans by the Audit Committee in September, it was adopted by the Council in December.

DRAFT BUDGET 2013-14–

- In December the Cabinet approved the draft budget for the next financial year. At that time no date had been set for the announcement of the local government finance settlement, which sets the level of central government funding for councils. Accordingly, the draft budget uses estimate figures for grant funding which are likely to change.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT-

- In January the Council agreed to the first designated neighbourhood area in the Ashford borough (at Wye). This allows for future development of a Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Development Orders.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2011-12-

- Auditors Grant Thornton informed the Audit Committee in December that there were no matters to be highlighted regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the council's accounts.

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT CONSULTATION -

- During August and September the council consulted on a new scheme for council tax benefit, which was agreed by the Cabinet in December. The council also received accreditation from the Consultation Institute for its work on this consultation.

Local Economic Information:

- Average selling prices on the housing market have increased by 11% in Ashford over the last twelve months (to October). [source = <http://www.home.co.uk>]
- The number of residents unemployed – those claiming Job-Seekers allowance – stands at around 1,901, representing 2.6% of the working-age population. This is 50 lower than in the previous quarter. A year ago the number was around 30 more.
The number of residents unemployed – those claiming Job-Seekers Allowance – stands at 1,932 (to the end of January), representing 2.6% of the working-age population. This is around 15 lower than in the previous quarter. A year ago the number was around 75 more.
- Occupation of completed housing rose by 800, with around a third being in affordable properties. This was significantly more than expected; showing that developers remain confident in Ashford, and has positive implications for future New Homes Bonus funding.

Budget Monitoring:

There is currently a slight pressure (around £50,000) in the Council's budget, but this reflects the local economic and unemployment situation. This gap is being managed down and a balanced budget is expected by the end of the year. Council reserves remain healthy.

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 March 2013

Future Reviews and Report Tracker

Stour Centre Refurbishment.

Since the last meeting the Acting Leader, in discussion with the Chief Executive and Head of Project and Cultural services, has decided that a Task Group will be set up to consider the Stour Centre Refurbishment.

O&S will not therefore be receiving a report at this time.

April

- Presentation from Stour Valley Arts: “Stour Valley Arts – investing in Ashford”
- Community Safety Partnership – update
- Code of conduct for charity street collections

May - New Municipal Year

- O&S annual report
- ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report – Q4

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	Cancelled	
December	Cancelled	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 • Briefing on Welfare Reform 	Budget Scrutiny TG meetings
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation from Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group re Health Care Provision in Ashford Borough • Stour Centre – Biomass/CHP review 	
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update report on Communications • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report 	
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation from Stour Valley Arts • Community Safety Partnership – update • Code of conduct for charity street collections 	

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 claim work	Work ongoing	Await completion of claim work.
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	Licensing and Community Safety Manager	October 2012	Deferred to March 2013.	On April 2013 agenda
142/09/12	3 year review of Mayoralty		Sept 2015		
312/01/12	Street Markets	Licensing and Community Safety Manager		O&S may wish to review once report has been to Cabinet	Await report to Cabinet

389/03/12	Update report on Communications	Communications & Marketing Manager; Head of Business Change & Technology	February 2013		On March Agenda
429/04/12	Presentation by Stour Valley Arts	Stour Valley Arts, Arts & Cultural Industries Manager	April 2013	Deferred to spring 2013	On April 2013 agenda
429/04/12	Update on Stour Valley Arts agreement	Stour Valley Arts, Arts & Cultural Industries Manager	TBA		
431/04/12	ABC Business Plan performance report – quarter 3 2012/13	Policy & Performance Officer	Feb/May/Aug/Nov	Deferred to March 2013.	
62/06/12	Sports & Leisure		TBA		
304/01/13	Code of conduct for charity street collections	Licensing and Community Safety Manager	April 2013		
303/01/13	Review of 'Best Services resources allow' activity	TBA	TBA		
347/02/13	Refurbishment of the Stour Centre	Arts and cultural industries Manager/ Head of Cultural & Project Services			

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		