Head of Legal and Democratic Services and   OSC
Monitoring Officer, T W Mortimer LLB Solicitor

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, 25th June 2013 at 7.00 pm.

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The Members of this Committee are:-

Cllr Adby (Chairman);
Cllr Chilton (Vice-Chairman);
Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Bennett, Burgess, Davison, Feacey, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Smith, Yeo.

Agenda

Page Nos.

1. **Apologies/Substitutes –** To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii)

2. **Declarations of Interest:-** To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: 1

   a)   Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)
   b)   Other Significant Interests (OSI)
   c)   Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests

   See Agenda Item 2 for further details

3. **Minutes** – To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 21st May 2013

Part I – Matters Referred to the Committee 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

4.   Sickness Absence 2012/13   3 - 11

Part IV – Information/Monitoring Items

HC/JV/VS
14 June 2013

Declarations of Interest (see also "Advice to Members" below)

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

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

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

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

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

- Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or

- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does <u>not</u> 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 <u>not</u> his/her financial position.

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

<u>Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest</u>:

(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
plus the link sent out to Members at part of the Weekly Update email on the 3rd May 2013.

(b)   The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at
http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols

(c)   If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, <u>and in advance of the Meeting</u>.

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 **21st May 2013.**

Present:

Cllr. Adby (Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bennett, Burgess, Davison, Feacey, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Chilton, Mortimer, Yeo.

Also Present:

Policy and Performance Officer, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

12   Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 23rd April 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

13   Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13

The Senior Scrutiny Officer introduced the report and advised that she would need to make two amendments to it before it was considered by Council. These amendments were relating to size of the Committee, which had reduced from 19 to 16; and, in relation to the Reviews on the Forward Plan, the Update on the Stour Valley Arts Agreement was included in the presentation to the Committee that had taken place on the 23rd April 2013 and therefore would no longer be retained on the forward plan.

The report gave an overview of the work that the O&S Committee and its Task Groups had been involved in during 2012/13. It was required as part of the Council's constitution that the O&S Committee make an annual report to Full Council on the work they had undertaken during the year.

During the discussion the following points were raised.

- Were the Committee satisfied that the Cabinet was taking forward the recommendations? Was there any mechanism in place to report back that what was being sought, through the reports of the O&S Committee, was actually being done? The Senior Scrutiny Officer agreed to consider ways in which this could be monitored. Members could, it was reiterated, attend the Cabinet meeting at which the O&S Reports were being considered and address the Cabinet. A Member suggested that from his experience at attending Cabinet meetings, that the Cabinet did take the reports of the O&S Committee very seriously. There was also the mechanism of call-in that could be used. It was suggested that if the Cabinet were to change a recommendation made by the O&S Committee then the relevant Portfolio Holder should attend the next O&S Meeting to report the reasons behind this to the Committee.

- A Member suggested there had been concerns raised for sometime that O&S was not supported fully, with its remit being reduced further and further. It was important that the strength and influence of the remaining Committee was retained.

- It was accepted that it was not within the remit of the O&S Committee to change decisions made by external bodies, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group, but Members could legitimately raise concerns and/or criticise through the Scrutiny process. It was feared that the scrutiny process may be "losing its way".

- Historically Ashford's O&S Committees had made some tough decisions through their work programmes, actively drilling down into issues with operating departments being scrutinised annually. This system identified areas of poor practice but Constitutional changes had stopped this process. It was accepted that the operating style of the Council had changed and that there had been improvements, but decisions were being made by the Cabinet sometimes months before the O&S Committee could consider them.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and the amended version be presented to full Council.

Recommended:

That, should the Cabinet vote to change a recommendation made by the O&S Committee, the relevant Portfolio Holder attend the next Committee meeting to address the Committee on the reasons for such a change.

14   ABC Business Plan Q4 Report

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report which was the fifth of its kind and provided Members with an overview of how the Council had performed over the last quarter, also giving an overview of the performance for the last year, giving a key performance snapshot on specific areas. The report had been considered by the Cabinet on the 9th May 2013 and Members were invited to consider it.

The Policy and Performance Officer reported that there were demands on front line services, particularly as a result of the Universal Credit impact with much pre-emptive work being carried out. He undertook to deal with as many of the Members questions as possible and assured Members that he would find answers to any questions he was unsure of and report back to the relevant Member.

During the discussion Members raised the following points:

- Members sought clarity as to how concerned the Authority was with regard to the impact of Universal Credits. It was the unknown demand that presented the greatest concern. There had been some work undertaken to "map" the potential issues that would arise and the workload impact of that, but until the information actually reached the residents and they began to call on the Council's Services it was not something that could be measured.

- With regard to the vulnerable people within the Borough, what special measures were being put in place to support them in understanding the changes and prevent them getting into crisis? The Policy and Performance Officer agreed to discuss this with the Housing team, but assured Members that the Authority had been working hard to protect its residents in implementing this Government led change. To date the appropriate staffing decision had been made and the Authority was in the best position possible with the situation as it stood at the present time. A Member reported that the Cabinet had considered a very informative report on the 9th May 2013 on the subject of Universal Credit and urged Members to read this as it covered some of the issues being raised. Another Member added that in her opinion the Housing Department could do nothing more in terms of preparation and awareness, but that it was indeed the unknown that was the concern. Members were advised that there was a single Task Group to deal with the Welfare Reform and that there was a team in place to provide a holistic approach to cater for the cross cutting social needs of claimants. A good advance measure for the issues concerning those affected by the Welfare Reforms would be to ask the Customer Contact Team to keep records of the nature of the calls coming to the Authority on this matter.

- A Member considered that the telephone app to aid residents with recycling was out of date and needed some review. It was agreed that this would be reported to the Communications team.

- There had been some discussion regarding the impact on the Council's Parking Income if the Portas Pilot suggestion of offering some free parking was put in place. Members were advised Management Team considered parking issues and that this concern would be forwarded to them.

- A Member suggested that the report could just be seen as a public relations exercise and that it was actually rather bland. In his opinion some of the important subject matters affecting the Borough were missing, such as Chilmington Green and Sevington. The Policy and Performance Officer explained that the projects reported on were agreed with the Heads of Service, and it was likely that these two would be added in the near future. He reiterated that if Members wanted to see specific items reported then they could request this.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

15   Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Senior Scrutiny Officer introduced the report. The Chairman reported that he had received requests from Members for items to be considered for inclusion in the Tracker for future reviews and explained that he would be meeting with the Vice-Chairman and Senior Scrutiny Officer to discuss these. He reminded all Members that they could contact him or the Senior Scrutiny Officer with written suggestions for items.

In terms of the Sickness and Absenteeism report, which was due to be considered in June, clarification was sought if the sickness figures would be reported department by department. This was not the case, although if Members had specific concerns regarding sickness in certain areas, they could raise this with the Officer at the meeting.

Resolved:

That the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be noted.

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Hayley Curd:
Telephone: 01233 330499   Email: hayley.curd@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees

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Agenda Item No: 4

Report To: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: **25 JUNE 2013**

Report Title: **Sickness absence**

Report Author: Ian Smith, Personnel Officer.

Summary:	This report provides end of year sickness absence information for the period 2012/13 and sets out the measures in place to manage sickness absence effectively.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: That the committee consider the information provided in this report and advise officers:

- If any further information is required

- If the committee would wish to receive a further update in a year's time

Contacts: Ian.smith@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330411

Report Title: Sickness Absence –Annual Report 2012/13

Purpose of the Report

1.   This report presents and analyses the sickness absence data for employees of Ashford Borough Council year period 2012/13. The data shown is according to the duration of absence and the factors causing absence**.**

2.   The report also describes the actions and processes which the council has in place to maximise attendance and reduce the level of employee sickness absence.
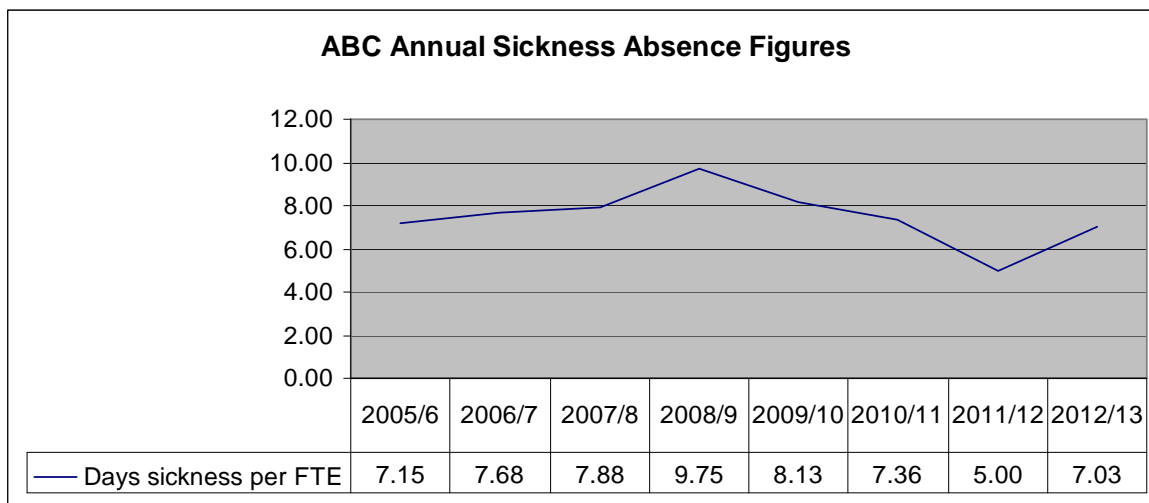
Background

3.   Under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, all employees are entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Payment of SSP is conditional on the provision of a self certification form from the first to seventh day of absence. From the eighth day of the sickness absence the council requires all employees to provide a doctor's statement of fitness note.

4.   Sickness absence is managed within the authority in accordance with the agreed *Policy for Handling Sickness Absence.* The policy has two principle objectives:

   •   To address and resolve absence issues before they become a problem.

   •   Managing unacceptable levels of sickness absence and long term ill health cases

5.   Ashford Borough Council's sickness absence figures and details for 2012/13 have been obtained from sickness absences recorded on the council's iTrent Payroll and HR system.

6.   The sickness absence statistics are presented as the average number of working days lost per full time equivalent per annum. This is more meaningful than the percentage of days lost and follows 'old' BVPI methodology for calculating and as a result tends to be calculated the same way across other local authority, which is helpful in comparison.

Sickness Absence –Annual Report 2012/13

7.   Based on the average number of 368.91 full time equivalent (FTE) employees, the total amount of working days lost due to sickness equates to 7.03 days per FTE. This figure represents an increase of 2.03 days per FTE reported for 2011/12.

8. **Chart 1** shows the average number of day's sickness absence for 2012/13 is the second lowest annual reported figure since 2005/6.

ABC Annual Sickness Absence Figures

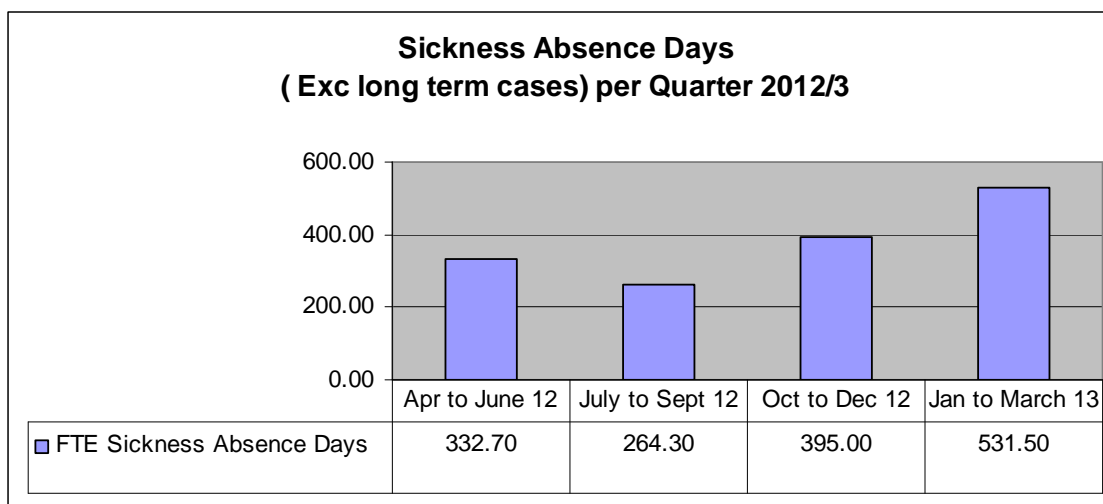|	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Days sickness per FTE	7.15	7.68	7.88	9.75	8.13	7.36	5.00	7.03

9. It is evident that the figure for 2011/12 is very low in comparison to other years. Factors contributing to the increase in the figure presented for 2012/13 are considered further in this report.

10. **Table 1** shows comparison figures by each sickness absence category (detailed further in the report) between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Category of sickness Absence	2011/12 FTE days (%of overall total)	2012/13 FTE days (% overall total)	Comparison totals
Short term (1-7 days)	573.64 (32%)	1291.00 (49.8%)	**Increase**: 717.36 days (+125.05%)
Medium Term (8-19 days)	489.7 (27%)	232.50 (8.9%)	**Decrease**: 257.2 days (-52.52 %)
Long term (20 + days)	731.66 (41%)	1070.62 (41.3%)	**Increase**: 338.94 days (+46.32%)
Totals	1795	2594.12	**Increase**: 799.12 days (+44.52 %)

11. This table shows that, while there have been significant increases in the categories for both long term and short term absences, there has been a marked decrease for sickness absences within the medium term category.

12. **Long term cases** – although there was increase of only one case from 2011/12, i.e. from 18 to 19, the average number of day's duration for each case increased from 45 days to 59.5 days with the longest period rising from 100 to 204 days. Given the uniqueness of each case within this category it is not possible to determine a common denominator for these increases.

5

13. **Short term absence cases** – in accounting for this increase it is appropriate to give consideration to the fact that the majority of sickness absence days occurred in the: quarter January to March 2013 as detailed in **Chart 2.**

Sickness Absence Days
(Exc long term cases) per Quarter 2012/3

	Apr to June 12	July to Sept 12	Oct to Dec 12	Jan to March 13
FTE Sickness Absence Days	332.70	264.30	395.00	531.50

14. The number of days for the quarter January to March 2013 accounted for 34.88% of all sickness days (1523.50 FTE days). In this quarter, 38.76% (206.02 FTE days) of reported sickness absences were attributed to *cold/influenza.*

15. The predominance of sickness absences in this period coincided with the coldest months during the last winter period. In addition to the illnesses associated with annual seasonal flu viruses, figures released by the Health Protection Agency report that up to 1.89million people caught norovirus (winter vomiting bug) during the winter recording period (November 2012 to March 2013). This figure is an increase of over 100,000 reported cases compared with the same period for 2011/12. Furthermore, the number of reported cases for March 2013 rose by approximately 9% compared to March 2012.

16. **Medium term absence cases** – it is possible to attribute the decrease in this category to (the comparatively) recent requirement for GPs to provide recommendations to facilitate a return to work rather than continue to 'sign off` the individual.

17. The total number of FTE days of absence was 2594.12**.** Represented as a percentage of the total amount of annual working days for all employees, the total number of days lost was 2.79%.

Absence by duration

18. Data is analysed according to the duration of absence, as short, medium and long term.

   - **Short term (1-7 days).** Sick leave of up to seven days is self certified and staff are not required to provide a doctor's note to justify the absence. Whilst the length of absence is by definition relatively short, this type of absence can disrupt service provision as it is difficult to predict the numbers of staff that might be absent each day. Short term sick leave accounted for **1291.00** days (49.77%) of the overall total.

   - **Medium term (8-19 days).** An employee is required to produce a doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work (fit note) to verify the period of sick leave. The fit note also provides a GP with the option to recommend a return to work as long as the employer provides the employee with reasonable help and support. Unless there are established patterns of sickness absence and /or a defined underlying health condition, this length of absence is unlikely to necessitate a referral to the occupational health service. There were 25 cases within this category, which accounted for **232.50** days (8.96 %) of the overall total.

19. **Table 2** details the six most common reasons for sickness absences under the above categories.

Reason	Number and percentage of FTE days
Cold/influenza	361.66 (23.71%)
Back pain/neck problems	71.6 (4.9%)
Stomach/digestive problems	163 (10.59%)
Chest/respiratory problems	89.56 (5.85%)
Musco Skeletal	44.41 (2.88%)
Stress/depression/anxiety	116 .19 (7.61%)

20. **Long term sickness absence (20 days or more)-** contributed significantly to overall sickness absence levels. There were 19 cases within this category, which accounted for 1070.62 days (41.27%) of the overall total.

21. The average period of absence per employee within this category was 59.5 days with the longest individual period being 204 days.

22. **Table 3** provides further details of these cases.

Returned to work.	Still absent	Ill health retirement	Death in service
16	1	1	1

23. **Table 4** shows the reasons for sickness absence within this category.

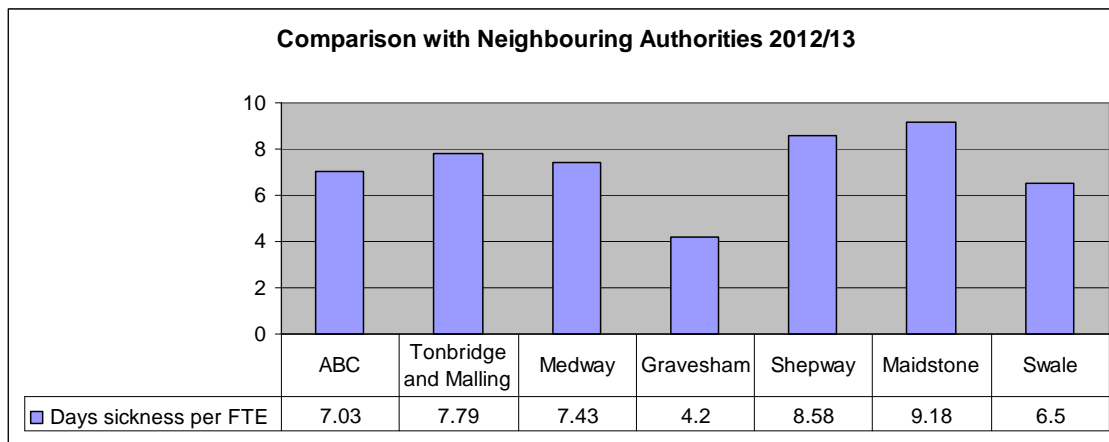| Reason	Number of cases
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	1
Heart condition	2
Anxiety/stress/depression	7
Cancer related	2
Abdominal condition	2
Bronchial condition	1
Back condition	1
Surgery	2
Vascular problems	1
Total	19

24. Where it was appropriate to do so**,** the rehabilitation of the employee's return to work was managed in accordance with the advice provided by the council's occupational health provider.

25. Compared to the reported figure for 2011/12, when there were 18 cases accounting for 731.66 days, there has been a 46.3% increase in the number of days for this category.

Financial Implications

26. The indicative cost of absence in 2012/13 was £ 364,102.This equates to 2.79% of the annual staff budget

27. It should be noted that these costs do not include overtime payments for staff covering for absent colleagues. We are very good at covering absence within existing staff levels, especially for short term absence. There has been no unusual peak in overtime payment during 2012/13 other than in the Monitoring Centre where two members of staff, who operated 24/7 shift working rotas, were off on long term sickness absence. Overtime in this area has been approximated to be £2,500.

28. Very rarely do we get agency/temporary /contractor staff to cover long term absences. However, the following additional (approximate) costs have been incurred in the following service areas as the result of the engagement of these staff:

- Financial Services - £39,500
- Ashford Monitoring Centre - £41,000

Comparison data

29. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) Annual most recent Survey Report (2012) on absence management trends reported that the average number of days sickness for employees within the public sector fell to its lowest level of 7.9 days since the first recording of absences by sector in 2002. The combined average for both the private and public sectors fell from the 2011 figure of 7.7 days to 6.8 days per employee.

30. **Chart 3** shows how the council compares with 6 neighbouring authorities who provided their average sickness absence figures for 2012/13.

Comparison with Neighbouring Authorities 2012/13

	ABC	Tonbridge and Malling	Medway	Gravesham	Shepway	Maidstone	Swale
Days sickness per FTE	7.03	7.79	7.43	4.2	8.58	9.18	6.5

Management of sickness

31. Line managers are expected to maintain the following overview approach in managing attendance:-

   - Be familiar with the Council's Policy for Handling Absence.
   - Ensure that their staff comply with absence reporting arrangements.
   - Include sickness absence management as a regular team agenda item.
   - Regularly monitor sickness absence to identify trends and any areas of concern.
   - Ensure that all sickness absence is recorded and reported to the Payroll Section
   - Maintain contact with staff during their absence**.**
   - Conduct return to work interviews with staff following their return from any period of sickness absence.
   - Seek advice and liaise with Personnel and Development where action is required in accordance with the Policy.

32. Sickness absence is monitored using the 'Bradford Factor' which provides a scoring based on the total days absence and instances of absence. Where appropriate, the resulting score directs the manager to speak to their staff and set attendance targets where attendance has been identified as a cause for concern. Individuals who do not meet the targets are managed through the Council's Capability Policy. The Personnel Section also carries out regular monitoring of sickness absence and 'flags' any concerns to managers.

33. Return to work interviews are recognised as one of the most widely used and effective tools to assist in the management of sickness absence. Conducting effective return one to work interviews was one of main learning objectives of the training sessions; '*Essentials of Managing Sickness Absence'* provided to our line managers earlier this year.

34. The provision of accurate absence data is a key enabler to support effective absence management and control. The reporting facilities of the iTrent Personnel and Payroll System allows managers to obtain up to date information of sickness absence levels.

35. The self certificate form has recently been revised to support better return to work processes. From the beginning of 2013/14 the 'Self-Service' function of the new iTrent system was rolled out to all staff. This gives our managers instant access to absence reports for their teams and staff can, for the first time, see their absence history.

36. We hope that this will have the dual effect of managers being able to easily get information about absence to assist in managing attendance. And staff, particularly those with higher absence, realising just how much sickness absence they have, making them think more carefully about whether they need to take time off. There is however a possibility that, because it is easier for staff to record their sickness, reporting may improve. As a result, absence levels may increase in 2013/14.

Employee Support Mechanisms

37. It has long been recognised that employers who provide an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) have better return to work rates than those who do not provide such schemes. Consequently, the council has engaged *Health Assured* to provide our employees with a free 24 hours a day confidential life management and personal support service. In the event the telephoned based counsellor determines 'face to face' counselling is required, up 8 sessions are provided to the employee. As part of the contract, the *Active Care Service* provides support to the employee on the very first day of a stress related absence. A report providing advice for the provision of appropriate work place support is provided to the manager of the referred employee**.**

38. The continuation of the contract with *Preventative Health Care* as the council's occupational health provider ensures the provision of professional advice in support of the management of sickness absence, particularly long term cases. Typically the advice relates to the supportive arrangements that need to be put in place to enable the employee's return to work. The quality of the advice provided can be recognised as a significant contributory factor to reducing levels of sickness absence. The council's occupational health service, managed by Personnel and Development provides a range of support mechanisms with respect to maximising employee attendance. The objective of these mechanisms is not only to provide advice and guidance to the Council and the employees when an employee is absent but also to act in a preventative capacity providing support or treatment which pre-empts and avoids the possibility of an employee being absent wherever possible.

39. The role of occupational health is integral to the effective management of employee absence. Managers may refer employees who are absent, or have returned from absence, to Occupational Health in order to receive advice regarding the implications of an employee's condition with respect to their duties.

40. The occupational health service provides clinical or medical opinion as to the nature of the condition, the anticipated recovery period and whether there are interventions which can be put in place to assist the employee return to work. In 2012/13 there were 17 managerial case referrals for this purpose.

Conclusion

41. The Council does not expect its staff to attend for work when they are medically unfit to do so, but it does require them to account for absences.

42. Equally, the provision of appropriate support to staff to aid their return to work is essential in contributing to reducing levels of sickness absence and maintaining service delivery.

43. First line managers are key to managing the absence levels of their staff. Managing absence successfully is about early intervention together with the provision of appropriate advice and support. Personnel will continue to support our managers thorough the provision of guidance, advice and training.

44. It is therefore essential that the management of sickness absence is effective, fair and consistent. To ensure that the council meets this obligation we will continue to support and train our line managers in dealing with absence issues and review the policy and its procedures to determine where improvements can be made.

Contact: **Ian Smith Personnel Officer**
Email: ian.smith@ashford.gov.uk
Tel: 01233 330411

Agenda Item No:	5
Report To:	**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Date:	**25th JUNE 2013**
Report Title:	**Communication and Consultation Strategy for the Core Strategy Review**
Report Author:	Simon Cole, Policy Manager

Summary:	Following the Update report on communications to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March this year, it was agreed that representatives of the Planning Department be invited to a future meeting to discuss the communication and consultation strategy for the Core Strategy Review (Local Plan 2030).
	This report sets out some of the issues and challenges in getting a broad and representative public response to the major planning issues that the Plan will address and highlights some of the communication methods and techniques we are currently employing.

Key Decision:	NO
Affected Wards:	All Wards
Recommendation:	**The Committee be asked to note the content of the report.**
Policy Overview:	The current Core Strategy was adopted in 2008 and is currently in the process of being reviewed to have an end date of 2030. It will form the main planning policy document for the Council and govern decisions on new development across the borough.
Financial Implications:	None
Risk Assessment	NO
Equalities Impact Assessment	NO
Other Material Implications:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contacts:	Simon.cole@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330642

Agenda Item No. 5

Report Title: Communication and consultation strategy for the Core Strategy Review

Purpose of the Report

1.   This report provides a follow up to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March where Members indicated that they were concerned with the communications strategy for the Core Strategy Review (Local Plan 2030) and were keen to understand more about how we intend to generate public interest in the plan-making process.

Background

2.   The requirements for consultation when a Local Planning authority is creating a new Plan are set out in Government Regulations. Despite the raft of recent changes to the planning system over the last few years, these Regulations have remained reasonably consistent, and if anything, more recent revisions have generally reduced the overall requirement to consult or have placed the onus on the LPA to decide for itself when consultation is necessary.

3.   However, the Government has also introduced a new legal 'Duty to Co-operate' in plan-making, where LPAs are required to demonstrate that they have fully liaised and discussed their emerging plans with neighbouring local authorities and other statutory organisations such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Environment Agency, Homes & Communities Agency, Highways Agency, etc. The 'Duty' doesn't extend to issues of consultation with the general public.

4.   Set alongside these regulatory requirements is the 'localism' theme, where communities are encouraged to take the initiative in determining the future of their areas and, specifically, the concept of formal Neighbourhood Plans has been introduced to allow plan-making to be undertaken by communities at a very local level. Only Wye with Hinxhill and Rolvenden parishes are pursuing this option in the borough at the present time.

What do we normally do ?

5.   In recent years, as the Council has produced a series of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), our approach to public consultation has been based on the methods and principles set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI was first adopted in 2006 and revised in 2009. A further revision is currently being drafted and is scheduled to soon be considered by the Cabinet. The 2009 version is appended for information.

6.   The SCI goes a considerable way beyond the minimum requirements for consultation in plan-making set down in the Regulations and generally accepts that we will include a series of 'informal' stages of public consultation

depending on the nature and / or location of the issues involved. As we have an adopted SCI, we are then obliged to carry out our consultation in accordance with it, irrespective of whether we already meet the minimum regulatory requirements.

7.   The SCI also sets out some of the consultation techniques that we would normally use. In all cases, we publish the document for consultation on the Council's website and an e-mail is automatically sent to all parties who are logged on our consultee database to advise them that a consultation has begun. In addition, a notice is placed in the local newspaper and the relevant documents are made available to view at the libraries in the borough and at the Gateways in Ashford and Tenterden as well as the Civic Centre.

8.   However, again depending on the issues involved, in order to supplement the consultation process, there may be a series of exhibitions – staffed or unstaffed - in accessible locations (County Square is often used for example) either during the consultation period or whilst the plan is still emerging. We will seek to publicise these events in advance with help from the Communications Team and external partners, such as a Parish Council, so that people know when they are being held.

9.   Comments from the public can be captured from a variety of means. We do encourage people to respond to consultations via our consultation portal, on the website but we will readily accept e-mailed or written comments which are then manually scanned onto the system. These are then available to view for everyone once the consultation period has closed.

What are the Challenges ?

10.   Our long experience of plan-making in the borough tells us that there are always some difficult challenges in making consultation as broad and inclusive as possible whilst not spending a fortune on it. These can usually be summarised as follows :-

-   Planning can be highly technical – can it be presented more simply without reducing complex arguments to over-simplified debate ?
-   General apathy or lack of awareness, until a 'threat' is perceived
-   Reaching different parts of the community
-   Consultation 'fatigue'

11.   In general, it is probably reasonable to say that local reaction and involvement to planning applications tends to be a lot greater than for plan documents and yet it is often the Plan that will have already set the principle for the determination of the application. Applications are inevitably more site specific and are seen as an indication that something is going to happen soon, whereas Plans are sometimes perceived as much longer-term in their potential impact.

12.   This experience suggests that the site-specific elements in plan-making need to be better communicated so that people are aware of proposals and understand that this is the stage when the principle for a development coming forward can be established, rather than waiting for the subsequent planning application to come along.

13. It was with these challenges in mind that we have sought to adapt our consultation strategy for the Core Strategy Review process and this is explained in more detail below.

Plan-it Ashford

14. Drawing on a best practice model used for Winchester's Local Plan, Plan-it Ashford was launched in August last year as a means of engaging directly with local communities across the borough at the earliest possible stage of the Local Plan's preparation. We initially wrote directly to every parish council and urban forum inviting them to participate and have subsequently extended invitations to different community or interest groups.

15. The intention behind the Plan-it exercise was to get local communities to identify the things they particularly liked or disliked about their areas and to identify any challenges they thought would need to be addressed over forthcoming years. A set of animated 'characters' was devised to represent different elements of each local community so that people could be encouraged to consider not only their own needs but those of others in their neighbourhood.

16. Since the end of 2012, the Policy Team has been heavily engaged in facilitating discussions with a wide range of groups and organisations (see Appendix 1). These have sometimes involved just local parish councillors and sometimes members of the wider general public and we are continuing to meet new groups all the time.

17. The exercise has been undertaken with a consciously wide remit. Facilitators have emphasised that any comments are welcome, whether specifically planning-related or not (and thus a broader knowledge of planning is not required). The agenda is very much set by the local participants and it has consciously focused on local issues as these are the ones that people can generally recognise and articulate much more freely about.

18. The initiative has been widely welcomed by those groups who we have met and hopefully is seen as a demonstrable example of localism in action. However, we have been at pains to emphasise that we may not be able to address all the issues raised in the Local Plan and that there should be an on-going dialogue with communities to discuss what can and cannot be achieved in due course.

19. The exercise has shown the value that local organisations can play in communicating information from the Borough Council. Parish Councils and Urban Forums can and should be encouraged to play a more proactive role in seeking the views of residents within their areas and ensuring that those views are representative. We will continue to use the channels of communication that the Plan-it Ashford exercise has opened up in recent months as the Local Plan preparation moves forward.

Communications today

20. Alongside more traditional forms of communication, we need to consider that today's preferred modes for many people are focused around social media. Although the likes of Twitter and Facebook are perhaps more attuned to 'discussion' rather than commenting as part of a consultation, the council needs to be aware of the potential of these avenues.

21. The Communications team has created a Facebook page called 'Ashford Local Plan' so that comments can be received separately to the council's main Facebook page. This allows for a channel for comments outside of any official 'consultation period'.

22. The power of these media was demonstrated during the evolution of the Urban Sites & Infrastructure DPD when Facebook campaigns around development proposals in Godinton Park and Kennington generated large local responses which were instrumental in influencing the council's final drafting of the Plan. We should have the ability to be proactive in the use of these media to assist in communicating and consulting with a wide audience.

Strategic versus local

23. It is acknowledged that Members were disappointed by the public response to the 'jobs / homes scenarios' consultation that was undertaken at the end of last year. This was the first in what will be several 'informal' consultation events to be held over the course of the Local Plan's preparation and focused on strategic, 'high level' questions of potential jobs and housing targets to 2030.

24. It is inevitable that where a greater level of understanding is necessary to fully engage with the issues being consulted on, and there is no site specific element involved, responses tend to be mainly from the industry itself rather than the general public – which was the case here.

25. This need not invalidate the value of a consultation provided that its context is understood and appreciated. For example, a debate about overall housing and jobs numbers is rooted in the application of different trends and assumptions derived from various studies and other statistics and a technical knowledge about the validity of certain approaches is necessary for an informed view to be formed. However, when the debate starts to focus on 'where' those houses and jobs should go, then local resident and business views are particularly important in informing the process.

Future Consultation stages

26. Throughout the next 12 months, we would envisage several opportunities for further public consultation to be carried out in addition to the statutory consultation required on the draft Local Plan when it is first published in full. Working with the Communications Team, I would anticipate a significant amount of consultation work around the choices for sites to be allocated in the Local Plan. This would be undertaken prior to any decisions being taken by the council on which might be the 'best' sites and has the chance to greatly inform the final decisions on which sites to include in the draft Plan.

27. These consultations should draw on the relationships established through the Plan-it Ashford work and the 'workshop' approach utilised with a number of parish councils in the drafting of the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD where they were asked to identify their preferred locations for development in their villages. This gave communities some 'ownership' over the decision-making process and significantly reduced the number of eventual objections to the Plan.

28. We also have a long track record of involvement and consultation as detailed proposals progress through various design workshops and events and working with local residents and other groups in order to gain as much local local consensus as possible.

29. The intention will be to work closely with the members of the Planning Task Group in identifying when public consultation would be desirable in the plan-making process and how such consultation should best be carried out.

Portfolio Holder's Views

30. Comments awaited

Contact: Simon Cole - 01233 330642

Email: simon.cole@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Plan–it Ashford Meetings held to date

Day/ Date	Organisation	event	Time	Location
3/10/12	Willesborough Community Forum	intro	7.30	Willesborough Baptist Church
16/1/13	Chilham PC	Intro & post it*	7pm	Village Hall
29/1/13	Central Ashford Community Forum	Into & post it	7pm	Furley Hall
Wed 13/2/13	Shadoxhurst PC	intro	7.30pm	Village Hall
Thurs 21/2/13	South Ashford Community Forum	Full event	-	
Wed 6/3/13	South Ashford Youth Group	Full event	4-7pm	South Ashford Baptist Church
Fri 8/3/13	Ashford District Partnership Group (Families and carers for children with disabilities)	Full event	10am-12.30pm	St Francis Church, Cryol Road
Monday 11/3/13	Rolvenden PC	intro	9.30	Civic centre
Thur 14/3	HOUSE	Full	6-10pm	Stour Centre
Fri 15/3/13	Egerton PC	intro	6 – 9pm	Millennium Village Hall
Wed 20/3/13	Mersham – Village Alliance	intro	7.30	Mountbatten Hall, Mersham
Wed 20/3/13	Newenden PC	intro	7pm	
Mon 25/3/13	Stanhope PC	intro	7pm	
Tues	Central Ashford	full	evening	St Mary's Parish Hall

Day/Date	Organisation	event	Time	Location
26/3/13	Community Forum			
Wed 27/3/13	Ashford Access (Cllr Claughton)	Intro	10am	CR2
Wed 27/3/13	Willesborough Community Forum	full	7.30pm	Baptist Church, Hythe Rd
Sun 7/4/13	Nepalese Sagarmatha community group	full	11am	
Tuesday 9/4/13	Tenant and Residents Panel (Housing – Philippa Dale & Rebecca Wilcox)	Full	Evening 6.30pm	Council Chamber.
Tues 30/4/13	Kennington Community Forum	Intro	7pm	St Mary's Hall, Church Road Kennington
Mon 13/5/13	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell PC	Intro	7.30	Iron Room Village Hall, Boughton Aluph
Mon 20/5/13	Great Chart/Singleton PC	Intro	7pm	Parish Hall
Tuesday 28/5/13	Kennington Community Forum	Post it	7pm	St Marys Hall
Tues 11/6/13	Hastingleigh PC	Intro	7.45	Evrington Village Hall
Thurs 20/6/13	Brook PC	Intro	7pm	Brook Village Hall
Wed 10/7/13	Smeeth PC	intro	7pm	Brabourne Baptist Church

*post-it sessions are where we have asked the group to identify their main local 'likes' and 'dislikes' on post-it notes

Statement of Community Involvement First Review

Contents

1 Introducing the Statement of Community Involvement

Background to the SCI

1.1   Community involvement is an important part of preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Council is required to prepare and maintain a document known as the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out how the Council intends to achieve continuous community involvement in the preparation of Local Development Documents in their area as well as involve the public on consultation on planning applications.

1.2   The aim of the SCI is to ensure that all sections of the public and community, including local groups and organisations, are actively represented and involved throughout the process of preparing any Local Development Document contained within the LDF, including both Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

1.3   As a Growth Area identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan, the production of the Ashford LDF and the associated SCI is especially important. The Council's original SCI was formally adopted on the 24 August 2006 and this is the first review.

First Review of the SCI

1.4   This review of the adopted Ashford SCI has been undertaken in response to changes made to the Local Development Framework plan-making process following the publication of the new PPS12 [1] on 4th June 2008 and to enable consistency with the accompanying amendments to the 2004 Regulations [2][3]. A summary of the amendments to the Regulations can be found at Appendix 4.

1.5   This has also given the Council an opportunity to review the original SCI following the adoption of the Core Strategy and the submission of the Council's first AAP (the Ashford Town Centre AAP) to the Secretary of State and make amendments where necessary to reflect past experiences and the most effective methods of consultation used to date.

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1   Communities and Local Government (2008) 'Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning

2   Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 - 27th June 2008

3   Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 - 6th April 2009

2 Explaining the Local Development Framework

2.1   The Local Development Framework contains a portfolio of documents called Local Development Documents (LDDs) which will collectively deliver the spatial strategy for the borough and supersede the remaining 'saved' policies in the Ashford Borough Local Plan (2000). The LDDs will include Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans (DPDs and AAPs) that are geographically or issue specific, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that detail core policy issues contained within the DPDs. All documents can be prepared and updated separately and are subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement. The public statement that sets out the timetable that the Council intends to follow in the production of its LDF is called the Local Development Scheme (LDS).
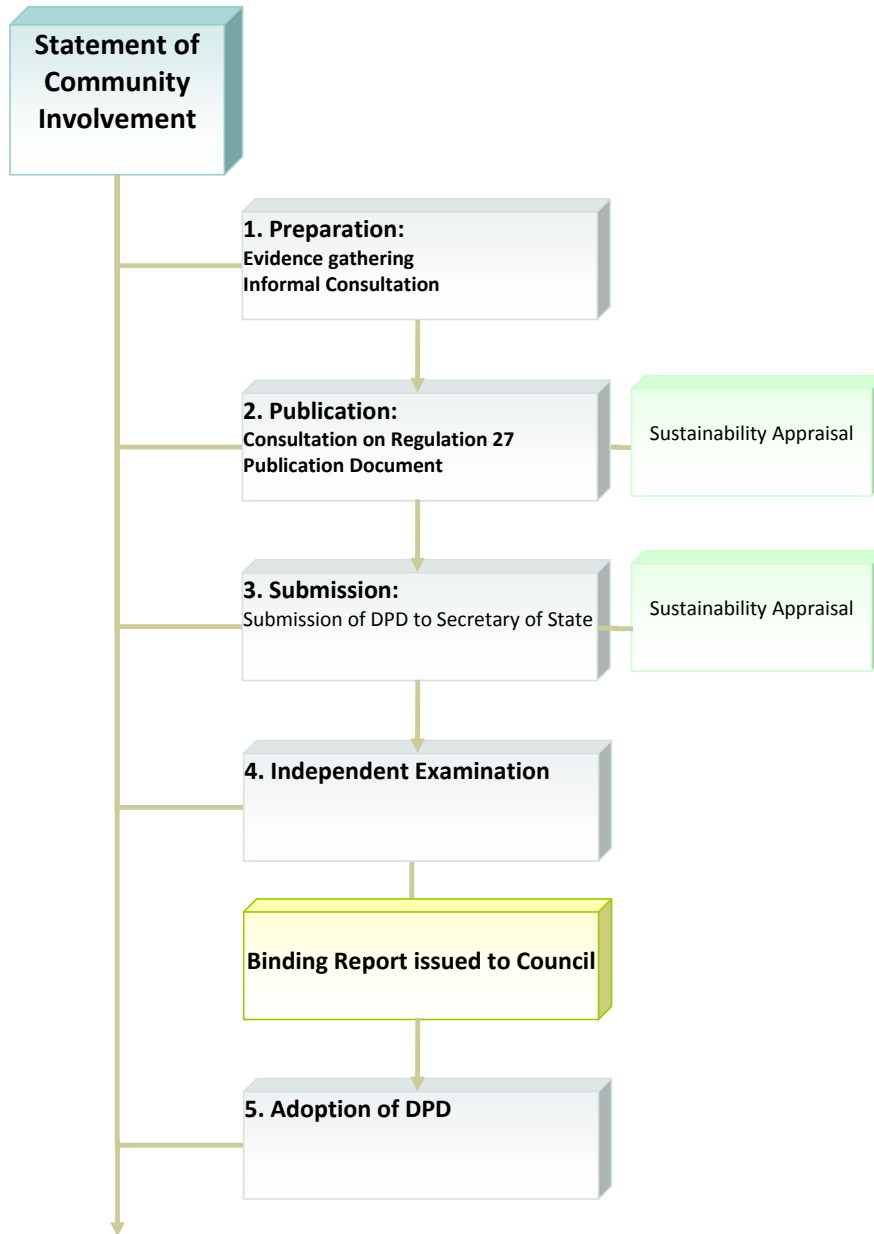
The Local Development Scheme

2.2   The Council is required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Local Development Scheme is a three-year project plan for the preparation of the LDF showing the timetable for producing each Development Plan Document. It is submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and is used to assess the Council's performance in LDF preparation.

2.3   Ashford Borough Council's original LDS was approved in March 2005. This was first reviewed in March 2006 and the amendments published on on the Council's website. A further review in 2007 was postponed following discussions with the Government Office for the South-East (GOSE) pending the outcome of of the Examination into the Core Strategy. In June 2008, the Inspector's Report declared the Core Strategy 'sound' and the Council subsequently reviewed the LDS. A new LDS was agreed by the Secretary of State in October 2008.

2.4   The timetable for the preparation of the Ashford LDF taken from the October 2008 LDS is inserted at Appendix 1. As the timelines and content of the Local Development Framework may be subject to change, please visit our website at www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf for any updates.

Preparing the Local Development Framework Documents

2.5   Each Development Plan Document must be prepared in a series of stages in accordance with the new Government Regulations. See Figure 1. For a description of the changes to the 2004 Regulations please see Appendix 4.

Figure 1: The Process of preparing and adopting Development Plan Documents (DPD)

Statement of Community Involvement

1. Preparation:
Evidence gathering
Informal Consultation

2. Publication:
Consultation on Regulation 27
Publication Document

Sustainability Appraisal

3. Submission:
Submission of DPD to Secretary of State

Sustainability Appraisal

4. Independent Examination

Binding Report issued to Council

5. Adoption of DPD

Community Involvement

2.6   The aim of continuous community involvement is to produce consensus as far as possible on the form and content of any Local Development Document which the Local Planning Authority are preparing. Achieving consensus is not always possible and planning is often seen as conflict laden. With Ashford's growth agenda and the potential for communities to resist change, there is a need for creativity and good will to develop solutions and reach consensus as far as possible.

2.7   This Statement sets out the Council's commitment to a range of participation methods to involve all relevant stakeholders and which will take place at different stages of the plan-making process. If this is successful in building a broad consensus, it may help to minimise the need for a lengthy examination process. However, it must be recognised that the Local Planning Authority will have to make difficult decisions where it may not always be possible to achieve complete consensus and it may then be necessary to take any unresolved issues to an examination.

The Sustainability Appraisal and Environmental Assessment

2.8   Article19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires a 'Sustainability Appraisal (SA)' to be carried out on Development Plan Documents, so that the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the plan can be appraised. In addition, Directive 2001/42/EC requires a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of certain plans and programmes, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment . Therefore, both the SA and SEA will play an important role in the preparation of the LDF and ensuring they help in moving the Borough towards a more sustainable future, in line with the Borough's Community Strategy and aims for Ashford's Future.

2.9   The Sustainability Appraisal can incorporate the Strategic Environmental Assessment as long as guidance in 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' [4] is followed. Therefore, the Council will publish a single document to accompany each Development Plan Document. This will be called the Sustainability Appraisal and will provide the basis for future monitoring, together with specific indicators and targets. For example, as part of the background documents to the Core Strategy, a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating the SEA was produced and adopted in October 2006.

4   Communities and Local Government (2006) "A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive"

3 Community Involvement - The Wider Context

3.1 Continuous community involvement is not a new concept for Ashford Borough Council. Comprehensive and successful participation and consultation involving many hundreds of stakeholders and local people has been carried out for many other strategies and initiatives led by the Council in the past. Indeed much of this participation indirectly feeds into the LDF in terms of views and opinions relating to setting a vision for the Borough and ultimately development proposals and policies.

Those strategies most directly related include:-

Ashford Borough Council Corporate Plan

3.2 Ashford Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2007 to 2010 (amended 2008) aims to "To protect and improve the quality of life of every resident of the Borough, now and in the future". This plan details elected members themed priorities for the next few years and what the council, working alongside partners and others, will do to deliver these priorities.

3.3 There are seven main themes contained within the Plan which set out the aims and values which underpin the work of the Borough Council and its delivery of services to the people of Ashford.

3.4 The seven themes are:

- Good quality services giving best value for money.
- Local leadership and strong partnership working
- Customer/Citizen focus
- Our Environment
- Ashford's Future
- Housing
- Prosperity

Ashford's Community Strategy

3.5 The Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership was set up in 2002 to reflect on the implications of Ashford's planned growth and produce a vision for the borough. It contains members from key organisations within the public, community, voluntary and private sectors, who have worked together to plan a vision for the borough. This vision is called the Ashford Sustainable Community Strategy and its aim is to transform the economic, social and environmental profile of the borough so that local people can live more happy and fulfilled lives.

3.6 The Sustainable Community Strategy for Ashford was adopted in 2008 and provides a vision statement for the Borough covering the next 10 years.

3.7 The plan sets out a number of clear strategic priorities set into eight themes, see Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Community Strategy

3.8   The Local Strategic Partnership has been involved in key stages of planning for the LDF and will continue to play an important role at each stage in the process. It is essential that there is a strong relationship between the Community Strategy and the LDF in order to link the objectives and identify opportunities, consider the potential to combine community consultation processes and share information gathering and monitoring processes. There is also a county-wide Community Strategy that has been endorsed by all Kent District Councils that sets out a 'Vision for Kent'[5]. The Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership will play an important role in providing a link between the county-wide Community Strategy, Ashford's Community Strategy and the LDF.

Beacon Award

3.9   The Beacon Scheme, sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government highlights best practice in local government. Beacon status is granted to those authorities who can demonstrate a clear vision, excellent service and a willingness to innovate within a theme. It is not just an award, but also a responsibility to share best practice and knowledge with other authorities. Ashford Borough Council is 1 of only 4 Council's in the country to have been awarded Beacon Status for 'promoting sustainable communities through the planning process'.

3.10   Ashford Borough Council received the award in 2007 as a reward for their long track record of design workshops on important sites and the community based approach to masterplanning Ashford's growth.

3.11   For   further   information   please   visit   the   Beacon   Scheme   website www.beacons.idea.gov.uk

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5   Kent Partnership (2006) Vision for Kent, Version 2, published April 2006

Ashford's Growth Programme

3.12 Ashford's Growth programme is being co-ordinated and delivered by the Ashford's Future Company, which has been formed from a partnership between the local councils (KCC and ABC), government agencies and others from the public and private sector. The company is responsible for delivering regeneration throughout the Ashford Growth Area and ensuring the town develops and grows in a sustainable way. Ultimately the partnership wants Ashford to be the best place to live, work and do business.

3.13 The role of the partnership is to:

- Provide great urban environments
- Improve recreation opportunities and facilities
- Enhance and protect countryside and green spaces
- Introduce balanced communities with good schools
- Provide excellent community and cultural facilities
- Improve transport and utilities infrastructure
- Develop homes that people can afford to rent or buy

3.14 Ashford's Future uses the brand 'Best Placed in Britain' to promote the growth agenda. It has organised many events and workshops to help promote the Ashford brand. These have included extensive participation with the local and wider community in workshops, exhibitions, leaflets, and opinion surveys and through the media. Further participation is planned and will be carefully related wherever possible to the key formal stages of the LDF. This will provide the opportunity to create a more widely shared vision of how Ashford can develop for the benefit of the community in the future.

3.15 For further information regarding the activities of Ashford's Future please see www.ashfordbestplaced.co.uk

4 Community Involvement in the Local Development Framework

How the council proposes to involve the public

4.1   This is the key part of the SCI where an inclusive programme for consulting with the public and all key stakeholders at various stages of the production of the Local Development Plan Documents is set out. Consultation on Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents must conform to the SCI and include a Statement to illustrate how they have done this.

4.2   It is important to identify the key target groups to be involved in the LDF process. It is also important to recognise that within any area 'communities' are made up of many different interest groups, and effective involvement cannot happen without a good understanding of make up, needs and interests of these different groups and their capacity to engage in community involvement. For each, there will be effective ways to involve them, which, if carefully designed, will maximise their opportunities to influence the preparation of the LDF. For example, a summary leaflet might be all many people want to read about the LDF but local amenity groups may want full documents and supporting information and to debate these at workshop events. The Council has an LDF database, which is used to manage the contact details for individuals and is also arranged into, and provides an effective tool in targeting, specific target groups. The LDF database is referred to in Table 3 of the SCI.

4.3   It is crucial that the debate about the Local Development Framework is accessible to all. The Council will offer large print documents, a document reading service, Braille versions and a translation service for all key material it produces on request and will work with local groups on other steps needed to make sure that all members of the community can access material. Alternative versions can be made available by calling the Planning and Development Unit on 01233 330229. Events and exhibitions will be planned at venues that are fully accessible for everyone regardless of their mobility.

4.4   To be effective, consultation needs to be accessible and appropriate to the needs of the particular target group. A significant proportion of the Borough's residents live in rural areas, and therefore may have limited access to public transport and other services. The Council will endeavour to fully engage rural communities in consultation on the proposals that affect them as well as those communities that live in the Ashford growth area. Tailoring consultation arrangements to community needs is important and therefore innovative approaches should be explored and developed, especially in relation to "hard to reach" groups, such as the elderly, the young, disabled, ethnic minorities. These groups have tended to be underrepresented in the planning process in the past, and therefore more innovative approaches are needed in order to engage them.

4.5   The Ashford Community Network is a key strategic body for voluntary and community organisations within the borough. It aims to represent the sector's voice on key issues and to provide an efficient and effective single point of contact and consultation with the voluntary and community sector. The Ashford Community Network works in partnership with the Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership.

4.6   Additionally, the Council is committed to the Ashford Borough Compact, which sets out clear principles and codes of practice on working positively with its voluntary and

community sector partners. Ashford Borough Council recognises that both the Ashford Community Network and the Compact are key to enabling effective involvement of marginalised groups in policy development and community planning. The Ashford Borough Compact can be viewed on the Ashford Borough Council website.

4.7   One of the main aims of the SCI is to ensure that all sections, including the public, local voluntary and community groups and organisations, service providers, landowners and developers, Parish Councils are actively involved throughout the process of preparing any local development documents including Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Planning Policy Statement 12 lists a set of 'statutory' consultees that must be involved in consultation - this is reproduced in Appendix 2. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to comment during a formal consultation period. The Council is happy to accept representations in the following formats: online via the Consultation Portal, by representation form, by letter, by email and by fax. Hard copy representation forms are available at deposit points and by telephoning 01233 330229.

4.8   The following table sets out broad consultee groups that the Council will aim to involve and the techniques that may be used to engage them.

Table 1 List of Consultee groups and techniques used to target these groups

Consultee Group	Example	Consultation techniques proposed for targeting group
Councillors	• Ashford Borough Councillors • Kent County Councillors	• LDF Task Group and formal Council meetings • Workshops and meetings
Parish Councils	• Individual Parish Council chairman and clerks • Representatives from Parish Councils	• Parish Forums • Community Workshops and meetings • Parish Council meetings
Business Interests	• Local Companies - Rural and Urban • Ashford Chamber of Commerce, Ashford Town Centre Partnership	• Workshop, meetings and focus groups • Business breakfasts • Briefings • Participation in exhibitions
Land Interests	• Developers, landowners, house builders and consultants	• Meetings and workshops • Housing Market Partnership • Business breakfasts
Partner Agencies	• Ashford's Future Company Board Members, Government Agencies, Local Strategic Partnership, Statutory consultees.	• Workshops and meetings • Consult with partner agencies throughout the drafting of policy documents

Consultee Group	Example	Consultation techniques proposed for targeting group
General Interest Groups	• The Borough and the wider area	• Participation in workshops and exhibitions • Focus groups on specific issues
General Public	• The Borough and the wider area	• Keep up to date on issues via the Council website and the media and press • Exhibitions and public events
Hard to Reach groups	• Young people, older people, ethnic minority groups, disabled people	• Specific tailored events within schools, colleges, community centres etc • Workshops, exhibitions and focus groups

The detailed participation proposals

4.9   The participation processes and activities proposed can be separated into two parts: the types of consultation we intend to carry out throughout the process and the broad interest groups that we intend to involve at each stage.

4.10   Individual Development Plan Documents will vary greatly in content, scope and location, it is important to consider the most appropriate consultation method to use at the different stages in the preparation of each DPD, and also to ensure that the methods employed are suitable for the intended audience. A consultation statement of how the methods used for each DPD conform to the general thrust and approach set out in the SCI will also be included,and will form part of the Submission to the Secretary of State, in addition to informing the monitoring and review process.

4.11   The following table (Table 2) sets out the general consultation techniques that we may use throughout the production of the Local Development Documents and what these techniques involve. Please note, this list is not exhaustive and additional consultation techniques could be utilised where they are felt necessary or could improve public participation during consultation events, for example working with the local Parish Council or using leaflets advertising a consultation event. Following on from this, Table 3 sets out the key stages in the production of a DPD and the types of consultation that may be carried out at each stage, some form part of the minimum statutory requirements for consultation. The Council exceeds the minimum statutory requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, (as amended 2008 and 2009).

Table 2 Consultation Methods for Development Plan Documents

Consultation Techniques	Examples where we have utilised consultation Techniques
Consultation document	
• Draft documents made available for inspection at the Council Offices, Libraries and other appropriate venues and on the Council website. See Appendix 3 for a list of 'Deposit Points' where hard-copy documents will be available for consultation. • Formal opportunities for making representations on the draft documents in accordance with Government requirements at formal plan making stages.	Issues and Options documents have been prepared for consultation for several DPDs to date. These are published on the Council's website and comment made either in hard copy or via the Council's consultation portal on the website. Hard copies of DPDs and referenced background documents are available on request
Staffed exhibitions	
• Exhibition outlining main issues and proposals with chance for face-to-face discussion with planning officers. • Summary exhibition outlining main issues and proposals using a range of materials that capture interest and reaction. • Acting as an effective way of soliciting responses to published documents • Exhibitions will take place at times and be located at venues accessible to the widest possible audience.	Staffed exhibitions in conjunction with Ashford's Future have been held in the County Square Shopping centre to help highlight the issues and options for the Town Centre AAP.
Consultation Portal and website	
• To provide basic information on the LDF process, timetable, outputs and all documents produced in a downloadable	To date the Council has successfully consulted on the following documents using the Consultation Portal:

format conforming with e-government initiatives and accessible to all. • To act as a consultation tool at the formal consultation stages, through viewing documents and submitting representations electronically: www.ashford.gov.uk/consult and www.ashford.gov.uk/ldf	Ashford Town Centre AAP - Publication Version Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Regulation 27 - Publication version Cheeseman's Green and Waterbrook AAP - Issues and Options Report Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD - Issues and Options Report Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD - Issues and Options Report Draft Affordable Housing SPD Draft Sustainable Design and Construction SPD This software is hosted externally by Limehouse Software and provides the consultee with a user friendly environment to make representations and read comments that have been received.
Development Update (containing the LDF Newsletter)	
• Informative six-monthly newsletter produced to highlight progress in the production of LDF documents and on major planning applications, and to provide information on proposed public consultation events, and where to obtain feedback from past consultations. • The newsletter will be available to download from the Council's website and interested parties, including Parish Councils will be informed of its availability via email.	The LDF newsletter is contained within the Development Update. It is produced every six months and is available to download from the website in PDF format. Development Update.
Workshops/Meetings	
• Organised meetings / discussions to discuss specific issues in a structured forum and to obtain initial concepts and develop ideas. • Generating structured discussions to establish consensus and to flag up areas of contention.	The Council has successfully organised two series of village workshops, to gain views and perspectives on the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD. These workshops were held in different villages identified for development, with invitations from the respective Parish Councils to gain a broad cross-section of the community.

• Provide developers / landowners with the opportunity to promote their sites and set out their aspirations. • Increasing interface and working relations between consultants, agents, the council and key stakeholders, in order for key people to feed successfully into LDF process.	Regular stakeholder and landowner meetings are held regarding the proposed Ashford Urban extensions and a workshop on the Chilmington Green urban extension was held in February 2009.
Formal Adverts	
• These are statutory notices placed in local newspapers to advertise key public consultation stages in the production of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents showing the places and times at which the proposals documents can be inspected.	To date all statutory adverts have been placed in the Ashford and Tenterden editions of the Kentish Express newspaper, when required.
Informal Adverts	
• May also include articles / adverts in the local newspaper highlighting the specific parts of the DPD preparation process, consultation events or specific requests for information.	The Council successfully used this technique for the Affordable Housing SPD, where the Council had a front page article explaining the document and the consultation process. The Council also informally advertised in July 2007 to invite local landowners / developers to put forward their land for consideration for development in the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD.

Table 3 Stages and Types of Consultation

Stage	Type of Consultation
Preparation: -Evidence gathering -Informal Consultation	
Informal Adverts	Used to alert people to early work on area-based elements of LDDs and seek, for example, site submissions from interested parties.
Informal Workshops / meetings	Statutory consultees will be consulted on the evolving issues, as necessary. The Council will hold informal meetings with the appropriate specific consultation bodies and non-statutory consultation bodies, to discuss issues at the earliest opportunity as well a interested stakeholders.
Exhibitions	May be used in local communities to identify potential issues or proposals at early stage of DPD making process, or to address a mass passing audience and engender interest and debate on the issues the DPD needs to address.
Development Update (containing the LDF Newsletter)	Raising awareness of general issues and work underway.
Scoping Document	Informal scoping report sent to all 'specific' consultation bodies that are affected by the issues and policies of the Development Plan Document. Also an email notification sent to all consultees on database and to 'general' consultation bodies as the Council considers appropriate.
Issues and Options Report	Consultation document prepared to set out what the Council considers to be the principal issues that the DPD needs to address and various but not exclusive options as to how that might be done. Minimum of 6 week consultation period. Specific notification given to relevant stakeholders but consultation open to general public.
Website	LDF web pages will be kept up-to-date and show detail relating to active policy documents being prepared, the broad timings for

4

	consultation events proposed including how people can get involved in the process.
Publication: Consultation on Regulation 27 Publication Document	
Full Document	Full consultation document available for inspection at the deposit points outlined in Appendix 3 and to download from the Consultation Portal. An electronic copy will be sent to all 'specific' consultation bodies outlined in Appendix 2. In addition, Parish Councils' will receive a hard copy of the document.
Online Consultation Portal and website	Consultees are encouraged to consult online and register as a consultee through the Ashford Borough Council Consultation Portal Full consultation document downloadable from Consultation Portal website and any background documents including promotional material will be downloadable from website where possible. Clear instructions on consultation timings and how to participate in the consultation will be displayed on website in addition to the consultation being highlighted on the planning 'News and events' page.
Letter / email notification from the Consultation Portal	An email notification will be sent to anyone registered on the Consultation Portal website. Anyone, who wishes to receive notification, but does not have email will be added to the Consultation Database and sent a letter.
Formal Adverts	Public notice in the local newspaper of the proposal matters and the places and times that the pre-submission documents can be inspected.
Submission of DPD to Secretary of State	
Website	Website updated to inform people that the document has been submitted to the Secretary of State and Programme Officer details displayed.
Formal Advert	As required by Regulations - Public notice in the local newspaper stated that the document

	has been submitted and Programme Officer details displayed.
Full Document	As required by Regulation 30 a copy of the Submission version of the document will be made available for inspection at the deposit points outlined in Appendix 3 and notification will be sent to all 'General' consultees listed in Appendix 2 informing them of its availability. An electronic copy version of the document will be sent to all 'Specific' consultees outlined in Appendix 2.
Independent Examination	
Consultation Document	Copies of Council evidence provided to those appearing, otherwise on demand – and at cost for commercial organisations.
Website	Information on examination arrangements. Representations made on submitted document displayed.
Formal Advert	As required by Regulations

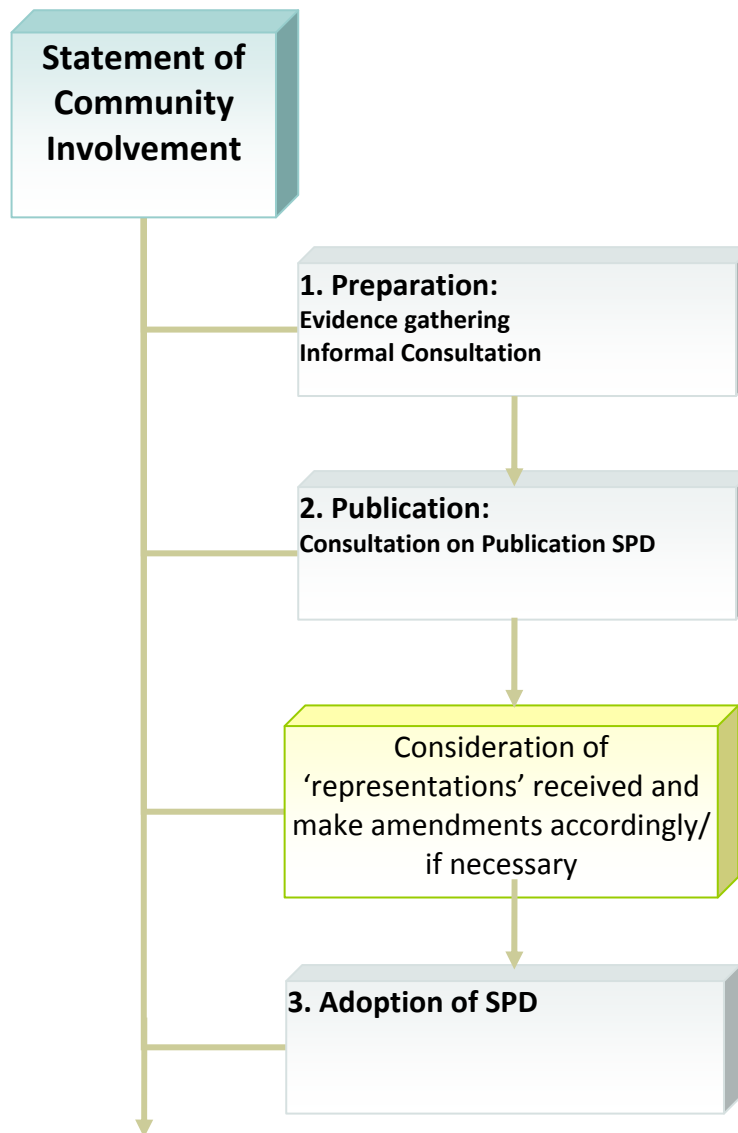### Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents

4.12 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) will form part of the policy framework for the Borough. Their purpose is to expand on policy issues or provide further detail to policies in development plan documents. All proposed Supplementary Planning Documents are timetabled into the current Local Development Scheme although it is now no longer a requirement for the LDS to include the timetable for the preparation of these documents.

4.13 The process for the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document is much simpler than that for the preparation of a Development Plan Document. Although SPD is not subject to independent Examination by a Planning Inspector, it is nevertheless important for SPD to be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement. Consultation techniques will vary and be targeted to particular groups and individuals depending on the nature, issues or geographical extent of the proposed Supplementary Planning Document. An individual programme for consultation should be produced for each Supplementary Planning Document. The programme should inform the local community and stakeholder to the proposed consultation processes for that specific SPD at an early stage in its preparation.

4.14 The minimum statutory requirements for consulting on SPDs are outlined in the following table and Figure 3 outlines the process for preparing and adopting SPDs.

Table 4 Consultation requirements for a Supplementary Planning Document

Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Process
Informal consultation targeted at interested parties and individuals and with representative organisations, to identify relevant issues issues and options prior to the start of the formal consultation process
Before the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document, a four to six week public consultation period must be arranged on the draft SPD with the following minimum standards: • Make copies of the SPD documents, and a statement of SPD matters available for inspection during normal office hours at principal offices (Civic Centre, Ashford) and at such other places that the authority considers appropriate. • Publish the draft SPD documents on the Council's consultation Portal. • Send a copy of the draft SPD document, the sustainability appraisal report (where applicable), a consultation statement, and relevant supporting documents to each of the 'specific' consultation bodies in the Regulations to the extent that the Council thinks that the SPD affects the body. • Also send a copy of the draft SPD to any 'general' consultation bodies, as the Council considers appropriate. • Advertise the draft SPD in the local newspaper and state where the documents are available for inspection and the places and times at which they can be inspected. • The Council must also consult the Regional Planning Body to ensure conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

4.15 Village Design Statements are managed and organised by the local community and are a tool that local communities can use to influence the design of new development locally by identifying, describing and analysing local character and drawing guidance directly from this character. Under the Borough Local Plan, Village / Parish Design Statements may have been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), whereas under the new Local Development Framework, Village / Parish Design Statements may be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The Council is keen to continue to adopt Village / Parish Design Statements as supplementary guidance and will assist local communities by providing advice on consultation when drafting and adopting their Village / Parish Design Statements.

The process of preparing and adopting Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

```
Statement of
Community
Involvement

        1. Preparation:
        Evidence gathering
        Informal Consultation

        2. Publication:
        Consultation on Publication SPD

        Consideration of
        'representations' received and
        make amendments accordingly/
        if necessary

        3. Adoption of SPD
```

Reporting back

4.16 An important part of community involvement is to report back to those who have taken the trouble to be involved in consultation, and to let them know how their comments and suggestions have been taken on board.

4.17 The results from formal consultation and key decisions relating to the LDF process will be dealt with in a number of ways. Initial consultation feedback will be reported to the LDF Task Group, who will make formal recommendations to be considered by the Council's Executive. The Executive's decisions will, in turn, need to be ratified by the Full Council when LDF documents are either to be formally submitted for examination or be adopted as Council policy.

4.18 The Council's formal response to representations and those that may result in any additional changes or modifications to Development Plan Documents will be published on the website. Stakeholders will be notified of the consultation feedback through the LDF Update Newsletter.

Consultation on Sustainability Appraisals

4.19 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) will be produced for each Development Plan Document as a supporting document and will be published for comments and representations as part of the formal consultation on the Regulation 27 Publication version of the DPD. All specific consultee bodies (Appendix 2) will be sent electronic copies of the SA alongside the main DPD document.

4.20 Where appropriate, an initial SA may also be published alongside an Issues and Options report when consultation takes place.

4.21 Finally, where appropriate a Sustainability Appraisal will be available to download from the Consultation Portal and to view in hard-copy at the designated deposit points. Hard copy versions will be available to purchase on request by telephoning 01233 330229.

5 Active participation on planning applications

5.1   This section sets out how the Council makes information on planning applications available to the public and how comments can be made. The Council has a number of procedures currently in place to involve the public in considering planning applications. These are in accordance with National Policy: Circular 22/80 - Development Control and Practice; Circular 28/83 – Information on Planning Applications and Circular 15/92 – Publicity for Planning Applications. These documents are available via the Planning Portal (www.planningportal.gov.uk).

Definition of Major, Minor and Other applications

5.2   Major

- Applications for 10 residential units or more
- Residential sites of 0.5 ha or more
- The creation of 1000m^2 or more of non-residential floorspace
- All sites of more than 1 ha in size

5.3   Minor

- Development that does not meet the criteria for major development and is not a change of use or householder development

5.4   Other

- Changes of Use, householder, advertisement and other related applications such as Certificates of Lawfulness

5.5   When notifying neighbouring residents and businesses, it is the Council's normal practice to send letters to individual premises. Letters are sent to immediate neighbours in accordance with the plan below.

Figure 4: Notifying Neighbours
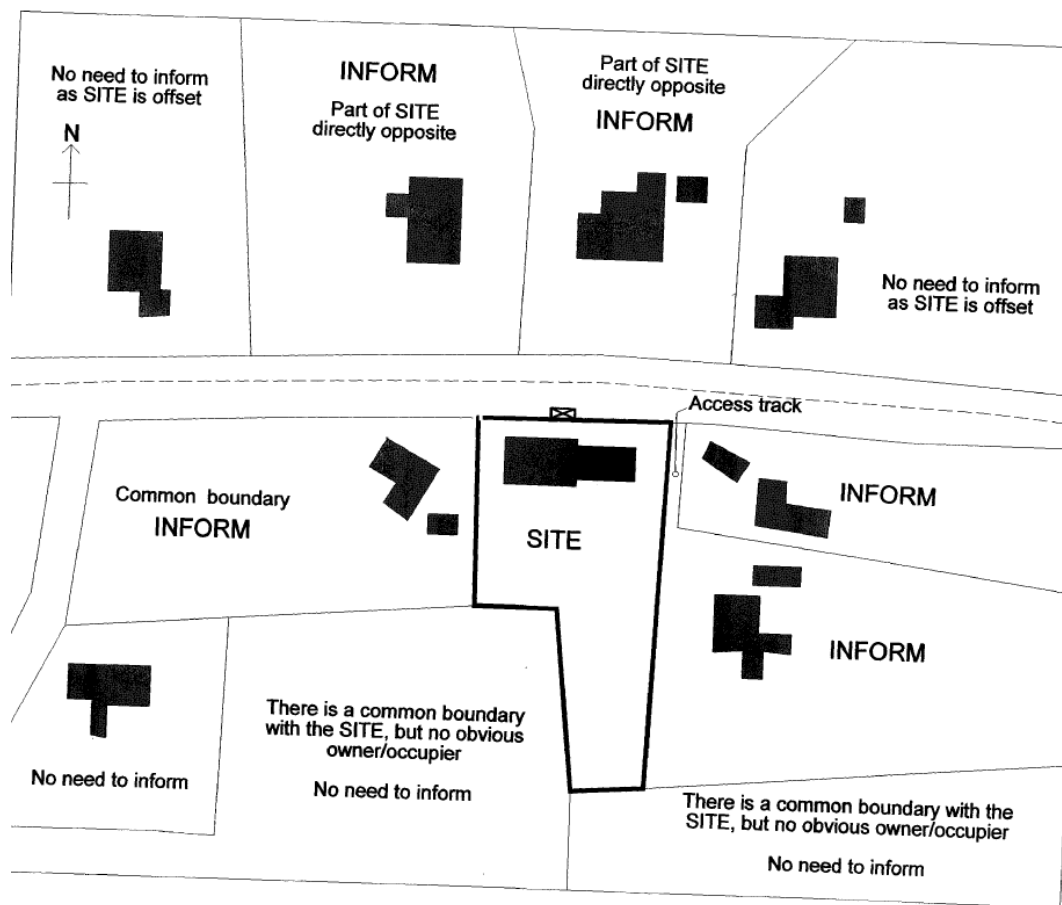
5.6   For larger proposals letters are distributed more widely, depending upon the scale of the proposal. Notification letters invite responses to be made within 24 days of the date of the letter. The results of any such notification will be carefully considered and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council. Bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a different period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.

5.7   Anybody may comment on an application even if they have not been notified by the council.

5.8   Ashford Borough Council undertakes statutory publicity in accordance with current legislation. Government is likely to change the statutory publicity requirements and our future approach will reflect any changes that are made. Currently for submitted major planning applications we post Planning Notices on or adjoining planning application sites. Where a proposal may have impact on more than one street it may be appropriate to display more than one site notice. Some applications are also advertised in the local newspaper, if the application affects a listed building, a conservation area, affects a public right of way, or departs from the Council's Local Plan, or if the application may have a substantial impact on an area.

5.9   Notification letters or emails will also be sent to organisations (e.g. Highways Agency, Environment Agency) etc. and the organisations invited to comment on proposals in

accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended).

5.10   Borough Councilors will be notified of applications in their Ward. Notification of each application will be sent to the relevant Parish Council and responses invited within 24 days of the date of the notification letter. Such notification and response will ideally be carried out electronically and the Council will keep under review the current practice of providing paper copies.

5.11   The Council will make electronic copies of all live applications and accompanying plans available for inspection, in the Council offices at the Civic Centre. Paper copies will be available on request at the Civic Centre. In addition, electronic copies of all applications will be available for inspection at the Ashford 'Gateway'. If the application lies within Tenterden or the parishes of Woodchurch, High Halden, Biddenden, Rolvenden, Newenden, Wittersham or Stone, electronic copies of all live applications and accompanying plans will be available for inspection at the 'Gateway' office in High Street, Tenterden. In addition, a hard copy of any live application within Tenterden and the above parishes may be requested to be available for inspection at the Tenterden 'Gateway' office within 7 days of the request being made to the Council. This additional service at the 'Gateway' will be provided until improvements to facilities for viewing are introduced there, such as the provision of larger screens.

5.12   All copies of applications and plans are available for inspection on the Internet, usually within 4 working days of being registered. Weekly lists of applications, decisions and appeals are available via the Council's website.

5.13   The Council receives and handles comments on planning applications by conventional post, fax and email or by our online comments form on the council website. The Council's website provides access for members of the public to view the full details of planning applications, including their accompanying plans. The website is updated with any subsequent correspondence received from the applicant or third party allowing the public to track the progress of an application.

5.14   If there are any significant amendments to the planning application during consideration, the relevant Parish Council will be notified. The period for commenting on amended plans will normally be 24 calendar days but this may be reduced to no less than 10 calendar days if circumstances such as the date of a planning committee dictate.

5.15   In addition to consulting the Parish Council, notification will be sent to the relevant ward member, nearby residents and to people who have already written in with comments. The period for commenting on amended plans will normally be 24 calendar days but this may be reduced to no less than 10 calendar days if circumstances such as the date of a planning committee dictate.

5.16   Where a s106 agreement would result in responsibilities or liabilities being placed on a Parish Council, the agreement of that Council will need to be sought to the Heads of Terms for the agreement relating to those matters only prior to consideration by the Planning Committee, and they will need to be a party to the agreement.

5.17 The Council's Planning Committee takes place approximately every 4 weeks and is attended by elected Members who determine the decision of major, complex or controversial planning applications. The Committee agendas' are available on the Council's website, and include reports on the individual planning applications being considered. Written comments on planning applications may be considered by the Committee if received by 15.00 hours on the day of the committee meeting.

5.18 All Parish Councils will be notified of the publication of each planning committee agenda on the council's web site. This will be an email alert, normally sent a week before the meeting, to the parish clerk.

5.19 The Parish Council and one speaker in support and one in objection to the application are allowed to speak at the meeting for up to 3 minutes each prior to the application being debated. Committee reports and resulting decisions can be viewed via the Council's website. Requests to speak must be made in writing, which includes emails, and must be received by 3pm on two working days before the committee meeting. Usually this is 3pm on the Monday preceding the Wednesday meeting unless Monday is a public holiday when the cut-off time will be 3pm on the preceding Friday.

5.20 At the time a decision is issued on any application, the Council will notify all those who have submitted written comments on the application either by letter or email. We will say if the application has been approved or refused. Parish Councils will be notified too and provided with an electronic link to a copy of the decision notice. If a decision is made that is contrary to the views of the Parish Council, the Parish Council will be informed in writing.

5.21 Copies of all decisions will be made available on the council's website and electronically at all council offices. Weekly lists of decisions will also be available via the Internet.

5.22 If the council receives an appeal following its decision on an application we will notify all those who commented on the original application either by letter or email. We will explain what the appeal is about, how people can be involved in the appeal process and the timescales for being involved. If the appeal is about a householder application, that is typically those for extensions or alteration to houses, then we will only let people know the appeal has been received. New comments on these types of appeal cannot be made at this stage.

Pre-application consultation

5.23 Ashford Borough Council and Ashford's Future Partnership, the local delivery vehicle for Ashford's growth area, face a major challenge to fulfil the Sustainable Communities agenda. The Borough Council and Ashford's Future has developed a standards 'Charter' for strategic and major development proposals. The Charter, which has the commitment of all the local agencies involved in the development process, sets in place a structured toolkit whose aim to encourage and facilitate major planning applications from submission to determination. Ashford's Future core delivery team will be available to negotiate where competing interests threaten to frustrate progress. More information can be found on the Strategic Sites web page:

www.ashford.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/strategic_development.aspx

5.24 The Council also works hard to inform and involve the wider community in helping to create better quality developments and "place making". The Council encourages potential major developers to undertake pre-application consultation with the local community on significant applications. This process can serve to inform interested parties about the nature and scale of the proposal and local people have an opportunity to comment before proposals reach an advanced stage.

5.25 There are many pre-application consultation techniques currently being used by the Council, not all these methods will be suitable for each pre-application consultation, it is essential to match the consultation methods with the individual planning proposal. The Council uses a combination of the following.

- Public meetings and exhibitions
- Workshops
- Surgeries
- Enquiry by Design
- Development briefs

5.26 The Council produces a major sites development update leaflet every six months to inform key stakeholders and consultees about significant planning applications and progress being made with them. The development update will be distributed to the Borough's principal libraries and will be circulated to interested consultees as well as being published on the Council's website.

6 Resources and Management of the process

6.1   Public consultation events that require considerable staff involvement, such as staffed exhibitions and workshops will be prioritised to be held at the most effective stages in the preparation of Development Plan Documents. These types of public consultation can be resource intensive both in terms of Officers time and production costs but are very valuable and effective consultation techniques. Assistance and support from other staff within the Council or partner organisations and agencies may be required as well as from Ashford's Future Company and the Local Strategic Partnership.

6.2   A non-prescriptive approach will be taken to wider community involvement, so that the Council can tailor events to be relevant to the subject matter. For example, an exhibition in a town centre shopping centre on a weekend if the subject matter is regarding the Town centre, or a community workshop held in a village hall in the evening if the subject matter is regarding rural issues. This approach has been effective so far in engaging the communities who will be most affected by the proposals and allowing them to express themselves fully and influence the preparation of the document in question.

6.3   Wherever possible, the Planning and Development Unit will aim to undertake consultation in tandem with other initiative and strategies in order to make better use of resources and to avoid 'consultation overload'. When considering spatial elements contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy we will consult with the Local Strategic Partnership. We will also build participation by drawing on the skills and resources of the existing Urban and Parish Forums, local interest and amenity and stakeholder groups, and the Ashford Community Network wherever it is considered appropriate.

6.4   The key target groups and consultation techniques set out in this SCI to inform and involve the community on LDF documents will be monitored for their effectiveness by use of feedback forms and the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR is published in December each year and available at the designated Deposit Points (see Appendix 3) and to download from the Council's website. Listed below are the community involvement indicators that are used in the AMR assessment. These indicators may be developed or changed to meet new circumstances in the future.

- Number of staffed exhibitions and workshops taken place and attendees
- Number of individuals invited to events
- Analysis of events tailored to 'hard to reach' groups
- Number of representations received
- Number of representations made (by consultee groups)

Appendix 1 - Timetable taken from the Local Development Scheme

Local Development Scheme Timetable

Timetable for the Preparation of the Ashford Local Development Framework – 2008 – 2011

Key: C = Consultation on scope of SA, P = Publication of submission DPD for consultation or Publication of draft SPD for consultation (as appropriate), S = Submission of DPD to Secretary of State, A = Adoption, 1 = Pre Hearing Meeting, 2 = Hearing Sessions Open, 3 = Inspector Report Fact Check, 4 = Inspector Report Final.

LDF Document	2008 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2009 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2010 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2011 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Core Strategy							A																																									
Ashford Town Centre AAP														P					S	1	2				3	4	A																					
Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD																	P				S	1	2				3	4	A																			
Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD																	P				S	1	2				3	4	A																			
Chilmington Green / Discovery Park AAP																				P					S	1	2			3	4	A																
Cheesemans Green / Waterbrook AAP										C																							P				S	1	2				3	4	A			
Generic DC policy DPD																									C													P				S	1	2			3

Supplementary Planning Documents	2008 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2009 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2010 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2011 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Affordable Housing SPD									P					A																																		
Sustainable Design & Construction SPD										P						A																															
Infrastructure Contributions SPD											P					A																															
Residential Space & Layout SPD														P					A																												
Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD														P					A																												
Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems																		P				A																										
Broadband & Telecommunications SPD																		P				A																										

Appendix 2 - List of participants

The Town and County (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended 2008 and 2009), lists three different classifications of consultation bodies; specific, general, and other consultees.

'Specific' consultation bodies **must be** consulted on in accordance with the regulations. 'General' and 'Other' consultation bodies should be consulted upon where appropriate.(Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations have occurred)

Specific Consultation Bodies

Regulations	Consultee for Ashford
The regional planning body if the local planning authority's area is in a region other then London	Government Office for the South East South East England Partnership Board
A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority	Maidstone Borough Council Shepway District Council Swale Borough Council Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Rother District Council Canterbury City Council Kent County Council East Sussex County Council All Parish Councils in the Ashford Borough Kent County Constabulary
The Coal Authority	The Coal Authority
Natural England	Natural England
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency
The Secretary of State for Transport - in relation to functions concerning railways by virtue of section 1 of the Railways Act 2005 (in cases where the plan affects rail provision projects, national rail projects, such as High Speed 2 or Crossrail, and/or the local Network Rail office) and the Secretary of State's function as highway authority by virtue of section1 of the Highways Act 1980 (the Highways Agency)	Highways Agency Network Rail Channel Tunnel Rail link
English Heritage	English Heritage South East Region
A Regional Development Agency whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority	South East England Development Agency

Regulations	Consultee for Ashford
Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communications Act 2003, and Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the Local Planning Authority	Mobile Operators Association (MOA) 3 O2 Orange T-mobile (UK) Limited Vodafone
Any of the bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the council: • primary care trust • person to whom a license has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986 • sewage undertaker • water undertaker.	Eastern and Kent Primary Care Trust South East Coast Strategic Health Authority Scotia Gas Networks (Southern Gas Networks Plc) South East Water Ltd Southern Water
The Homes and Communities agency - under transitional provisions, this will be a requirement from 6th April 2010	The Homes and Communities Agency

General Consultation Bodies

The general consultation bodies are also listed in the regulations. The regulations identify five types of bodies as general consultation bodies that relate to voluntary organisations representing certain groups within the community. The general consultation bodies are:

i) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the council's area

ii) bodies which represent the interests of:

• different ethnic or national groups in the council's area
• different religious groups in the council's area

- disabled people in the council's area
- people carrying on business in the council's area.

The following list contains a selection of 'general' consultation bodies and is for information only and should provide an indication of the types of participants who may be consulted on in the preparation of policy documents.

- Ashford Access
- Ashford Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Ashford Committee of the Kent Association of Parish Councils
- Ashford Community Network
- Ashford and District Volunteer Centre
- Ashford Fire Brigade
- Ashford's Future
- Ashford International Chinese Association
- Ashford Landowners Group
- Ashford Museum
- Ashford Muslim Association
- Ashford Rural Trust
- Ashford Town Centre Partnership
- Business Link Kent
- Central Ashford Community Forum
- Churches Together in Ashford
- Community Action South East Kent
- County Square Shopping Centre
- English Partnerships
- Gaxmudian Kurdish Community
- Halcrow Consulting Limited
- High Weald AONB
- The Housing Corporation
- Kent Association of the Disabled People (Ashford Branch)
- Kent Downs AONB
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- Kent Police
- McArthur Glen Designer Outlet
- Mid & SE Kent Council for Voluntary Services
- The National Trust
- Parish Councils
- Royal Mail
- Sagarmatha Gurkha Community
- Salvation Army Housing Association
- South Kent College
- Stagecoach East Kent Limited
- Surestart (Ashford)
- William Harvey Hospital
- Zimbabwean Youth Group (Awake Grace Ministries)

Other Consultation bodies

The Council should carry out public participation that is appropriate for the development plan document being produced. Depending on the plan being produced, it may be appropriate to consult with other agencies and organisations in addition to those identified as specific or general consultation bodies. The following list provides some suggestions, but it is not exhaustive, and we may not always consult with these bodies.

- British Geological Survey
- Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- Church Commissioners
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
- Crown Estate Office
- Diocesan board of finance
- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
- Environmental groups at the national, regional and local level, such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Kent Wildlife Trust.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Gypsy Council
- Health and Safety Executive
- Home Builders Federation
- Learning and Skills Council
- National Playing Fields Association
- Post Office property holdings
- Sport England
- Traveller Law Reform Project

Appendix 3 - Deposit Points

Local Development Framework documents and any associated background documents and representation forms will be made available to view in hard-copy at the following deposit points:

Ashford Borough Council Civic Centre
Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL
9am - 5pm (Monday to Thursday); 9am - 4.30pm (Friday)

Ashford Library
Church Road, Ashford, TN23 1QX
9am - 6pm (Monday to Wednesday); 9.30am - 8pm (Thursday); 9am - 6pm (Friday); 9am - 5pm (Saturday)

Charing Library
Market Place, Charing, Ashford, TN27 0LR
Closed (Monday and Wednesday); 9am - 5pm (Tuesday); 9am - 12 noon (Thursday); 2pm - 5pm (Friday); 10am - 2pm (Saturday)

Tenterden Gateway
2 Manor Row, Tenterden, TN30 6HP
Open 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 4pm on Saturdays.

Wye Library
6 Upper Bridge Street, Wye, Ashford, TN25 5AF
Closed (Monday and Wednesday); 9am - 12 noon (Tuesday); 2pm - 6pm (Thursday); 9am - 5pm (Friday); 10am - 2pm (Saturday)

Alternatively you can purchase a hard copy of the document by calling 01233 330229, by emailing asfordldf@ashford.gov.uk or by writing to:
Strategic Planning Unit
Ashford Borough Council,
Tannery Lane,
Ashford, TN23 1PL

Copies of the document can be downloaded from the Ashford Borough Council Consultation Portal www.ashford.gov.uk/consult

Appendix 4 - Amendments to the 2004 Regulations

The main amendments to the LDF Regulations 2004 were made during 2008 with further amendments made during 2009. The main reasons for these changes have been explained in the the prepared Explanatory Notes on the Office for Public Sector Information website www.opsi.gov.uk[6][7] and further information can be found in the Plan Making Manual, available on the Planning Advisory Services website (http://www.pas.gov.uk).

The main changes taken from the 2008 Amendments relevant to the SCI are highlighted below:

Development Plan Document (DPD) Preparation:

The revised Regulations remove the requirement for the formal 'Preferred Options' consultation stage (the former Regulation 26 stage). Instead, the new Regulation 25 introduces a single preparatory stage for DPDs, which includes: Scoping and evidence gathering, consideration of issues and options and consideration of draft DPD proposals and policies (See Figure 1).

The minimum consultation requirements of Regulation 25 are:

- The Council must notify each of the 'specific consultation bodies' and 'general consultation bodies' that may have an interest in the subject of the DPD, as set out in Appendix 2.
- The Council must invite these bodies to make representations on what the DPD could contain.
- The Council will consider if it is appropriate to invite representations from general consultees and carryout consultation accordingly.

The Council will try and go beyond these minimum requirements wherever it is felt necessary.

Publication of the proposed submission DPD:

Following preparation of the DPD under the new Regulation 25, new Regulation 27 requires that the Council publishes a 'Regulation 27 Publication Version' (sometimes known as Draft Submission version) of the DPD for consultation, before it formally submits the DPD to the Secretary of State for examination.

The new Regulation 28 requires the Council to invite representations on the Regulation 27 Publication version for a minimum 6 week consultation period (See Table 3 for formal consultation arrangements).

Submission of the DPD for examination:

The Council will consider all of the representations made on the Regulation 27 Publication version of the DPD. In response, the Council may propose changes to the DPD. If these changes are minor in nature, the Council will then prepare an addendum to the Regulation 27 Publication version of the DPD setting out the proposed changes. If any of the proposed changes to the DPD are regarded as significant, then a further 6 week consultation will be carried out on those

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6   Explanatory Memorandum to the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 No.1371, available from www.opsi.gov.uk
7   Explanatory Memorandum to the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 No.401, available from www.opsi.gov.uk

parts of the DPD which are affected (not the whole DPD). When no further significant amendments are to be proposed by the Council, it will then formally submit the DPD (with any addendum of minor changes) to the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

Independent Examination:

An examination of the DPD will be carried out by an independent Planning Inspector to test its soundness, taking into account the representations that have been received. Those who have made representations may be invited by the Inspector to attend the parts of the examination held in public.

The Inspector will prepare a report for the Council setting out their conclusions on the issues that have been discussed at the examination and declaring whether the DPD is 'sound' or not. If the DPD is considered 'sound', the Inspector may still make recommendations that the DPD be amended. These recommendations are binding on the Council and the Council may not formally adopt the DPD without accepting those amendments.

There have been no changes to the Regulations regarding the issuing of a Binding Report and Adoption by the Council.

The New Regulation 26 sets out how the Public should participate in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement

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The 2009 amendments are minimal and offer further clarification of Regulation 26 regarding preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement.

Changes to the Regulations regarding Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

There is no longer a statutory requirement to carry out a Sustainable Appraisal for each SPD.

Appendix 5 - Glossary

AAP Area Action Plans - A type of Development Plan Document focused upon a specific location or an area subject to conservation or significant change (such as major regeneration). AAPs proposed for Ashford Borough include the Town centre AAP and an AAP for the proposed urban extensions.

AMR Annual Monitoring Report - Part of the local development framework, the annual monitoring report will assess the implementation of the local development scheme and to the extent which policies in local development documents are being successfully implemented.

Community Strategy- A document setting out a vision for the Ashford Borough community, produced by the Local Strategic Partnership, which contains members from key organisations within the public, community, voluntary and private sectors.

DPD Development Plan Document - A key local planning document forming an essential part of the Local Development Framework. DPDs include the Core Strategy, site specific allocations of land, Area Action Plans (where needed), and the Proposals Map. DPDs form part of the statutory development plan. All DPDs are subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

LDD Local Development Documents - The collective term for documents forming part of the Local Development Framework, which include Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

LDF Local Development Frameworks - The name of the portfolio which contains all the policies and documents that collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the Borough.

LDS Local Development Scheme - The document which sets out the timetable for the production of the Local Development Framework.

Parish Plan- A Government-sponsored initiative aimed at improving rural communities, where a plan is developed by the local community setting out what the community and Parish Council should work on in the next few years. Several parishes in Ashford have produced their own Parish Plans.

PPS Planning Policy Statement - A series of statements issued by central government to replace the existing Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

RSS Regional Spatial Strategies - Regional Spatial Strategies replace the old Regional Planning Guidance and sets out the regions policies in relation to the development and use of land and forms part of the development plan.

SA Sustainability Appraisal - An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sutainable development.

SCP Sustainable Communities Plan- A report published by the Government in 2003 which identified Ashford as one of four areas in the UK where major growth should take place.

SEA Strategic Environmental Assessment - An environmental assessment of plans and programmes, including Development Plan Documents.

SPD Supplementary Planning Documents - These are being phased in to replace the Supplementary Planning Guidance, and are non-statutory documents that expand upon policies or proposals in the Development Plan Documents.

Future Reviews and Report Tracker

At a recent meeting the Chairman of O&S and the Chairman of Audit discussed the relationship and respective roles of the two committees with regard to supporting the council's strategic objectives and to ensuring that all items requiring review were picked up by the appropriate committee.

The ability for O&S and Audit to cross refer items to each other is already in the council's Constitution. Items may also come forward from Management team. No items have been put forward at this stage but a non-specific example might be of O&S considering a new policy/service development and whether this achieved the predicted outcome.

New items:-
At the meeting of the Council on 16 May 2013 it was agreed that O&S would review the Energy Saving Budget and proposal for the Civic Centre (to improve lighting in the Civic Centre) to ensure the most prudent use of reserves. This has been added to the forward plan.

Suggested items for O&S, with Chairman's recommendation if appropriate.

All items come before the Committee for Members to decide if they wish to have any of them added to the forward work programme.

1. KCC Shared Space contract
Comments –
- O&S have already made it clear that they do not want to review the Shared Space contract - Min 196/10/11
- A progress report of the Ashford Shared Space Study to investigate maintenance issues went to JTB on 11.6.13. The study is due to be completed by the end of June 2013. JTB should receive the final report in September and there will be the opportunity to raise questions/debate the report then.

Chairman's recommendation – not to add this item to the work programme, as O&S have already decided they do not wish to review the contract and there is ample opportunity for Members to comment/ask for more information etc at JTB.

2. Drover's roundabout
Comments -
- This project is also under consideration by JTB and a further update report is expected in September. Once that report has been seen it may be appropriate for O&S to consider it further.
Chairman's recommendation – not to add to the work programme at this stage.

3. Sevington development project: -
Review likely options
Compare likely gains versus likely losses
Consider need
Consider public consultation
Comments -
- Policy U19 of the Urban sites and Infrastructure DPD (approved by Members 18.10.12) deals with Sevington. The core strategy is also being reviewed.
- When a Planning application is received then it will be for Officers to make a recommendation according to the Council's adopted Policy and for the Planning Committee to decide. It is not an O&S function.
- Public consultation – the updated Statement of Community Involvement (which deals with consultation with the public on planning applications and other matters) is being presented to the Cabinet in July, therefore any issues with this can be raised there.

Chairman's recommendation – not appropriate for the O&S work programme.

4. Conningbrook Project
Review plans for management of Leisure and Sporting activities
Consider how these activities will integrate with housing project on the immediate boundary
Review ABC objectives for the site
Comments –
- The working group reported to Cabinet in July 2012 and the recommendation was Resolved at Council the next week. There was the usual opportunity to call this decision in.
- Planning application 12/1245/AS agreed at committee on 18.5.13 and is subject to an S106 agreement.

Chairman's recommendation - not appropriate for the O&S work programme.

5. Fly posting/Graffiti in the borough
Comments –
- These two issues involve both Planning (fly posting) and Environmental services(graffiti)

Chairman's recommendation - Officers to produce an Information report on What powers/obligations the council has in relation to these issues.

Year Plan 2013/14

Month	items	Task Group
May	• O&S annual report. • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report.	
June	• Sickness & Absenteeism annual report. • Communication and Consultation Strategy re Planning Policy	
July		
August	• Review of Best Service Resources allow activity	
September	• Membership of Budget Scrutiny Task Group • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report.	
October		
November	• ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report.	
December		**Scrutiny of Council's draft 2014/15 budget – Budget Scrutiny TG meetings**
January	• Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group	**Budget Scrutiny TG meetings**
February	• ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report.	
March		
April	Community Safety Partnership – annual update	

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
142/09/12	3 year review of Mayoralty		Sept 2015		
312/01/12	Street Markets	TBA	TBA		
431/04/12	ABC Business Plan performance report – 2013/14	Policy & Performance Officer	May/Sept/ Nov/Feb		
62/06/12	Sports & Leisure		TBA		

303/01/13	Review of 'Best Services resources allow' activity	Chief Executive	August 2013		
396/03/13	Communication and consultation strategy – Planning Policy	Policy Manager	June 2013		
398/03/13	Refurbishment of the Stour Centre	TBA	TBA	Final Report from Task Group to be presented to O&S	
418/04/13	Community Safety Partnership – annual update	Community Safety Service Manager	April 2013		
11/05/13	Review of 'Invest to save' Civic Centre lighting project	TBA	TBA		

Low Priority & other proposed reports

	Report Title	Officer	Date due	Current position	Recommended action
57/06/08 199/10/11	Recycling and the Blue box scheme	Street Scene and Open Spaces Manager 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		