

# 5 Year Business Plan



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## BSRA Presentation to O&S

August 2013

# 5 Year Business Plan



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## Today:

- Reminder of the BSRA concept and the Business Plan
- What's gone well
- What hasn't
- 20 mins presentation and questions at the end

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## Context:

- New Govt – circa 30% reduction in formula grant
- Proposition from Cabinet to concentrate spend on areas local people value most
- Trade off against those they value least
- BSRA –
  - Concept of less for less or
  - Ford Mondeo level of service

# Market Research Objectives and Summary of Methodology

## Objectives:

- Ashford Borough Council retained Facts International to co-ordinate a public consultation to inform the Council on:
  - Priorities in making Ashford a good place to live
  - Identify what residents would like the Council and its partners to prioritise in terms of support for the local community
  - Identify on which service areas residents would like to see the Council spend more / less
  - Identify which service areas residents would like the Council to focus on over the next 5 years

## Methodology:

- Residents had a choice of completing a survey either online or on paper.
- Paper questionnaires were distributed in Ashford Voice and local newspaper as well as being handed out in various public locations in Ashford Town Centre; Online survey was hosted on Council's website
- Fieldwork took place between 18<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010
- 1,478 questionnaires were analysed, 1139 were postal and 339 were web based.

PROJECT LETS YOU DECIDE WHERE AXE SHOULD FALL

# Public's chance to have their say on council's budget

Ashford taxpayers are being asked to provide their own versions of a tough council budget in a survey.

Reporter Sam Lennon joined them by submitting own proposals.

AS MANY as 260 people have so far become mini-Chancellors and submitted their own versions of what the council budget should be.

Members of the public took part in an online survey where they could decide how to save £1 million as savings spending cuts approach.

An Ashford Borough Council spokesman said: "The idea is to take the public with us and give them a chance to have a say as to what should be cut or prioritised."

"The exercise is not an easy process and shows that a decision on one area of spending could affect another."

The consultation also involved

a road show at the town's County Square on Friday and Saturday to promote the consultation.

It was also a provision for members of the public without internet access, and council staff guided people on following the process.

Twelve people made their contribution during the road show and the total number contributing swelled to 260 by Monday.

## Unacceptable

The consultation gives council taxpayers their chance to submit their own personal version of a council budget.

There they can say which cuts should be made and which would be unacceptable. They

had options to cut, maintain or improve services such as recycling, youth activities and parking, and the exercise showed the impact certain choices have on the council budget.

This is part of the next stage of the council's public consultation on how to make savings over the next five years as deep national cuts loom.

It follows the initial Have Your

Say, It's Your Borough consultation in March.

That was shortly after the council warned that job losses were unavoidable, authority buildings could be sold and all departments must cut spending by 15 per cent.

The results from this summer's more detailed consultation will be published in mid-September and will help shape



Caroline Owen stops shoppers as Ashford Borough Council workers hit County Square with the road show for consultation on how to save £1 million  
Picture: Martin Apps P0173552

the council's five-year business plan, which will come into force from April.

The survey is available at [www.washford.gov.uk/save£1million](http://www.washford.gov.uk/save£1million) and residents have until Saturday, August 14 to give their input.

Participants can take part in a prize draw afterwards, with the winner receiving an iPod nano.

## Deserving causes which I had to cut

I have been shocked by my own butchery.

I have decapitated department budgets and slashed services. When I took part in the online exercise I found the task was not easy without hardening your heart and ruthlessly hatching some of the most worthwhile services.

These were the choices I made:

- Close three Ashford public toilets and hand over 17 rural and two Tenenden ones to parish and town councils.

- Reduce parish council grants by 60 per cent.

- Cut maintenance spending on council property by 20 per cent.

- Reduce voluntary grants by 20 per cent.

- Waste collection and recycling cut to fortnightly.

- Street sweeping decreased by 15 per cent.

- Temporary closure of the Julie Rose Stadium.

- Investigate only serious planning enforcement breaches.

- Stop the subsidy to Bockhanger and Kingsnorth Recreation Centre.

- Youth services were not offered an extra penny and neither was nature and the environment.

- Other cuts seemed easier to stomach - reduced grass cutting in council-owned land by 15 per cent, keeping my fingers crossed that volunteers could take over.

- My choice of investigating only serious planning enforcement



Kentish Express reporter Sam Lennon provides his own version of a slashed Ashford Borough Council budget

breaches was done in the hope that money would no longer be wasted on petty cases.

But in other cases I inflicted a double whammy, such as dropping the responsibility of public toilets on parishes, yet slashing their budgets by a fifth.

I had hoped to spare the hard-pressed motorist increased parking charges. But with too little money to spare I ended up shaking them down like a gangster. I went for the maximum rise of £1.20 an hour for all council car parks.

With many of the cuts I made I nervously hoped that private enterprise or charities could step into the breach.

But how much can they spare when everyone is cash-strapped during this bleak post-recession period? With

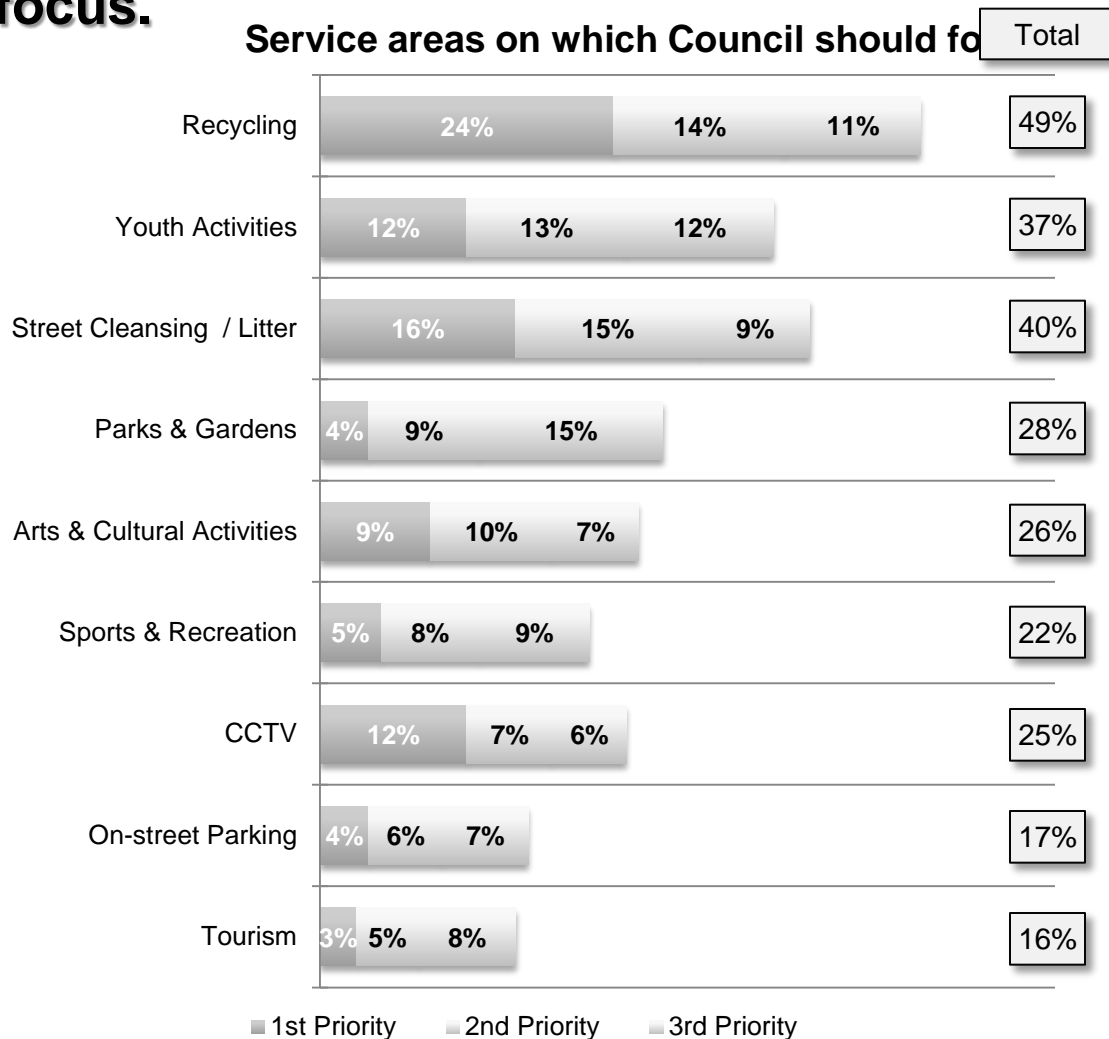
UK councils so often accused of wasteful spending it was an eye-opener to find out how much money was spent on essential and taken-for-granted services.

Granting of money in this exercise was done by awarding points, and the few I had available, representing a tight budget, gave me little leeway. One of my sacred cows was keeping the 24-hour CCTV monitoring services instead of having the monitoring time and even selling it off.

But with the system's high cost it took up so many points that I was forced to cut down other deserving causes.

Who'd be a council finance chief, never mind George Osborne? It's not for the faint hearted.

# Recycling, street cleansing and youth activities are the most frequently chosen other services on which the Council should focus.



## Comment:

- Men and residents aged 35+ are more likely to prioritise street cleansing and litter than other demographic groups
- Youth activities are more of a priority for a greater proportion of those aged under 54
- Parks & Gardens are a priority for more of the under 35s and over 65s than other age groups.

Q6b. Please choose the top three services that you feel Ashford Borough Council should focus upon over the next five years?  
Base: All respondents (1,478)

## Our Corporate Priorities:

- Cabinet agreed 1/11/10 and unanimously agreed by Council December 2010
  - Recycling & environment
  - Activities for young people
  - Economic development & housing
  - Best services resources allow



## Recycling and Environment:

- Recycling and waste contract
  - New contractor in place
  - Should save £500kpa
  - Recycling service rolled out from July
- PV panels
  - generating £20kpa of revenue – will do more
  - CHP system – will save £1.4M over life of plant





## Activities for young people :

- House operating 2 evenings per week successfully integrating with operators of Sk8side
- Hang 10 youth service delivered 140+ sessions and worked with nearly 2000 young people across Ashford
- Tenterden Youth café opening 22<sup>nd</sup> April for 2 sessions a week
- Aspire project to give young people work experience to improve their prospects of securing a job – 1st cohort complete



## Economic development and housing:

- Town centre
  - Outlet centre
  - Stanhope
  - Kier
  - Panorama
  - K College site
  - Office building
- Conningbrook
- John Lewis
- Housing delivery
  - Farrow court
  - 50+ new affordable units per annum delivered



## Best Services Resources Allow:

- Sessions at Elwick Club
- Rationale
  - Culture change and staff commitment
  - New Members to understand scale of change
  - Staff morale
  - Identify and develop talent
  - Saving money
- Process and selection of ideas



## How have we progressed?

- **Website/Automated Service** – launched December 2012. The aim to increase online transactions and provide better access to services for customers.
- **Intranet** - A new Intranet site is currently being developed and should be ready to go live by November.
- **Social lettings agency** - scheme to reduce the number of homeless people going into B&B.

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## How have we progressed?

- **Generic working** – Restructuring service areas to help align services with synergy. E.G Health, Parking and Community Safety so that AMC and CSU sit together – Parking Attendant becomes Civil Enforcement Officer
- **Eyes and Ears** - The “Report It” mobile app for smartphones that we recently launched is planned to be launched on the corporate website by the end of September. This app enables the public to report such issues as missed bin collections, discarded syringes, dog fouling, fly tipping etc.
- **Commercial charging** – Charge cost of recovery for environmental services e.g. rats. And increase planning fees to cost recovery level.
- **Printing** – To review the amount of printing we carry out for staff and paperwork they generate and stop sending out printed agendas.

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## Impact Website and Automation:

- 20,000 average calls per month
- 8-9000 visitors per month
- 2,500 emails per month
- Costings –
  - face to face £20
  - phone £3
  - email 30p

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## Impact Website, App and Automation:

- 100% increase in website traffic since new website live
- 62% of users getting what they want in 3 clicks
- 25-30% of calls handled by automated services
- 15% handled by assisted self help
- Average 80% of benefit claims done online
- Inform - 25% of 20,000 calls per month = 3 fte or £6,250/month
- Website/Report it app – If all phoned = approx £900/month

## Social Lettings, Commercial Charging & Print:

- Social Lettings
  - circa 32 properties signed up so far
  - average cost of £1,500 based on 8 week stay - avoiding costs of around £2,000/month saving to general fund
  - 32 families and/or vulnerable people housed properly
- Building consultancy to save around £7-10,000 in first year
- Introduction of I Trent – all HR transactions online saving estimated £12,000 per annum





## What has not gone so well:

- Commercial charging did not really get off the ground – members did not want to increase costs for rat capture, bed bugs etc.
- Govt changed its mind on cost recovery for planning applications.
- Under pressure (mainly) in service areas where Govt policy changes are starting to translate into more work Revs and Bens, Universal Credits etc.

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## All contributed to:

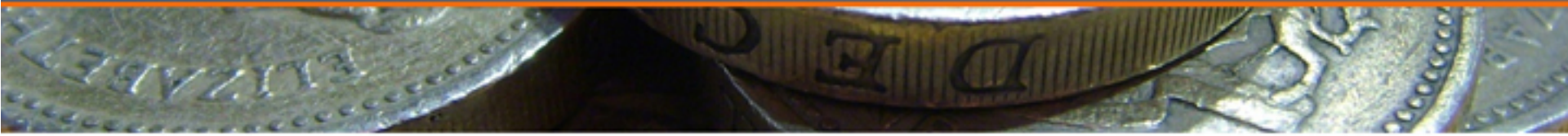
- Improved staff morale – “One to Watch” in Best Companies to work for
- Staff sickness lowest in years – 5 days per fte in 11/12
- Savings of £2.8m delivered in 3 years
- Achieved budget each of the 3 years since introduced
- Remained lowest council tax in Kent

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Questions?