

Agenda Item No:

Report To: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **16th December 2014**

Report Title: **Ashford Portas Pilot Programme**

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Neil Shorter, Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property

Report Author: Andrew Osborne, Economic Development Manager

Summary:	<p>This report identifies the progress that has been made in delivering the Portas Pilot projects and the work of the Town Team to extend that programme to incorporate other key initiatives to improve the attractiveness and vitality of the town centre.</p> <p>In addition to the project updates, this report provides the latest monitoring indicators for shop vacancies, footfall, and car park usage within Ashford town centre.</p>
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Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: Stour Ward and Victoria Ward

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

Policy Overview: **Focus 2013-15 Ashford Borough Council Corporate Business Plan Update.**

Financial Implications: The Department for Communities and Local Government awarded Ashford Borough Council £100,000 as part of the Ashford Portas Pilot status, the other £100,000 provided within the programme is funded through an existing section 106 agreement to bring vitality and viability to the Town Centre.

Please see Appendix B for the latest project budget figures.

Risk Assessment Please see section 36 of this report

Equalities Impact Assessment Please see section 40 of this report

Other Material Implications: None

Background Papers: Ashford Portas Pilot Case Studies (attached as Appendix A)

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Report Title: Ashford Portas Pilot Programme

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides information requested by Overview and Scrutiny to update the Committee on the activity undertaken under the Portas Pilot Programme.

Background

2. In March 2012, following the aspirations set out by the Cabinet and the suggestions coming forward from town centre businesses, Ashford Borough Council submitted a bid for the first round of Portas Pilot funding. Although unsuccessful initially, a second round bid succeeded in July 2012. Ashford was announced as one of 27 Portas Pilot Towns nationally out of over 400 bids. Portas Pilot Status provided Ashford Town Centre with £100,000 worth of funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), this has been matched with £100,000 of section 106 funding.
3. The successful Portas Pilot bid identified 6 priority projects to revitalise the High Street:
4. **The Bid Priorities were:**
 - A. The rebirth of the Town Centre Street Market. Ashford is a market town – its first Charter dates from 1243. A new town centre street market will celebrate quality local produce and crafts produced in the Garden of England, testing the “stall for a tenner” concept, supporting new enterprise, and attracting visitors, creating a new *Ashford Experience*.
 - B. To create a unique covered area for the lower High Street providing a distinctive place within the town centre, where markets, music, entertainment, eating and drinking can take place during the day and evening.
 - C. To use new technology to market the town centre, by developing a virtual tour of the town centre through an innovative website and app, so that visitors can walk down the High Street online, find shops and local offers, and access information on parking and local services. With smart-phones representing over 50% of mobile phones now sold, town centres need to deliver new innovative solutions.
 - D. To build on the 2030 Framework by developing a compelling Vision for the town centre, considering it as one centre by characterising zones and roles for its different parts.
 - E. To generate creative solutions to improve the link between Ashford Designer Outlet and the town centre.
 - F. To use the website, app and street market to galvanise businesses and provide income to support the Town Team and management of the town centre.

Ashford Town Team

5. All Portas Pilot Towns were also required to set up a Town Team to take forward project activity, provide leadership, and also develop a stronger management of the Town Centre environment and streamlined regulatory functions.
6. Ashford Town Team was set up with a first meeting having taken place on 21st September 2012, chaired by the Rt Hon Damian Green MP. The Town Team has representatives from town centre businesses, the shopping centres, developers, Central Ashford Community Forum, the Police, Homes and Communities Agency and Kent County Council as well as Ashford Borough Council. The Town Team have met quarterly, with input from partners shaping the programme of activity which is presented in this report. The Council are represented on the Town Team by Cllr Neil Shorter as the Council's Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property, along with John Bunnett, the Council's Chief Executive.

Progress on Ashford's Portas Pilot projects

Ashford Town Team Manager

7. To support the Town Team, and with the closure of the Ashford Town Centre Partnership, a Town Team Manager was appointed by Ashford Borough Council in April 2013 and Jo Wynn-Carter has now been in post for over 18 months. This post was recruited to bring in specific expertise to advise and support the development of a programme of projects to deliver crucial improvements to the town centre. This post has been funded through New Homes Bonus.
8. Since April 2013, the following progress has been made in driving forward projects in the town centre.

Rebirth of the Town Centre Market

9. Ashford Market was involved in the National First Pitch programme in 2013 offering new market traders the opportunity to set up on the market with support from Economic Development staff at the Council, Chamber of Commerce business advisers and the National Market Traders Federation. Ashford were successful in attracting 1 of 100 new market traders across the country who traded in produce from Provence on the Market for approximately 6 months from May 2013.
10. To test the potential interest in more market activity within Ashford Town Centre, the Town Team Manager organised the Ashford Food and Drink Festival, which took place on the 21st and 22nd June 2013 (Fri & Sat), delivered by Amber Markets Ltd an events market operator. The Food and Drink festival took place on North Street, with 20 stalls bringing in hot food, cold food and entertainment over the two days to enliven the Town and stimulate trade in the existing market on the lower high street and across the town centre. Entertainment was arranged including music, children's' craft stalls and additional entertainment for the lower high street to ensure the flow

of people throughout the town. This event provided a positive introduction to the future plans to offer a Farmers' Market in the Town Centre.

11. Plans to take forward the revitalisation of the existing market and to introduce a Farmers' Market into the Town Centre were delayed following lengthy discussions with traders and market operators.
12. Following approval to employ a part-time Farmers' Market manager to deliver a Farmers' Market on the first Sunday of each month in the lower high street, Rachel Heather, an experienced farmers' market manager and producer, was employed in May 2014. The first market launched on the 6th July 2014 between 10-2pm with 20 stalls, offering quality local producers, street food and chef demonstrations. Community stalls showcasing a different farm each month, highlighting how farming has changed over the years, have also been introduced.
13. We are now approaching the 6th month of delivering a farmers' market and have seen the market grow. The market now has up to 30 quality traders each month. The traders have supported the creation of a fantastic market and atmosphere. Shops and businesses have reported increased takings and increased footfall on Farmers' Market Sundays. Ashford Farmers' market is also currently within the top 10 farmers' markets in Kent, as voted by the public in the Taste of Kent Awards 2015. Now that the market is becoming established additional marketing, themed events and additional traders will be targeted in 2015.
14. **Covered area of the Lower High Street** – The Portas Pilot bid provided funding to undertake a feasibility study into the potential to construct a covered area in Ashford's Lower High Street. Initial survey work was undertaken by Ashford Borough Council's project office and a number of challenges arose based on the need to retain the trees within the area, cellars that come out under the pavements, potential safety and anti-social behaviour issues, and the potential need to retain vehicular access through this area. Following this initial investigation, representation from the Central Ashford Community Forum and businesses on the Town Team requested that as no funding was in place for the delivery of a covered area following the feasibility study and with little support from residents and businesses for the scheme, that this project be taken out of the programme and that the funding be used for other projects that would provide more immediate impact for existing traders and visitors.
15. Cabinet endorsed the removal of this action from the programme and supported its replacement with the Pop Up Shop initiative at their meeting on 10th October 2013, following the support of the Town Team and the Department for Communities and Local Government who provided the Portas Pilot funding.
16. **Pop Up Shops** – Pop Up Shops have emerged as an excellent way of introducing new businesses to trade on the High Street, with an organisation called Pop Up Britain leading the way with high profile examples of stores opening in Kings Road and Piccadilly Circus in London. Although not a project within the original bid for Portas Pilot funding, this has been promoted through consultation with businesses and residents, with the aim of providing

companies the opportunity to test products and services before taking a permanent unit within Ashford.

17. PopUp Ashford opened its doors in a unit in Park Mall on Monday 14th October 2013, with 4 businesses including Laser Inspired Designs (Ashford-based), Blooming Briony (Rolvenden-based), Lovertons Ltd – Beutisa Range, and Rainy Day Box Co (Sevenoaks-based). Businesses have received mentoring from Jo Wynn-Carter and business support from Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. Over 25 tenants have now taken space within Pop Up Ashford. One of the tenants stayed for 5 months and is currently exploring the idea of taking on a lease in the town centre. Another has gone on to develop her product range and exhibit at a major London trade fair with success. Another has received a Vistaprint grant to further develop her business and won the prestigious Theo Paphitis award.
18. Pop Up Ashford hosted an exciting event with TV's Alex Polizzi, attended by over 70 local businesses, learning the 'seven sins of business'. The project has attracted media interest from BBC South East and Meridian TV. Other events within the unit have included a Buying and Visual Merchandising workshop on the 11th March 2014, by an award winning trainer from the National Skills Academy, inviting local businesses to improve their skills, with exceptional feedback from those attending. The Pop Up shop will be open until the 24th December 2014. Ashford College photography students were given the challenge of using their photography to make products. They have been selling Christmas cards and prints as part of an enterprise project and will be in the Pop Up shop until 9th December 2014.
19. The project has been very successful in supporting businesses and entrepreneurs, and opening up contacts with enterprise and creative networks and organisations, but has had more limited success in converting these tenants into shops within Ashford town centre. The original concept of Pop Up Britain was to allow businesses to test the High Street for 1 week in a shared unit. The Ashford Pop Up shop initiative has naturally evolved this approach through feedback from businesses to initially extend this to be a 2 week period and then to 4 weeks to help businesses build trust in their brand and more face to face contact with customers. The next progression of this project is to provide smaller units for individual businesses looking to start up, but over a longer initial period, say 6 months, which would give these businesses a greater chance to test the market over a more sustained period and could result in more tenants taking vacant units within the town centre. Officers are investigating plans for the next stage of this initiative.
20. **Pop Up Gallery – The Cornershop** - Ashford Borough Council was allocated £10,000 of additional funding from the Arts Council to support the Portas Project Activity. Following discussions on how best to complement Portas activity it was agreed to secure a 'pop-up' Art Gallery, channelled through the professional curation of a local Arts Company. On the 23rd of November 2013, Stour Valley Arts (SVA) refurbished and opened 'The Cornershop Gallery' with a high quality art show "Gifts From The Forest" displaying and selling affordable artworks by artists and makers from Kent, inspired by landscapes of Kent. In the 4 weeks up to 21st December 2013, 800 people visited the gallery and over £1,000 worth of work was sold. There is also

evidence of a positive cross-over between start-up businesses in PopUp Ashford and The Cornershop.

21. The Cornershop hosted a KCC touring show 'Documentarium' which opened on the 18th January 2014. The exhibition has received a lot of publicity for its tour around the country. Stour Valley Arts held a number of sessions with local groups and further exhibitions through to June 2014.
22. **New Town Centre Website and App** – This project was identified as a priority Portas Pilot project to ensure that the Town Centre and its businesses have a good presence online, with more consumers looking online for their products and services
23. The Economic Development team undertook the procurement of a company to help deliver a new website and app for the town centre, and assist in the engagement of local businesses. Red Carrot a local firm in North Street were commissioned to undertake this contract and provide support for the website in the first 2 years. The team have used face to face contact, email, twitter and drop-in sessions held at the Red Carrot offices once a week to engage businesses. This has been a considerable challenge, with multiple retailers having to obtain head office sign off, and independent retailers having to be sold and educated about the advantages of an online presence. After considerable interaction by the Economic Development team over a sustained period of time, over 100 businesses signed up at the launch of the site in October 2014. The site provides the opportunity for businesses to advertise their company and products through click-and-collect and special offers. It has a searchable database of businesses and products and provides a platform to promote town centre events.
24. The website became live in September with a bug reporting mechanism. This proved very constructive in ensuring that any teething problems were resolved ahead of the proper launch. The marketing campaign started with advertising on 12 local bus routes. The Economic Development team spent 3 days in County Square in a pop up shop advertising the website and launching a competition to win an iPad – by simply signing up. The competition will run until the 7th December. Website statistics will be monitored to support businesses to tailor their offers, but also to assess the success of the project. This project will require ongoing support from the Economic Development team in order to continue to be successful, and the challenge of engaging businesses to interact with the site will continue to be a critical factor in the longer-term success of this initiative.
25. **Improving the link between Ashford Designer Outlet Village and Ashford Town Centre** – With considerable changes having taken place in Ashford Town Centre over recent years with the introduction of the Ashford Gateway and refurbishment of St Mary's Church, finger post signage in the Town Centre needs to be changed to reflect these changes. Portas Pilot funding has been agreed to support the delivery of this new scheme alongside other Borough Council funding.
26. In addition to finger post signage, Ashford Borough Council has been working with development partners to strengthen the linear connection between the Designer Outlet Village and the town centre, through progressing the Ashford

Commercial Quarter, Elwick Place and Ashford International College Campus developments.

27. **Building on the 2030 Framework to develop a compelling vision for the town centre.** – The Ashford Strategic Delivery Board has been set up to deliver the Big 8 projects over the last 12 months, including critical developments for the Town Centre such as Ashford International College Campus, Elwick Place, and the Commercial Quarter. Further work is being undertaken in 2015 to establish the evidence to consider the future role of the town centre in developing the new Local Plan.

Additional Town Centre Initiatives

28. **T-CAT (Town Centre Action Team)** – Funded by Ashford Borough Council and not the Portas Pilot funding, the new T-CAT team has been in operation since the middle of September 2013, and deal with a variety of jobs Monday to Saturday, including clearing litter, dog mess, graffiti, chewing gum, and cigarette butts. They have refurbished street furniture, tidied council car parks, kept our walkways weeded and flowerbeds flourishing, removed fly-posting and kept pavements gritted in the winter. The team have also supported the introduction of the Farmers' Market by assembling stalls on market days.
29. This new team have added additional capacity to existing cleansing and environmental services to make the Town Centre a very pleasant and attractive place to visit, supporting the call for improvements from local residents and businesses. The team have also acted as an additional resource available when unforeseen events occur such as the flooding earlier this year, and the benefits of the team in operation are already apparent.
30. **Town Centre Parking Initiative** - As a result of concerns from businesses in the town centre and as part of the Council's review of its parking strategy for Ashford and Tenterden, a new parking initiative has been introduced in October 2014 that provides free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays in Edinburgh Road, the Flour Mills and Station Road car parks, and free after 3pm Monday to Saturday in Edinburgh Road car park. This is intended to incentivise visitors to come to the town centre and stay longer, generating more footfall and helping to encourage new businesses into the town.

Ashford Town Centre Performance

31. **Vacancy Rates** - Over the last 12 months, shop vacancy rates increased between November 2013 (15%) and November 2014 (16%) but had risen as high as 18% in May 2014. Although these have now stabilised and started to decrease again, this is still a critical challenge for the town centre. Over the last 6 months the town centre has seen the loss of names such as Clarks shoes and Accessorize during this period, but also the introduction of Yours Clothing and The Entertainer. Overall figures still show Ashford to have a higher than average vacancy rate when compared to the national averages of 11.8% and 10.1% (Source: Local Data Company and Springboard), but is in line with other medium sized towns across the country, which have been hit hardest by the recession and changing retail sector.

32. Despite vacancy rates stabilising, there is considerable change within the town centre with business closures and new businesses opening up. This shows that the town is still evolving its offer following the economic downturn and greater movement to online and out-of-town shopping. The current challenge is to lower vacancy rates below the national average.
33. **Town Centre Car Parking** - 2014 has seen a turnaround of declining trends in car parking usage in Ashford Town Centre in recent years, with figures in 2014 consistently outperforming figures in 2013. In the months of August and September, car parking figures have been up over 10% on 2013 totals supporting businesses within the town centre.
34. **Town Centre Footfall** - As part of the work undertaken by the Town Team and Ashford Borough Council, a new footfall counter was placed on the High Street in September 2013, which provides 24 hour counts that will not only inform initiatives moving forward, but also provides accurate information on the impact of specific projects and events within the town. Although the impact of events and new markets have shown positive increases in footfall year on year, in general footfall has been down in the town centre during the period September- November 2014 compared with the same period in 2013. This shows the continued impact of changing shopping habits on medium sized town centres and High Streets such as Ashford.
35. **Recommendation**
 - (1) . **The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.**

Risk Assessment

36. Risk – That the projects identified in the Town Team Programme do not have a significant impact on footfall and vitality within Ashford Town Centre.
37. Action to mitigate the risk – This will be a key element of focus in managing the delivery and outcomes of the priority projects. Monitoring is being undertaken to identify the impacts and regular reviews will provide the opportunity to adapt and improve the projects.
38. Risk – Businesses do not engage sufficiently with the projects being delivered to make them a success and to ensure they are sustainable in the future.
39. Action to mitigate the risk – A key role for the Town Team Manager is to involve businesses in the projects, to understand their views and adapt projects to ensure they are supported by the town centre businesses. This is an ongoing challenge, and business forums and groups have been set up to ensure this dialogue takes place with as many businesses as possible.

Equalities Impact Assessment

40. Consideration has been given to ensure all projects being delivered are accessible to the public, complying with equal opportunities policies.

Other Options Considered

41. In identifying priorities for the Town Team Programme, officers and members have sought the views of the public and businesses before drawing up the priorities identified in this report.

Consultation

42. Officers and Members have been involved in organising a number of town centre business forum meetings to consult on progress and understand the challenges businesses face. Social media has also been used to update businesses and residents and receive their feedback on project activity. Since the appointment of the Town Team Manager, regular meetings with individual town centre businesses have been undertaken to enable companies to provide their views.

Conclusion

43. The award of Portas Pilot Status in 2012 has stimulated considerable project activity within Ashford Town Centre, particularly over the last 18 months with the introduction of the Town Team Manager. The Town Team Programme has been developed to incorporate not only the Portas Pilot funded projects, but the broad breadth of priority activity that is being delivered by Ashford Borough Council and other partners in Ashford Town Centre.
44. Even with considerable progress, it is recognised that not all projects have moved forward as quickly as the Council, businesses or residents would have liked. It was inevitable that getting resources in place and developing detailed plans would take some time in the early stages of this initiative, and delivery of projects has now been accelerating over the last 12 months. The delivery of the Love Ashford website, the new parking initiative and the Farmers' Market alongside the continued delivery of Pop Up Ashford within the last 6 months, has shown considerable progress has been made, but their impacts need to be continually monitored and resourced to ensure these continue to be successful and sustainable.

Lead Member's Views

45. Cllr Neil Shorter, Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property -

"Along with just about every town centre in the land, Ashford has its challenges of economic recovery and a changing shopping culture that results in businesses needing to restructure, reinventing themselves for the age of the internet or, sadly, finding that they have lost their customer base and cease trading. However as I have said on a number of occasions, the work that ABCs economic development team are doing, in conjunction with the wider structures and systems that are in place such as the Town Team, Chamber of Commerce, individual businesses etc, is inspirational. This does not even start to reflect the wider, strategic elements of work that also forms a cohesive element of the teams output so that issues such as Elwick place,

DOV expansion and the railway signalling modernisation that has to integrate into the development of what our town centre should/could be in 5-10 years' time and finding a surge of bodies who are clamouring to spend their money on who knows what?

Working with so many individual stakeholders that form the towns businesses should not be under stated; they all have individual interests and business models, so to identify the common characteristics that will enable them to work with us for the common good is a long road; we have now firmly set our course and collaboratively we will make Ashford a destination for both work and play."

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Appendix A: Ashford Portas Pilot Case Studies

Since the formation of the Ashford Town Team, Ashford has forged ahead with several exciting new projects designed to reinvigorate the town centre. The team has benefitted through funding from Ashford Borough Council and the appointment of a full-time Town Team Manager. Jo Wynn-Carter, who came from the private sector to fill this role in April 2013, has been able to dedicate time to building strong relationships between local businesses, landlords and public sector bodies. This role has proved very successful in being able to provide a decisive lead for projects and in encouraging cross-organisational support for key decisions. The team's ability to deliver projects through our early schemes has enabled us to investigate the launch of challenging new projects such as a planned monthly Farmers' Market set for summer 2014.

'Love Ashford' Town Centre Website and App

Ashford is driving town centre footfall through our innovative website and mobile app. Visitors will be able to interact with local shops and businesses, access special offers and discover local events and activities.

We are looking to lead the way on the Digital High Street through the development of the Love Ashford website. We have worked with a local web-design company, Red Carrot, who will also be launching the Love Ashford app, accessible through mobile phones and tablets.

loveashford



We are now in the beta stage of this exciting project, working closely with businesses to encourage them to join the Love Ashford website. The site will launch at the end of April, and will be the first of its kind to offer independent businesses a universal 'click and collect' service. Opportunities to monetise the site and app to make them self-sustaining through income generation are also integrated into the site.

Key features of the site include:

- Individual page for each town centre business
- Integrated mapping and social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Events promotion
- Special offers

- 'Click & Collect' for independent businesses
- Interactive resident surveys and feedback
- A business-to-business email facility
- Business and resident newsletters

PopUp Ashford

Media coverage of empty shops has appeared in many newspapers, both locally and nationally. As a direct result of being a Portas Pilot town we have been able to work with PopUp Britain, the retail arm of the StartUp Britain national campaign supporting Britain's entrepreneurs, to deliver the first PopUp Britain shop in Kent and in a Portas Town.



By building a good working relationship between Ashford BC and UBS, landlords of Park Mall shopping centre, we were able to procure an unused retail unit for the project with the idea that we would make use of an empty shop front and encourage more pedestrians into the area. PopUp Ashford opened on the 14th October 2013 and has brought

much-needed footfall to an area of town that had a very high vacancy rate.

Start-up businesses share the space for two weeks at a time, and can test their trade on the high street. The project has run for five months and we have seen more than 14 businesses using the space and receive support from the town team.

One of our tenants remained for a total of three months and is now exploring the idea of taking on a lease in the town centre. Another has gone on to develop her product range and exhibit in a major London trade fair with success. Another tenant has received a grant from Vistaprint and won the prestigious Theo Paphitis SBS Award.

We have challenged the traditional use of a retail outlet by hosting events and workshops - most recently an evening event with TV's Alex Polizzi, attended by more than 70 local businesses. We have attracted media interest from BBC South East and Meridian TV; and we are currently running exciting Buying and Visual Merchandising workshops for local businesses to learn how to buy for profit and maximise product performance.

Pop up Gallery – Stour Valley Arts

Ashford was allocated Arts Council funding to support the Portas Pilot project activity. Following discussions on how best to compliment this activity, it was agreed by the Town Team that the funding be used to secure a 'pop up' art gallery, curated by a professional local arts company. On the 23rd November 2013, just one month after the decision by the Town Team, Stour Valley Arts opened the Cornershop Gallery opposite PopUp Ashford with a high quality art show displaying and selling affordable artworks by artists and makers from Kent. In the first four weeks of opening, 800 people visited the gallery. There has also been evidence of a positive crossover developing between start-up businesses in PopUp Ashford, and the Cornershop. Stour Valley Arts is planning exhibitions through to June 2014.



Town Centre Action Team

As a direct result of Ashford being a Portas Pilot, Ashford Borough Council unveiled a Town Centre Action Team (T-CAT) to the public in September 2013, ushering in a new era of a brighter and cleaner town centre. The team has been tasked with keeping the town looking at its best, and can respond rapidly to any problems reported by residents, visitors or local businesses. Duties covered by this team of four include litter picking, minor maintenance works, and painting and refurbishing street furniture. T-CAT has had a positive impact on the town not just in terms of cleanliness, but also by working closely with businesses and the public alike.

We recently used PopUp Ashford to showcase the great work this team is undertaking and produced a town centre survey to be completed by the public. We have had an excellent response from this and the results have assisted with the focus on particular areas in the town going forward.



Appendix B - Summary Portas Pilot Budget Oct 2014

Portas Pilot Projects	Actions	Budget	Proposed spend	Expenditure to date	Timescales
Rebirth of the Town Centre Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stall for a tenner Project Plan to Rejuvenate Ashford Town Centre Market Ashford Town Centre Farmers' Market. 	£100,000	£74,870	£32,776	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Pitch Initiative – May 2013 to May 2014. Ashford Food and Drink Festival 21st June to 22nd June 2013. Ashford Farmers' Market operational by July 2014.
Use new Technology to market Ashford town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative Website Town Centre App 	£32,000	£30,000 to £64,000 depending on income generation over first 3 years.	£32,040	Commissioned by end Sept 2013, with new website in place by Oct 2014.
PopUp Ashford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PopUp Shops 	£42,000	£30,000 for 1 unit	£27,856	Signed off concept, opened October 14 th 2013 for 6 months(extended to 31 st December 2014)
Developing the Ashford 2030 – A Framework vision for the town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and business involvement workshops 	£5,000		£0	Ashford Borough Council planning department currently developing evidence base for new town centre strategy to be developed.
Improving the links between Ashford Designer outlet Village and Ashford Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiation of innovative solutions 	£11,000	£11,000	£0	Budget being put towards finger post signage to extend the town centre scheme.
Strengthen the Ashford Business Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Meetings Communication Activity Town Team Administrative Support 	£10,000	£8,500	£8,491	Hosting of meetings, delivery of newsletters, and research and monitoring activities.

Arts Council Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts impact on Town Centre Market • Direct Commissioning of public realm enhancements 	£10,000	£10,000 on 'Pop up' in Park Mall	£10,000	Opened Nov 2013 to June 2014
Total		£210,000	£168,370 to £198,370	£111,163	