



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 28th June 2016 at 7.00pm.

The Members of this Committee are:-

Cllr Chilton (Chairman)

Cllr Michael (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey, Hicks, A. Howard, W. Howard, Krause, Link, Mrs. Martin, Sims, Wedgbury.

Agenda

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| 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: | (i) |
| 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 24 th May 2016 subject to the inclusion at Minute No 16 that Southern Water would be invited to attend the Overview & Scrutiny Meeting in October. | |

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

- | | | |
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| 4. | Sickness Absence Report 2015/2016 | 1 - 4 |
| 5. | Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2015/16 | 5 - 12 |
| 6. | Scoping Report – Review of Raising the Profile and Awareness of Scrutiny | 13 - 16 |

Part IV – Information/Monitoring Items

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| 7. | Future Reviews and Report Tracker | 17 - 18 |
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28/06/2016

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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 nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the 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 nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

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

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be 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 not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

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

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240134/Openness_and_transparency_on_personal_interests.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, with revisions adopted on 17.10.13, 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 Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

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 **24th May 2016**.

Present:

Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey, A. Howard, Hicks, Krause, Link, Mrs. Martin, Sims, Wedgbury.

Apology:

Cllr. Chilton

Also Present:

Member Services & Scrutiny Manager, Policy & Performance Manager, Policy & Performance Officer, Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair welcomed Cllr Mrs Martin to the Committee and expressed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to Cllr Knowles, who was now a Member of the Cabinet. He also welcomed the Policy & Performance Manager and Policy & Performance Officer. He then went on to explain that he had recently attended a training course on Overview & Scrutiny and after the first item on the Agenda he would discuss his findings with the Committee.

14 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 26th April 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

15 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The report highlighted the work that had been undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year 2015/2016. The Vice Chairman opened up the report to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A Member expressed disappointment that only one external topic had been scrutinised. He considered that the Committee needed to be more outward looking and should deal with issues which would further benefit the community. He stated that the lack of call-in's undertaken was also disappointing and that they should not be viewed negatively.
- A query was raised as to whether certain subjects which had previously been scrutinised could be added again to be looked at. These included Rat

infestations, public seating and toilets within the Borough and Hospital transport.

- The Committee discussed Water Supply and the privatisation of sewerage works that was due to be completed by October 2016. Concerns were given regarding the location of sewerage works within the town centre and infrastructure within rural areas.

Resolved:

That the report be approved, and Water Supply remain a priority.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5, Cllr. Wedgbury asked that it be recorded in the minutes that he had voted against the recommendation.

16 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Vice Chairman gave an overview of his findings from a training course he had attended. He explained that effective Overview & Scrutiny should have: - support from the Cabinet; in-depth reviews; partner and public engagement; and demonstrate impact.

He introduced a Topic Selection Flowchart which he considered could prove to be a valuable tool in assisting the Committee when deciding what subjects to scrutinise. Additionally he advised that it should be viewed as a live document.

Members discussed how the flowchart would be used and agreed that it would be very useful. A Member requested that any topic raised by three or more Committee Members be considered for review and passed through the flowchart.

A query was raised regarding 'low priority' ideas – would they be discarded or set aside for review at a later date? The Vice Chairman explained that the Committee should consider what impact they could have, and any issues for which a review would not add value should not be considered.

The Vice Chairman then asked the Committee for their thoughts on periodically completing a self-evaluation form and Members were apprehensive about who would collect the data and what action would be taken in response. Therefore Members considered that it would not serve any real purpose.

The Policy & Performance Manager welcomed Scrutiny back into the 'Corporate Centre' and explained that their aim was to develop an exciting and interesting Programme, which would add benefit to the Council and the community. The Policy & Performance Officer would be overseeing and managing the process and a new Scrutiny Officer had been appointed, with part of his role dedicated to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Policy & Performance Manager explained that the new Officer would commence their work in one month and the Member Services Team would continue to clerk the meeting. The Policy & Performance Officer went on to advise that the team would also provide research and analytical support to the Committee. The Policy & Performance Manager suggested that raising the profile of

Scrutiny and engaging the public could be an initial consideration to be placed on a reshaped Tracker.

The Vice Chairman expressed his overwhelming thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Member Services & Scrutiny Manager for all of his hard work.

The Vice Chairman then invited the Committee to discuss the Tracker and decide whether any items should be removed. The Member Services & Scrutiny Manager explained that the Tracker reflected previous discussions by the Committee and was also a log of what items had been requested to be put back onto the Tracker. The Vice Chairman suggested that Task Groups with two to three Members could look in detail at an issue, and then convey back their investigation to the whole Committee. Members agreed in principle, and clarification was given that only Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee could sit on a Task Group, but Members outside the Committee (but not Cabinet Members) with specific expertise could be invited to attend for specific topics under review. The Committee provisionally agreed the following: -

In relation to items already on the Tracker: -

- Refurbishment of the Stour Centre would remain on the Tracker, subject to the usual scoping being conducted. The Terms of Reference for the Stour Centre Redevelopment & Leisure Management Steering Group were currently being developed.
- Council Play Parks would be removed from the Tracker.
- Quality Bus Partnership would be removed from the Tracker, since this was duplicated by a separate Committee and KCC.

In relation to items previously raised for potential review: -

- Education and Free Schools would not be added to the Tracker.
- Local Council's Public Health and Social Care would be added to the Tracker.
- HMO'S would not be added, since this was duplicated by a separate Committee.
- HS1 and Eurostar Services would not be added as this was part of a dedicated Cabinet Task Group.
- The Syrian Vulnerable Persons relocation scheme would not be added to the Tracker as a report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in September.
- Water Supply would remain on the Tracker, specifically around maintenance of private sewers

- Power supply and IT Disaster Recovery at the Civic Centre would remain on the Tracker. The Policy & Performance Officer would liaise with Officers to provide an update.
- Flooding would not be added to the Tracker, since this was duplicated by a separate Task Group.
- Social Housing Providers be further considered in light of the Housing enforcement report to be submitted to Cabinet in June.
- Rat infestations would also be added to the list of other potential items for review.

The Policy and Performance Officer said he would reshape the Tracker into a chronological order, with additional information. The Vice Chairman advised that he also had a list of other potential items for review which would be circulated to Members and would be discussed further at the next meeting.

Resolved:

- (i) **that the Topic Selection Flowchart be adopted by the Committee and be used as a first step in determining the validity of subjects for review.**
- (ii) **that the Tracker be amended to reflect the decisions recorded above.**

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Agenda Item No: 4



**ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Report To: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 28 June 2016

Report Title: Sickness absence 2015/16

Report Author: Ian Smith, Personnel Officer

Portfolio Holder: Callum Knowles, Information, Technology and Communications

Summary: This report provides annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2015/16.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: None

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

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

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

Sickness Absence 2015/16

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides members with sickness absence figures for the financial year 2015/16

Background

2. The reported figures for council employees have been obtained from all sickness absences recorded on the iTrent Payroll and HR system.
3. The figures are presented as the average number of working days lost per FTE (full time working equivalent) employee during the reported period.

4. The council's level of annual sickness absence is compared with previously reported figures, nationally reported figures and with some of our neighbouring authorities.
5. Members have requested not to receive detailed analysis on the level of reported sickness absences; except where there has been a significant change in the level reported from the previous year.

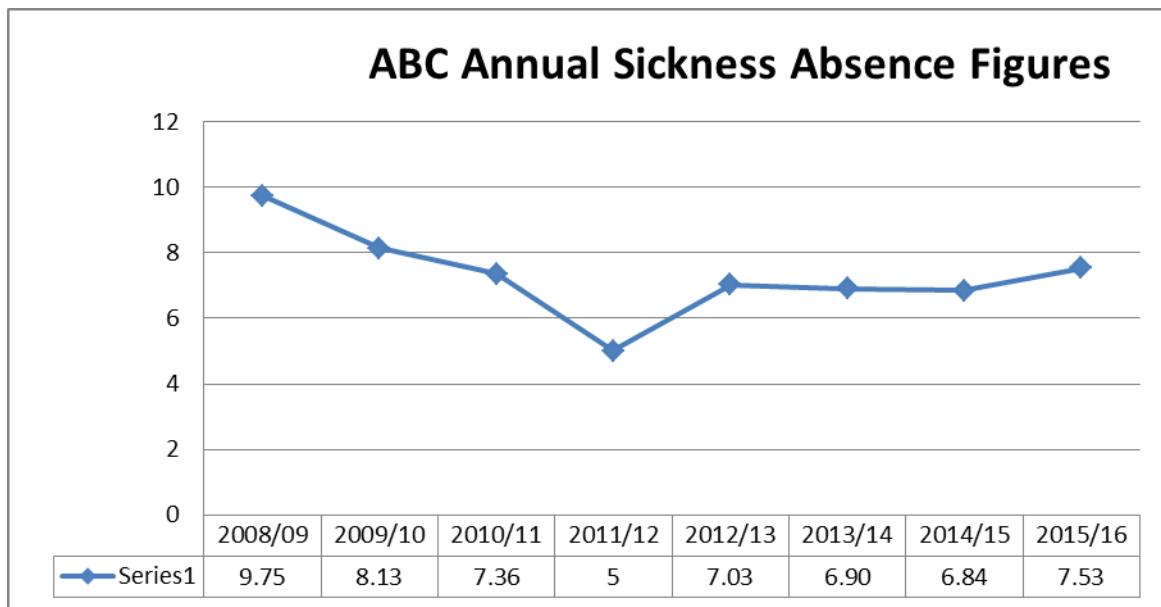
Sickness Absence 2015/16

6. Based on the average number of 382.7 FTE employees, the total amount of working days (2875) lost due to sickness equates to 7.53 days per FTE. This figure represents an increase of 0.69 days per FTE reported for 2014/15.
7. 33 long term cases (20 continuous days or more) were reported. The total number of days in this category represents 49.65 % (1427.5 days) of the total number of working days lost. The average period of absence per employee within this category was 43.26 days; the longest individual period being 133 days.
8. By excluding long term sickness absences, the average number of working days lost per FTE equates to 3.79 days.
9. A total of 139 (30 %) of staff did not incur any periods of sickness absence.

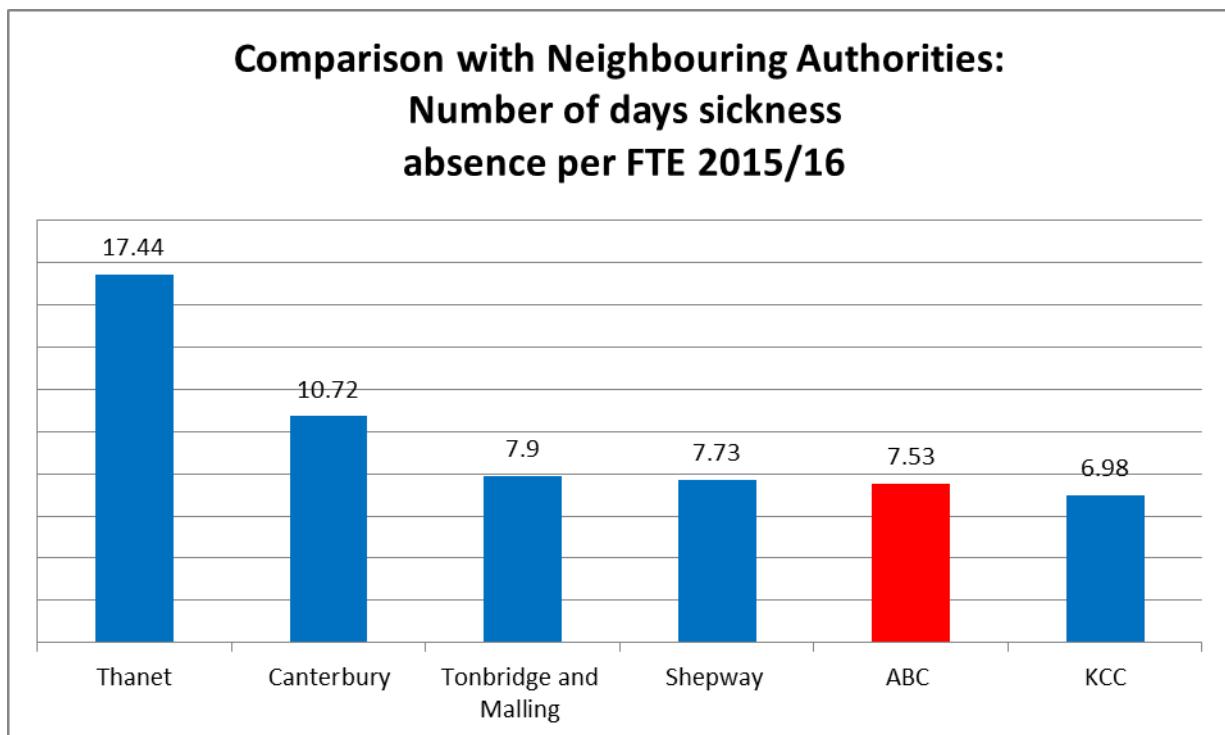
Comparisons

10. The 2015 Absence Management survey report produced by the *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development* showed that there was a sickness absence rate of 9.3 per employee in the UK Public Sector; this is an increase from the 8.7 days reported for 2014. The rate for the private sector was 8.2 days; this is an increase from the 7.2 days reported for 2014.

11. **Chart 1** - shows the number of day's sickness absence per employee (FTE) for each financial year since 2008/9.



12. **Chart 2**- shows how the council compares with some of our neighbouring authorities.



Summary

13. ABC's progress in bringing down the level of sickness absence since 2008/9 has been significant. Our absence level compares very well with the latest national figures and those provided by some of our neighbouring local authorities.
14. For 2015/16 there has been a slight increase in the overall level of sickness absence. While this is believed to represent a 'blip' and not a long term trend, it does highlight the continuing need for effective interventions and initiatives to be taken in order to achieve low sickness absence levels; in turn these will improve productivity, service quality and reduce the costs in those areas where cover for absence needs to be provided.
15. Personnel and Development will play a key role by continuing with case by case active management, promoting well-being initiatives and by maintaining and enhancing the partnership working with line managers and the trade union.

Portfolio Holder Comments

16. "It is positive to see that ABC continues to have comparatively low sickness levels. This is especially pleasing when the pressures on ABC officers to deliver are high; this is a positive indication of good staff morale. It will be important for managers to continue to manage sickness effectively to ensure the very small increase on last year's level is in fact a blip and not the start of a trend of increasing sickness absence."

Ian Smith, Personnel Officer

Contact: ian.smith@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330411

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|--------------------------|--|---|
| Agenda Item No: | 5 |  ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL |
| Report To: | Cabinet | |
| Date: | 09/06/2016 | |
| Report Title: | Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2015/16 | |
| Report Author: | Nicholas Clayton, Policy and Performance Officer | |
| Portfolio Holder: | Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget & Resource Management, Neil Shorter | |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Summary: | <p>This report seeks to update members and the public on the performance of the Council during Quarter 4. This includes information on what the Cabinet has achieved through its decision-making, key performance data, and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacts upon the Council's work.</p> <p>More widely, and following agreement of the Council's new Corporate Plan in December, the organisation's approach to the monitoring of its performance against this plan is being revised.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Council is currently rolling out a new online Performance 'Dashboard' to change the way we view performance and its relevance to our operations.</p> |
|-----------------|--|

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: N/A

Recommendations: The Cabinet be asked to:-

1. Note the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 4 of 2015/16.

Policy Overview: In December 2015 the Council agreed a new Corporate Plan - "*The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement*".

This also provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was measured, presented and engaged with by officers and members.

Financial Implications: N/A

Risk Assessment N/A

**Equalities Impact
Assessment** N/A

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

Report Title: Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2015/16

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide a headline overview of performance against the Council's Corporate Plan for Quarter 4 2015/16, and update members on the aims and progress of the Council's new 'Performance Dashboard'.

Background

2. Each quarter the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committees receive an update on how the Council is achieving its objectives.
3. Historically, this has been in the form of a short, paper-based report which could only provide a snapshot of how the Council was doing at a fixed point in time.
4. In December 2015 the Council agreed a new Corporate Plan - "*The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement*".
5. This also provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was monitored, presented and engaged with by officers and members. The section below provides an update on the aims and progress of this initiative.

The Ashford Borough Council 'Performance Dashboard'

6. Following Full Council endorsement of the new corporate plan, the Council's senior leadership agreed that a refreshed, regularly updated, visual and interactive online performance system would help senior managers, members and (in time) the general public get an up-to-date picture of strategic performance.
7. Accordingly, over the last six months the Policy and Performance team have worked with a leading open data and visualisation company to design a Performance Dashboard, held workshops with performance leads within services to see what information the Council collects and what should or could be collected; gathered contextual data from KCC and other partners; and kept senior managers appraised of developments.
8. The Performance Dashboard uses data and insights from across the authority to monitor progress against the goals set out in the new Corporate Plan. It focuses on the Council's four priority areas –
 - a. Enterprising Ashford
 - b. Living Ashford

- c. Active and Creative Ashford
 - d. Attractive Ashford
9. The overriding approach has been to use the data already collected by services for their management statistics, alongside including new data where appropriate, and presenting them on a single user-friendly system so as to build a comprehensive overall picture.
10. The system will be updated regularly from across the organisation with the latest data as it becomes available. Updates on the Council's initiatives, projects and priorities (as they relate to the corporate plan areas and the performance data) will also be regularly refreshed to provide context, narrative and analysis. The site itself is always available, so once colleagues have access to the system they can monitor performance at their own pace at any time.
11. Whilst this approach is naturally an evolving one, the aim is for the Performance Dashboard to inform the work of both officers and members, providing an ongoing tool which facilitates insight and understanding across the organisation on the state of progress against our goals.
12. Alongside the complementary work of the Programme Manager to build a comprehensive picture of the Council's projects and delivery plans, this insight will provide an enhanced understanding of the Council's success in delivering upon its strategic objectives.
13. As part of the Council's wider governance arrangements, such performance information is used to reflect on the organisation's approach – leading to doing things differently where needed in order to offer efficient services and effective outcomes.
14. Longer-term, the Dashboard will also help the Council meet its duties as an open and accountable body, allowing the public to see how we are doing in meeting our agreed goals.

Summary of Performance in Quarter 4 2016/17

15. The majority of performance goals the council is working towards remain either on-target or near-target.
16. Whilst trend figures are available in the Technical Annex below, the following provides a short contextual summary of key changes during the last three months -
- a. The state of Ashford town centre remains generally strong, with footfall bucking the national trend and increasing by around 5% in 2015 compared to the year before, compared to a national trend of a 1.6% decrease. The number of visitors parking has remained steady – with a slight underlying upward trend - in some part due to the free parking initiative. It is important to remember that this is one element of a package of measures, including the Farmers Market, *Made In Ashford* and TCAT, to boost the High Street.

The corresponding business picture has improved. Vacancy rates have fallen in both County Square and the town centre overall over the last year, while in Park Mall - while historically higher - rates have begun to fall since the Council took over direct operations in the second half of 2015.

For the year ending March 2016, the crime rate in Ashford town centre was about the same as the average crime rate across similar areas, with a slightly downward trend in overall crime levels.

- b. Whilst average house prices fell slightly during the last three months, the wider trend remains upwards. The average house selling price in Ashford now stands at around £220,000, while the last two quarters have seen especially strong performance in terms of new properties either starting to be built or being completed. During the last year the building of over 450 homes were started across the borough, with over 550 completed. This is around 300 more homes being completed compared to 2014/15, and around 450 more being completed compared to the year before that.
- c. Whilst full figures relating to planning applications are available a quarter in arrears due to the need to ensure applications are finalised, the longer-term trend indicates strong performance across the range of application types, with generally increasing decision and approval rates.
- d. The total number of people claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed rose slightly over the last two quarters following a period of sustained fall. It now stands at just above 1,000. This is still 13% less than at the same time last year and constitutes around 1.4% of Ashford's working age population. Ashford is below the Kent average, currently at 1.6%. Accordingly, the council's benefits caseload continues to fall, although at a slower rate compared to previous quarters.

Of note in this area is the recent change in the calculation methodology from the Office for National Statistics. Historically, the Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant count was used by local authorities as a proxy for unemployment. However, the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) meant that increasing numbers of claimants moved from JSA to UC, without necessarily remaining unemployed. This in turn meant that JSA figures increasingly underestimated the rate of unemployment.

As more claimants received UC the Department for Work and Pensions have been able to calculate new experimental figures which give a more accurate total for the number of people claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.

- e. During the quarter, 97.4% of food premises comply with environmental health standards. While the percentage has remained steady over the last year, the council has maintained its effort in this area with a

continued focus and resources. Any food premises found to be non-compliant either receive a formal letter or a revisit, and officers always seek to work with the premises in the first instance. If non-compliance is severe, or does not improve after these initial interventions, officers would then serve a notice.

17. Furthermore, Quarter 4 saw activity on a variety of initiatives which will have a positive impact on the outcomes set out in the Council's corporate plan –
 - a. In December the Planning Committee approved an application to develop land along Elwick Road, while work continues on the Commercial Quarter between the International Station and the Town Centre.
 - b. The Council was awarded £1.92 million towards the cost of providing care-ready homes at Danemore in Tenterden. By 2026, it is anticipated that around 40% of residents in the Ashford borough will be aged over 50, and may require additional care and support. The council is fully committed to do all it can to help meet the housing needs of those who need extra support.
 - c. As part of the Council's support for active and vibrant communities, the demolition and preparation work on a new pavilion at Spearpoint began in February, while planning permission for a community building and multi-use games area in Repton was also approved in the same month.
 - d. In March the Council's face-to-face customer services returned to the Civic Centre, in part to reflect the changing ways residents use council services.

Risk Assessment

18. N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment

19. N/A

Portfolio Holder's Views

20. I am pleased to see that performance measures remain strong across the Council's key objectives, as can be seen from a consideration of the trends over the last year in the annex below.
21. More broadly, I welcome the steps underway to increase the depth and impact of understanding the Council is seeking to achieve against its new corporate plan. While this is naturally an evolving system, I look forward to sharing the results of this work with colleagues at the earliest opportunity.

Contact: Nicholas Clayton, Policy and Performance Officer

Email: Nicholas.clayton@ashford.gov.uk

Technical Annex

| Indicator | Quarter 4 2015/16 | Quarter 3 2015/16 | Quarter 2 2015/16 | Quarter 1 2015/16 | Quarter 4 2014/15 |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Average Town Centre footfall per month | 264,000 | 282,000 | 316,600 | 310,000 | 300,000 |
| Average car park users per month | 102,000 | 104,000 | 101,950 | 99,650 | 98,600 |
| Householder planning applications - number | --- | 230 | 218 | 234 | 215 |
| Householder planning applications - % decided within 8 weeks | --- | 91 | 92 | 88 | 84 |
| Householder planning applications - % approved | --- | 95 | 93 | 93 | 98 |
| Small business planning applications - number | --- | 93 | 82 | 97 | 83 |
| Small business planning applications – % decided within 8 weeks | --- | 78 | 80 | 80 | 57 |
| Small business planning applications – % approved | --- | 94 | 84 | 84 | 79 |
| Numbers unemployed | 1,080 | 965 | 930 | 895 | 1,075 |
| % of working age population unemployed | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Number of 18-24 year olds unemployed | 240 | 230 | 250 | 200 | 265 |
| % of 18-24 year olds unemployed | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.8 |
| Average house selling price (to January) | 220,638 | 230,919 | 226,827 | 215,340 | 217,500 |
| Number of homes started | 150 | 110 | 80 | 120 | 100 |
| Number of homes completed | 120 | 230 | 150 | 80 | 80 |
| % of Ashford Borough Council properties with a current gas safety certificate | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Average number of families in B&B accommodation per month | 14 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 14 |
| Number of homeless applications received | 51 | 59 | 56 | 38 | 65 |
| Number of homeless applications approved | 35 | 39 | 42 | 23 | 40 |
| Benefits Caseload | 9,533 | 9,650 | 9,700 | 9,800 | 9,900 |
| % Council Tax collected | 98.3 | 86.7 | 58.5 | 30.5 | 98.5 |
| % Business rates collected | 99.5 | 84.1 | 60.2 | 33.2 | 98.5 |
| % take up of direct debit for paying council tax | 66.6 | 66.6 | 67.1 | 67.1 | 66.7 |
| Number of disabled adaptations completed | 108 | 132 | 75 | 50 | 65 |
| % of compliant food premises | 97 | 97 | 97 | 97 | 98 |

Overview and Scrutiny

Scoping Paper

Review - Raising the Profile and Awareness of Scrutiny and Increasing its Influence and Impact

For Discussion

Introduction

Following a discussion (led by the Vice Chair who has recently attended training on effective scrutiny) at the May Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was felt that a good, short and appropriate review would be to consider ways in which the committee could raise its own profile. This would include both its internal and external presence, and those steps needed to increase the influence and impact of its workplan.

This paper sets out the proposed scope for the review, on which the Committee's views are sought.

1. Exerting influence and building positive relationships

Why?

In order to work effectively, it is crucial that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has positive working relationships with not only the other elements of the Council's governance arrangements (such as the Cabinet and senior management) but also with other parties who may become involved in the committee's work. This ranges from third parties, contractors and service providers subject to a review, to witnesses and the public who may provide advice to inform the work of scrutiny.

How?

Central to building trust and exerting influence are measures which ensure that committee is seen to work in a business-like manner - able to evidence and document the way in which it approaches its work and makes recommendations.

The committee may wish to explore the ways in which internal relationships can work to strengthen the role and influence of the committee, and measures to ensure transparency and openness in the way the committee conducts its business.

2. Making a difference....Demonstrating Impact

Why?

The demonstration of impact flows from the exerting of influence noted above. Effective scrutiny, whilst not a decision-making body itself, can still produce useful outcomes through positive relationships and engagement, effective reviews and SMART recommendations.

How?

The committee may wish to consider what measures it would be useful to have in order to demonstrate impact, and how to raise the profile of these outcomes through the committee's annual report and other means of communication.

3. Raising the Profile

Why?

Scrutiny is at the heart of modern, local accountability. Apart from elections, scrutiny is the principal democratic means of accountability. It ensures that all councillors can take part in the development of council policy, debate and evaluate that policy and other ideas for improvement in an independent and objective manner.

How?

The committee may wish to explore the different channels available for updating internal and external stakeholders on the work of the committee. This could include the local paper, council publications, social media, the council's website and the committee's own annual report.

4. Engaging the public

Why?

Scrutiny is the key means of engaging the public and partners in both the council's priorities, and on matters of local concern. It is crucial that the committee harnesses the concerns and thoughts of residents when setting its priorities and workplan.

How?

The committee may wish to consider ways in which the public can be encouraged to submit suggestions for future scrutiny reviews and be kept up-to-date with the work of the committee.

Next Steps

These are all areas which can form the basis for further discussion by a task group of committee members, or further research / information-gathering from officers in order to further future consideration.

O+S is asked to discuss and endorse or amend the scope of this review, and decide how members would like to approach the review.

The means by which the committee wishes to conduct the review will impact upon the timescale for draft recommendations to be put back to the committee, but we would hope that any review can be conducted within **2 months**, or longer if the committee considers it necessary.

Nicholas Clayton, Policy & Performance Officer

Overview and Scrutiny

Report Tracker

| Report Title | Date due to O&S | Head of Service | Lead O&S Member / Taskgroup | Scope of what is to be scrutinised | Further details / current position |
|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Sickness & Absenteeism Annual Report | June 2016 | Head of Personnel & Development | | Provides members with sickness absence figures for the financial year 2015/16; Asks if the committee would wish to receive a further update in a year's time. | O&S original request; to remain on tracker but format may change |
| Quarter 4 2015/16 Performance Report | June 2016 | Policy and Performance | | Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision-making; key performance data; the wider borough picture. | Cabinet requirement |
| Housing Framework Annual Report | July 2016 | Housing Strategy Manager | | Highlights work undertaken during 2014/15 to achieve the five priorities of the Framework and issues and opportunities presented over the last 12 months. | Cabinet requirement |
| Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 | July 2016 | Head of Housing | | A further update on how the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 is being implemented. | Update report – one year on |
| Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group on HRA Business Plan – Universal Credit | September 2016 | Head of Housing | | The O&S Committee wishes to have an update report on the roll out of Universal Credit. | |
| Water supply and waste water disposal | October 2016 | | | Southern Water to be asked to attend on adoption of private sewers. | |
| Community Safety Partnership Annual Update | February 2017 | Health, Parking & Community Safety | | Presents the latest strategic assessment information that informs CSP priorities, and the work carried out by partners during 2016/17. Members are invited to ask questions about any aspect of the Community Safety Partnership. | Statutory requirement as part of Crime & Disorder Partnership |
| Safeguarding | March | | | | Requested by Cabinet |

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| Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report | 2017 | June 2017 | Policy and Performance | The Council's Constitution requires the O&S Committee to make an annual report to full Council. | as part of a revised policy Statutory requirement |
|--|------|-----------|------------------------|---|--|

Items for the Future

**Local Councils,
Public Health
and Social Care**

**Power supply
and IT disaster
recovery at the
Civic Centre**

**Stour Centre
refurbishment**

Head of Culture