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## **'Future Proofing the Borough' – Reflections on the Committee's recent findings on Infrastructure**

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017**

By: **Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer**

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**Summary:** **As part of the agreed revisions to its procedures, the Committee previously resolved to adopt an annual work programme for Overview and Scrutiny.**

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### **Background**

1. At the previous meeting of the Committee, members discussed agreeing proposed themes for the forthcoming year in order to lay out Overview and Scrutiny's 2017/18 workplan.
2. Alongside Air Quality and Wellbeing, the committee agreed that Infrastructure - covering 'future-proofing' in a wide range of issues and plans for the borough's growth and development – was a theme worthy of underpinning significant focus by members during the forthcoming year.
3. Whilst the committee noted that a strong sense remains that infrastructure and utility provision is a key barrier to sustainable growth, it acknowledged that a lot of work had already been conducted into looking into this area, - most notably in the plans of key partners to deliver. Indeed, a number of updates and briefings have been received by the committee since January 2016.
4. In addition, the Scrutiny and Overview Officer has attended a number of meetings of the KCC Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee meetings, which have shed further light on the topic – learning which has been incorporated into this report.
5. Accordingly, it was agreed that as part of further discussions on infrastructure this report would set out the context offered by these previous scrutiny sessions. In summarising what the committee has learnt so far, this will help members further clarify and refine the work still to be done in the year ahead.

### **Water – *South East Water, Southern Water, private sewers and watercourses***

6. The Committee heard both from a number of external partners responsible for different elements of the borough's domestic water infrastructure, and those officers overseeing the council's complementary efforts in maintaining water channels and flood prevention.
7. South East Water (the water supplier) and Southern Water (with responsibility for waste water) attended the committee in January 2016. From South East Water, members learnt that –

- a. The Environment Agency has designated the South East of England as being seriously 'water stressed'.
  - b. South East Water work in accordance with a *Water Resources Management Plan 2015-2040*, but are preparing a further plan to cover the period 2020-2045.
  - c. Proposals for six new pipelines to supply the South East area by a collective group of water suppliers formed part of South East Water's National Long Term Plan, and that the Water Services Regulation Authority ensured that the agreement was mirrored in all sets of company plans and these were published. These would then be statutory plans.
  - d. South East Water was planning on building a new storage reservoir near Canterbury at Broad Oak, which would supply an extra 13.5 million litres per day by 2033.
  - e. Plans to install water meters were mandatory and it is expected that 90% of homes would be metered by 2020.
  - f. South East Water is working alongside East Malling Research to investigate different methods of irrigation control.
8. Questioning of Southern Water covered areas including their Business Plan and supply area, flood management and drainage and their role in planning and development, and revealed that –
- a. Southern Water obtained funding via a price setting mechanism and this was overseen by OFWAT. Water supply for new local infrastructure should in principle be funded by the Developer, though more often negotiations took place between the Developer, the Local Authority and Southern Water to understand exactly what was needed. Southern Water took future income from new properties into account, but if there was a projected deficit then the Developer would be expected to cover the shortfall.
  - b. Despite this, better relationships were needed between sewerage management and developers on forward planning as there were still disputes arising where relevant infrastructure for sewerage was not organised in advance.
  - c. If planning approval is given without drainage conditions, Southern Water cannot subsequently refuse a connection on the grounds of inadequate capacity.
  - d. In the case of flooding, most stations have a standby pump or were alarmed, which provided some degree of resilience.
  - e. In terms of mapping the position of pipes, the company's crews use what they called 'the Red Line System' to enter data whilst in the field.
  - f. The sewage plant in Kennington is currently operating with spare capacity.
  - g. An operational team (committed to growth forecasting) is in place at Southern Water.
9. The committee followed this session up with a discussion in October 2016 on specific concerns around the adoption of private sewers and pumping stations, in line with a deadline for the transfer of these to Southern Water. A

representative again attended, and advised that of the six pumping stations owned by Ashford Borough Council, two sites had been accepted for transfer, two rejected and another two awaiting confirmation. These sites would be transferred out of the council's ownership if they had not been adopted prior to the deadline.

10. The committee heard details of the transfer and adoption process, and the exemptions within that. The committee was also provided with a list of council sites, and those exempt from transfer. **The committee was satisfied with the process as considered, and agreed that no further information or clarification was required.**
11. In April 2016 the committee scrutinised an ongoing project to review and revise (as necessary) the maintenance of ditches and waterways across the borough, which aim to ensure the free-flow of water and minimise flood risks. Members heard that the current weekly inspections would be revised to fortnightly or monthly inspections, supplemented by a more detailed annual inspection. Site visits with ward members had also been undertaken.
12. During the 2016 review most sites were found to have issues with partial silting up of the waterways, whilst some sites would also benefit from improvements to their grills and access points. The committee heard that remedial work would be undertaken over the next 12 months, with the ongoing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance transferring to the council's in-house ASPIRE team.
13. At the end of the meeting's discussions, "***the Chairman explained that the committee had now completed its review on water supply and disposal***", notwithstanding the follow-up noted in paragraphs 9 and 10.

## Education

14. At the January 2017 Overview and Scrutiny, members received a presentation by the KCC Area Education Officer for South Kent. The presentation provided details of the provision and resourcing for education in the borough.
15. *Early Years* –
  - a. This is provided over almost 200 settings, including after/before school clubs, child minders and nurseries. 96% are rated OFSTED good or better.
  - b. All three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours free education per week. From September 2017 this increases to 30 hours per week for working parents.

## 16. Primary Education –

- a. Of Ashford's 43 Primary Schools, 4 are Outstanding, 36 are Good and 3 have no judgement. No Primary schools are rated to require Improvement or are inadequate.
- b. The committee heard that *'increased capacity has kept pace with demand, but some year groups remain very tight'* -

## Forecast Year R-6 Places

Forecast surplus/deficit of places in no action is taken

Planning Group	2015-16 capacity	2015-16 (A)	2016-17 (F)	2017-18 (F)	2018-19 (F)	2019-20 (F)	2020-21 (F)	2020-21 capacity
Ashford Central	1,380	7	16	29	13	-9	-27	1,530
Ashford North	1,440	45	40	27	47	48	60	1,470
Ashford South	2,520	86	113	75	85	90	105	2,520
Ashford South East	1,260	99	23	4	4	-5	-11	1,470
Willesborough	1,260	36	60	40	56	57	61	1,290
Ashford Rural East	535	28	41	34	50	59	71	560
Ashford Rural West	700	63	65	67	87	94	101	715
Charing and Challock	335	44	38	34	31	23	19	350
Chilham	105	7	7	7	4	-1	-4	105
Biddenden	140	4	-2	-1	3	1	7	140
Hamstreet and Woodchurch	461	5	43	35	31	21	18	497
Tenterden	873	109	116	119	117	122	129	873
<b>Ashford</b>	<b>11,009</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>11,520</b>

- c. Since 2010, KCC have –
  - i. Opened two new Primary Schools - Repton Manor (2FE) and Goat Lees (1FE), adding 630 places
  - ii. Opened Finberry Primary School offsite prior to the occupation of the new building in September 2017 (1FE) adding 210 places
  - iii. Expanded 4 schools- Aldington, Challock, Furley Park, John Wesley adding 560 places
  - iv. In total 1477 permanent places and 150 temporary places have been added since 2010

## 17. Secondary Education –

- a. Ashford has one 'Maintained' school and six Academies.
- b. Five of the seven schools are OFSTED rated good or better.

District	2015-16 capacity	2015-16 (A)	2016-17 (F)	2017-18 (F)	2018-19 (F)	2019-20 (F)	2020-21 (F)	2021-22 (F)	2022-23 (F)	2022-23 capacity
Year 7	1,538	220	173	172	60	-31	-64	-11	-19	1,481
Years 7-11	7,270	804	878	959	845	614	329	146	-44	7,405

NB: Year 7 and 7-11 Surplus/Deficit Capacity if no Further Action is Taken

18. Wye School has also opened, adding 450 secondary places.

19. The committee also heard details of KCC's commissioning plan to 2021, which seeks to keep up with demand by increasing the capacity of Ashford's schools –

## 2017/21 Commissioning Plan

### Primary Provision

Planning Group	2019–20	2020-21 to 2022-23
Ashford South East		1FE expansion of Finberry
Ashford South	1FE (of 2FE) at Chilmington Green	1FE at Chilmington Green
Willesborough	1 FE of 2FE in Willesborough	
Charing and Challock	0.3FE expansion of Charing CEPS	

### Secondary Provision

by 2019-20	2020–21 to 2022-23
60 Year 7 Places	2020-21 - 90 Year 7 places 2021-22 - 60 Year 7 places 2022 - 4FE (of 8FE) school in Chilmington Green

20. Members asked how special provision in new schools would be provided, and were informed that this would take the form of a satellite facility or fixed accommodation.
21. In summarising, KCC confirmed that despite changes in funding, they were confident the small projected shortfalls in provision would be met, in part by the new FE college in central Ashford – for which KCC do not anticipate a marked decrease in school sixth form intake.

### Other Infrastructure – namely planning policy and partners' plans to meet growth

22. In November 2016 the committee received an outline of how infrastructure develops to support Ashford's growth – specifically as part of the wider Local Plan process and following concerns that the expansion plans of key infrastructure providers may not fully align with the growth forecast outlined in the draft local plan. It is a national policy requirement that the new Local Plan shows no major gaps in infrastructure provision in order for it to be deemed sound by the Planning Inspectorate. In accordance with this, the Planning Policy team have reached out to all infrastructure providers and statutory partners over the last two years regarding their plans for infrastructure expansion and development.
23. Accordingly, following discussion of this scoping report the committee requested a further update from the council's Planning Policy team, which was subsequently received in January 2017.

24. The Principal Policy Planner confirmed that the draft local plan includes proposed allocation for 12,200 homes by 2030, whilst the Strategic Housing Market Assessment has projected a population increase of 25,497 between 2011 and 2031.
25. The committee heard that whilst engagement is ongoing with infrastructure partners, with different scenarios being tried and tested, some stakeholders were more adept in providing the necessary information than others. For example, Clinical Commissioning Groups had (at the time) yet to provide detailed requirements on infrastructure needs.
26. Members enquired as to what steps could be taken to influence the CCGs, and were informed that whilst recent progress had been made, if future outputs were not received then engagement from members could be helpful. **The committee resolved to engage further with Healthcare partners at the appropriate opportunity** (please see the proposed workplan for 2017/18).
27. The committee also considered the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule, which brings together partners' plans into a single document. The schedule was last updated in May 2016 in line with the previous consultation period, with priorities assigned confirmed to be in relation to the need of the project to deliver the jobs and homes set out in the Local Plan. Accordingly, an updated version will be published alongside the next Local Plan consultation.

## Next Steps

28. As noted in paragraph 26, at the January 2017 O&S the committee resolved to engage further with **Healthcare** partners at the appropriate opportunity. This ties in with the Wellbeing theme in the 2017/18 work programme.
29. At the April 2017 O&S the committee also agreed that a primary area for scrutiny would be **roads, major transport policies and other areas (such as 'green' and sustainable infrastructure)**.
30. Both of these areas have already been incorporated into the draft work programme for 2017/18, which is appended to the O&S Annual Report.

**Bearing in mind the above (and the learning and conclusions already gathered and set out in this report) the Committee is asked to consider if there are any other areas of infrastructure provision they would like to engage with in order to take forward the work programme theme on 'Future Proofing the Borough'.**

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