



CABINET

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on Thursday, 14th March, 2019 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Cabinet are:-

Councillor Clarkson (Chairman)
Councillor Bell (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Galpin, Bell, Bennett, Bradford, Clokie, Pickering, Shorter and White

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**

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To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document:

- 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**

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To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 14th February 2019

4. **To Receive any Petitions**

5. **Leader's Announcements**

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19.	Items for Future Meetings	

DS
7 March 2019

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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/5962/2193362.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the 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.

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **14th February 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);
Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Bradford, Clokie, Galpin, Pickering, Shorter, White.

Apologies:

Cllr. Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Burgess, Dehnel, Hicks, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Link, Miss Martin, Michael, Smith, Suddards.

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Legal and Democracy, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Culture, Head of Environment and Land Management, Development and Regeneration Manager, Economic Development Manager, Senior Accountant (LF), Senior Accountant (MH), Accounts Officer, Communications Officer, National Management Trainee, Member Services Manager (Operational).

316 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Miss Martin	Made a Voluntary Announcement as her Mother would qualify as a potential Honorary Alderman.	323

317 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 10th January 2019 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

318 Leader's Announcements

The Leader reported that Agenda Item 11 – Ashford College Campus – had been withdrawn from tonight's Agenda. He advised that following the recent news, that only came out the previous day, about changes to the management of the West Kent and Ashford College, and having not received any further detail or an official position from the College at this stage, it was felt prudent to withdraw the Cabinet report on the Ashford College Campus. This matter would be brought back to Cabinet when the information was available to ensure that the Council could make an informed decision.

The Leader also advised that the National Infrastructure Commission, in conjunction with the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), had arranged a visit to Ashford to take place on 19th March 2019. They wanted to view Junction 10A, the A28 and Ashford College amongst other developments, as well as staying for lunch and having a look around Ashford. This was welcomed as an extremely good opportunity to provide some positive publicity for the investment in Ashford.

319 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Task Group had scrutinised the Council's draft 2019/20 budget and had regarded it as sound and deliverable. The Portfolio Holder said that this year's had been one of the most thorough and structured budget scrutiny processes he had been involved in and thanked the Chairman of the Task Group and the Members for their hard work. He advised that he fully supported the recommendations and was pleased that the Task Group had regarded the draft budget as sound and deliverable.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) it be noted that the O&S Committee regards the Council's draft 2019/20 budget as sound and deliverable.**
 - (ii) it be noted that the O&S Committee regards the Council's reserves position as suitable to cover identified contingencies and risks.**
 - (iii) it be noted that the parking income budget for Elwick Place is based on generally sound assumptions but remains ambitious.**
 - (iv) it be noted that the lorry clamping scheme extension is supported but represents a potential risk to the budget if fees are not set at a level which allows for operational costs to be covered.**
 - (v) it be noted that there may be a risk to the budget associated with the Town Centre Place Making work if the NNDR pooling target is not achieved or if the aspirations of the Town Centre Place Making Board exceed available funding.**
 - (vi) consideration be given to increasing the pest control budget in recognition of the expansion of Waterbrook truck stop.**

- (vii) **it be noted that improvements to the signage for the Community Toilet Scheme may necessitate expenditure beyond the Page 7 Agenda Item 6 allocated budget.**
- (viii) **the remaining capital outlay for Elwick Place be considered as part of the 2019/20 Capital Programme.**
- (ix) **it be requested that draft Capital and Treasury Management Strategies are included for consideration by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in future years.**
- (x) **it be noted that there may be a risk around delivery of key projects in the event of Section 106 funds not being available.**
- (xi) **the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group be instructed to consider ways to expand allotment provision in the Borough.**
- (xii) **it be noted that there may be a risk to the Council's rental income if International House leases expiring in 2019/20 are not renewed.**

Recommended:

That the Council agree that GDPR training be compulsory for all Members following the 2019 local elections.

320 Budget 2019/20

The report presented the final Draft 2019/20 Budget which would be recommended to the Full Council for approval. The Budget supported the fourth year of the Council's Corporate Plan, including the Big 8 projects and a number of other approved commercial and regeneration projects. The report also covered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which included a 1% reduction in rents, the fourth and final year of the four year reduction programme, the Capital programme and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT introduced the report and directed Members' attention to the tabled paper which included a minor amendment to the table on page 125 of the report, and the detailed comments of those who had responded to the budget consultation. He thanked those residents who had taken the time to engage with the budget setting process and for asking meaningful questions. He advised that the budget proposed a £5.00 (3.17%) rise in the Borough's annual Council Tax requirement which would still leave Ashford as the lowest of any Kent District and amongst the lowest quartile in the country. He thanked all involved in putting the budget together through Officer hard work, formal scrutiny and consultation, and for all those Officers and Members who continued to promote and deliver the Council's entrepreneurial approach. This was continuing to generate a significant income stream which had allowed the Council to become self-sufficient, more than negating the loss of Government Grant without placing the burden on Council Tax payers.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing commented on the HRA which, despite setting an ambitious programme for the coming year, had been viewed as sound.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Budget context and MTFP position be noted.**
 - (ii) the Chief Financial Officer be delegated powers to establish local discounts in Business Rates in accordance with Government policy.**
 - (iii) the summary of reserves as set out at Table 6 of the report (Appendix C refers) be noted.**
 - (iv) the Equality Impact Assessment as set out in Appendix E to the report be noted.**
 - (v) the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2019/20 be approved.**
 - (vi) the estimated average rent decrease of 1% be approved in accordance with Government guidelines and that the rent setting for the future continues to follow movements in the “limit rent” set by the Government.**
 - (vii) the advice from the Chief Financial Officer concerning the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves be noted.**

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the Revenue Budget 2019/20 including the net Budget requirement of £15,725,930 (excluding Parish Precepts) be approved.**
 - (ii) the level of Discretionary Fees to be levied from 1st April 2019 (as set out in Appendix D to the report) be approved.**
 - (iii) Band D Council Tax be set at £162.50.**
 - (iv) the Capital Plan for 2018/19 to 2021/22 (as set out in Appendix G to the report) be approved.**
 - (v) the MRP policy as set out in Appendix I to the report, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement at Appendix J to the report, and the Investment Strategy at Appendix K to the report, be approved.**
 - (vii) the Risk Based Verification Policy as outlined in Appendix L to the report be approved.**
 - (viii) the new Council empty homes premium for 2019/20 be adopted (appendix M to the report refers).**

321 Financial Monitoring – 2018/19 Quarter 3

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the forecast outturn for 2018/19 as at the end of Quarter 3 (31st December 2018). The report covered the performance and forecasts of the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, with commentary supporting key variances in the body of the report. He also directed Members to the tabled paper which included some amended wording to strengthen recommendation (iii).

Cabinet Members said they strongly welcomed the approval of revenue funding to support service provision at Sk8side for a further two years. They were undertaking crucial work with the Borough's young people and the level of engagement they had achieved was fantastic. There was also strong support for the release of Section 106 funding to the Tenterden Schools Trust for the provision of a 3G pitch at Homewood School and the amended recommendation.

The Deputy Leader made reference to the pressure of additional planning costs which could no longer be contained within reserves and explained that this was because the Council had committed to robustly defending the rural areas against a number of predatory and inappropriate planning applications. They had been successfully fought, but these did come at a cost.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the forecast outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be noted.**
 - (ii) the Capital Monitoring and Treasury Management position be noted.**
 - (iii) the release of Section 106 contributions of £235,081 to Tenterden Schools Trust for the provision of a 3G artificial turf pitch at Homewood School be approved, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Funding Agreement and a Community Use Agreement between the Schools Trust and the Council.**
 - (iv) revenue funding of £30,000 a year for two years be approved to support service provision at Sk8side.**

322 Corporate Performance Report – 2018/19 Quarter 3

The report summarised performance against the Council's suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Quarter 3 (1st October to 31st December 2018). Certain Performance Indicators from the previous Council framework had been retained and allowed for historic data comparison, however a number of new Performance Indicators had been agreed upon for which data was only available for the year to date. A summary of all KPIs was appended to the report. The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and thanked the Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer for his continued hard work in embedding the new monitoring arrangements.

Resolved:

That the performance data be received and noted.

323 Honorary Alderman Scheme

The Leader introduced the report which proposed the establishment of an Honorary Alderman Scheme to recognise dedicated and committed service by past elected Members of the Council. The report set out proposals for how the scheme would be established in Ashford and requested that the Cabinet make appropriate recommendations to Full Council.

A Member asked if the length of service to become eligible should be 16 years (or four terms) as at some other Local Authorities, rather than the proposed 12 years (three terms). The Leader said he did not believe there was a standard across other Local Authorities and the eligibility criteria did vary somewhat. This issue had been considered at some length and it had been agreed that 12 years or three terms of service did demonstrate significant commitment to the community.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) an Honorary Alderman Scheme for the Borough of Ashford be established for those former Councillors who had served for 12 years or more as an Elected Member of Ashford Borough Council.**
 - (ii) the rights and privileges to be afforded to Honorary Aldermen be agreed as set out in Paragraph 7 of the report.**
 - (iii) Past Mayors be given the title of “Mayor Emeritus” upon ceasing to be a Member of the Council to acknowledge their contribution to the work of the Council and the community.**
 - (iv) the existing Members Long Term Certificates Scheme continue to be awarded to those Members who have served one or two terms of office.**
 - (v) the Nomination Award Criteria for Honorary Aldermen be approved as outlined in Paragraph 5 of the report.**
 - (vi) the Head of Legal and Democracy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Member Champion for the Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison, be given delegated authority to agree the ceremonial and other matters associated with the award.**

324 Ashford College Campus: Extension of the Time Period of the Loan for the Phase 1A Development

ITEM WITHDRAWN

325 Solar Farm Project

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which proposed a solar farm on land in Council ownership as the optimal use for a 50 acre site located in Shadoxhurst. He advised that the proposal would deliver a significant income generating project for the Council, would allow grazing and farming to continue on the land, had a low environmental impact and promoted sustainable production of sustainable green electricity. The proposal was clearly predicated on Local Planning Authority approval of a detailed planning application for this site, which would include the usual community consultation.

Members were heartened that the location and topography of this particular site meant that this proposal could be implemented with no visual impact on neighbouring properties, gardens and roads and would be well screened on all sides. It presented a good opportunity for the type of development proposed.

Recommended:

- That (i) **subject to planning approval and public consultation, it be agreed that a solar farm is the optimal use for the site, which would provide a significant income stream to the Council, and in doing so further diversify that Council's Corporate Property Portfolio.**
- (ii) **approval be given to spend £5.94m as outlined in the report and a delegation be given to the Director of Finance and Economy, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to agree the optimal funding solution.**
- (iii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democracy and the Head of Corporate Property and Projects to agree and enter in to all documentation required to give effect to the above recommendations.**

326 Trading and Enterprise Board Minutes – 11th February 2019

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 11th February 2019 be received and noted with the exception of the recommendations in Minute No. 313.

Recommended:

That the recommendations in Minute No. 313 be approved and adopted.

327 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Notes – 19th December 2019

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 19th December be received and noted.

328 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019

Report Title: Pay Policy Statement- Annual Review

**Report Author &
Job Title:** Michelle Pecci
Head of HR & Customer Services

Portfolio Holder Leader of the Council- Cllr. Clarkson

Portfolio Holder for: Cllr. Pickering- HR & Customer Services

Summary:

The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to publish an Annual Pay Policy Statement; this report will review the current Pay Policy statement, ensuring it is up to date and reflects the council's approach to pay.

The council also takes this annual review as an opportunity to review the rates of the Ashford Living Wage Allowance (ALWA) and the Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance (AAWA). This report therefore provides recommendations on rates for the 2019/20 allowances.

Key Decision: YES

**Significantly
Affected Wards:** None

Recommendations: **That Cabinet recommend to Council:**

- I. Approve the updated Pay Policy Statement.**
- II. Approve the Ashford Living Wage Allowance be increased to £9.00 for 2019/20.**
- III. Approve the Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance be maintained at 15 pence per hour over the National Minimum Wage rate applicable to the age of the apprentice.**

Policy Overview:

Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require local government bodies to prepare a pay policy statement. These statements must articulate an authority's own policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly senior staff and its lowest paid employees.

The Ashford Living Wage Allowance demonstrates the Council's commitment in ensuring that wages (salaries) of our employees can sustain families and individuals and underpins a thriving economy.

The Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance underpins the council's commitment to support lower paid members of staff

by providing a fair wage to our apprentices. The council is committed to making apprenticeships accessible to all and encourages its local people to gain worthwhile careers by paying a rate which is comparable with entering any other form of employment; this in turn will benefit the local economy.

Financial Implications: Increasing the Ashford Living Wage Allowance will cost up to £10k plus on costs and maintaining 15 pence per hour over the national minimum wage rate for apprentices will cost circa £2k plus on costs and can be managed within the 2019/20 budgets.

Legal Implications The Council is required to review and publish its Pay Policy Statement on an annual basis.

Equalities Impact Assessment The application of the Pay Policy will not result in any detrimental impact on any particular group of staff.

The ALWA and AAWA benefits the lowest paid groups of staff within the council regardless of any protected characteristic. The Council's Pay Policy ensures that our staff are remunerated appropriately, equitably and legally
n/a

Other Material Implications:

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: n/a

Contact: Michelle.pecci@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330602

Report Title: Pay Policy Statement- Annual Review

Pay Policy Statement: Introduction & Background

1. Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require local government bodies to prepare a pay policy statement. These statements must articulate an authority's own policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly senior staff and its lowest paid employees.
2. The pay policy statement must be reviewed and approved each year by Full Council.
3. There are a number of statutory requirements relating to pay accountability in the Localism Act that need to be taken into account as well as a catch-all within the Act that states that members must have regard to any guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State.
4. The statement encompasses both the statutory requirements as well as the 'broader' elements of guidance.
5. The Act requires the council to prepare a pay policy statement for this year and it must set out the authority's policies relating to:
 - (a) the remuneration of its chief officers,
 - (b) the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees, and
 - (c) the relationship between:
 - (i) the remuneration of its chief officers, and
 - (ii) the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers.

The statement must include:

- (a) the definition of "lowest-paid employees" adopted by the authority for the purposes of the statement, and
- (b) the authority's reasons for adopting that definition.

The statement must also include the authority's policies relating to:

- (a) the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer,
- (b) remuneration of chief officers on recruitment,
- (c) increases and additions to remuneration for each chief officer,
- (d) the use of performance related pay for chief officers,
- (e) the use of bonuses for chief officers,
- (f) the approach to the payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office under or to be employed by the authority, and
- (g) the publication of and access to information relating to remuneration of chief officers.

6. Pay policy statements may be amended during the course of a financial year to reflect changes or developments in an authority's pay policy. However,

section 39(5) of the Act requires that amendments can only be made by resolution of the full Council, or a meeting of members, and that any amended statement must be published as soon as is reasonably practicable.

7. The median salary figure is £24,261 and is down slightly from last year's median figure of £24,492. Therefore the ratio between the highest paid and the median salary is slightly up to 4.7:1, from last years ratio of 4.6:1, this is within our stated position of maintaining a pay multiple of 5 or less (paragraph 13 of the proposed pay policy statement attached).

Ashford Living Wage Allowance: Introduction & Background

8. The Council is committed to ensure that the wages (salaries) of our employees can sustain families and individuals as well as underpinning a thriving local economy.
9. This commitment is provided through the Ashford Living Wage Allowance (ALWA) implemented in 2013. As part of the Pay Policy review Members consider the application of an ALWA on an annual basis.
10. In the 2016 the Government introduced a Statutory National Living Wage rate that aims to raise living standards amongst the lowest paid.
11. The Council's stated commitment with regard to the Ashford Living Wage is currently:

"The council will aim to provide our lowest paid staff, irrespective of their age, with a rate of pay that is better than the Statutory National Living Wage rate."
12. The lowest NJC pay scale for 2019 is £9.00 per hour and although the Council does not recognise the NJC pay scale this rate is notable if the Council is to maintain its relative positioning amongst comparator employers.

Proposal/Current Position

13. The current minimum ALWA for ABC employees is set at £8.35 per hour, the Statutory National Living Wage rate for 2019/20 has been set at is £8.21.
14. It is recommended that we increase the current ALWA to £9.00 per hour. This rate continues to achieve the council's commitment to its lowest paid staff, and puts the council in an advanced position in being able to accommodate the forthcoming annual increases to the statutory National Living Wage Rate leading-up to 2020.
15. At this revised rate there will be up to 26 staff who will receive the ALWA which will cost a maximum of £10k per annum and can be managed within the 2019/20 budget.
16. By applying the ALWA the council has been widely recognised as a responsible and considerate employer who voluntarily provides a fair and sustainable wage to their lowest paid staff. It is therefore important for the

council to be able to continue to make such a strong statement of commitment in this regard.

Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance: Introduction & Background

17. Apprentices are engaged to gain practical training in a job combined with study. The status of their employment is reflected by the fact that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the statutory Living Wage Rate is not applicable to them in the first year of their apprenticeship.
18. The 2019 National Wage Rate for apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year is £3.90 per hour. All other apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum and Statutory Living Wage rates as applicable to their age.
19. The AAWA aims to provide our apprentices with a pay rate that is “better” than the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or Statutory Living Wage applicable to the age of the apprentice and irrespective of whether the apprentice is in their first year.
20. The council’s stated commitment in respect of pay rate for apprentices is:

“The council is committed to making apprenticeships accessible to all by paying a rate applicable to the apprentice’s age that aims to be better than the respective Statutory National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates.”

Proposal/Current Position

21. The current AAWA is 15 pence per hour above the respective NMW or SLW rates. It is proposed that the 15 pence per hour differential is maintained for 2019/20. The overall additional costs of maintaining 15 pence above NMW will be circa £2k.

Summary

22. For ease of reference the following table details the pay rates referred to above:

Wage Rate	National rates from April 2018	Ashford current rates 2017/18		National rates from April 2019	Ashford proposed rates For 2019/20	
Statutory National Living Wage rate for over 25’s	£7.83	£8.35		£8.21	£9.00	
National Minimum Apprentice rate	£3.70	Aged 25+	£7.98	£3.90	Aged 25+	£8.36
		21-24	£7.53		21-24	£7.85
		18-20	£6.05		18-20	£6.30
		Under 18	£4.35		Under 18	£4.50

Implications and Risk Assessment

23. Reviewing and publishing the Pay Policy Statement will ensure that we are compliant with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.
24. Continuing to apply both the ALWA and AAWA is a positive statement about the value the council places in all staff and provides a role model for other employers in the local community.

Equalities Impact Assessment

25. The application of the Pay Policy will not result in any detrimental impact on any particular group of staff.
26. The ALWA and AAWA benefits the lowest paid groups of staff within the council regardless of any protected characteristic. The Council's Pay Policy ensures that our staff are remunerated appropriately, equitably and legally.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

27. UNISON representatives have been invited to provide feedback on this report and the proposals relating to the ALWA and AAWA.
28. This report together with the proposed pay policy statement was considered at the Joint Consultative Committee on 28 February 2019.

Other Options Considered and Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

29. Other options included withdrawing both the ALWA and AAWA but this was not thought to be consistent with the council's desire to show its commitment to its lowest paid staff.
30. A further option was to retain the ALWA at its current rate. This would maintain a pay rate greater than the Statutory Living Wage rate however this would mean our pay rates will have fallen behind the national pay spine which could impact on the attractiveness of our role and the ability to compete with other authorities for talent at the lower end of the pay scale.

Next Steps in Process

31. Once approved by Council the 2019/2020 Pay Policy Statement will be published on the transparency section of the Ashford Borough Council website.
32. Written notification will be provided to those staff who are entitled to receive the ALWA and the AAWA to inform them of the respective rates that will be payable to them for 2019/20.

Conclusion

33. The pay policy statement reflects our current approach to pay and satisfies the requirements of the Localism Act.
34. The Ashford Living Wage Allowance endorses the council's commitment to its lowest paid staff by applying an hourly rate which aims "to be better" than the statutory National Living Wage irrespective of individual's age.
35. The Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance provides a very positive statement that the council is committed to making apprenticeships accessible to all and encourages its local people to gain worthwhile careers by paying a rate which is comparable with entering any other form of employment; which in turn will benefit the local economy.

Portfolio Holder's Views

36. Cllr Pickering:

"Ashford Borough Council intends to maintain its position as the leading employer in the Borough with good employment practices and a remuneration structure to reward our staff based on systems to maintain fairness at all times.

We are conscious of the need to ensure the lower paid members of our staff and Apprentices are paid a rate that can sustain family life and make Apprenticeships accessible to all."

Contact and Email

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Ashford Borough Council

Pay Policy Statement

Financial Year 2019/20

Introduction

ABC is a large and diverse organisation providing a range of statutory and other services to a local community with a population of 127,500. It is responsible for managing a combined annual capital and revenue spend of £160 million.

To ensure the council is effectively led and efficiently managed, it must be able to attract and retain a range of high calibre staff in a competitive job market. The value and composition of the remuneration package offered to senior staff is a key factor in enabling the council to attract, recruit, motivate and retain staff with the skills sets required to deliver the Council's objectives and aspirations, which in turn have a significant impact on the lives of local residents.

Notwithstanding the statutory requirement to produce and publish this policy, the Council recognises the importance and benefits of applying a transparent policy to ensure that its staff are remunerated appropriately, equitably and legally.

Pay Policy

- 1 This policy statement is made in accordance with Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011. The Act requires the authority to set out its policies for the financial year relating to:
 - (a) the remuneration of its chief officers,
 - (b) the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees and
 - (c) the relationship between:
 - i. the remuneration of its chief officers, and
 - ii. the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers.

- 2 **Definitions:**
 - (a) The Definition of '**Chief Officer**' in the Localism Act reflects that in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and so is wide enough to include not only the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and other statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers but also those senior officers who report directly to them. It is not considered necessary to extend the scope of this definition due to any particular local circumstance or reward structure.

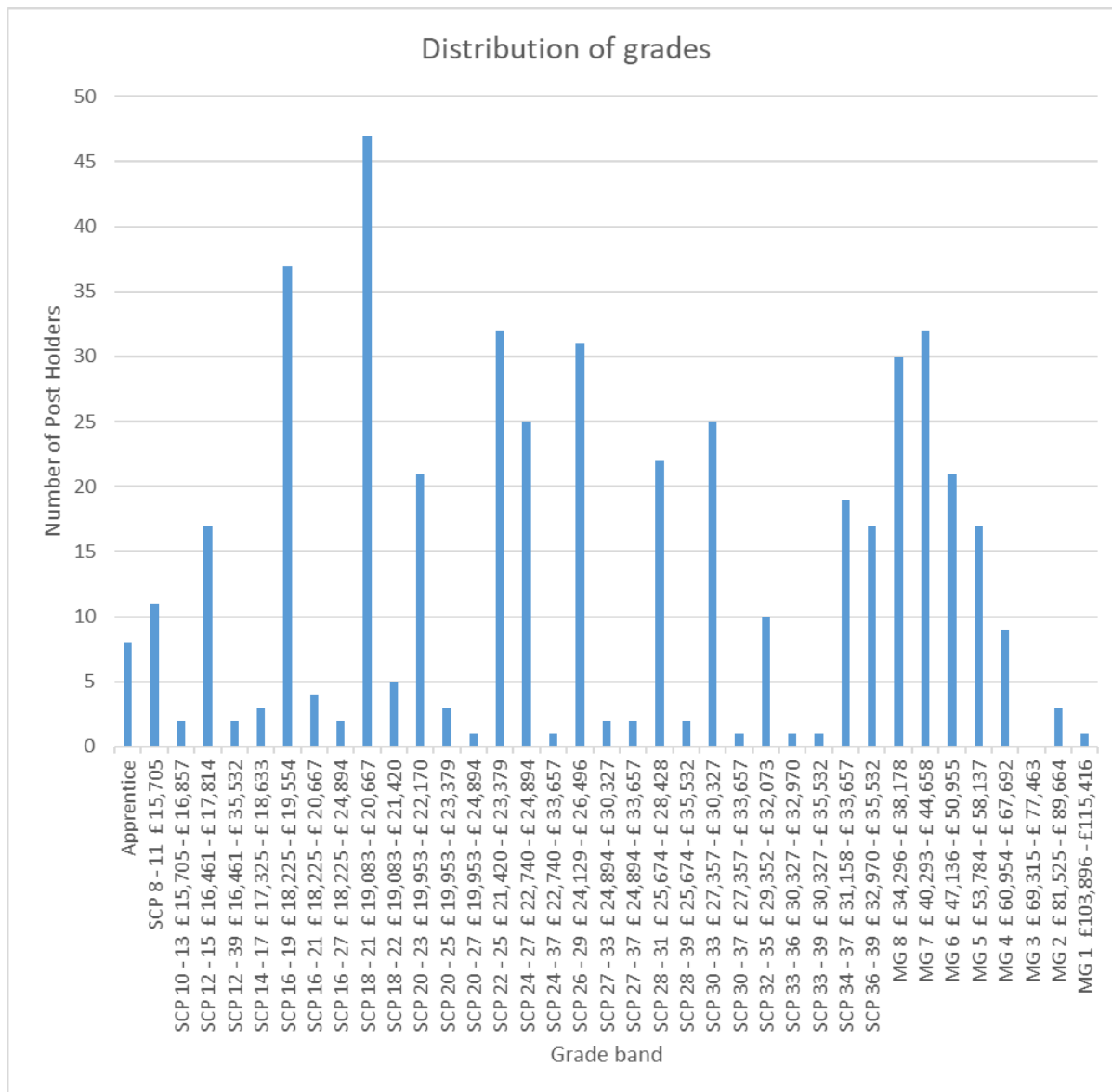
 - (b) A '**Lowest paid employee**' is an employee who is paid on the lowest pay grade used by the council. The definition does not include postholders engaged in apprenticeships or other job creation schemes.

- 3 The policy statement will be reviewed and approved annually by Members and published on the transparency section of the Ashford Borough Council website together with the pay data published in line with the code of recommended practice on data transparency. Data on pay for individuals

employed under a 'contract for services' (opposed to contract of employment) can be found under the data on spend.

- 4 The council's pay framework has been in place for many years and the grade for each role is determined by a job evaluation scheme developed by Inbucon Pay Consultants.
- 5 The basic grade of all officers is determined by job evaluation process. Pay and all other elements of the remuneration package for the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), Director or Head of Service posts are approved by Members as part of the recruitment process and other formal approval process such as restructuring reports. The remuneration packages for all other roles are approved by senior managers.
- 6 The incremental progression for all roles, including Chief Officer roles, are automatic unless there are formal concerns over capability.
- 7 Cost of living pay awards are considered on an annual basis and take account of market forces, economic climate measures of inflation and budgetary position. The council is not subject to national pay bargaining. Pay awards are negotiated locally with UNISON and subject to approval by Members.
- 8 The council is committed to ensuring that the pay of its employees can sustain families and individuals and underpin a thriving economy. To support this commitment it is the Council's aim to provide its lowest paid employees (excluding apprentices and those referred to in paragraph 2b) to receive a wage rate which is better than the Statutory National Living Wage rate irrespective of the age of the employee. As a consequence, the lowest paid employees receive the Ashford Living Wage Allowance (ALWA) as a supplement to the employee's hourly pay rate to provide a minimum rate of £9.00 per hour. The Council reviews the application of the ALWA on an annual basis.
- 9 Apprentices are engaged to gain practical training in a job combined with study. The council is committed to making apprenticeships accessible to all and aims to pay a rate that is better than the respective Statutory National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates; the Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance (AAWA) is currently set at 15 pence per hour higher than these rates. The AAWA is reviewed annually and applied to those employed by the Council on an apprenticeship.
- 10 Grades MG1 and MG2 have two additional discretionary incremental points that can be applied for recognition of performance, or as part of a retention package. These points are not automatically applied to all MG1 or MG2 roles, but if they are, they require confirmation from the officer's manager that there has been exceptional performance and the increment should be awarded.
- 11 The organisation's Returning Officer for elections receives election fees in addition to their regular salary. These fees are set by the Cabinet Office for national elections and referendums; or for borough and county elections through a countywide arrangement. The fees vary according to the election taking place. Any election fees paid during the year are included in the salary figure published in the council's annual statement of accounts.

- 12 We are required to publish pay related information. This includes the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency requirements to publish a Pay Multiple and information on senior salaries. The Pay Multiple is the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole authority's salaries.
- 13 The current ratio between the highest paid employee and the median earnings across the organisation is **4.7:1** (excluding Returning Officer fees as these are determined by the Cabinet Office, or through a countywide arrangement. The fees are only paid in the event of an election). The council intends to maintain a pay multiple of 5 or less i.e. the highest paid employee is paid no more than 5 times the median salary which is £24,261. The chart below shows the current dispersal of grades amongst the council's employees:
- 14 Ashford pay grades are determined through job evaluation and reflect the breadth of impact the role has for example: the level and complexity of advice given by the postholder as well as the decisions made; the qualifications required to carry out the role, the level of autonomy the postholder has as well as the level of internal and external contacts routinely made by the postholder.



- 15 Salary information for senior staff is published annually on the transparency section of the council's website and total remuneration packages for Chief Officers are published in the council's annual statement of accounts also available on the council's website.
- 16 The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive receive an annual mileage allowance to compensate for up to 3,000 work related miles travelled within Kent and are not allowed to submit mileage claims for the first 3,000 miles travelled in Kent.
- 17 Posts may attract a subsidised lease car or cash alternative. Entitlement is usually determined as part of the recruitment process and the entitlement is intended to assist the officer in carrying out their duties or, in some cases, as a recruitment tool.
- 18 All officers are entitled to be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in the course of their duties. Limits are laid out in the conditions of service and all expense claims must be accompanied by receipts.

- 19 The council does not have a performance related pay scheme or a bonus scheme. Managers do have the ability to make honorarium payments to any level officer in the following circumstances:
- Covering the full/partial duties of a more senior post (other than for annual leave)
 - Taking on additional duties/responsibilities for a limited period
 - Taking on additional responsibilities e.g. project work which would not normally fall within the employee's job description
 - Taking on additional workload, which is not at an additional level of responsibility but which warrants financial recognition
 - One-off merit payments in recognition of exceptional performance.

Where the request for the payment falls outside of the above criteria the Head of Personnel and Development will take the request to Management Team for discussion.

- 20 The council does have a market supplement scheme to address market pressures that cause recruitment and retention difficulties. Market supplements are applied in exceptional circumstances and any proposed payments for a Management Team post must be approved by Members. For all other roles Management Team is able to give approval.
- 21 If a Chief Officer, or any other officer, chooses to end their employment with the authority there are no termination benefits payable.
- 22 If the council terminates an officer's employment then the council's policy on the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 may apply.
- 23 The Council will comply with obligations under the Exit Payment Recovery Regulations.
- 24 Officers may also be entitled to release of their local government pension if they satisfy the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007.
- 25 Employees who are Local Government Pension Scheme members aged 55 or over are entitled to request flexible retirement in accordance with the council's Flexible Retirement policy. This allows an officer to access their local government pension and continue working in a role at either reduced hours or in a lower paid role to help their transition into retirement. Member approval is required where there is a cost associated with the release of the pension. There must be a benefit to the council in agreeing to a flexible retirement request, the benefits may include: assisting with succession planning, delivering savings etc.
- 26 In exceptional circumstances we may find ourselves in the situation whereby an officer who has been previously employed by the council (or another authority) and who, on ceasing to be employed, was in receipt of a redundancy payment and/or a local government pension is subsequently reemployed by the council. It is not the policy of Kent County Council (the pension scheme administrators) to abate pensions in payment in these circumstances.

- 27 In cases where the council shares staff with other authorities/agencies this often results in different pay scales, terms and conditions between the two parties. The council will ensure that for staff employed by Ashford Borough Council that there is internal comparability. This may result in discrepancies across teams with employees working for other employers.
- 28 The council does not intervene in the pay policy of external contractors; remuneration packages are a matter for the external contractor to determine not the council.
- 29 The Council is committed to tackling all forms of tax avoidance and therefore encourages the direct employment of staff and pays them via the payroll system. When a need arises for a temporary appointment, recruitment is normally secured by using the council's employment agency contract arrangement. In a few circumstances where it is necessary to engage self employed people who can provide exceptional skills/experience, the council will offer a contract for services. Such engagements would be in accordance with HMRC guidelines to ensure that the correct employment status has been applied for PAYE purposes.
- 30 This policy is required to be reviewed at least once a year proceeding the next financial year. Proposals to adjust the policy in a financial year must be approved by Members.

March 2019

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Agenda Item No:
Report To: CABINET
Date of Meeting: 14th March 2019
Report Title: Ashford's Cycling and Walking Strategy 2019 - 2029
Report Author & Job Title: Ian Grundy, Principal Policy Planner
Simon Harris Community Projects Manager
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Bennett, Portfolio Holder for Culture
Portfolio Holder for: Cllr Clokie Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

Summary: The Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy as attached as appendix 1 provides an overall approach to cycling and walking in the borough that helps to promote benefits in health, transport and the economy. The Strategy sets out the picture regarding walking and cycling in the borough at present and then establishes over-arching aims and key areas of work. A Delivery Plan of key projects in appendix 2 is based on the key themes.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- i. Approve the Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy and Delivery Plan 2019 – 2029 for the purpose of public consultation.**
- ii. Delegate authority to the Head of Culture in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make minor amendments to the Strategy**
- iii. To note the use of £195,000 for the town centre projects as identified in the Town Centre Framework.**
- iv. Agree the funding of £20,000 from reserves for appropriate rural projects as identified in the Delivery Plan and £10,000 for promotional projects.**
- v. Delegate authority to the Head of Culture and Head of Planning to complete all tasks and to deliver the projects and give effect to the above recommendations.**

Policy Overview: The Council's Corporate Plan 2015 – 2020 sets out the Council's direction and key priorities and particularly refers to the development of a "cycle town" strategy as part of establishing an "Active and Creative Ashford" and also references developing connections between green spaces

via cycle and footpath links under the theme of “Attractive Ashford”.

Financial Implications:

There will be a funding implication to implement the projects set out in the Delivery Plan. An initial funding allocation is requested as part of the Town Centre Framework project proposals as agreed by the Town Centre Partnership Board who have allocated £195,000 for appropriate town centre projects. This will fund initial detailed feasibility work on key town centre routes and the implementation of key proposals.

Additional funding from reserves totalling £20,000 is requested to fund appropriate rural projects and £10,000 for suitable borough-wide promotional projects respectively.

Legal Implications

None

Equalities Impact Assessment

Note required as no policy changes proposed.

Other Material Implications:

None

Exempt from Publication:

NO

Background Papers:

The Ashford Local Plan 2030

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Report Title: Ashford's Cycling and Walking Strategy 2019 - 2029

Introduction and Background

1. The Council's Cycling Strategy was approved in 2010 and has now been revised and reviewed to incorporate walking into a joint strategy which supports benefits in health, transport and the economy.
2. Ashford borough has an excellent network of well-used cycling routes already in place in the urban area and this incorporates parts of the national cycling network that pass through the borough. The main routes are incorporated into the green corridor network that follow the river corridors and converge on the edge of the town centre. There have been recent significant new routes delivered including the link from Park Farm to the Designer Outlet across the Willesborough Dykes and the route from Godmersham to Chilham in the rural area. Many of the routes are dedicated off-road routes that are shared with pedestrians. There has been a significant increase recorded in the number of cyclists accessing the domestic railway station on a daily basis.
3. The Council has worked closely with key partners in the preparation of this Strategy including Sustrans who have carried out detailed route assessments and in particular the Council has worked with consultants Mott MacDonald, appointed by the Department of Transport (DfT) to enable a comprehensive walking and cycling strategy to be produced and endorsed by the DfT.
4. The Cycling and Walking Strategy will be a key part of the wider aim of improving overall sustainable transport within the Borough and in particular accessibility to the town centre.
5. The draft Cycling and Walking Strategy sets out the ambitions for cycling and walking in the Borough as follows:
6. The draft Cycling and Walking Strategy presented here sets out six over-arching principles as follows:
 - Providing and improving the cycling and walking network
 - Cycle parking
 - Maintenance of the existing cycling and walking network
 - Safer cycling
 - Promoting cycling and walking in the Borough
 - Cycling and walking tourism
7. A series of key projects under each principle are set out in a Delivery Plan.

Proposal/Current Position

8. The draft Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy brings together policies and related actions to promote cycling and walking and the delivery of related infrastructure in Ashford Borough with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active travel modes. The Strategy provides a basis for making bids for improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure at key routes serving the town, urban extensions and rural areas. The Strategy also seeks to increase cycling and walking participation by promoting safer cycling, active promotion of cycling and walking and the support for cycling and walking based tourism.
9. Specific route corridors have been audited in a number of key locations including Ashford town centre and the rural areas of Tenterden, Wye, Charing and Hamstreet. The Council has worked with consultants Mott MacDonald, appointed by the Department of Transport (DfT) to analyse local data using the propensity to cycle and walking toolkit. This will enable a comprehensive walking and cycling strategy to be produced and endorsed by the DfT.
10. In addition to the provision of new or improved cycling and walking infrastructure the Strategy acknowledges that the existing cycling and walking infrastructure in the Ashford urban area is very good, but could be better utilised, and there are therefore measures proposed to increase local awareness of local routes to increase their usage. There is the opportunity to host cycling events that will raise the profile of the borough and generate interests in cycling as both a sustainable means of transport and a healthy leisure activity.
11. The Strategy acknowledges the role that cycling and walking tourism can play in the overall visitor offer and economic vitality of the Borough and sets out measures to increase cycling and walking related tourism. The Council will actively pursue significant infrastructure projects such as the proposed Royal Military Canal shared pathway, this a long term project which has the potential to benefit both the rural economy and the enhanced opportunities for accessing the countryside by working closely with landowners and partner agencies.
12. The Strategy sets out the Council's ambitions for cycling and walking in the Borough as follows:
 - Ashford borough is recognised as a cycling and walking friendly borough
 - Cycling and walking routes are high quality, safe, accessible, well maintained, integrated, signed and promoted.
 - More people are cycling and walking for everyday journeys
 - There are more opportunities for sustainable travel to work, school and key services and reliance on cars is reduced
 - Drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers
 - Cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users
 - Off road cycling and walking networks are maintained and improved
 - Cycling and walking contribute to the visitor economy
 - To secure a significant modal shift from cars to cycling and walking to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions and improve overall air quality.

Implications and Risk Assessment

13. To support the delivery of the Strategy, sufficient funding will be required for Ashford to become an “active travel” destination. Funding from a range of sources will need to be acquired to pay for feasibility studies on potential new paths, up-grade of existing paths, signage, parking, storage, marketing and promotion, events and training.
14. A key risk is not producing a Strategy that is “fit for purpose” and has the support of the DfT and other key partners, as that would diminish the value of the Strategy and potentially miss opportunities for significant funding for key projects. To mitigate this, the draft Strategy is proposing the provision for initial seed funding of projects. The strategy has been produced using the guide methodology produced for the DfT, compliance with this methodology reduce this risk area.

Equalities Impact Assessment

15. Not required as no policy changes proposed.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

16. The draft Cycling and Walking Strategy will be the subject of local consultation with community groups, parish councils and local interest groups before it is adopted.
17. In the event that the consultation highlights the need for minor amendments to the strategy a delegation to the Head of Culture is requested so that these amendments can be made after consultation with the portfolio holder. Alternatively major amendments will be reported to members before adoption.

Other Options Considered

18. The only other option considered was to rely solely on the policy approach set out in the newly adopted Ashford Local Plan 2030 that does include over-arching policies regarding cycling and walking, but it was considered that this would not include the level of detail involving detailed project delivery that is set out in a dedicated Strategy document or express the ambition of being a Borough acknowledged for its active travel offer.

Next Steps in Process

19. The Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy will be the subject of local consultation for a six week period and comments will be reported back to Members and appropriate amendments made to the draft Strategy where necessary.
20. The Audit of Cycle routes will be completed and a work programme of alterations produced that will be brought to the Town Centre Regeneration Board for approval

Conclusion

21. The draft Cycling and Walking Strategy brings together policies and related actions to promote walking and cycling and the delivery of related infrastructure in Ashford Borough with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active

travel modes. The Strategy also provides a basis for making bids for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in Ashford Borough. The Strategy also seeks to increase cycling and walking participation by promoting safer cycling, active promotion of cycling and walking and the support for cycling and walking based tourism.

22. Portfolio Holder's Views

23. Councillor Bennett comments that, "Members have debated cycling and walking route expansion many times and agreed the need for an `active travel strategy to develop real progress towards our aspirations to make Ashford a `cycle town' and improve the network of routes. I support the adoption of the recommendations that will enable officers to develop a delivery plan for the next decade".
24. Councillor Clokie comments that, "This strategy should enable the council to increase not only the number of Cycle routes but also routes which have a high regard for Cyclist safety."

Contact and Email

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Simon Harris, Community Projects Manager. simon.harris@ashford.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

Draft Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy 2019 - 2029

Introduction

The Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy brings together policies and related actions to promote walking and cycling and the delivery of related infrastructure in Ashford Borough with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active travel modes

The Strategy provides a basis for making bids for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in Ashford Borough.

The Strategy will help to secure support for walking and cycling for other possible funding streams eg. Developer funding via s106 obligations and CIL

The emphasis of the Strategy has been on identifying the improvements required to deliver a comprehensive and well connected walking and cycling network which will help to make both cycling and walking more attractive for journeys within the borough.

The Ashford urban area is served by an excellent network of cycleways and footpaths, many of which are based along the existing river corridors and have been delivered as part of the green corridor project. The number of cyclists using the routes to commute to the station has increased significantly so there is already a significant amount of existing infrastructure in place and a key challenge is to increase awareness and promote its use whilst also making sure the infrastructure is improved and extended where possible.

The Strategy also seeks to increase cycling participation for recreation and leisure and daily journeys by promoting cycling as a key priority, providing new facilities and enhancing existing facilities and promoting local participatory events.

Benefits of Cycling and Walking

In towns and cities across Britain, increasingly cycling and walking are becoming more and more popular and is regarded as the preferred means of travel – it is a quick, easy and green way of getting around – whether for work, going to school , or simply leisure and fitness.

- **Health** – by making cycling and walking the norm and incorporating it into everyday life, particularly in making short trips, this improves physical activity and improves physical fitness and contributes to the promotion of healthy lifestyles
- **Environment** – cycling and walking are low impact zero emission means of getting from A to B and by replacing car journeys with trips by bike it will help to improve air quality that creates a better living environment.
- **Sustainable Growth** – building cycling and walking infrastructure into new developments can make sure that they are fully integrated into the developments from the outset and ensure that they are linked to the wider network of existing and proposed routes
- **Transport**- travelling by bike can help to reduce congestion and free up road space for businesses and other road users

- **Social Inclusion** – cycling and walking provide an affordable way of getting around for people who do not have access to a private car
- **Safety** – the more people who travel by bike helps to change the perception of cycling as means of travel
- **Tourism** – promoting cycle tourism benefits related businesses – cafes and pubs, local attractions benefited such as museums and historic houses and accommodation providers. It can also lead to the promotion of local businesses catering for the needs of cyclists

In 2013 4% of UK residents said they cycled at least once a day. This compares to 43% in the Netherlands where 27% of all trips are made by bike and where in cities such as Utrecht that has a population of 345,000, 125,000 people use a bike on a daily basis.

The Government’s targets to reach by 2025 are:

- Double cycling from 0.8 billion to 1.6 billion stages (a stage is a unit of travel when there is a change in the mode of transport ie. a journey cycling to a railway station to catch the train to work is one cycle stage. This allows cycling and walking to be included and counted in journeys when they are not the main mode.)
- Increase walking to 300 stages per person per year
- Reduce the number of cyclists killed or injured each year
- Increase the percentage of school children (5-10 years) that walk to school from 49% to 55%

Currently 3% of trips in Ashford are made by bike and the target for the Strategy is to increase that to 6% over its lifetime.

By 2040 the government’s ambition for cycling and walking is to deliver,

BETTER SAFETY

'A safe and reliable way to travel for short journeys'

- streets where cyclists and walkers feel they belong, and are safe
- better connected communities
- safer traffic speeds, with lower speed limits where appropriate to the local area
- cycle training opportunities for all children

BETTER MOBILITY

'More people cycling and walking - easy, normal and enjoyable'

- more high quality cycling facilities
- more urban areas that are considered walkable
- rural roads which provide improved safety for walking and cycling

- more networks of routes around public transport hubs and town centres, with safe paths along busy roads
- better links to schools and workplaces
- technological innovations that can promote more and safer walking and cycling
- behaviour change opportunities to support increased walking and cycling
- better integrated routes for those with disabilities or health conditions

BETTER STREETS

'Places that have cycling and walking at their heart'

- places designed for people of all abilities and ages so they can choose to walk or cycle with ease
- improved public realm
- better planning for walking and cycling
- more community-based activities, such as led rides and play streets where local places want them
- a wider green network of paths, routes and open spaces

The Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan – Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016 – 2031 - identifies the transport priorities for Kent through appropriate strategies, policies and action plans. The LTP specifically seeks to deliver a safer road, footway and cycleway network to reduce the likelihood of casualties, to deliver schemes that reduce the environmental footprint of transport, and to provide and promote active travel choices for all members of the community to encourage good health and wellbeing, and implement measures to improve local air quality.

The LTP aims to make active travel – which means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure purposes – an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys. It can benefit health and wellbeing by incorporating physical activity into everyday routine as well as reduce the number of vehicles on the road and improve air quality.

KCC manages a network of 7,000km of public rights of way. People use this network to access the countryside, as a means to enjoy beautiful landscapes, to improve their health and wellbeing, and to support the rural economy. Much of the network still fulfils the purpose from which it evolved: providing motor-vehicle free access to schools, public transport hubs and local amenities. It has been demonstrated that walking, cycling and access to green spaces improves overall health – including lowering blood pressure, reducing stress, and improving mental health. Further, the attraction of these routes draws

visitors to Kent, and countryside recreational activities benefit the local economy, which in turn supports essential services in rural areas.

The LTP specifically identifies Ashford as a Cycling Town. The delivery of an improving cycle network and the doubling of cycle parking at Ashford International Station in 2015 (as well as its 2010 Station of the Year award in the National Cycle Rail Awards) provide opportunities to capitalise on the use of this mode of transport.

Ashford's Corporate Strategy

Ashford's Five Year Corporate Plan 2015 – 2020 sets out the Council's direction and key priorities and specifically highlights the importance of sustainable modes of transport and in particular includes two priorities below.

Priority 3 - Active and Creative Ashford – healthy Choices through Physical, Cultural and Leisure Engagement – develop a “cycle town” strategy

Priority 4 – Attractive Ashford – Countryside and Townscape, Tourism and Heritage – Develop cycle town strategy and connections between green spaces via cycle and footpath links

A picture of Cycling and Walking in Ashford today

In Ashford the last accurate record of cycling commuters was from the 2011 census where Ashford has shown the greatest percentage increase in the number of residents cycling to work over the period 2001 – 2011 at 8%. In overall terms, the total number of residents cycling to work was second only numerically to Canterbury – a university city of course which typically has higher numbers of cyclists.

In 2017, nationally the average person made 17 cycling trips and cycled 60 miles made 2% of all their trips by cycling and covered just 1% of all their distance. Nationally, interestingly the most common purpose for cycling trips was commuting/business (37%) followed by cycling for leisure (36%).

Ashford actually has one of the best developed network of cycleways in Kent with a mixture of off road dedicated routes and on road segregated road space.

The Ashford Local Plan 2030 in policy TRA5 states that

Development proposals shall demonstrate how safe and accessible pedestrian access and movement routes will be delivered and how they will connect to the wider movement network. Opportunities should be proactively taken to connect with and enhance Public Rights of Way whenever possible, encouraging journeys on foot

The Ashford Local Plan 2030 in policy TRA6 specifically seeks to improve conditions for cyclists through the following measures

- *Promoting and developing a Borough-wide network of cycle routes*

- *Developments should, where opportunities arise, include safe, convenient and attractively designed cycle routes, including, where possible, connection to the Borough Wide cycle network*
- *Promoting and providing cycle parking facilities in town centres, at railways stations and at major public buildings, and requiring new development to provide cycle parking facilities in agreement with the Council*
- *Taking opportunities to consider active travel when designing new routes and establishing connections with existing routes, encouraging journeys by bike*

The green corridor network of routes in the Ashford urban area has enabled the establishment of key pedestrian and cycleway links through the town. There has been an increase in cycling commuting principally to the station taking advantage of the network of off road routes. National Cycle Route NCN18 crosses the Borough in a linking rural Tenterden to the Ashford urban area and then out to the north and Wye in the direction of Canterbury. National Cycle Route 17 also is within the Borough boundary.

There have also been significant off –road dedicated cycle routes built and provided which have helped to improve connectivity and accessibility. Principally the South Willesborough Dykes route now links Park Farm to the international Station and in the rural area there is an off-road link from Godmersham and Chilham (part of NCN18).

The Council has worked closely with Sustrans who have carried out an extensive audit of the existing routes in the Ashford, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye. Those audits form the basis of the proposed improvements and projects in the delivery plan.

There are four dedicated cycle clubs within the Borough with large memberships promoting recreational cycling at all levels together with sporting activities related to two triathlon clubs.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), as set out in the Government’s Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10 year period, and form a vital part of the Government’s strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by cycle. The Borough Council was part of a Department of Transport pilot project to trial the preparation of LCWIPs and received support from consultants to analyse local census data to establish the most heavily used cycling and walking routes where key improvements would secure the greatest benefits. The key routes are set out in the delivery plan. While the preparation of LCWIPs is non-mandatory, it has been indicated by the DfT that those local authorities who have plans will be well placed to make the case for future investment.

Our Ambitions

- Ashford borough is recognised as a cycling and walking friendly borough
- Cycling and walking routes are high quality, safe, accessible, well maintained, integrated, signed and promoted.
- More people are cycling and walking for everyday journeys
- There are more opportunities for sustainable travel to work, school and key services and reliance on cars is reduced
- Drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers
- Cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users
- Off road cycling and walking networks are maintained and improved
- Cycling and walking contribute to the visitor economy
- To secure a significant modal shift from cars to cycling and walking to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions and improve overall air quality.

Overall Aim of the Cycling and Walking Strategy

The over-arching aim is as follows

“Walking and cycling become the natural choices for shorter journeys in Ashford Borough – or as part of a longer journey – regardless of age, gender, fitness level or income”

Over-arching principles

1. Providing and Improving the cycling and walking network

New routes will be provided as safe, continuous links between communities and popular destinations such as shops, schools, leisure centres and work places. New developments will be expected to deliver cycling and walking routes within them and provide linkages to the wider network including sections of the National Cycling Network.

Principle 1 - A network of high quality cycling and walking routes will be completed or improved in Ashford town, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye. This will connect with the Borough-wide network of cycle and pedestrian routes including the National Cycling Network. Detailed recommendations for new and improved routes can be found in appendix ** of this report.

Principle 2 - Wherever possible measures will be provided which give cyclists and pedestrians priority over motorised traffic in terms of accessibility and journey time.

2. Cycle Parking

Cycle parking needs to be convenient, safe and secure and there is a specific requirement in the Ashford Local Plan (policy TRA6) that it is provided as part of new development. Cycle parking can be complemented by related facilities for cyclists including secure storage or drying facilities for clothing and equipment and can incorporate showers and changing facilities.

Cycling can form part of longer journeys if there is good integration with public transport and high quality, safe and secure cycle parking is essential to this. There is substantial cycle parking provision at Ashford Station that was extended and increased in 2015. The existing station cycle parking is extremely well used on a daily basis and this has been complemented by the Brompton Dock cycle hire scheme. Cycle parking at other public transport hubs should be well provided and should be kept under review

Principle 3 - Cycle parking/storage will be provided in all developments in accordance with Policy TRA6 of the Ashford Local Plan and at key public transport links and all public buildings.

3. Maintenance of the Existing Network

There is extensive existing network of cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the Borough that unless they are maintained to an appropriate standard will quickly fall into disrepair and will be difficult to use. It is imperative that the network is maintained with structural maintenance and more regular cleansing and cutting back of vegetation. This also includes ensuring that roads frequented by cyclists are maintained, with whipping branches and vegetation kept cut back. Similarly, there is a need to improve and provide appropriate signage and way-marking and lighting that is appropriate for its location.

Principle 4 - The Borough Council will work with its partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks and pedestrian routes within the Borough

4. Safer Cycling

A key barrier to the increase in cycling within the Borough is the perception of relative safety of bicycle users on existing routes and roads. There are a number of ways in which this can be tackled including considering detailed design and layout of new routes or adapting existing routes. Equally bike handling training for children is important to increase confidence and Bikeability training comprises three levels of competency based training and has been supported for some time by the Borough Council.

Principle 5 – The Borough Council will ensure that the safety of cyclists is considered as a priority in the provision of new routes and the adaptation and re-configuration of existing routes. The Borough Council is committed to its support of the roll out of Bikeability training within the Borough.

5. Promoting Cycling and Walking in Ashford

Ashford town has one of the best developed network of cycleways/footpaths in Kent that has developed over a number of years but the perception is that the network is not as well used as it should be and is not being used to its full potential. It is essential therefore that there is more promotion of the positive benefits of cycling and walking and alternative means of travel

It is essential that cycling and walking are actively promoted otherwise the use of cycle routes and footpaths is unlikely to increase. The Borough Council's web site will be kept up to date with information regarding cycling and walking within the Borough. All cycleways and footpaths will be fully signposted and local clubs and cycle shops could help to promote cycling within the borough. The Council will ensure that its published information regarding cycling and walking is kept up to date.

Principle 6 - Ensure cycleways and pedestrian routes are fully advertised and appropriately signposted and cycling and walking mapping is available for all routes.

6. Tourism

Cycling and walking can be an important source of tourism and in particular there are cycling opportunities within the Borough that could be exploited as part of an improved visitor offer.

The proposal to upgrade the existing public right of way which runs parallel to the Royal Military Canal to a shared path/cycleway, is an ambitious project that will provide a unique opportunity to travel through the rural Romney Marsh area in a healthy and sustainable manner. By upgrading and promoting the route it will encourage healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities; encourage managed access to the countryside by working with local landowners and partner agencies; encourage visitors and tourists to the area which will benefit existing local businesses and potentially encourage new businesses to develop; help to celebrate and promote the unique heritage of the area and enjoy the unique and diverse wildlife in the area.

This multi-faceted project that will deliver against the following corporate priorities: **Corporate Priority 1 – Enterprising Ashford** by stimulating interest in the rural economy and support for allied businesses. **Corporate Priority 3 – Active and Creative Ashford** by encouraging physical activity and engagement in cultural and leisure activities. **Corporate Priority 4 – Attractive Ashford** by strengthening the local tourism offer for the Romney Marsh and surrounding areas, as well as linking to associated tourism providers further afield in the Borough.

Ashford Borough Council is keen to work with landowners and stakeholders to ensure a sympathetic and sustainable route is created that can eventually join with existing and proposed sections of the Royal Military Canal shared pathway along its entire 28 mile length.

Principle 7 - The Borough Council will support and promote cycling and walking projects that contribute to the overall tourism offer in the Borough.

The Delivery Plan (Appendix 2)

The delivery plan sets out the proposed projects that are required to enable the Strategy to be implemented and sets out the long term, local approach to deliver cycling and walking projects in the Borough over the lifetime of the Strategy.

It focusses on enabling cycling and walking for everyday journeys to reduce the reliance on car travel and create confident, active and healthy communities. It is focused on the six over-arching principles set out above.

- **Providing and Improving the cycling and walking network**
- **Cycle Parking**
- **Maintenance of the Existing Network**
- **Safer Cycling**
- **Promoting Cycling and Walking in Ashford**
- **Tourism**

Funding

The draft Strategy proposes the initial funding of projects in the town centre and rural areas. In recent years there have been significant central government initiatives to promote cycling and walking with substantial funding available to identified locations. The Council's Strategy and in particular the Council's participation in the DfT Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan process means that the Council will be best placed to take advantage of further central government funding for cycling and walking infrastructure.

Partnerships

There are clearly some key partner organisations that can assist with project implementation.

- Department for Transport
- Sustrans
- Parish and Town Councils
- KCCC
- Relevant landowners

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APPENDIX 2

Ashford's Cycling and Walking Strategy 2019-2029 – Delivery Plan

1. Providing and Improving the Cycling and Walking Network

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
<p>Audit and assess priority routes, networks in smaller settlements and key routes linking them using DfT's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and Living Streets School Route and Community Street Audits</p> <p>Routes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashford Town Centre • Tenterden - provision of a network of pedestrian/cycle routes building on existing routes and providing routes as part of new development – TENT1A and B • Wye • Charing • Hamstreet - provision of a network of pedestrian/cycle routes for the village as part of the Sustrans report findings – linking to the Royal Military Canal project <p>Ashford circular route - long term project to provide a linked network of pedestrian/cycle routes around the Ashford urban area that builds on existing routes but provide new routes as part of new development – Chilmington Green/ Court Lodge / South of Kingsnorth/ Park Farm / Park Farm South East / Cheesemans Green / Finberry / Waterbrook/ Sevington / Willesborough Lees/ Conningbrook/ Kennington site S2/ Eureka</p>	<p>ABC, Parish and Town Councils, KCC, Sustrans,</p>	<p>H</p>
<p>Carry out feasibility and outline design for LCWIPs in and between key settlements focussing on key routes as follows:</p>	<p>ABC</p>	<p>H</p>

1	Beaver Road, Victoria Way and Jemmett Road areas		
2	Repton – tank r/b through Godinton Road		
3	Highworth School r/b to Liddle and off to Magazine Road areas		
4	Canterbury Road to Magazine Road and Green Corridor (Ashford Rugby Club) areas		
5	Hythe Road to Mace Lane and green corridor to Mabledown Road areas		
6	Newtown Road from Outlet Centre to and from the station areas		
	Conningbrook – Wye cycleway – provision of a dedicated off road cycle / pedestrian route linking the Conningbrook country park and associated residential development and the village of Wye that will improve accessibility to and from Wye and link into the wider rural network and connect to cycleway links to Canterbury	ABC, KCC, Wye PC	H
	Charing Heath – Charing Greenway – provision of a dedicated cycle/pedestrian “green-way” between Charing Heath and Charing to improve accessibility to the village	ABC, KCC, Charing PC	H
	Replace expired monitoring-counters at 10 sites and install permanent counters at 10 additional sites.	KCC	H
	Produce LCWIP for Ashford Town Centre	ABC	H
	Embed LCWIP in the Ashford Planning tool	ABC	H
	Secure funding through LCWIPs from developers via Section 106	ABC, KCC	H

Require that new developments and new roads include best practice pedestrian and cycling routes which are direct, well designed and permeable, take priority over motor traffic and are well connected to surrounding networks	ABC, KCC, developers	H
Require new workplace buildings to have Travel Plans which are active travel friendly, with sufficient cycle parking and facilities for showering/changing	ABC, KCC, Workplaces	M
Use best practice design guidelines to attract users of all ages and abilities and ensure a good quality and consistent experience.	ABC, KCC	H
Construct priority routes identified in LCWIP for the town centre and Sustrans work in rural areas	ABC, KCC, Town Council and Parish Councils	H

2. Cycle Parking

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority
Delivery of cycle parking in accordance with Policy TRA6 of the Ashford Local Plan – policy TRA6 of the Local Plan requires (amongst other things) the promotion and provision of cycle parking facilities – in particular there is a requirement that new development provides appropriate levels of cycle parking.	ABC, KCC	H
Ensure all staffed Council buildings have sufficient cycle parking which complies with modern standards	ABC	H
Ensure all railway stations have sufficient cycle parking which complies with modern standards	ABC, KCC, Network Rail	H

3. Maintenance of the Existing Cycling/Walking Network

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority
Establish a system for management of the cycling and walking network through maintenance and inspection.	ABC, KCC, Parish Councils	H
Ensure all new routes have required permissive access and lease agreements	ABC, KCC	H
Improve existing key routes as part of a prioritised programme identified through route assessments	ABC, KCC	H
Audit and upgrade NCN routes	ABC, KCC	H
Signing – provision of improved signage where appropriate and maintenance of existing route signage	ABC, KCC	H
Line marking/segregation – maintenance of surface markings to ensure clear segregation	ABC, KCC	H
Legible Cycling wayfinding -	ABC, KCC	H

4. Safer Cycling

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority
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<p>Implement enforcement practices that contribute to the safety and attractiveness of cycling and walking to make sure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers and • cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users 	ABC, KCC	M
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5. Promoting Cycling and Walking

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority
Ensure the Borough's commitment to cycling and walking is recognised regionally and nationally	ABC	H
Work with cycling and walking groups, forums and partnerships as a mechanism for providing information, monitoring progress and budget allocation and consulting on proposals. Eg establishment of Cycling Forum or Bicycle Users Group	ABC	H
Support the production and actions of Travel Plans, support promotional campaigns, challenges and events	ABC	H
Continue rolling out Bikeability training form children	KCC	H
Produce town cycling maps which include guidance on safer cycling to include information for drivers on safe conduct, via the website	ABC, KCC	H
Provide cycle maintenance training	ABC	M

Establish the Borough Council as an active travel employer with the provision of adequate showers, changing, bike storage and parking	ABC	H
Work with local schools to promote active modes of travel for travel to school trips	KCC	M
Encourage development and usages of related apps to promote cycling and walking on a regular basis	ABC/KCC	M

6. Tourism

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority
Produce borough wide cycling maps and available online via the Council's dedicated and tourism website	ABC	H
Promote newly improved and new routes	ABC	H
Encourage e bike tourism by working with local businesses and entrepreneurs	ABC, private businesses	H



Agenda Item No: 9
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019
Report Title: Environmental update
Report Author & Job Title: Angela d'Urso, community safety and wellbeing manager
Portfolio Holder Cllr Brad Bradford
Portfolio Holder for: Community safety and wellbeing

Summary: This report highlights some of Ashford's cross council activity to achieve a high quality environment during 2018/19 and seeks approval for the air quality strategy 2019/20 – 2021/22 and related green taxi scheme.

Key Decision: Yes

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:

- I. Note the highlighted cross council achievements over 2018/19 to deliver highest quality environmental standards**
- II. Note the emerging priority for 2019/20 and beyond to maintain and improve our environment – as recognised by our 'Year of the Environment 2019' campaign, being led by the environment and land management department**
- III. Approve the air quality strategy and action plans to deliver the strategy, including approving the establishment of a green taxi scheme**

Policy Overview: The council has a corporate plan 2015-20 priority - Attractive Ashford – focused on creating a high quality environment for our residents.

Air quality has been identified as an issue through a number of mechanisms, including our Overview and Scrutiny Committee, our service planning processes and through national policy changes and prioritisation e.g. the new Clean Air Strategy 2019. There are a number of relevant regional strategies that also have an impact.

Financial Implications: A dedicated staffing resource will be required beyond 2019/20. Based on approval of this by Cabinet, this will then

be managed through the council's budget processes.

It is likely some specific projects within the air quality strategy will require funding. This will happen through the council's project initiation document (PID) process.

Legal Implications

In relation to the green taxi scheme, most sites that pay carbon offsetting contributions as part of the Section 106 agreements sign up to a standard agreement.

This agreement stipulates that the carbon off-setting contribution can be used to cover costs including relating to the designing, procuring, delivering, administering and project managing of works or services or the repayment and reimbursement of expenditure and forward funding (irrespective of when incurred).

It is the legal view that therefore this fund can be utilised to provide a grant to a taxi driver towards the acquisition of an electric taxi in place of a fossil fuel one. Substitution must be demonstrated.

Equalities Impact Assessment

See attached

Other Material Implications:

None

Exempt from Publication:

No

Background Papers:

None

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Environmental update

Introduction and background

2018/19 activity

1. A significant amount of work has been undertaken across council services in 2018/19 to deliver the Attractive Ashford corporate plan priority. Some highlights of this activity are detailed below:

Recycling figures to be proud of

2. Our resident survey 2018 showed that **77%** of our residents are satisfied with the bin collection services.
3. We have built on our successes in our recycling services - Ashford was top of the league in Kent for the fourth year in a row, with the highest percentage of household waste recycled and composted and for the lowest residual waste tonnages per household. . ABC is now **27th** in the country for recycling – up from **35th** place last year – and **10th** place for the amount of residual waste produced by households. This is an incredible achievement by residents and we will work to ensure continuous improvement.
4. Ashford's garden waste recycling service continues to grow and has more than **15,400** customers – a growth of nearly **1,000** customers in the past year.

Supporting a sustainable future

5. The council submitted the final draft of the **Local Plan 2030** to the Secretary of State on 21 December 2017. The independent examination process into the Local Plan was held over the summer of 2018 and the inspectors notified the council in January 2019 that, subject to modifications, the Local Plan 2030 was sound and compliant with the relevant legislation. This brings to a close the examination process, and the Local Plan was formally adopted by the council in February 2019.
6. We continue to support the switch to electric and hybrid vehicles - we have specified high levels of electric vehicle charging points within new developments, as well as providing **14** charging points in our own car parks. No charge is made by the council for electricity used at our own electric vehicle charging points.
7. A **community transport scheme** was designed and launched, with the first pilot starting in July 2018 in Rolvenden. The community transport scheme is primarily a wellbeing initiative, designed to connect those who would otherwise be isolated for a variety of reasons. The community bus also means a reduction in car traffic and the number of older minibus vehicles on the road by creating a shared asset that can be used by community groups – which improves our environment and in particular our air quality.

8. **Create** music festival organisers committed to reducing plastic waste at this 2018's free festival in support of our recycling commitments. Key changes included:
- The use of paper straws instead of plastic ones
 - The use of wooden stirrers instead of plastic ones
 - The use of PolyEthylene Terephthalate (PET) 100% recyclable bottles and the provision of recycling bins accordingly
 - The used of compostable bin liners
 - The introduction of a reusable cup scheme

Parks and open spaces

9. Our resident survey 2018 showed that **71%** of our residents are satisfied with our parks and **62%** of residents are happy with our play areas.
10. We continue to invest in our parks and opens spaces. **Bridgefield park and play area** was opened in 2019 - the first of its kind to be commissioned in the borough for over 20 years, after several years of planning, consultation and development by the council and Kingsnorth Parish Council.
11. The refurbishment of **Newtown play park** was completed, with various different zones created including an under six zone, an over six zone, an inclusive zone that has incorporated paths and equipment suitable for wheelchair users and a brand new outdoor gym area.
12. The council secured initial funding to develop a **£3.7million** restoration and improvement project in Victoria Park, from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund. We have since been consulting on further detailed proposals and our detailed funding bid has been submitted.
13. The Aspire team continues to go from strength to strength since being brought in house. In this year alone Aspire has achieved **ISO 14001, 9001 and 45001**. ISO 14001 is an independent assessment that Aspire is environmentally friendly. Not only is it unusual for one ISO to be applied for and achieved by a council service, but to achieve three standards simultaneously is remarkable and an achievement of which the council is incredibly proud.

Proposals / issues for consideration

Looking forward – 2019/20 and beyond

14. A broad range of activity is scheduled for 2019/20 and beyond. Some highlights of this activity include:

The Year of the Environment

15. 2019 has been identified on a national level as the **year of the environment**. The council is taking action in support of this, and we are designing activity to demonstrate that we can improve the environment through shared and collective action. The year will provide an opportunity to generate momentum as we work with all communities to take action to improve the planet.

16. We will be delivering various events, campaigns and initiatives throughout the year to support these causes and promote the environment. Our aim is to have Ashford connect, protect and enhance the environment. Each event will be centred on one or more of our five key themes:
- **Recycle** – encourage residents to waste less and recycle more
 - **Clean** – keep Ashford clean by tackling litter and encouraging residents to get involved with volunteer schemes
 - **Grow** – encourage residents to grow fruit and veg in their own homes, gardens and allotment sites
 - **Nature** – encourage residents to use parks and open spaces in the borough whilst encouraging wildlife and biodiversity
 - **Air** – encourage residents to use active transport to reduce pollution and improve health and well-being
17. There are numerous events planned throughout the year focused on green action, for example litter picks, implementing the refill scheme and a big art project in conjunction with Create. **The Great British Spring Clean** will take place from 22 March – 23 April 2019.

Cycling and walking strategy

18. The **draft Ashford cycling and walking strategy** has been developed. The strategy brings together policies and related actions to promote cycling and walking and the delivery of related infrastructure. The strategy provides a basis for making bids for improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure at key routes serving the town, urban extensions and rural areas. The strategy also seeks to increase cycling and walking participation by promoting safer cycling, active promotion of cycling and walking and the support for cycling and walking based tourism.
19. The draft strategy will go out for public consultation and the final strategy will be considered for approval and adoption in 2019/20.

Air quality

20. Air pollution is the **greatest** environmental risk to public health in the UK. It is the **fourth** greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. It causes more harm than passive smoking.
21. Air pollution also has a direct impact on our natural environment, contributing to climate change, reducing our crop yields and polluting our oceans. We are dependent on the health of the planet on which we live – from the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the energy that powers our homes and businesses. Protecting our natural environment protects our way of life – this is particularly true of air quality.
22. We know air pollution has a significant impact on the health of the borough. Public Health England has estimated that air pollution is a contributory factor in **50** deaths in Ashford each year. PHE has also estimated that there are **539** years of life lost in our population due to exposure to air pollution – meaning many of our population are dying earlier deaths than necessary. Improving

our air quality will lead to our communities living longer, healthier and happier lives.

23. In Ashford our pollutant concentrations are below the national limit, which is positive. This doesn't mean we have no work to do. No amount of air pollution is safe. Even lower levels of air pollution can have a detrimental impact on our health, as evidenced by the statistics above. We know we must aim to reduce levels of air pollution as far as possible.
24. Following on from the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) task force on air quality, a report was produced and considered by Cabinet in February 2018. This report contained a number of recommendations, which were agreed by Cabinet to form the basis of a strategy moving forward. Included in these recommendations were the appointment of an officer to focus on air quality activity. This was agreed.
25. Taking the report from O&S, plus some further work on the part of officers (acknowledging the increasing national, regional and local importance of air quality and latest developments), an air quality strategy (AQS) has been produced (please see Appendix 1).
26. The air quality strategy (AQS) (appendix 1) has been developed by officers and builds on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny air quality task force. The AQS has three priorities as following:
 - **Ensuring we lead the way** – actions the council will undertake to set a high standards for ourselves
 - **Working with our partners** – actions to council will undertake with its partners to safeguard and where possible improve standards of air quality
 - **Enabling behavioural change** – actions the council will undertake to facilitate lasting behavioural change within the population of the borough
27. The district deal with Kent County Council will be a key mechanism for the delivery of the 'working with our partners' priority. Officers are working on this accordingly.

Green taxi scheme

28. The O&S task force on air quality report included a recommendation to encourage the uptake of electric and hybrid vehicles within our taxi and private hire fleet. This has become a project contained within the new AQS. Currently diesel vehicles make up the majority of the Ashford taxi fleet.
29. The green taxi scheme has been designed as follows:
 - The scheme will subsidise in full the annual licensing fee for green taxis for the first three years they are on the fleet
 - The scheme will apply defined criteria to what a 'green' vehicle is (based on pre-existing criteria developed by other relevant schemes)
 - The scheme will provide for **ten** vehicles per annum for **three** years, and will operate on a first come, first served basis
 - Using the licence fee for 2019/20, the funding requirement from Section 106 over the three year lifetime of the scheme is **£28,800**. This funding allocation has been confirmed

30. We do not know what the uptake of the scheme will be. Any leftover monies will remain in the Section 106 pot. If demand outstrips supply we will review options and report back to Cabinet as required.

Community transport scheme

31. We will be seeking to increase the number of pilot community transport schemes in 2019/20, with funding for a further three schemes currently being identified. We will develop an information pack based on our learning from these scheme in order to support other communities who may wish to invest in their own community transport scheme.

Implications

Resource implications

32. In order to deliver the AQS meaningfully, a staffing resource is required to lead the work. There are also a number of other work streams across the wider environmental portfolio that require support. In 2019/20 this work will be led by the Public Practice environmental project manager. Resource commitment beyond 2019/20 will be agreed as part of the council's budgeting processes as detailed in the Cabinet approved recommendations of the O&S task force (Agenda item 6: Report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – findings of the air quality task group, Cabinet 8 February 2018).

Financial implications

33. It is likely some specific projects within the air quality strategy will require funding. This will happen through the council's project initiation document (PID) process.
34. The green taxi scheme is ready to launch for 2019/20 and will be funded from Section 106. Based on the proposed licence fee for 2019/20, the funding requirement from Section 106 over the three year lifetime of the scheme is £28,800. We do not know uptake of the scheme. Any leftover monies will remain in the Section 106 pot. If demand outstrips supply we will review options and return to management team with proposals.

Equalities impact assessment

35. Please see appendix B for the equalities impact assessment. There are no specific or immediate issues arising from it.

Consultation planned or undertaken

36. We have used consultation evidence from our residents' survey 2018. We have also undertaken informal consultation with some specific interest groups, for example the Taxi Drivers' Forum. This information has shaped policy development and interventions so far.

37. Consultation is also planned as we start to develop some of the further project activity, for example creating our community education and behaviour change campaign.

Other options considered

38. The council could decide not to adopt the air quality strategy and continue with statutory air quality activity only. This, however, would not enable us to safeguard our environment effectively. This would also include not delivering the green taxi scheme.

Reasons for supporting option recommended

39. Protecting and enhancing our environment is an emerging priority for our developing corporate plan 2020 onwards. Environmental protection, including our air quality, is of increasing importance to our communities, particularly our younger generations.

Next steps

40. Officers are working together to prioritise the activity of the resource identified to deliver year one of the AQS. The first step will be to establish any new delivery mechanisms required to drive the action plans forward.
41. Ashford Borough Council's wider environmental approach will be explored in full as part of the corporate planning process, which will begin in 2019/20.

Conclusion

42. Ashford Borough Council is committed to excellence in our environment and work will continue in 2019/20 and beyond to ensure we deliver against our commitments.

Portfolio holder's views

43. This report shows the excellent work that happens across the council to deliver best quality environmental services and standards. I would like to recognise the work of other Cabinet colleagues in driving this agenda forward in their own areas.
44. In terms of the air quality strategy I would also like to thank again my colleagues on the O&S air quality task force in developing the recommendations that formed the basis of this new approach. I look forward to seeing the successful delivery of the strategy and the safeguarding of our air quality for all residents, especially our younger generations.

Contact and email

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**Air Quality Strategy
2019/20 – 2021/22**

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Introduction

Air pollution in the UK

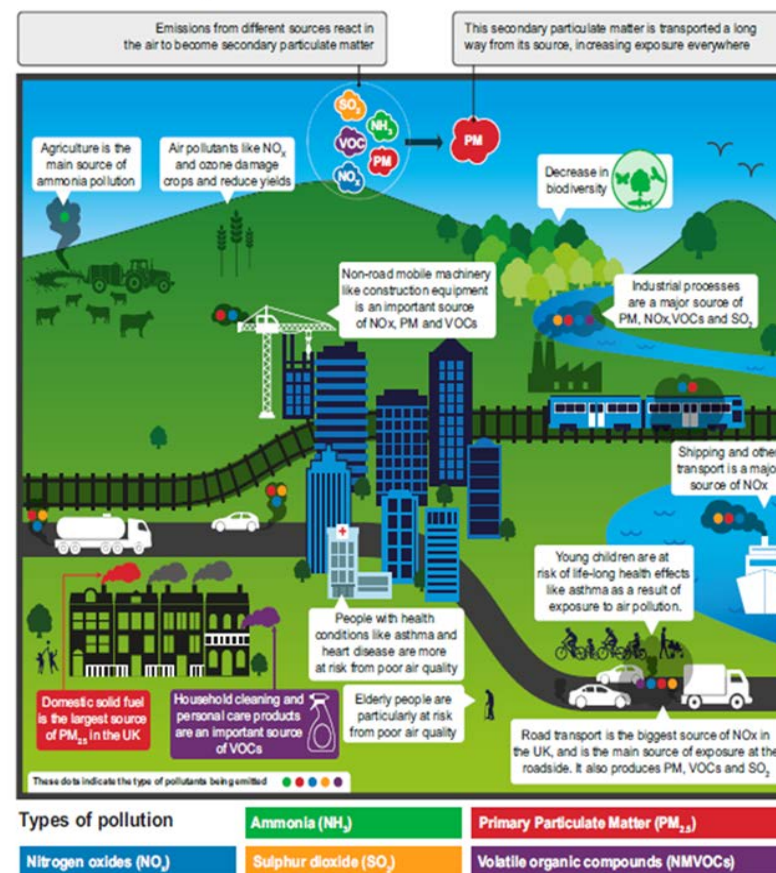
Air pollution leads to the early death of tens of thousands of people each year in Britain and negatively affects the health of hundreds of thousands more. Put bluntly, poor air quality shortens lives and contributes to chronic illness.

Air pollution is the greatest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It is the fourth greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. It causes more harm than passive smoking.

In 2010, the Environment Audit Committee considered that the cost of the health impacts of air pollution was likely to exceed a previous estimate of £8 - £20 billion. People are less able to work and need more medical care, which results in higher social costs and demands on the National Health Service.

Air pollution also has a direct impact on our natural environment, contributing to climate change, reducing our crop yields and polluting our oceans. We are dependent on the health of the planet on which we live – from the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the energy that powers our homes and businesses. Protecting our natural environment protects our way of life – this is particularly true of air quality.

The sources of air pollutants and their effects



It is acknowledged that there is extra effort required to effectively tackle air pollution. For example:

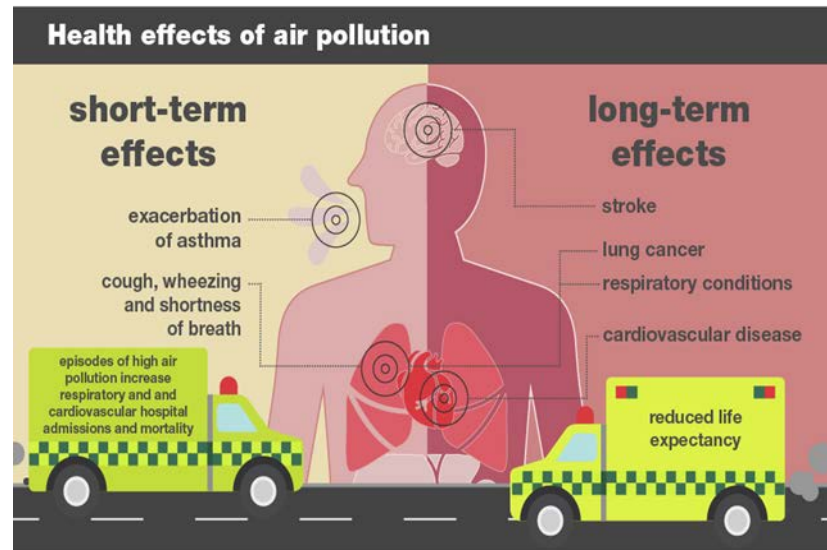
- In October 2018, the United Nations warned that the UK government was endangering people's health by denying their right to clean air
- The world's biggest children's charity, Unicef, has stated it has refocused its British operation to tackle air pollution because of the scale of the "health crisis" facing young people in the country
- In October 2018, the World Health Organisation said that air pollution was the "new tobacco", causing 7 million deaths around the world and harming billions more

The UK national government is taking action to tackle air pollution, as outlined in the Clean Air Strategy 2019. The UK government has set stringent targets to cut polluting emissions by 2020 and 2030. The aim of the national Clean Air Strategy is to reduce harm to human health from air pollution by half. We know that we need to tackle air pollution locally to ensure that we achieve national targets and improve air quality for future generations.

Air pollution is everyone's problem, and taking action to improve our air quality is everyone's responsibility.

There are small things we can all do that would make a big difference to pollution levels, both locally and nationally.

We must work together to protect each other from harm, as well as our environment.



What is air pollution?

Air pollutants are emitted from a range of man-made and natural sources. Every day activities such as driving, heating our homes, manufacturing goods and farming our land can and do have a detrimental impact upon air quality. Pollutants can travel long distances and combine with each other in the air to create different pollutants. The impact of pollution can depend upon how much is emitted, how harmful the emission is and how it interacts with other substances already in the air.

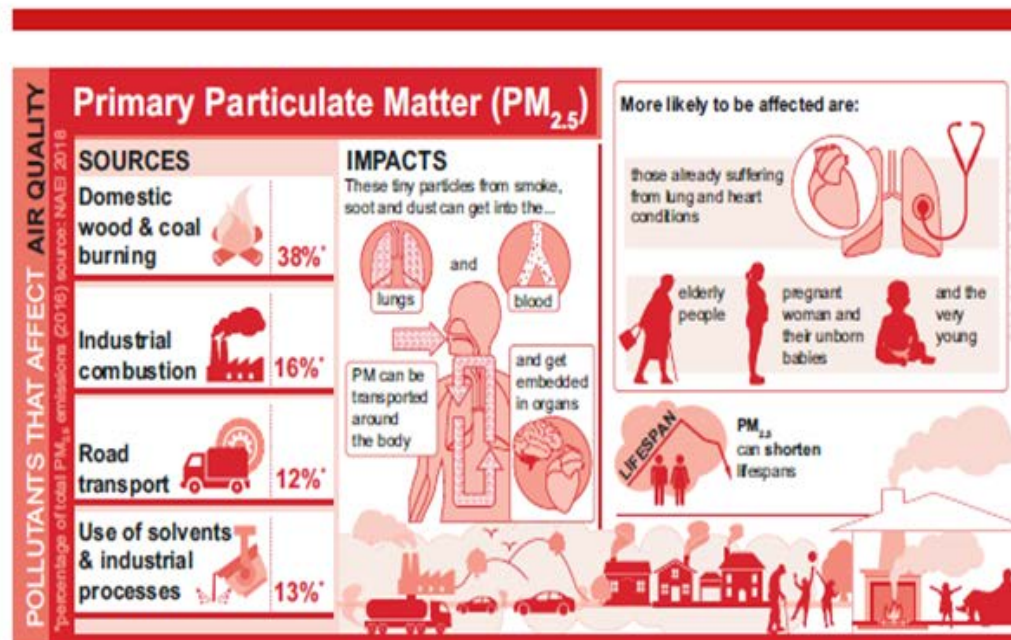
Concentrations occur where pollutants build up in large quantities in a particular location, for example by a busy road, a large industrial estate or an intensive farming operation. Emissions from distant sources can also build up into high local concentrations of pollution. Exposure to high concentrations is most likely to directly result in adverse impacts, although our health can be affected by both short term exposure to high pollution levels and by long term exposure to lower levels of pollution. We are exposed to air pollution in all aspects of our lives – at home, when travelling, at school and at work.

There are different types of pollutants, and we are focusing on three of the most damaging ones in our first air quality strategy. These are detailed in the next sections.

Particulate matter

PM is a generic term used to describe a complex mixture of solid and liquid particles of differing size, shape and composition. PM is simply everything in the air that isn't gas. Sizes range from a few nanometers in diameter (about the size of a virus) to about 100 micrometres in diameter (about the size of a human hair). These particles include carbon, trace metals and mineral components. PM_{2.5} is less than 2.5µm (micrometers) across, is the main type of PM which is regulated and that causes the most harm to health. The UK has made legally binding commitments to further reduce the amount of PM_{2.5} that we emit into our air by 30% by 2020 and 46% by 2030, based on a 2005 baseline.

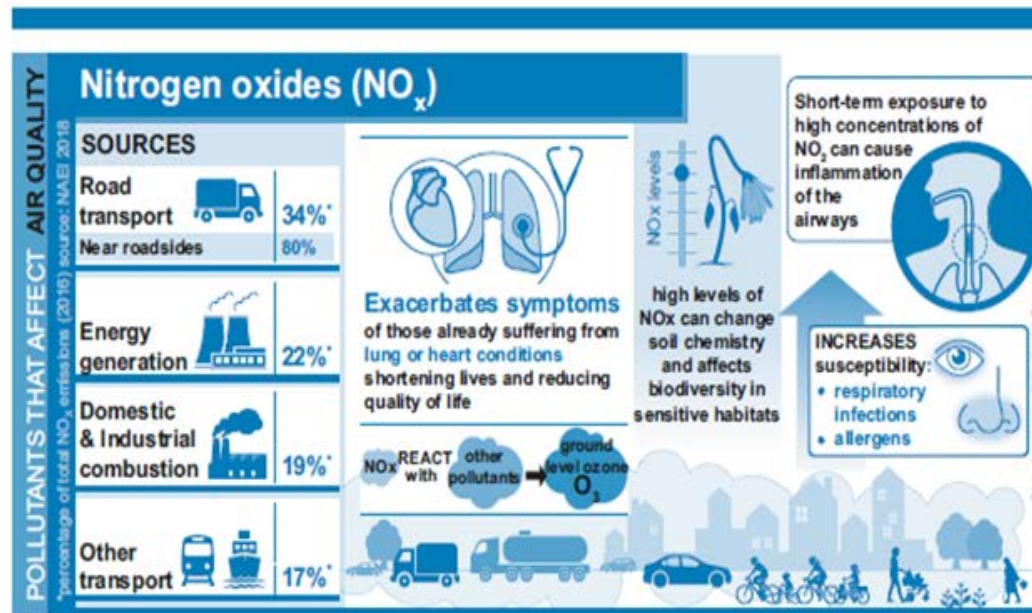
The below shows the main sources of PM_{2.5} on a national level, some of the health impacts and those who are most likely to be affected:



Nitrogen oxides

Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are a group of gases that are mainly created from burning fossil fuels. This includes nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The UK isn't meeting the current limits of nitrogen dioxide concentration. DEFRA estimates 80% of NO_x emissions (particularly in places where the UK is exceeding the NO₂ limit) is due to transport, mainly smaller vehicles such as cars and vans. The UK aims to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides (from a 2005 baseline) by 55% by 2020 and 73% by 2030.

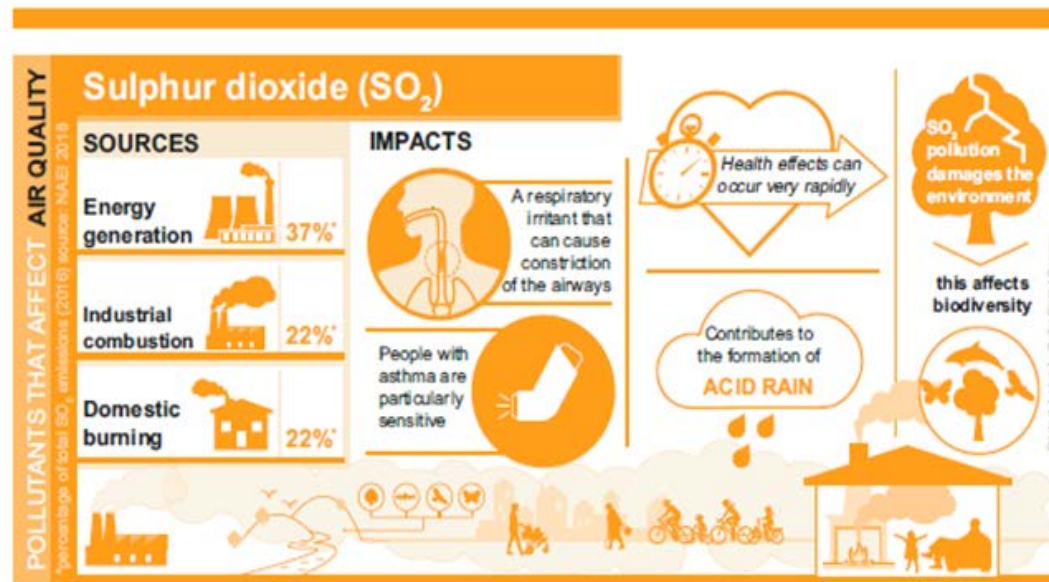
The below shows the main sources of NO_x on a national level, some of the health impacts and those who are most likely to be affected:



Sulphur dioxide

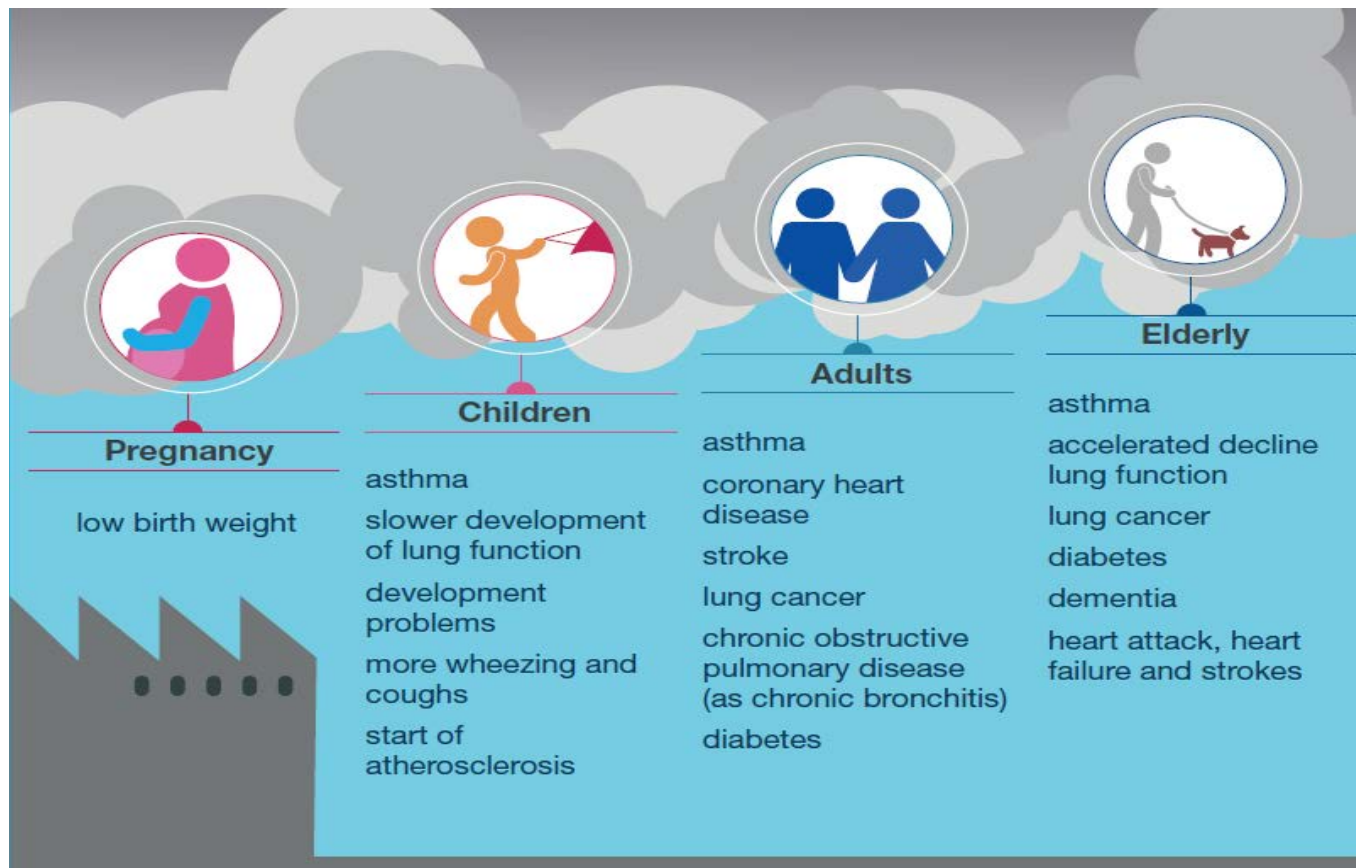
Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) is an acidic gas which can combine with water vapour in the atmosphere to produce acid rain. Sulphur dioxide is an irritant that can affect airways, particularly in those who have asthma. Emissions of SO₂ are decreasing and have fallen by 97% since 1970, although there is still more work to do. The UK aims to reduce emissions of SO₂ (from 2005 baseline) by 59% by 2020 and 88% by 2030.

The below shows the main sources of SO₂ on a national level, some of the health impacts and those who are most likely to be affected:



What are the health impacts of air pollution?

Poor air quality can affect health at all stages of life. Those most affected are the young and old. In the womb, maternal exposure to air pollution can result in low birth weight, premature birth, still birth or organ damage. In children there is evidence of reduced lung capacity, while impacts in adulthood can include diabetes, heart disease and stroke. In old age, a lifetime of exposure to air pollution can result in reduced life expectancy and an increased risk of disease and lower quality of life at the end of life. There is also emerging evidence for a link between air pollution and an acceleration of the decline in cognitive function. People with pre-existing health conditions – such as asthma or heart disease – are also at greater risk from air pollution.



Deprived communities are more likely to experience adverse health effects from poor air quality. There are many reasons for this, for example:

- They are more exposed to air pollution by living closer to major roads.
- They are less likely to live close to well-maintained green spaces associated with lower levels of air pollution, increased physical activity, and improved mental wellbeing.

However, air quality can also be poor in areas that are generally considered affluent, such as central London. This is reflected by the overall national distribution of air pollution with highest average levels in South East England and lowest levels in the North of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

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Considerations in developing Ashford's Air Quality Strategy

What about air pollution in Ashford?

We know air pollution has a significant impact on the health of the borough. Public Health England has estimated that air pollution is a contributory factor in **50** deaths in Ashford each year. PHE has also estimated that there are **539** years of life lost in our population due to exposure to air pollution – meaning many of our population are dying earlier deaths than necessary. Improving our air quality will lead to our communities living longer, healthier and happier lives.

In Ashford our pollutant concentrations are below the national limit, which is positive. This doesn't mean we have no work to do. **No amount of air pollution is safe.** Even lower levels of air pollution can have a detrimental impact on our health, as evidenced by the statistics above. We know we must aim to reduce levels of air pollution as far as possible.

That is why we are taking action to accelerate the improvements to our air quality. We aim to reduce the risks to health for current and future generations. This strategy is evidence of a compelling case for action so we reduce public exposure to air pollution in order to save lives and improve quality of life for all.

Opportunities and challenges ahead

We also know there are a number of opportunities and challenges on the horizon, which will inform the delivery of our air quality strategy. A PESTELGO (political, economic, societal, technological, environmental, legal, governmental and organisational) analysis was conducted as part of the strategy's development – key highlights include the following:

Political

- Brexit planning and implications for all partners - the EU Withdrawal Act preserves some EU law after our exit, but leaves potential for disruption and instability. Risks for Ashford include road transport (risks of queues at Dover and impact on the rest of the county) and a downturn in the economy which might affect partners' financial situations
- EU funding and funding for sustainable vehicles dropping out

Economic

- Continuing investment and development in Ashford town centre, including the expansion of the Ashford Outlet Centre and the Chilmington Green development for almost 6,000 new homes – bringing with them potential increased air pollution levels, for example an increase in the number of vehicles, dusts associated with building sites etc.
- National funding streams available to deliver work to improve air quality often focus on the major cities and those with declared exceedances in the UK

Societal

- Health inequalities and disproportionate impact of air pollution on our most vulnerable community members, for

example the young and the old, those with pre-existing health conditions, those living in our most deprived communities

- An increased awareness of and concern about air pollution in the general population, with an increased expectation of action taken by the local authority

Environmental

- The new M20 junction 10a scheme is scheduled to complete in spring 2020
- Enhancement of some of our major green spaces, for example Victoria Park and Conningbrook Lakes,

Legal/Governmental

- Challenges in the High Court to national government over failure to deliver against international air quality standards
- Consultation on air quality strategy and potential new statutory instruments

Organisational

- Partners are developing new strategies and are currently in the consultation phases, for example the Kent County Council Energy and Low Emission Strategy.
- Ongoing public sector budget cuts are affecting all partners and services, resulting in priorities around core business

What have we achieved so far?

Although this is Ashford Borough Council's first specific air quality strategy, we have always been working to safeguard our air quality. In 2018/19 for example, we have:

- Specified high levels of electric vehicle charging points within new developments, as well as providing 14 charging points in our own car parks
- Invested in A-rated condensing boilers to update older, inefficient boilers as part of our planned maintenance of our council housing stock
- Delivered a number of energy efficiency improvements to the key buildings within our property portfolio, resulting in a year on year reduction in greenhouse gases from the council's managed estate
- Launched a community transport scheme – with the pilot scheme 'Rolvenden Rocket' up and running since July 2018
- Worked to set up a green taxi grant scheme, which will launch in 2019/20
- Invested in electric transport options for our staff, such as the e-bikes used by our civil enforcement officers and the electric pool car used by our housing officers



Priority outcomes for this strategy

Based on the evidence of the problem at a national and local level, we will seek to improve air quality in Ashford and safeguard excellent air quality for future generations. In order to achieve this, this strategy will achieve the following outcomes:

- **Ensuring we lead the way** – actions the council will undertake to set a high standards for ourselves
- **Working with our partners** – actions to council will undertake with its partners to safeguard and where possible improve standards of air quality
- **Enabling behavioural change** – actions the council will undertake to facilitate lasting behavioural change within the population of the borough

Ensuring we lead the way

We will show commitment and leadership to show what is possible when tackling air pollution, modelling the behavior we expect to see in others.

Action plan

Objective	Key actions	Key performance measures	Lead
Create an in house resource to deliver the Air Quality Strategy	Appoint an officer, with key tasks to include establishing a cross council delivery group, developing a lobbying and funding strategy and developing behaviour change campaigns. (recommendation 25, 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer in post Delivery group set up Additional funding levered in 	Angela d'Urso, community safety and wellbeing manager
Increase the number of staff using public transport, cycling, walking or car pools in their journeys to, from and within work	Conduct annual staff survey includes questions around journeys to, from and within work to establish current methods and trends (recommendation 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New schemes launched to target barriers identified by the survey e.g. car pooling Increase in those using public transport, cycling or walking 	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Review the impact of free car parking permits for staff in terms of the implications for air quality, parity of terms and conditions with staff who use other modes of transport and our income levels	Review completed after six months of free car parking scheme	Angela d'Urso, community safety and wellbeing manager
	Explore the installation of additional shower facilities within the Civic Centre to enable staff to cycle to and from work (recommendation 24)	Increased use of public transport and cycling as primary means of travel to and from work from baseline to be established through staff survey	Michelle Pecci, head of human resources
	Explore the establishing of a pool bike scheme to enable travel whilst in work (recommendation 21)	Reduced levels of claim against vehicle mileage scheme	Michelle Pecci, head of human resources

	Promote mileage rate for cycling scheme (recommendation 24)	Increased take up of cycle to work subsidy	Michelle Pecci, head of human resources
Reduce the pollutants from our vehicle fleet	Explore limits on high polluting vehicles within our leasing and mileage claim schemes (recommendation 19)	Following feasibility, reduced levels of CO ₂ within staff vehicle fleet as recorded in annual greenhouse gas emissions report	Michelle Pecci, head of human resources
	Explore procurement of fuel efficient driver training for essential car users (recommendation 22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following feasibility reduced levels of CO₂ within staff vehicle fleet as recorded in annual greenhouse gas emissions report Following feasibility reduced fuel consumption within council fleet vehicles 	Michelle Pecci, head of human resources
Ensure the highest standards of development in our borough	A best practice standard is set for future developments and this standard to be applied as is appropriate. The standard includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric vehicle charging points for residential and non-residential development, including off street car parking for major developments Minimum standard gas fired boilers Major developments carried out in line with guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management (recommendation 3)	The standard is applied to all new developments as and where appropriate	Tim Naylor, head of planning and development
	A proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be set aside for air pollution mitigation measures (recommendation 2)	This will be taken forward dependent on the future of the CIL post national government changes	Tim Naylor, head of planning and development
	Set appropriate planning conditions requiring the delivery of electric vehicle charging points within residential and non-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric vehicle charging points provided within new developments at a 	Tim Naylor, head of

	residential development (recommendation 5)	<p>minimum of 1 per residential property with a dedicated parking space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric vehicle charging points provided within new non-residential development at a minimum of 10% of parking provision • Increased number of charging points within the borough 	planning and development
	Set appropriate planning conditions for enabling cycling to work within new commercial development (recommendation 15)	Cycle storage, shower and changing facilities provided within appropriate non-residential development	Tim Naylor, head of planning and development
	Maintain high standards of green space, including effective planting strategies to support pollutant mitigation and street ventilation (recommendation 4)	Improved green spaces around the areas with the highest air pollution levels	Environmental policy and projects officer
Ensure we understand our air quality	Ongoing monitoring of our air quality making best use of available resources and information	Annual air quality status reports compiled and submitted to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Trevor Ford, environmental protection and licensing team leader

Working with our partners

We know we cannot do this alone. A great many of the changes we know we need are not within our gift. Crucial to achieving our strategic aims will be effective partnership working – lobbying and influencing others to secure the changes we need.

Action plan

Objective	Key actions	Key performance measures	Lead
Increasing the use of sustainable transport	Lobbying bus companies and KCC to provide low emission buses within Ashford and maintain good, high quality, frequent and well used services (recommendation 11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus vehicles at Euro IV standard or higher Reduced levels of private car use within Ashford and consequential reduction in pollutant concentrations 	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Lobby rail companies to ensure services continue to be frequent and regular	There is a positive impact in decision making	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Lobby KCC regarding the outcomes of The Big Conversation	Community preferred rural public transport options maintained in Ashford, particularly serving rural communities	Environmental policy and projects officer
Minimising the impacts of poor air quality	Work with KCC to deliver roadside planting that seeks to mitigate air pollution (recommendation 4)	Roadside planting delivered and impacting positively on pollutant concentrations along key transport routes	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Lobby KCC to consider air quality impacts in the design of road layouts and traffic calming measures (recommendation 4)	Reduced pollutant concentrations along key transport routes	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Lobby KCC to use urban traffic management control to optimise traffic flow within Ashford (recommendation 7)	Reduced pollutant concentrations along key transport routes	Environmental policy and projects officer

	Work with KCC to explore options for providing on street electric vehicle charging points (recommendation 6)	Feasibility is assessed and a project developed accordingly	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Collaborate with KCC over the use of variable message signing (VMS) to promote air quality information (recommendation 28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced pollutant concentrations along key transport routes • Reduced incidents of vehicle idling in high risk areas 	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Work with Kent Police to tackle vehicle idling in key locations such as outside schools (recommendation 18)	Reduced incidents of vehicle idling in high risk areas	Environmental policy and projects officer
Driving a collaborative approach to air quality	Continue to work with our KCC partners, including in the development and delivery of the Kent energy and low emissions strategy	Positive impact on the developing strategy and the direction of travel	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Influence any legislation emerging nationally, lobby the national government to ensure we are able to take action where we need to	Positive outcomes in the national environment, for example in terms of funding allocated to district authorities	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Work with the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership to ensure all partners are playing their part in tackling air quality, for example the NHS.	The Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership develops the action plan across the partnership and drives delivery accordingly	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Work with the big employers in Ashford to reduce the number of employee journeys made to and from work by single occupant vehicles	A scheme is developed and key big employers sign up to it	Environmental policy and projects officer

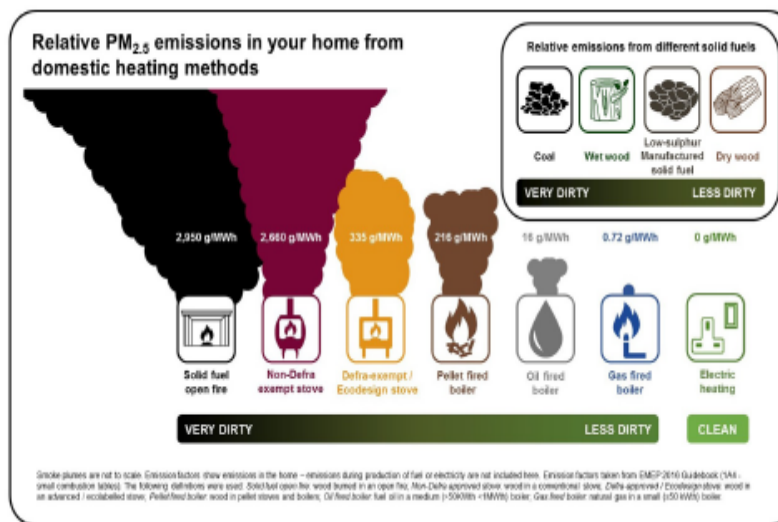
Enabling behavior change

Ashford Borough Council will not be able to reduce air pollution alone.

Key to the success of this strategy is everybody understanding air pollution and taking personal responsibility for changing their own behaviours to positively impact air pollution levels.

Small actions – ones that we can all make - will make a big difference. This might seem like an unsurmountable task, but we have done it before. After action from the council, residents changed their recycling habits, taking Ashford from the district authority with the worst recycling rate nationally, to one of the best.

Public education will be the first step. For example, most people will be aware of air pollution caused by large industrial sites or major urban road networks. Yet many people will be unaware that emissions in their own homes not only increases their personal exposure to pollutants, but contributes significantly to our national emissions. The below shows just how polluting some of day to day activities (such as heating our homes) can be:



Our community leadership role to deliver the necessary changes in behavior will be key in the delivery of this strategy.

Action plan

Objective	Key actions	Key performance measures	Lead
Making sustainable transport the easy and preferred choice for our community	Delivering the council's Cycling and Walking Strategy, including an audit of what cycling facilities are available in the borough and action to be taken where gaps are found (recommendation 16)	Delivery of the strategic aims contained in the strategy	Simon Harris, community project manager
	Continue to support and enhance walk to school schemes within the borough (recommendation 17)	Increased uptake of walk to school schemes	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Rolvenden Rocket pilot continues, with lessons learned and expansion to other parishes / hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of schemes launched, in operation and level of usage Promotion of community transport grant schemes 	Angela d'Urso, community safety and wellbeing manager
	Promotion of Kent Karrier and other sustainable transport schemes, where appropriate	Increased membership recorded in Ashford borough	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Ensuring our network of electric vehicle charging points expands (recommendation 5)	Number of electric vehicle charging points across the borough	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Explore options to reduce or remove parking charges for electric vehicles within our own car parks to encourage increased uptake of these vehicles (recommendation 14)	Options paper developed for consideration	Environmental policy and projects officer
Making sustainable transport the easy and preferred choice for businesses	Launch a scheme to encourage electric and hybrid vehicles in the taxi and private hire fleets in the borough (recommendation 13)	Uptake of scheme among trade	Angela d'Urso, community safety and

			wellbeing manager
	Explore options to deliver fuel efficient driver training for taxi and private hire drivers (recommendation 14)	Interest in scheme established and uptake of scheme	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Explore options for new HGV parking facilities to provide for electric HGV charging and refrigeration (recommendation 10)	Options paper developed for consideration	Environmental policy and projects officer
Advising and informing the public	A long term, overarching behavioural change campaign to be designed and delivered – key messages will need to be identified, as well as target audiences. This campaign will need to include an educational aspect, to ensure people understand the issues around air quality. The campaign will show individuals how they can take action to reduce air pollution and how they can help protect them, their families, neighbours and communities. The campaign should link to existing national, high profile activities, such as Clean Air Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people who recognise air quality and pollution as an important issue, as measured by the resident's survey • Increased use of sustainable transport options • Measured reduction in pollutant concentrations 	Environmental policy and projects officer
	Linked to the campaign, the council's webpages to be updated to ensure full information on air quality is provided to members of the public, including any actions they can take themselves (recommendation 27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of hits on the new webpages • Number of people who recognise air quality and pollution as an important issue, as measured by the resident's survey • Increased use of sustainable transport options • Measured reduction in pollutant concentrations 	Environmental policy and projects officer

Work with the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership information for residents living in the worst affected areas in relation to steps they can take to minimise impacts on their health ([recommendation 29](#))

- Number of people taking regular physical exercise
- Number of people categorized as obese
- Number of smokers in the adult population
- Reduction in hospital admissions where poor air quality may be a contributory factor
- Improvement in health profile of target areas

Angela d'Urso,
community safety and wellbeing manager

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Next steps

We will ensure the success of our Air Quality Strategy by embedding it into three key mechanisms. The mechanisms will take responsibility for one crucial element each, as below:

- Regular policy review and related strong strategic management
- Developing the action plans in this strategy in further detail and ensuring delivery against targets – including the district deal we develop with Kent County Council
- Strong performance management to ensure outcomes are achieved

This strategy is a three year plan from 2019/20 – 2021/22. It will be updated on an annual basis to ensure we make progress and build on our good practice. An annual progress report will be received by the AHWP and Ashford Borough Council.

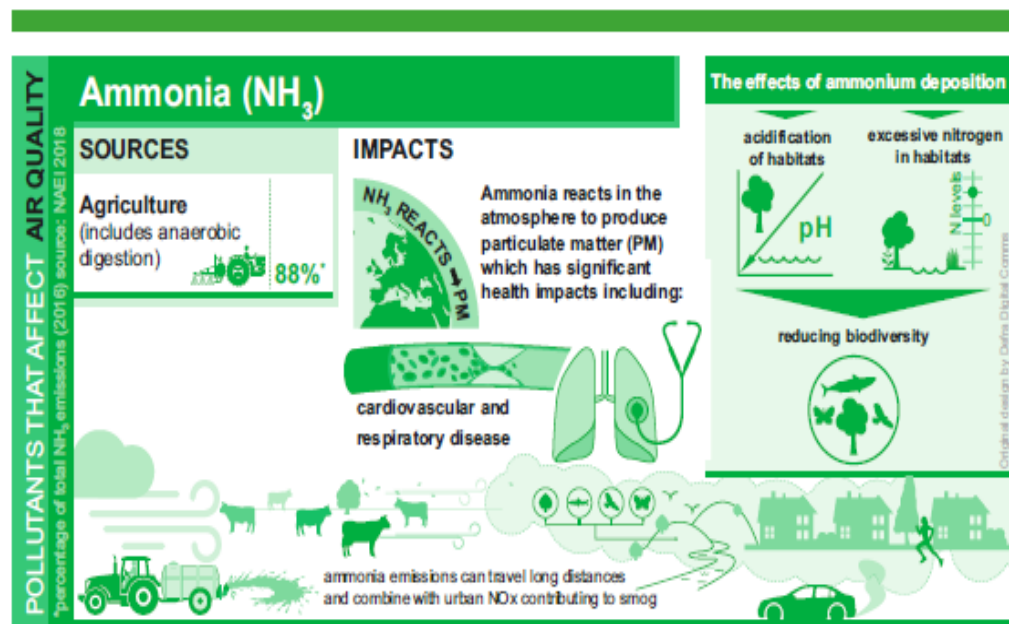


Future updates of this strategy

Future strategies will also look at how we all work together to tackle two other types of pollution, specifically ammonia (NH_3) and non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs).

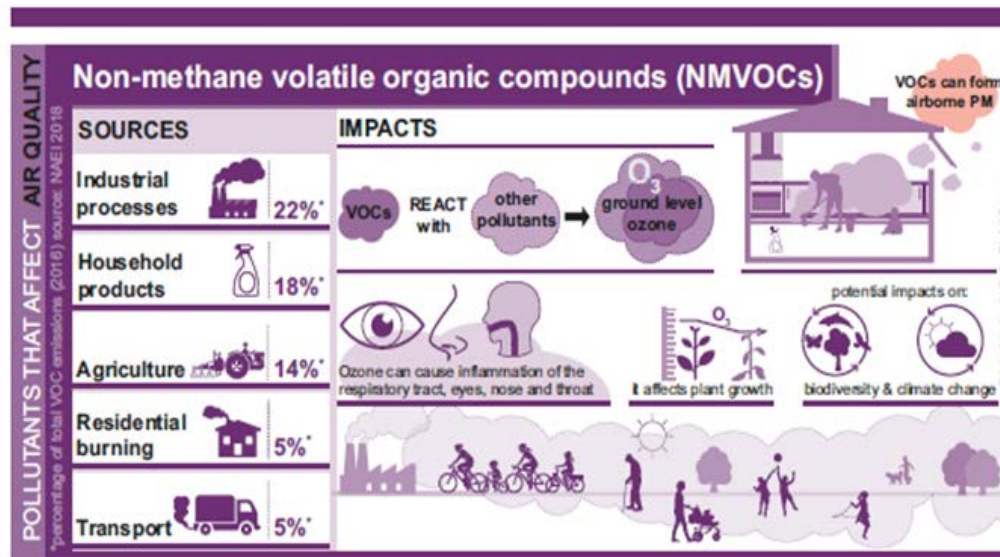
Ammonia is a gas that is released into the atmosphere, mostly from agricultural sources like slurry or other rotting farm waste and fertiliser. The agricultural sector accounts for 88% of UK emissions of ammonia, which is emitted during the storage and spreading of manures and from application of inorganic fertilisers. This will be a crucial area for exploration in the development of future action plans as part of this strategy. Emissions from ammonia have fallen by 13% since 1990. However since 2013, there has been an increase in emissions of ammonia. The UK has targets to reduce emissions of ammonia (from the 2005 baseline) by 8% by 2020 and by 16% by 2030.

The below shows the main sources of ammonia, some of the health impacts and those who are most likely to be affected:



Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs) are organic molecules, which differ widely in their chemical composition but can display similar behaviour in the atmosphere. These include vapours from every day products we use at work or home like petrol, solvents, air fresheners, cleaning products and perfumes. The government has set targets to reduce emissions of NMVOCs (from 2005 baseline) by 32% by 2020 and 39% by 2030.

The below shows the main sources of ammonia, some of the health impacts and those who are most likely to be affected:





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Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019
Report Title: Approval to Spend Highways England Contribution Funding for Church Road Play Area and Open Space, Sevington, Ashford
Report Author & Job Title: Amanda Scott, Play and Open Spaces Project Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Mike Bennett
Portfolio Holder for: Culture, Leisure, Environment and Heritage

Summary:

Funding has been secured by Ashford Borough Council from Highways England in negotiation as a result of compulsory purchase of a portion of designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) land at Church Road Open Space in Sevington owned by Ashford Borough Council. The compulsory purchase enabled the current Highway works at Junction 10a of the M20.

The agreement with Highways England sets out how the provisions will be used to improve and enhance the play area and open space at Church Road Open Space LNR.

It is proposed to use the provisions to carry out these improvements and enhancements in consultation with local residents, children and families and Mersham and Sevington Parish Council.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Highfield

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. Approve spending of Highways England Funding of £138,343.85 on the project detailed in this report which aims to improve the Church Road Play Area and Open Space;**
- II. Give authority to the Head of Culture, in collaboration with appropriate officers, to complete all tasks and to execute and complete all documentation necessary to deliver the project and give effect to the above recommendation.**

Policy Overview: This project meets Priority 3 of the Corporate Plan to provide a range of leisure and sports facilities.

Financial Implications: Project costs totalling £138,343.85 will be covered by the appropriate Highways England funding. No other funding is implicated in these improvement works. Aspire will manage

the ongoing grounds maintenance of the open space including the play area thereafter.

Legal Implications A funding agreement is in place with Highways England which the project proposal will need to adhere to.

Equalities Impact Assessment See Attached

Other Material Implications: -

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: Agreement relating to open space and replacement land in connection with the proposed M20 Junction 10A Development Consent Order

Church Road Play Area and Open Space Location Plan

Contact: amanda.scott@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330393

Report Title: Approval to Spend Highways England Contribution Funding – Church Road Play Area and Open Space

Introduction and Background

1. Funding has been secured from Highways England as part of the Compulsory Purchase arrangements of Ashford Borough Council land at Church Road Open Space, to construct the new Junction 10a on the M20. An agreement was formed, agreeing to the payment of £138,343.85 from Highways England, towards improvements on Church Road Play Area and Open Space in Sevington.
2. Accordingly, the agreement states the following arrangement: *‘The Council agrees to use the Church Road Open Space Contribution (£138,343.85) for the purpose of enhancement of the Church Road Open Space only substantially in accordance with the schedule of refurbishments at Schedule 2’*. A list of play area refurbishment works are detailed in Schedule 2 of the agreement and forms the basis of the works required which include:
 - removal of all existing play equipment and surfacing
 - supply and installation of new play and leisure equipment for a range of age groups and abilities with new safety surfacing
 - supply and installation of new ancillary items (seating, bins, etc)
 - improvements to entrances and desire routes to enable better accessibility for all abilities to the play area and open space.
3. The funding contribution has now been received by the Council and officers seek agreement to apply the contribution to enable the design and delivery of an appropriate improvement project.
4. Officers have been consulting with the Ward Member for Highfield, Cllr Gerald White, and Sevington and Mersham Parish Council, who support the proposal.

Project Proposal

5. The play area on Church Road Open Space is in poor condition as identified in the Condition Audit of Ashford Borough Play Areas in 2017. Most of the equipment is over 30 years old and at the end of its functional lifespan. It is proposed that the Highways England funding is used to update and upgrade the current play facilities as per the agreement with Highways England.
6. The design specification will be based on consultation with local residents, children and families and encompass play opportunities for all age groups, abilities and diversities within the local community. Inclusivity and accessibility will be addressed within the design.

7. A tender process will be undertaken to procure the appropriate services of a playground manufacturer, to design and build play and leisure improvements in the play area and adjoining open space.
8. It is expected that installation works would start before the school summer holidays this year.

Implications and Risk Assessment

9. It will be important to ensure community consultation is clear about what can be delivered within the cost envelope to ensure community expectations are realistic but also meet the needs of the local community.
10. Risks will be mitigated by the use of a fixed price tender process, use of the Council's project management software to track project delivery. Aspire maintain the area and once the works are delivered will continue to do so. Thus future and repairs and maintenance requirements will be considered as part of the design and tender process.

Equalities Impact Assessment

11. There are no issues arising under the EIA agreed by Management Team.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

12. A consultation with local residents, children and families will be concluded to inform the design specification that will go out to tender. A survey has gone out to 174 local households and children at the local primary school have filled in surveys. So far over 200 surveys have been received back and are being analysed for the results to understand the initial ideas and concerns of residents
13. Church Road Open Space sits in the parish of Sevington and Mersham. Sevington and Mersham Parish Council have been consulted about the proposed scheme and have helped officers to distribute surveys to local households.
14. As Church Road Open Space is situated in a designated Local Nature Reserve, officers have already approached Natural England on the proposed project and will continue to liaise on design and delivery considerations.

Other Options Considered

15. As the Junction 10a works were having a direct impact on the footprint of Church Road Open Space, the contribution was best used on much needed improvements directly on Church Road open space as suitable compensation for the Compulsory Purchase arrangements.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

16. It is the Council's policy to involve the relevant stakeholders, in this case Parish Councils where appropriate on the use of funding in their area due to

their knowledge of local need and resident's wishes. Early consultation with the community also ensures a consensus on the use of potential funding to support community benefit.

Next Steps in Process

17. Officers with partners will focus on the type of equipment children and young people would like to see in the newly developed play area.
18. The public consultation will be completed and the data analysed. The Play and Open Spaces Project Officer will develop a design for the play area and associated open space improvements such as drainage, landscaping and furniture to produce a tender brief from the consultation results.
19. Tender submissions will be assessed accordingly and a preferred supplier selected. The Play and Open Spaces Officer will project manage the construction of the scheme. An opening event will be held with local residents, families and children to celebrate the improvements once completed in the summer.
20. Once in the ground management and maintenance of the site will be handed over to Aspire to continue ongoing inspections and repairs.

Conclusion

21. Use of the Highways England funding to upgrade and improve the play area and open space at Church Road positively mitigates for the impact of the Junction 10a works in the local area.
22. Including residents and local children in the consultation ensures the design will meet local needs and engender local community ownership in the open space.
23. This approach is supported by Sevington and Mersham Parish Council and by the Ward Member Cllr Gerald White.

Portfolio Holder's Views

24. "This report seeks to authorise the spending of Highways England funding agreed as compensation for Junction 10A works to considerably enhance facilities at the council owned Church Road, Sevington Play Area and Open Spaces and I fully support the recommendations".

Cllr Mike Bennett

Contact and Email

25. Amanda Scott, Play and Open Spaces Project Officer,
amanda.scott@ashford.gov.uk

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ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019

Report Title: Ashford Town Centre Framework 2019-2025

Report Author & Job Title: Lorna Ford, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Gerry Clarkson
Portfolio Holder for: Leader of the Council

Summary:

With the rise of online shopping and changes in how people use their leisure time, high streets across the country are facing challenging times and decline. In recent years Ashford Borough Council has taken bold steps to support its town centre and is now bucking some national trends with regards to footfall. However, as the scale of the challenge grows and as other centres strongly compete to differentiate and diversify their offer, Ashford needs a clear future direction. The proposed Ashford Town Centre Framework aims to do just that.

It is important that the ambitions in the framework meet the needs and aspirations of local communities and businesses. To ensure this is the case, extensive consultation was undertaken on the future of the town centre from July to October 2018. This report sets out the findings from this consultation which has helped to shape the framework's ambitions and actions.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: The most impact will be on those wards within the town centre, however given that Ashford town centre serves the whole borough and is a key economic driver all wards are affected.

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. approve the draft Ashford Town Centre Framework 2019-2025 as set out in appendix A;**
- II. approve the use of S106 funds and NNDR retention pool to fund the proposed indicative programme of town centre projects and events as set out in appendix B;**
- III. note the findings from the town centre consultation as set out in appendix C; and**
- IV. delegate authority to the Leader and the Chief Executive, to agree changes to the programme and move resource between projects as and when required.**

Policy Overview:

The Ashford Town Centre Framework sets out a vision and objectives to ensure the success and vibrancy of the town centre for future generations. Responding to the findings from the town centre consultation and the significant challenges facing the High Street, this framework document also sets out an ambitious and exciting programme of projects and activities to be implemented over the next five years.

The framework supports the following objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2020:

Priority 1 Enterprising Ashford – A vibrant town centre and a supporting business centre.

Priority 2 Living Ashford – Create a supply of town centre housing to suit emerging new markets.

Priority 3 Active and Creative Ashford – Grow our cultural offer to be a successful and alternative destination.

Priority 4 Attractive Ashford – Strengthen tourism and local heritage offer.

The Town Centre Framework also supports the following policies from the Borough's Local Plan 2019-2030:

Policy SP4 – Delivery of Retail and Leisure Needs.

Policy SP5 - Ashford Town Centre.

Financial Implications:

In recognition of the need to increase investment in town centre activities, an increase in the base budget of £130k has been built into the 2019/20 budget. In addition there is a £70k a year contribution from the s106 agreement for the outlet centre extension. Therefore a total of £200k has been identified as an on-going, annual commitment to animating the town centre.

In addition, the council has benefited from the National Non-Domestic Rate pool proceeds to the tune of £600k with another £300k expected. From the outset the benefits arising from this pool were identified to be used to help strengthen the town centre economy. This funding provides a huge opportunity to plan for the next three years to deliver a comprehensive programme of projects - both capital and revenue. Also available are various sums from s106 agreements – some which must be spent for specific purposes (e.g. open space improvements) and others which are more general in nature (e.g. promoting the town centre). Over the next three years, taking all these sources of funding into account, there is a significant sum available of almost £1.7m to commit to town centre activities and tackle the scale of the challenge the town centre faces. The proposed list of projects and activities to be funded through this pot are set out in appendix B. It should be noted that full project plans have not yet been prepared for all projects and

therefore resources may need to be moved between activities when full project costs are fully understood.

Legal Implications	None arising specifically from this report.
Equalities Impact Assessment	See attached (appendix D)
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Town Centre Consultation: Report of Findings The Resident's Survey 2018
Appendices	Appendix A – Draft Town Centre Framework 2019-2025 Appendix B – Indicative programme of town centre projects requiring funding Appendix C – Findings from the Town Centre Consultation Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment
Contact:	Lorna.ford@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330314

Report Title: Ashford Town Centre Framework 2019-2025

Introduction and Background

1. The Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board was set up in 2018 to plan, drive and coordinate future schemes and activities in the town centre. It has been supported by four work-streams responsible for engagement, master-planning, project delivery and the impatience team. The draft Town Centre Framework document, attached at appendix A, brings together the efforts of the four town centre work-streams. Whilst the framework includes projects and activities which already have the agreement of the council, it also proposes new initiatives that aim to animate the town centre and improve the cultural offer of the town. These projects are set out with indicative costings in appendix B to this report.
2. In working towards the renaissance of the town centre, all four work-streams have been guided by the following ten principles which are also embedded in the framework document itself:
 - I. Deliver real, qualitative change at pace – don't wait for the 'perfect' masterplan
 - II. Celebrate and consolidate our 'old town', and excite people in the contrasting character of the emerging new Ashford alongside it
 - III. Recognise the key Council role of 'curating' our town centre – 101+ small initiatives will add up to help drive change and build confidence
 - IV. Be brave and determined to be different – be afraid of being the same!
 - V. Recognise that, first and foremost, people want quality experiences
 - VI. Work hard to understand what different generations and different groups of people want – e.g. millennials; grey pounders; young families
 - VII. Temporary, 'meanwhile uses' and activity in public spaces are key points on the roadmap to more permanent solutions
 - VIII. Capture the imagination of the '5%' of creative innovators in the population and use and grow local talent
 - IX. We can achieve more by working with partners and critical friends to harness their skills and capacity
 - X. First impressions matter – get the welcome to our town centre right

Challenges to Ashford Town Centre and the Future High Streets Fund

3. Section 1.3 of the Ashford Town Centre Framework (attached as Appendix A) sets out the challenges that the town centre is currently facing. These are captured under three main themes that reflect the issues raised through the consultation exercises undertaken over the last 12 months. These three themes are:
 1. Ashford Town Centre is predominantly a functional and convenient centre, it lacks a sense of community, distinctive identity and has a weaker retail and cultural offer.
 2. Ashford Town Centre is going through significant change and growth, and is in transition and at a tipping point with the potential to thrive, but also with clear threats.
 3. The accessibility of Ashford Town Centre is challenging for both pedestrians and vehicles.

4. The scale of the challenge facing all high streets across the country has also been recognised by the government and during 2018 a number of initiatives were announced, these included:
 - cutting business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years, to provide upfront support for high streets;
 - consulting on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres, and trialling a register of empty shops;
 - setting up a High Streets Task Force which will support local leadership with expert advice on helping local high streets to adapt and thrive;
 - strengthening community assets, including the restoration of the historic buildings that make our high streets special, supporting community groups to use empty properties and providing business rates relief for public toilets and local newspapers; and
 - supporting the transformation of the high street, by creating a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.

Ashford Borough Council will be submitting a bid to the Future High Streets Fund. This fund aims to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. Only one bid can be put forward from the Ashford Borough and the government has made it clear that it will not accept bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges. Projects will need to be co-funded by the public and private sectors on a project basis, or to deliver a local area's wider strategy for the high street.

The fund will contribute between £5-10 million (no more than £25m) to each successful place. The funding is not available for projects that only make a

difference to appearance, but rather how an area is used to achieve a lasting long-term impact. It is intended that the fund can be used for:

- Physical infrastructure;
- Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm;
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area;
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification; and
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology.

5. The deadline for expressions of interest is 22 March 2019. The Ashford Town Centre Framework will provide a useful evidence-base to support this bid.

Vision, objectives and priority outcomes for Ashford town centre

6. The vision and objectives set out in the framework have been informed by the extensive consultation that was undertaken and seek to address the future challenges Ashford town centre faces. The framework is structured around an overall vision for the town centre, supported by ten objectives and three priority outcomes to be achieved by 2025, as shown below:

<i>Vision - Ashford town centre is a place where the community meet, share experiences, shop and pursue their interests –a place where people and businesses flourish.</i>	
OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
i. An attractive and clean town centre	<i>Ashford town centre has a sense of community and is a place to be proud of.</i>
ii. A safe town centre	
iii. A welcoming place with a civic heartbeat	
iv. A desirable place to live for new and existing residents	
v. A town centre known for its quality experiences that appeal to residents and visitors alike	<i>Ashford is a destination where people choose to socialise, relax and have fun.</i>
vi. Ashford has a vibrant evening and night time economy with a wide variety of places to meet, eat and drink	
vii. A town centre with quality cultural and entertainment facilities	
viii. Ashford has a thriving town centre known for its mix of independent and high street traders	<i>Ashford town centre is thriving and accessible to all.</i>
ix. Ashford town centre is easy to navigate by all and well connected by public transport	
x. Ashford is known for being a 'smart town' , digitally connecting people to	

7. The framework also sets out the actions to be delivered under each of these objectives and measures of success (Key Performance Indicators). The plan will be annually reviewed to ensure the actions are still relevant and a monitoring/impact report will be produced which will be communicated widely to relevant partnerships and reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Outcome of Town Centre Consultation

8. The Town Centre Framework has been shaped and informed by the findings from the Town Centre Consultation, which ran from July to October 2018 (full findings are attached at appendix C to this report). The consultation was structure around four open-ended questions as follows:
 1. How do we create a buzz about Ashford and make it stand out from the crowd?
 2. How do we create a thriving, fun place to go in the daytime and at night?
 3. How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?
 4. How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

The consultation sought responses from residents, local businesses and town centre visitors. Over 1000 comments were received which varied from one word answers through to in-depth responses of several pages regarding a number of issues affecting the town centre. Respondents were able to submit their views in a number of ways including:

- an online consultation tool which encouraged comments and debate
- an online questionnaire promoted widely via social media and on the council's website
- Exhibition materials and paper questionnaires were available at the Gateway and at the council offices and questionnaires were also distributed to businesses across the town centre
- A stakeholder conference involving local businesses, community groups and other partners.

9. Frequently recurring comments related to entertainment and culture, accessibility, safety and general ideas for improvements to the town. Many respondents wanted the council to encourage a variety of entertainment opportunities that are inclusive of all, a mixture of retail so there is something for everyone, as well as making the town more accessible (particularly for those with disabilities or those who use public transport) and feel more safe, especially at night. Other comments included tackling perceptions about aspects of the town, such as vacant retail units, and making the town look more attractive. A summary of the main themes and comments is as follows:

Expanding the offer of the town	Addressing areas for improvement	Creating a community and town to be proud of
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of entertainment, leisure and retail • More events and activities to take part in • The offer of the town should be unique • Supporting local and independent businesses as well as enticing bigger brands • Introduce facilities and events targeted at groups within the borough • Promote events going on in the town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing actual crime as well as perceptions of crime • Ensuring disabled access is improved and all new buildings are accessible • Improve public transport to reduce traffic making the town easier to visit • Make parking easier free or cheaper particular for people who just want to pop into town • Ensure safety for pedestrians • Make navigation easier with better signage and lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities to meet and socialise with others • Protect green spaces and care for the environment • Ensure housing is well-placed and affordable • Be inclusive of everyone • Ensure the town centre is the heart of the community • Keep going with current projects • Keep the town clean and looking smart • Celebrate Ashford's heritage.

Implications and Risk Assessment

10. There is a risk around the capacity of the officers to deliver such an ambitious action plan. This has been recognised by the Town Centre Place-making Board and an additional £270,000 is being recommended as part of the town centre fund for additional project management resource over the next three years.
11. There is also the risk that residents' expectations have been raised in relation to all ideas being taken forward. There are some ideas not being recommended at this time, such as an ice rink in the town, or that the market cannot currently support, such as Primark coming to the town. The reasons why these ideas have not been taken forward will need to be communicated alongside the results from the consultation.
12. Another recession or economic downturn could also reduce the council's ability to deliver this ambitious programme. The framework will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is still deliverable and resources are being focussed on the right activities.

Equalities Impact Assessment

13. The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at appendix D. Overall, the assessment shows that the implementation of the action plan will have positive impacts on groups with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010.

14. The action plan includes the implementation of inclusive community led events, and a programme of commissioned events and activities. The overall aim of these events is to strengthen community cohesion and offer a diverse programme to appeal to all residents living in the borough.
15. The framework also addresses current accessibility issues in the town such as uneven surfaces and cobbles in the lower High Street, which are reported to be difficult to traverse for older people, those with certain disabilities and parents with children in buggies and pushchairs. The resurfacing of these areas would result in a positive impact for these groups.
16. It should be noted that the Equalities Impact Assessment considers the equalities issues for the strategy as a whole. Individual projects within the strategy will be subject to future individual assessments.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

17. The findings from the town centre consultation undertaken between July and October 2018 are set out in the body of the report (see paragraphs 8 and 9).

Other Options Considered

18. Members could chose not to adopt the Town Centre Framework. This could lead to a disjointed approach and undertaking projects that do not seek to address the significant challenges facing the town centre.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

19. The framework provides a coordinated approach to delivering the desired outcomes for the town centre. It also sets out performance framework for the town centre so that the impact of the interventions made in the town centre can be measured. In addition it provides a framework to commission new activity and projects to ensure future resources are being deployed to best effect.

Next Steps in Process

20. As part of the review of partnerships and the governance of the town centre, further conversations will take place with partners and other stakeholders to understand how they can contribute to the ambitions set out in the plan.
21. The Framework will be graphically designed and communicated to residents via the council's website, social media and *Ashford for You* magazine.

Conclusion

22. There are significant challenges facing Ashford's town centre. The Town Centre Framework brings together the planned and new activity to meet the aspirations of the local community and businesses and ensure our town centre is fit for the future.

Portfolio Holder's Views

23. "The Town Centre Framework aims to provide a clear future direction for the town centre bringing together an inspiring and ambitious programme of events, activities and projects to enliven and enrich Ashford's offer. In developing this plan we have listened carefully to what residents, businesses and partners have said about Ashford town centre. We must continue to work together to tackle the challenges facing our town centre to ensure our town is a place where people and businesses flourish. I therefore recommend that Cabinet approve the Ashford Town Centre Framework."

Cllr Gerry Clarkson, Leader of the Council

Contact and Email

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Ashford Town Centre Framework - 2019 to 2025



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Welcome to Ashford's Town Centre Framework.

High streets up and down the country are facing challenging times with the increase in online shopping and the need to offer something beyond just a shopping experience. In recent years Ashford Borough Council has taken bold steps to support its town centre including purchasing Park Mall Shopping Centre and overseeing a programme of investment totalling £520m which is changing the fortunes of the town.

This is having a positive knock on effect, with Ashford College bringing in students into the town, the Commercial Quarter bringing in office workers plus we have the Elwick Place cinema and new Brewery adding to our leisure and night time offer.

Ashford is bucking some national trends with regards to footfall, however, as the scale of the challenge grows and as other centres compete to differentiate and diversify their offer, we need a clear future direction that builds on the sound foundations being laid. The Ashford Town Centre Framework aims to do just that.

2018 saw an extraordinary programme of events in the town, including the Snowdogs art trail, the Fields of Battle Lands of Peace Exhibition and Splashes of Summer family fun activities. These events enlivened and enriched the town's offer and most importantly brought the community together.

In developing this plan we have listened carefully to what residents, businesses and partners have said about the existing offer of the town centre and what they want to see in the future. Our vision is that:

*Ashford Town Centre is a place where the community meet, share experiences, shop and pursue their interests – a place **people and businesses flourish**. By 2025 our three priority outcomes are that Ashford Town Centre...*

*... has a **sense of community** and is a place to be **proud of**
... is a **destination** where people **choose** to socialise, relax and have fun
... is **thriving** and accessible to **all**.*

Ashford has come a long way but we must not rest on our laurels. We must continue to work together with local businesses, partners and the community to realise this vision and to meet the future needs of our borough.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Future of the High Street

Ashford is one of many high streets throughout the country experiencing considerable change and significant challenges. Consumer spending habits, levels of disposal income and changes in how people use their leisure time have all had an impact but undoubtedly the biggest impact has been the unprecedented growth of online shopping. In 2000 online retailing accounted for less than 1% of total retail sales, by October 2018 almost a fifth of all retail sales took place online.¹ Technological advances, such as the fast growth in personal computer use, smartphone use and improvements to broadband have facilitated this rapid rise in online retailing. It is the speed of these changes that has meant that many town centres and high street are struggling with high vacancy rates and falling footfall. It has been particularly hard for those town centres that heavily rely on traditional retail. Whilst evidence shows that town centres with a wide choice of retail services, residential and office space are more successful at adapting to change.^{2 3}

A strong retail and leisure offer is no longer enough to secure the future prosperity of a town centre. It is also the sense of community, the experiences people have and the social interaction. As Mary Portas put it back in 2011: “The new high street won’t just be about selling goods. The mix will include shops but could also include housing, offices, sports, schools or other social, commercial and cultural enterprises and meeting places. They should become places where we go to engage with other people in our communities, where shopping is just one small part of rich mix of activities”.⁴

1.2 Building on our success

Over a number of years Ashford Borough Council has taken an innovative and proactive approach in tackling the challenges the town centre faces to support the regeneration of the town. The 2015-2020 Corporate Plan set out an ambition of achieving a vibrant town supporting a business centre. To achieve this ambition, the council has actively sought inward investment in new jobs, homes, hotels and leisure attractions in the town centre and, where needed, used council resources to help trigger major new investments. A key priority has been creating new daytime and evening activity in the town centre and kick-starting major new office development. The council’s purchase of a town centre shopping centre has supported the development of independent retailers in the town to make it a lively and attractive shopping destination.

¹ Office for National Statistics (2018), Retail Sales, Great Britain: October 2018

² Public Health England (2018), Healthy High Streets

³ British Property Federation (2016), Town Centre Investment Zones: Getting investment back into the high street

⁴ The Portas independent review (2011): the future of our high streets

Ashford's innovative and proactive approach was recognised by the High Street Minister Jake Berry MP following a visit to Ashford in May 2018.

A summary of some of the key interventions and projects are as follows:

Support for Revelation at St. Mary's

Revelation is Ashford's music and arts venue, delivered by the St Mary's Arts Trust and supported by Ashford Borough Council. Operating since 2011, Revelation Ashford aims to be a beacon for the arts, to which Ashford's growing community can come together and experience high quality performance and exhibitions.

Loveashford

Established in 2014 Loveashford.com has been Ashford's digital high street and was the first website of its kind. Loveashford supports local businesses and business owners by promoting all of the best news, stories, offers and events in Ashford's town centre.

Purchase of Park Mall Shopping Centre

Back in 2015 Ashford Borough Council purchased the then ailing Park Mall shopping centre, where one third of shops lay empty. Today nearly all units are let and it is home to innovative, high-quality independent traders with footfall growing by seven per cent year on year.

Support for Made in Ashford

Operating from Park Mall shopping centre, Made in Ashford is a collaboration of local designer/makers and crafts people helping to support and nurture small creative businesses by giving them an affordable platform on the high street to showcase and sell their products.

Ashford College

Ashford college is a new multi-million pound state-of-the-art building located in Ashford town centre. It opened its doors to the first intake of students of over 1000 students and 100 members of staff in September 2017.

St. Mary's Churchyard refreshed

In April 2018, Ashford Borough Council took proactive action to refresh and refurbish St Mary's Churchyard in the town centre and ensure it is a clean, more attractive and a pleasant place for residents to visit.

Splashes of Summer

Under the Loveashford banner, Splashes of Summer was a series of fun family events aimed at animating the town centre throughout July and August 2018. These free events included live music, street entertainment, and games such as over-sized

chess and table tennis. The programme of events proved to be very successful with over 50% of those attending events visiting specifically for this purpose and 67% of these attendees then visiting businesses in the town.

Commercial Quarter

Phase 1 of the Commercial Quarter, Connect38, opened in 2018 providing an 80,000 sq ft office block on Station Road in Ashford. The council's long term aspiration is that the Commercial Quarter will create several thousand jobs, 590,000 sq ft of office space and 150 homes within the town centre.

Elwick Place

In December 2018 Elwick Place officially opened. Funded by Ashford Borough Council, Elwick Place is Ashford's flagship town centre leisure development. The development includes a six-screen Picturehouse cinema, a 58 bedroom Travelodge Hotel and restaurant complex.

Snowdogs arts trail

Snowdogs Discover Ashford was a Wild in Art event delivered by the council and Pilgrims Hospices. The public art trail of 35 Snowdog sculptures, designed by local and regional artists, was placed around the town during September and November 2018. There was a 15% increase in town centre footfall during these months.

Ashford's One You Shop

Working in partnership with Kent Community Health Care Trust, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council, the One You shop provides free health care services, support and advice located in the heart of the town. In 2018 the One You Shop was shortlisted for the Royal Society for Public Health's 'Health on the High Street' Award.

Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace 14-18 Exhibition June 2018

Opening on Monday 30th April 2018 at London's Guildhall, the photographic exhibition was a tribute to all those who took part in, or were affected by, the First World War. Sponsored by Ashford Borough Council, the renowned open air photographic exhibition was displayed in the town's memorial gardens as part of its national tour in June 2018. The exhibition was very well received by local residents.

Curious Brewery

The Curious Brewery, from Chapel Down is set to open in spring 2019. This 1.6 acre craft brewery experience will enable it to grow its domestic and international distribution and contribute to the tourism offer of the town and borough. The brewery will be open to the public for guided tours and will feature a shop, restaurant and bar.

Coachworks

Due to open in summer 2019, the council is working with Carl Turner Architects to develop a meanwhile, mixed-use campus at Dover Place, close to the international train station. Coachworks will provide co-working space primarily aimed at start-up companies, flexible indoor/outdoor event space and a food and drink destination showcasing local producers and suppliers.

Town Centre CCTV

In May 2019 public space cameras are to be updated in Ashford. The new cameras will generate high-resolution digital images that will be relayed to the monitoring centre via the Kent Public Service Network (KPSN). The new cameras represent a major investment in the town and will help to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the town as well as providing reassurance to town centre residents and visitors.

New Homes Planned for the Town Centre

Increasingly Ashford Town Centre is a place to live which will bring new residents and vibrancy into the town centre. Over 1000 new homes are planned for the town centre including 660 new homes at Riverside Park, 216 new apartments at Victoria Point and 110 apartments in the additional blocks next to the Panorama building.

1.3 Challenges for Ashford Town Centre

1. **Ashford Town Centre is predominantly a functional and convenient centre, it lacks a sense of community, distinctive identity and has a weaker retail and cultural offer.**

A key challenge for Ashford that has come out of the residents survey and town centre consultation in 2018, is that the offer in Ashford Town Centre needs to be stronger, that Ashford Town Centre lacks an identity, with most residents citing Ashford Designer Outlet and Ashford International Station as the two key unique selling points (USPs) within the area, both of which are not on the High Street or within the traditional heart of the town centre. Ashford has not been exciting enough local residents to come and visit regularly enough, and especially the more affluent residents that can help create vibrancy. Many Ashford residents perceive Ashford town centre as an unsafe place with high crime levels and incidents of anti-social behaviour, which is creating a significant barrier to attracting people to visit.

Resident satisfaction levels are not as high for the town centre as for Ashford as a whole, with only 40% very/fairly satisfied with Ashford as a place to shop and 25% very/fairly satisfied with Ashford as a place to go out. With closures of shops like M&S, Argos, BHS and Clintons, and the opening of Deichmann, Metro Bank, Café Madeline, and Smiggle, Ashford's retail offer is changing. The Town Centre also competes with Canterbury, Maidstone, Folkestone and Tunbridge Wells, as well as with local out-of-town retail and leisure parks like the Designer Outlet, Ashford Retail Park, Warren Retail Park, John Lewis, and the big supermarkets. Ashford is considered a mid-size Convenience and Community Town Centre, the group most at threat from changes to online shopping and out of town retail. Footfall has risen in the town centre in 2018 off the back of a successful programme of events and activities, but is still not back above 2014 levels.

2. **Ashford Town Centre is going through significant change and growth, and is in transition and at a tipping point with the potential to thrive, but also with clear threats.**

Off the back of the opening of domestic high speed services from Ashford International Station in 2009 on High Speed 1, that reduced journey times to London to 38 minutes, Ashford has attracted approximately £520 m of investment into the town, including new road infrastructure, housing development, a new brewery, a new Aldi, the Connect 38 office building, a new Ashford College town centre campus, the Elwick Place leisure development, and the expansion of the Ashford Designer Outlet. These have been delivered in partnership with private sector developers, but also through the drive and leadership of Ashford Borough Council. Ashford set out its Big 8 projects in 2013, and set up an Ashford Strategic Delivery Board to deliver these, with representation from key public sector organisations. In 2019, many have already completed, and the rest are under construction or progressing. This is creating a positive buzz about the town, but are only the first stages as part of a longer-term strategy to create a thriving town and town centre.

The development and growth in Ashford Town Centre is changing people's habits and creating challenges for tertiary areas such as the Lower High Street, which are becoming less attractive as they become less busy. As the town centre evolves, there is a need to change the use of town centre retail spaces and create new attractive experiences, leisure venues, community space, and living spaces. This will require the redressing of property values with some less commercially viable uses required in the future to stimulate community activity. With over 1000 homes planned or under construction in the town centre, there is the clear challenge of curating the area as a living space for its growing town centre population.

There are lower quality areas of public realm in parts of the town centre such as the Lower High Street and around the Bandstand, which will take significant investment to realise their full potential in the future. With all of the current development and future opportunities, Ashford still has an immature investment market with more challenging development viability, requiring the need for public intervention to ensure the right commercial and community space is created to complete the transformation of the heart of Ashford Town Centre.

3. The accessibility of Ashford Town Centre is challenging for both pedestrians and vehicles.

With the second highest number of comments from the Ashford Town Centre Consultation in 2018, accessibility is a key issue for visitors to the town centre. Limited public transport from the rural areas surrounding Ashford, as well as poor bus interchanges, require improvements to public transport. Ashford also suffers from poor convoluted access to central car parks within the former ring road area. These all make Ashford a less attractive offer to visit, and there are opportunities through improved signage and use of technologies to improve this visitor experience.

With the considerable new construction and development over the last few years on brownfield town centre sites, this is changing the structure of the town and how people move around it. A key challenge is the pedestrian route from Ashford International train station through to the town centre, to attract some of the 3.9 visitors to dwell and spend more time in the town centre.

In Conclusion, Ashford is at a tipping point where the momentum built up over the last few years could create a vibrant town centre with some key further investments that create entertainment and leisure destinations that diversify the offer and reliance on retail. The challenge is establishing the capital investment to take forward the next phases of development in Ashford town centre and to regenerate existing spaces to complement the existing events and promotional activity.

2. Feedback from research and consultation

2.1 2018 Residents' Survey

Research from the 2018 Residents' Survey⁵ provides useful insight into how well regarded the town centre is by local people, what draws different groups to the town centre and how frequently they visit. Overall the survey found middling levels of satisfaction with the town as a place to shop and lower levels of satisfaction with Ashford town centre as a place to visit and as a place to go out. Those living in Ashford town itself generally held the town's offer in higher regard than those living in rural areas.

Residents were asked how satisfied they are with Ashford town centre as a **place to shop** - whilst 40% said that they are very/fairly satisfied, 41% said that they are dissatisfied to some extent. There were lower levels of satisfaction with Ashford town centre as a **place to visit** with 25% being very/fairly satisfied but 50% of residents saying that they are dissatisfied to some extent. There were similar levels of satisfaction with the town as a **place to go out** with 22% of residents being very/fairly satisfied compared with 56% of residents being dissatisfied to some extent.

The residents' survey also asked how frequently residents visit key locations in the town centre. The survey found that over half of residents visit Park Mall shopping centre at least once a month or more often. Those living in Ashford tend to use it the most frequently (a third of Ashford town residents visit once a week or more) this compares with just 8% of rural residents using the town centre as frequently. This is also true of visits to County Square shopping centre where 41% of residents living in Ashford town visit once a week or more, compared with only 9% from rural areas.

When it comes to eating out during the daytime, 11% of Ashford town centre residents eat out at least once a week compared with only 2% of residents from rural areas. The survey also found that only 8% of Ashford town residents and 1% of rural residents eat and socialise in the evenings in the town centre.

2.2 Town Centre Consultation 2018

The Town Centre Framework has been shaped and informed by the findings from the Town Centre Consultation, which ran from July to October 2018. The consultation was structured around four open-ended questions as follows:

How do we create a buzz about Ashford and make it stand out from the crowd?

How do we create a thriving, fun place to go in the daytime and at night?

⁵ Ashford Borough Council's 2018 Residents' Survey - <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/6916/residents-survey-2018.pdf>

How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?

How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

The consultation sought responses from residents, local businesses and town centre visitors. Over 1500 comments were received which varied from one word answers through to in-depth responses of several pages regarding a number of issues affecting the town centre. Respondents were able to submit their views in a number of ways including:

- an online consultation tool which encouraged comments and debate
- an online questionnaire promoted widely via social media and on the council's website
- Exhibition materials and paper questionnaires were available at the Gateway and at the council offices and questionnaires were also distributed to businesses across the town centre
- A stakeholder conference involving local businesses, community groups and other partners.

Frequently recurring comments related to entertainment and culture, accessibility, safety, and general ideas for improvements to the town. Many respondents wanted the council to encourage a variety of entertainment opportunities that are inclusive of all, a mixture of retail so there is something for everyone, as well as making the town more accessible (particularly for those with disabilities or those who use public transport) and feel more safe, especially at night. Other comments included tackling perceptions about aspects of the town, such as vacant retail units, and making the town look more attractive. A summary of the main themes and comments is set out below:

Expanding the offer of the town	Addressing areas for improvement	Creating a community and town to be proud of
<p>A variety of entertainment, leisure and retail</p> <p>More events and activities to take part in</p> <p>The offer of the town should be unique</p> <p>Supporting local and independent businesses as well as enticing bigger brands</p> <p>Introduce facilities and events targeted at groups within the borough</p>	<p>Addressing actual crime as well as perceptions of crime</p> <p>Ensuring disabled access is improved and all new builds are accessible</p> <p>Improve public transport to reduce traffic making the town easier to visit</p> <p>Make parking easier free or cheaper particular for people who just want to pop into town</p>	<p>Create opportunities to meet and socialise with others</p> <p>Protect green spaces and care for the environment</p> <p>Ensure housing is well-placed and affordable</p> <p>Be inclusive of everyone</p> <p>Ensure the town centre is the heart of the community</p>

<p>Introduce facilities and events targeted at groups within the borough</p> <p>Promote events going on in the town</p>	<p>Ensure safety for pedestrians</p> <p>Make navigation easier with better signage and lighting</p>	<p>Keep going with current projects</p> <p>Keep the town clean and looking smart</p> <p>Celebrate Ashford's heritage.</p>
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At a stakeholder conference held on the 2 October 2018, elected Members, residents, businesses and other stakeholders were invited to discuss the future of the Town Centre, including current proposals. A workshop facilitated by Dr Steve Millington from the Institute of Place Management, based at Manchester Metropolitan University, identified some of the key challenges according to delegates. From the analysis of the results of the workshop, it was recommended that Ashford consider:

Restructuring: To restructure governance structures and also physical structuring, requiring co-operation with stakeholders and creating strategic networks and public-private relationships

Rebranding: Focus on the application of branding, marketing communications and public relations techniques to establish a consistent place identity

Reinventing: Encourage diverse leisure/recreational activities to improve perception, and monitor changes in footfall

Repositioning: Consider repositioning itself as more than a retail destination, such as by focusing on becoming a "modern market town".

3. Vision, objectives and priority outcomes for Ashford Town Centre

The vision and objectives set out in the framework have been informed by the extensive consultation that was undertaken. The framework is structured around an overall vision for the town centre, supported by ten objectives and three priority outcomes to be achieved by 2025, as shown below:

VISION - Ashford town centre is a place where the community meet, share experiences, shop and pursue their interests – a place where people and businesses flourish	
OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY OUTCOMES
i. An attractive and clean town centre	Ashford town centre has a sense of community and is a place to be proud of.
ii. A safe town centre	
iii. A welcoming place with a civic heartbeat	
iv. A desirable place to live for new and existing residents	
v. A town centre known for its quality experiences that appeal to residents and visitors alike	Ashford is a destination where people choose to socialise, relax and have fun.
vi. Ashford has a vibrant evening and night time economy with a wide variety of places to meet, eat and drink	
vii. A town centre with quality cultural and entertainment facilities	
viii. Ashford town centre is known for its mix of independent and high street traders and a place where businesses thrive	Ashford town centre is thriving and accessible to all .
ix. Ashford town centre is easy to navigate by all and well connected by public transport	
x. Ashford is known for being a ' smart town ', digitally connecting people to information, services, experiences and offers.	

3.1 Priority outcome 1 - Ashford town centre has a sense of community and is a place to be proud of

Objective	Timescale S/M/L ⁶	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
An attractive and clean town centre.	S	Undertake environmental and safety improvements on the route between the station and outlet centre including CCTV and lighting upgrades and repairs and repainting footbridge.	Network Rail, ABC, McArthur Glen, KCC	Maintain levels of street cleanliness in the town centre.
	S, M & L	Undertake street tree planting project.	ABC, KCC	Reduction in airborne pollutant concentrations in town centre
	M	Support retailers to improve shop front design through grant scheme	ABC working with local retailers	Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
	S	Improve the appearance of the High Street through small environmental improvements including relocation of three BT telephone boxes and minor repairs to existing red paving and gullies.	ABC, BT, KCC	
A safe town centre.	S & M	Deliver the Community Safety Partnership rolling action plan to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre.	Community Safety Partnership	Reduction in the level of Anti-Social Behaviour and crime in Victoria ward.

⁶ * S = short-term within 1 year, M = medium-term 2-3 years, L= long-term 3 years+

Objective	Timescale S/M/L ⁶	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
A welcoming place with a civic heartbeat.	S	Deliver Phase 1 of the Coachworks providing new space for community events and community meeting space.	Carl Turner Architects working with ABC	<p>Increase in the % of residents saying that they feel part of the community.</p> <p>Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.</p>
	S	Introduce small grant funding to deliver a range of community events in the town centre.	ABC	<p>Value of grant funding approved and delivered</p> <p>No. of events delivered, attendance, attendance by target groups, social media reach</p>
	S	Commission 'Made in Ashford' to deliver creative community workshops and events.	ABC working with Made in Ashford	No. of workshops delivered, attendance, attendance by target low engagement groups (to be defined), social media reach

Objective	Timescale S/M/L ⁶	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
A desirable place to live for new and existing residents	S, M & L	Delivery of new quality homes in the town centre by 2025	Various development partners and ABC	<p>Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that their local area is a good place to live.</p> <p>Breakdown of type and tenure of new homes in the town centre.</p> <p>Number of new homes delivered in the town centre.</p>
	S	Review existing partnership arrangements in the town centre to increase the involvement of the local community and communities of interest.	ABC working with local community groups.	<p>Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.</p> <p>Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they can influence local decision making</p>

3.2 Priority Outcome 2 - Ashford is a **destination** where people **choose** to socialise, relax and have fun.

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
<i>A town centre known for its quality experiences that appeal to residents and visitors alike</i>	S	Commission a programme of town centre events to animate the town centre throughout the year. Determine potential new arrangements to manage the enhanced town centre cultural offer.	ABC	Increase in town centre footfall, spend and dwell time in the daytime, evening and at night.
	S	Improve marketing and branding of town centre events programme to increase reach and impact	ABC working with Ashford Business Forum	Increase in satisfaction with the town centre as a place to go out/visit/shop
	M	Explore the feasibility, design and delivery of new play space in one or more town centre locations	ABC	
<i>Ashford has a vibrant evening and night time economy with a wide variety of places to meet, eat and drink</i>	M	Commission a quality, high profile annual event with a particular focus on driving the night time economy.	ABC	Increase in participation in cultural activities from specific groups/communities where there is low engagement (to be defined)
	L	Explore Purple Flag accreditation to support a thriving evening and night time economy	ABC working with the Community safety Partnership and Business Forum	
	S	Deliver the Phase 1 of the Coachworks to become a new destination for performance, exhibition space and food and drink events selling locally sourced and made products.	Carl Turner Architects working with ABC	Increase in visitor numbers at events
<i>A town centre with quality cultural and entertainment facilities</i>	M	Develop Ashford's 'old town' through the Mecca/ Vicarage Lane site to enhance Ashford's heritage by revealing St Mary's Church and retaining the lower high street frontage	ABC working with a development partner	Increase in usage of the town centre from the following ACORN groups:

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
	S	Market test options for the 'upstairs space' in the former Mecca building to create a new indoor performance/creative space in the town centre	ABC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comfortable communities Rising prosperity Affluent achievers Increase in visitor number as measured through the Visitor Information Centre
	M	Deliver a new outdoor performance area/square at the Mecca/Vicarage Lane site	ABC working with a development partners	
	L	Explore the potential to establish and deliver a new Arts, Entertainment, and Conference venue to include theatre and related facilities.	ABC	
	M	Determine potential new arrangements to manage the enhanced town centre cultural offer.	ABC	

3.3 Priority Outcome 3 - Ashford town centre is thriving and accessible to all.

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
<i>Ashford town centre is known for its mix of independent and high street traders and a place where businesses thrive</i>	S	Encourage and support temporary 'meanwhile uses' in key town centre locations and empty units to stimulate and widen Ashford's permanent offer.	ABC	Reduce vacancy rates of units in the town centre
	M	Review existing partnership arrangements with retail/ business stakeholders in the town centre	ABC	
	S	Deliver phase 1 of the Coachworks to create 3,000 sq ft of flexible office accommodation/meeting space for hire.	Carl Turner Architects working with ABC	Increase the number of new businesses locating in the town centre
	L	Deliver Phase 2 of the Coachworks (Corn Mill) to deliver creative studios for local artists, designers and makers.	ABC	Increase the number of cultural and creative businesses locating in the town centre
	M	Develop a business support programme for independent retailers to help them evolve their offer in a continually challenging and changing retail and entertainment environment.	ABC	Increase in business survival rates
	S-M	Continue to support 'Made in Ashford', a pop up shop selling high quality handmade local products in Park Mall.	ABC working with Made in Ashford	Vacancy rates in Park Mall

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
	S-M	Ensure Park Mall continues to provide a diverse offer of independent retailers	ABC working with Made in Ashford	
	M	Review the way forward for future market provision in the town centre.	ABC	
<i>Ashford town centre is easy to navigate by all and well connected by public transport</i>	M	Resurface pedestrian and cycling routes in the underpass to the outlet centre.	ABC, KCC, Sustrans	Increase in no. of cycling trips through town
	M	Improve road surface in the Lower High street	ABC, KCC	Increase in town centre footfall Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
	M	Deliver Mecca/vicarage Lane project to create a new pedestrian route to the town centre.	ABC	Increase in town centre footfall Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
	M	Deliver a new quality, accessible multi-storey car park at Station Road.	ABC	Increase quality and capacity of town centre parking

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
	M	Work up designs and detailed costings for the identified key cycleway and pedestrian 'missing links' to better connect the town centre and support the delivery of priority projects.	ABC, KCC, Sustrans	Increase in no. of cycling trips through town Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
	S	Review town centre signage including car parking, 'entry signs' and way finding to improve navigation to /around the town.	ABC, KCC	Increase occupancy rates and capacity of town centre parking
	M	Plan and deliver an attractive route from the station and International Quarter to the High Street through a series of great spaces.	ABC, KCC	Increase in town centre footfall Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.

Objective	Timescale S/M/L	Actions	Lead organisation(s)	Measures of success
	M	Work with partners to deliver improvements to community/ public transport provision to serve the town's urban and rural hinterland.	ABC, KCC, Stagecoach	Increase bus patronage, maintenance of service frequency and routes
<i>Ashford is known for being a 'smart town', digitally connecting people to information, services, experiences and offers.</i>	M	Building on Love Ashford, take forward the 'smart town' concept to digitally connect people to information, services, experiences and offers.	ABC	Increase reach through social media Increase in the % of town centre residents saying that they have pride in the local area.
	M	Explore extending public Wi-Fi provision in the town centre (e.g. using new lighting and street furniture) and supporting the development of 5G technology.	ABC	

4. Delivery, measuring impact and review

4.1 Our guiding principles

In working towards the renaissance of the town centre, the following principles have guided Ashford Borough Council to ensure delivery. These principles will be taken forward into the partnerships supporting the delivery of the Ashford Town Centre Framework. Together we will:

1. Deliver real, qualitative change at pace – don't wait for the 'perfect' masterplan
2. Celebrate and consolidate our 'old town', and excite people in the contrasting character of the emerging new Ashford alongside it
3. Recognise the key Council role of 'curating' our town centre – 101+ small initiatives will add up to help drive change and build confidence
4. Be brave and determined to be different – be afraid of being the same!
5. Recognise that, first and foremost, people want quality experiences
6. Work hard to understand what different generations and different groups of people want – e.g. millennials; grey pounders; young families
7. Enable temporary, 'meanwhile uses' and activity in public spaces are key points on the roadmap to more permanent solutions
8. Capture the imagination of the '5%' of creative innovators in the population and use and grow local talent
9. Achieve more by working with partners and critical friends to harness their skills and capacity
10. Get the welcome to our town centre right - first impressions matter

4.2 Working with our partners and the local community

The diagram below sets out the roles of the key partnerships and the council in the delivery, oversight and review of the framework.

	Ashford Strategic Delivery Board	Town Centre Place Making Board	Ashford Town Centre Business Forum	
Purpose	The Ashford Strategic Delivery Board is a collaborative board which works together to negotiate practical and pragmatic solutions to problems of delivery and to promote these solutions within the member organisations.	The Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board provides strategic and operational direction for the regeneration of Ashford town centre.	The Ashford Town Centre Business Forum is an advisory group dealing with operational matters impacting on the town centre.	
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC • KCC • Highways England • Arts Council • Ashford College • Homes England • Damian Green MP 	ABC Member Board Supported by four workstreams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and professional engagement • Project Delivery • Master-planning • Impatience team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre businesses • County Square shopping centre • Park Mall shopping centre • Community organisations • ABC 	
Focus	The Big 8	ASHFORD TOWN CENTRE FRAMEWORK		Economic Development
Framework role	Oversight of potential future 'Big 8' framework projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mecca/Vicarage Lane • New multi-storey car parks • Accessible Ashford • Town centre placemaking • Arts, Entertainment and Conference venue • Commercial Quarter 	Identification of town centre regeneration projects across work streams, co-ordination and prioritisation of capital works and service provision.	Review to be undertaken of how businesses and local communities are involved in the management of the town centre in the future. At the moment the forum is largely consultative.	
Town Centre Framework monitoring arrangements	Quarterly updates to Board on progress of Big 8 projects	Board meetings to update on workstream progress and oversee review of the framework. Annual report to Overview and Scrutiny	Regular liaison and consultation with forum membership	

4.3 Annual impact report

The Ashford Town Centre Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the action plan is being effectively delivered and the focus of the framework is still relevant and achievable. The review will be informed by feedback from partners and the community. An annual impact report will be produced showing progress against the delivery of the action plan and performance against the measures of success. This update will be reported to the council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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TOWN CENTRE FRAMEWORK PROJECTS										
	Lead	Total 3 year project cost	S106	Other external	Possible supporting contributions	ABC Contribution				Notes/ revenue implications
						2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Beyond	
		'000	'000			'000	'000	'000	'000	
Town Centre animation and events										
1	Small grant funding to community/ special interest groups to deliver a range of community events in the town centre	CF	30		in kind support	10	10	10	10	Continuing budget provision likely to be needed.
2	Town centre events programme through the year - outsourced to specialist providers	LF	210	210	sponsors					Contracted out with two year review. Continuing budget provision likely to be needed but hopefully with trader contributions.
3	Commission a quality, high profile event with a particular focus on driving the night time economy.	CF/ LF	280		key sponsor	30	150	100	150	Match funded by £70k per annum outlet S106 contribution. Continuing budget provision likely to be needed but may be scope to reduce ABC contribution over time.
4	Revelation St Mary - three year grant support to help develop local audiences, programme of shows and skill development	CF	90			30	30	30		
5	Ashford and The Railways Theatre - proposal explores the rich heritage of the railways in the borough and create with the community a new piece of theatre		60			36	24			
6	Additional marketing budget to promote the above and possible street banners	LF/ CF	60			20	20	20	20	Continuing budget provision likely to be needed but may be scope to reduce ABC contribution over time.
			730	210	0	126	234	160		
Interim, 'meanwhile use' proposals										
7	Encourage and support temporary 'meanwhile uses' in key town centre locations and empty units to stimulate and widen Ashford's offer.	PM	60		various - in kind	40	20			Support in areas such as Elwick Place, Park Mall and elsewhere - as centre becomes more robust hopefully a declining pressure.
8	Continue to support 'Made in Ashford' a pop up shop selling high quality, handmade goods made by local producers.	LF	60			20	20	20		Support for growing the independent network in Ashford and generating further uptake of retail space with spin-offs.
			120	0	0	60	40	20		
Environmental works - stations to outlet route										
9	Package of works including landscaping, signage, litter bins, cycle racks etc	TB/ PM	165	165	McArthur Glen					Works funded by planning agreement with McArthur Glen and carried out by them.
10	Works to underpass, including lighting improvements, surface cleaning and painting, artwork etc	TB/ PM	31		31 Network Rail					Works funded and carried out by Network Rail.
11	Upgrade to underpass including lighting & CCTV	TB/ PM	22			12	10	0	tbc	On-going maintenance obligation.
12	Repairs and repainting footbridge	TB/ PM	90		90 Unknown					Currently there are problems establishing ownership and responsibility for repair costs.
13	Other minor works including lining, treatment of area under flyover and pedestrian/ cycle counters	TB/ PM	20		5 Network Rail/ McArthur Glen	10	5			
14	Project management costs for all the above projects - out-sourced	TB/ PM	35		McArthur Glen?	15	15	5		There is no PM capacity internally to co-ordinate these works.
			363	165	126	37	30	5		
Other environmental improvement works										
15	Improve the road surface to Lower High Street	SD/ PM	350		300 KCC		50			Potential contribution to KCC total scheme costs of c £350k
16	Grant scheme to support retailers improving shop front design	TN/ LF	45				20	25		Dependant on take-up there may be a case to continue funding post 2021
17	Removal/ relocation of three BT telephone boxes & minor repairs to existing red paving and gulleys	PM	30		BT	10	20			May be problems securing BT agreement.
18	Street tree - feasibility and planting project (e.g. Station Road)	TB/ TN	40	30	KCC	5		5	tbc	Maintenance obligations will arise on Council land and negotiation needed with KCC on highway land
			465	30	300	15	90	30		
New facilities - preparatory work/ investigation										
19	Explore potential to establish and deliver a new cultural quarter to include theatre and related facilities	TN/ CF	50		KCC; Arts Council	30	20			Initial costs of project scoping; masterplanning assessment; feasibility and options testing for the future of this area.
20	Market testing options for Mecca 'space upstairs' and design testing	CF	15			15			tbc	Soft market testing by consultants BOP and initial design/ options testing - delivery costs to be identified. May be continuing revenue support costs for operation of venue.
21	Review the way forward for market provision in the town centre and produce a specific, costed proposal	LF	15			15			tbc	Costs of review only - delivery costs to be identified. Depending on option chosen may be continuing revenue support costs.
22	Explore Purple Flag accreditation to support a thriving evening and night time economy	LF	5					5	5	Funding unclear at this stage - may be additional costs once criteria for accreditation are established.
			85	0	0	60	20	5		
New facilities and capital projects - delivery										
23	Feasibility, design and delivery of new play space in one or more town centre locations	CF	150				150		tbc	A maintenance/ inspection obligation will arise with revenue cost.
			150	0	0	0	150	0		
Working with partners										
24	Deliver the Community Safety Partnership rolling action plan to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre	SD	29		Income from the crime reduction partnership and also possible member grant contributions	18	6	5	5	Year 1 would cover the deployable town centre camera and crime reduction partnership start up costs. The taxi rank improvements are scheduled for Y2 but would be undertaken having regard to other town centre development that might influence taxi rank location. The community safety app is also scheduled for y2 but no direct costs assigned as in-house development anticipated.
			29	0	0	18	6	5		
Getting around more easily										
25	Working up designs and detailed costings for the identified key cycleway and pedestrian 'missing links' and improvements to serve the town centre and delivery of priority projects	CF	195		Sustrans and KCC	35	80	80	80	Assumes continued capital investment in schemes in 2022/23
26	Review current town centre and car park signage and 'entry signs' to help users and especially visitors and implement improvements	SD/ PM	72	15		46	11			Year 1 would cover directions signs to car parks, 'Welcome to Ashford' signs at 7 key routes into the town centre, additional finger post signage and tourism sign for Coachwork. Y2 could cover the car park information boards.
27	Rural Community Transport Scheme - work with partners to deliver improvements to community transport to serve the town's rural hinterland communities.	SD	45		Parish Councils but 50% risk covered by borough council	24	7	14	14	Indicative allocations at present for 3 additional parishes in 19/20 and thereafter 2 each year for the following two years. Beyond this dependant on success and takeup. On-going options and allocation to be reviewed in light of project evaluation including feedback from communities. Note the projects aim to be self-financing and responsibility transfers to parish councils after a set period. This cost profile is based on recovering 50% of costs from the parishes and requires income to be vired to next financial year or full amount required. The Rural Community Transport Scheme is covered by a PID. Approval is required for upscaling beyond 19/20.
28	Plan and deliver an attractive route from the station and International Quarter to the High Street through a series of great spaces	TN	15		Developers	15				Indicative sum for outline design work/ design code and materials palette for developers to work to.
			327	15	0	120	98	94		
Getting connected										
29	Building on the 'Love Ashford' brand, take forward the 'smart town' concept to digitally connect people to information, experiences, services and offers in the town.	LF	60	15	Commercial partners	10	30	5		Further work is required to scope this project and hence the costs at this stage are indicative only. High Streets Funding bid to CLG to support innovative 'digital town' concept.
30	Explore extending public Wi-Fi provision in the town centre (e.g. using new lighting and street furniture) and supporting the development of 5G technology.	LF	20			20	0	0	tbc	On-going costs may arise - yet to be determined. Also part of the CLG funding bid - see above.
			80	15	0	30	30	5		
Capacity to deliver										
31	Project management capacity to deliver the programme - in-house and out-sourced.	PM	270			90	90	90		This extra project management capacity is needed to for the organisation to have a reasonable prospect of delivering this priority package of town centre work.
			270	0	0	90	90	90		
Project costs			2,619	435	426	556	788	414		
2019/20						556				
2020/21							788			
2021/22								414		
Total 3 year programme - ABC costs								1,758		

Tim Naylor (TN)
Lorna Ford (LF)
Paul Mckenner (PM)
Tracey Butler (TB)
Christina Fuller (CF)
Sheila Davison (SD)

Base budget + outlet contribution @ £200k p.a.	600
NNDR pilot proceeds	900
other (S106) funding with ABC Contribution	150
Total 3 year programme - ABC Funding	1,650

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Ashford
Borough Council

The Future of Ashford

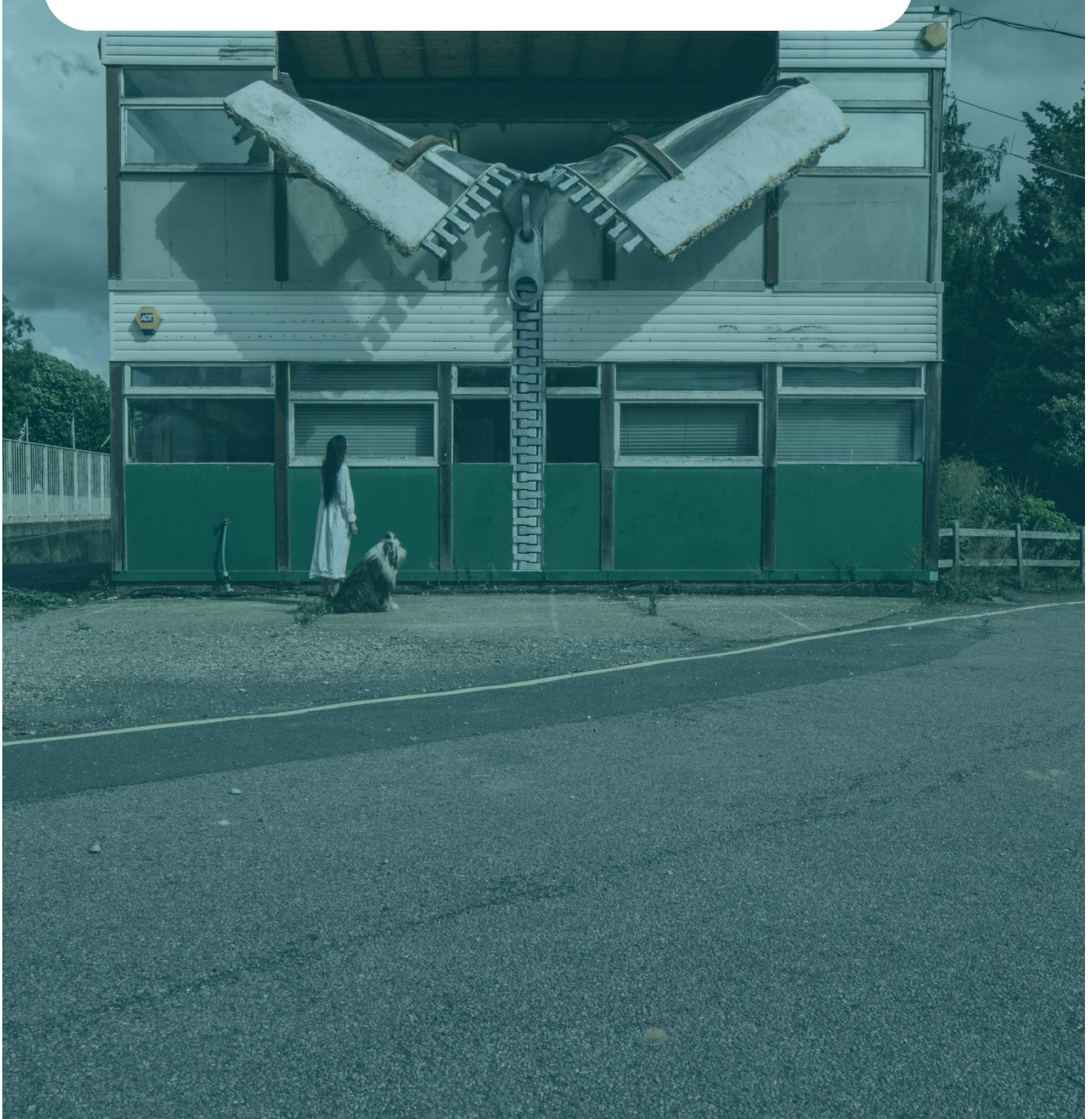
A report of findings from the Town
Centre Consultation



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Executive Summary, background and methodology



1.0 Executive Summary

From July to October 2018, Ashford Borough Council ran a consultation which sought the views of local people, businesses and visitors on how to improve Ashford town centre to ensure it is fit for the future. The consultation asked 4 open-ended questions:

- How do we create a buzz about Ashford and make it stand out from the crowd?
- How do we create a thriving, fun place to go in the daytime and at night?
- How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?
- How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

In response to these questions, respondents focused on topics such as the offer of the town (including entertainment, leisure and retail), potential areas for improvements (for example accessibility) and creating a community and town centre to be proud of.

1523 comments were left via the various response routes provided - online and paper questionnaires and an online consultation tool. Respondents were residents, visitors, workers, students and business representatives. Comments received were grouped into themes (e.g. entertainment and leisure, business, accessibility etc.) and the number of comments related to a particular theme were counted to show the prevalence of the theme.

The most predominant theme was entertainment, leisure and culture. Accessibility, creating experiences, general improvement, business, perceptions about the town and targeting certain groups were also major themes. These topics are explored in detail in this report.

Below are some of the frequently occurring ideas that were commented in response to the questions asked in the consultation:

1.1 How do we create a buzz about Ashford and make it stand out from the crowd?

- Bring in something unique, and celebrate our unique points too
- Be different from other towns in Kent
- Create reasons for residents and visitors to come to the town
- A variety of entertainment, leisure and cultural facilities to be enjoyed by all, as well as an increased number of entertainment facilities and events
- Ensure everyone can be involved in new events, including children, families and older people
- Encourage independent shops to open in the town, as well as bigger name brands
- Greater promotion what is going on in Ashford

1.2 How do we create a thriving, fun place to go in the daytime and at night?

- Ensure a variety of entertainment, particularly at night
- Increase the number of events going on, round the clock
- Remove barriers for having fun – tackle perceptions of crime and create a safer environment

1.3 How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?

- Accessibility is a barrier – it needs improvement!
- Free or cheaper parking should be enforced so that people can come for events and entertainment
- Improve public transport – bring back old routes and run services later
- Ensure there is access for disabled residents and visitors, particularly regarding provision in shops, car parks, and the cobbles in the lower high street
- Ensure safety for pedestrians – make the town more pedestrian friendly!
- Make navigation easier, make sure the signage is clearer

1.4 How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

- The council has the right idea with some of the projects – particularly the Snowdogs and Coachworks projects
- Promote community – create opportunities to meet and socialise with others
- Celebrate our heritage as a market and railway town and promote the history of Ashford
- Keep the town centre clean and the buildings looking smart
- Put the needs of locals first; but still try to bring in visitors
- Be more green – protect green spaces from too much housing development and install more planters

2.0 Background

Town centres all across the country are undergoing change, following prominent changes to population and consumption, convenience and the internet. Many town centres primarily focus on retail, but now face unique challenges that accompany this offer.

Ashford town centre is also changing rapidly, with many large-scale projects such as Elwick Place (cinema and restaurant complex), the Designer Outlet expansion and a new Commercial Quarter (brand new business spaces) all either planned in the coming years or already underway, which will provide local residents and visitors with an expanded offer.

A major consultation regarding the future of Ashford Town ran from July to October 2018. While mainly local residents responded, there were also responses from students, people who work in Ashford, visitors and local businesses. The results show the priorities, ideas and concerns of local people and visitors.

3.0 Methodology

The Town Centre consultation ran from July to October 2018. The consultation utilised a number of different consultation techniques, including face-to-face contact, and online systems. The consultation sought responses in order to answer four main questions about Ashford Town Centre:

1. How do we create a buzz about Ashford? How do we make it stand out from the crowd?
2. How do we sustain a thriving, fun destination in the daytime and night?
3. How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?
4. How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

The consultation also aimed to increase awareness of the council's current projects, and projects that are planned. Feedback on the projects and ideas for future projects was encouraged.

3.1 Questionnaire

One of the main ways of getting involved was by completing a questionnaire. The questions were open-ended, so respondents could write their views fully. The questionnaire also asked for additional information about the respondent, including whether they were answering as an individual or business, their age and postcode, and whether they were a resident/worker/visitor of Ashford Town. This allowed the analysis to be broken down into groups, e.g. what do certain age groups want, which ward responded most frequently, etc. The questionnaire was available to respondents online via web-link and a physical copy of the same questionnaire was available at face-to-face sessions, and also available in the council reception area and at the Gateway. See appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire

3.2 Online Consultation Tool

An online consultation tool was used alongside the questionnaire. This tool operated in a similar way to a forum, where respondents were presented with information and could leave comments and discuss topics with other respondents. Respondents could click through pages that have maps of the town centre (see diagram 1) and interactive buttons that detail the project that is happening or set to happen in the location they have clicked on (see appendix 2 for town centre maps in more detail).

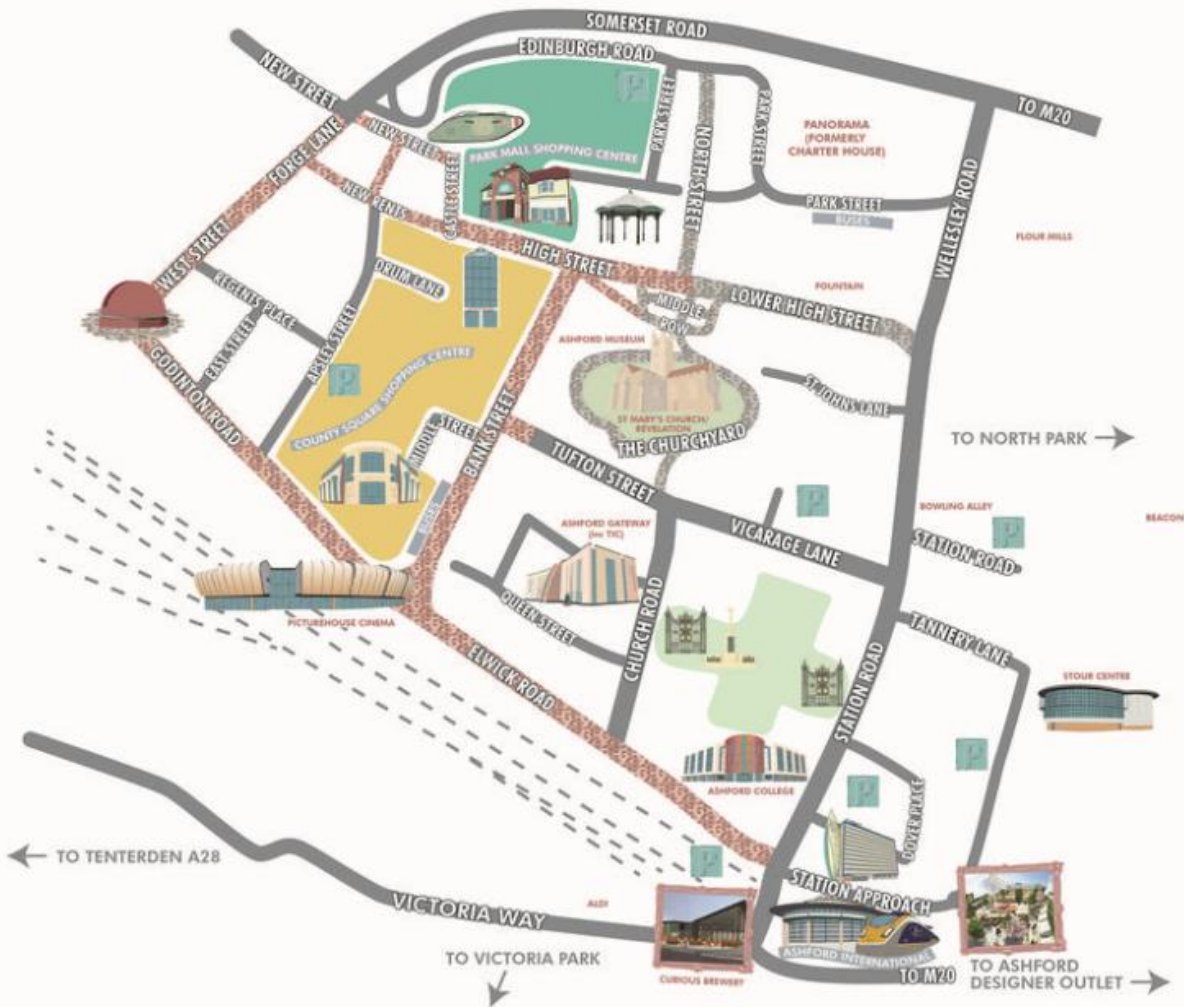


Diagram 1: The Stickyworld Map, showing notable roads and council projects. Participants could place virtual post-it-notes onto the image to comment on a particular project.

3.3 Face to Face

Face-to-face consultation was used on 3 separate occasions:

- Over a two day period on the weekend of Create Festival, during which a booth was set up on the festival grounds;
- Over a two day period in County Square shopping centre, and;
- At the Ashford College Fresher's Fayre, to gain opinions from younger age groups

3 boards were set up detailing current and future projects as well as potential ideas for projects, along with banners with the 4 key questions from the questionnaire written on them. Respondents had the opportunity to talk through the boards with staff and ask questions. Respondents were encouraged to describe their views on projects and ideas for future projects on a post-it note and stick it to the relevant boards. Alternatively, staff asked permission to transcribe their views following discussions and post on the boards on their behalf.

The notes from the face-to-face consultations were then posted by council staff to Stickyworld usernames 'Create Visitor' and 'Visitors from County Square,' in order to keep track of where the comments came from.



Image 1 (Above): A board set up during face-to-face consulting with respondents. Comments were written on post-it notes.

Image 2 (Above): Respondents at the face-to-face consultation could also complete paper questionnaires in order to leave feedback.

3.4 Respondents

Over 1500 comments were made in total but due to the mixed methodology used, it is impossible to know exactly how many people took part in the consultation. 258 individuals and 3 business representatives submitted responses to the online survey. However, the comments on the online consultation tool were submitted anonymously so multiple comments cannot be traced to a single individual. For face-to-face consultation, the number of people council representatives engaged with was not counted.

Respondents were asked for their age and postcode, though not all gave these details. Of the 258 who gave their age most were from the aged group 35-44, with 25% of respondents being from this age group. The percentage respondents for the rest of the age groups are:

- Under 18s – 8% of respondents
- Aged 18-25 – 8% of respondents
- Aged 26-34 – 19% of respondents
- Aged 35-44 – 25% of respondents
- Aged 45-54 – 17% of respondents
- Aged 55-64 – 11% of respondents
- Aged 65+ - 9% of respondents
- No age given – 4% of respondents

Age did not significantly affect the subjects discussed by respondents, however, older respondents are more concerned about accessibility than about entertainment and leisure, which was valued by younger age groups.

There was a far greater proportion of respondents from wards closer to the town than rural wards. Of respondents who gave their postcode, 80 were from the Ashford Hinterlands, 57 from Central Ashford areas and 42 from Rural Ashford areas.

4.0 Analysis

The comments were analysed using a combination of thematic analysis and content analysis. Comments were given an initial read-through to establish the 16 over-arching themes (see table 1 in section 5.0). Once the themes of each comment were established they were given a second read through to establish the content. For example, if a comment that fell under the theme “Entertainment and Leisure” mentions a “Theatre”, theatre is counted as the content of that comment. The number of mentions of each content topic were counted to assess their frequency. A large number of comments on a particular topic was considered to indicate importance of the topic to respondents.

Key Themes



5.0 Results

5.1 Key Themes

Theme	Total no. of mentions
Entertainment, Leisure and Culture	912
Accessibility	472
Perceptions about Ashford town	336
General Improvements	309
Business and Retail	276
Target Groups	264
Experiences	178
Comparisons to Neighbours	155
Heritage	134
Unique Selling Point	94
Housing	89
Satisfaction	86
Community and Socialising	84
Environmental Issues	82
Communication with the Council	56

Table 1: The main themes of resident responses to the consultation.

The most frequently occurring theme in the consultation was entertainment, leisure and culture, with 912 of all comments (25%) mentioning an activity or facility which falls into this category. The least frequently occurring theme was communication with the council, mentioned in 56 comments (2% of the total comments). Full analysis tables with each theme explored can be found in Appendix 3.

What the town has to offer



5.2 What the town has to offer



One of the most frequently occurring themes in the consultation was regarding entertainment, leisure and the cultural offer of Ashford town. Further, respondents discussed the retail offer of the town, which contributes to the town centre's offer. Such facilities are suggested as they could potentially increase footfall of not only local people but also visitors from further afield.

Throughout the consultation, respondents emphasised the offer of the town should not only be different, it should have variety. Some respondents stated a greater range of things to do, including: shopping, leisure, entertainment and cultural activities would improve the offer of the town (30 comments). Respondents perceived the offer to be solely focused on retail and pubs (11 comments). Further, quality of activities and facilities were also important to respondents (20 comments). Respondents stated that any new facilities should be high quality, even if it means that they are more "expensive" for the council to implement. However, quantity of activities was also valued by respondents (19 comments), as some feel there is currently not enough to do during the day and particularly at night.

5.2.1 Retail

Respondents discussed the current retail offer of the town and how well it suits their shopping needs. 48 comments left by respondents indicate a dissatisfaction with the current shopping offer; many of the comments stated the offer is "cheap" or that there are too many shops offering the same thing; for example; hairdressers and barbers, cafés, vaping/e-cigarette shops and pound shops. Various suggestions were made to improve the retail offer, most frequently mentioned (46 comments) was the introduction of independent shops, however 23 comments indicated a desire for more "big-name" brands such as Zara and Dorothy Perkins, but particularly Primark (29 comments). Suggestions of brands were often accompanied by comments indicating that respondents don't want to have to travel to competitor towns (for example, Whitefriars in Canterbury, and Fremlins Walk in Maidstone) in order to access these brands. In contrast,

independent shops were desired for their unique offer Respondents suggested that a different offer to some of the aforementioned locations is desirable for a unique town identity, as well as to support local businesses and to draw in visitors.

However, some respondents stated that the retail offer of the town was not the only aspect that requires improvement, but also the shops themselves. 23 comments suggested there are a number of vacant shops on the high street. The perceived number of vacancies is thought to be due to “expensive” rents, which in turn leads to shops closing (23 comments), and some respondents believe the rates should be lowered to prevent this. A few respondents also stated that more needs to be done to make these empty units look ‘attractive’ (10 comments). Suggestions were been made as to what can be put in the units, including a children’s play centre and indoor markets.

For the full analysis table on Business and Retail, please go to Appendix 3.

5.2.2 Entertainment and Leisure

Aside from suggestions about improving the retail offer of the town; 912 comments within the consultation mentioned improving the entertainment, leisure and retail offer of the town, in order to diversify the experiences had by visitors.

Some respondents made general comments about wanting more entertainment in the town (44 comments). These respondents were keen to suggest why more entertainment would improve the appeal of the town centre. This includes bringing in tourists and visitors who will spend money in Ashford, as well as having a positive impact on residents as it would provide reasons to come to the town centre, instead of travelling to other towns for entertainment.

Of all the entertainment facilities mentioned, a theatre was the most frequent, commented a total of 159 times. This was by far the most popular suggestion across all consultation platforms, as respondents feel it would vastly improve the entertainment offer in the town, particularly at night. Alternative live entertainment options were also explored by those involved in the consultation. Live music and performances, such as comedy performances, were a favourable option (66 comments), for similar reasons that respondents gave for introducing a theatre to the entertainment offer of Ashford. Street performances and entertainers were also favoured (17 comments). Respondents often suggested these performances occur at the bandstand, as it is a central outdoor performance space.

Ideas for use of the Mecca Bingo hall:	No. of mentions
Theatre	28
Flexible space	5
For retail	1
Art centre	3
For heritage	1
"Entertainment Venue"	6
Indoor market	1
Homeless Shelter	2
Open to have a look around	1
Ice rink	1
Total	49

Table 1: The table shows the various suggestions for the currently vacant Mecca Bingo Hall/Odeon Cinema site. Some respondents gave several ideas for use of the Mecca site.

Many respondents explain that they believe the Mecca Bingo/Former Odeon site is suitable for a theatre and was one of the most common suggestions for the use of the building. An alternative site that respondents identified as being potentially suitable is the Flour Mills site. 41 respondents suggested that the bingo hall should be kept (in contrast to 2 comments stating it should be demolished) and there were a number of ideas of what it could be used for as set out below. It should be noted that some people gave more than one idea.

As well as general comments about bringing more entertainment to be enjoyed by residents and tourists, respondents were keen to have most events and activities occur in and around the town centre (58 comments). “Events and activities” often included festivals, fairs and carnivals. Some respondents also wanted to see more community events, either run by the community or for them, to create socialising opportunities.

Respondents suggested that the council should introduce and support more festivals and fairs (22 comments). Food and drinks festivals were the most common suggestion, such as a gin/prosecco festival and cultural food fair. A railway festival was also mentioned in order to celebrate some of Ashford’s heritage, along with film, comedy and gaming festivals, and craft fairs.

Most of the “entertainment” comments referred to daytime entertainment, but there were 11 comments regarding more entertainment at night. Some respondents feel there is a limited night-time offer (19 comments), or say they avoid the town centre at night due to perceptions that safe to go into town at night, and that more police and security enforcement is required during this time (6 comments). A few respondents also noted the closure of past night clubs has resulted in the loss of some socialising opportunities for adults.

There were 71 comments relating to restaurants in the town centre. Respondents mentioned named brands such as Nandos and Prezzo, but were also favourable of smaller businesses and a few were open to the idea of ‘pop-up’ places to eat (9 comments).

As well as more restaurants to improve the nightlife, there was a large demand for more:

- Bars (52 comments);
- Clubs (17 comments);
- Pubs (13 comments)

Whilst there were 21 comments supporting more cafés in the town centre, there were many comments indicating the already extensive café offer in the town. As a result, some respondents were opposed to more cafes opening in town.

One of the most commonly requested facility was an ice rink – mentioned a total of 31 times. There was a strong view that an ice rink would appeal to families and young children more so than any other specific groups. Respondents also stated that an ice rink would serve as a destination attraction.

There were a number of comments about improved facilities for young children, such as: A fairly common idea was to have softplays or more play areas in the town, with 19 comments relating to these facilities. Comments regarding bringing softplays to the town, or investing in more parks were almost always accompanied by comments identifying children and families as the target users of these facilities. Some other facilities suggested for children were:

- Softplays (19 comments) – this was the most popular suggestion for children’s facilities
- Splashparks (13 comments) – this was commented mainly during July and August;
- A waterpark (6 comments) – respondents regard this as a potentially unique facility to Ashford

- An outdoor pool (1 comments)

Facilities and Activities Suggested	No. of mentions	Quotes from respondents:
Theatre	159	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Add a theatre and give Ashford the much needed culture and creative space that many people have been wanting for over 20 years.” Resident, aged 30, from Aylesford Green • “Theatre/conference hall is a must - there is nowhere in central Ashford to hear visiting speakers in public...Do not get stuck on "Marlowe" size theatres and associated costs, but think about "Gulbenkian" sized facilities which are more appropriate/flexible.” Resident, aged 61, from Kennington
Restaurants	71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Make sure that entertainment and food outlets are of high standard well maintained and variety, look at start-ups such as pop up restaurants that provide value for money and can be accessed by everyone. Don't just add the boring not good value for money national food chains.” Resident, aged 59 • “Get some decent restaurants in the high street that offer a variety of eating cultures ... get micro-breweries to open in the empty units” Resident, aged 37, from Park Farm North
Live music and performances	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “At night a place that stages live music especially as the Create festival is always well received” Resident, aged 39, from Washford • “By providing a range of entertainment choices...music and the arts are important too” Resident, aged 46
Events/activities	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduce new, inclusive events such as LGBT events/pride, a ‘Notting hill’ Style carnival, country/folk festival. Winter events could include indoor crafts/sewing, poetry& creative writing etc. - a focus should be on creativity and fun.” Resident, aged 32, Washford
Bars	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ashford needs more bars and restaurants to make people want to stay for a night out instead of travelling to other towns.” Resident, aged 33
Entertainment	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “By providing a range of entertainment choices” Resident, aged 46
Art (galleries, museums, exhibitions, investment)	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There could be day and evening - art /poetry/theatre classes in the building - children's holiday groups, disabled art groups. The old bingo hall could be made into artist studios to rent (affordable) and a gallery.” Resident, aged 60, from Wye • “Create a platform for young and upcoming artists. Art and culture are extremely important in creating experiences.” Resident, aged 40, from Beaver
Ice Rink	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...an ice skating rink would be brilliant the closest one to Ashford is Gillingham so think how many people from the

		surrounding areas would come to visit the rink.” – Resident, aged 30
Activities/spaces for young people	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Re-launch the library with new activities for young people. Ask young people what they want to see rather than guess!” Resident, aged 38
Community hub/flexible space	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A multi-use theatre would be amazing, it doesn't have to be fixed as just a theatre, but it could be a multi-purpose entertainment or indoor market venue. If a small town like Cheriton can do it, why not Ashford?” Resident, aged 44, from Stour “Having a flexible space for music events, theatre, comedians, boxing events, darts events, ballroom dancing” Works in Ashford

Table 2: This table shows the top 10 most requested entertainment, leisure and cultural facilities suggested by respondents. The full table can be found in appendix 3.

Despite more comments relating to wanting more entertainment and leisure facilities and retail, some respondents were pleased with the progress that's currently being made. 38 respondents report they are satisfied with current projects such as Elwick Place and Curious Brewery and particularly the Snowdog art trail. Some respondents encourage the council to continue with its current workstreams due to satisfaction with the current progress (22 comments).

Suggestions of entertainment and leisure were often accompanied by stating that specific groups in the borough should be targeted. Some respondents feel as though there is not enough provision for their group, or that their group is not included in events. The main groups suggested were children (44 comments) and families (34 comments). Respondents who suggested including more facilities for children were often of age groups that could have young children. A few respondents also believe that school-age respondents should be included more in the council's development of projects and events (10 comments).

Respondents indicated they want more provision for:

- “Young people” (22 comments);
- Teenagers (14 comments);
- Adults (10 comments);
- Everyone (10 comments);
- Older people (5 comments)

5.2.3 Creating a Unique Offer

Respondents mainly drew comparisons to the offer available in other towns, usually as they want to see similar facilities become available in Ashford. It is perhaps unsurprising that Ashford is most commonly compared against one of its closest neighbours, Canterbury (43 comments). Other nearby locations, such as Maidstone (23 comments), Folkestone (21 comments) are also compared. The respondents who mentioned these locations perceived them to have a more varied leisure, entertainment and retail offer than Ashford.

There was a prominent theme that additional effort is required to attract visitors; they need a reason to come to Ashford as opposed to travelling elsewhere (24 comments). As a result, respondents discussed introducing a different entertainment and leisure offer to other towns, and

in particular to have a 'unique selling point' (USP). Some respondents suggested that Ashford already has a USP; the two main suggestions were:

- The Designer Outlet Centre (10 comments) for its shopping offer, or;
- The International railway station (4 comments) due to the travel links into London

However, respondents identified a potential challenge; both these facilities don't necessarily entice people into the very centre of the town, as they are located nearer the outskirts. Respondents stated that there must be a reason for visitors and tourists to want to come to the centre of the town, as at the moment they are mainly attracted to the Outlet but not into town (11 comments). It was suggested that greater accessibility from the Outlet by bus or on foot (3 comments) would encourage more people into the town centre.

Some respondents felt that Ashford does not have a USP at the moment (3 comments). The desire to have a USP was prominent, as respondents stated they want more 'unique' places to go to and activities to do that aren't available anywhere else, as well as 'more to do' in general (19 comments). This was suggested to entice not only locals to visit, but also tourists. There were suggestions about what this USP might be, including:

- An ice rink (with 4 respondents mentioning that the closest rink is in Gillingham);
- A water park, and;
- A theme park

Potential areas for improvement



5.3 Potential areas for improvement



During the consultation, respondents identified potential areas for improvement. These ranged, simple changes to the appearance of the town centre to much larger projects involving refurbishment of buildings. One of the biggest barriers identified by respondents was accessibility to the town. A variety of accessibility challenges were identified, including congestion, roadworks, parking and disabled access.

5.3.1 Accessibility

Accessibility to the town was commonly mentioned in the consultation, with some respondents stating they are dissatisfied with the current levels of accessibility to the town (28 comments). Respondents had different views on what constituted "accessibility" with some feeling as though it is more associated with getting into and about the town, whereas others focused more on disabled access.

Parking was the most frequently occurring accessibility concern among respondents. Respondents felt that multiple parking-related factors prevent those travelling by car from accessing the town centre easily, particularly due to the price. The most frequent comments discussed parking prices. Respondents wanted free parking (40 comments) or cheaper pricing (29 comments) implemented, as the parking is too "expensive" (12 comments).

Some respondents suggest less extreme measures than making all parking free, such as introducing limited time free parking (12 comments). There was also an association between limited time free parking and wanting to be in town a short amount of time, thus avoiding "expensive" charges.

Parking quantity was mentioned on a few occasions (15 comments). Any comments about parking quantity seemed to be involved in another theme regarding overall provision for a perceived growing population in Ashford. A few respondents stated that due to an increase in the number of residents (4 comments) in the borough, local infrastructure (schools, roads, hospitals) cannot accommodate this increase (10 comments), and parking was sometimes counted under this infrastructure. However, some felt extra parking provision should not be prioritised over improvement of other infrastructure, in particular disabled parking provision (6 comments).

Aside from parking, respondents said they have experienced accessibility difficulties when using bus services around the borough. Some respondents were dissatisfied with public transport due to changes to bus routes and times, and the abolishment of the 'Little and Often' buses.

Respondents stated they want bus services 'improved,' particularly with regards to the restoration of old routes (11 comments) and the 'Little and Often' buses being brought back (7 comments). 33 comments were left to request improvements to public transport as a whole.

The bus services were suggested to be hindering connectivity between villages and the town centre, because of the difficulty in accessing public transport as a result of changes to times, routes and schemes. A few respondents perceived Ashford as being "too spread out (11 comments)," meaning public transport is essential for rural communities. As a result, some respondents particularly those further from the town who cannot drive, may find it challenging to come into town.

Ensuring access for the disabled was prioritised by some respondents (26 comments). For example, several respondents mentioned that the cobbles on the lower high street are an issue for anyone with physical disabilities or children in pushchairs as these are painful to traverse (7 comments). Similarly, wheelchair-users face difficulty in some shops due to the lack of suitable facilities to help them get onto different floors. A suggested solution to this was to have more ramps, or ramps in the place of stairs for all buildings.

A number of comments about accessibility mentioned the roadworks (2 comments) and the number of traffic lights, stating that they need to be changed or taken away entirely (8 comments). Respondents feel that accessibility to the town requires improvement, with particular regards to congestion and traffic, suggesting it is a major barrier to accessing the town (21 comments), whether it's for visitors, shoppers or people going to work.

Accessibility Issues raised	No. of mentions	Quotes from Respondents:
Free parking	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Free parking in the afternoons & at weekends to encourage people to come into town plus promotions from town centre businesses" Resident, aged 48, Downs West • "Free parking. Somewhere you can park free, near town for an hour, so you can pop in if you need to return something or only. Need to pop to one place. Parking fees are extortionate" Resident, aged 38
Improve public transport	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Improve bus services from villages, or have a special bus once a week for people to visit the town at a sensible time. Much like the free buses that supermarkets provide but this would be a paid for." Works in Ashford, aged 65
Cheaper parking	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Make car parking cheaper to encourage more people into town" Resident, Weald East
Dissatisfaction with Accessibility	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...Car parking can be an accessibility issue for everyone. Those from outside the area still say they don't come to Ashford because they can't find their way to a car park. Needs to be looked at holistically. Signage needs to be bolder." Resident, aged 75, Godinton

Ensure accessible to disabled	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ensure there are things for all and paths accessible for all. Not just wheelchairs but others with disabilities such as autism or mental health issues.”
Traffic is a problem/barrier	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “By not building villages tacked onto the outskirts, condemning future generations to a life of gridlocked roads, over-stretched GP surgeries and ER waiting times measured in days, not hours” Resident, aged 45, Saxon Shore
More parking	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We do NOT need more housing with inadequate parking provision” Resident, Stour
Improve accessibility	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stop doing roadworks! The place is far from accessible when it takes an hour to get from one side to the other.” Resident, aged 28
Dissatisfaction with parking price	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “At the moment the parking is extortionate and I avoid coming into the town” Resident, aged 48
Improve cycle routes	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Improve pedestrian and cycling facilities along main accesses.” Works in Ashford, aged 26 • “More cycle-paths that actually go in and around the town centre - the current ones are great (a big thumbs up), but they all bypass the town.” Resident, aged 32, Great Chart with Singleton North
Pedestrianise the town	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Safer walk-ways for pedestrians, walking routes that are attractive so to encourage fewer car users” Resident, aged 42, Aylesford Green • “There should be a car-free zone, where people can walk freely.” Resident, aged 40, Beaver

Table 4: The top accessibility topics discussed by respondents, with example quotes. The full table of issues raised can be found in Appendix 3.

5.3.2 General Improvements

General improvements were also suggested by many respondents, with 309 comments, however a large portion (75 comments) related to cleanliness of the town centre. Some respondents were dissatisfied with the current cleanliness of the town centre (10 comments), and a few were satisfied (3 comments), but most comments encouraged upkeep of current cleanliness.

A more simple improvement was the introduction of more seating. 9 comments suggested more seating and benches in the town, and 13 comments suggested outdoor seating at cafés and restaurants. These respondents felt that outdoor seating will appear more social and “European” and improve the general “feel” of the high street.

Another suggestion for simple improvements was to have more lighting (14 comments) and improved signage (7 comments) in the town. Lighting was suggested more for safety reasons due to a perceived high volume of crime, but also for decoration. Respondents sometimes stated that

the signage in and around Ashford is insufficient, and is required to help visitors navigate their way here, and to help with navigation whilst actually in the town.

Issues raised/suggestions	No. of mentions	Quotes from Respondents
Cleanliness	75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Well managed cleaning service keeping areas clean and tidy” Resident, aged 59 • “Keep the streets clean and tidy!” Resident, aged 43, Downs North
Mecca bingo (retain and use it)	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Keeping the Mecca Bingo building and using it for community events, or to hire out (at a reasonable fee), would encourage locals to come into the town centre day and night.” Resident, aged 55, Victoria
Better lighting	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Improve the lighting in Bank Street, it is the main route to the centre of town” Resident, aged 59, Beaver • “Introduce better lighting at night and security patrols to make all ages feel safer” Resident, age 61, from Saxon Shore
Outdoor seating at cafes and restaurants	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...pavement cafe seating to create a Parisian feel.” Resident, aged 50, Park Farm
Concerns about council services	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Spend council tax payers money wisely (not on fancy street lights or cobbled/block paves streets that then get ripped to pieces by contractors and pasted back together with tarmac)” Residents, aged 75, Godinton
Refurbish buildings	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The houses near the old college need to be refurbished, they are part of history of Ashford as is the market, the original was great” Resident, aged 61
Decorate/maintain shop fronts	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Try to make disused shop fronts appealing. Colourful and not just boarded up” Resident, aged 67, Bockhanger
Improved/clearer signage	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A large and ornate 'welcome to Ashford' sign at several points on the way into town” Resident, aged 40 • “Accessible - make shops disabled-friendly, have signs in multiple languages” Resident, aged 42, Norman
More benches and seating	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “More benches and seating in nice outdoors spaces” Works in Ashford • “I have elderly friends and relatives who often find the benches they used to sit and rest on are occupied, so maybe more outdoor seating is required.” Resident, aged 45

Table 4: The table shows the top 10 general improvements suggested by respondents of the survey, along with example quotes from respondents. The full table of issues raised can be found in appendix 3.

5.3.3 Perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour

Further to the general improvements suggested by respondents, more complicated topics arose in the consultation, particularly to do with crime and safety. One of the most common responses throughout the consultation was regarding levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Some respondents stated they feel Ashford is not safe (14 comments). Crimes that respondents listed more commonly fall under anti-social behaviour crimes, such as vandalism and theft (16 comments). Respondents often reported that they do not feel safe in the town, and attribute this feeling of low safety to a number of different factors, most notably the perceived low enforcement from police officers and PCSOs, as well as poor lighting in locations such as Victoria Park and various car parks, and a perceived lack of security cameras.

A few respondents also perceived younger groups to be responsible for crime, in particular attributing ASB crimes to young adults and teenagers. These respondents stated that younger people have not got enough to do in the town. Respondents were favourable of schemes like Sk8side as they feel this gives this age group an opportunity to socialise and reduces potential criminal activity.

As a result of these factors, more enforcement – most commonly suggested in the form of policing – was suggested (43 comments), and more safety (39 comments) was requested by some.

Issues raised	No. of mentions	Quotes from Respondents
More enforcement/security/policing needed (general)	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Ensuring everyone feels safe, police or PCSO presence” Resident, aged 32, Stanhope
More safety needed	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Work with the police to reduce the town centre’s un-savoury atmosphere at night - most perceived rather than real - of drunks, druggies and violence.” Resident, aged 67, Stour
ASB is a problem in Ashford	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Ensure there is adequate policing to discourage anti-social behaviour and make the place feel safe for all” Works in Ashford, age 65
“Ashford is not safe”	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Have police to patrol Ashford at night. Making it feel safer for people.” Resident, aged 70
Council should help the homeless more	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “...provide all homeless people with shelter not just in the winter” Resident, aged 51, Godinton “Clean up the streets and help the homeless more than is done now.” Resident, aged 62
Ashford has a problem with drunks/street drinking	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Crack down on antisocial behaviour, such a littering , drug taking and excessive drinking” Resident, aged 61, Highfield
Concern about the number of homeless	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “...try and assist with homeless people. I have noticed Ashford have a lot more homeless people now I live and work in the town centre” Resident, aged 22, Godinton

Table 5: The top issues raised related to perceptions of crime, with example quotes from respondents. The full table of issues raised can be found in appendix 3.

Creating a community and a town to be proud of



5.4 Creating a community and a town to be proud of



5.4.1 Creating a Community

An important aspect of living in Ashford according to some respondents was the sense of community. A number of respondents stated they wanted to have more opportunities to socialise (21 comments), perhaps by having dedicated spaces such as shops, cafes and community centres, and that the council should encourage socialising (17 comments). Also important was the introduction of more “community” events and projects, such as those like Create festival (12 comments). Respondents stated that these events promote a greater sense of belonging, as well as providing opportunities to socialise.

One common suggestion was a community hub or flexible, multi-use space (28 comments), where residents and visitors could gather and engage in a variety of activities. These comments suggested that having a community hub in town would provide more socialising opportunities. The Mecca Bingo site was mentioned as a potential location for the hub (5 comments).

Vitaly, community events and spaces to socialise must also be inclusive of all people (31 comments). As well as this, it was often commented that they would like to see certain groups included in events more than they are currently, including:

- “Young” people (3 comments);
- “Old people” (1 comment)
- People with disabilities (5 comments);
- Members of the LGBT+ community (2 comments), and;
- Pet owners (2 comments)

However, in order for these community events and spaces to be utilised effectively by the public, information regarding them must be communicated clearly, and the council plays a vital role in this. Mostly, respondents would like more promotion of events and facilities (23 comments). 11 comments indicated that some respondents also want to see more engagement from the council

with residents and various groups within the borough. Some respondents also want to see a greater use of social media for both advertising and engagement (11 comments).

A few respondents stated that they wanted communities to be connected together. There was a perception that development occurs away from the town centre, and that the rest of the borough’s residential areas are spread out, thus partially contributing to a lower sense of community. These respondents suggested that by connecting the communities together through events and projects, it will create a “stronger, single community.”

5.4.2 Civic Pride

Pride in the local area was also mentioned in the consultation; some respondents said they are already proud of Ashford town centre (6 comments). A notable area of satisfaction was with environmental elements of the town and surrounding area, including green spaces (8 comments) and the planters/flowerbeds in the town centre (9 comments). A few respondents want to see more green spaces (11 comments), planters and flowerbeds (12 comments), and trees planted (7 comments). These respondents stated that green areas create a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere and commented that they are satisfied with current provision as well.

A few respondents also wanted to protect the environment; 4 comments related to decreasing pollution (particularly on the ring-road) and 6 comments state that the council should not build new developments (e.g. houses) on green spaces.

In relation to housing there was some opposition; most were opposed to more being built (23 comments) whereas some were keen to have more housing (12 comments), particularly if it is affordable (5 comments). Further to the opposition for building houses on green spaces (6 comments), some respondents were also opposed to housing development in the town centre (6 comments), due to constraints such as spaces to build, as well as the belief that town centres should be a community space rather than for accommodation.

Respondents also identified potential barriers to civic pride. A few respondents indicated that they believe Ashford has a negative reputation (6 comments), due to a number of factors such as the current look of town centre buildings, and perceived levels of crime. Another barrier was perceptions about the quality of builds around Ashford. 19 comments related to buildings and developments looking “dirty” or “neglected,” with some respondents urging the council to do something to refurbish these builds (11 comments). Similarly, respondents suggested shop fronts be “decorated” and “maintained” in order to improve their appearance, particularly vacant units (10 comments).

Further barriers to pride included concern for the welfare of others; some respondents are concerned about the number of homeless people in the town centre (11 comments), which results in lower pride in the town as well as partially contributing to feelings of low safety. 12 comments related to respondents wanting the council to help the homeless more than is currently done, such as by providing shelter.

Potential Barriers to Civic Pride	No. of Mentions
Perceived level of crime	30
Housing and over-development	27
Appearance of the town centre	19
Homelessness	11
Destruction of green space	6

Negative reputation	6
Lack of heritage/lack of celebrating heritage	5
Lack of Culture	2

Table 6: Examples of identified barriers to pride in the town, with the number of mentions and example quotes from respondents.

Additionally, a potential barrier to pride is culture. A small number of respondents perceived there to be a lack of culture in the town (2 comments), and suggest ways of introducing more culture into the town, resulting in increased pride in the local area. One idea for cultural activities is to encourage art - 39 comments were left regarding 'arts' or galleries being brought to the town. The comments also clarified what kinds of art they would like to see. This includes art galleries, art installations and spaces for art enthusiasts. There were also comments on promoting locally produced art as opposed to well-known or commissioned artists. Further, respondents suggested encouraging children and young people to be involved in art, as it is believed this will grant some 'ownership' of the town, and will also contribute to the town's identity and local pride.

Celebrating the heritage of Ashford is also mentioned in the consultation. There were comments stating that Ashford's history should be promoted (5 comments), while a few respondents felt that heritage has been lost (5 comments). Respondents had various ideas about what constitutes the heritage of the town, including the markets and the train station. One respondent commented they would like the Mecca Building preserved for heritage purposes. There was a contrast between respondents who wanted to bring in new developments and a modern 'feel' and keeping older buildings and preserving heritage.

Changes to markets were also a common suggestion. Some residents believed Ashford's heritage is as a market town (10 comments) and wanted to see markets brought back to the town (12 comments). A few residents were dissatisfied with the current market (6 comments), but want to see it improved, perhaps through an indoor market (7 comments).

Museums were also a popular suggestion, with 11 comments referring to a desire for more museums in Ashford as well as refurbishing (1 comment), celebrating (1 comment), and expanding (1 comment) the current Ashford Museum.

Conclusion and additional supporting evidence



6.0 Additional supporting evidence

6.1 Residents' Survey

Through March and April 2018, Ashford Borough Council conducted the Residents' Survey 2018. The survey assessed the opinions and priorities of residents on topics such as council services, priorities for the future and the town centre.

Research from the 2018 Residents' Survey provides useful insight into how well regarded the town centre is by local people, what draws different groups to the town centre and how frequently they visit. Overall the survey found middling levels of satisfaction with the town as a place to shop and lower levels of satisfaction with Ashford town centre as a place to visit and as a place to go out. Those living in Ashford town itself generally held the town's offer in higher regard than those living in rural areas.

Residents were asked how satisfied they are with Ashford town centre as a **place to shop** - whilst 40% said that they are very/fairly satisfied, 41% said that they are dissatisfied to some extent. There were lower levels of satisfaction with Ashford town centre as a **place to visit** with 25% being very/fairly satisfied but 50% of residents saying that they are dissatisfied to some extent. There were similar levels of satisfaction with the town as a **place to go out** with 22% of residents being very/fairly satisfied compared with 56% of residents being dissatisfied to some extent.

The residents' survey also asked how frequently residents visit key locations in the town centre. The survey found that over half of residents visit Park Mall shopping centre at least once a month or more often. Those living in Ashford tend to use it the most frequently (a third of Ashford town residents visit once a week or more) this compares with just 8% of rural residents using the town centre as frequently. This is also true of visits to County Square shopping centre where 41% of residents living in Ashford town visit once a week or more, compared with only 9% from rural areas.

When it comes to eating out during the daytime, 11% of Ashford town centre residents eat out at least once a week compared with only 2% of residents from rural areas. The survey also found that only 8% of Ashford town residents and 1% of rural residents eat and socialise in the evenings in the town centre.

The full results of the Residents' Survey can be found here:

<https://ashford.gov.uk/transparency/the-transparency-code/residents-survey-2018/>

6.2 Town Centre Conference

The council hosted a conference on 2 October 2018 as part of the Town Centre Consultation workstream, during which Dr Steve Millington of the Institute of Place Management ran a workshop in which attendees could take part in identifying some of the potential barriers to progress of the town. Many groups identified some similar things to those identified in the consultation. The main barriers identified were *Networks and Partnerships*, which includes relations with the county authority and with the public, *Place Marketing*, related to Ashford's branding, reputation, and how the brand is communicated, *Crime and Safety*, related to issues around perceptions of the aforementioned and finally, *Entertainment and Leisure*, centred on the constraints of the current leisure and entertainment offer.

From the analysis of the results of the workshop, it was recommended that Ashford:

- *Restructuring*: To restructure governance structures and also physical structuring, requiring co-operation with stakeholders and creating strategic networks and public-private relationships
- *Rebranding*: Focus on the application of branding, marketing communications and public relations techniques to establish a consistent place identity
- *Reinventing*: Encourage diverse leisure/recreational activities to improve perception, and monitor changes in footfall
- *Repositioning*: Consider repositioning itself as more than a retail destination, such as by focusing on becoming a “modern market town”.

To read Dr Steve Millington’s research into placemaking, please follow this link:

<http://placemanagement.org/research-projects/>

7.0 Conclusions



The consultation provided residents, visitors and businesses with an opportunity to have their say about how to improve the offer and feel of the town centre, as well as voice their concerns about issues affecting the town. The suggestions made by respondents can be condensed into 3 main headings, as seen in the diagram above. The findings from this consultation will be used to inform future policy and the Town Centre Framework which will set out the future ambitions for Ashford Town Centre.

Appendix



8.0 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1 – Questionnaire (paper copy)

Q1. How do we create a buzz about Ashford, how we make it stand out from the crowd?

Q2. How do we sustain a thriving, fun, destination in the daytime and at night?

Q3. How do we create a place that is welcoming and accessible to all?

Q4. How can we make Ashford a place we are proud to call home?

Q5. Which one of the following best describes you: Please tick one of the following.

- I am a resident (please provide postcode)..... Age.....
 - I am visiting Ashford (please provide postcode)..... Age.....
 - I study in Ashford Age
 - I work in Ashford Age
 - I am responding on behalf of an organisation/business
- Name of organisation/business

Please tell us your ideas at: www.ashford.gov.uk/towncentre

Or return to the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, TN23 1PL

Thank you for taking part.

All information that you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be stored securely by Ashford Borough Council (ABC). The information you will provide will only be used for analysis purposes to help us understand the views of people by different locations and demographic groups. ABC is the data controller for the information you provide in this form. Your information will be used to improve the services offered by ABC and for other research purposes, relying upon the public interest legal basis. ABC's Data Protection Officer can be contacted at FOI@ashford.gov.uk should you have any questions about how your data is handled.

Ashford is changing



High streets up and down the country are facing challenging times with the increase in online shopping and the need to offer something beyond just a shopping experience. Here in Ashford we know residents want more from their town centre and the good news is there are many changes taking place or in the pipeline.

Our ambition is to build on Ashford's heritage as a market town, one that makes the most of its unique location, international connections and strong community spirit – a modern market town.

**But it's not just about pretty words
and grand visions – it's about action.**

**We'd like YOUR ideas and views on how we improve
Ashford town centre. Please fill in the form overleaf.**

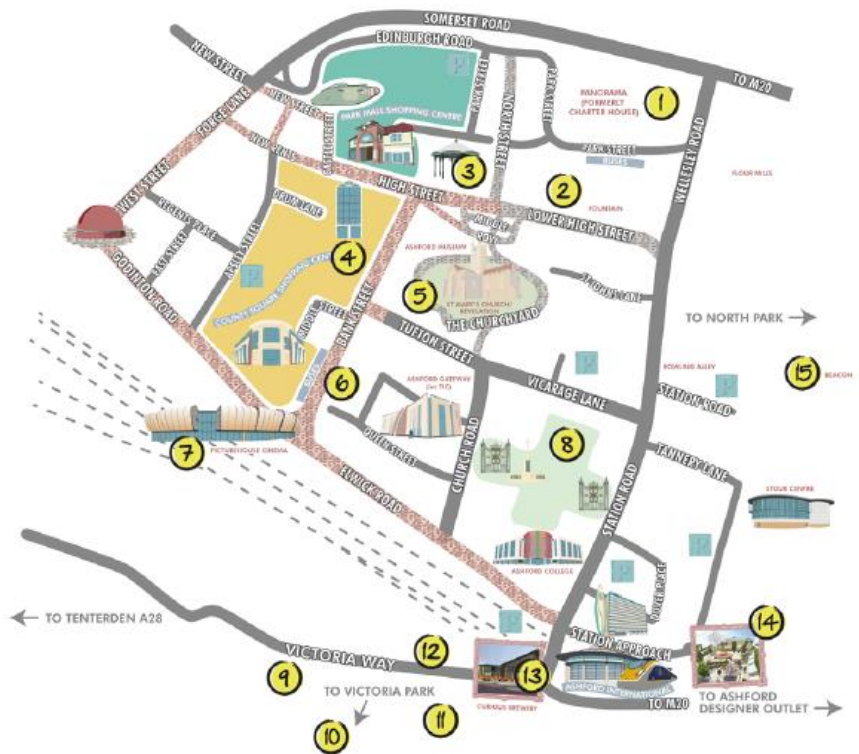
Or tell us your ideas at: www.ashford.gov.uk/towncentre



8.2 Appendix 2 – Town Centre Maps

What's happening now (this year)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Next to Panorama
Two additional blocks of apartments - construction underway</p> <p>2 Market (weekly) & Farmers Market (monthly)</p> <p>3 Programme of music on the Bandstand</p> <p>4 Christmas Festival Fire Day 17th November 2018</p> <p>5 Programme of shows and productions at Revolutions St. Mary's</p> <p>6 Snowdays Discover Ashford Autumn 2018</p> <p>7 Picturehouse Cinema 700 seats, 8 screen cinema 7 restaurants, cafes 58 bed Travelodge hotel 280 new parking spaces Queen Mary's Statue Opening 2018</p> <p>8 Fields of Battle Lands of Peace Exhibition throughout time in the Memorial Gardens</p> | <p>9 Riverside Park 660 homes - construction underway</p> <p>10 Create Festival 21st July 2018 - Victoria Park HLF Bld</p> <p>11 Victoria Point 218 apartments, 120 bed hotel, 3 retail units</p> <p>12 Aldi Food Store Opening 2018</p> <p>13 Carriars Brewery Brewing and pub/restaurant Opening 2018</p> <p>14 Designer Outlet Expansion Additional 100,000 sq. ft. 35 new leasing brands 6 restaurants Opening 2019</p> <p>15 Civic Beacon Lighting of the new civic beacon and party tributes in North Park</p> |
|--|---|



What's coming soon (within the next 3 years)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Park Mall Dropping refurbishment and management</p> <p>2 Police Station being retained and refurbished</p> <p>3 Elwick Place phase 2 Residential development of up to 200 homes</p> <p>4 Former Mecca building/Vicarage Lane car park We are currently looking at future options for this site</p> <p>5 Ashford College phase 1a 2,500m2 sustainable technology block, providing engineering, motor vehicle, and plumbing and electrical courses</p> | <p>6 Station Road multi storey car park We are currently considering the viability of building and operating a multi-storey car park on this site</p> <p>7 The Coachworks A mixed-use business/retail space that could include a new social and cultural meeting place with a performance area, bars and restaurants</p> <p>8 Former Kent Wool Growers site A mixed-use site including new homes, public realm, riverside walkway and to bring Wood House (a Grade II listed building) back into use</p> <p>9 Pedestrian under path between the station and Designer Outlet</p> |
|--|---|



What we would like to see in the future



Here's a few ideas to get you started but we really would like to hear your ideas

Redevelopment of Park Mall shopping centre	Public art piece that becomes a national attraction
Children's play space (indoor soft play area)	Pedestrianisation of the lower high street
New public realm scheme in the upper high street	Refurbishment or redevelopment of the Stour Centre (dry side)
Digital town/Smart City – access info and services via an app	Next phase of the Commercial Quarter office development
Cycling and walking routes which start and finish in the town centre	Redevelopment of the station forecourt
Lighting to animate buildings and spaces at night	Bring a little bit of Disneyland Paris to the station/town
Outdoor flexible performance space	Open up the green spaces and animate them
Ashford College – phase 2 (higher education provision)	Venue to host international events and conferences

Tell us your ideas for the future



8.3 Appendix 3 – Full analysis tables

Entertainment

Entertainment, Leisure and Culture issues raised	No. of mentions
Theatre	159
Restaurants	71
Live music and performances	66
Events/activities	58
Bars	52
Entertainment	44
Art (galleries, museums, exhibitions, investment)	39
Ice Rink	31
Activities/spaces for young people	31
Community hub/flexible space	28
Festivals/fairs	22
Cafes	21
Sports (table tennis, fitness groups etc)	20
Softplay/children's indoor play areas	19
Dissatisfaction with nightlife offer	19
Street performances (e.g. at the Bandstand)	17
Clubs	17
Culture	14
Pubs	13
Splash park	13
Dissatisfaction with current projects	13
Entertainment (night)	11
Comedy	11
Christmas	11
Dissatisfaction with leisure offer	10
Pop-up stands	9
Leisure	7
Water park	6
Cultural hub	5
Science (e.g. museums)	5
Outdoor cinema	5
Snow centre	5
Aquarium	4
Hire bike	4
New bingo hall/more bingo	4
Ballroom	4
Drones	4
Carnival	3
Play parks	2
Casino	2
Artificial beach	2
Theme events	2
Pantomime	2

Revelation	2
No culture	2
Dissatisfaction with Revelation as a theatre	2
Parks (general)	1
Outdoor pool	1
Lightshows	1
Star gazing	1
Cinema	1
Club (16+)	1
Crazy golf	1
Food court	1
Adult activities (e.g. parks designed for adults)	1
Bowling	1
Cinema	1
Laser tag	1
Go karting	1
Boxing events	1
Conventions	1
Darts comps	1
More Snowdogs	1
Another swimming centre	1
Outdoor exercise machines	1
Roller rink	1
Theme park	1

Accessibility

Accessibility issues mentioned	No. of mentions
Free parking	40
Improve public transport	33
Cheaper parking	29
Ensure accessible to disabled	26
Traffic is a problem/barrier	21
More parking	15
Improve accessibility	14
Improve cycle routes	13
Pedestrianise the town	13
Limited time free parking	12
Parking is too expensive	12
Less traffic	11
More bus routes	11
Park and ride (disfavour for)	11
Dissatisfaction with shared space	11
Favour of international rail links	10
Improve roads	9
Easier accessibility needed	9
Better parking	9
Utilise the train station	8

Improve/change the traffic lights	8
Better paths	8
More buses	8
Little and often buses	7
Cobblestones and LHS paving	7
Accessible to all	6
Connect outlet to the town	6
Bus station	6
More disabled spaces	6
Accessibility is good already	6
Accessibility is a barrier	5
Park and ride (favour for)	5
Public transport to operate later	5
Parking is a barrier	4
Improve transport links	4
Keep the roads open	4
Cheaper public transport	4
Walking routes	4
Underground parking	3
Less parking	3
Tram system	3
Parent-child parking	3
Monorail	2
Ensure accessibility for pushchairs	2
More on street parking	2
Extend/improve shared space	2
Ensure safety for pedestrians	2
Wider paths	2
Link the station to town better	2
Cycle storage	2
Too many roadworks	2
Cheaper parking elsewhere	2
No pedestrianisation	1
Parking space size	1
Build a real ring road	1
Car parks open later	1
Ensure accessibility for older people	1
Easier to park	1
Bigger taxi rank	1
Don't build in the ring road	1
Parking charges enforced for too long	1
Get rid of NCP	1
Railway halt	1
Parking shouldn't be allowed outside Royal mail	1
East hill pavement	1
Crossing at Stour centre	1
No left turn on LHS	1

Parking policy should change	1
Too many taxi spaces	1
More cycle routes	1
Improve access to parks	1
Cable car	1

Perceptions about Ashford Town

Perceptions about Ashford Town	No. of mentions
More enforcement/security/policing needed (general)	43
More safety	39
High volume of vacant shops	23
Rents are too high/should be lowered	22
ASB is a problem in Ashford	16
Dissatisfaction with ASB and safety	15
Ashford is not safe	14
Council should help the homeless more	12
The town/villages are too spread out	11
Ashford has a problem with drunks/street drinking	11
Homeless problem	11
Decrease crime	11
CCTV	10
Limited resources/infrastructure	10
Young people cause ASB	7
More enforcement/security/policing needed (at night)	6
Council doesn't listen	6
Council wastes money	6
Ashford has a reputation	6
"The town is intimidating"	5
Council is about making money (and that's bad)	5
Ashford has problems with drugs	4
Increasing population	4
Development is not in, but away from, the town	4
Ashford is too big/busy already	3
Council doesn't care	3
Problems with vandalism	2
Shops are moving/are located out of town	2
High ASB is just perceived	2
Council doesn't act	2
Make men wear shirts in the summer	2
Housing increasing	2
Out of town developments undermine town centre	2
Lower business start-up costs	2
Increased population means more ASB!	1
Fine businesses linked to ASB	1
High street needs to shrink	1
Too noisy	1
Crowd funded police	1

Truancy officer	1
Large companies don't care	1
Council doesn't support local business	1
Residential areas should be spacious	1
Youth dominate the town centre	1
Council has no plan	1
Council supresses culture	1
Ashford is a "clone town"	1

General Improvements

General Improvements	No. of mentions
Cleanliness and general maintenance	75
Mecca bingo (use it)	28
Refurbish buildings	19
Better lighting	14
Outdoor seating at cafes and restaurants	13
Concerns about council services	13
Decorate/maintain shop fronts	11
Refurbish buildings	10
Improved/clearer signage	9
More benches and seating	9
Clear/improved/signage	7
More lighting	6
Booklets/information points/leaflets	6
More signage	5
Quarters	5
Public toilets	5
Dissatisfaction with certain locations	5
Build a University	4
Keep shops open later	4
More bins	4
Build bigger/taller buildings	3
"Modernisation"	3
CCTV	3
Employment	3
More infrastructure (hospitals etc)	3
Clean up grafitti	3
Build studios	2
Town maps	2
General TLC/upgrade	2
Invest in town	2
Mecca bingo (demolish it)	2
Lycee Francais School	2
Charity events/volunteer events	2
Hire consultants	1
Bring services (Uber, Deliveroo, Amazon etc.)	1
Fibre optic service	1

"Reinvigorate"	1
Convert buildings	1
Covered walkways	1
Public Wifi	1
Move facilities (e.g. care homes)	1
Smoking areas	1
Revamp North Park	1
Digital/maps	1
Clean river	1
Schools	1
New builds should be good quality	1
Demolish builds (e.g. Park Mall)	1
No modernisation!	1
The dome	1
Improve railings	1
Showcase the Tank	1
Improve post office	1
No Smoking enforced	1
Rename North Park	1
"Little town"	1
Relocate TIC	1
Extend opening hours of TIC	1
Digital hub	1

Business and Retail

Business and Retail topics	No. of mentions
Dissatisfaction with current offer	48
Independent shops	46
Primark	29
Quality shops	25
Big name brands	23
More shops	20
Variety shops/leisure	19
Local business	14
Reduce rent	11
Attract business	8
Tidy fronts	5
Walk-in health service	5
Shops open later/on Sundays	3
Good brands	2
Outlet	2
Companies involved in events	2
More business	2
Control which shops are allowed to open	2
More funding	1
Modern shops	1
More leisure	1

Connect shops	1
New shopping centre	1
Up to business where they open	1
No independent shops!	1
Bring back past business	1
Business Hub	1
No more shops!	1

Experiences

Types of experience suggested	No. of mentions
Variety	30
Different/unique	27
Quality/better experiences	20
More to do/quantity	19
Welcoming	15
Interesting, fun and quirky	14
Create a positive atmosphere	13
Identity	9
Better appearances/more attractive	8
Stimulating and lively	6
Exciting	4
No appeal, negative atmosphere	4
Busy	3
Relaxing	2
Characterful	2
Cultural experiences	1
Modern and vibrant	1

Target Groups

Groups mentioned	No. of mentions
More for children	44
More for families	34
Inclusive of all	31
More for "young"	22
Bring in tourists	17
More for teens	14
More for adults	10
More for all	10
Involve kids in projects	10
Inclusive of families	8
Focus on locals	7
"enough for families already"	6
Bring in more families	6
More for old	5
Inclusive of the disabled	5
More for tourists	4

More for both young and old	4
More for the disabled	3
Inclusive of young	3
"There's nothing for older people!"	3
More for creative people	2
Inclusive of pet owners	2
Focus on families	2
Inclusive of old	1
Good for young and old	1
Bring in more children	1
Focus on specific ages	1
Nothing for teens	1
"Create a focus group"	1
Appeal to wealthy people	1
"Younger people should be on the town council"	1
Young entrepreneurs	1
Bring in students	1
More for women	1
Can't be everything to everyone	1

Comparisons to Neighbouring Towns

Towns or locations compared to	No. of mentions
Canterbury	43
Maidstone	23
Folkestone	21
Faversham	5
Tenterden	5
London	5
Gillingham	4
Europe	4
Rye	3
Bluewater	3
"other towns	3
Yorkshire	2
Stratford (London)	2
Dorset	2
Broadstairs	2
Hythe	2
Bury St Edmunds	1
Belgium	1
Bromley	1
Louth	1
Hull	1
Liverpool	1
Spain	1
Chatham	1
Margate	1

Dover	1
Rochester	1
Herne bay	1
Tonbridge Wells	1
Oxford	1
Cambridge	1
Deal	1
Sandwich	1
Westward cross	1
Brighton	1
Totnes	1
Lewes	1
Stroud	1
West Malling	1
Tonbridge	1
Milan	1
Grantham	1

Heritage

Heritage issues raised	No. of mentions
Bring market back	12
New/more markets	12
More museums	11
Heritage is market town	10
Better market	8
Heritage is railway town	7
Indoor market	7
Market is low quality	6
Focus on history	6
Heritage is lost!	5
Promote history	5
Dissatisfaction with the current market (general comments)	5
Refurbish old builds	4
Railway museum	4
Dissatisfaction with tearing down old buildings	4
People don't know about heritage	3
Model railway	2
Invest in markets	2
Develop rail works	2
Contrast modern with old (CHECK)	2
Educate about heritage	1
Air museum	1
Festivals for heritage	1
No museums in ashford	1
Refurbish museums	1
Celebrate museums	1
More heritage	1

Promote markets	1
Famous Ashfordians	1
Permanent market	1
Market like before	1
Bigger market	1
Bigger museum	1
Evening market	1
French Brocante	1
Invest in museum	1
Market could be a USP	1

Unique Selling Point

Unique Selling Point	No. of mentions
Be different/unique	26
Create reasons to entice visitors	23
No one is attracted to the town	11
Designer Outlet is a USP	10
Designer centre takes custom away	7
Promote railway	3
Favour for the Outlet	3
Connect the town and Outlet	3
There is no USP	3
Disfavour for Outlet	2
Improved facilities offer as a USP	1
Music venues as a USP	1
Favour for railway	1

Housing

Housing issues raised	No. of mentions
Dissatisfaction with current level of housing	27
Less housing/no more housing	23
More housing	12
No housing on green spaces	6
No housing in the town centre	6
Cheap housing	5
"There's too much housing"	3
No housing without new infrastructure	3
Limit height of builds	2
"More housing means more crime"	1
No flats	1

Areas of Satisfaction

Areas of satisfaction	No. of mentions
Current Projects/Developments (Snowdogs, Elwick Place)	38

“Carry on with what you are doing”	22
Current facilities (e.g. library, memorial gardens)	6
Accessibility	6
Pride in the town	6
Environment (e.g. town planters, green space)	5
Cleanliness	3

Community and Socialising

Community and Socialising suggestions and issues	No. of mentions
More opportunities to socialise	21
Encourage community	17
Inclusive	14
More community events/projects	12
Connect communities	4
Pride	3
Sense of belonging	3
Feeling of ownership	2
Community art	2
Togetherness	2
No community	1
No current social opportunities	1
Happy residents	1
Look after the community (e.g. by discouraging litter)	1

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues raised	No. of mentions
More planters/flowerbeds	12
More green spaces	11
Satisfaction with planters/flowerbeds	9
Satisfied with green spaces	8
More trees	7
Create a green/eco-friendly town	5
More maintenance (e.g. trim trees/pathways)	5
Decrease pollution	4
Use the river more	4
Dissatisfaction with building on green space	4
Value the environment	4
Utilise solar panels/wind power	2
Protect environment	2
Get rid of planters/flowerbeds	1
Parks	1
Satisfaction with Aspire	1
Freecycle point	1
Conservation Advisory Committee	1

Communication with the Council

Communication Issues	No. of mentions
Advertise events/facilities more	23
Engage more with residents/various groups	11
Use of social media	11
Dissatisfaction with current advertisements	5
Revamping communication	2
Council should do more	2
Satisfaction with Love Ashford	1
No more apps!	1

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Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:
 - (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
 - (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
 - (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
 - (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).
3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
 - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
 - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
 - Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
 - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Lorna Ford
Decision maker:	CABINET
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	To note the findings of the town centre consultation To approve the framework for Ashford town centre.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	14 March 2019
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adopt a framework for Ashford town centre that sets out a vision and objectives to ensure the future vitality and prosperity of the town. This includes an action plan that sets out a programme of projects to be delivered in the short, medium and long term and aims to tackle some of the challenges to the town centre identified in the framework. • Key actions are set out in the action plan. • Expected outcomes are an increased footfall in the town, improved perceptions of Ashford and the local area and improved resident satisfaction and pride in Ashford town

	<p>centre, as well as increased feelings of ownership and influence over what happens to the town centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framework aims to improve the offer of Ashford town centre and improve the experiences of those who live, work and visit Ashford.
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The 2018 Residents' Survey has provided valuable insight into who is and who is not using Ashford Town Centre and why and how satisfied different groups are with their town centre.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Extensive consultation on the future of Ashford Town Centre was undertaken between July to October 2018.</p> <p>There were a number of comments made that revealed specific issues relating to some protected characteristics including the LGBT community, people with mental and physical disabilities. The consultation highlighted difficulties experienced by those with disabilities accessing certain shops, public transport and the accessibility of the town centre in general. There were also comments about encouraging more inclusive festivals and events such as a LGBT "pride" festival.</p> <p>Respondents frequently mentioned promoting a more inclusive Ashford community. The proposed decision should impact positively on most protected characteristic groups, in particular age and disability groups, by providing more provision and easier access for these groups and an increased feeling of inclusivity. The proposed decision also aims to increase the involvement of groups with protected characteristics, and foster good relations between all sections of the community.</p> <p>The action plan includes the implementation of inclusive community led events, and a programme of commissioned events and activities. The overall aim of these events is to strengthen community cohesion and offer a diverse programme to appeal to all residents living in the borough.</p> <p>The framework also addresses current accessibility issues in the town such as uneven surfaces and cobbles in the lower High Street, which are reported to be difficult to traverse for older people, those with certain disabilities and parents with children in buggies and pushchairs. The resurfacing of these areas would result in a positive impact for these groups.</p>

Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
Middle age	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
Young adult	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
Children	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	HIGH	POSTIVE (Minor)
Mental	MEDIUM	POSITVE (Minor)
Sensory	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
<u>GENDER RE- ASSIGNMENT</u>	LOW	NEUTRAL
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
<u>RACE</u>	MEDIUM	POSITVE (Minor)
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	MEDIUM	POSITVE (Minor)
<u>SEX</u> Men	NONE	NEUTRAL
Women	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	MEDIUM	POSITIVE (Minor)
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	LOW	POSITIVE (Minor)
Former service personnel	LOW	POSITIVE (Minor)
Service families	LOW	POSITIVE (Minor)

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>This programme ties together several existing projects which may have established negative impacts on certain protected characteristic groups. Impact assessments and negative impact mitigation have been completed for these existing projects.</p> <p>Individual projects within this programme will be subject to future EIAs.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	YES
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	YES

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>This decision gives consideration to the requirements outlined in the Equality Act 2010, in that the action plan in part aims to promote inclusivity through events and projects and encourage community cohesion.</p> <p>As far as officers are aware, there is no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision.</p> <p>The town centre framework aims to have a positive impact on all protected groups without discrimination.</p> <p>As the action plan is a programme of projects, schemes and activities, further individual EIAs will be conducted for projects within the framework that have not yet started.</p>
EIA completion date:	05.03.19

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ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 14th March 2019

Report Title: Proposed Multi Storey Car Park, Station Road, Ashford

Report Author & Job Title: Steve Parish - Project Delivery Manager
Jo Fox - Deputy Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing

Portfolio Holders for: Cllr Bradford - Community Safety and Wellbeing
Cllr Galpin - Corporate Property
Cllr Shorter - Finance and IT

Summary: This report seeks approval for the development and construction of a new multi-storey car park on the site currently occupied by the existing surface level car park on Station Road, Ashford. The aim of the proposal is to provide a high quality, commercially viable car parking facility that supports the aspirational and expected growth of the town centre, complementing the steadily rising growth in the local economy and demand for parking.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All Town Centre wards particularly Victoria

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:

- I. Approve in principle the construction of a new multi-storey car park of circa 500 spaces on the site of the existing surface car park on Station Road, Ashford, subject to a planning application being made and approved in due course.
- II. Recommend Council approve the necessary capital funds to deliver the multi-storey car park in accordance with the estimate provided. Such funds to be met from reserves and borrowing the extent of which is to be determined by the Director of Finance and Economy in conjunction with the Chief Executive.

- III. **Approve that the capital resources expended on the project are funded from future income over the life of the asset.**

- IV. **Delegate authority to the Director of Law & Governance with the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, Head of Corporate Property and Projects and Director of Finance in consultation with their respective portfolio holders to effect and complete all necessary steps for the development and construction of the new multi-storey car park at Station Road, Ashford. This to include approval of the detailed design of the proposed scheme, associated professional appointments, preparation of detailed designs and submission of planning permission prior to procuring the works.**

- V. **Receive further update reports as necessary.**

Policy Overview:

The Council's Corporate Plan identifies Enterprising Ashford, stimulating economic investment and growth, as a key priority. The growth that is being achieved will result in a significant increase in demand for parking during the next decade. The multi-storey car park will help to ensure that demand for parking is met and thus support and develop the local economy. The facility will be of relevance to residents, commuters, and visitors. The proposal supports the overall objectives of the Town Centre Framework.

Financial Implications:

The capital cost of developing the multi-storey car park is outlined at Appendix A. This is based on the provision of circa 500 spaces. The year 1 net cash benefit for the recommended option is estimated at circa £73k. This will however be influenced by the final capital cost, the number of spaces to be provided and the charging structure applied. Viability to year 6 is presented within an exempt appendix.

Legal Implications:

Planning permission for development of the site will need to be obtained. This is an entirely separate approval process. The council will also need to comply with its rules for contracts in engaging appropriate engagements for scoping and subsequently undertaking the construction. The council has the necessary powers to enable it to provide off-street parking places and can choose to use its land as an off-street car park. The totality of the site is in the council's ownership, however, there are covenants relevant to access by third parties. The council can choose whether to regulate the use of the car park through an off-street parking order that gives the council its charging and enforcement

powers. The proposed development of the multi-storey car park will be subject to a statutory notice process.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

The proposed new multi-storey car park will be designed and constructed in line with relevant national car parking and planning practice. It will incorporate consultation feedback as part of the planning process and the likely impacts on protected groups. An equalities impact assessment is provided at Appendix B.

Other Material Implications:

This is a major project and requires significant input from both the Community Safety & Wellbeing Service and Corporate Property and Projects. It will also generate considerable work in terms of finance and legal support.

There is currently insufficient council resource to take the project to the next stage and therefore a suitably qualified and experienced person(s) will need to be engaged at various points during the course of the project in order to meet the indicative timetable.

A screening application will be made in order to determine whether an environmental impact assessment is required as part of the planning application. An air quality assessment will, however, be undertaken.

Exempt from Publication:

Appendix A, E & F are not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Appendices:

Appendix A (Exempt)	Estimated cost/capital requirement
Appendix B	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix C	On & off street parking provision
Appendix D	Examples of car park facade treatments and interiors
Appendix E (Exempt)	Viability on basis of cost estimate
Appendix F (Exempt)	Viability to year 6

Background Papers:

None

Contact:

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Agenda Item No.

Report Title: **Proposed Multi Storey Car Park, Station Road, Ashford**

Introduction and Background

1. Members agreed in July 2018 (Minute reference 95 CA 120718) to the development of options to construct a multi-storey car park in order to meet the growing demand for parking and to support the wider regeneration and development aspirations for the town centre. The existing surface level car park on Station Road was identified as the preferred location and authority was given to allocate resources to develop the proposal.
2. The above report identified the existing parking provision within the town centre (both public and private), gave details of new council car parks that were due to open, and addressed the longer-term implications for certain car parks in light of site development opportunities. Clearly, vehicle parking is integral to meeting the needs of visitors to the town and commuters.
3. The council is currently responsible for nine public car parks that apply charges accommodating 1,869 vehicles. In addition, 1,663 cars that can be parked on-street within the controlled town centre parking bays. The number of car parking spaces recently increased with the opening of Elwick Place in December 2018 and it is expected that this number will increase by a further 104 spaces once Victoria Way car park is open. Further information on council car parking provision is provided at Appendix C.
4. While the number of public car parking spaces has recently increased, as stated in the earlier report, the Ashford Town Centre Masterplan has identified suitable redevelopment sites located on land in council ownership that are currently utilised for public car parking. The key sites being Vicarage Lane and Elwick Road which currently provide the following spaces:
 - Vicarage Lane – 178 spaces (including 16 additional temporary bays since February)
 - Elwick Road (temporary car park) - 105 spaces
5. The development of Vicarage Lane car park is on the agenda for this cabinet meeting and therefore it will be clear to members that a considerable number of spaces could be lost from the town centre. The temporary car park on Elwick Road will be developed as part of the future phases of the Elwick Road development site and is only covered by a temporary planning permission until April 2020. Development of these sites would see a potential loss of 283 parking spaces.
6. In addition to the above, it is likely that the following factors will contribute to the pressures on parking in the town centre during the next decade:

- On-going economic development of the town centre which will continue at pace with a number of major development schemes already underway
 - Projected year on year growth in the local population
 - Projected year on year growth in commuters and rail users
 - Demand for off-street parking
 - Growth in on-street controls which will increase usage of off-street facilities
7. In order to respond, the council's parking strategy needs to offer suitable mitigation action including:
- Managing the supply, location and pricing of parking to support local economic growth and the prosperity of the town centre
 - Effectively managing the likely shortfall in supply of short and long stay parking
 - Seek opportunities through redevelopment to upgrade (both physically and technologically), rationalise and consolidate car parking provision in a way that improves overall offer across the town centre
 - Provide high quality parking facilities that create demand and attract usage
 - Ensure that our car parks design in public safety and discourage anti-social behaviour
 - Supporting car park provision that where possible incorporates environmental features, including charging points for electric vehicles, provision for bicycle storage, lighting to minimise light pollution, design that will blend with existing landscapes and integrate with surrounding architecture.

The Proposal

8. Having selected the existing Station Road car park as the preferred location for a multi-storey car park, a feasibility study has been undertaken to look at the options available to maximise the number of spaces. The following issues have been considered:
- Design
 - Vehicle movements
 - Financial modelling
 - Programme
 - Payment arrangements

Design

9. The detailed design of the car park has yet to be determined but currently the recommendation is to construct a steel framed flat deck five-storey car park. This will provide circa 500 spaces. Vehicle access to parking areas will be via internal ramps. Vehicle circulation will be one-way with combined entry/exit. Access for users will be via two stair cores both of which will incorporate a passenger lift.

10. Notable requirements that will influence the design include proximity to adjacent buildings (which is of particular note for firefighting and means of escape), bay sizes, payment arrangements (i.e. ANPR), additional facilities (e.g. toilets and bicycle storage) and junction capacity considerations. Note toilets are not factored into the build cost.
11. It is anticipated that the building will be clad in an aesthetically pleasing material and incorporate an attractively designed feature on the south-west corner visible from Station Road and the Commercial Quarter. Further consideration will be given to those sides of the car park that are visible from neighbouring premises. Variables that will also change the external appearance include the location and design of the stairwells and lift shaft, top floor treatment (either open topped or roofed with photovoltaics and public realm/landscaping around entrances).
12. The car park will be designed to meet the *Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme – New Build Car Park Guidelines for car park designers, operators and owners*. It is anticipated that the car park will have shutters allowing access to users day and night throughout the year.
13. CCTV will be incorporated into the building on every floor that, combined with regular building inspections and a high standard of cleaning, will create a safe and comfortable environment in which to park. The project team are currently in contact with the Designing Out Crime Officer from Kent Police in order to ensure that crime prevention is a key consideration from the start of the project i.e. where there is an opportunity to prevent and reduce the opportunities for crime from occurring.
14. ANPR technology will be incorporated which will necessitate the use of entry and exit barriers in combination with pay stations.
15. Fire safety is a critical consideration for the design of the car park. While fortunately car park fires are quite rare there are concerns regarding new and emerging risks from modern cars and alternative fuels. Fire safety arrangements are currently being investigated and any necessary measures will be addressed as part of the detailed building design.
16. Provision will be made for electric vehicle charging at a level that supports an increase in the use of electric vehicles and encourages their use of our car parks. Bike racks will be included within the design of the car park. Potential options to add photovoltaics panels to the building will be investigated as part of the detailed design process.
17. A screening application will be made in order to determine whether a full environmental impact assessment is required as part of the planning application. Air quality assessment will, however, be undertaken in line with the Kent & Medway Air Quality Planning guidelines that recommend an assessment as part of any development proposing 30 or more two-way movements in any hour, or more than 100 parking spaces.
18. In order to provide an idea of the type of building being considered, some examples of modern multi-storey car parks have been provided at Appendix D. This shows a range of surface treatments as well as giving an idea of what the

interiors could look like. They are provided purely as examples to give a better feel for the quality and style of building that could be achieved and have been identified as part of the early viability work.

Vehicle movements

19. A transport planning and infrastructure design consultancy has been engaged to identify vehicle movements associated with the proposed car park facility and to consider the suitability of the access function from Station Road to accommodate future movements. The report prepared assumes that Vicarage Lane remains in use as a car park in order to identify the worst-case scenario for vehicle movements onto Station Road. The capacity of the access junction and its ability to accommodate the forecast vehicle movements were assessed.
20. The capacity modelling results suggest that the existing junction is able to accommodate movements associated with the increase in car parking numbers identified. However, this would depend on pedestrian demand for the crossing facilities. Capacity results during the morning peak identify a better performance than during the evening peak periods. Vehicles queueing to exit the car park are likely to occur during the evening peak period and may extend to the car park egress from the access road. This needs to be considered as part of the overall design of the car park and in the context of the planning application.
21. It is appropriate as the project moves forward to confirm the intended use of the car park in terms of the percentage long-stay to short-stay in order to further refine the junction capacity analysis as well as repeating the modelling in light of the decisions over the Vicarage Lane Car Park. This will be examined through the planning process.

Financial modelling

22. The financial implications of the recommended option to construct a 500 space multi-storey car park have been modelled and are summarised in the table below:

Option	Assumptions	Benefit (£000's)
Multi-storey car park constructed on Station Road	500 spaces subject to planning permission 50 year investment period	Annual surplus (161) Less Station Road 2019/2020 net budget (88) Annual Net Cash (Benefit) (73)

23. The table indicates the multi-storey car park development is estimated to yield cash benefit to the council over the 50 years investment period. This acknowledges the income currently achieved by the Station Road surface level car park that for 2019/20 is estimated at £88k. The net cash benefit from the multi-storey car park is therefore estimated at £73k in year 1. See

Appendix E & F for additional cost and viability information. The annual net cash benefits increase year on year as the inflation figure for income is higher than that for costs. Borrowing remains at a fixed rate assuming interest rates continue as forecast. Use of reserves or capital receipts from other council projects will reduce the extent of borrowing and consequently increase the annual net cash benefit further.

24. The projections are based on the following:
- 500 spaces of which 60% are short stay and 40% are long stay
 - Average current rates of return for long and short stay parking
 - Overnight charge to be applied
 - 70-80% migration from existing council owned car parks
 - Vicarage Lane and Elwick Road closing
 - Increasing demand for parking

Procurement arrangements

25. The project is estimated in excess of £4.5m and as such an OJEU compliant route will be followed for procurement. The use of frameworks is currently being considered but it is likely that a traditional two stage process will be undertaken in preference i.e. stage one advertising for expressions of interest, evaluation to shortlist to a minimum of five tenders and then stage two tendering to shortlist. The evaluation criteria is envisaged to be 70% cost /30% quality.

Programme

26. Subject to the approval of the recommendations contained within this report, the aim is to construct and open the new multi-storey car park by December 2020. This date is relevant not only from the practical construction timescale but takes in account the desire to close Station Road car park after the Christmas holiday i.e. closed in January 2020. This minimises disruption to existing users and protects local businesses during the Christmas period.
27. Subject to the approval of this report, delegated authority will be given to progress the appointment of associated consultants, prepare and submit a planning application and appointment of an approved contractor to develop and deliver the car park.
28. The anticipated delivery programme based on key milestones is summarised in the following table:

Activity	Target completion date
Cabinet/Council	March\April 2019
Design phase	June 2019
Planning committee	October 2019
Tender period & contract award	October 2019
Update to Cabinet	October 2019
Construction starts	January 2020
Construction completes	November 2020
Car park open	December 2020

Payment arrangements

29. Users will be asked to sign up for a new account with the council providing their vehicle and payment details and this will allow them to pay automatically. The car park will use automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology so that users only ever pay for how long they actually stay in the car park. Signing up will be easy, fast and secure.
30. Tariff structures are still under consideration but as previously stated they are likely to accommodate both long and short stay parking. Parking will also be available overnight at a reduced rate. In order to provide for both short and long stay customers, as well as a night rate it is necessary to zone areas of the car park. It is currently proposed to allocate floors 1 to 3 as short stay and floors 4 and 5 as long stay. It will be possible to adjust the areas as demand changes.
31. Customers will also be able to pay by cash, credit card and by phone.
32. Parking charges are reviewed by the council for all our car parks every three years. The next review would see any changes in effect from 1 April 2020.

Equality Impact Assessment

33. An equality impact assessment is provided at Appendix B. This will be reviewed and updated during the design phase. The initial assessment indicates that any negative impacts arising during the build phase will be temporary and that the project will, on completion, deliver positive impacts through increasing the supply and quality of parking (including dedicated disabled parking) at Station Road.
34. Any changes to existing car park provision have the potential to affect the public and protected groups in different ways. It is expected that the development will increase overall parking supply and the design will fully consider the needs of those with limited mobility. There are currently 24 disabled bays within the proposed scheme. Relevant engagement will take place with the Ashford Access Group in order to ensure appropriate provision in line with applicable guidelines.

Implications and Risk Assessment

35. The potential implications of the council not approving the proposals set out in this report include:
 - Affordable town centre public parking provision does not keep pace with demand affecting residents, businesses, and commuters
 - Missed opportunity to generate additional income from the Station Road site
 - Failure to provide public parking to compensate for the likely closure of other council car parks and the knock on effect on other town centre development projects
 - Slowing of economic growth through lack of infrastructure investment

36. The risk assessment for this project is constantly updated, however, a summary of the current position is provided as follows:

37. **Risk 1 – Size of car park restricted**

The number of spaces that the car park can accommodate may need to be reduced in light of the traffic movement forecast and capacity concerns at the access junction. The size of the car park may also be restricted in order to meet fire safety requirements. The commercial viability of the project would be called into question if the number of spaces were significantly reduced. Both issues have been addressed and the risks are not considered significant at this point in time. See earlier section on vehicle movements. Existing rights of way and ground conditions as this is a brown field site, which had various industrial uses.

38. **Risk 2 – Disruption for existing customers during the construction phase**

A suitable location to accommodate temporary parking spaces is needed to deal with the temporary displacement of vehicles from the existing Station Road car park during the multi storey car park construction phase. The plan is to relocate the Station Road customers, which are mainly long stay, to the Vicarage Lane car park while the multi-storey car park is being built. This will necessitate re-designating Vicarage Lane for long stay. At the same time, short stay customers (currently using Vicarage Lane) will be encouraged to use Elwick Place which is already designated as a short stay car park. Upon completion of the multi-storey car park, Vicarage Lane Car Park becomes available for development with customers transferring to the multi-storey car park.

39. **Risk 3 – Shift in strategic parking policy**

The developing corporate plan could see a change of policy regarding parking provision.

40. **Risk 4 – Brexit impact on construction costs**

If trade agreements with favourable terms are not secured this could result in increasing cost of resources, tools, materials and subsequently projects.

41. **Risk 5 – Financial risks**

The cost of construction as currently estimated might be too low. Until the detailed design work has taken place, planning conditions have been established and tenders received we will not know for certain. Any increase in capital cost (or consequential revenue implications) will affect the viability of the project.

If it is necessary to remodel the Station Road junction to meet the required traffic flow this could have a significant cost impact. The current project costings have only included some minor works to the existing infrastructure.

There are financial risks associated with interest rates as previously highlighted. The financial modelling also factors in percentage increases in

parking charges and operating costs and these could change. Once the car park is constructed, it becomes more difficult/expensive to utilise the land for other uses. This is mitigated to some degree by constructing in steel which would be easier to adapt. An exchange rate fluctuation would have significant impact on construction costs e.g. cost of steel, and influence the long-term viability of the car park. An economic downturn would also affect income streams. However, other surface level car parks could be taken out of the system if demand drops. Edinburgh Road car park will at some point be redeveloped or undergo major refurbishment and this is relevant to the viability of the new multi-storey in the context of an economic downturn.

42. Risk 6 – Changes in demand for car parking

Changing social behaviour could see a shift from car usage resulting in less demand for public parking. We know however that there is a demand for on-street parking which exceeds supply and an additional car park will help in this regard. Enhanced vehicle charging requirements during the predicted life of the car park. The intention is to incorporate as much future proofing as possible to mitigate these issues. This will result in an increased construction cost initially but will be significantly cheaper than retrofitting in the future both in terms of capital costs and disruption to users.

43. Risk 7 – Technology risk

There is a risk that we could adopt new payment and car park access technology that is not welcomed by our customers. The project, however, seeks to utilise technology that has been tested by other operators so this risk is reduced. There are also risks related to ANPR and CCTV integration with existing back office systems. This will need to be factored into the design process.

44. Risk 8 – Environmental impact

There is an impact on the environment from building a multi-storey car park. Key mitigations include provision for electric vehicle charging, potential inclusion of photovoltaics and use of sensitive lighting. The car park is replacing an existing surface level car park and mitigating loss of other spaces within the town centre. The viability work includes ecological assessment and ground condition surveys that are currently underway.

45. Risk 9 – Stakeholder expectations

There is a risk of challenge from stakeholders who do not support the building of a multi-storey car park. This will be addressed as part of the planning process. Neighbouring landowners have been advised of the proposal and contact will continue with them throughout the development.

Risk 10 – Resources to deliver the project

There is currently insufficient client resource to take the project to the next stage and therefore a suitably qualified and experienced person(s) will need to be engaged at various points during the course of the project in order to meet

the indicative timetable. These costs have been taken in to account when assessing the viability of the project.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

46. Consultation will take place as relevant to the planning application and during the design phase with key stakeholders such as the Ashford Access Group and neighboring premises owners/occupiers.

Other Options Considered

47. The following options have been considered:

Option 1 – Do Nothing (Not recommended)

The existing car park at Station Road could be retained. While this option saves the cost of building a multi-storey car park, it fails to address the likely closure of the Vicarage Lane car park and future loss of Elwick Road. A reduction in overall parking provision would increase pressure on residential streets and this generates significant complaints from local residents. A loss of parking supply also has significant implications for the town's economic and cultural development.

Option 2 - Construct a multi-storey car park of less than 500 spaces (Not recommended)

The costs are marginally less, however, the necessary income levels would not be achieved by having a car park substantially less than 500 spaces. Loss of Vicarage Lane and Elwick Road means that the multi-storey needs to be at least 283 spaces in order to achieve like-for-like provision.

Option 3 – Construct a multi-storey car park on an alternative site (Not recommended)

Station Road car park was identified as the preferred location for the next multi-storey car park by the council's appointed design consultants. Five potential sites in and around the town centre were examined. Station Road has the advantage of being owned by the council, has sufficient footprint to secure the desired number of parking bays (without the need to exceed five floors), and its location is appropriate for a mix of users e.g. commuters, town centre workers, shoppers and other visitors to the town.

The use of the Victoria Way car park was considered, however, its size, proximity to both the classic railway, the HS1 and potential problems associated with moving underground assets made this site unviable. The site is crossed by a number of large electrical cables starting at the adjacent substation serving the town and possibly the railway.

Option 4 – Alternative use of the car park (Not recommended)

The land could be developed for an alternative use (i.e. not car parking). This has not been addressed as part of this evaluation due to the requirement to provide public parking in line with the strategy identified in para 7.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

48. The option recommended i.e. to progress with the proposed development of Station Road multi-storey car park with a capacity of circa 500 spaces, best addresses current pressures on town centre parking, best fits with the council's parking strategy as outlined within this report, and the selected site performs well against the identified risks.

Next Steps in Process

49. This report seeks authority to commit resources to deliver the car park, giving all necessary delegated authority. An outline planning application will then be made and the necessary procurement steps followed. Reserved matters will be addressed at a further planning committee. Regular updates on the project will come to the Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board.

Conclusion

50. The Council's policy to promote redevelopment in the town centre to bring economic investment, growth and employment opportunities is reliant on the availability of suitably located land and the provision of supporting infrastructure.
51. The proposals in this report support this policy through the potential provision of new infrastructure that will allow land to be available for redevelopment.

Portfolio Holder's Views

52. *Ensuring a supply of modern and safe parking is vital for all who work, visit and commute to and from the town. The proposed multi storey car park is very much a part of our vision for the future. I endorse the desire to build a high quality modern car park that places safety and ease of use for our customer at its heart. I fully support the project moving forward, recognising that there will be a separate planning approval process where it will be possible to consider any officer report and consultation responses before reaching a final view in that regard. I commend the recommendations to the Cabinet.*

Cllr Bradford – Community Safety and Wellbeing

53. *This report addresses the importance of the provision of adequate car parking for the continued economic and social development of Ashford Town. The projected multi storey car park will provide about 500 spaces and is planned to be protected with enhanced fire safety provision. The new car park is needed to accommodate new residents, visitors and businesses to our flourishing and growing town. A multi-storey car park also gives us the flexibility for the planning of any new regeneration. The business plan demonstrates this to be a viable project subject to planning permissions being granted. This is a vital piece in the jigsaw of Ashford's present and future revitalisation and regeneration. I therefore commend the recommendations to the Cabinet.*

Cllr Galpin – Corporate Property

54. *This report sets out the clear objective of preparing the Town for the planned and as yet aspirational developments for the future. This is fully in line with the council's aspiration to make the town more welcoming for both residents and visitors and to help businesses to thrive in the current evolution of town centre economies. Subject to ongoing due diligence by officers and the relevant Portfolio Holders within the contract letting and project management processes, I fully support this proposal.*

Cllr Shorter – IT and Finance

Contact and Email

55. Jo Fox
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Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the

right time as part of decision-making procedures.

6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
- encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.

- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:

- Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty

by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.

- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. *[Equality Duty in decision-making](#)*

Lead officer:	Steve Parish/Jo Fox
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Approval in principle to proceed with proposed Multi Storey Car Park, Station Road, Ashford (Bowling Alley Car Park)
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	14 March 2019
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>The decision will be to approve the development and construction of a new multi-storey car park on the site currently occupied by the existing surface level car park on Station Road, Ashford. The aim of the proposal is to provide a high quality, commercially viable car parking facility that supports the aspirational and expected growth of the town centre, complementing the steadily rising growth in the local economy and demand for parking.</p> <p>Due to the close proximity of the alternative parking supply (Vicarage Lane) for existing users of the station road car park any negative impacts on existing users with</p>

	<p>protected characteristics will be minimised, with the completion of the multi-storey car park having a positive impact in terms of increasing the supply and quality of the parking offer at Station Road, including increasing the quantum of dedicated disabled parking spaces.</p> <p>Some users of the existing Vicarage Lane car park with protected characteristics will be impacted negatively by the re-designation of Vicarage Lane as a long stay car park during construction of the new multi-storey car park on the Station Road site due to the increased distance between the lower high street and the alternative short stay provision at Elwick Place, however this impact will be temporary as the project will on completion provide a positive benefit to users overall as described above.</p>
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The income, user profile and season ticket uptake of all ABC car parks including Station Road car park is subject to ongoing monitoring to establish usage trends and future demand.</p> <p>Research into design options and indicative capacity for the proposed multi-storey car park has been carried out and used to inform the proposed decision.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? What were the results of the consultation? Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>The construction of a multi-storey car park on the existing Station Road site was included as a potential project during the Ashford Town Centre consultation. Whilst the consultation did not ask specific questions regarding this proposal, accessibility to the town through parking provision was a frequently occurring subject in the consultation, which ran from July to October 2018. Respondents to the consultation suggested that increased parking provision of a better quality than the existing town centre supply was desirable. This consultation provides evidence to support the addition of more and better quality parking provision in the town centre. Full details of the consultation including responses will be reported to Cabinet in March 2019.</p> <p>Detailed consultation will be carried out with relevant organisations once approval in principle has been given by Cabinet and the proposals move into the design stages. Consultation will also take place via the planning process.</p>
<p>Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.</p> <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for</p>	

young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.		
Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Positive (minor) – increasing supply of parking at existing site
Middle age	Low	Positive (minor) – increasing supply of parking at existing site
Young adult	Low	Positive (minor) – increasing supply of parking at existing site
Children	Low	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	High	Positive (major) – increasing supply of dedicated disabled parking and quality of parking environment
Mental	High	Positive (major) – increasing supply of dedicated disabled parking and quality of parking environment
Sensory	High	Positive (major) – increasing supply of dedicated disabled parking and quality of parking environment
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Low	Positive (minor) – increasing supply of parking at existing site in close proximity to town centre.
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u>	None	Neutral

Men		
Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u>	None	Neutral
Regular/Reserve personnel		
Former service personnel	None	Neutral
Service families	None	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Negative impacts on existing users of the Station Road car park arising from the loss of parking at Station Road during construction will be mitigated through providing alternative long-stay provision at Vicarage Lane.</p> <p>Mitigation of the negative impacts on existing short stay users of the Vicarage Lane car park through re-designation of the car park as long stay during the construction phase of the project will be through the increased availability of parking at the recently opened Elwick Place car park, however due to the increased distance and gradient between the lower high street and Elwick Place, it is recognised that this mitigation may not fully address the impact on users with protected characteristics. A number of disabled parking bays exist on-street within close proximity of the Vicarage Lane car park and off-street in other town centre car parks such as Edinburgh Road.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's <i>Essential Guide</i>, alongside fuller <i>PSED Technical Guidance</i>.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>The proposed project will, on completion, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it by increasing the quantum and quality of both general use and dedicated disabled parking at Station Road.</p> <p>The decision will not give rise to unlawful discrimination.</p> <p>Mitigation measures have been identified for the construction phase of the project to address negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring for the project will be carried out via the Programme Management Group and Ashford Strategic Delivery Board.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>28/02/19</p>

Appendix C: Council on and off-street provision

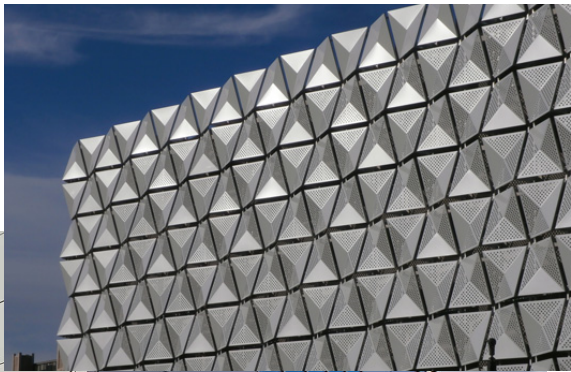
Off-street bays

Car Park	Number of spaces
Henwood	61
Flour Mills	79
Civic Centre & Stour Centre	483
Dover Place	180
Station Road	108
Vicarage Lane	178 (<i>including 16 bays added w/b 11 February 2019</i>)
Edinburgh Road	289
Elwick Road	105
Elwick Place	282
Victoria Way	104
TOTAL	1869

On-street bays

On-street information	Number of spaces
No. of controlled parking zones (A,B,D,E,G)	5
No. of on-street parking bays (pay and display) Zone B	148
No. of limited period free bays (Zones D,E & G) <i>N.B. Not including A as there are only two bays which are for Zone A permit holders only</i>	Zone D- 248 Zone E- 393 Zone G- 23 TOTAL- 664
No. of disabled persons' bays	59
No. of loading bays	3

Appendix D: Examples of car park facade treatments and interiors



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14th March 2019

Report Title: Data Protection Policy (amended due to legislative change)

Report Author & Job Title: Tom Swain – Governance and Data Protection Officer

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Neil Bell

Portfolio Holder for: Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Legal & Democratic

Summary:

The councils current Data Protection Policy was agreed by Members in March 2017. As of 25 May 2018 the Data Protection legislative landscape has seen significant changes with the repealing of the Data Protection Act 98 and its replacement with the General Data Protection Regulation and domestic implementation legislation, The Data Protection Act 18.

The enclosed policy document revises and amends the councils Data Protection Policy bringing it in-line with the current legislative landscape.

The revised policy will amend the following policy document in the current Conditions of Service:

- D1 Data Protection – General Data Protection Regulation

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: None specifically

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:

- I. Review and approve the amended Data Protection Policy
- II. Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to approve minor amendments to the policy in-line with working arrangements.

Policy Overview: Amended Data Protection Policy reflecting the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 18.

Financial Implications: None

Legal Implications: Required to ensure the council complies with its obligations as a Data Controller.

Equalities Impact: See Attached **Appendix A**

Assessment

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: NO

Background Papers: N/A

Contact: Tom Swain – Governance and Data Protection Officer
tom.swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330432)

Report Title:

Introduction and Background

1. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its domestic implementation legislation, the Data Protection Act 2018, are now in force as of 25 May 2018, marking the biggest change to data protection law since the 1998 Data Protection Act.
2. The council's current Data Protection Policy was last updated in March 2017 with a review date set for March 2019. With significant change in the legislative landscape between these time periods the policy has required significant amending.

Proposal/Current Position

3. The current Data Protection Policy was built with the Data Protection Act 98 in mind, this no longer satisfactorily reflect the current legislation and as such, it is recommended that it be replaced with the amended policy attached.
4. This policy is built around the revised 6 data protection principles which state personal data shall be;
 1. processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject (**'lawfulness, fairness and transparency'**)
 2. collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes. Further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes (**'purpose limitation'**)
 3. adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed (**'data minimisation'**)
 4. accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay (**'accuracy'**)
 5. kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed. Personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, with due regard to the rights and freedoms of the data subject (**'storage limitation' or 'retention'**)
 6. processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using

appropriate technical or organisational measures (**'integrity and confidentiality'**).

5. It also takes into account other key areas of variance from the previous governing data protection legislation including; strengthened individual rights, the requirement of contractual arrangements for data processors, increased record keeping requirements, necessity to conduct data protection impact assessments, and a requirement to report breaches.
6. The amended Data Protection Policy is the key anchor policy within a suite of information security policies, in addition it should be noted two of these linked policies have been amended addressing specifically the increased rights now available to individuals and detailing the councils approach to managing data breaches. Please find these attached at the end of this report. **Appendix B&C**

Implications and Risk Assessment

7. A robust Data Protection Policy is required to ensure our data protection obligation are documented, met and promoted to all.
8. A failure to have such a policy would potentially place the council in a vulnerable position which could result in financial and reputational damage.

Equalities Impact Assessment

9. Please see attached Assessment. **Appendix A**

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

10. The policy has been drafted through collaborative work with the data protection team, external consultative experts and scrutinised through the internal officer led Information Governance Group.
11. This final draft of the Data Protection Policy is provided to Cabinet for consideration. As the policy document informs part of the Conditions of Services, the JCC have already been consulted regarding the proposed changes.

Other Options Considered

12. The update is required for reasons of legislative change and as such it is not an option to maintain the previous policy.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

13. GDPR and thus the Data Protection Act 18 requires a data controller to be responsible for, and be able to demonstrate compliance with the 6 data protection principles covered in para 4. A robust Data Protection Policy is required to documents our approach to these.

Next Steps in Process

14. Once approved by Cabinet this revised Data Protection Policy will replace its predecessor as the anchor policy within the suite of information security policies.

Conclusion

15. We are committed to having robust Data Protection policies and procedures and appreciate the importance and requirement to protect personal data. The policy aims to spell out how we intend to uphold this.

16. Please find attached:

Data Protection Policy
Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix A)
Data Security Breach Management Policy (Appendix B)
Individual Rights Policy (Appendix C)

Portfolio Holder's Views

17. Portfolio Holders comments to be given at meeting if required.

Contact and Email

Tom Swain – Governance and Data Protection Officer

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Ashford Borough Council

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Last updated: March 2019

Version History

Version	Date	Amendments	Reviewed/Approved
V1.00	March 2017	First Version	PCOURTINE
V2.00	March 2019	Revisions for GDPR/DPA18	TS/CH

Next review date: On or before March 2021

Author: Tom Swain

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Introduction

1. This policy provides Ashford Borough Council's (ABC) standards which must be maintained to comply with the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) and EU's General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).
2. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office with registration number Z8344724.
3. ABC needs to collect and use certain information about individuals to allow us to carry out our many and varied functions and responsibilities - including the provision of government services and meeting legal, statutory and contractual requirements. This data is a valuable asset, and without adequate levels of protection, confidentiality, integrity and availability of information, we will not be able to fulfil these obligations whilst maintaining the confidence of service users.
4. This document is available to: all ABC Employees, Partners, Contractors, Agents and Elected Members.
5. Key Messages
 - ABC is a data controller and as such all Council Employees, Partners, Contractors, Agents and Elected Members have a responsibility for data protection.
 - Service Heads as the most senior/responsible individuals within each service are required to take on the role of Information Asset Owners (IAOs). Their role is to understand what information is held, what is added and what is removed, how information is moved, and who has access and why to data within their respective service. As a result they are able to understand and address risks to this information, and ensure it is only processed in line with data protection law.
 - Data protection applies to all the personal and "sensitive" special category data held by, and on behalf of, ABC. This information must be lawfully and fairly processed relying upon appropriate legal bases and the provision of suitable privacy notices.
 - You must only access personal data, client records, files and folders which you "need to know" in order to do your job. Unauthorised access is a criminal offence.
 - Safeguarding of people, at immediate risk of harm, over-rides data protection concerns.
 - All members of the public, employees and members, as data subjects, have statutory rights including the right of access to their data.
 - Data Protection training is a mandatory learning module all employees must complete as part of their inductions and revisit as a refresher module every two years.
 - You must report any suspected data breach of personal or sensitive data to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) immediately.
 - Make yourself aware of the additional statutory responsibilities on the Council, including the need for Privacy Notices, Data Processing Contracts, Records of Processing Activities and Data Protection Impact Assessments.

Policy Statement

6. Any personal information - however it is acquired, held, processed, released or destroyed - must be dealt with in a transparent manner that maintains the trust of the general public and our colleagues. We also need to ensure that we comply with our legal obligations when collecting and using personal data. In particular, we have to comply with the six “data protection principles”, which are that personal data shall be:
 - 1) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject (**‘lawfulness, fairness and transparency’**)
 - 2) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes. Further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes (**‘purpose limitation’**)
 - 3) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed (**‘data minimisation’**)
 - 4) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay (**‘accuracy’**)
 - 5) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed. Personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes, with due regard to the rights and freedoms of the data subject (**‘storage limitation’** or **‘retention’**)
 - 6) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures (**‘integrity and confidentiality’**).

As a data controller we are responsible for, and need to be able to, demonstrate compliance with the above principles (**‘accountability’**).

7. Always be as careful with other people's personal information as you would expect others to be with yours. Good security is good practice and common sense.
8. ABC is also committed to preserving the confidentiality, integrity and availability of our information assets:
 - For sound decision making;
 - To deliver quality services to our customers;
 - To comply with the law;
 - To meet the expectations of our customers and citizens;

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- To protect our reputation as a professional and trustworthy organisation; and
 - To safeguard against fraudulent activity.
9. This policy therefore also sets out our commitment to information security and provides the guidelines and frameworks for ensuring all forms of information, supporting systems and networks are protected from security threats such as malicious software, unauthorised access, computer misuse, information technology failures, human error and physical security threats. This approach is led by a number of key principles:
- Information is protected against unauthorised access;
 - Confidentiality of information is assured;
 - Integrity of information is maintained;
 - Regulatory and legislative requirements are met;
 - Information security training and e-learning is available to all staff and elected members;
 - Where appropriate, any serious breaches of information security, actual or suspected, are reported and investigated to see what lessons could be learnt. Examples might include the leaving of data storage devices in a public place; and
 - Business requirements for the availability of information and information systems will be met.

The Scope of this Document

10. This policy applies to all ABC employees, partners, contractors, agents and elected members operating on our behalf or on our premises (referred to collectively as **employees** or **you**).
11. In addition elected members as representatives for the residents of their respective wards may act as data controllers in their own right, for example when dealing directly with requests received from constituents. ABC registers each elected member separately with the Information Commissioner's Office.
12. This policy applies to all personal data and other confidential or sensitive information held by ABC, in whatever form. This includes information stored as follows:
- Hardcopy documents on paper and sent by fax
 - Electronic information stored on computers, remote servers, mobile devices, tapes, microfilm, CDs, external disks, USB storage devices and any other electronic storage medium; and
 - Verbal information (face to face conversations and over the telephone).
13. The policy sets out ABC's legal responsibilities and how you must act when processing personal and other confidential data to ensure ABC complies with those responsibilities. Everyone at ABC is responsible for making sure that ABC complies with its obligations and this means there are certain steps you must make sure you always take when dealing with personal data.

14. "Personal data" means any information about an identifiable living individual. This includes, for example, an individual's contact details, such as name, address, email address and telephone numbers. It can include information about individual's council tax payments, web browsing history and their opinions and beliefs. Images and call recordings can also be classed as personal data so consideration must be given to this information when reading this policy. In relation to colleagues, personal data includes job role, salary and benefits information and performance reviews.
15. Some information is designated as "special category personal data". This is information that relates to an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade-union membership and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation. Due to the private nature of special category personal data, stricter rules apply.
16. As well as personal data, this policy also applies to confidential information handled by ABC. This may include any commercially sensitive information, such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations; information relating to security, investigations and proceedings, and any information provided in confidence.

Key Data Protection requirements

'Lawfulness, fairness and transparency'

17. We must be clear and open about what we intend to do with individuals' personal data. Privacy notices are a crucial tool to aid in our data protection compliance, spelling out to the data subject at the point where their personal data is collected, in a concise, transparent and easily accessible form, what they can expect to happen to their data. The following information should be provided to the data subject:
 - a. The identity and contact details of the data controller and the data protection officer;
 - b. The legal basis relied upon to legally process;
 - c. A clear description of the reason the information is collected;
 - d. Whether we are going to share it with anyone else;
 - e. The period or criteria used to determine such period for which the data will be held;
 - f. Any intention to transfer personal data outside the European Economic Area;
 - g. Information on the individual's rights. For example, if relying upon consent as the legal basis to process, how this consent can be withdrawn;
 - h. The existence of any automated decision making; and
 - i. The right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority (ICO)
18. This information is provided in different ways depending on how people give us their information, for example:
 - a. website privacy policies for information collected through online forms;

- b. conversations with people who telephone us; and
 - c. hardcopy privacy notices for individuals who do not want to use online forms.
19. We must always have a legal basis for collecting and using personal data; generally the legal basis for processing by us as a public authority will be one of the following:
- a. **Public task:** processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the council;
 - b. **Legal obligation:** processing is necessary for compliance with the council's legal obligation;
 - c. **Contract:** processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps on their request prior to entering into a contract.

We may also on occasion process personal data relying upon the following circumstances:

- d. **Consent:** where the data subject has given consent to the processing of their personal data for one or more specific purposes;
 - e. **Legitimate interests:** where processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by us or by a third party. This legal basis is not open to us when performing our statutory tasks; however, where we are operating on a commercial basis, this legal basis may be utilised; and
 - f. **Vital interests:** where processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another individual. For example, protecting someone or their property from imminent harm or damage.
20. When special category data is collected, we will also need to ensure a secondary condition is met from within Article 9 (2) of the GDPR (processing of special categories of personal data). If in doubt please consult with the Data Protection Officer.
21. You should note that it is a criminal offence to knowingly or recklessly obtain or disclose personal data without ABC's consent, for example by using the data used at work for personal use. Employees should not process any personal data unless they are sure that they are authorised to do so; failure to do so may result in liability for non-compliance with data protection legislation for ABC and the employees involved.

'Purpose limitation'

22. Personal data should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. If personal data is to be used for a new purpose not compatible with the previous purpose the data subject should be consulted, provided with an updated privacy notice and, if necessary, any required consent re-gained.
23. The principle of purpose limitation is fundamentally linked with that of the principle of processing personal data fairly, lawfully and transparently and as such the data subject must be provided with a description of the specific purpose for which any collected personal data

is to be used. This allows for personal data to be collected in a clear and open manner aiding with our accountability requirements and preventing function creep.

'Data minimisation'

24. We should only ever collect and process the minimal amount of personal data needed to fulfil the operational needs associated to the purpose of collection or to comply with any legal requirements.
25. Personal data shall only be collected if it is adequate, relevant and strictly limited to what is necessary to fulfil the desired purpose.

'Accuracy'

26. We must make sure that the personal data we hold is accurate, relevant and up-to-date. This means that:
 - a. We should check personal data is correct when we first receive it. For example, if you take someone's telephone number, make sure that it has the correct number of digits and read it back to them to check it is correct.
 - b. We should periodically review personal data we hold to make sure it stays up-to-date. For example, if you hold an address on file that has been the same for a number of years, you should check whether the person has now changed addresses.
 - c. If we receive a request to correct inaccurate personal data, we should correct it straight away. For example, if someone phones you to tell you the email address you hold for them is incorrect, you should change this immediately on our systems.

'Retention'

27. We must ensure that we delete or destroy personal data securely when we no longer need it, in accordance with our [Data Retention Policy](#) and in line with the details provided in any privacy notices. Electronic documents and devices should be destroyed by the IT team, and paper documents should be placed in confidential waste bins.

'Integrity and confidentiality'

28. All managers and staff are responsible for ensuring that personal data is held securely at all times. If we don't keep personal data secure, it can lead to real harm and distress for individuals.
29. When deciding what level of security is appropriate, we need to look at the potential risks arising out of accidental disclosure of the relevant data. This includes thinking about the value, sensitivity and confidentiality of the data involved and the likely harm that could result if we don't handle it properly. For example, information about people's health will require a higher level of security than a list of email addresses.
30. Note that the requirements to keep information secure apply to information both within and outside ABC's premises.
31. As a minimum, you should always take the following steps to make sure that data is kept securely:
 - a. Make sure that all systems are password-protected and that only authorised personnel can access the systems. Keep your passwords secure at all times, including your password to your voicemail.
 - b. Make sure that passwords you use to access our systems or devices are "strong" passwords, in line with our password [guidance](#).
 - c. Ensure that only employees who need access to particular personal data to do their jobs can access it. If you think you have access to data that you don't need to see, contact the DPO immediately.
 - d. Don't leave devices unattended and make sure that electronic files are inaccessible when left unattended. For example, lock your screen if you leave your desk and don't leave hardcopy files in open view.
 - e. When you use portable devices to store personal data, you must be very careful and make sure devices are always encrypted. Use of portable devices should follow the [Bring Your Own Device policy](#).
 - f. Make sure you safely dispose of records when they are no longer required, in accordance with the sections above headed "Accuracy", "Retention" and our [Data Retention Policy](#).
 - g. Take care when printing or photocopying sensitive or confidential information and sending or receiving faxes. Make sure you do not leave printing unattended and always send test faxes first to ensure you are using the correct number.
 - h. If you take equipment, such as laptops, off-site, these should always be locked away and kept out of sight when left unattended. Make sure that people off the premises cannot see confidential information you are dealing with, for example by looking at a laptop screen over your shoulder.
 - i. Don't leave portable media such as CDs that contain personal or confidential information in CD drives.

- j. Make sure that you do not discuss any ABC business in public, either face-to-face or on the phone.
- k. Take good care of your keys and access fobs and do not leave these unattended. If you lose keys or access fobs, please inform the DPO and the Facilities Management team immediately.
- l. Always wipe white boards and remove personal data from notice boards when you have finished using them.
- m. Make sure all doors and windows at ABC's premises are closed outside of business hours. If windows and doors are open during business hours, they should not allow unauthorised access to the building.
- n. If you are in charge of visitors to the building, make sure they are escorted at all times and their access is logged, including times in and out, as per the [visitors procedure](#).
- o. Always lock away hardcopy files in locked cupboards when you are not using them.

Individuals' rights

32. Individuals have a number of rights under data protection law. ABC must comply with those rights.
33. In particular, individuals have a legal right to receive a copy of their personal data (known as "subject access rights"). If someone requests a copy of their personal data, we must respond within one calendar month.
34. Please note that opinions about someone constitute their personal data so everyone has a right to see recorded opinions about themselves. Bear this in mind if you are ever recording opinions about another individual. Opinions recorded on a file must be carefully and professionally expressed to avoid causing embarrassment to ABC if a subject access request is made for that data.
35. The complete list of individual's rights are as follows:
 - a. the right to be informed;
 - b. the right of access;
 - c. the right to rectification;
 - d. the right to erase;
 - e. the right to restrict processing;
 - f. the right to data portability;
 - g. the right to object; and
 - h. rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

The [councils individual rights policy](#) provide a detailed explanation of what each of these rights involves so that all employees are able to recognise these rights if an individual seeks to exercise them. The policy also explains the timeframes for responding to requests and the consequences if we fail to respond as we should.

Sharing personal data

36. We recognise the need to share personal and sensitive data with other partner organisations in order to safeguard the vulnerable and provide effective and efficient services.
37. If you need to share personal data with a third party for any reason, you must always comply with our [Data Sharing Protocol](#) and follow our [Data Sharing Checklist](#).
38. We are signatories to the [Kent & Medway Information Sharing Agreement](#) which provides a framework to enable a number of organisations and public bodies across Kent and Medway to share personal information in line with agreed data sharing protocols.
39. When we collect personal data from individuals, we must be clear and open about whether we are going to share that data with third parties. If we are going to share personal data with third parties, we must explain why we need to do this.
40. We are sometimes asked to share personal data with the police, regulators, banks and other local or central government bodies for the purposes of crime prevention and detection, fraud investigations and to verify information relating to credit and job applications. Although exemptions to the DPA18 and GDPR may apply we must avoid taking a blanket approach and assess each request on its individual merit.
41. We cannot send personal information, or allow people to access personal information, outside the European Economic Area, unless certain contractual requirements or information security conditions are met. If you are working on a project that might involve sending personal information outside the UK and if you are unsure about whether you have met these conditions, you must refer to the DPO.
42. Please also note that requests for information may fall within the Freedom of Information Act and/or the Environmental Information Regulations. Please see the [Freedom of Information page](#) for details on how to deal with these requests.

Data processors

43. When we pass personal data to third party suppliers who use the data to provide services to us, they will be a “data processor” on our behalf. We must ensure that they have adequate measures in place to keep personal data secure and we must ensure that a written contract is in place with the supplier.
44. Any data processor will need to agree to process data only in accordance with data protection laws and, in particular, on the following conditions, which must be included in a written contract:

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- a. the Processor shall only process the Data (i) on the written instructions from Ashford Borough Council (ii) only process the Data for completing the Services and (iii) only process the Data in the EU with no transfer of the Data outside of the EU (Article 28, para 3(a) GDPR);
- b. ensure that all employees and other representatives accessing the Data are (i) aware of the terms of the Agreement and (ii) have received comprehensive training on Data Protection Laws and related good practice, and (iii) are bound by a commitment of confidentiality (Article 28, para 3(b) GDPR);
- c. Ashford Borough Council and the Processor have agreed to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to the risk, complying with Article 32 of GDPR, (Article 28, para 3(c) GDPR);
- d. the Processor shall not involve any third party in the processing of the Data without the consent of Ashford Borough Council. Such consent may be withheld without reason. If consent is given a further processing agreement will be required (Article 28, para 3(d) GDPR);
- e. taking into account the nature of the processing, assist Ashford Borough Council by taking appropriate technical and organisational measures, in so far as this is possible, for the fulfilment of Ashford Borough Council's obligation to respond to requests from individuals exercising their rights laid down in Chapter III of GDPR – rights to erasure, rectification, access, restriction, portability, object and right not to be subject to automated decision making, etc. (Article 28, para 3(e) GDPR);
- f. assist Ashford Borough Council in ensuring compliance with the obligations pursuant to Articles 32 to 36 of GDPR – security, notification of data breaches, communication of data breaches to individuals, data protection impact assessments and when necessary consultation with the ICO, etc. taking into account the nature of processing and the information available to the Processor (Article 28, para 3(f) GDPR);
- g. at Ashford Borough Council's choice safely delete or return the Data at any time. [It has been agreed that the Processor will in any event securely delete the Data at the end of the Services.] Where the Processor is to delete the Data, deletion shall include destruction of all existing copies, unless there is a legal requirement to retain the Data. Where there is a legal requirement, the Processor will, prior to entering into this Agreement, confirm such an obligation in writing to Ashford Borough Council. Upon request by Ashford Borough Council the Processor shall provide certification of destruction of all Data (Article 28, para 3(g) GDPR); and
- h. make immediately available to Ashford Borough Council all information necessary to demonstrate compliance with the obligations laid down under this Agreement and allow for, and contribute to, any audits, inspections or other verification exercises required by Ashford Borough Council from time to time (Article 28, para 3(h) GDPR).

Records of processing activities

45. ABC, as a data controller, shall maintain a record of processing activities under its responsibility. This record must contain:

- a. Our name and corporate contact details, together with the contact details of our Data Protection Officer;
 - b. The purposes of processing the personal data;
 - c. A description of the categories of data subjects and of the categories of personal data;
 - d. The categories of recipients to whom the personal data have been or will be disclosed including, where applicable, recipients in third countries or international organisations;
 - e. Details of suitable safeguards if the data is transferred outside the EU;
 - f. Via our Records Retention Schedules the envisaged time limits for erasure of the different categories of data; and
 - g. A general description of the technical and organisational security measures in place to protect this data – it should be noted that access for security reasons to such data will be extremely limited.
46. These details may be requested by the ICO at any time and as such will require regular updating to maintain an accurate representation of our processing activities.
47. These records will be the responsibility of the respective Head of Service as IAO for each service to ensure they are maintained. These records will be scrutinised by the data protection team and Information Governance group periodically and/or when required.

Data Protection Impact Assessments

48. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) are tools which can help identify the most effective way to comply with its data protection obligations and meet individuals' expectations of privacy. An effective DPIA will allow ABC to identify and fix problems at an early stage, reducing the associated costs and damage to reputation which might otherwise occur. DPIAs are an integral part of taking a 'privacy by design' approach, and are a legal requirement whenever a 'process is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons'. A DPIA template is available on the [intranet](#).

Use of email, instant messaging and social media

49. Email is an essential tool for conducting day to day business. However, sending information by email presents certain security risks. For example, emails can be intercepted or accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. Incoming emails may contain links that are used to hack our systems through phishing attacks or similar.
50. Sending an email to the wrong person or to an out of date email address can have serious consequences, so it is important to always check before you send that the email is addressed to the correct individuals and that the addresses are current. The 'external recipients mailtip'

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is turned on by default and will show a warning at the top of any message should an external email address be inserted. However If you regularly email sensitive or confidential data (especially to people outside the Council), you should also consider whether or not to turn off the auto-complete function in Outlook (see the [intranet](#) on how to do this).

51. An email address can be classified as personal information and as such the same care should be taken with it as with any other personal information. This includes not sharing it with unauthorised individuals, so it is essential to **use the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) feature when sending** email messages to multiple external recipients especially where those recipients do not know one another. When you place email addresses in the **BCC** field of a message, those addresses are invisible to the recipients of the email and thus any personal information contained within the email address is protected.
52. All emails that are used to conduct or support official ABC business should be sent using an “@ashford.gov.uk” address. You must not use non-work email accounts to conduct, support or discuss official ABC business.
53. You must not open attachments or click on hyperlinks within e-mails from unknown sources. If an email looks suspicious, please inform the DPO and forward the email to the IT team.
54. ABC’s official disclaimer along with a link to its privacy notice is automatically added to all emails sent to external addresses – this is an important security feature and should not be altered.
55. When forwarding or replying to a message, consider the chain of messages that precede it and whether these need to be sent on. Generally, you should make sure that you do not send personal or confidential data by email unless you need to or have been authorised to do so.
56. Emails that contain personal or confidential data, particularly sensitive data, should be password-protected or encrypted. If you are sending attachments containing confidential data, the attachments should be password-protected and the password sent in a separate email.
57. It is equally important not to divulge sensitive or confidential information through other electronic media – namely instant messaging and social media platforms. Details of the specific considerations to be made regarding social media can be found in ABC’s [social media policy](#).

Home and off-site working

58. When working from home or remotely from other locations, you must take the steps set out in this section as a minimum to protect personal and confidential data whilst off-site.

- a. All remote working must be carried out in compliance with ABC's [remote working and portable device guidance](#), [health and safety policy](#) and [conditions of service](#) and must be authorised by your line manager.
- b. Any laptop or other device that is taken off ABC premises must be encrypted and allocated to the user.
- c. All necessary precautions must be taken to ensure the security of hardcopy documents that are taken off ABC premises. For example, you must make sure that you do not leave hardcopy documents in open view when off-site.
- d. You must make sure you only use personal data you take off-site for official ABC business. Do not take any personal data off-site without authorisation from your line manager.
- e. If you need to dispose of personal data when off-site, you must shred hardcopy information and must contact the IT team to dispose of any IT equipment or electronic files. If you cannot securely dispose of files, information or equipment at your remote working place, you must take the information securely to ABC's premises to destroy them.

Systems and software

59. It is important that all of our IT systems and software are as secure as possible and are used appropriately to ensure personal data stored in those systems and software is protected.
60. All information processing systems which are to be used for storing and processing ABC information must be formally authorised by IT. You must not install any software on any ABC computers or devices which has not been authorised. Information asset owners are responsible for ensuring new systems have the necessary validation checks and audit trails and also for ensuring user acceptance testing is carried out. Depending on the scope of any new software it may be necessary to carry out a Data Protection Impact assessment.
61. ABC's IT team will have overall responsibility for keeping the authority's anti-virus and other security software up to date. If any software on your computer or any other device is out-of-date, please make sure that you contact IT so this can be updated.
62. User access to systems must be adequately controlled using appropriate access rights and protected by passwords in line with our password [guidance](#). User access rights must be regularly reviewed to ensure they are still appropriate. If you think yours or someone else's access rights need updating please notify the DPO and the IT team.
63. Users must not attempt to access systems or records within systems which they have not been formally authorised to access.
64. Users must not, and must not attempt to, bypass, disable or subvert system security controls.

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65. Computer systems and software must only be used for purposes for which they are designated.
66. Only IT approved and encrypted USB memory devices should be used ensuring that any personal data that may be present is encrypted during transport. Before any new memory device is plugged into any ABC system it is essential it is scanned for threats by the IT team.
67. Software must only be used in compliance with the terms of any contractual or licence agreements.
68. ABC will have sole ownership and copyright of all programs and data it has developed, unless there is a contrary prior written agreement.
69. Deliberate unauthorised access to, copy, alteration or interference with computer programs or data is strictly forbidden.
70. All employees with IT access must undergo ABC's data protection e-learning module and complete the refresher package at least every two years. Managers will ensure this is part of a new employee's induction.
71. Managers must ensure that when any employee leaves ABC, all ABC equipment (including their ID card) is returned. IT Service Desk must be informed of all leavers immediately to ensure network access is revoked.
72. All users must be aware that the network is monitored. IT Service Desk will monitor day to day access to ensure adequate protection against security threats, and where necessary, will collect evidence of misuse and unauthorised activity.

Breaches and penalties

73. Despite everyone's best efforts, issues may sometimes arise. For example, we may lose personal data accidentally; someone may steal personal data or attack our systems; or our IT equipment may fail and result in data being lost or accessed by a third party.
74. If there is a security breach, we need to act quickly and appropriately to manage the breach and limit the effects and damage it causes. Where a breach poses a risk to the rights or freedoms of individuals we are obligated to report this to the ICO. Furthermore this reporting must happen within 72hrs of discovery.
75. Even if the decision is taken by the DPO not to report, all breaches should be logged internally, investigated, and any required remedial actions taken. Learning from previous breaches aids with the prevention of future breaches and as such learning points must be circulated.

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76. Any security breach, either actual or suspected, must be escalated immediately as set out in the [Data Security Breach Management Policy](#).
77. The consequences of a security breach can be severe. They can include:
- a. Real harm and distress for the individuals involved.
 - b. Reputational consequences for ABC and a loss of public trust in ABC.
 - c. Legal enforcement action being taken by the ICO.
 - d. Compensation claims being made by individuals.
78. It is therefore essential that in the event of a breach you follow the steps on the [Data Security Breaches page](#) and keep an accurate record of the circumstances.

Relevant roles and responsibilities

79. Everyone at ABC is responsible for ensuring they comply with this policy and with all other data protection and security policies. There are some specific roles it may be useful for you to be aware of, as follows:
- a. The Chief Executive for ABC is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all information is appropriately protected and that data protection law is adhered to.
 - b. The DPO is responsible for data protection issues and setting standards and procedures in relation to data protection laws. The DPO also acts as a liaison with other partner organisations and with the ICO if necessary. The DPO is required to act and advise independently.
 - c. Service Heads, as the most senior/responsible individuals within each service, are required to take on the role of Information Asset Owners (IAOs). Their role is to understand what information is held, what is added and what is removed, how information is moved, and who has access and why to data within their respective service. As a result they are able to understand and address risks to this information, and ensure it is only processed in line with data protection law.
 - d. ABC designates certain employees as "[key workers](#)". Key workers have received additional training and can be consulted if you need support or have questions regarding data protection and information security.

Ensuring Compliance

80. Key workers and other senior employees may be responsible for ensuring data protection compliance across their Services. Those employees should act in accordance with the [Compliance Monitoring Protocol](#) and should escalate any queries to the DPO.
81. All employees must undergo data protection training as part of their inductions and once every two years thereafter. If you have not received data protection training, please inform your line manager.

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82. If you are responsible for managing the relationship and/or contract with a third party or contractor operating on ABC's behalf, you must make sure that those third parties or contractors are aware of this policy and of their obligations around data protection. You must also periodically check that they are complying with those obligations, for example through periodic audits.
83. ABC has an internal officer lead Information Governance Group who with the aid of the Data Protection Officer will monitor compliance with the policy.

Other documents

84. Please also take note of ABC's other data protection documents which will help you comply with the policy. These include:
- e. [Data Protection Top Tips](#)
 - f. [Data Sharing Protocol](#)
 - g. [Data Sharing Checklist](#)
 - h. [Kent and Medway Information sharing agreement](#)
 - i. [Data Retention Policy](#)
 - j. [Individual rights](#)
 - k. [Data Security Breaches](#)
 - l. [Freedom of Information Guidance](#)
 - m. [Freedom of Information Top Tips](#)

Questions

85. If you have any questions about this policy, any of the other policies listed above or your data protection obligations, please contact the DPO.

Review of this policy

86. This policy, data protection arrangements and guidance will be reviewed every two years, unless there is a major change to the underlying regulations.

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Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not

share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate

in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
 - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
 - Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the

following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Tom Swain – Governance and Data Protection Officer
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Revised Data Protection Policy, amended with consideration to GDPR and DPA18
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	March 2019
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	Data Protection Policy updated to reflect the changes to the data protection legislative landscape in the wake of GDPR and DPA18.
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 • Data Protection Act 2018 • Best practice guidance • Reviewed by the Information Governance Group
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Team • Information Governance Group

Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	None	Neutral
Middle age	None	Neutral
Young adult	None	Neutral
Children	None	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	None	Neutral
Sensory	None	Neutral
<u>GENDER RE- ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Neutral
Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Neutral
Former service personnel	None	Neutral
Service families	None	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	n/a
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?	
Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC’s Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	n/a
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	n/a
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	n/a

Conclusion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Although the policy document has been amended in-line with the changing legislative landscape and as such is required in order to ensure our data protection obligations are met, the legislative change has given additional and or strengthened rights to the data subject.</p> <p>This can be seen as having a minor positive impact on those individuals classified as having protected characteristics with the GDPR and DPA18 requiring data controllers to meet a secondary condition if processing special category personal data.</p> <p>Similarly individuals under this policy have a more comprehensive number of individual rights associated with data protection, these include the right to be informed, have access to, to rectification, to erasure, to restricted processing, to data portability, to object and with regards to rights relating to automated decisions making and profiling. These rights are applicable to all data subjects.</p>
EIA completion date:	26/11/18

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Appendix B

Ashford Borough Council Data Security Breach Management Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 If a data security breach occurs this can have serious implications for Ashford Borough Council (referred to in this Policy as **Ashford, we, us or our**) and any individuals whose Personal Data (as defined below) may have been lost or accessed in an unauthorised manner.
- 1.2 This Data Security Breach Management Policy (**Policy**) explains the procedure that you should follow as soon as you become aware of a data security breach.
- 1.3 This Policy will help us ensure that the consequences of data security breaches are managed as quickly and effectively as possible and ensure compliance with our legal obligations, which may involve reporting data security breaches to the Information Commissioner and/or to affected individuals.
- 1.4 This Policy sets out the procedure which all Ashford employees and contractors (referred to in the remainder of this Policy collectively as **employees**) and all councillors must comply with if they become aware of a data security breach.
- 1.5 If you have any questions about this Policy, please raise them with Ashford's data protection office (**DPO**), Charlotte Hammersley, at any of the contact details below:

Email: charlotte.hammersley@ashford.gov.uk

Phone: 01233 330878

Address: Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL

2 What is a data security breach?

- 2.1 A data security breach occurs if there is breach of security that leads to:
- 2.1.1 the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss or alteration of Personal Data;
or
 - 2.1.2 any unauthorised disclosure of or access to Personal Data.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this Policy, **Personal Data** includes information that is confidential to Ashford such as draft reports and legal advice and all personal information.
- 2.3 **Personal Data** includes any information about a colleague, a tenant, a member of the public or any other individual, including name, address, telephone number, bank details, health records and personnel records.
- 2.4 Examples of data security breaches include:
- 2.4.1 loss or theft of Personal Data or equipment on which Personal Data is stored;
 - 2.4.2 inappropriate access or security controls allowing unauthorised use;
 - 2.4.3 equipment or technical failure leading to loss of or corruption of Personal Data;
 - 2.4.4 human error, for example sending an email to an incorrect recipient or forgetting to use the 'BCC' field instead of the 'CC' field;

- 2.4.5 hacking attack; or
 - 2.4.6 "Blagging" offences where Personal Data is obtained by deceiving the organisation who holds it into believing the person requesting the information is entitled to access to the Personal Data.
- 2.5 A personal data breach can have serious consequences for the individuals concerned such as identity theft and fraud and it is important that each and every one of us takes responsibility for any potential, suspected, threatened or actual security breaches.

3 What do you do if there is a data security breach?

- 3.1 You must report **immediately** any potential, suspected, threatened or actual security breach to the DPO, who will ascertain the nature and severity of the breach.
- 3.2 You can use our Data Breach Reporting Form to report the breach. The Data Breach Reporting Form is available [here](#). Please make sure you complete as much detail as possible before submitting the form to the DPO.
- 3.3 Your report should include the following details:
 - 3.3.1 your name, job title and telephone and email contact details;
 - 3.3.2 a description of what has happened;
 - 3.3.3 when the breach occurred;
 - 3.3.4 the volume of Personal Data involved and number of individuals affected;
 - 3.3.5 the type(s) of data involved, including Personal Data and which individuals this affects;
 - 3.3.6 status of the security breach, i.e. (i) potential (ii) suspected (iii) threatened (iv) actual (and if actual, has this been isolated (and how) or is it ongoing?);
 - 3.3.7 whether the data security breach relates to a supplier arrangement and, if so, from where the security breach originated (i.e. from us or the supplier);
 - 3.3.8 who is aware of the breach;
 - 3.3.9 what actions have been taken to address the breach and have these mitigated any adverse effects;
 - 3.3.10 any impacts caused as a result of the breach; and
 - 3.3.11 any other relevant information.

4 Breach management procedure

- 4.1 The DPO will be responsible for co-ordinating the response to data security breaches with the support of the Breach Management Team. The Breach Management Team includes representatives from other services including Finance; HR, Communications and Technology; Legal and Democratic; Policy and Performance; Environmental and Customer Services; board member.
- 4.2 The Breach Management Team shall:
 - 4.2.1 investigate the reported breach to establish the scale and nature of the breach;
 - 4.2.2 consider what can be done to recover the loss of Personal Data;

- 4.2.3 identify the safeguards in place, or to be put in place, to protect the misuse of the Personal Data;
 - 4.2.4 identify any relevant departments to assist and if appropriate, any third parties, such as banks, websites, insurers, police or credit card companies to prevent fraudulent use of Personal Data;
 - 4.2.5 if the data security breach relates to supplier agreement, liaise with the relevant supplier in accordance with the terms of the relevant agreement;
 - 4.2.6 by establishing the cause, determine whether any further actions can be taken to contain the breach e.g. taking systems offline, changing access codes, finding lost equipment etc.;
 - 4.2.7 where the breach relates to unauthorised access or disclosure, determine the value of the Personal Data to the third party in receipt; and
 - 4.2.8 take all necessary steps to mitigate the effects of the Personal Data breach.
- 4.3 The DPO will act as a contact point for the business and the affected individuals, and lead the co-ordination of remedial action.

5 Breach reporting

- 5.1 In some circumstances it will be necessary to report data security breaches involving Personal Data, including but not limited to, to the Information Commissioner. It may also be necessary to notify individuals of a data security breach if the personal data is particularly sensitive or if individuals need to take steps to protect themselves against potential misuse of their Personal Data.
- 5.2 The DPO shall be responsible for determining whether a data security breach needs to be reported to regulators, including but not limited to, the Information Commissioner or whether affected individuals need to be notified.
- 5.3 In order to evaluate whether a data security breach needs to be reported to the Information Commissioner or whether individuals need to be notified of the breach, the DPO shall take account of all relevant regulatory guidance and shall evaluate the likely risk to individuals. The DPO should consider factors including the number of individuals affected, the nature of the Personal Data affected, including whether special categories of personal data were affected and the volume of Personal Data affected. When carrying out this evaluation the DPO shall consider whether there are any risks of:
 - 5.3.1 identity theft or fraud;
 - 5.3.2 financial loss;
 - 5.3.3 reputation damage;
 - 5.3.4 loss of confidentiality protected by professional secrecy; or
 - 5.3.5 any significant economic or social disadvantage to the individual(s) concerned.
- 5.4 If a data security breach involves Personal Data that is being processed by Ashford on behalf of a third party, details of the data security breach may need to be notified to that third party. The DPO shall be responsible for determining which data security breaches need to be notified to third parties.
- 5.5 Where we conclude that a data security breach needs to be reported to the Information Commissioner, the notification shall include the following:

- 5.5.1 a description of the nature of the data security breach including the categories and approximate number of data subjects and personal data records concerned;
 - 5.5.2 details including the name and contact details of the point of contact where more information can be collected;
 - 5.5.3 a description of the likely consequences of the data security breach; and
 - 5.5.4 a description of the steps taken or proposed to be taken to address the data security breach and to mitigate any potential risks.
- 5.6 If we conclude that it is necessary to communicate the data security breach to the affected individuals, we will contact the individuals as soon as practicable. The notification will include the information noted above at 5.5.2-5.5.4 and provide individuals with advice on the steps that they can take to protect their position (if applicable).
- 5.7 Please note that should the DPO determine that it is necessary to notify the Information Commissioner of the data security breach, **the notification must take place within 72 hours of anyone within Ashford becoming aware of the breach**. Therefore, it is imperative that you follow through the process in the policy immediately.

6 Post breach review

- 6.1 After the event of a data security breach, the Breach Management Team shall evaluate the data security breach and the response to the breach and shall prepare a report for the DPO. The report shall:
- 6.1.1 summarise the data security breach event;
 - 6.1.2 outline the steps taken in accordance with this Policy;
 - 6.1.3 describe the effects of the data security breach;
 - 6.1.4 detail the measures taken by the business to prevent similar breaches happening again; and
 - 6.1.5 set out recommendation for any additional preventative steps that can be taken, including measures to improve the breach management response.
- 6.2 The DPO shall consider the content of the post breach report and shall determine what (if any) additional steps should be taken.

7 Data security breach log

- 7.1 The DPO shall record details of all reported data security breaches in a data security breach log. The log must include details of the nature of the data security breach, an assessment of the severity of the breach and the potential impact on individuals, whether the breach has been reported to the regulators (and if not, the reasons why it is not necessary to report to the regulators) and the current status of the breach.

8 Policy updates

- 8.1 We will review this Policy periodically and will make any updates it deems necessary. You will be required to comply with any updates made as from the date the updated Policy is made available to employees. We will let you know if and when any updates are made.
- 8.2 This Policy was last updated on 24/05/18.

Appendix C

Ashford Borough Council

Individuals Rights Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Under data protection legislation individuals have a number of rights in relation to their personal data. This policy provides an overview of individuals' rights and explains the procedures which Ashford Borough Council (referred to in this policy as, **Ashford, we, us, or our**) requires all employees and contractors (referred to in this policy collectively as **employees or you**) and councillors to comply with if an individual makes a request to exercise their data protection rights.
- 1.2 If you have any questions about this policy, please raise them with our data protection officer (**DPO**), Charlotte Hammersley, at the following contact details:
- Email: charlotte.hammersley@ashford.gov.uk
Phone: 01233 330878
Address: Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Some of the terms used in this policy have very specific meanings. These include:
- 2.1.1 **data controller:** this means the entity which determines how, and for what purposes, personal data will be collected and used. Ashford is a data controller and has an obligation to comply with data protection legislation;
- 2.1.2 **data subject:** this means the individual to whom personal data relates;
- 2.1.3 **personal data (or personal information):** this means any information about a living individual (including customers, employees, suppliers and contractors of Ashford) who can be identified from that information, or from that information together with other information held by Ashford or third parties. Personal data may include things like customer application forms and contact details; employee files; call recordings and CCTV footage and correspondence with a customer or another individual;
- 2.1.4 **processing:** this means any operation performed on the personal data, including, organising, retrieving, using, disclosing and simply holding information.

3 What rights do individuals have under data protection legislation?

- 3.1 Under the General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**) individuals have the following rights:
- 3.1.1 the right to be informed;
- 3.1.2 the right of access;
- 3.1.3 the right to rectification;
- 3.1.4 the right to erase;
- 3.1.5 the right to restrict processing;

- 3.1.6 the right to data portability;
 - 3.1.7 the right to object;
 - 3.1.8 rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.
- 3.2 The sections below provide a detailed explanation of what each of these rights involves so that all employees are able to recognise these rights if an individual seeks to exercise them. The policy also explains the timeframes for responding to requests and the consequences if we fail to respond as we should.

4 The right to be informed

- 4.1 Individuals have a right to be informed about how we will use and share their personal data. This explanation must be provided to individuals in a concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible format. Privacy notices must be written in clear and plain language and must be provided free of charge.
- 4.2 We must ensure that we provide privacy notices to individuals at the point where we collect personal data from them if we are collecting personal data directly. If we obtain personal data from a third party then the information must be provided to individuals within one month or, if earlier, at the point of first contact with the individual or before personal data is disclosed to a third party.
- 4.3 The GDPR sets out a list of specified information that must be provided to individuals in privacy notices. We must therefore ensure that all privacy notices contain this mandatory information.
- 4.4 We satisfy this requirement by ensuring that appropriate privacy notices are included at all data collection points.
- 4.5 We have the following privacy notices that address our personal data use:
 - 4.5.1 employee privacy notice;
 - 4.5.2 recruitment privacy notice;
 - 4.5.3 public facing privacy notice which is published on our website and addresses the use of personal data by us in the majority of our service lines;
 - 4.5.4 task specific privacy notices.

5 Right of access – Known as a Subject Access Request

- 5.1 Under the right of access, individuals have a right to:
 - 5.1.1 obtain confirmation of whether we are processing their personal data;
 - 5.1.2 access their personal data; and
 - 5.1.3 information regarding how their personal data is being used by us.
- 5.2 The purpose of the right of access is to allow individuals to access their personal data so they are aware of and can verify the lawfulness of the processing carried out by us.
- 5.3 When an access request is received we must provide a copy of all personal data to the individual unless an exemption applies. There are a number of exemptions that may apply. This includes personal data that is subject to legal privilege and personal data that relates to third parties, which must be redacted so as not to breach their data protection rights. This also applies where CCTV footage and call recordings include

third parties, which may not be shared unless we have the necessary consents from the third parties.

- 5.4 A reasonable and proportionate search must be carried out to locate all relevant personal data and then a review of all documentation will need to be completed before sending relevant information to the individual.
- 5.5 We must respond to a request to exercise the right to access within one month of receiving the request in writing. Whilst we can ask a data subject to complete a form or clarify any specific information in order to assist us in responding to the request, we cannot make our response conditional on receiving the request in a prescribed form, nor can we delay a response until this is received.
- 5.6 If a request for access is received you must contact the DPO immediately.

6 Right to rectification

- 6.1 Individuals have a right to have any inaccurate or incomplete personal data rectified.
- 6.2 If we have disclosed the relevant personal data to any third parties we are also responsible for taking reasonable steps to inform those third parties of the rectification where possible.
- 6.3 We have an obligation to ensure that the personal data we hold is accurate, so we should still verify that the request for rectification is valid and accurate, for example we should request to see reasonable evidence of any change, if appropriate.
- 6.4 If we dispute that the personal data is inaccurate then it will be necessary to go back to the individual and explain why the personal data is not being rectified. Individuals should also be informed at this point that they have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office if they do not agree with this decision.
- 6.5 If you receive a rectification request and you are concerned it goes beyond a business as usual request or are unable to confirm the identity of the individual making the request you must contact the DPO immediately.

7 Right to erasure

- 7.1 Individuals have a right to request that certain personal data held by us is erased. This is also known as the "right to be forgotten". **This is not a blanket right** to require all personal data to be deleted. Rather the right will be triggered in the following circumstances:
 - 7.1.1 if we are continuing to process personal data beyond the period when it is necessary to do so for the purpose for which it was originally collected
 - 7.1.2 if we are relying on consent as the legal basis for processing and the individual withdraws their consent (usually this is not the case for our processing but is relevant for some activities);
 - 7.1.3 if we are relying on legitimate interest as the legal basis for processing and the individual objects to this processing and there is no overriding compelling ground which enables us to continue with the processing.
Please note that as a local authority, the circumstances in which we would be relying on the legitimate interest grounds for processing are restricted as legitimate interests may not be relied upon when we are acting in the performance of our public function and tasks;
 - 7.1.4 if the personal data has been processed unlawfully (i.e. in breach of the requirements of the GDPR); or

- 7.1.5 if it is necessary to delete the personal data to comply with a legal obligation.
- 7.2 There are some exemptions to the right to erasure so even if one of the triggers above is met it may not be necessary to erase the relevant personal data. If information is required to exercise or defend legal claims then it is not necessary to delete the personal data. We are also permitted to retain personal data where there is a public interest task which requires the personal data to continue to be processed or for research purposes.
- 7.3 If you receive a request to erase personal data you must contact the DPO immediately.

8 Right to restrict processing

- 8.1 Individuals have a right to block the processing of their personal data in certain circumstances. This right arises in the following circumstances:
 - 8.1.1 If an individual disputes the accuracy of personal data then processing of that personal data should be restricted whilst we are verifying the accuracy of the personal data.
 - 8.1.2 If an individual has raised an objection to processing then processing should be restricted while we consider whether the objection should be upheld.
 - 8.1.3 If processing of personal data is unlawful and the individual opposes erasure and requests restriction instead.
 - 8.1.4 If the personal data is no longer required by us but the individual requires the personal data to be retained to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim.
- 8.2 If a request to restrict processing is made then it will be necessary for us to determine whether the request should be upheld and whether procedures need to be put in place to restrict use of the relevant personal data. If the request to restrict processing is not upheld then the individual needs to be notified of the reasons for this.
- 8.3 If you receive a request to restrict processing and you are concerned it goes beyond a business as usual request or are unable to confirm the identity of the individual making the request you must contact the DPO immediately.

9 Right to data portability

- 9.1 In certain circumstances individuals can request to receive a copy of their personal data in a commonly used electronic format. This right only applies to personal data that individuals have provided to us (for example by completing a form or providing personal data through a website), or personal data that has been gathered by monitoring their behaviour then this personal data will also be subject to the right to data portability. However, any analysis done by us in relation to an individual would not constitute personal data that they have provided to us and therefore is not subject to the right of data portability.
- 9.2 The right to data portability only applies if the processing that we are carrying out is based on the individual's consent or if the personal data must be processed for the performance of a contract. In addition, the right only applies in relation to data processing that is carried out by automated means (i.e. electronically).
- 9.3 In order to provide the personal data in response to a portability request the personal data must be provided in a commonly used and machine readable form.

9.4 The individual also has a right to request that the personal data is transferred directly to another organisation. If this is technically feasible then we must comply with such a request.

9.5 If you receive a data portability and you are concerned it goes beyond a business as usual request or are unable to confirm the identity of the individual making the request you must contact the DPO immediately.

10 Right to object

10.1 Individuals have a right to object to data processing being carried out by us in the following circumstances:

10.1.1 If we are processing personal data based on legitimate interests (please see paragraph 7.1.3 regarding our reliance on legitimate interests as a legal basis for processing) or for the performance of a task in the public interest (including profiling).

10.1.2 If we are using personal data for direct marketing purposes.

10.1.3 If personal data is being processed for scientific or historical research or statistical purposes.

10.2 If an objection is raised in relation to personal data that is being processed on a legitimate interest or public interest ground then a balancing test must be carried out to consider whether there are any compelling legitimate grounds which enables us to continue processing the personal data. In each case the outcome of this decision and the reasons for it must be documented.

10.3 If an objection is raised in relation to direct marketing then the objection must be upheld and no balancing test will be carried out.

10.4 Individuals must be informed that they have a right to object at the point of data collection and the right to object must be explicitly brought to the attention of the individual and be presented clearly and separately from any other information.

10.5 If you receive an objection to marketing you must ensure that the relevant individual is flagged as an "opt-out" on all relevant databases immediately. If you receive an objection to other data processing activities and you are concerned it goes beyond a business as usual request or are unable to confirm the identity of the individual making the request you must contact the DPO immediately.

11 Rights related to automated decision making

11.1 Individuals have a right not to be subject to a decision which is based on automated processing where the decision will produce a legal effect or a similarly significant effect on the individual. Such decisions would include a decision whether to enter into a contract with an individual, decisions in relation to whether credit will be extended to an individual and decisions to cut off a supply.

11.2 There are exemptions from this right if the decision is necessary to enter into or perform a contract with the individual, is authorised by law or is based on explicit consent.

11.3 If one of these exemptions applies then it is still necessary to inform the individual of the automated decision making and provide them with an opportunity to object and request manual intervention.

11.4 If any automated decisions are being made then it will be necessary for us to analyse whether the decision has a legal effect or a similarly significant effect. If so then advice

should be sought from our in relation to the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the automated decision making is carried out in a compliant way.

- 11.5 Where automated decisions are being made if a request for manual intervention is received, and you are concerned it goes beyond a business as usual request or are unable to confirm the identity of the individual making the request you must contact the DPO immediately.

12 Receiving and recognising requests

- 12.1 It is very important that all Ashford employees, contractors and councillors are aware of how to recognise a data subject request so that Ashford can comply with its obligations under the legislation.
- 12.2 There is no requirement for a request to be in a particular format, nor for it to be sent to any particular person within an organisation. Ashford do have an online form that we direct people to complete via the website, but if we receive a separate request, we cannot refuse to respond on the basis that the form has not been completed.
- 12.3 A request does not have to state that it is a request, reference any data protection legislation or even refer to "personal data" in order to be valid.
- 12.4 If you are unsure about whether correspondence you have received is a request relating to the personal data of a data subject, please contact Ashford's data protection officer (**DPO**) immediately so that it can be reviewed.

13 What to do if you receive a request

- 13.1 If you receive a request, or a communication which you think might be related to the individual rights of a data subject, you should forward this to the DPO immediately together with any information you know about the background to the request.
- 13.2 If you receive a telephone request for information about an individual, you should:
- 13.2.1 take steps to verify the individual's identity on the phone and not disclose any personal data about the individual unless you are sure of the caller's identity;
 - 13.2.2 refer the call to your line manager if you are not sure how to deal with the request.
- 13.3 We are also entitled to ask for any further information that we require to enable us to respond to the request. For example, if it is not clear from the individual's request whether he or she is requesting all information held or only some specific information. This can help us to narrow down the request (although we can't use this to restrict the scope if the data subject doesn't want to).

14 Verification of identity prior to taking any action in relation to a request

- 14.1 We must be satisfied that the individual making the request is in fact the individual about whom the personal data relates. If we have an ongoing relationship with the individual and have no reason to doubt the validity of a request then there is no need to take further steps. For example, if an employee or contractor makes a request using their known employment email address then no further steps to verify identity would be required. However, if a customer made a request and asked for personal data to be sent to an address that was not known to us then additional steps should be taken to verify the identity of the individuals.

- 14.2 Ashford may require a certified copy of the individual's photographic ID (such as a passport or driving licence) and in certain circumstances may require further identification, for example if:
- 14.2.1 a request is being made by a third party on behalf of the data subject (see section 15 below);
 - 14.2.2 the request is made by someone whose name or details we do not recognise; or
 - 14.2.3 contact details provided in the request do not match the contact details we hold on file for the data subject.

15 Third party requests

- 15.1 Sometimes data subjects will ask a third party, such as a solicitor, family member or friend, to make a request on their behalf. There are certain steps that we should take to make sure that we can disclose the relevant information to the third party.
- 15.1.1 We may need to request further identification documents from the individual in this situation to ensure that we are confident that the individual requesting the third party to act on his/her behalf is the data subject.
 - 15.1.2 We will need to make sure we have a document authorising us to send the data subject's personal data to the third party, for example a power of attorney or letter of authority. We may also require this if two or more data subjects make a joint request.

16 Can we charge a fee?

- 16.1 In most cases it is not possible for us to charge a fee to comply with requests made by individuals. However, if any request is manifestly unfounded or excessive, in particular it is a repeat request, then we may charge a reasonable fee taking into account the administrative costs of providing the information or taking the action required. Alternatively in these circumstances we may refuse to act on the request. In each case we will have to be able to demonstrate that the request is manifestly unfounded or excessive and must document the reasons for this decision. This exemption may only be relied on in exceptional circumstances and if you wish to refuse a request on these grounds the decision should be escalated to our to be authorised.

17 Time frames for responding to requests

- 17.1 In relation to the right to be informed, information must be provided at the point of data collection where personal data is collected directly from an individual. Where personal data is collected from a third party then information must be provided within one month at the latest. Please see section 3.2 above for more information.
- 17.2 In relation to all other rights we must respond without undue delay and in any event within one month. In exceptional cases this one month period may be extended by two further months if the request is particularly complex and involves a large number of requests. If we wish to make use of this extension then the individual must be informed within the initial one month period and the reasons for the delay must be explained. The ability to extend the one month period is only likely to arise in exceptional cases. If you wish to extend the period for responding to a request you must consult with our.

18 What happens if we fail to comply with a request?

- 18.1 Failure to comply with individuals requests under the GDPR are considered to be serious breaches of an individual's rights. Such breaches can attract the maximum

possible fine under the GDPR regime, which equates to up to a 4% of Group turnover or €20million. Failure to comply could also have an adverse effect on the individual. It is therefore important that all requests are recognised and are acted on promptly to enable us to respond to requests correctly and within the one month time frame.

19 Making a request

- 19.1 If you would like to make a request relating your personal data, please send your written request to the DPO.

20 Policy updates

- 20.1 We will review this policy periodically and will make any updates deemed necessary. You will be required to comply with any updates made as from the date the updated policy is made available to employees.
- 20.2 This policy is dated [24 May 2018].



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14th March 2019

Report Title: Response to Folkestone & Hythe District Council's consultation on the Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Core Strategy Review

Report Author & Job Title: Ashley Taylor
Principal Policy Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Paul Clokie
Portfolio Holder for: Planning and Development

Summary: Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) has published their Core Strategy Review for consultation. This report identifies the cross border impacts (strategic matters) resulting from the proposals on Ashford Borough and concerns in relation to the policy framework for the proposed garden settlement at Otterpool.

The report recommends that Cabinet agree to the response in Annex 1 (which is to be submitted to FHDC by 11th March 2019), which raises objection to the Plan and seeks changes be made to address the concerns.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Borough wide

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. **Agree the response that has been submitted to the Folkestone and Hythe Core Strategy Review Regulation 19 consultation at Annex 1.**
- II. **Delegate authority to the Head of Planning Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development to agree a Statement of Common Ground with Folkestone and Hythe District Council that addresses the issues raised by the Borough Council in the consultation response and any related issues that may emerge as the Core Strategy Review progresses.**

Policy Overview: The Core Strategy Review will form a key policy document for Folkestone and Hythe District Council. There is no specific policy framework for this decision, however the Council's Corporate Plan and Ashford Local Plan 2030 are relevant considerations.

Financial Implications:	There are no financial implications
Legal Implications	<p>The submission of a response by the 11th March 2019 is a pre-requisite to the Council having the right to appear and participate at the Core Strategy Review examination.</p> <p>Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) imposes a duty on the Council to co-operate and engage with other authorities on strategic matters, which includes development which would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas.</p> <p>The NPPF requires the Council to prepare and maintain one or more Statements of Common Ground with FHDC documenting the cross boundary matters and progress on them.</p>
Other material implications	The outcome of the FHDC core strategy review may have implications for future plan making in the Borough.
Equalities Impact Assessment	Not required because there are no equalities issues raised as a result of the Council's proposed response. Folkestone and Hythe District Council will be required to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment on the draft Core Strategy Review themselves.
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	<p>Folkestone and Hythe Submission Draft Core Strategy Review and supporting evidence base.</p> <p>https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/Core-strategy-review-2019</p>
Contact:	Ashley.taylor@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233)

Report Title: Response to Folkestone & Hythe District Council's consultation on the Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Core Strategy Review

Introduction and Background

1. On 25th January 2019, Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) published the draft version of their Core Strategy review document for public consultation. When adopted, this would replace / update FHDC's existing Core Strategy which was adopted in 2013.
2. The new draft Plan is intended as the means by which FHDC's planning policies for the proposed new 'garden settlement' at Otterpool will be set out and established in advance of the determination of a planning application for the garden settlement in due course.
3. Therefore, it is important for the Borough Council to consider what cross border effects there might be as a consequence of the proposed Plan and make formal representation/objections in response to the current consultation.
4. The current FHDC Core Strategy proposes the delivery of at least 8,750 homes in the District from 2006-31 – a target of 350 homes pa. The new draft Plan has been based on the Government's new standard housing need methodology and provides a target figure of 12,845 dwellings from 2018-37, equivalent to 676 units pa.
5. Otterpool is proposed to provide for 6,750 dwellings during the plan period (to 2037) and up to 10,000 over the longer term. In addition, FHDC are proposing further expansion at Sellindge (350 units) and delivery through a combination of sites with planning permission already (4,100 units) and proposed allocations in their Places & Policies Local Plan (1,400 units) which was submitted for examination in September 2018. Windfall sites would make up any balance.
6. The draft Core Strategy Review is based on a Growth Areas Study which was an assessment of development potential across the Folkestone & Hythe district which highlights the inherent restrictions on significant areas from new development by virtue of the AONB in the north of the district, Romney Marsh with its flood risk and ecological constraints in the south and the built up coastal strip of Folkestone, Hythe and Sandgate in-between. This has left the Otterpool area to the north west of Hythe as the main area with significant development potential and capacity to meet the district's development needs in the future.
7. Over the last 18 months or so, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development and Cllr Burgess, along with officers, have had regular informal meetings with officer and member colleagues from FHDC. These have focused on the emerging masterplan proposals for the garden settlement and their evolution and have provided an opportunity to raise potential cross

border issues of relevance to the Borough Council arising from the proposed development.

Current position - Cross Border Issues

8. The following sets out the cross border issues and how these are proposed to be addressed in the Core Strategy Review. The Council's response to the issues is set out in the letter at Annex 1.
9. It is considered that there are five main themes where major development at Otterpool could have impacts on residents or businesses in the borough or potentially affect the Council's discretion in plan-making in the future. These are:-
 - Transport (road and railway capacity)
 - Water and drainage
 - Secondary education
 - Retail provision
 - Phasing and infrastructure
10. The Core Strategy Review document includes four separate policies which aim to set out the policy basis for any emerging proposals for the garden settlement (policies SS6- SS9). These cover, respectively:- development requirements; place shaping principles; sustainability and healthy new town principles; and infrastructure, delivery and management. The focus of the following section of this report is how those policies address the four themes referred to above.

Transport - Road

11. Transport is perhaps the most obvious area of potential cross border impact as the traffic generated by a scheme of up to 10,000 new dwellings will inevitably increase vehicle movements on the road network significantly.
12. The transport evidence prepared in support of the Plan indicates that the majority of traffic generated will flow onto the strategic highway network (M20 and A20) with only a very small percentage (1%) expected to use the rural road network across the borough boundary towards Aldington and Bonnington. Around 30% of generated traffic in total is modelled to be using the A20 or M20 corridors towards Ashford and a potential impact on the capacity of M20 Junction 9 is highlighted.
13. Policy SS7 of the draft Plan sets out a large range of 'place-shaping principles', one of which is entitled 'sustainable access and movement'. Within this part of the policy, one criteria states that "*the capacity of M20 Junction 11 shall be upgraded and other key junctions on the road network will be redesigned and improved in partnership with Highways England and Kent County Council*".
14. This appears to be the only section in all four of the 'garden settlement' policies that deals with strategic highway matters.

Transport – Rail

15. The garden settlement at Otterpool is located adjoining the existing Westenhanger rail station on the domestic line between Ashford and Folkestone. At present, the station is lightly used with few facilities but the emerging masterplan for the Otterpool development emphasises the role an improved station here could play in providing an integrated transport hub for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users to access rail services.
16. The draft Plan makes specific reference to the garden settlement providing an opportunity to secure an upgrade of facilities at Westenhanger including the lengthening of the platforms, new and refurbished station buildings, a new footbridge between platforms and additional car parking. It is also stated that the settlement provides a major opportunity to secure a high speed rail service between Westenhanger Station and London St Pancras. Policy SS7 in the draft Plan requires the upgrading of the facilities and reinforces the aspiration of the high speed rail service.

Water and drainage

17. Water and drainage are key cross border issues due to the way in which the river catchments operate across the two local authority boundaries. Run-off from F&H District's higher ground converges in Ashford at the confluences of the East Stour, the Great Stour, Ruckinge Dyke, Whitewater Dyke and Aylesford Stream. The surface water runoff from the existing site of Otterpool drains into the East Stour through several small drainage tributaries. Increases in discharges into these watercourses would have a direct effect in increasing flood risk in Ashford, and in particular, the urban area south of Ashford Town which is vulnerable to fluvial flooding. Discharges from the site will also impact upon water quality in Ashford Borough.
18. The issue of wastewater infrastructure also has potential cross border issues, namely ensuring sufficient and appropriate wastewater infrastructure will be necessary to ensure water quality can be maintained and improved and that the capacity at Sellindge WWTW is not undermined (Sellindge WWTW currently serves Brabourne Lees in Ashford Borough).
19. The impact of the proposed development upon runoff into these water courses is therefore a crucial consideration and it is essential that the development should not:
 - result in any increase in flood risk for Ashford Borough, and should ideally result in a decrease in off-site flood risk;
 - have any harmful impact upon water quality.
20. The issue of water and drainage is addressed for the site through Policies SS7 and SS8 of the draft Core Strategy Review.
21. Policy SS7 requires that a green and blue infrastructure strategy be developed that delivers: (amongst other requirements) *'Sustainable Drainage Systems to maximise landscape and biodiversity value and to prevent*

downstream flooding of the East Stour River, developed as part of an integrated water management solution.'

22. Policy SS8 requires all new homes to be built to water efficiency standards that exceed current building regulations – to achieve a maximum use of 90 litres per person per day. The development shall be informed by a Water Cycle Strategy which includes details of:
 - Water efficiency and demand management measures to minimise water use and maximise water recycling and reuse
 - Need to maintain the integrity of water quality, how it will be protected and improved, and how the development complies with the Water Framework Directive
 - Surface water management measures to avoid increasing flood risk through the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems and;
 - Water services infrastructure requirements and their delivery.
23. Officers from FHDC and the site promoters have attended the Ashford Water Group to present the proposals for Otterpool in relation the approach to water management and flood risk within the proposed development. The Masterplan for the site has been based upon an Integrated Water Management approach – which considers the water cycle as a whole and interrelationship between water usage (including potential water recycling), wastewater, drainage and flooding, including surface water management.
24. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which has been produced alongside the Core Strategy Review, provides details of the post development discharge rates set out in a site wide strategy, which would result in a decrease in overall discharge rate from the site, thereby reducing flood risk downstream in Ashford Borough.
25. In terms of waste water treatment, Southern Water has indicated (set out in the IDP) that there is limited existing capacity at the Sellindge WWTW and that either major improvements are required at Sellindge WWTW or the development could provide its own on-site treatment works. There are no proposals within Southern Water's existing five year (2015-2020) Asset Management Plan (AMP) to provide for the required infrastructure, and it will therefore be necessary to put forward schemes to accommodate this growth within the next AMP (post 2021). The other alternative is that the developers forward fund the work. Southern Water has advised that it is working with the site promoters to agree a schedule of infrastructure at the site(s) in question.

Secondary Education

26. Secondary Education is a potential cross border issue, given the catchment areas of secondary schools, whereby pupils residing in F&H District attend secondary schools in Ashford Borough, and vice versa. The provision of secondary education provision in Ashford Borough is already under pressure due to development growth in Ashford and the Council has worked closely with KCC to ensure that new secondary school provision is provided at the right time in order to manage demand from new development. Currently KCC

are planning to manage this demand through increasing provision at existing schools in the Borough, and with the development of a new secondary school as part of the Chilmington Green development.

27. The evidence regarding secondary education provision Officers have been party to, is set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan supporting the Core Strategy Review.
28. This document states that KCC has advised that capacity does currently exist in secondary schools in both Ashford Borough and F&H District, however forecasts indicate that there are rising numbers of pupils entering year 7, peaking in 2022-23, which will result in a shortfall in both areas. The shortfall in Ashford Borough is being dealt with by the means identified above. In F&H the shortfall will potentially be dealt with by providing 'extra classes' being admitted in existing schools, to deal with the bulge. Off-site secondary school capacity will be full at the time Otterpool development is currently expected to commence.
29. With regard to the specific impact on demand from Otterpool, KCC population modelling indicates that 10,000 new homes may generate the need for 13 forms of entry of secondary school demand. As the need for the District's population decreases (as is expected after the 2022-23 peak), the demand from Otterpool will be rising, offsetting the reduction until 2031. 500-600 places may be needed throughout the period 2024-2030. The IDP states that the solution to this need to be developed.
30. KCC has indicated that they intend to meet part of the demand through the expansion of The Harvey Grammar School for Boys and Folkestone School for Girls (both selective schools). However any decision to extend these schools is a decision for the SoS and therefore cannot be guaranteed. But it is expected that the majority of secondary school places for Otterpool Park will be met on-site via one or two new secondary schools (again, the IDP states that the configuration yet to be determined).
31. The issue of secondary education is dealt with in the Core Strategy Review through Policy SS6 and Policy SS9. Policy SS6 which address development requirements has the following criteria in terms of secondary education provision:
 - It be provided and fully funded by the development to meet projected needs
 - Delivered in partnership with appropriate providers
 - Land should be provided at nil cost (both on and off site)
 - Safeguarding of additional, suitable land is required to allow for future expansion
32. Policy SS9 which addresses infrastructure, delivery and management includes the following requirements which would apply to the consideration of secondary education in the development:
 - The settlement should be self-sufficient regarding education.....where necessary allowing for the expansion and improvement of nearby facilities such as secondary education.

- The provision of infrastructure should be phased in a way that does not disadvantage early residents or neighbouring communities through placing pressure on existing infrastructure in the local area.
- Infrastructure provision will be secured and/or funded through S106 legal agreements to ensure it is delivered at the appropriate phase of the development.

Retail Provision

33. The provision of new retail development has the potential to result in cross border impacts, where new retail development could have a negative impact upon the vitality and viability of other town centres, including Ashford. The main issue is in relation to the potential for significant comparison retail development which could impact upon Ashford Town Centre.
34. The proposals for retail development at Otterpool are set out in policy SS7(2) – A vibrant town centre. The requirements are for in summary:
- A town centre to act as a focal point to the settlement
 - Town centre should be planned in easy walking distance of the station
 - Higher density mixed use development
 - Food shopping provision to allow choice and variety
 - A range of other shopping floorspace (comparison retail) shall also be provided to create a vibrant town centre.
 - The Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment 2018 Update indicates the new garden settlement can support approximately 3,150 sqm (gross) of convenience floorspace and 7,300 sqm (gross) of comparison floorspace within the plan period.
 - A mix of other town centre uses should be provided including food and beverage, and non-retail and financial and professional services
 - An impact assessment to be undertaken to demonstrate no detrimental impacts on the vitality and viability of nearby local village centres, and other town centres including Ashford.
35. The supporting text to policy SS7 states that the town centre *‘will need to be carefully planned and phased, particularly any proposals above these indicative requirements, to avoid any detrimental impacts on nearby town centres (such as.....Ashford), or shops and facilities in nearby villages, yet also meet the everyday needs of the settlement and nearby communities.’*

Phasing

36. Policy SS9 of the draft Plan deals with the delivery of infrastructure and states that *“critical infrastructure, such as primary education, should be provided in the first phases of development to support investment and community development. The provision of infrastructure should be phased in a way that does not disadvantage early residents or neighbouring communities through placing pressure on existing infrastructure in the local area”*.
37. Policy SS6 requires that the masterplan which is to be submitted in support of the outline planning application includes a detailed phasing and delivery strategy which has been prepared in consultation with the local planning

authority (and others). There are no details about the parameters for this, or what would be expected to be included.

38. Clearly the delivery of infrastructure at the garden settlement alongside or in advance of new development will be fundamental to not just achieving the wider aims for the settlement but also in mitigating potential impacts including any on communities in Ashford Borough.

Housing provision and deliverability

39. The draft Plan is based upon the premise of meeting the housing needs for F&H District in full within the District over the plan period. A significant amount of the need is proposed to be met through the Otterpool development.
40. The draft Plan has ambitious timescales for the delivery of new development in the District. The garden settlement is intended to deliver 6,375 dwellings across the Plan period to 2037 with construction due to start as early as 2020 with circa 300 completions by March 2022. Experience from Chilmington Green suggests meeting these timescales may be challenging.
41. However, there is no reason for this Council to be challenging the soundness of the draft Plan on this basis and it would only be in circumstances where the Inspector examining the Plan considered this to be an issue might there be implications for neighbouring authorities such as Ashford. In that scenario, amendments to the draft Plan would be necessary and the Borough Council would have the opportunity to comment at that stage.

Proposed Response

42. The proposed response is set out in full at Annex 1.
43. In summary, the response sets out support to the Plan in relation to its strategy and proposals for FHDC to meet its housing need within Folkestone and Hythe District.
44. However, objection is raised to the Plan in terms of the soundness of the policies relating to the garden settlement, and how they propose to address the main cross border issues identified above. In general it is considered that the Plan does not contain sufficient detail and is not precise enough to ensure that the cross border matters identified above will be addressed appropriately. The policies should provide the framework and parameters by which the planning application for the development will be determined, but it is considered that the policies are deficient in providing for this.
45. It is therefore considered that the policies are unsound on the grounds of justification and effectiveness. The proposed response therefore raises objection to the Core Strategy Review on these grounds, and proposes that changes be made to the Plan in order to address the concerns and make it sound.

Implications and Risk Assessment

46. If the issues identified above are not satisfactorily addressed through the policies and the subsequent development of the garden settlement, there is potential impact upon the Borough and its communities, in terms of the issues identified.

Consultation Undertaken

47. The above issues and proposed response has been considered by the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group, where it was resolved that a firm and robust response should be made to FHDC on the issues.

Other Options Considered

48. An alternative option would be to not respond to the consultation, however this could result in the cross border issues not being addressed appropriately through the development. The Council would still be required to enter into a Statement of Common Ground, but the Council's position in this would be undermined if objection had not been raised formally first.
49. It is necessary to raise these concerns at this stage, and not wait until the planning application, as the issues being addressed through the policy would provide more certainty for the Council that these issues will be addressed appropriately.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

50. The proposed development of the new garden settlement at Otterpool has the potential to have cross boundary impacts upon Ashford Borough, and therefore in order to ensure these are addressed appropriately and to provide for positive outcomes from the development, it is considered necessary to raise objection to the Core Strategy Review.

Next Steps in Process

51. The consultation on the draft Core Strategy Review closes on 11th March 2019. Due to the timing of the consultation and Cabinet dates, it has been necessary to submit the response, on a provisional basis, to FHDC prior this Cabinet meeting. Should Cabinet wish to make changes to those that have been submitted, Officers will write further to FHDC to set these out.
52. FHDC are required, as part of the plan making process, and to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the duty to co-operate to enter into a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with authorities where there are cross boundary issues, and a SoCG will be required with Ashford Borough Council. A first draft of the SoCG has been produced by Officers at FHDC, which highlights the cross boundary issues identified here.
53. FHDC has indicated they propose to submit the Core Strategy Review for examination without making any further amendments following this

consultation. The SoCG provides an opportunity for the two Council's to agree proposed changes to the Plan which will address the issues raised. FHDC can then ask the Inspector to recommend that the changes be made to the Plan through the examination process.

54. The proposed response (Annex 1) therefore recommends this as a way forward. It is recommended that authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to agree a SoCG with FHDC to address the issues that have been raised in this Council's response and any related issues that may emerge as the Core Strategy Review progresses.
55. If it is not possible to agree appropriate changes through the Statement of Common Ground, the statement will identify where there are areas of disagreement. The Council's representations would then be considered by the Inspector, and it would be necessary for the Council to be represented at the examination to put its case forward on any outstanding matters.
56. It is expected that the planning application for the development of the garden settlement is to be submitted to FHDC imminently. The Council will also be consulted with through this process, which will provide a further opportunity to respond to the detail of the proposed development.

Conclusion

57. FHDC Core Strategy Review proposes a new garden settlement at Otterpool, which has the potential to result in cross border impacts upon Ashford Borough in terms of highways, railway capacity, water and drainage, secondary education and retail impact.
58. The current policies relating to the new garden settlement are not considered to address these issues with sufficient precision or detail, in order to ensure that there is no negative impact upon Ashford Borough. It is therefore proposed that the Council raise objection to the Plan, as it is not sound as it is not justified or effective. It is proposed that the Council work with FHDC to agree appropriate amendments to the policies to ensure the issues are adequately addressed.

Portfolio Holder's Views

59. I have serious concerns regarding the potential impact of the development on Ashford Borough, but I hope that we can continue to work together with FHDC to resolve them through the next stages of the process.

Contact and Email

60. Ashley Taylor
61. Ashley.taylor@ashford.gov.uk

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Planning

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AshfordBoroughCouncil

Date: To be submitted by 11th March 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

Core Strategy Review Regulation 19 Consultation

Thank you for consulting with the Council on the Folkestone and Hythe Core Strategy Review. The Council acknowledges and supports the overall strategy set out in the Core Strategy Review of meeting the District's housing need within Folkestone and Hythe District over the plan period.

However, the Council has concerns regarding the detail of the policies relating to the proposed garden settlement at Otterpool, and how they, and the Plan as a whole address the strategic matters which impact upon Ashford Borough. **The Council is therefore raising objection to the plan on the basis of it being unsound as it is not effective or justified.**

This letter sets out the reasons for this, and proposes amendments to address the issues.

As we have discussed with you over the past 18 months or so, it is the development of the proposed garden settlement at Otterpool which has the potential to result in cross boundary impacts on Ashford Borough, and this is therefore where the focus of the comments are provided. The Council's comments relate primarily to policies SS6, SS7, SS8 and SS9 which provide the policy framework for the proposed garden settlement, and in relation to the following cross border issues:

- Transport – highways and rail
- Water – flood risk, wastewater infrastructure and water quality
- Secondary Education
- Retail provision
- Phasing

In general it is considered that the policies do not contain sufficient detail and are not precise enough to ensure that the cross border matters will be addressed appropriately. The policies should provide the framework and parameters by which the planning application for development will be determined, but it is considered that the policies are deficient in providing for this.

The Council therefore objects to the policies SS6, SS7, SS8 and SS9 of the draft Core Strategy Review. The following identifies the concerns by issue.

Transport – highways - Policy SS7 (6) c.

For such a potentially significant issue, the draft Plan is unclear and imprecise about where impacts are expected and what sort of mitigation will be required. Whilst it is accepted that transport modelling for such a large scale development cannot be wholly precise and that many different factors may influence what actually happens on the ground in due course, the evidence base provides a general overview of potential highway impacts which should be expressed more specifically in the site policy.

In particular, the reference in Policy SS7 (6) c.) to “other key junctions” being improved is vague and does not provide sufficient comfort that adequate mitigation will be required in all necessary locations.

It is requested that specific reference is made to M20 Junction 9 in the policy as any capacity constraints caused here by traffic from the garden settlement may have implications for the Borough Council’s future plan-making and decision-making if capacity is reduced at such a strategic point of the highway network.

There is also a need to ensure that adequate monitoring safeguards are built into the policy. This will enable the predictions for traffic generation and distribution contained within the transport model to be monitored and should actual traffic flows depart from those predicted, require suitable and proportionate mitigation to be designed and implemented. This is particularly the case in respect of the rural road network where relatively small increases can have significant negative effects.

Transport – rail - Policy SS7 (6) g.

The need to make significant improvements to Westenhanger station in order for it to fulfil its anticipated role for the settlement is acknowledged and supported, and will be important in persuading future residents to travel by rail rather than by car. The policy would benefit from being more precise as to the timescale or appropriate trigger point (e.g. number of residential occupations) for such improvements to be completed.

The question of existing and future high speed services to London is a crucial aspect for Ashford’s future growth. Westenhanger is approximately a non-stop 6 minute journey from Ashford International on non-HS1 services and so connectivity to HS1 services that depart from Ashford International is already good albeit requiring a change of train.

If Westenhanger station is to become an additional stop on the HS1 services south of Ashford, this could affect future train passenger capacity at Ashford International. It would be preferable if the Plan reflected the possibility of high speed ‘Javelin’ services to

Westenhanger in the context of ensuring that passenger capacity is not compromised at Ashford International in the future.

Water and drainage - Policy SS7 (1) b.vi; Policy SS8 (1) 1-iv; and Policy SS9 (1)

The proposals presented through the Masterplan for integrated water management are aspirational and if implemented, are likely to have positive benefits for Ashford including reducing flood risk and improving water quality.

However, it is not considered that this has been followed through and is properly secured through the planning policies for the development, particularly in the case of flood risk.

The two policies which deal with flood risk make conflicting statements and it is therefore unclear from the policy what is actually required. Policy SS7 (1) b vi. requires SuDS to be delivered to 'prevent downstream flooding of the East Stour River', whilst Policy SS8 (1) iii. states that SuDS should be delivered to 'avoid increasing flood risk'. It is questionable whether the SS7 requirement is actually deliverable, as it is unlikely the development could reduce runoff sufficiently to prevent flooding of the East Stour River completely. Whilst the requirements of SS8 are not considered to go far enough and should require the development to reduce flood risk.

The work that has been carried out through the masterplanning of the site in relation to greenfield runoff rates and proposed development rates indicates that the development can deliver a reduction in total discharge rate to the East Stour, which would result in a reduction in peak flow rate for 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 flood events, thereby reducing flood risk downstream. This is achieved by delivering an overall post development rate for the site of less than 2 l/s/ha.

The Council considers that amendments are required to the policies which make it clear that the use of SuDS should be designed and implemented to reduce flood risk downstream. The policy should be specific regarding the runoff rates that will be required in order to reduce flood risk downstream, which based upon the current evidence is an average post development rate of less than 2 l/s/ha, with no areas of the development site discharging above 2l/s/ha.

In terms of wastewater infrastructure, Policy SS8 (1) iv. is also vague on the specific requirements, only stating that the water cycle strategy should include details of water services infrastructure requirements and their delivery. Reference is made to Policy CDS5 which is a generic policy about water and coastal environmental management which requires new buildings and dwellings to be delivered in line with wastewater capacity. However, it is not clear as this policy mainly relates to surface water runoff.

There is still uncertainty regarding how the proposals for wastewater infrastructure will be delivered, what they will be and their timing, which it appears may not be capable of being delivered prior to the proposed development phasing. The Council therefore considers that amendment needs to be made to the policies (at SS7 (1) b and SS9 (1)) to make more explicit requirements for wastewater infrastructure and their phasing in relation to the proposed development. This would ensure sufficient infrastructure is in place to support the development and avoid any harm to water quality or impact upon existing infrastructure

which may have a negative impact upon surrounding communities, including those in Ashford Borough.

Secondary Education - Policy SS6 (4) c. and Policy SS9 (1)

Folkestone and Hythe District appear to be at the early stages of discussion with Kent County Council (KCC) regarding school provision for the development, and the proposals for dealing with secondary school provision are not well developed.

The proposals within Policy SS6 (4) c. and Policy SS9 (1) are very generic, and there are no specific requirements regarding the amount, timing or location of secondary education provision within the development. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan does provide some additional information regarding KCC's preference to provide for the additional demand through a combination of expansion to the two existing selective schools in Folkestone, as well as provision on-site.

Given that KCC has indicated that secondary school capacity will be full when the garden settlement development commences, the Council considers that Policy SS6 (4) c. needs to set out further clarity on what will be required and when. The policy should set out the trigger points for requiring secondary schools to be provided on site, or for the off-site expansions to be completed, to ensure that the provision for schools is provided in line with the need.

Without this security within the policy, there is a risk that the demand for school places from the development is not able to be delivered in a timely manner, thereby putting pressure on secondary schools in Ashford, and undermining the planning that has taken place in Ashford to ensure that secondary education provision is expanded in line with development. This should include an amendment to reference to the 'local area' in Policy SS9 (1) b, to ensure this covers the relevant infrastructure in Ashford Borough.

Retail Provision – Policy SS7 (2) b.

The main issue in relation to retail provision which may impact upon Ashford is the potential provision of comparison retail, in terms of its format, scale and location. The potential for large scale comparison retail development which does not meet the everyday needs of the new community, would raise concerns for the Council, in terms of the potential impact upon Ashford Town Centre and its vitality and viability.

Policy SS7 (2) b. provides an indication of the amount of comparison retail expected to come forward by making reference to the amount which the Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment evidences could be supported by the development. However, the policy is worded in a way which only makes reference to the study, and does not specify that this is the amount that should be provided, and a greater amount could come forward. If a greater amount of comparison retail were to come forward, this would be catering for more than the needs of the development and therefore has the potential to draw trade away from other centres, including Ashford.

The Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment Update 2018 identifies the need for 6,299 sqm within Table 3.2, whereas Policy SS7 (2) b. states 7,300 sqm. The correct figure needs to be clarified.

It does appear that the intention is for the retail development to provide only for the needs of the new community, and that it should be located and laid out as a town centre for the development. Policy SS7 (2) b. and supporting text (para 4.179) does recognise that there is the potential for retail development to have an impact upon Ashford (and other centres in F&H District). The supporting text states that the town centre will need to be 'carefully planned and phased' to avoid any detrimental impact to surrounding centre. However, it is considered that the policy should be more explicit about the role and function of the town centre and that the provision of retail development should only be to meet the needs of the new community (based upon the existing retail and leisure needs assessment, or an update to it). Policy SS7 (2) should include more detailed parameters explaining what is meant in terms of being carefully 'phased and planned' in terms of the format, scale, location and phasing of the retail development. For example, to avoid proposals coming forward for large scale retail development and/or in the form of an out of centre retail park.

Phasing – Policy SS6 and Policy SS9 (1)

The delivery and phasing of infrastructure is critical to mitigating potential impacts on existing communities, including those within Ashford Borough. The current requirements for phasing and delivery of infrastructure set out in policies SS6 and SS9(1) are vague, and do not include any specific requirements or parameters around the details of what infrastructure will be required and when. It appears that this is proposed to be fully negotiated and agreed through the planning application process. However, there is no requirement in the policies for the local planning authority to agree with the phasing and delivery strategy – it is only required to be consulted with. It is considered that this is inappropriate and gives Folkestone and Hythe District Council little control over what it to be proposed and how and when it will be delivered.

It is therefore requested that the policies be more specific in identifying what would be regarded as 'critical' infrastructure needed to support the development and either a timescale or set of trigger points to govern when that infrastructure should be in place. For example, when specific highways improvements are expected to be carried out, and schools are expected to be delivered, in relation to the delivery of dwellings/other development. There should be additional detail provided regarding what will be expected to be included within the detailed phasing and delivery strategy, and that this should be agreed by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be carried out in accordance with it.

It is recognised that the emerging masterplan which is being prepared in support of the planning application does currently address some of these concerns, and that Folkestone and Hythe District Council proposes to address and secure an appropriate solution to the issues through negotiation on the planning application and associated S106 agreement. However, without these details being set out as policy requirements, this does not provide the necessary safeguards that these matters will be addressed appropriately through the development.

We hope that we can work with you to agree an appropriate form of wording to be included within the Plan, to address these concerns. You have advised that the timetable for submission of the Plan does not allow for amendments to be made before this taking

place. It is therefore proposed that the Statement of Common Ground should be used to agree the proposed amendments that will address the Council's concerns.

Please note that due to the timing of the consultation period, this response is provided on a provisional basis, and is due to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on the evening of 14th March 2019. A further response will be provided following that meeting should any changes or additions to this letter be requested by the Cabinet.

Yours sincerely

Ashford Borough Council

CABINET

14TH MARCH 2019

INDUCTION ARRANGEMENTS 2019

As Members will be aware, work has been ongoing to devise an Induction Programme for the new Council from May 2019. With the new Borough boundaries coming into effect there will be an overall increase from 43 to 47 Councillors and there is likely to be a fairly significant number of newly elected Members. The contents of this report have been supported by the Member Training Panel who considered it at their meeting of 22nd January 2019 (the Chairman's Report of that meeting is attached at Appendix A to this report). The programme is intended to follow the successful induction arrangements in the past but also seek to build on these and make improvements where we can.

Following initial discussions with Members, the Member Training Panel and with Management Team we are now in a position to outline a draft of the arrangements and comment on some other emerging issues. Final details and firm dates of the sessions will be made available to Members both prior to, and immediately after, the Elections and further details will be circulated to all Members when finalised.

The current timetable is as follows: -

Induction Phase 1

Election Day – Thursday 2nd May 2019

The Count – Friday 3rd May 2019

Once elected, successful candidates will be met by Member Services Officers at the Count, given a welcome pack containing some important information and some of the immediate forms they will need to complete, as well as being taken to sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and having their photographs taken.

Tuesday 7th May – Wednesday 15th May 2019 – Collection of iPads and Set-Up

As Members will be aware, following the Elections all successful candidates will be provided with an Apple iPad device which will be loaded with the Modern.Gov App to allow them to view all Committee Agendas and Minutes. In addition, the iPad will be loaded with: - Outlook 365 for emails; Microsoft Office; internet access; the App Store; and will be connected to the govroam WiFi network. The device will also come provided with a detachable keyboard, hard case and stylus pen. Members will also be allocated an @ashford.gov.uk email address. All Councillors, whether returning or newly elected, will be given an appointment between the 7th and 15th May 2019 to meet with Officers from the Member Services and IT teams to be given their iPad

device, sign the Terms of Use Agreement and set up the relevant passwords to ensure the device and contents are secure.

Modern.Gov Training - Thursday 16th May 2019 (afternoon and evening sessions)

Members will be provided with some bespoke training on using the Modern.Gov Committee Management System. This will be offered twice as an afternoon and an evening session, and facilitated by Ricky Clarke from Modern.Gov with assistance from Officers.

Planning Committee Training

Session 1 – Wednesday 29th May 2019 – 6-8pm – Council Chamber

Session 2 – July 2019 TBC

THE FIRST OF THESE SESSIONS IS COMPULSORY FOR MEMBERS WISHING TO SIT OR SUBSTITUTE ON PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Session 1

The main purpose of this session will be to get Members up to speed to start dealing with planning applications in time for the first Planning Committee meeting of the year on 5th June 2019. The evening will therefore focus on Development Management and include a role play session/mock Planning Committee and the Legal Officers will discuss probity in planning. The session will also introduce Planning Policy as well as outlining web access and explain how to use the planning part of the ABC website. Key staff within the Unit will also be introduced.

Session 2

This will include a more general introduction to Planning Policy, Building Control, Enforcement and Listed Buildings etc. with some more discussion on the Local Plan and the key DPDs and SPDs.

Service Market Stalls – mid May – Date TBC

The Member Training Panel particularly requested a return to the ‘Market Stalls’ session previously offered in 2007 and 2011. This will involve the Committee Rooms being opened up to house a display table for each service area with some handouts and key personnel present. The format of the 2016 Staff Expo event provides a good template to repeat. This will provide an early opportunity for newly elected Members to put “names to faces” and ask initial questions. **A Briefing Note giving further details of a proposed way forward is attached at Appendix B to this report.**

Code of Conduct/Legal Issues Training – late May/early June – Date TBC

The Monitoring Officer will arrange for Code of Conduct training for both Borough Councillors and Parish Councils to be given, in conjunction with external advisors. The session will offer a basic introduction to the Code as well as the principles of public life and the rules on interests and will include some real life scenarios to work through. All Borough Councillors will be

invited to this event as well as the Clerks and up to two Councillors from each Parish Council.

Licensing Committee Training – late May/early June – Date TBC

COMPULSORY FOR MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE LICENSING & HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Whilst compulsory to Members appointed to the Committee it will also be open to other interested Members. The session will be given an experienced external provider, with input from the Council's Licensing Team. Training will get Members up to speed on the Licensing Act 2003 to enable them to start sitting on licensing hearings and this will include a full mock hearing session. It will also cover key legislation and recent changes, the applications and hearings process and how the Committee and Sub-Committees operate. The session will also introduce the Council's Licensing Department, what it covers and key contacts.

Audit Committee Training – Early/Mid-June 2019 – Date TBC but before first meeting on 18th June 2019.

The session will cover the structure of Audit at Ashford including the roles and responsibilities of Internal and External Audit, key pieces of audit work coming up in the year and the role of the Audit Committee itself.

Overview & Scrutiny Training – Early/Mid-June 2019 – Date TBC but before first meeting on 25th June 2019.

Some specialist 'effective scrutiny' training will be provided by an external provider. This will be a highly participative and practical workshop which will take place in time for the first meeting of the new Committee on 25th June 2019. The aim of the session will be to provide Members involved in Overview and Scrutiny with the necessary skills and strategies to carry out effective scrutiny on Council related issues and engage effectively within the Council and the community. Whilst particularly relevant to Members appointed to the Committee, all Members (including Portfolio Holders) will be encouraged to attend.

Induction Phase 2

Following the initial flurry of essential and important induction and training in the opening weeks of the new Council, it is intended to move to the next stage of training sessions. This will include more service based and topic specific sessions which, whilst still important, are not quite as urgent and can hopefully be delivered over the remainder of 2019. It is recognised that there is a lot to cram in initially, so Officers will not try to do all of this in the first couple of months. An outline of some initial suggested areas is detailed below, including the Council's more 'outward' facing Services, and it is considered that perhaps one of these sessions could take place per month up to December 2019 (the proposed content is not exclusive, but areas which Members and Officers have previously recommended be covered):-

Local Government Finance

With the importance of the Council's financial position, budget and income and expenditure, a dedicated Member training session on the Council's finances has been proposed. This would cover: -

- The budget and what it covers in simple terms.
- How the Council is funded?
- A summary of income and expenditure.
- Commercial investment.
- The position on grants the Council receives and the shortfalls due to cuts.
- Borrowing/Investments/Assets
- Council Tax.
- Benefits and debt recovery.
- HRA/Housing Finance
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

Housing

- The Housing team and its functions.
- The housing problem.
- The housing list and how it works.
- Explanation of Affordable and Local Needs Housing and Council House Building Programme
- Social Services (and how ABC Housing fits in).
- Tenants Complaints Panel.
- Site inspections.
- Involvement in major housing projects with Planning.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions (including outline of Area Managers).

Cultural Services

- An outline of the Service and its aims/functions.
- Sports Centres and Facilities.
- Cultural/Arts Events and Festivals.
- Tourism.
- Parks and Open Spaces.
- Nature Conservation.
- Local Heritage and History.
- Liaison with the Voluntary Sector.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

Environment and Land Management

- Waste and Recycling.
- Aspire Landscape Management.
- Street Cleansing.
- Cemeteries.
- Allotments.
- Dog Warden
- Community litter picking.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Emergency Planning and Business Continuity
- Highways and Parking (including relationship with KCC and role of the Joint Transportation Board).
- Community Safety and the Community Safety Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing

Other

The following sessions have also been suggested to be delivered to Councillors in the first year of the new term.

- Social Media Use - Possibilities and Pitfalls (Externally Provided).
- Data Protection/GDPR/Freedom of Information/Cyber Security.
- Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse.
- Dementia Awareness.
- Diversity

At all sessions offered, the emphasis will be on stripping information down to the bare bones and presenting it as concisely and simply as possible, so as to not bombard new Members and to send clear messages. It would be useful to invite Portfolio Holders or key Members to be part of the training team for relevant sessions.

It is recognised that a lot of induction/familiarisation occurs within Political Groups and it is not the intention of Officers to “tell Members how to be a Councillor”, but we do have to bear in mind that not all Elected Members will have that Group support. The induction process is intended to be more about arming Councillors with the necessary tools to enable them to do their jobs effectively and let Members find their way – either individually or within their Political Groups.

Other Matters for Consideration

On-Line Training/Training Library (including alternative methods of delivery)

As always we are looking at ways to modernise the way we deliver our training. There are already options to undertake e-learning modules through the Learning Nexus platform. We will also be establishing a ‘training area’ for Members to access via Modern.Gov within the Council’s website. It is accepted that not every Members can attend every training session, so this would enable us to place training materials in a library/archive type format which Members can dip in to and access throughout their time as a Councillor. It will also, along with the Framework Documents mentioned below, remain ‘live’ and be updated and added to when needed. We will also explore opportunity to record the live training sessions so that this can possibly be viewed back in video or audio format.

Other Induction Materials

Members have requested that they be provided with a map of the building showing the location of each Service area and that the staff phone directory be extended to also include the part of the offices where they sat. It is also intended that all newly elected Members will, as usual, be provided with a copy of the LGA Guide for New Councillors.

Framework Documents

In addition to the training and induction sessions mentioned, it is also proposed that as part of the Induction Arrangements Members again be provided with Framework Documents. A folder of printed documents was issued in 2015 and was well received. These documents were either Service or topic specific and a particular 'What to Expect as an Ashford Borough Councillor' one which was popular. There is an appetite to repeat this and work has already begun on their production, however there was a significant amount of work involved in producing, compiling and printing these so the feeling is that they should be delivered on-line and housed in the aforementioned training library (in accordance with the wider Digital Transformation work). Members previously suggested that it would be useful to receive 'mug-shots' to enable them to put names to faces for key personnel in their early days as a Councillor. It is therefore proposed that the service specific Framework Documents contain these and we will also attempt to get a Councillor photo gallery produced and circulated as soon as possible after election day.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

It has been suggested that some sort of simple FAQs document be put together and distributed to new Councillors. Initial suggestions for inclusion in this are: - how to dress for meetings; and standing for the Mayor at Full Council meetings etc. If Members have any suggestions as to the sort of information that should be included or would have been useful for you, this would be welcomed by Member Services.

Buddy System

It has also been suggested that we should consider implementing some sort of 'Buddy System' whereby an experienced Councillor is paired up with a new one to show them the ropes and be able to provide them with advice should they need it. It is accepted that this may well be done within Political Groups anyway, but a more informal arrangement, also involving Members from the smaller groups or individuals, may be the way forward. Members views on this arrangement are sought.

Recommendations:

That the Cabinet comment on and endorse the content of the proposed Member Induction Programme for 2019.

Ashford Borough Council

Report of the Chairman of the Member Training Panel – 22nd January 2019

1 Introduction

1.1 A meeting of the Member Training Panel was held on the 22nd January 2019.

The Members present were:-

Councillor Feacey (Chairman);
Councillor Mrs Bell (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors W Howard, Krause, Link.

Apologies: -

Councillors Farrell, A Howard.

Also Present:-

Councillor Shorter,
Member Services Manager (Operational).

2 Chairman's Report – 6th December 2016

2.1 **Resolved:**

That the report be received and noted.

3 Draft Induction Arrangements 2019

3.1 A draft programme for the events to be included within the Induction for the new Council from May 2019 was presented to the Panel. The Member Services Manager (Operational) ran through the draft programme and said that he hoped it covered the majority of the points previously made by both Members and Management Team. It was based largely around the successful model of previous years with some relevant additions. Once the draft programme had been endorsed by this Panel it would need to be discussed with Management Team and the Officers who would be involved in the sessions, and firm dates and times could be put to each session. It would go to the Cabinet for final endorsement in March. Even once agreed, the programme was not exhaustive and would evolve as time went on. Member Services would always be receptive to any ideas and suggestions.

3.2 The Chairman said that he had been involved in the compilation of the report and supported the contents. He had been keen to promote alternative methods of delivering training, including web based options and the possibility of recording sessions to store and watch back at a later date.

3.3 The Chairman opened the report up to the Panel and the following points were made: -

- Whilst the complexities around making Member training ‘compulsory’ were well understood, the Panel considered that training in both GDPR and Safeguarding should be badged as compulsory. Both areas were a potential threat to the finances and reputation of individual Elected Members, as well as the Council as a whole, and the Panel would support any recommendation coming forward on this from Overview and Scrutiny. Members asked that any learning on these subjects undertaken in other roles could also be recognised to avoid duplication.
- A Member said that the e-learning opportunities available through Learning Nexus were very good and easy to use. He asked if the new Member iPads could be pre-loaded with easy access to this training programme and if its ease of use could again be promoted to Members.
- The Panel asked if the previous ‘Market Stalls’ approach could again be pursued. This had been a session that had taken place following the 2007 and 2011 Elections and involved the Committee Rooms being opened up to house a display table for each service area with some handouts and key personnel present. The format of the recent Staff Expo event provided a good template to repeat. This would provide an early opportunity for newly elected Members to put “names to faces” and ask initial questions. This idea would be pursued with Management Team.
- It was also suggested that Members be provided with a map of the building showing the location of each Service area and that the staff phone directory also include the part of the offices where they sat.
- The Panel was supportive of the content of the induction programme as drafted. It was suggested that a couple of areas be added, namely Diversity and some externally provided Social Media training. Councillor Mrs Bell advised that KCC Members had recently received some particularly good Social Media training and she would pass on the name of the provider.
- The concept of a training library was welcomed, particularly as it was recognised that not every Member could attend every session and it would also be useful for Members elected in by-elections. Such a library was also considered the best place to house the new Framework Documents.
- There was also support for the proposed informal Buddy System and it was considered that a pool of more experienced Members who were willing to help should be sourced prior to the Elections. It was accepted that such an arrangement may happen within Political Groups anyway, but a more informal arrangement, that was non-Political, would be useful, particularly for Members in small groups or those not in a group at all.

3.4 Resolved:

That

- (i) subject to the addition of diversity training and some externally provided social media training, the content of the proposed Member Induction timetable for 2019 be endorsed.**
- (ii) the possibility of holding a 'market stalls' type session, with a chance to be introduced to key staff from each Service, be investigated with Management Team.**
- (iii) The Panel is supportive of any recommendation to make GDPR training and Safeguarding training compulsory for all Elected Members.**
- (iv) the other matters for consideration, namely: - on-line training; the training library; framework documents; FAQs; and a buddy system all be supported.**

Councillor P Feacey
Chairman – Member Training Panel

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services:
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: <http://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

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Market Stalls 2019 Briefing Notes

Showcasing the Council's Services to Councillors

Why?

May 2019 sees the next Borough election which will result in an increased number of Councillors, which will consist of new and potentially returning Councillors. A wide Member Training Programme is being devised to cover Committee specific topics, such as Planning, Scrutiny and Audit training. The Member Training Panel have recommended that the Market Stalls exhibition be reinstated and following on from the success of the Staff Expo 2016 it is felt that this is achievable with support from Management Team.

The Council does extraordinary work for the residents of the borough. Much of this work goes unnoticed and unrecognised, particularly in relation to the services which are not necessarily high profile or customer facing. In order to support Councillors it is important that they understand the functions of the Council, the corporate structure and how we all work together to achieve the authority's corporate plan.

The Market Stalls will provide an opportunity talk to Councillors, new and returning, about the work of each Department and Team to further their understanding of the work of the Council.

Over the last two years the structure of the Council has changed and this will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the work of each team.

Who? What?

It is envisioned that all departments are captured, with a key point of contact being identified from each Service to provide information and support to the Member Services Team.

Display areas will be provided for each Service and teams within, with two members of staff from each Service available on the day/evening. It is envisioned that display posters will be required in addition to handouts from each team. Input will be required from Services on their leaflets, which can build on those used for the Expo.

When?

Committee Rooms – Mid May (TBC).

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**Notes of a meeting of the
Ashford Strategic Delivery Board
Friday 25 January 2019 at 10.00am**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chairman) – Leader, ABC
 Rt Hon Damian Green MP
 Cllr Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Planning, ABC
 Cllr Graham Galpin – Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property, ABC
 Mr Mike Whiting – KCC, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways,
 Transportation and Waste
 Barbara Cooper – KCC, Director – Growth, Environment and Transport
 Paul Harwood - Highways England
 Mark Lumsdon – Taylor, Hadlow Group
 Chris Moore, Homes England
 Tracey Kerly, ABC

Non Board Members

Cllr Neil Shorter, ABC
 Cllr Aline Hicks, ABC
 Matthew Hogben, KCC
 David Smith, KCC
 Jonathan White, KCC
 Victoria Thistlewood KCC
 Len Mayatt, ABC
 Stewart Smith, ABC,
 Lorna Ford, ABC
 Andrew Osborne, ABC
 SallyAnne Logan, ABC
 Dean Spurrell, ABC
 Jessica Brown, ABC
 Keith Fearon, ABC

Item	Notes	Action
1.	<p>Declaration of Interests</p> <p>Cllr Galpin declared an interest in respect of the discussion under the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board Projects – Next Steps item as his son was involved in the Scale Up Scheme.</p>	ABC

2.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all those present and said he was pleased to report that he had recently attended the opening ceremony for the new Travelodge. He said that the quality of finish was to a very high standard and that the hotel was also disabled friendly. In terms of the new cinema, he understood that attendance figures for the previous weekend had been in the region of 1500.</p> <p>In terms of this meeting he believed that the Board was now at the stage when it needed to re-focus and to help take forward new projects.</p>	
3.	<p>Ashford Strategic Delivery Board Projects – Next Steps</p> <p>Tracey Kerly (TK) gave a presentation on the report enclosed within the agenda papers. The report, four years on from the adoption of the original ‘Big 8’, suggested that the Board review its future role and agree upon a way forward. Circulated at the meeting was a paper which set out the detailed progress on the original ‘Big 8’. The Board noted the position that they were all now more or less delivered.</p> <p>The Board then considered each of the suggested new projects and following questions agreed that the following projects form the new Big 8:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mecca/Vicarage Lane • New multi- storey car parks • Newtown Works • Accessible Ashford • Town Centre place-making • Cultural Quarter • Chilmington Green and the wider south of Ashford growth area • Commercial Quarter <p>In addition to the new ‘Big 8’ the Board agreed that they would keep a ‘watching brief’ on a series of other projects which were currently well underway and oversee ‘emerging projects’, details of which are set out below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elwick Road • Station Spurs • Ashford College • Designer Outlet Expansion • Junction 10a 	ABC/KCC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasmin Vardimon • Victoria Park • Conningbrook Country Park • Park Mall and Somerset Road <p>During discussion on the proposed new Multi Storey car parks, it was acknowledged that as part of the work on this there would be a need to develop a Transport Strategy for the town centre.</p> <p>In terms of the recent announcement about the closure of the Marks and Spencer store in the town centre, the Board regretted the decision but hoped that another operator could be found to take over that particular unit.</p> <p>In terms of future working with the private sector, the Board favoured the options of holding annual breakfast briefings and also making specific invitations for key investors and developers to meet with the Ashford Strategic Project Delivery Board. It was also accepted that the use of Ashford story tellers and Scale Up work with small and medium enterprises would help to enliven developments.</p> <p>Paul Harwood (PH) also referred to the future upgrade of the Orbital Park junction following the J10a works. TK said that consideration needed to be given as to how best to incorporate this project into the work of the Board.</p>	
4.	<p>Jasmin Vardimon and Javelin Way Development</p> <p>Jonathan White (JW) and David Smith (DS) gave a presentation on KCC's proposals for a development on their land at Javelin Way, Henwood Industrial Estate. This would comprise a creative laboratory for Jasmin Vardimon Dance Studio and the provision of 29 new industrial units which would help financially to support the overall scheme.</p> <p>The dance studio element would provide a rehearsal facility and offer training for local people and it was hoped that work could be started in April 2019, with completion in 2020.</p> <p>The Board were very supportive of the project, particularly as Jasmin Vardimon had in the past been encouraged to establish a rehearsal space in the Stour Centre. TK advised that the use of the existing facility by Jasmin Vardimon would need to be managed in the interim until the new facility was available.</p>	KCC/ABC

5.	<p>Chilmington Green and the Provision of Waste Water Infrastructure</p> <p>SallyAnne Logan (SAL) and Victoria Thistlewood (VT) gave a presentation on the progress of the Chilmington Green development and Cllr Neil Shorter (NS) updated on discussions with Southern Water.</p> <p>In terms of governance, SAL explained that Regen Co, had been appointed to provide assistance with the creation of a fit for purpose governance structure and to aid project management. Work was also ongoing in terms of the provision of electrical charging points and the developer wished to expand the CMO. VT also advised that Chilmington Green Primary School was currently operational off site but it was hoped that the first primary school would open on site in Chilmington in September 2020, but that there were issues with agreeing an acceptable haul route with the developer.</p> <p>NS said that Officers had recently met with Southern Water regarding the provision of waste water infrastructure and he confirmed that good progress had been sustained. There was a credible programme to deliver the infrastructure by Spring 2021. A decision was also needed from KCC about whether the scheme needed to have a full Environmental Impact Assessment. Focus had also now changed from provision for Chilmington to Ashford generally and the local plan team had provided information covering the next 15 years.</p> <p>In terms of the improvement works required on the A28, Chris Moore (CM) said that there was an urgent need to identify a funding solution with partners and government to enable these works to take place. The Rt Hon Damian Green MP said that the Secretary of State had been asked to look into this matter.</p>	ABC/KCC/ HE
6.	<p>Commercial Quarter</p> <p>Stewart Smith (SS) advised that the project was progressing well and only 20% of the office space was still available to be let.</p> <p>In terms of the development at the Coachworks, this had received planning approval and it was hoped that work would commence on site in February.</p>	ABC

7.	<p>Elwick Place</p> <p>SS advised that the cinema had opened before Christmas and the Travelodge the previous day. In terms of the retail units, there was a lot of interest, but at this stage no contracts had been signed.</p>	ABC
8.	<p>Ashford International Station Spurs Project</p> <p>Andrew Osborne (AO) advised that Atkins had been appointed to undertake a feasibility study and detailed design to resolve the technical fault regarding the power supply which would be completed in April 2019 with remedial work to follow later in the year.</p> <p>AO also explained that Eurostar continued to serve Ashford International with the same pattern of service which operated between December 2016 and April 2018. However, AO said that the Council was in the future keen to seek improvements to the service to Brussels.</p>	ABC
9.	<p>Ashford College Campus</p> <p>Mark Lumsdon-Taylor (MLT) explained that a property on the Wooton Road Industrial Estate had been acquired to house the Technical and Engineering Centre which had been displaced from the Jemmett Road site. In the near future another site for Construction trades might also be required. A funding package would be in place by late March/early April for Phase 1A.</p> <p>MLT also explained that Hadlow had also merged with West Kent College, but the identity of Ashford College would be retained.</p>	Hadlow Group
10.	<p>Designer Outlet Expansion</p> <p>Cllr Graham Galpin (GG) advised that he had met with the Outlet Manager who had confirmed that the project was both on time and within budget and that work was also underway with Network Rail on potential improvements to the railway underpass off Newtown Road.</p> <p>AO also explained that he understood that the Outlet had had its best figures for the Boxing Day sales despite the current building works. The Board noted the importance of maintaining good communications in terms of the future road closure.</p>	KCC

11.	<p>Junction 10a of the M20</p> <p>PH advised that construction work was progressing well, with the second of the bridge sections being put in place that weekend. He undertook to check the diversion route for lorries whilst the motorway closure was in place.</p>	HE
12.	<p>Conningbrook Country Park</p> <p>Len Mayatt (LM) explained that the Masterplan had now been drafted and that he would be meeting with adjacent landowners to discuss the document. In terms of the potential use of the KCC depot, good progress had been made initially and a response was now required from the Property Team.</p> <p>It was anticipated that the Masterplan would be reported to the Cabinet in June 2019.</p>	ABC
13.	<p>Victoria Park Rejuvenation</p> <p>LM advised that the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund of £3m would be submitted by the end of February, with a response expected by July. LM also undertook to send a 1 page summary of the bid to the Rt Hon Damian Green MP.</p>	ABC
14.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Friday 26th July 2019</p>	

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Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on the **23rd January 2019**.

Present:

Cllr Clokie (Vice-Chairman in the Chair).

Cllrs Burgess, Mrs Dyer, Galpin, Hicks, Michael, Pickering.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) Cllrs. Hicks and Pickering attended as Substitute Members for Cllrs Heyes and Mrs Bell respectively.

Apologies:

Cllrs Mrs Bell, Bradford, Dehnel, Heyes.

Also Present:

Head of Planning Policy; Principal Policy Planner (IG); Principal Policy Planner (DC); Principal Policy Planner (AT); Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development); Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr Burgess made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.2 Cllr Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Tenterden and District Residents' Association.
- 1.3 Cllr Michael made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

- 2.1 The Notes of the meetings held on 28th November 2018 and 19th December 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Local Plan to 2030 – Inspectors' Report

- 3.1 The Head of Planning Policy introduced this item, and outlined the Inspectors' headline changes to the Plan, which had been consolidated in their report.
- 3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following questions/points were raised:
 - In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy confirmed the Inspectors' view that the Council could now demonstrate a 5.3 year housing land supply. This situation would be secure until October 2019, when the

position would be reviewed and Members would be advised accordingly. He said the housing land supply was a rolling position which was reviewed annually. The housing supply target figures for assessment were provided by the Government and could vary according to the methodology used. Ashford Borough Council's figures were based on the old system, but the new methodology would start to kick in in due course and it would be necessary to review the Council's position in the light of the new approach. He confirmed that it was possible to spread any shortfall over a longer period than the usual 5 years.

- A Member asked about the Council's position in relation to potential appeals. The Head of Planning Policy said that the Council would be in a better position now with a newly adopted Local Plan than it had been 12 months ago. However, the ongoing position would depend on housing delivery and build out rates.
- In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy advised that the new methodology could lead to a reduction in target housing numbers, as the shortfall in delivery since 2011 may no longer be a factor, although it was still likely that the target would remain at a challenging level.
- A Member asked about potential gating factors and the Head of Planning Policy said that he did not expect that the Council would be a gating factor to suitable schemes.
- The Head of Planning Policy advised that the next stage in the process would be for the Council to consider the final amended version of the new Local Plan before agreeing its adoption. Once this had taken place a number of the Council's existing Development Plan Documents would fall away. He said that a draft copy of the final version of the Local Plan would be available for Members before the February Council meeting.
- In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy explained that all amendments covered in the Table of Main Modifications attached to the Inspectors' Report were subject to consultation during Autumn 2018, except for three very minor additional changes proposed by the Inspectors in response to the consultation. He said the planning department would be responsible for applying these changes and applications would be judged against policy criteria.

Resolved

That the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group welcomes the Inspectors' Report on the Examination of the Local Plan to 2030 and recommends that the Council adopts the new Local Plan subject to the Main Modifications appended to the Inspectors' Report.

4 Village envelope exercise – update

- 4.1 The Vice-Chairman in the Chair introduced this item. He opened up the item for discussion and the following questions/points were raised:

- In response to a question, the Head of Planning Policy explained that the maps contained in the report did not show Local Plan site allocations, but were intended to indicate the current built form of the settlement. Members agreed that they would like to see some indication of site allocations on these maps. The Head of Planning Policy undertook to amend the maps to show the location of any major development applications that had been granted, but not yet fully implemented, and where site allocations in the Local Plan were located. Once these sites were fully built out the village envelope boundary would be amended accordingly.
- A Member asked about the standing of village envelopes with regard to Planning Policy. The Head of Planning Policy said that village envelopes were designed to provide some clarity about the interpretation of 'built-up confines' where this was referred to in Local Plan policies. However, they should not be regarded as the sole indication of whether proposed schemes were acceptable or not, and an application outside a village envelope may be acceptable depending on a number of other relevant factors and vice versa. He said that this was particularly the case with larger settlements.

Resolved

The Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group endorses the proposed village envelopes for High Halden, Smarden, Little Chart and Hamstreet set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the plans being amended as agreed above, and recommends that the Cabinet adopts them as informal guidance for development management purposes.

5 Date of Next Meeting

5.1 27th February 2019 2pm Chamber
15th March 2019 2pm Chamber

Councillor Clokie
Vice-Chairman in the Chair – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Agenda Item No: 19

Report To: CABINET
Date: 14TH MARCH 2019
Report Title: SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN



Report Author and Job Title: Danny Sheppard, Member Services Manager (Operational)

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holders are individually specified in the attached Schedule.

Summary: To set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet of Ashford Borough Council.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Where appropriate, individual Wards are indicated.

Recommendations **That the Cabinet receive and note the latest Schedule of Key Decisions.**

Policy Overview: Under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no longer a legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, however there is still a requirement to publish details of Key Decisions 28 clear days before the meeting they are to be considered at. The Council maintains a live, up to date rolling list of decision items on the Council's website, and that list will be presented to the Cabinet each month, in its current state, for Members' information.

Financial Implications: Nil

Legal Implications: n/a

Equalities Impact Assessment n/a

Other Material Implications: Nil

Exempt from publication: No

Background Papers: None

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**CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

The following Key Decisions will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet on the dates stated.

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Gerry Clarkson; Neil Bell; Clair Bell; Mike Bennett; Gareth Bradford; Paul Clokie; Graham Galpin; Alan Pickering; Neil Shorter; and Gerald White.

Copies of the reports and any other relevant documents that are submitted to the Cabinet in connection with a proposed decision will be available for inspection, or on screen, five clear days before the decision date at the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford and at The Town Hall, 24 High Street, Tenterden, during opening hours, or at www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors_and_committees.aspx

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
14th March 2019					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (Including Review for 2019/20)	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance</i>	Cllr Pickering	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	9/3/18
Cycling and Walking Strategy	<i>To seek support for the proposed programme of measures to make the Borough and the town of Ashford, an 'active travel' destination.</i>	Cllr Bennett	Simon Harris	Open	4/9/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Ashford's Environmental Approach	<i>To note progress made against our environmental plans, policies and projects and to note work planned for 2019/20; to seek Cabinet agreement for the Air Quality Strategy; and to approve the creation of an Environmental Policy and Projects Officer to lead on the strategy, plus other cross cutting environmental activity as relevant to the post.</i>	Cllr Bradford	Angela d'Urso	Open	4/12/18
Church Road, Sevington Open Space Play Area	<i>To seek agreement to the authorisation of Highways England funding to support the local community of Sevington for works that are compatible with the relevant Borough strategies.</i>	Cllr Bennett	Amanda Scott	Open	26/11/18
The Future Ashford Town Centre: Draft Vision and Action Plan	<i>To set out a draft vision and action plan for the Town Centre, informed by the findings from the consultation which will be appended to the report.</i>	Cllr Galpin/ Clokie	Richard Alderton/ Lorna Ford	Open	15/11/18
Station Road Multi-Storey Car Park	<i>To provide the outcomes of the feasibility study and propose options along with costings, risks and a delivery timetable for the construction of a multi-storey car park for Station Road, Ashford.</i>	Cllr Galpin	Steve Parish/Jo Fox	Open (Exempt Appendix)	9/11/18
Former Mecca Bingo Hall and Vicarage Lane Car Park – Next Steps	<i>To provide Cabinet with details of the proposed development scheme and ask for approval to work said scheme up into a planning application. Also to recommend the selection</i>	Cllrs Clokie/ Galpin	Stewart Smith	Open (Exempt Appendix)	24/10/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
	<i>and appointment of a JV partner to work with the Council to deliver the project.</i>				

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Data Protection Policy	<i>To introduce a revised Data Protection Policy fully redrafted to bring the councils data protection policies up to required standards.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Tom Swain	Open	3/1/19
Council's response to the consultation on the Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review	<i>The document raises some cross border planning issues where this Council may wish to make representations. If formal objections need to be raised, then these need to be made at this stage of the process to enable them to be considered by the Inspector subsequently appointed to examine the document once it has been submitted to the government.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Simon Cole	Open	1/2/19
11th April 2019					
Adoption of Village Envelope Boundaries	<i>To seek approval to adopt the village envelope boundaries as informal guidance for development management purposes.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Simon Cole	Open	3/12/18
Local Development Scheme – Update	<i>To seek the Cabinet's endorsement of the revised Local Development Scheme and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD timetable and recommend it is formally adopted by Full Council.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Simon Cole	Open	4/1/19
Repton Park	<i>To agree a framework to allow the Trust to</i>	Cllr Bennett	Simon Harris	Open	19/11/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Community Facilities Commuted Sum	<i>draw down S106 funding.</i>				
Personnel Policy Review - Grievance Resolution Policy	<i>To continue the review of the most frequently used 'big six' personnel policies. The report will propose a revised Grievance Policy.</i>	Cllr Pickering	Joy Cross	Open	1/3/19
MAY 2019 – NO MEETING DUE TO BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS					
13th June 2019					
Final Outturn 2018/19	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	18/6/18
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Will Train	Open	18/6/18
Section 106 Agreements – Annual Progress Report	<i>Focus on s106 contributions received in the last year, contributions secured in new agreements and projects that have been supported by s106 funding.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Lois Jarrett	Open	18/6/18
Conningbrook Masterplan	<i>To introduce the draft masterplan which provides a conceptual plan for the park and the</i>	Cllr Bennett	Len Mayatt	Open	4/9/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
	<i>main features to be delivered within it, with S106 contributions from current and potential future developments. The report will also confirm indicative costs and delivery timescales.</i>				
Environmental Crime Enforcement – In House Team		Cllr Mrs Bell	Mark Goodman	Open	22/1/19
Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board – Annual Update 2018/19 and the Way Forward		Cllr Bradford	Angela d’Urso	Open	7/11/18
Royal Military Canal		Cllr Bennett	Len Mayatt	Open	21/2/19
11th July 2019					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	13/7/18
Annual Performance Report 2018/19	<i>The Annual Report will build upon the contents of quarterly performance monitoring, but will also include the following information – An Introduction from the Leader and Chief Executive; Facts and figures about Ashford; Timeline of key achievements in the Borough over the calendar year; Borough</i>	Cllrs Clarkson/ Shorter	Lorna Ford	Open	13/7/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
	<i>achievements; and a Financial Summary.</i>				
8th August 2019					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	10/8/18
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance ‘snapshot’.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Will Train	Open	10/8/18
12th September 2019					
Corporate Commercial Property Strategy – Annual Report	<i>To advise of the revenue performance of the Council’s corporate property portfolio during the last financial period and to advise of proposals to increase profitability in the coming financial period.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Stewart Smith	Open	14/9/18
Animal Policy Update		Cllr Bradford	Angela d’Urso	Open	4/12/18
10th October 2019					
14th November 2019					
Corporate Performance	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of</i>	Cllr Shorter	Will Train	Open	9/11/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Report	<i>how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>				
Medium Term Financial Plan	<i>To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year's Budget process.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	9/11/18
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	9/11/18
5th December 2019					
Draft Budget 2020/21	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	7/12/18
Council Tax Base 2020/21	<i>To present for approval the estimated 2020/21 Council tax base calculation for the Borough and each parished area, on which the major preceptors and local Parish Councils will base their requirements.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	7/12/18
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2019 – 2049	<i>An annual update of the HRA Business Plan financial projections. This report updates the position for the period 2019-49.</i>	Cllr White	Sharon Williams	Open	7/12/18
16th January 2020					

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	11/1/19
13th February 2020					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	15/2/19
Revenue Budget 2020/21	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2019/20 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	15/2/19
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Will Train	Open	9/2/18

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