



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on Tuesday, 25th June, 2019 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)
Councillor Michael (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Chilton, Farrell, Forest, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Krause, Ledger, Link and Mulholland

Agenda

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To receive notification of substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)	
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To declare any interests that 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	
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3. Minutes of the previous Meeting	3 - 6
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ITEM DEFERRED TO A LATER MEETING	
6. Annual Performance Report (including Quarter 4 Performance	19 - 38

Report)

- | | | |
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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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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **26th March 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman);
Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett, Burgess, Dehnel, Farrell, Krause, Miss. Martin.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Feacey, Mrs. Martin.

Head of Environment & Land Management, Head of Cultural Services.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Mrs. C. Bell, White.

Director of Finance & Economy, Housing Operations Manager, Environmental Operations Manager, Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

403 Minutes

The Minutes of this Committee held on the 26th February 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

404 Community Toilet Scheme

The Environmental Operations Manager introduced the report that gave detail on toilet provision in the Town Centre and the impact that the Community Toilet Scheme had.

The report was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions/points were raised:

- A Member asked whether the use of Aid Cards would be considered, whereby card holders would be permitted to park anywhere (within reason and for a reasonable, brief amount of time) and be exempt from parking charges. The Environmental Operations Manager agreed that this could be considered and would take the idea away to discuss with Parking Services.
- In response to a question asking whether costs for the scheme would increase going forward, the Director of Finance & Economy explained that there was the

likely possibility that late charges and invoicing would not yet have been accounted for which would change the outturn position. In addition, the Council were looking to expand the scheme so any underspend could be allocated to costs associated with development. A Member commented that although this scheme had made savings, it was important to remember that the Council were responsible for providing adequate services to residents, even if resulting costs were higher.

- Signage for the scheme and the possibility of disability apparatus e.g. a speaking facility for those hard of hearing were discussed. It was confirmed that lots of work was still ongoing between the Council and other agencies to continually improve the scheme, and this included the possibility of working with charities including Ashford Access. A Member expressed concern that not all sections of the disabled community were consulted, and the Council needed to be mindful to communicate and liaise with a variety of charities and advocacy groups to ensure inclusivity.
- A Member asked about signage at Ashford Gateway. The Environmental Operations Manager confirmed that there were signs at Ashford Gateway, but she would look at making them more visible and conspicuous.
- In response to a question asking about premises insurance for the two toilets remaining and why the 'actual' figures for 2018/19 were not displayed on page 6 of the report, the Director of Finance confirmed that the figures were too de-minimus to charge out.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

405 Safeguarding Update

The Housing Operations Manager introduced this item and explained that a number of changes had occurred to the Council's work towards safeguarding, which were highlighted in the report. These changes included a revision of the policy and the completion of the biannual Section 11.

The report was opened up to the Committee and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member asked what, if any, tracking procedures were in place after the Council made referrals to other partners and agencies. Was there a degree of accountability for the Council and were we culpable to a certain extent. The Housing Operations Manager explained that although KCC had overall responsibility, the potential for accountability was there. Officers used an internal system to track referrals made, but added that communication with KCC could sometimes be inconsistent. Officers had met to discuss this problem, and sought to improve communication channels. She added that so long as an audit trail existed, the Council were covered in terms of fulfilling their duties. A recent domestic homicide review had been undertaken and ABC

were commended for their work. The Councillor for KCC spoke about a recent safeguarding case she had reported to ABC, but had not had a response giving feedback on the case. She appreciated a detailed response would not be appropriate, but a simple email to say the case was being dealt with would offer some reassurances. The Housing Operations Manager advised that Officers would normally respond.

- In response to a question asking how ABC were performing compared to other Councils, the Housing Operations Manager advised that she would obtain that information from KCC.
- The Committee went onto discuss the One Stop Shop at the Willow Centre. The Chairman noted that an increase in domestic abuse had been reported by the Police at a recent O&S meeting, and wondered whether this type of provision was adequate or should be increased. A further point was made stating that the County and Local Authority often worked separately when there may be opportunities for them to work together, in providing outlets for victims. The Housing Operations Manager agreed and would look at the potential to expand and develop the One Stop Shop. She added that Domestic Abuse Officers were available all the time for victims to contact.
- A Member requested that up to date information regarding support for victims be circulated to all Councillors and Parish Councils also.
- The Committee discussed safeguarding training, since only 43% of Members had completed safeguarding training. From May 2019 this training would be mandatory. A Member added that the Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer had drafted an excellent report outlining the responsibilities held by Councillors.
- The Housing Operations Manager went on to talk about her involvement with the peer group review regarding submission of Section 11 toolkit. This submission was required every two years and the peer review gave a valuable insight into how other Local Authorities were approaching safeguarding. Ashford had increased its evaluation score from 'partially met' to 'met'.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

406 Future Agenda Items

It was agreed that future agenda items would be reviewed by the new Committee Members after the election in May 2019.

407 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart

A Member commented that Stagecoach had recently attended the Joint Transportation Board meeting to discuss public transport provision, and therefore

were not likely to be receptive to being invited again to attend an O&S Meeting, so the topic of public transport may be better scheduled for later in the committee's work programme.

An additional comment was made regarding the two recommendations on page 33 of the tracker concerning planning applications, and that Officers must follow these instructions that are set out in the Constitution.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

408 Thanks

Cllr. Miss Martin relayed a message from Cllr. Mrs Martin expressing her gratitude to all Members of the Committee and Officers, since she would not be standing for re-election. The Chairman responded with a message of thanks to Cllr. Mrs Martin for her long-standing contribution to the Committee and her hard work as a Ward Member. He went onto thank fellow Committee Members, Officers and the Senior Policy & Scrutiny Officer and Member Services Officer for their efforts and wished everyone a safe and enjoyable election.

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Agenda Item No:



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Sickness Absence 2018/19

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:

Consider the information provided in this report and advise officers:

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

Date of O&S meeting: 25 June 2019

Chair of O&S Committee: Cllr Noel Ovenden

Relevant Portfolio(s): Cllr Alan Pickering – Portfolio Holder Human Resources and Customer Services

Summary: This report provides annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2018/19

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: none

Contact: Joy Cross
HR Manager
joy.cross@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330 400

Sickness Absence 2018/19:

Introduction and Background

1. This report provides members with sickness absence figures for the financial year 2018/19.
2. Data is presented in the following sections in order to provide more in-depth information to Members for their review; sickness absence per employee, comparison with last year, chronological comparison, service comparison, national and sectoral comparison, reasons for sickness absence and well-being focus.
3. The reported figures for Ashford Borough Council employees have been obtained from sickness absences recorded on the iTrent Payroll and HR system.
4. The figures are presented as the average number of working days lost to sickness per FTE (full time equivalent) employee averaged during the reported period.
5. The council's level of annual sickness absence is compared with previously reported figures, nationally reported figures and with some of our neighbouring authorities.

Sickness Absence per Employee 2018/19

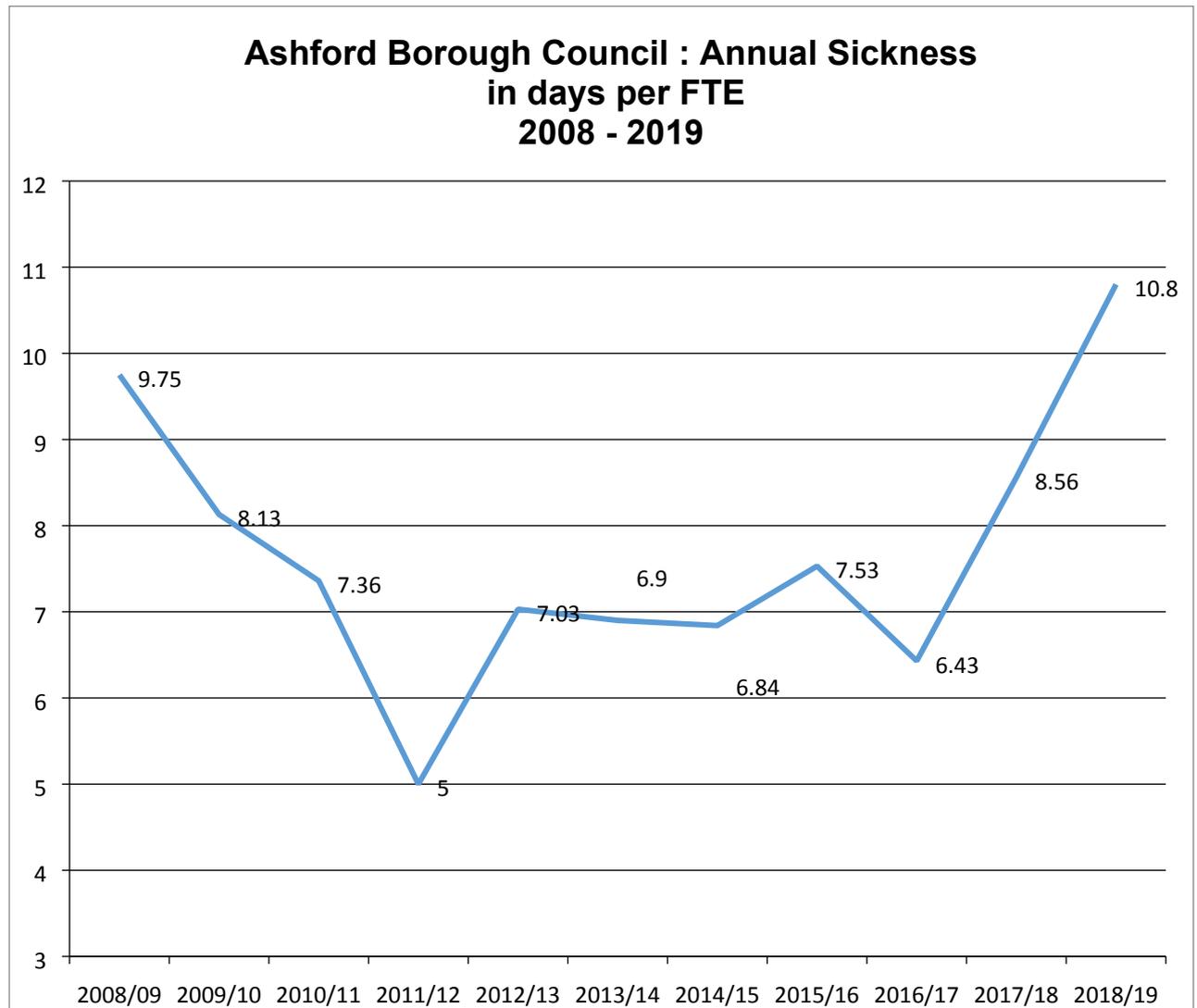
6. A total of 4,558 days were lost to sickness absence across the 12 month period from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. Based on the average number of 424 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees across the 12 month period, the total amount of working days 4,558 days lost due to sickness equals 10.8 days per FTE.
7. 328 employees incurred sickness absence periods during the period 2018/2019. A total of 144 employees 31% (average headcount) of employees did not incur any periods of sickness absence during the 12 month period. This figure remains broadly constant when compared to last year's figure of 29%, a third of employees had 100% attendance.
8. Of the 4,558 days lost due to sickness absence within the period, 44% of this absence is categorised as short term absence, namely absence lasting up to and including 19 days. Therefore 56% of absenteeism is categorised as long-term. The longest period of absence was 260 days.
9. The report deals with issues relating to long term sickness absence and short term sickness absences separately as the nature of these two types of sickness absence, and the way in which they are supported, differs significantly. It is therefore useful to consider the average days lost in each category.
 - Average days lost due to short term sickness absence equals 4.7 days per FTE.
 - Average days lost due to long term sickness absence equals 6 days per FTE.

Comparison With Last Year

10. Last year a total of 3,495 days were lost to sickness absence across the 12 month period from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018; there has been an increase of 1,063 days this year. There has also been an increase in the average number of employees, last year we reported an average FTE (full time equivalent) of 408.07 and this figure has increased by 15.93 FTE.
11. The total amount of working days lost due to sickness for 2018/2019 equates to 10.8 days per FTE; this figure has increased by 2.2 days from the previous year (8.6 days).
12. The number of employees incurring sickness absence remains broadly constant when compared with the previous year. In 2017/2018 319 employees incurred sickness absence periods whereas this figure is now 318 employees. Last year, based on average headcount, 29% of employees did not incur any periods of sickness absence during the 12 month period; this year's figure is 31%.
13. This year 44% of absence is categorised as short term absence (less than 20 days) and 56% of absence is categorised as long term (more than 20 days). Last year 55% of sickness absence was short term and 45% was due to long term sickness absence. Within the long term category the longest sickness absence period was 217 days whereas this year the figure is 260 days. Long term sickness absence was reported in cases relating to 39 employees; previously this figure was 27.
14. Mental ill health (including stress) accounts for 27% of the council's long term absences, which is significantly less than last year when it was 45% and is less than the national average for this year, which is 43%.
15. The current position in relation to the 39 employees who were absent long term is as follows:-
 - 35 employees have either returned to work or left the employment of the council
 - 2 employees are due to return to work in June 2019
 - 2 employees are currently undergoing consideration for ill health retirement

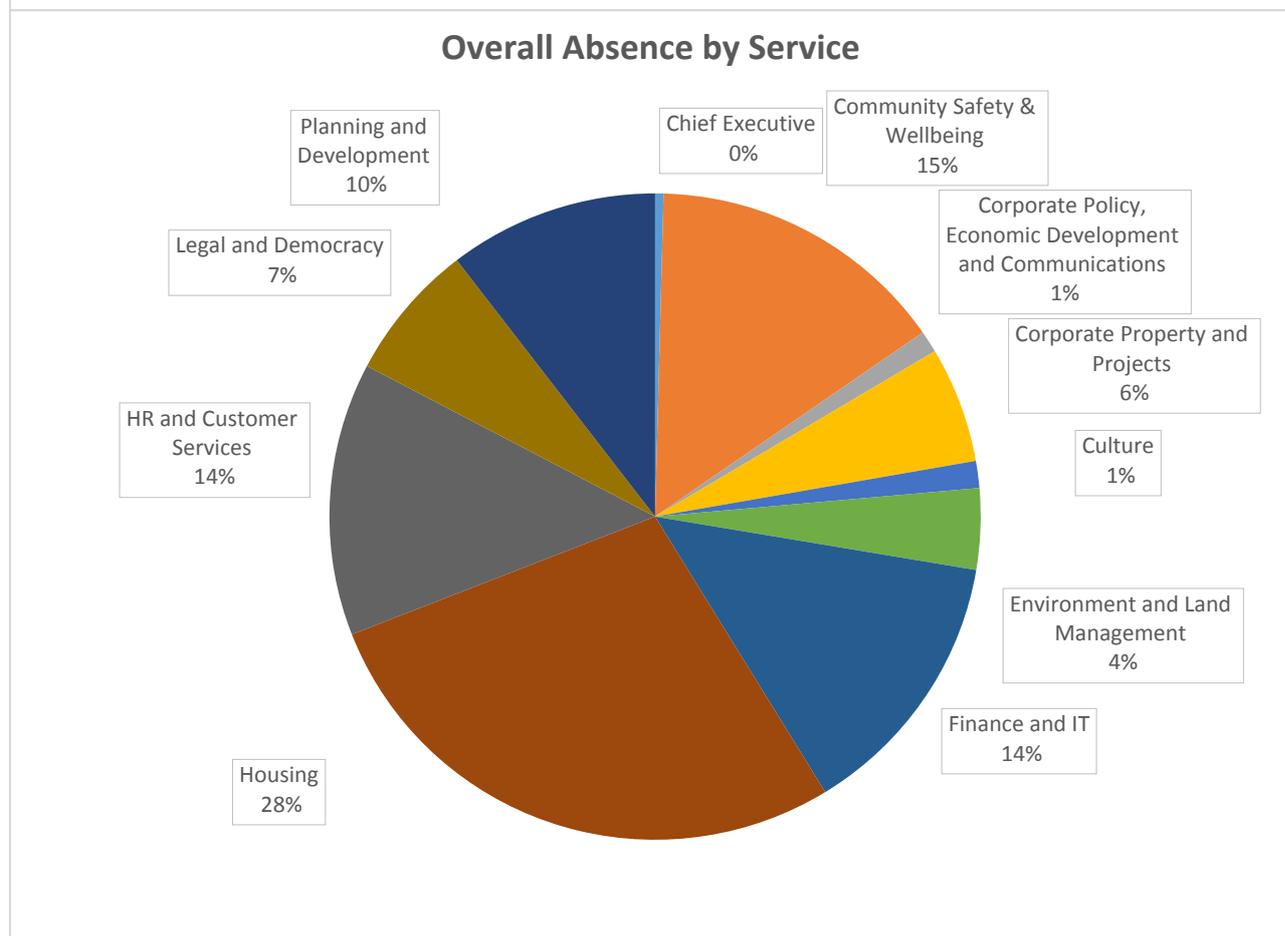
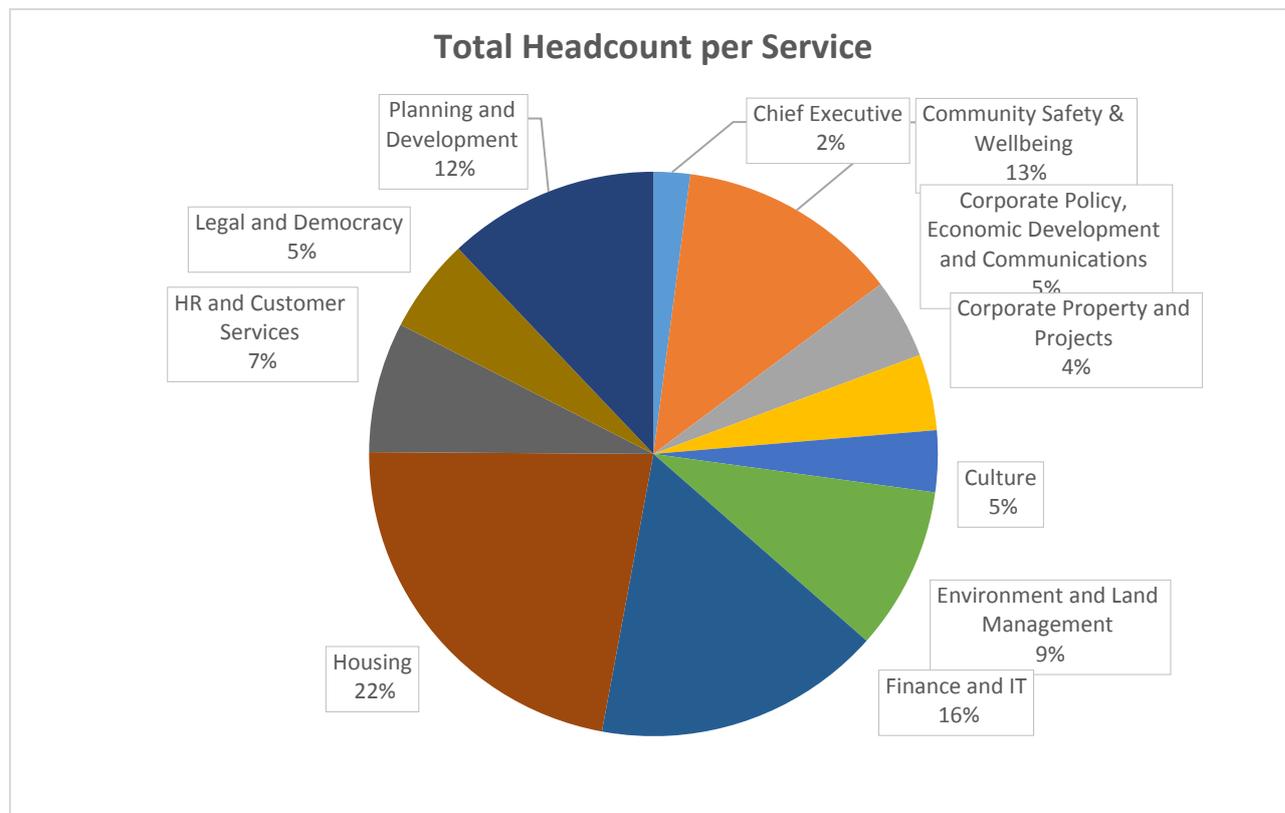
Chronological Comparison

16. The following chart shows the number of days' sickness absence per employee (FTE) for each financial year since 2008/2009.



Service Comparison

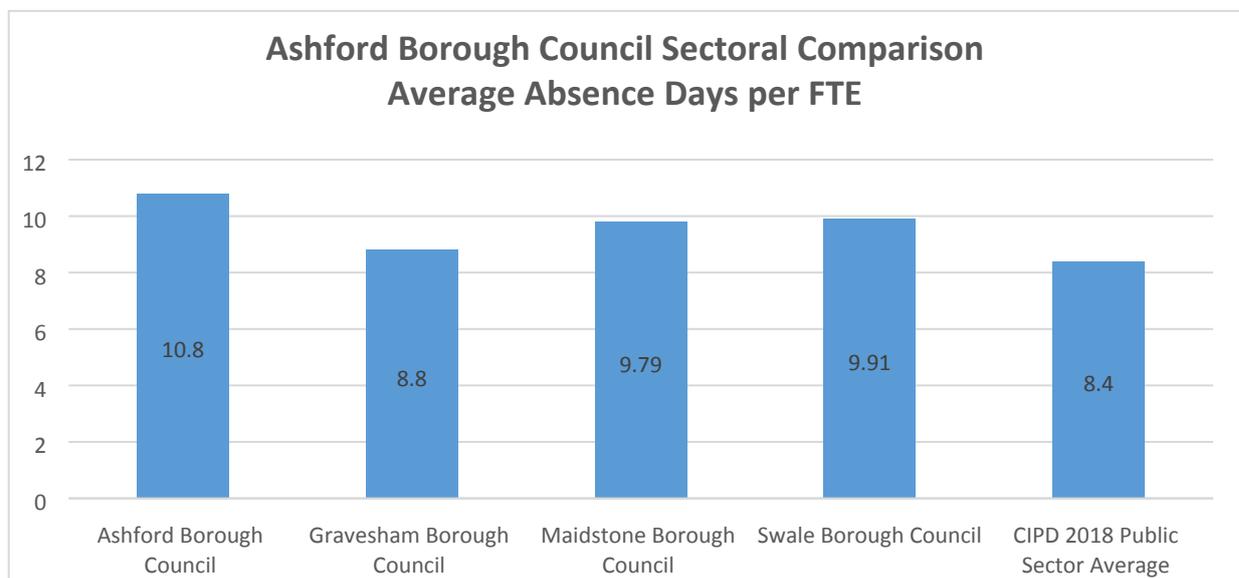
17. The following show how absence is distributed amongst services with days lost by service being displayed against the total headcount per service at 31st March 2019.



- 18. There is clear overall correlation between these two charts indicating that absence is mostly distributed evenly across the organisation.
- 19. The significant exceptions are Housing and HR & Customer Services.
- 20. In Housing, the main cause of long term sickness absence was acute/chronic illness, which accounted for 62% of long term absence in the Service.
- 21. This was also the case in HR & Customer Services, where acute/chronic illness accounted for 56% of long term absence in the Service.

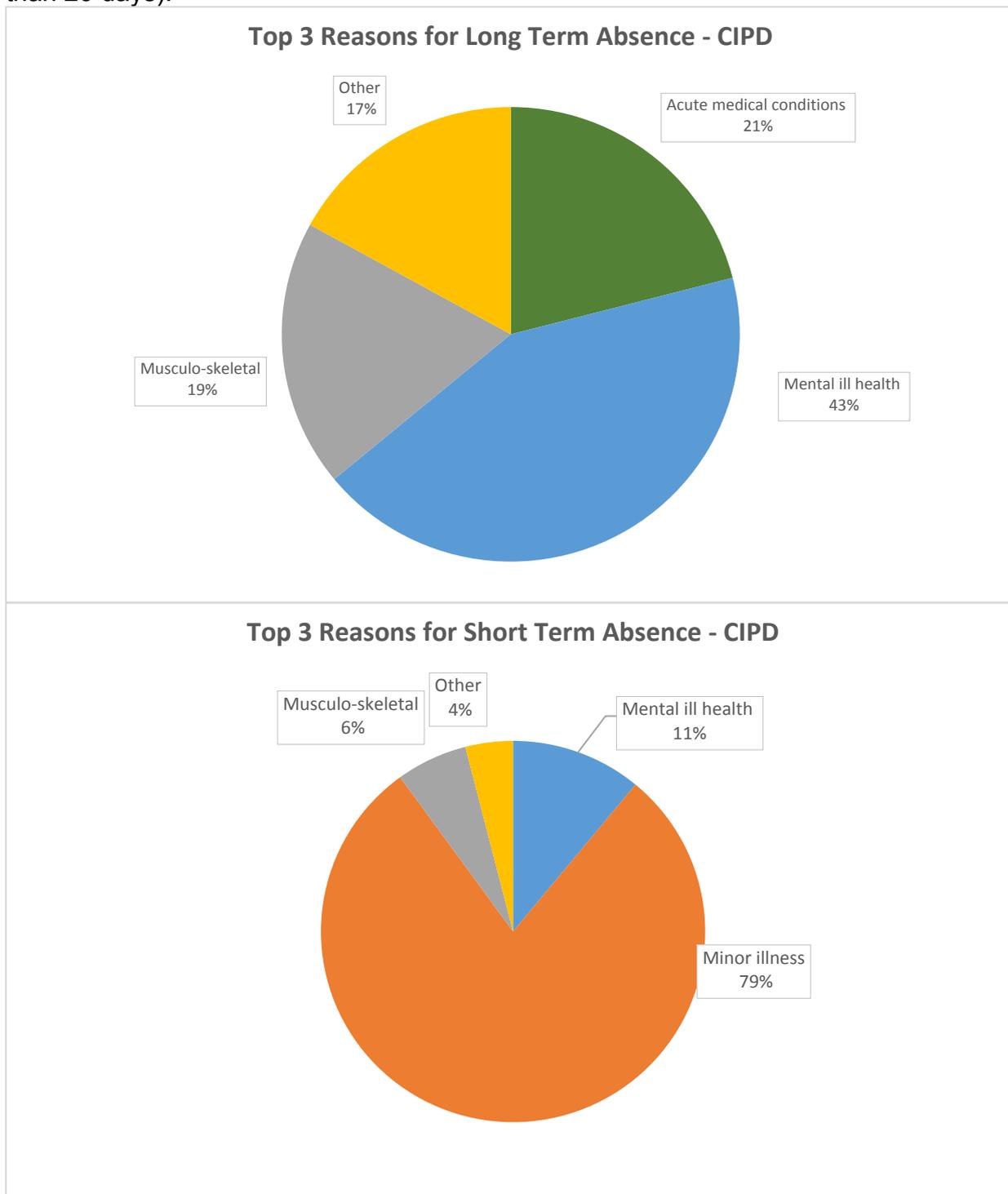
National & Sectoral Comparison

- 22. The April 2019 Health and Well-being At Work Survey produced by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported on national absence trends across sectors.
- 23. The Survey reported an average sickness rate for the public sector of 8.4 days per employee (FTE) which is a slight decrease from the figure of 8.5 days per FTE in 2017/18.
- 24. The chart below shows how the council compares with the national average for the public sector and some of our neighbouring authorities.



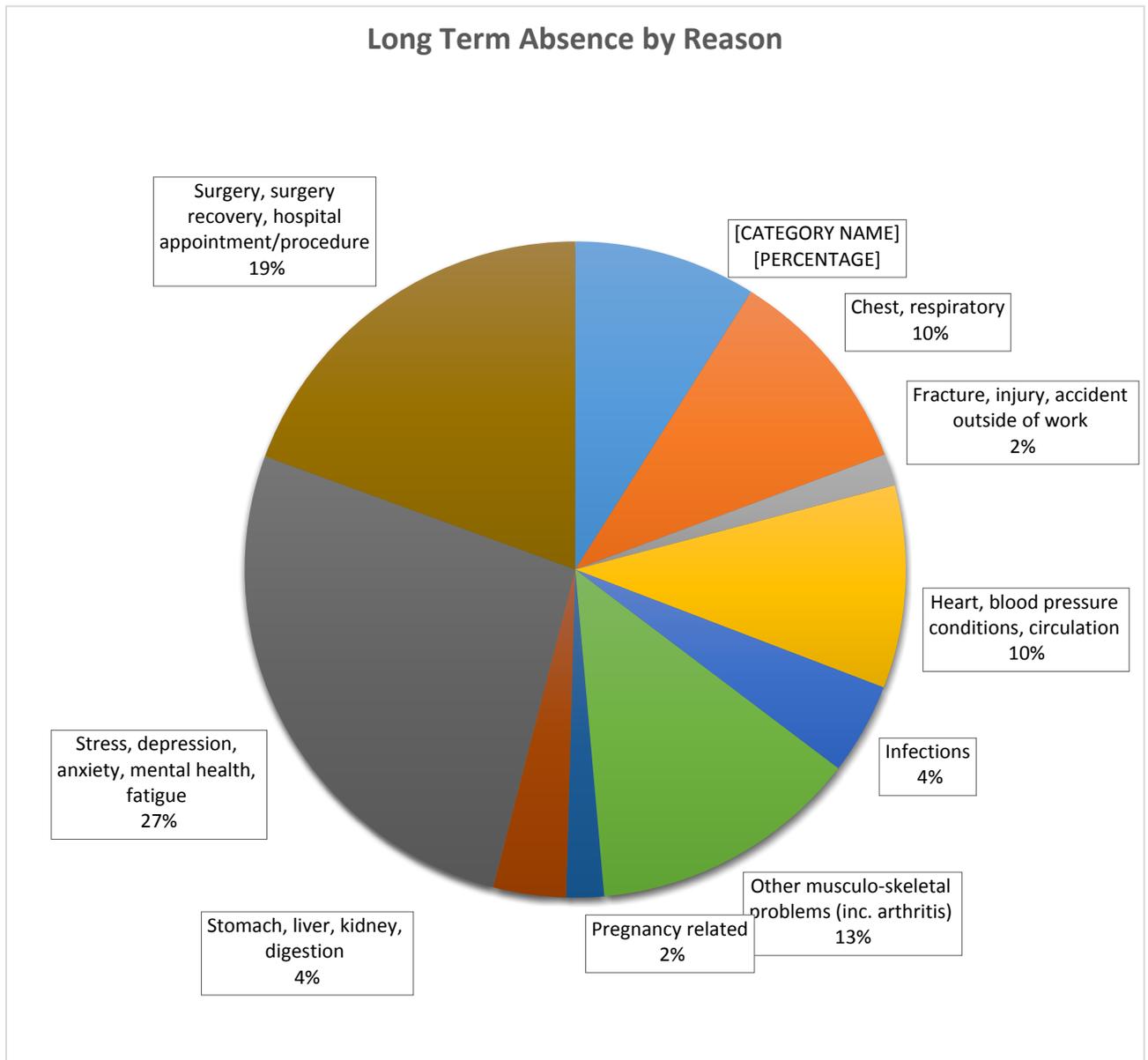
Reasons for Sickness Absence

25. The CIPD Health and Well-being At Work Survey reported on the most prevalent reasons for both long term sickness absence and short term sickness absence (less than 20 days).



26. The following two charts detail the reasons for our long term and short term sickness absence.

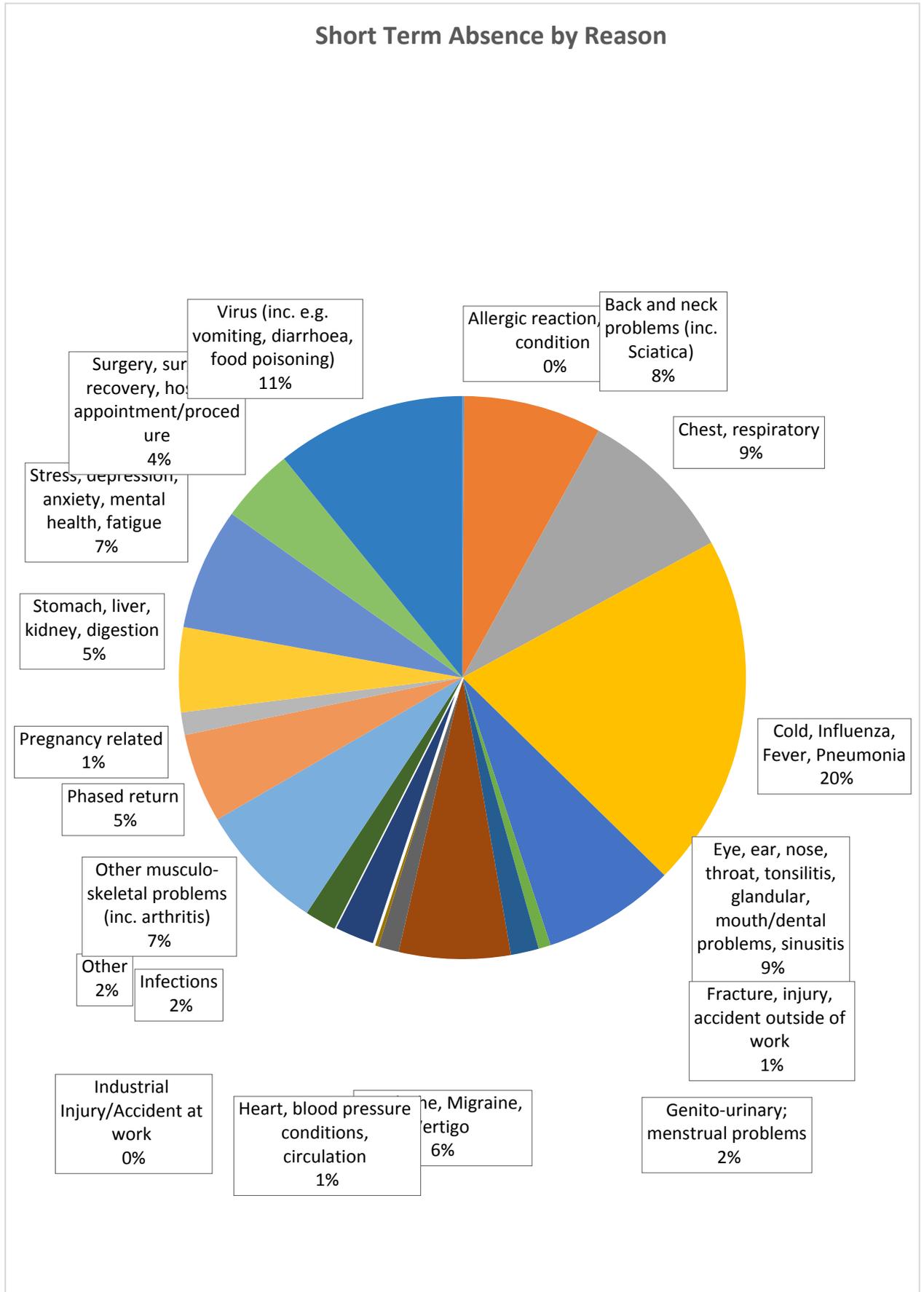
27. Long Term Absence By Reason – Ashford Borough Council



28. Comparison with National Trends - Long Term Absence

- CIPD trends indicate that 43% of long term absence is caused by stress and mental ill health. In Ashford Borough Council this 27% of long term absence is attributable to stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue. This is a significant reduction from 2017/18 when it was 45%.
- 21% of long term absence according to the CIPD is due to acute medical conditions such as cancer, stroke and heart conditions. Surgery, surgical recovery, hospital appointments/procedures make up 19% of long term sickness absence within the council.

29. Short Term Absence By Reason – Ashford Borough Council



30. Comparison with National Trends - Short Term Absence

- The CIPD report that 79% of short term absence is caused by a wide range of minor illnesses such as cold, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines. This trend is reflected on the council's data with colds making up 20.3% of short term absence, viruses 10.8%, chest and respiratory illnesses 9.1% and headaches 6.4%.
- Mental ill health makes up 7% of short term absence within the council which is a reduction of 3% from 2017-18. In the CIPD Survey mental ill health equates to 11% of short term absences. Musculo-skeletal conditions make up 6% of reported absence in the CIPD Survey and make up 15.2 % of reported short term sickness absence in the council.
- Phased returns to work make up 5.1% of short-term absence within the council, demonstrating the important part that recuperative return to work plans play in facilitating an early return to work following sickness absence.

Well-Being Focus

31. Mental ill health (including stress) is the major cause of long term sickness nationally and within the council. However there has been a sharp drop at the council in the proportion of long term mental ill health sickness absences over the last year.
32. Nationally, mental ill health accounts for 43% of long term sickness absence whereas it represents 27% of long term absence for the council, a reduction from 2017-18 when it accounted for 45% of all long term absence.
33. The council utilises support from an occupational health provider to provide medical opinion and an employee assistance programme to provide online, telephone and face to face counselling. We are able to refer staff with stress or anxiety to the Active Care service for an early intervention and provision of guidance and advice on support mechanisms.
34. The council ensures that DSE Assessments are carried out for staff returning to work from absences related to musculo-skeletal conditions. Where appropriate, workstation assessments are carried out by Posturite for advice on provision of ergonomic office equipment and other workplace adjustments.
35. The council also utilises the services of the Government's Access to Work service for workplace assessments for staff with a disability and the provision of discounted equipment and software.
36. Staff returning to work from an absence related to mental ill health are given the opportunity of completing a stress risk assessment in order to identify potential workplace stressors. An action plan is then formulated by the employee and their line manager, facilitated by HR, which is reviewed on a regular basis.
37. All staff attended SDI workshops which assist employees in understanding relationships and potential areas of conflict in the workplace.
38. There are regular articles on wellbeing within monthly staff communications.

39. Workplace Wellbeing Week is held on an annual basis, focussed on proactive wellbeing for employees.
40. Mental Health training has been undertaken by employees & managers and Personal Resilience in the Workplace training was provided as part of the 2018/19 Training Strategy

Conclusion

41. Sickness absence levels have increased for the council, primarily for long term absence, where there was increase in the number of staff members absent with acute / chronic illness.
42. Mental ill health in the accounts for far fewer of long term absences than in 2017-18 and is below the national average.
43. A summary of the figures within this report can be found in the table below.

Description	2017-2018	2018-2019
Number of days (averaged) lost due to sickness absence across the 12 month period from 1 st April to 31 st March	3,495	4,558
Total amount of working days lost due to sickness within the year FTE	8.56	10.8
Number of employees incurring sickness absence	319	328
% of employees taking no time off work due to sickness absence	29%	31%
% of short term and long term absence	55% and 45%	44% and 56%
Number of cases of long term sickness absence	27	39

Next steps

44. The revised Sickness Policy has been reviewed following consultation with working groups and Unison, and a draft is currently with Unison for comment ready for formal consultation via the JCC. The implementation of the policy will include a review of associated procedures and training for managers.
45. Future well-being campaigns will focus on preventative measures staff can take to keep themselves well, such as taking up routine NHS screening programmes, the services provided by the One You service in the town centre.

46. We will maintain a focus on mental ill-health to keep these levels comparatively low and ensure that we continue to provide regular updates on mental health and well-being training for managers and personal resilience training for all staff.
47. We have had good feedback about the service we get from Health Assured, our EAP, and we continue to signpost and refer staff to this. We will also provide greater signposting and communications about physical wellbeing aspects both through Health Assured product and through other mediums. Health Assured includes a wealth of information such as how to boost your physical resilience, healthy eating, musculoskeletal health, heart health, cancer awareness, back pain, upper limb/lower limb health awareness.

Contact and Email

Joy Cross, HR Manager joy.cross@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330 400

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
2018-2019



MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

As we approach the end of the council's current corporate plan, it is appropriate to reflect on both the achievements of the borough and its future. Our latest annual report shows that the council continues to operate well and deliver high quality, well-resourced services for residents and businesses in the borough; whilst also delivering key strategic priorities such as the Local Plan to 2030 and the first phases of development at Chilmington.

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one for the borough, with new developments such as The Coachworks and the Designer Outlet Extension adding to the town's offer and helping to build a renewed sense of civic pride in the borough. I look forward to sharing more of Ashford's continued progress with you all in future issues of *Ashford for You* and next year's annual report.

GERRY CLARKSON, CBE
Leader, Ashford Borough Council



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The maintenance of effective and good value for money services for residents whilst keeping council tax at the lowest level of any Kent district is a testament to the council's entrepreneurial approach. Through careful planning and working in conjunction with local and regional partners, the council has earned its reputation as an exemplary local authority, delivering transformative change for everyone in the borough and setting a standard for others to follow.

This year, we will be developing priorities for our next corporate plan, covering the period up to 2025, with input from our partners, parish councils, and most importantly our residents.

TRACEY KERLY
Chief Executive, Ashford Borough Council



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Cover photos (from top right)
River Stour, Ashford
High Street, Tenterden (credit: Ady Kerry)
Elwick Place, Ashford (credit: Ady Kerry)
Ashford Snowdogs, Civic Centre, Ashford

Rear cover photos (from top right)
Ashford International Station
Battle's Over: A Nation's Tribute, Ashford
High Street, Tenterden
Chilmington Green masterplan

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT ASHFORD BOROUGH



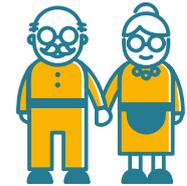
83% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live



4,950 homes in the borough are owned by the council, with 72% of these built since 1945



54% of residents feel the council keeps them well informed



24% of residents will be aged 65 and over by 2030



3.9 million passengers used Ashford International in 2017/18



Ashford is the least densely populated borough in Kent (2.2 people per hectare)



Life expectancy at birth is higher than the national average for both men and women



47% of residents agree that the council provides value for money



93% of planning applications were approved in 2018/19



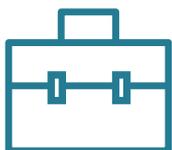
29.1% of the borough's residents are qualified to NVQ4 level



Ashford is the top recycling authority in Kent and 27th nationally



58.5% of adults are physically active, above the national average



Small businesses account for 80% of employers in the borough



Average weekly resident earnings for full time workers were £574.90 in 2018



12.9% of residents are employed in the knowledge economy



127,500 people live in the borough (2017 mid-year estimate)

THE CORPORATE PLAN

2015 - 2020

Memorial Gardens, Ashford

The council's Corporate Plan sets out our priorities for the future, and our aspirations for a borough where people want to live and businesses want to locate. The five priorities of the Corporate Plan are detailed below.

ENTERPRISING ASHFORD

Promote growth and achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford borough. Work to secure inward investment to create a wide range of jobs carried out by a highly skilled workforce.

- A vibrant town centre and a supporting business centre
- A range of jobs with an emphasis on increasing skills levels
- Creating a new local plan that provides for economic growth by allocating sufficient space for new businesses and encourages a range of jobs, especially higher skilled jobs
- Well-planned and well-resourced infrastructure to maintain Ashford's prime location status
- A thriving rural tourism economy and successful rural enterprise.

LIVING ASHFORD

Secure quality homes across the borough, catering for a range of ages, tenures and need, in well planned and attractive new places.

- Identify an adequate supply of housing to meet the range of housing needs
- Create a supply of town centre housing to suit emerging new markets
- Help people meet their housing needs and aspirations
- Maintain assurance of confidence in the planning system



THE CORPORATE PLAN 2015 - 2020

ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD

Provide or enable a range of quality leisure and cultural activities where people can make healthy and affordable lifestyle choices and enjoy assets that create attractive, desirable and active communities.

- Delivery of the best mix of sports, cultural, recreational experiences supporting a range of health and wellbeing benefits for residents of all ages and abilities
- Innovative ways for people to choose active lifestyles
- Grow our cultural offer to be a successful and alternative destination
- Maximise the value of our key green sites

ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD

Achieve an environment that creates higher standards of public space design, alongside improved standards of presentation of key green spaces. Safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape quality to ensure the very best attractive environment with thriving and vibrant town centres.

- Improve and safeguard the quality and presentation of the borough, recognising its unique environment, countryside, local heritage and tourism offer
- Delivery of best mix of new and existing parks and green spaces, incorporating quality public art and cutting edge design
- Strengthen tourism and local heritage offer

OUR UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Remain a well-resourced council, with effective governance, high quality services, good communications, safe surroundings, demonstrating good compliance and high standards.

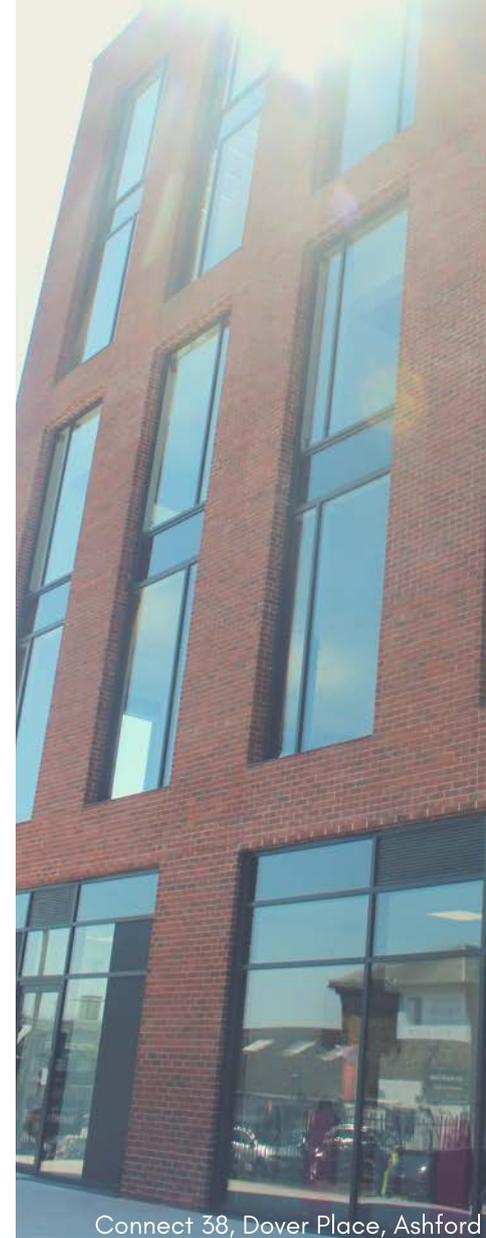
- A viable and sustainable replacement for formula grant, generating an additional £2m per annum by 2020
- Maintain a strong and effective governance framework
- A fair deal for all our residents and businesses through the use of council powers to ensure quality and compliance
- Proactive, useful, relevant and accessible communications and marketing

ENTERPRISING ASHFORD

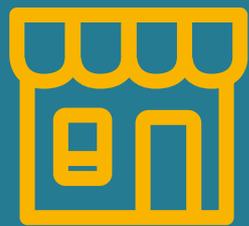
2018/19 has seen a number of key developments for the town centre come to fruition with the delivery of the first phase of the Commercial Quarter in Connect 38, the largest office block to be built in Kent for 20 years, along with other commercial developments such as Elwick Place, the Curious Brewery and the Ashford Designer Outlet Extension adding to the changing skyline of the town, while exciting new ventures such as The Coachworks and the redevelopment of the former Mecca Bingo Hall will bring new life to the town through increasing the social and cultural offer of Ashford while delivering a boost to the nighttime economy.

The council's efforts have resulted in year on year increases in footfall in the town centre in defiance of trends seen across the country, whilst national and international press coverage showcasing the town and the council's approach has continued to drive interest and inward investment.

Connectivity remains key to delivering the effective economic growth of the borough, and the delivery of junction 10a of the M20 (currently under construction) along with the continuation of Eurostar services at Ashford International will ensure that Ashford remains the ideal location for business.



Connect 38, Dover Place, Ashford



Vacancy rates in Park Mall have remained at a low level throughout 2018/19, with 29 of 32 units occupied throughout the year - an occupancy rate of 91%. The council offers ongoing support to traders in Park Mall and has seen footfall in the shopping centre grow steadily each year since it was acquired by the council.

Independent traders such as Made in Ashford, The Little Teapot, Emporia Fabric and Craft, Snap Jewellery and The Record Store ensure a diverse offer within the centre alongside national chains; whilst council-led initiatives such as the 'Splashes of Summer' and Snowdogs Art Trail have provided new experiences in the town to further boost footfall.

Made in Ashford, Park Mall, Ashford





Income for car parks in Ashford town centre increased by 14% in 2018/19 from the previous year, with an above trend increase in October and November coinciding with the 'Snowdogs Discover Ashford' art trail. Whilst income for Tenterden car parks does not follow as predictable a month to month trend as Ashford, 2018/19 has showed a 2% increase in total annual income from 2017/18. Parking provision in Ashford also increased with the opening of the Elwick Place car park in December 2018 delivering 282 additional parking spaces.

The average spend per user across all council owned car parks in Ashford and Tenterden has increased ahead of parking charge increases, showing that people are spending more time in both towns and so demonstrating increased confidence in the borough's town centres. Average spend in Ashford for 2018/19 rose from £2.18 to £2.40, whilst average spend in Tenterden rose from £1.88 to £1.97 over the same period. Strong increases in average spend for both centres in January align with the post-Christmas sales.

Average user spend per session in GBP, Ashford car parks 2017-2019



Average user spend per session in GBP, Tenterden car parks 2017-2019



The council collected 99.13% of owed National Non-Domestic Rates (business rates) in the 2018/19 financial year against a target collection rate of 99%. The council has maintained its discretionary rate relief scheme and provides proactive support to businesses experiencing hardship to assist them in continuing to trade.

Through its service level agreement with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, the council provided support to 102 pre-start and start-up businesses in the Borough in 2018/19. The council also works with established traders to facilitate the expansion of their businesses, such as with Made in Ashford, which has taken on additional space in Park Mall to open a plastic free market.

The council has also brought forward a number of town centre events in the last year to provide new experiences for visitors. The 'Splashes of Summer' campaign in July and August 2018 increased footfall and trade for town centre businesses through a series of family-friendly events and activities provided by LoveAshford.com and designed to animate the town centre.

In March 2019, the Cabinet endorsed the Ashford Town Centre Framework, created in response to the findings of the 2018 town centre consultation and the challenges facing the high street. The Framework sets out a vision and objectives to ensure the success and vitality of the town centre for future generations, as well as an ambitious and exciting programme of projects and activities to be implemented over the next five years.

LIVING ASHFORD

The adoption of the Local Plan to 2030 by the council in February 2019 sets an approach for the borough which aims to make sure that future development is well planned, helping to create great spaces and strong communities and providing a consistent approach to planning across the whole borough.

Ashford Borough Council's reputation for excellence in the housing sector continued to earn national recognition in 2018/19, with the authority nominated for UK Housing and Housing Heroes awards, as well as receiving special recognition for its commitment to welcoming and resettling Syrian refugees.

The council's New Build Affordable Homes Programme 2018–2022 seeks to continue the modernisation of existing sheltered housing schemes and bring forward the delivery of new affordable housing within the borough, whilst continuing the council's existing programme of street purchases and buying back ex-council house properties where appropriate. Through a series of strategic acquisitions of market rent properties, the council's property company has sought to provide a preferable private rented sector offer.



Finberry, Ashford

46 new build affordable houses were delivered by Ashford Borough Council in 2018/19, including the delivery of 34 units of affordable rented older persons accommodation at the multi-million pound modernisation of the Danemore sheltered housing scheme in Tenterden. Modelled on the multi-award-winning, dementia friendly Farrow Court scheme developed by the council in South Ashford, the new accommodation units are built to a high quality and are care ready. The council purchased 10 on-street properties in 2018/19 to bolster the resilience of its housing stock and continued to work with registered providers of social housing, who delivered 99 affordable rented and shared ownership properties in 2018/19.



The loss of rental income on void social rented and affordable properties has been kept low through 2018/19 due to the council minimising void turnaround times. As a percentage of the total rent roll, rent loss on social rented properties fell from 0.36% in quarter 1 to 0.24% in quarter 4, whilst rent loss on affordable properties fell from 1.42% to 1.06% over the same period.



Chilmington Discovery Park (Artist Impression)

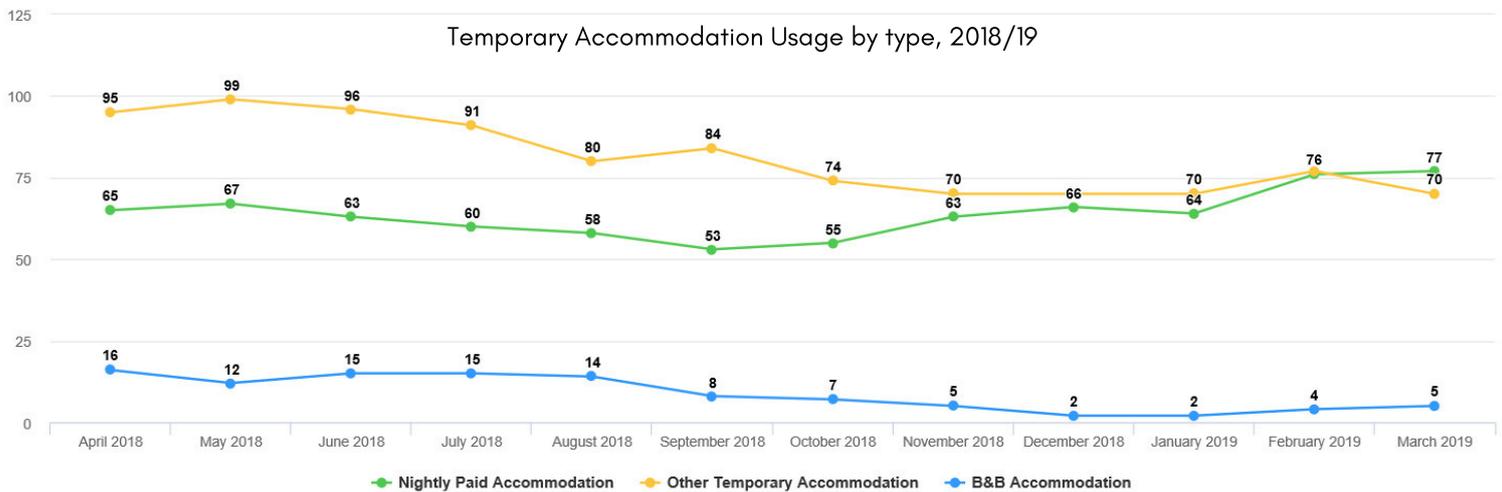


The council administered over £1m of disabled facilities grant adaptations in 2018/19, across more than 80 properties - representing the busiest year for the council in respect of disabled facilities grant cases. The council also spent more than £480,000 on disabled adaptations for council tenancies, with works ranging from fitting handrails to shower and wet room installations.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 expanded the duties of the council in regard to addressing homelessness. In 2018/19, the council prevented 349 households from becoming homeless through actions such as negotiating continuations of tenancies and rent reviews to enable households to remain in their existing accommodation. The council also provided homelessness relief for 250 households through securing alternative accommodation.



Through securing alternative short term accommodation, both provided directly by the council and through other registered housing providers, the council has sought to limit the use of bed and breakfast accommodation to extreme emergency cases only. As a result, the number of households placed in bed and breakfast has reduced steadily through 2018/19, from 15 households at the end of quarter 1 to five households at the end of year.



Danemore, Tenterden



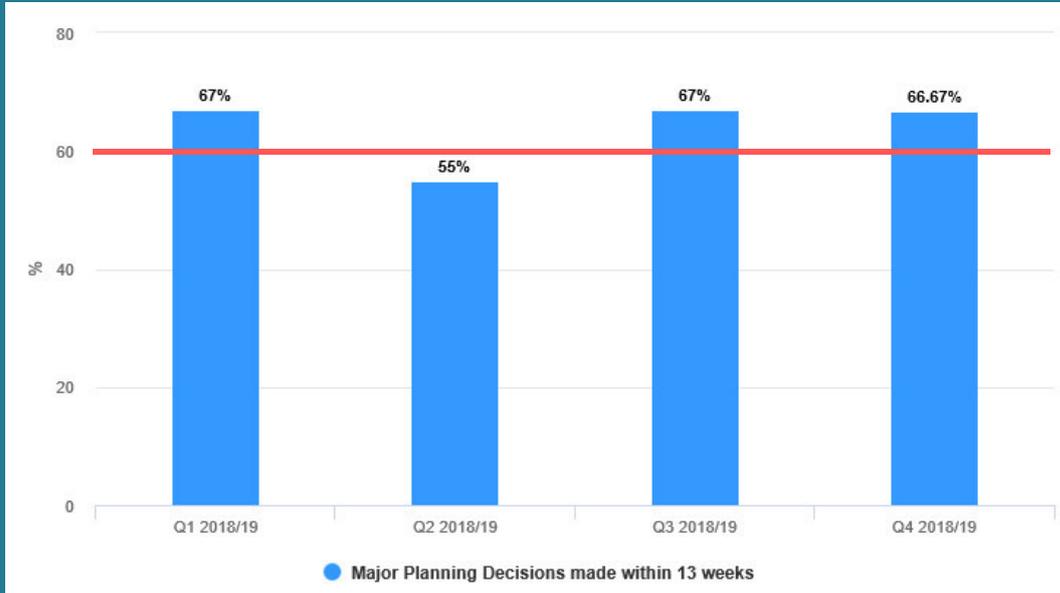
Right to buy application processing times remained well within statutory targets throughout 2018/19, with average turnaround times for confirming the eligibility for right to buy of 9.43 days for tenants living in an ABC property for more than three years (against a 28 day target) and 9.83 days for tenants living in an ABC property for less than three years (against a 56 day target).

The council received and investigated 251 complaints regarding the condition of private rented sector accommodation in 2018/19, of which 119 were resolved informally. Such complaints can vary in their complexity and the scale of any corrective works required by the landlord, and so resolution can be a lengthy process.





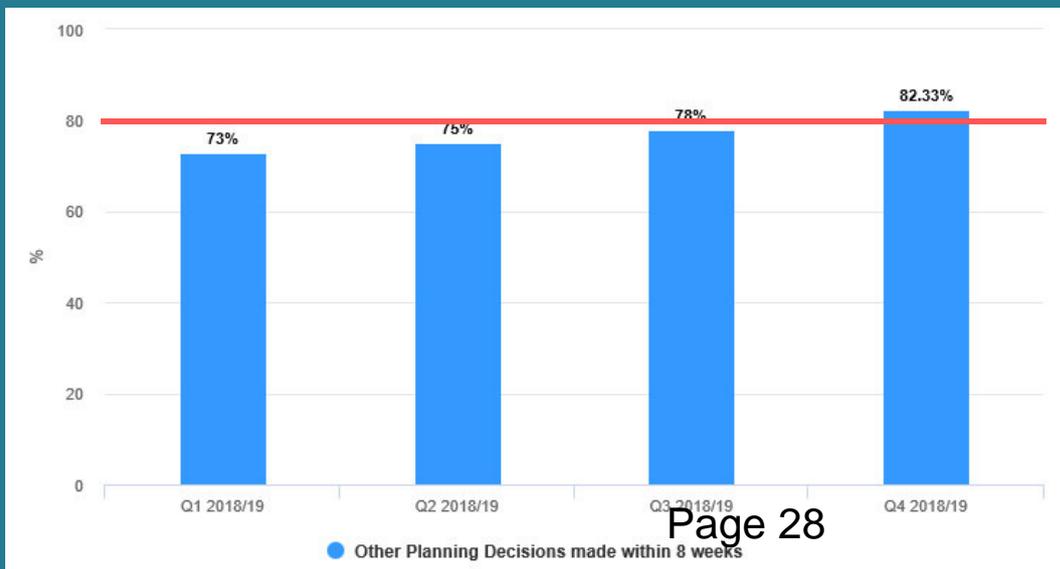
Planning application approvals remained above 90% throughout 2018/19. Despite unexpected pressure in-service arising from a high vacancy rate, the council has continued to process and approve large volumes of planning applications. Pragmatic and consistent planning enforcement remains a priority for the service, with 36.5% of planning contraventions occurring in 2018/19 resolved informally.



The percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks remained above the 60% government target in three of four quarters. Due to the small number of complex cases involved, performance against this target can be volatile. A drop below target occurred in quarter 2 due to staff shortages, however performance returned above target for quarters 3 and 4.



Minor planning application processing times have been down against the central government target of 65% through much of 2018/19 due to staff vacancies within the planning and development service. Through concerted recruitment efforts and the careful use of consultants, performance has returned above target in quarter 4.



'Other' planning applications represent a significant proportion of the caseload for the Planning and Development Service. Staff shortages through 2018/19 have caused a decline in performance against the target of 80%, however this decline has been reversed through the year, with performance above target for quarter 4.



The council's environmental health team carries out hygiene and food safety inspections on all food premises in the borough throughout the year, as well as running food hygiene training courses open to all catering businesses. The percentage of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating of at least three stars out of five has been above 98% for the entirety of 2018/19.

Ashford Lifeline is a 24 hour service providing an instant response at the touch of a button, giving a personal security system to enable residents who live alone to so do independently and safely. The council sets high standards for call answer speeds through the system, and 99.8% of calls were answered within 60 seconds in 2018/19. The annual customer survey of lifeline users in 2018/19 showed that 91.8% of customers are satisfied with the service.



Ashford Borough Council has a state of the art CCTV monitoring centre which provides remote CCTV monitoring to both public spaces and private businesses and plays a major role in detecting and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour. To ensure the efficacy of this service, 2018 saw the council begin a programme of upgrading its CCTV cameras.



Ashford Monitoring Centre, Ashford



The council collected 98.11% of owed council tax in 2018/19. Whilst Ashford Borough Council collects council tax from residents of the borough, only around 10 pence of every pound of council tax collected funds Ashford Borough Council services, with the remainder funding Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and (in parished areas) Parish or Town Councils.

The Revenues and Benefits team process both new benefit claims and changes of circumstance for existing claims for residents. In 2018/19, new benefit claims were processed in an average of 24.56 days against a target of 28 days; whilst changes of circumstance have been processed in an average of 2.77 days against a target of 10 days.







ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD

The council's continued commitment to safeguarding and improving the health and wellbeing of the borough's residents and providing high quality cultural and leisure experiences saw a range of initiatives and projects delivered in 2018/19.

In October, the Ashford One You Shop was a runner-up in the prestigious 'Health on the High Street' award at the Royal Society of Public Health awards, recognising the work of the One You Shop in supporting communities to tackle their health and wellbeing concerns. With the aid of funding provided by the council, the One You Shop will complete a relocation into larger premises within Park Mall in early summer 2019.

Providing a quality leisure offer to enable residents to lead healthy, active lives remained paramount in the council's priorities in 2018/19, with the council approving consultation on a new walking and cycling strategy, opening the Repton Connect Community Centre and facilities and providing a range of new open spaces and play areas across the borough.

The Snowdogs Discover Ashford art trail showcased 35 giant Snowdog sculptures designed by local and regional artists, alongside 19 Snowpups created by local schools around the town. The trail drew huge public interest over its 10 week duration and a closing auction of the sculptures raised over £140,000 for Pilgrim's Hospice.

2018/19 also saw one of the council's Big 8 projects, delivery of a purpose-built home for the Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company, given two major boosts with the council approving development of a site on Ashford's Henwood Industrial Estate and Arts Council England approving a grant of over £3m towards the ground-breaking project.



Create Festival 2018, Victoria Park



Ashford's free annual musical extravaganza, Create Festival, drew 12,000 people to a sun-drenched Victoria Park in 2018 to see more than 30 talented entertainers perform across four stages, complimented by local street food traders, theatre and children's entertainments.

The council continues to support the voluntary sector and individual projects that help deliver services and improve facilities for the community. Between April and December 2018, the council administered over £166,000 worth of grants to rural and urban initiatives serving borough communities at a ratio of 1.04:1 between urban and rural awards.





The council maintains a large number of play areas throughout the borough and audits these on an annual basis to determine their play value and condition. The latest audit showed that of 54 council owned play areas, 57% were 'satisfactory' or 'excellent', with 18 of an 'excellent' standard and 13 of a 'satisfactory' standard. This represents a 10% increase on the previous year, where 14 play areas were 'excellent' and 11 were 'satisfactory'. The council also opened two new play areas in 2018/19 - Bridgefield Park in Park Farm East and Bulleid Place in Newtown.

Kestrel Park Play Area, Ashford

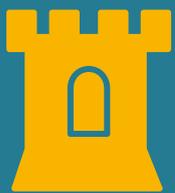


The council owns a number of leisure facilities across the borough which are managed in partnership with local trusts and councils, providing a wide range of activities to enable residents to live healthy, active lives. In 2018, there were 11,408 total memberships across the four main leisure sites (Stour Centre, Julie Rose Stadium, Tenterden Leisure Centre, Kingsnorth Recreation Centre).



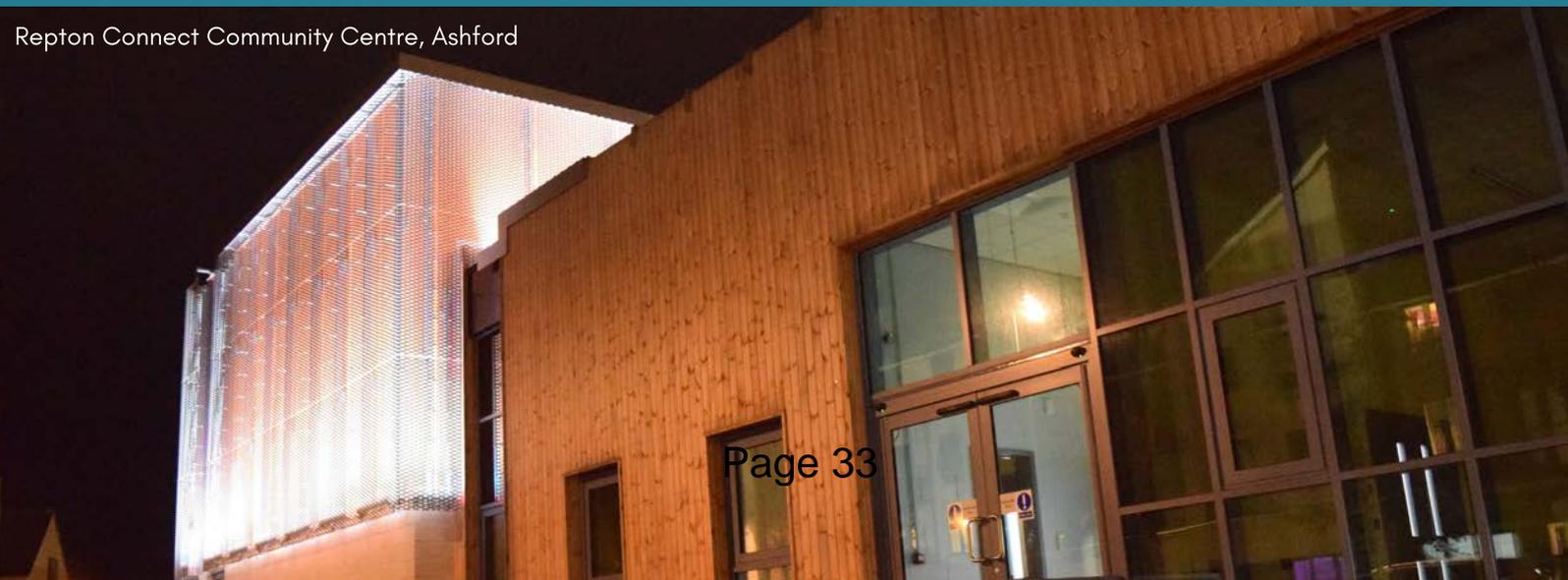
In 2018, the council and Ashford Leisure Trust began the process of procuring a new leisure operator for the main leisure facilities in the Ashford area to enable significant investment in leisure provision to meet the needs of the borough's growing population.

Ashford is home to the UK's first One You shop which provides free health services, support and advice to the public. Now into its third year of operation, the One You shop has delivered 4,626 health interventions, and in January 2019 saw its highest footfall to date, with 292 people accessing services.



The Ashford Visitor Information Centre relocated to a spacious and user-friendly site (incorporating an exhibition space) on the ground floor of the Ashford Gateway Plus in 2018. Since relocating, the percentage of tourism related contacts made in-person has increased by an average of 18% per month against the previous year's performance, with a significant increase coinciding with the Snowdogs Discover Ashford art trail.

Repton Connect Community Centre, Ashford



ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD

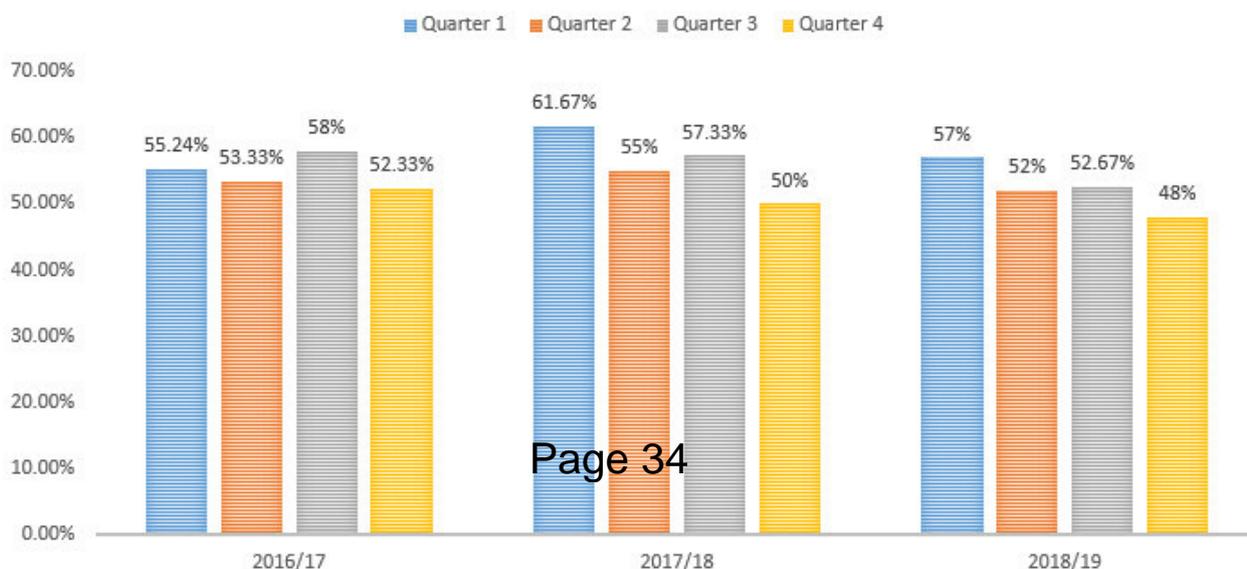
2018/19 saw the council's in-house grounds maintenance service, Aspire Landscape Management, complete two successful years of operation. Since its inception, the service has grown significantly and remarkably achieved three ISO standards simultaneously in 2018. The council also secured £167,000 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a bid to restore and improve Victoria Park.

A number of commemorative events took place in 2018 to mark the centenary of the armistice. The renowned Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace photographic exhibition went on display in Ashford's Memorial Gardens as part of its national tour in June 2018; a commemorative paving stone was laid in Charing to honour the only Victoria Cross recipient to be born in the borough and Ashford took part in the national commemorative event, Battle's Over: A Nation's Tribute with a service of remembrance set against a poppy tribute in Ashford's North Park. Thanks to support from residents, the poppy tribute raised nearly £5,000 for the Ashford branch of SSAFA.

2019 saw the start of a year-long programme of events, campaigns and initiatives in support of the Year of the Environment as part of the council's aim to connect, protect and enhance the environment. The council also committed to reducing plastic waste at 2018/2 Create Festival and adopted a new Air Quality Strategy in March 2019.



The council maintained its position as the top recycling authority in Kent and moved to 27th in the UK recycling league table (up from 35th) for its performance in 2017/18. Recycling rates for the past three years are shown below and whilst the borough's rates have dipped below the 50% target in quarter 4 of 2018/19, this follows the trend of previous years. Throughout 2018/19, the council has utilised targeted education campaigns to assist residents in maximising the amount of waste recycled.





The success rate for refuse collections has remained high throughout 2018/19, with 99.96% of refuse collections per 100,000 collections made being successful across the year. Focused education and awareness campaigns led by the council's Environment and Land Management service have helped residents to increase the amount of waste recycled and minimise contamination of recyclates.

The 2018 residents survey included a range of questions related to recycling and the attitudes of the borough's population towards it, the results of which have been used to inform the council's approach to education around waste and recycling. The results recorded that 69% of residents recycled everything that they could, compared to only 3% saying they did not recycle. For food waste recycling, 77% of residents responded that they participated in this on a weekly or daily basis, with 18% noting that they did not take part in food recycling.

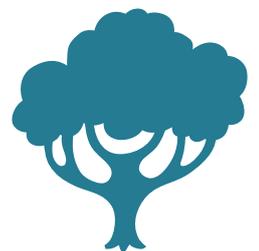


Residents were also asked what they normally do if they have more recycling than will fit in their green bin. 40% of respondents said that they would take it to the household waste recycling centre and 29% would place it next to their green bin in a clear sack for collection. Only 13% of respondents said they would place the additional recycling in their refuse bin.

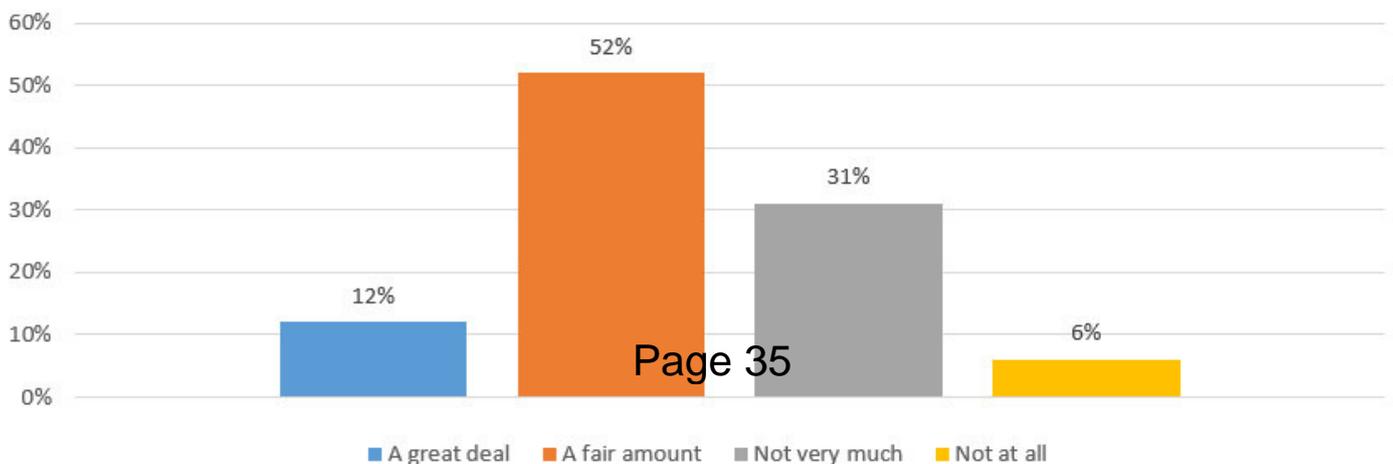


Battle's Over: A Nation's Tribute
North Park, Ashford

The survey also asked residents how satisfied they were with a range of council services, which showed that the highest satisfaction rates were with the council's refuse collection service (77% satisfied) and the borough's parks (71% satisfied) and play areas (62% satisfied). Residents were also asked to what extent they felt the council was committed to improving the local area, with 64% of respondents believing that the council is very or fairly committed to local area improvements.



Residents Survey 2018 - "How committed is the council to improving the local area?"



OUR UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

As part of the council's aim of providing proactive, useful, relevant and accessible communications, April 2018 saw the publication of the first issue of *Ashford for You*, a quarterly magazine distributed to all households in the borough covering events, services, people and places. The magazine has been well received by residents and bolsters the council's communications output.

In striving for improvements to the governance of the council, 2018 also saw Ashford welcome the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a 'peer review' of the council's performance and service delivery. The LGA praised the council's approach, ambition and impact, noting the strong, passionate and purposeful leadership and the clear expression of corporate priorities.

Recognition of those who contribute to the borough's success also featured highly in the council's work this year, with the return of the Civic Awards and the launch of the Ashford Ambassador Award recognising individuals who make a significant contribution to the development, wellbeing, strength and civic dignity of the Borough. The inaugural award was presented to Dr Lilian Turoiu of the Romanian Cultural Institute as part of a ceremony unveiling a statue of Queen Marie of Romania in Elwick Place.



Alex Chinneck Artwork
Kent Woolgrowers Site, Ashford

With the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation in 2018, additional pressures were placed on the council in regard to data protection and security. Improvements in data retention, privacy and the integrity of data sharing agreements have helped to minimise data breaches, with only 2 major personal data breaches occurring in 2018/19. Both of these breaches were reported to the Information Commissioner's Office, who deemed that no further action was required in regard to either.

Transparency in the council's governance remains paramount. The council responded to 1,005 freedom of information requests in 2018/19, of which 98.1% were completed within the statutory 20 working day time limit.



Designer Outlet Underpass improvement works
Ashford





At the start of the 2018/19 financial year the council surveyed 10,000 households to gather their views on the borough and the services provided by the council. The results of this survey have informed the council's work in 2018/19 and will continue to do so as the council moves into its next corporate plan period.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE WAY THE COUNCIL RUNS ITS SERVICES?



73%

Very or fairly satisfied

Very or fairly dissatisfied

14%



TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THE COUNCIL UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF ITS CUSTOMERS?



64%

A great deal or a fair amount

Not very much or not at all

36%



TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE YOU CAN INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS THE COUNCIL MAKES?



18%

Strongly or tend to agree

Strongly or tend to disagree

58%



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LOCAL AREA AS A PLACE TO LIVE?



83%

Very or fairly satisfied

Very or fairly dissatisfied

10%



The council welcomes the government's requirement for large organisations to be more transparent on gender pay and will nurture our culture of supporting women in the workplace and ensuring that success is defined by talent, not gender or circumstance. The council's gender pay gap - the difference in average pay between the men and women in the workforce, expressed relative to men's earnings - was 15.8% in 2018/19, down from 16.2% in 2017/18.



The council's digital transformation programme enables residents to engage with the council digitally for many services, such as reporting environmental issues using the council's 'Report It' app, however a large number of enquiries are handled by our dedicated customer service team. Despite being a high demand service, the average call wait time for 2018/19 was in line with target at 1 minute and 38 seconds.

The council has committed to handling complaints effectively, fairly and in a timely manner. With a clear focus on getting service delivery right first time, the council seeks to minimise complaints and seek to resolve any received as early as possible. Of 233 complaints received in 2018/19, 83% were resolved through one of the formal complaints procedure, increased from 81% in 2017/18.





Ashford Borough Council

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



**ASHFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**



FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In general terms, Overview and Scrutiny is the process whereby Councillors investigate, scrutinise and oversee the work of the Council. More specifically it pays particular attention to (a) decisions made by Cabinet, Council and Officers in relation to Council policy or key decisions, (b) activities carried out by the Council and other bodies such as Kent County Council, and (c) the performance of the Council in relation to its targets and objectives.

The past year saw the Overview & Scrutiny Committee work in close collaboration with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers to attest that decisions made by Cabinet, Council and Officers are in line with Corporate and other Council objectives, and that resident held concerns are identified and thoroughly investigated.

This report summarises the extensive and exhaustive range of work undertaken during 2018 - 2019, but cannot convey adequately the level of work and in-depth scrutiny that took place. I would like to thank the Committee and supporting Officers for their unstinting efforts which helped to realise notable accomplishments. I also thank the Chairman Cllr Brendan Chilton and Vice Chairman Cllr Winston Michael for conducting meetings, and on behalf of them I thank Officer William Train for his expert guidance of the Committee and for all the arrangements that needed to be made throughout the course of the year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important role to play in confirming that Council actions are delivering the outcomes sought. It is a credit to Cabinet members and Officers that they worked with Overview and Scrutiny to take on board the Committee's recommendations by adopting them.

Going into the next 12 months, the Committee looks to further close collaboration between it, the Cabinet and Officers; and it will strive at all times to be that "critical friend" to bring added value to Cabinet and Council decisions. At the same time, it will look to increasing engagement with residents of the Borough and to let them know their voice is not only important but key to the success of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and ultimately the Council.



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AT ASHFORD

The Local Government Act 2000 (the Act) introduced a requirement that councils with a 'Leader and Executive' arrangement must include the provision of one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees within their council structure.

Under section 21 of the Act, the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has power to submit reports and make recommendations to the Cabinet or full Council on any aspect of council business or any matter affecting the Borough or its residents.

The constitution of Ashford Borough Council contains provisions for a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out the functions detailed in the Act, although the Committee may assemble task groups from its membership for specific reviews.

In the 2018/19 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had 12 members, appointed in line with the broad political balance of the council. The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee were appointed to opposition members, although the Committee operates apolitically in its discussions, with all members of the Committee working together to ensure that the council and its services are acting effectively and efficiently.

With the 2019 local elections taking place in May, the political makeup of the council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has changed for the coming municipal year.



In preparation for a new committee, introductory training for Members on the role, purpose and powers of Overview and Scrutiny was arranged through the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This training session was attended by members of each political group on the Council and key staff involved in the delivery of the scrutiny function.



MATTERS SCRUTINISED BY THE COMMITTEE

The 2018/19 municipal year saw the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a number of items related to the council's operations and the wider issues affecting the borough and its population, including:

- Commercial investment by the council
- The Trading and Enterprise Board
- A Better Choice for Property Ltd
- The role and promotion of credit unions in the borough
- The development of the council's Air Quality Strategy
- Preparations for the roll-out of full service Universal Credit in Ashford
- Resident Management Companies and the Chilmington Management Organisation
- The council's Housing Statement
- Town Centre Place Making and the development of the Ashford Town Centre Framework
- The Community Toilet Scheme

The Committee also considers a number of standing items per year, namely:

- Scrutiny of the council's draft budget (carried out through a task and finish group)
- The annual report of the Ashford Community Safety Partnership
- The council's annual report on Safeguarding Adults and Children at Risk
- Sickness Absence in the council's workforce
- The council's corporate performance (assessed quarterly)

From the matters scrutinised by the Committee, a number of recommendations were made to the Cabinet and Full Council, of which the majority were accepted and adopted.

Where adopted, recommendations are tracked for implementation progress through the Committee's tracker report and the council's programme management system (Pentana).

BUDGET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the council's draft Capital and Revenue budgets. In 2018/19, the Committee assembled a cross-party task and finish group whose remit included ensuring that the draft 2019/20 budget was achievable and deliverable in line with the council's 5 year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the council's adopted corporate priorities.

The five member task and finish group first assessed the council's draft service budget books and key risks relating to the council's financial and resource positions, identifying areas to be subjected to in-depth scrutiny on an exception basis. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group met with relevant Directors, Heads of Service and the Accountancy team to examine the draft budget in areas including commercial income projections, town centre place making, capital expenditure, pest control and section 106 availability.

The task and finish group made a total of 12 recommendations in regard to the 2019/20 budget and referred several matters outside of its remit to the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.



COMMERCIAL SCRUTINY

During scrutiny of the council's draft 2018/19 budget, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee determined that a review of commercial investment by the council was warranted alongside an examination of the governance arrangements of the Trading and Enterprise Board and the progress of the council's trading company, A Better Choice for Property Ltd. Due to the complexity of these matters, scrutiny took place across several committee meetings between April and August 2018.

Members examined the council's policies on commercial investment as well as the acquisition, income generation and development of two key property assets - International House and Park Mall. From this scrutiny, Members made three recommendations aimed at strengthening the governance around the council's investment approach.

In examining the Trading and Enterprise Board and A Better Choice for Property Ltd, the Committee examined the company's history, business planning and trading activity, the council's mechanisms for approving acquisitions and loaning funds to the company and the governance arrangements of the Trading and Enterprise Board.

Seven recommendations were made to Cabinet regarding the governance of the Trading and Enterprise Board and the company, including requiring collective decision making in regard to the approval of purchases, the appointment of non-executive directors and clarification of the property company's business plan. Of these recommendations, the majority were adopted and implemented.



CREDIT UNIONS

In recognition of the difficulties facing people of low incomes when considering deposits for housing, the Committee met with representatives of the Kent Savers Credit Union and Together Canterbury to understand the work of credit unions and the services available to residents.

Both organisations provided detail on the extent of their operations in the borough, the services they offered and the challenges they faced. Members of the Committee were highly supportive of the work of both groups and felt strongly that the council should actively assist residents in accessing the financial support services of both groups and the practical alternatives to high interest lenders that were available to residents.

In recognition of the limits on the amount of lending that Kent Savers could undertake (through their need to maintain a minimum 3% capital to assets ratio), the Committee recommended that the council issue a £10,000 subordinated loan to Kent Savers, forge a closer working relationship and actively promote the services offered by the credit union to residents and council staff. Following the adoption of these recommendations, the council has issued the subordinated loan and entered into an agreement with Kent Savers to offer services to council staff.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PRIVATE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

During scrutiny of the council's draft 2019/20 budget, Members felt that it would be beneficial for the Committee to be presented with an overview of the council's section 106 process and current position, as well as an update on the development of the council's Air Quality Strategy. The Committee made four recommendations to Cabinet related to section 106 and planning application processes; and two recommendations related to air quality monitoring and electric vehicles.

Members also considered a report on the history and development of the Chilmington Management Organisation in 2018/19, and how its community management model differed from the operational model for private management companies.

Members were supportive of the community management approach, and felt that the council should work to ensure, as far as possible, that residents should be well advised of their rights with regard to management companies and that the council should keep a record of developments operated by management companies within the borough.

The Committee made five recommendations to Cabinet concerning private management companies for new and existing developments.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Tracker – 25 June 2019

Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19	25 June 2019	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	The council's Constitution requires the O&S Committee to make an annual report to full Council. This report will summarise the Committee's work over the past year and detail its work programme for 2019/20.
Quarter 4 2018/19 performance	25 June 2019	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	Information and analysis of performance against key performance indicators for the council for quarter 4 of 2018/19.
Annual Sickness Report	25 June 2019	HR & Customer Services	Provides annual information on sickness absenteeism within the council's workforce
Wye3 Masterplan	25 June 2019	Planning and Development	Information on the consultation around and development of the Wye3 masterplan.
Ashford For You	23 July 2019	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	A review of the Magazine's first year of publication, its reception among residents and plans/potential for development/digitalisation of the magazine/other communications
Aspire performance	23 July 2019	Environment and Land Management	The Committee would like an overview of the performance and development of Aspire Landscape Management.
Items for future consideration			
Staff Resources – Legal & Democratic		Legal and Democratic	Requested to be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group

Future plans for public transport		Community Safety and Wellbeing	Requested by the Vice-Chairman in regard to the use of low emission and fit for purpose buses in Ashford
Ashford Waste Water Treatment Works		Community Safety and Wellbeing	Requested by the Leader in regard to odours impacting on the quality of residents' lives in Kennington/Little Burton Farm
Kent Fire and Rescue Service – volunteer support		Community Safety and Wellbeing	Requested by the Committee in regard to a shortage of volunteer support for KFRS being noted at Tenterden.
Accessibility concerns at Elwick Place		Corporate Property and Projects	Requested by the Committee in response to concerns raised by Ashford Access group.

Recommendation Tracker

Report				
Page 48	Planning Presentation – Section 106 Process and Position			
	Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Response	Implementation responsibility
	That Ward Members should be consulted from the outset on Section 106 agreements attached to developments in their Ward(s)	Rejected	The existing opportunity for Ward Members and Parish Councils to contribute to discussions around s106 agreements takes place through discussions on individual planning applications through consultation with case officers.	N/A
That where issues of viability arise with regard to Section 106 agreements, the relevant Ward Member(s) and town, parish or community councils be engaged at the earliest stage	Rejected	Discussions with developers regarding viability are conducted through planning officers assisted by consultants who are experts in the field. Dialogue with ward member(s) and town, parish or community councils will take place as part of discussions with officers on a case by case basis.	N/A	

<p>That planning applications must not be permitted to go to the planning committee for determination before the time for public consultation has elapsed</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Public consultation processes are generally scheduled to take place in advance of planning committee. However in certain rare instances public consultation can overlap with planning committee. In such eventualities it is considered that adequate opportunity is provided for public comments to be recorded prior to the issuing of the decision</p>	<p>Head of Planning and Development</p>
<p>That as per the constitution, planning applications must not be approved under delegated powers where the Ward Member has called the application in to the planning committee</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The existing processes concerning the calling in of planning applications to Planning Committee by Members is to be reviewed and strengthened. A more formal protocol to register requests is to be established to avoid the eventuality of call in requests not being accurately recorded</p>	<p>Head of Planning and Development</p>

Overview and Scrutiny - Topic Selection assessment

Topic under consideration.....

1. Does the topic represent a key issue for local people and is it likely to result in improvements for local people?

		Yes
		No

2. Is the issue strategic and significant?

		Yes
		No

3. Does the topic fall within a Community or Corporate priority area?

		Yes
		No

4. Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?

		Yes
		No

*Stage 1 (validity) assessment - **reject** any topic with a 'No' response to any of questions 1 to 4.*

5. Will scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?

		Yes
		No

*Stage 2 (validity) assessment - **reject** any topic with a 'Yes' response to question 5*

6. Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?

		Yes
		No

7. Is it an issue of community concern or is there a high level of dissatisfaction with the service?

		Yes
		No

8. Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

		Yes
		No

9. Is the scrutiny activity timely?

		Yes
		No

Stage 3 (priority) assessment

*Topics with a 'No' response to any of questions 6 to 9 should be deemed **LOW PRIORITY***

*Topics with a 'Yes' response to all of questions 6 to 9 should be deemed **HIGH PRIORITY***

Stage 1 - Validity

Does the topic represent a key issue for the public and is it likely to result in improvements for local people?

Yes



No

Is the issue strategic and significant?

Yes



No

Does the topic fall within a Community or Corporate priority area?

Yes



No

Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?

Yes



No

Stage 2 - Validity

Will scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?

Yes

REJECT

No



Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?

Yes



No

Is it an issue of community concern or is there a high level of dissatisfaction with the service?

Yes



No

Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

Yes



No

Is the scrutiny activity timely?

Yes



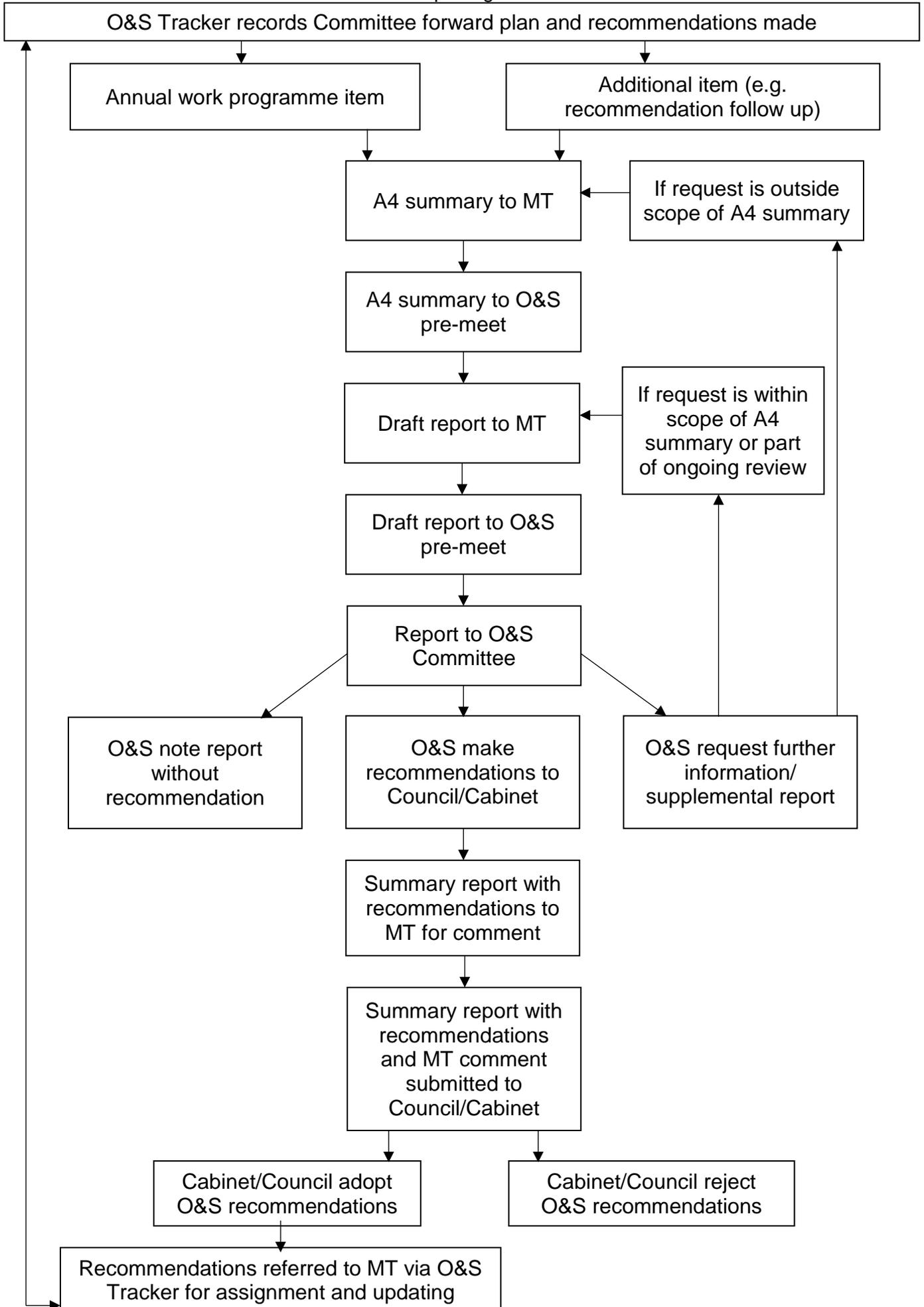
No

Stage 3 - Priority

ADD TO WORK PROGRAMME
High Priority

CONSIDER LOW PRIORITY

O&S Reporting flowchart



Agenda Item No: 12
Report To: CABINET
Date: 13TH JUNE 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.
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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 None

Papers:

Contacts:

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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; Paul Bartlett; Bill Barrett; Neil Bell; Andrew Buchanan; Paul Clokie; Peter Feacey; Jo Gideon; Alan Pickering; and Neil Shorter.

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 <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
13th June 2019					
Final Outturn 2018/19	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	18/6/18
Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 4) and Annual Performance Report 2018/19	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot' and 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 achievements; and a Financial Summary.</i>	Cllr Bell	Will Train	Open	18/6/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board – Annual Update 2018/19 and the Way Forward	<i>To update Cabinet on the work of the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board in 2018/19, to discuss the changes made in local and sub-regional approaches and seek approval of the creation of the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership as a result and to note the priorities and activity for 2019/20</i>	Cllr Gideon	Angela d'Urso/ Sheila Davison	Open	7/11/18
Ashford Heritage Plaque Scheme	<i>To agree the establishment of an Ashford Borough Heritage Plaque Scheme so that noteworthy individuals or buildings from Ashford's past that are not widely known or formally recognised across the Borough will have a permanent acknowledgment of their existence.</i>	Cllr Feacey	Sarah Barber	Open	21/3/19
Planning Reorganisation	<i>To consider the proposals in the report, the impact this will have on the delivery of service priorities and the consultation process followed.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Tim Naylor	Open	8/4/19
11th July 2019					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	13/7/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Statement of Licensing Policy 2019-2024	<i>To seek Cabinet approval to go out to public consultation on draft version of the revised policy.</i>	Cllr Gideon	Trevor Ford	Open	10/4/19
Conningbrook Masterplan	<i>To introduce the draft masterplan which provides a conceptual plan for the park and the 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>	Cllr Feacey	Len Mayatt	Open	4/9/18
Conningbrook H2 and Country Pub/Hotel	<i>To endorse the progression of legal agreements with Bretts to allow them to progress a planning application for H2 with a view to a subsequent land sale and with Bretts and Shepherd Neame to allow for the sale of the land for the Country Pub/Hotel.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Archie Cowan	Open	16/5/19
Householder Duty of Care Fixed Penalty Notice	<i>To ask the Cabinet to approve the application of a penalty for Householder breach duty of care and to confirm the amount of penalty to be applied.</i>	Cllr Buchanan	Mark Goodman	Open	11/4/19
Adoption of the WYE3 / WNP11 Masterplan		Cllr Shorter	Simon Cole	Open	23/5/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
8th August 2019					
12th September 2019					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Bell	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 Bell	Will Train	Open	10/8/18
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 Clokie	Paul McKenner	Open	14/9/18
Animal Licensing Policy	<i>To approve an animal licensing policy based on changes in legislative framework and responsibility.</i>	Cllr Gideon	Angela d’Urso/ Sheila Davison	Open	4/12/18
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 Shorter	Tim Naylor	Open	18/6/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Government Housing Green Paper – Ashford Promise and Fixed Term Tenancies		Cllr Barrett	Anthony Crossley	Open	8/5/19
Royal Military Canal		Cllr Feacey	Len Mayatt	Open	21/2/19
Play Plan		Cllr Feacey	Amanda Scott	Open	16/5/19
10th October 2019					
14th November 2019					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Bell	Will Train	Open	9/11/18
Medium Term Financial Plan	<i>To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year's Budget process.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	9/11/18
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	9/11/18

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Corporate Plan – Approval to Commence Consultation on Draft Corporate Plan 2020		Cllr Clarkson	Jennifer Shaw	Open	11/3/19
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 Bell	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 Bell	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 Barrett	Sharon Williams	Open	7/12/18
16th January 2020					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	11/1/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
13th February 2020					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Bell	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 Bell	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 Bell	Will Train	Open	9/2/18
12th March 2020					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (Including Review for 2020/21)	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance</i>	Cllr Pickering	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	15/3/19
Corporate Plan - Report on Consultation Findings and Approval to Publish Corporate Plan 2020		Cllr Clarkson	Jennifer Shaw	Open	11/3/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
2 nd April 2020					
14 th May 2020					

***If you wish to contact a Report Author by email, unless stated otherwise, the addresses are;
first name.surname@ashford.gov.uk***