



CABINET

Notice of a Meeting, to be held as a Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams in accordance with Regulation 5 of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 on **Thursday, 30th July, 2020 at 5.00 pm. (PLEASE NOTE EARLIER STARTING TIME)**

The Members of the Cabinet are:-

Councillor Clarkson – Leader of the Council
Councillor Bartlett – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democracy
Councillor Barrett – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Bell – Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT
Councillor Buchanan – Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management
Councillor Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Corporate Property
Councillor Feacey – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing
Councillor Forest – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism
Councillor Pickering – Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Customer Services
Councillor Shorter – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS VIRTUAL MEETING:-

Please note the public cannot physically “attend” a Virtual Meeting. However any member of the press and public may listen-in to proceedings at this ‘virtual’ meeting via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council’s website at www.ashford.gov.uk at least 24 hours before the meeting. Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc. during the live broadcast as they would be able to during a regular Cabinet meeting at the Civic Centre. It is important, however, that Councillors can discuss and take decisions without disruption, so the only participants in this Virtual Meeting will be the Councillors concerned, the Officers advising the Cabinet, and the Officers designated to address the Cabinet on behalf of any members of the public who have registered in advance to ‘speak’ on the items to be considered. This will take the place of the usual procedure for public speaking at the Cabinet’s regular meetings at the Civic Centre. In order to register for this, written notice must be given on the Council’s website at <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors-meetings-and-elections/councillors-and-meetings/public-participation/application-to-speak-at-a-public-meeting/> or by email to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk by 10am on the Wednesday before the meeting.

Summary of the Scheme of Public Participation for Virtual Meetings (referred to as “VMs”)

The public cannot physically “attend” a VM.

H.M. Government has recently changed the public’s legal right to attend meetings into a right to hear, by means of technology, the Councillors attending the VM remotely.

Written notice of a wish to speak (by means of the procedure below) at a VM must be given, either to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk or on the Council's website at <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors-meetings-and-elections/councillors-andmeetings/public-participation/application-to-speak-at-a-public-meeting/> by 10:00 hours on the Wednesday before the VM – i.e. 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th July, 2020.

Those registered to speak must submit to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk by 10:00 hours on the day of the VM, a copy of their speech in written, legible English. It should be no longer than 400 words, on a single side of A4 paper, printed in 12-point non-italic sans-serif font (e.g. Arial). Any text above 400 words will not be read out.

Speeches received as above will be read to the VM by a competent Officer for and on behalf of the speakers, at the normal times and in the normal order during the VM (subject to the Chairman's normal discretion).

IMPORTANT:

An Officer reading any speech on behalf of any speaker shall have discretion to omit/edit out any inappropriate language, information or statements.

If any defamation, insult, personal or confidential information, etc. is contained in any speech received from any speaker, and/or is read to the VM by an Officer, each speaker accepts by submitting their speech to be fully responsible for all consequences thereof and to indemnify the Officer and the Council accordingly.

Agenda

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c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests	
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DS
22 July 2020

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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 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 alone, such as:

- Membership of amenity societies, Town/Community/Parish Councils, residents' groups or other outside bodies that have expressed views or made representations, but the Member was not involved in compiling or making those views/representations, 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: Where an item would be likely to affect the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc.; OR where an item is an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc., there is likely to be an OSI or in some cases a DPI. ALSO, holding a committee position/office within an amenity society or other outside body, or having any involvement in compiling/making views/representations by such a body, may give rise to a perception of bias and require the Member to take no part in any motion or vote.]

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 alongside the Council's Good Practice Protocol for Councillors dealing with Planning Matters. See <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/2098/z-word5-democratic-services-constitution-2019-constitution-of-abc-may-2019-part-5.pdf>
- (c) Where a Member declares a committee position or office within, or membership of, an outside body that has expressed views or made representations, this will be taken as a statement that the Member was not involved in compiling or making them and has retained an open mind on the item(s) in question. If this is not the case, the situation must be explained.

If any Member has any doubt about any interest which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democracy as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

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Agenda Item 3

CA

Published 30th June 2020

Decisions effective from the 8th July 2020 unless they are called in or are recommended to the Council for approval

Cabinet

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Cabinet held on Microsoft Teams on the **25th June 2020**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Bell, Buchanan, Clokie, Feacey, Forest, Pickering, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Barrett, Chilton, Cornish, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Anckorn, Mrs Bell, Burgess, Harman, Howard-Smith, Ledger, Mulholland, Spain, Sparks, Walder, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Finance and IT, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Personnel and Development, Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of Culture, Head of Housing, Deputy Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Development Partnership Manager, Senior Accountant (LF), Communications Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational).

425 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Buchanan	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a member of the Stour Centre gym.	436

426 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28th May 2020 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

427 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that he wanted to advise of some changes to the appointments of Deputy Portfolio Holders. He announced that Councillor Larry Krause would be moving from Community Safety and Wellbeing to be Deputy Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT. Councillor Kalysa Howard-Smith would become the new Deputy Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Mrs Clair Bell would be taking up the appointment of Deputy Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Customer Services, and Councillor Jenny Webb would become the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure at the end of her Mayoral Year.

428 Financial Monitoring Report (Two Month Update to 31st May 2020)

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which was the second budget monitoring report of the financial year and updated the forecast outturn for 2020/21, reported at the last Cabinet meeting, based on information available at the end of May 2020. He also drew attention to the Tabled Paper which included the missing Table 3 - Reserves Position from page 18, paragraph 49 of the report. He re-emphasised that some of the figures in the report were 'sobering' and these unprecedented times had placed considerable risks to this forecast and the Council's financial standing as the long term economic impact became clearer. Forecasting had identified a £1.893m deficit to this year's budget having applied the £1.359m COVID grant awarded by Central Government. A further £2m pressure was forecast as Business Rates and Council Tax collection rates were lower than anticipated, however due to accounting purposes this would be reflected in next year's budget. The overall pressure of £3.893m was within the allocation of reserves earmarked at the last Cabinet meeting to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19. The HRA was reporting increased spend in its overall position, which included forecasting a £1.3m reduction in rent. The Housing team had reworked the capital programme to reduce spend this year, allowing the loss in rent to be mitigated.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report and said it was also now very important that the Council sent out the message that Ashford and Tenterden were now back open for business. Members wanted to stress their thanks to Officers, particularly from the Finance and Economic Development teams, for getting out the relevant grants to businesses in such a timely fashion, which would undoubtedly have helped a significant number of businesses and put them in a position to recover.

In response to a question about whether it would be more prudent to borrow to aid the recovery, rather than using up all of the Council's reserves, the Director of Finance and Economy advised that there were strict rules over what Local Authorities were allowed to borrow for. They could not borrow to cover day-to-day expenditure and most of the pressure highlighted in the report was in this category. However, there may be opportunities around borrowing for capital projects where they delivered an asset, and that would continue to be examined alongside using reserves, to ensure the right balance in delivering projects.

Resolved:

- That (i) the forecast outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be noted.**
- (ii) the Treasury Management position be noted.**

429 Ashford Borough Council Annual Performance Report 2019/20

The Leader introduced the report which presented the Council's Annual Performance Report. The report was an important pillar of the Council's transparency agenda and looked at the achievements and milestones realised by the Council in the context of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020. It also summarised performance against the Council's suite of Key Performance Indicators for the year 2019-20.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing emphasised the gas safety certificates for ABC properties and whilst the overall figure was 99.93% with up to date certificates, this still meant there were seven properties that were overdue and he hoped that would be redressed as soon as possible.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report and said that the data within it and some of the achievements could be used to aid the recovery phase from the pandemic. Examples included infrastructure delivery at M20 Junction 10a and other road projects, commitment to projects in the town centres and the Council's own house building strategy.

Resolved:

That the contents of the Annual Performance Report be noted and approved for publication on the Council's website.

430 Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy (2020-2024)

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy 2020-2024. This replaced the previous strategy and set out the Council's high level strategic framework for managing its Corporate Property Portfolio for the next four years.

Resolved:

That the content of the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy (2020-2024) be noted and the Strategy be adopted.

431 COVID-19 – Ashford Borough Council Response

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which documented the Council's emergency response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The report included details of: - the command and control arrangements; the establishment of the Ashford Response Depot (ARD); the Voluntary Emergency Response Appeal which had earlier that week broken its £10k target; the assistance provided to those on NHS shield lists and other vulnerable people; and grant support arrangements for the voluntary sector. It also outlined the significant steps taken to keep essential services running, as well as responding to immediate emergency needs. He said that the report was not definitive but provided a really good overview of all the areas covered by the Council, and its unique and beneficial relationship with the local voluntary sector. He also wanted to praise Council Officers and Members for their ability to adapt to an ever-changing landscape and deal with all of the challenges thrown at the Council and to look after the most vulnerable in the Borough.

Cabinet Members echoed those comments and drew particular attention to the work and effort of Council staff in a number of areas including Aspire, Biffa and the waste management service who had managed to keep operating a full capacity throughout, those involved at the ARD for food distribution, the work undertaken on grant schemes, support and project funds and business support. Thanks were also expressed to the school staff who had managed to keep schools open for children of key-workers in difficult circumstances, and now had allowed as many children as possible to return to school, as well as the population of the Borough in general, who had really pulled together as a community as well as obeying the restrictions that had been put in place for everyone's safety. The Deputy Leader advised that Kent County Council had earlier that week taken a decision to increase its budget for the Community Wardens by 50% and there were opportunities for Ashford to get its fair share of that additional money during the recovery process.

The Chief Executive thanked Members for their comments about staff and said she was pleased that their efforts had been recognised. Officers has undertaken some extraordinary work, often outside of their own remits and skillsets, in a quick and responsible fashion and even those not involved with the incident had kept on with the day job, often working from home or in new ways, and worked hard to keep the Council operating as normal. She would ensure that the Cabinet's thanks were communicated to staff.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report outlining the Council's response to date to the COVID-19 pandemic be noted.**
- (ii) the Cabinet pay tribute to residents, businesses, wider communities, volunteers and staff for all of the support and help they have provided, the sacrifices they have made, and the personal challenges they have and continue to face as a result of COVID-19.**

432 Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review Report

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which updated on the outcomes of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Challenge/Review of the Council's planning function and performance in terms of determining major planning applications. The Council's Planning Service had in the recent past been an 'exemplar' one, recognised for good performance, but over the past 12-18 months there had been a decline and the Council had been keen to see where it could improve. The Challenge/Review took place in January 2020 and the subsequent report recommended the adoption of an action plan to address a range of issues affecting performance. The report set out those issues and recommendations and sought Cabinet support for the implementation of an action plan to address the issues and develop and implement the recommendations in the PAS report to improve the performance of the Planning Service, particularly in relation to major applications.

Members discussed the recommendation to review the delegation agreement for Ward Members being able to request that an application be referred to the Planning Committee. A majority of Members of the Cabinet present expressed concern about this recommendation. Whilst the proposed requirement for this to be for a 'planning reason' was noted, Members advised that there were often issues that caused a lot of local concern and they did not like the idea of having this right taken away from Ward Members, who were often more aware of the local issues than anyone else. They should not have to be put in a position where they were having to 'argue' with Planning Officers. There was also a danger of disenfranchising those Members who were not Members of the Planning Committee. The Portfolio Holder explained that the thinking behind this recommendation was to try and make sure that applications were not simply called to Committee because they were unpopular. Applications had to be considered on planning grounds, and there was always an opportunity for Ward Members to discuss applications with the Planning Officers, so issues could often be addressed without elevating them to Committee and using up valuable Committee time. The Leader said he would not ever support this particular recommendation because he believed Members should continue to have the power to use their discretion and be able to call planning applications to Committee. That would be reviewed in the drawing up of the action plan.

In terms of points made about the onerous demands on Members of the Planning Committee, the Portfolio Holder explained that more in depth and expanded Member training was being worked up.

Resolved:

That an action plan be implemented to address the issues and develop and implement the recommendations in the PAS review report, but noting the comments made by the Cabinet about the recommendation to review the delegation agreement to require all requests for referral to Committee to be for a 'planning reason'.

433 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.

434 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Minute No.	Agenda Item Title	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A
435	Approval of Costs Associated with Early Release of Pension Due to Redundancy.	1
436	Leisure Operations Update	1 and 3
437	Housing Revenue Account Acquisition	3

435 Approval of Costs Associated with Early Release of Pension Due to Redundancy

The Portfolio Holder introduced the exempt report which asked the Cabinet to endorse and recommend to Council the early release of pension following the restructure of the Council's Insurance Team.

Resolved:

That the restructure of the Insurance Team be noted.

Recommended:

That Council approve the early release of pension due to redundancy.

436 Leisure Operations Update

The Portfolio Holder introduced the exempt report and directed Members' attention to the exempt tabled paper which included a letter from Unison. He also advised of an amendment to proposed recommendation (i) in that the figure mentioned would need to be increased to £300k.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) the option to pursue refurbishment and capital works at the Stour Centre be agreed, mindful of the contribution from the Council of up to £300,000 to Ashford Leisure Trust for appropriate costs, given full closure for redevelopment.**
 - (ii) it be noted that the Stour Centre will remain closed until such time as the refurbishment and capital works required under the Council's landlord responsibilities and within the parameters of the awarded Design Build Operate and Monitor Contract are complete, and it is effective to reopen and operate spaces efficiently.**
 - (iii) the Chief Executive and Directors be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Culture, Tourism and Leisure and for Regeneration and Corporate Property, to instruct Officers to put in place all necessary plans, arrangements and payments, to effectively deliver the above and bring forward appropriate reopening of the Julie Rose Stadium to support people to access leisure and gym facilities.**

437 Housing Revenue Account Acquisition

The Head of Housing introduced the exempt report which recommended the acquisition by the Housing Revenue Account of a number of units within the Town Centre.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) the Housing Revenue Account acquires the units within the Town Centre.**
 - (ii) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to negotiate and agree the final offer to the developer, subject to a second valuation.**
 - (iii) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Head of Finance and IT, and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to ensure that the Council's heads of terms and conditions for the purchase are met.**

- (iv) responsibility be delegated to the Director of Law and Governance, the Head of Housing and the Head of Finance and IT, to finalise and agree contracts and associated paperwork.**
- (v) the approach to sensitively let these town centre properties – and any other off-plan acquisitions set out in the Keyworker Initiative that will be further developed with Economic Development and Planning Policy - be agreed in principle (Appendices C and D of the exempt report refer).**
- (vi) responsibility be delegated to the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Deputy Leader, to finalise and implement the terms of the Keyworker Initiative (Appendix C to the exempt report refers).**
- (vii) it be noted that an affordable housing programme update will follow in the Autumn and that Overview and Scrutiny would review the HRA Business Plan financial projections, including this acquisition, as part of the Budget Scrutiny process.**

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Agenda Item No: 6
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 July 2020
Report Title: Financial Outturn 2019/20
Report Author & Job Title: Lee Foreman – Senior Accountant
Maria Hadfield – Senior Accountant
Portfolio Holder Neil Bell
Portfolio Holder for: Finance & IT

Summary:

This report presents the outturn revenue position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account for 2019/20 financial year.

It also presents the capital outturn for capital works and how these have been financed, the Collection Fund position, reserve transfers, and a treasury management update.

In February Cabinet received a forecast based on the third quarter position which forecast a general fund deficit of £150,000. This was an improving picture on previous months following a number of actions taken to reduce the deficits highlighted in quarter 1 and quarter 2. This trend continued in the final quarter and a deficit of £1,000 is reported at year end.

The Housing Revenue Account had net expenditure of £667,000 in year against a budgeted figure of £435,000 therefore reporting an overspend of £232,000.

Key Decision: NO
Significantly Affected Wards: All, none significantly

The Cabinet is asked to:-

- I. Note the financial outturn for 2019/20**
- II. Note the Capital Outturn, Collection Fund position, and Treasury management update**
- III. Approve the reserve movement transfers as per table 5.**
- IV. Recommend to Council that Delegation be given to the Head of Environment and Land Management to set fees and charges as necessary for external work provided by Aspire.**

Policy Overview: Upholding a strong focus on managing the Council's resources in line with the Council's Corporate Plan and the

Medium Term Financial Plan is a top priority for the Council. This is exercised through our regular monitoring procedures and the responsibilities that managers have for the stewardship of budgets

Financial Implications:

The General Fund outturn shows a deficit of £1,000 after transfers to reserves.

The Housing Revenue Account spent £667,000 in year against forecast spend of £435,000.

Various transfers to and from reserves have been made with the overall level of earmarked reserves (which includes developer contributions) at 31 March 2020 increasing by £1,577,000.

Legal Implications

Equalities Impact Assessment

Please see the Budget setting process assessment

Other Material Implications:

None

Exempt from Publication:

N/a

Background Papers:

Previous budget monitoring reports presented to this Committee.

Contact:

Lee.Foreman@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330509
Maria.Hadfield@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330545

Report Title: 2019/20 Outturn Report

Introduction and Background

- Following the closure of the 2019/20 service accounts this report provides Members with the outturn results for the General Fund (GF) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2019/20. It also covers outturn of capital spending, collection fund, reserve movements and an update on treasury management.
- The statutory deadline for closing and the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Economy) signing off the accounts for presentation to our external auditors has been extended due to the COVID 19 response. The revised deadline is 31 August 2020.

Proposal/Current Position

- Members are being asked to note the outturn results for 2019/20 for the GF and HRA, the capital outturn, the collection fund, and treasury management position. Members are also asked to approve the reserve transfers as per Table 5 of this report.

2019/20 General Fund Outturn

- The final outturn position was £1,000 over the approved budget, as shown at Error! Reference source not found., with further analysis, by service, at **Error! Reference source not found..** This final position reflects a number of variances that occurred during the year. The most significant movements between Quarter 3 and the final outturn for each service area are explained in the section after the tables. The variances up to quarter 3 have previously been reported to members.

Table 1 – General Fund Budget Outturn – by Directorate

* Directorate	Current Budget (net) £'000	Outturn (net) to 31/03/20 £'000	Annual Variance £'000	Movement from Quarter 3 £'000
a Chief Executive	1,350	1,373	23	(20)
b Director Of Finance & Economy	2,727	4,083	1,356	686
c Director Of Law & Governance	1,052	1,656	603	32
d Director Of Place & Space	10,597	10,434	(163)	(352)
Net Service Expenditure	15,726	17,546	1,819	346
e Non service specific items	(494)	(1,841)	(1,346)	(22)
Budget Requirement	15,232	15,706	473	324
f Financing:	(15,232)	(15,705)	(473)	(473)
Total movement	0	1	1	(149)

Table 2 - General Fund Outturn – by Service

*	Service	Current Budget (net) £'000	Outturn (net) to 31/03/20 £'000	Annual Variance £'000	Movement from Quarter 3 £'000
a	Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	1,350	1,373	23	(20)
b	Corporate Property & Projects	(2,284)	(1,527)	757	80
b	Finance & ICT	4,058	4,061	3	367
b	Housing Services	953	1,549	596	239
c	Community Safety and Wellbeing	(322)	497	819	169
c	HR & Customer Services	62	(11)	(72)	(94)
c	Legal & Democratic Services	1,313	1,170	(144)	(42)
d	Culture	3,282	3,442	159	43
d	Environmental & Land Management	5,238	5,056	(182)	(95)
d	Planning	2,076	1,936	(140)	(301)
	Net Service Expenditure	15,726	17,546	1,819	346
e	Capital Charges and net interest	(2,492)	(3,629)	(1,136)	(650)
e	Levies, Grants and Precepts	259	264	5	5
e	Contribution (from)/to reserves	1,739	1,524	(215)	623
	Budget Requirement	15,232	15,706	473	324
	Financing:				
f	Retained Business Rates	(4,721)	(5,157)	(436)	(437)
f	Council Tax	(7,556)	(7,592)	(36)	(36)
f	New Homes Bonus	(2,955)	(2,955)	0	0
	Total movement	0	1	1	(149)

Chief Executive

- This directorate delivered savings of £20,000 in quarter 4 as several projects within Economic Development have been delayed.

Director of Finance and Economy

- Corporate Property & Projects** reported a further deficit of £80,000 in the final quarter.
- International House had increased in Business Rates and Services Charge liabilities for void units totalling £40,000, and Carlton Road Depot had an increase in business rates of £30,000.
- Finance and ICT** had an overall pressure in year of £3,000 with £367,000 pressure being added in the last quarter.
- The movement in quarter 4 included bad debt write offs of £239,000, and £103,000 pressure from Corporate Vacancy Savings, although this pressure is matched off by salary savings across all service areas. There was also an additional £20,000 increase in debt expenses from brokerage fees.
- General Fund Housing** saw an additional pressure of £239,000 in the last quarter of which £226,000 related to the Housing Options Team.
- The further pressure from Housing Options was largely due to additional temporary accommodation costs of £186,000, and £30,000 of additional Housing Prevention Grants which are made to prevent homelessness and further temporary accommodation costs to the authority.

11. There was also £20,000 of additional costs for fencing works at the Chilmington Gypsy and Traveller site.

Director of Law & Governance

12. **Community Safety and Wellbeing** saw an additional pressure of £169,000 coming through the last quarter as parking income reduced as the threat of Covid19 materialised and formal restrictions on movement were introduced.
13. **HR and Customer Services** showed a quarter 4 saving of £94,000. Salary savings of £24,000 were made in Customer Services and there was a saving in the Corporate Training budget of £55,000.
14. **Legal and Democratic Services** had further income of £42,000 in quarter 4 as Legal fees increased by £64,000, however there was a pressure of £28,000 for replacement projectors in the Council Chamber.

Director of Place & Space

15. **Culture** had a further pressure of £43,000 in the last quarter. This included an increase in Stour Centre utility costs of £15,000 and further leisure procurement costs of £13,000.
16. **Environmental and Land Management** had a surplus of £95,000 in the last quarter with £35,000 of additional commuted sums received, and £60,000 of salary saving in the Ground Maintenance Team.
17. **Planning** saw a reduction in forecast in quarter 4 by £301,000.
18. £67,000 of this was from salary savings within the Building Control team, and £210,000 of consultant spend to deliver the day job did not come forward. The annual surplus has been set aside in the Planning reserve to aid future restructure and system implementation.
19. There was also a £70,000 saving in general consultancy costs, and planning fee income was down £70,000 in the last quarter.

Capital Charges and Net Interest

20. Capital and Net Interest is covered in the Treasury Management section of this report (from paragraph 46).

Collection Fund Outturn

21. The Collection Fund is the statutory mechanism by which income gathered by a billing authority (in this case, Ashford Borough Council) from Council Tax and Business Rates is distributed to Government and precepting authorities (KCC, Fire, Police and Parishes).
22. Overall the collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates have been high in 2019/20 at 98.1% and 99.1% respectively.

Council Tax

23. The year-end position for Council Tax shows an overall surplus of £903 in year, with an overall surplus of £537,030 including previous year distributions.
24. The in-year position is in line with the estimates reported throughout the year.

Table 3 - Council Tax Position

--

Business Rates

25. Net rates payable by ratepayers is broadly in line with the 2019/20 forecast.
26. Following the introduction of check, challenge and appeal the number of appeals coming forward has substantially reduced. All Kent authorities have therefore reviewed their appeals provision and recalculated the potential risk to be 2.7% of net rates payable and this continues to be a suitable general provision.
27. In May 2020 the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal to uphold the separate rating valuation of Automated Teller Machines within supermarkets and similar locations. This decision will mean that significant refunds will be due to retailers based on previous year's billing. A separate appeals provision has been created for these repayments of £523,330. The potential cost to the Council for this is £209,332.
28. The Valuation Office has also informed Local Authorities that purpose built GP surgeries will receive a 30% reduction which will be applied to the ratings list. The potential cost to the Council is £34,000.
29. Taking into account these potential costs the overall final position on the business rates collection fund was a deficit of £168,600, the Council's share of this is deficit is £67,440

Table 4 - Business Rates Position

	Original Budget 2019/20	Outturn (net) 2019/20
	£'000	£'000
Opening (Surplus)/Deficit		(222)
Surplus paid to Major Preceptors 2019/20		248
Amount of Business Rates to be paid to Major Preceptors	49,694	49,694
Amount of Business Rates Billed	(51,315)	(52,498)
Other Items Charged to the Collection Fund	241	343
Bad Debts/Appeals	1,598	2,355
In year (Surplus)/Deficit	0	142
Overall (Surplus)/Deficit	0	168

Kent Business Pool Update

30. The Council continues to be a member of the Kent Business Rates Pool, the benefit of the Pool is that the levy paid to Government is significantly lower than if the Council had acted individually resulting in a net benefit of £1.437m to the Pool.
31. Under the pooling agreement for 2019/20 Ashford Borough Council retains 30%, or £431,000 of this benefit, a further 30% goes to Kent County Council, 30% is put into a 'Growth Fund' for Economic Development within Ashford, with the remaining 10%, £144,000, being put aside for use as a Safety Net Reserve to mitigate risk.
32. The benefit of the levy is not budgeted for as the success of the Pool is dependent on all the members. The amount received of £862,000 has been transferred to the Business Rate Income Reserve to mitigate fluctuations in future Business Rate receipts.

Transfers to/from Reserves

33. Earmarked reserves are balances held for specific purposes, at the end of the year transfers to and from earmarked reserves increased by £1,577,000 which was largely due to additional interest from the Elwick Road development.
34. The significant reserve movements are:-
 - a. Transfer of £862,000 to the Business Rate Income Reserve for the Council's share of the business rates levy from the Pool. This is the levy which would have been paid to Central Government but is retained as a member of the Kent Business Rates Pool.
 - b. A further £1,000,000 has been transferred to the Economic Resilience Reserve. With future pressures anticipated following the economy slow down, the additional interest receivable on the transfer of the Elwick Road development has been allocated to reserves.
 - c. £600,000 has been transferred to the service pressure reserve to further support budget pressures in future years as the full economic effect of the pandemic is still uncertain.
 - d. £936,000 was used from the New Initiatives reserve to fund the capital works at The Coachworks.
 - e. New Homes Bonus was used to fund £106,496 of Digital Transformation projects and £142,453 in preparation cost for the Multi Storey Car Park. The reserve was increased by a further £683,000 grant received.
 - f. New Homes Bonus was used to fund £106,496 of Digital Transformation projects and £142,453 in preparation cost for the Multi Storey Car Park. The reserve was increased by a further £683,000 grant received.
 - g. Movements out of the reserve £194,049 emergency works to Windmills and Leisure Centres and £60,023 for Joe Fagg demolition, £50,000 various works to roundabout bays and £39,930 to fund ANPR at Elwick Road.
 - h. £940,000 S106 funds were used to contribute towards funding HRA residential new builds.
35. The closing General Fund balance is £2,394,000 which is in line with the minimum balance of 15% of the Net Budget Requirement for 2020/21.

36. The Cabinet is asked to approve the reserve movement transfers as shown below in Table 5.

Table 5 - Summary of Earmarked Reserves

General fund general reserves	2019/20			Balance at 31st March 2020 £'000
	Balance at 31st March 2019 £'000	Transfers In £'000	Transfers Out £'000	
Unearmarked General fund reserves	(2,275)	(120)	1	(2,394)
Earmarked Reserves				
Corporate Recovery Delivery Plan	(6,126)	(683)	1,295	(5,515)
Fund future expenditure	(8,943)	(3,364)	1,116	(11,190)
Provide for maintenance of assets	(1,487)	(895)	571	(1,811)
Required by statute reserves	(157)	0	14	(143)
Developer Section 106 contributions	(6,224)	(1,634)	2,121	(5,736)
Earmarked Reserves	(22,937)	(6,575)	5,118	(24,395)
Total Reserves Position	(25,212)	(6,696)	5,119	(26,789)

2019/20 Housing Revenue Outturn (HRA)

37. The outturn on the HRA is showing net expenditure at year end of £667,000 which represents an overspend of £232,000 for the year and a reduction in forecast of £220,000 from quarter 3 as shown in the table below, with key movements since quarter 3 following.

Table 6 – 2019/20 Housing Revenue Account Outturn

Budget Page	Current Budget (net) £'000	Outturn (net) to 31/03/20 £'000	Variance £'000	Movement from Quarter 3
Income	(24,843)	(24,993)	(150)	(159)
Supervision and Management	5,770	5,979	210	(81)
Repairs and Maintenance	3,478	3,595	117	(110)
Other	16,030	16,086	56	131
Net Revenue Expenditure	435	667	232	(220)
Capital Works - Decent Homes	4,600	3,262	(1,338)	(539)
Financed By:				
Contribution To/(From) Major Repairs Reserve	(4,600)	(3,262)	1,338	539
Total Net Expenditure	435	667	232	(220)

38. **Income** – additional dwelling rents received above forecast.

39. **Supervision and Management** – £80,000 reduction in Architect costs for new build developments.
40. **Repairs and Maintenance** – £109,000 additional income for costs of works recovered.
41. **Other** – Increase in capital Charges (depreciation).

Capital Outturn

42. In addition to the Revenue Budget the Council operates a Capital Programme.
43. As part of the closing process the capital spending for the year is assigned to various assets, and funding identified. Details of capital spend and financing are contained in the 2019/20 Budget Book which is available on the Council's website.
44. The Council uses many sources of funding for projects including Section 106 Developer Contributions, Homes & Community Agency Grants, other grants, Council's capital receipts, revenue reserves and borrowing.
45. Major projects during 2019/20 included:
 - a. The Coachworks – during the year work was completed on this project, providing flexible work space and entertaining space, within a fully refurbished set of buildings, in the heart of the commercial quarter. The capital spend in 2019/20 was £936,064 taking the total project cost to £1,042,785.
 - b. The retail unit occupied by Matalan was purchased for £5,030,939.
 - c. £8,000,000 was paid out from previously received grant monies for works at Junction 10a of the M20.
 - d. A further payment of £2,549,577 was paid towards the Elwick Road Development.
 - e. Christchurch Lodge – providing an 8 unit, short-stay temporary accommodation facility close the existing facility Christchurch House. . The project is estimated to be completed in September 2020, expenditure in 2019/20 has been £889,951 including cost of purchase.
 - f. Accelerated Street Purchase Scheme (HRA) – in 2019/20 to the Council acquired 43 properties, many of which will be let at Social Housing rents. This has relaxed some of the pressure on the Council's Social Housing waiting list and help to address homelessness within the borough. The expenditure for 2019/20 was £8,768,000.
 - g. Piper Joinery (HRA) - this site was acquired at a cost of £1,607,000 with the intention of developing 22 homes, and is currently being designed for neighbourhood consultation and submission to planning.
 - h. Tile Kiln Road (HRA) - This site has also been acquired at a cost of £1,001,000. A proposed scheme has been drawn-up with a potential 14 homes could be delivered on the site. This will shortly be put out for neighbourhood consultation before submitting a planning application.

Table 7 – Summary of Capital Spending and Financing

	£'000
General Fund Capital Expenditure	21,497
HRA Capital Expenditure	17,646
Total Expenditure	39,143
Funding	
Capital Receipts	4,704
1-4-1 Capital Receipts (ring fenced for affordable housing)	3,371
Earmarked Reserves	1,017
External Grants and Contributions	9,209
Developer Contributions	1,420
GF Revenue Contributions	86
HRA Revenue Contributions	4,400
Major Repairs Reserve	3,262
Prudential Borrowing	11,674
Total Funding	39,143

Table 8 – Capital Receipts

	£'000	Total Received £'000
Right to Buy Sales Receipts		3,060
Less		
Admin Costs	(3)	
Government share (Pooling liability)	(486)	(489)
Other HRA Capital Receipts		2,527
Less costs		(30)
General Fund Capital Receipts		4,864
Less costs (Property Company loan repayment)		(4,087)
Total Capital Receipts		5,845
Housing Revenue Account Receipts		
<i>Unringfenced receipts</i>		(3,470)
<i>1-4-1 capital receipts for affordable housing</i>		(1,598)
Total HRA Receipts		(5,068)
General Fund Receipts		(777)

2019/20 Treasury Management Position (Capital Charges and Net Interest)

46. The breakdown of the Capital Charges and Net Interest line is shown below at **Table 9**. This table shows the Interest Payable and receivable budget, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and depreciation. The MRP is a statutory payment the Council has to make to offset the costs of capital borrowing over the life of the associated asset.

Capital Charges and Net Interest	2019/20 Budget	Outturn (net) to 31/03/20	Annual Variance
Interest payable	1,783	669	(1,114)
Interest receivable	(3,050)	(3,276)	(227)
Minimum revenue provision	704	815	111
Depreciation	(1,929)	(1,835)	94
Total Net Interest	(2,492)	(3,629)	(1,136)

47. **Interest Payable** – Overall £1.114m was saved in interest payable for the year. The originally budget allowed for some long term placements in year and also allowed for further increases in the Bank of England (BOE) base rate. The borrowing assumptions where that significant additional borrowing would be drawn for A Better Choice for Property Ltd.
48. Due to the deficit in Q1, and the change in interest forecasts which forecast an interest rate rise to be less likely, a strategic decision was taken not to make any long term placements, additionally the forecast short term rate of 1.38% when setting the budget held at 0.75% and therefore significant savings were also made on short term borrowing. A full list of the Councils borrowing positions at year end are shown at **Appendix A**.
49. **Interest Receivable** - The performance of strategic investments performed as expected in year. Additional investment interest was received from the Elwick Development and has contributed to the additional income of £227,000, having transferred £1m to the Economic Resilience Reserve.
50. **Capital Values** - The Council's strategic investment portfolio saw significant falls in capital value due to the global economic crash which has resulted in a reduction of nearly £4m since quarter 3 budget monitoring.
51. Our strategic funds are recovering and as at 30 June 2020 capital values had risen by £620,000, leaving the overall level of exposure at £1.5m compared to the amount invested.
52. This position does not make any allowance for possible reductions in the Council's CCLA Property Fund holding which was valued at just over £12m at the end of January 2020.
53. As at the 25/03/2020, we received confirmation that the CCLA Property fund had suspended trading. The suspension is not due to a large amount of redemptions, but *"it is not possible for valuers to be confident that their valuations truly reflect prevailing conditions"*, and *"In circumstances where that is not possible and where there is therefore a material risk of*

disadvantage to either party, we are obliged to suspend transactions until the required level of certainty is re-established”.

54. The capital value of all funds is being monitored on an ongoing basis with the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors.

Delegated Authority

55. The Councils landscape management team ‘Aspire’ are undertaking external work for various stakeholders within the Borough including schools and Parish Councils.
56. To enable the team to have flexibility over the charging arrangements (outside of the annual fees and charges setting process) it is recommended the Council provide delegated authority to the Head of Environment and Land Management to set fees for external work as necessary.
57. The formal recommendation is therefore that: **“Delegation be given to the Head of Environment and Land Management to set fees and charges as necessary for external work provided by Aspire”.**

Implications and Risk Assessment

58. The figures in the published Accounts may change if the audit identifies a need, this may lead to a change in the reported outturn.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

59. As part of routine budget monitoring all budget holders are consulted about their outturn estimates and this forms the basis of the outturn forecasts. Services have been consulted for explanations of variances.

Next Steps in Process

60. This report will support the statement of Accounts. The Accounts will be audited in September and signed off by the November Audit Committee.
61. Any material changes as a result of the external audit will be reported to the Audit Committee.

Portfolio Holder’s Views

62. Despite significant service pressures in year, a number of strategic finance functions such as borrowing, investment interest and business rates delivered savings/additional income to support this pressure and deliver a minor deficit at year end.
63. Although not as much as planned, the Council still managed to strengthen its reserve position which will help manage the immediate and long term impacts of the current Covid19 Pandemic.

Contact and Email

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Appendix A

Treasury Management Portfolio as at 31 March 2020

Counter Party	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Fair Value £	Comment
Investment Accounts					
Goldman Sachs	Various	0.53%	50,000	51,295	*
ICD Portal - Blackrock	Various	0.66%	10,000,000	10,000,000	*
ICD Portal - HSBC	Various	0.58%	3,264,000	3,264,000	*
ICD Portal - Invesco	Various	0.70%	7,800,000	7,800,000	*
Payden Global MMF	Various	0.99%	3,000,000	2,942,674	*
Total Investment Accounts			24,114,000	24,057,969	
Long Term Investments					
Property Investment					
A Better Choice of Property Ltd.***	Various		275,001	272,765	Value as at 31/03/2019
CCLA Local Authority Property Fund	Various	4.21%	11,000,000	11,864,364	
Equity Funds**					
CCLA Diversified Income Fund	Various	3.29%	3,000,000	2,712,988	
Investec Diversified Income Fund	28/03/2019	4.13%	2,500,000	2,258,062	
Kames Diversified Income Fund	13/05/2019	4.34%	5,500,000	4,575,625	
Schroder Income Maximiser	Various	5.89%	3,500,000	2,393,889	
UBS Multi Asset Income Fund	Various	4.66%	3,000,000	2,554,918	
UBS Global Income Equity Fund	29/07/2019	3.50%	1,500,000	1,226,700	
Total Long Term Investments			30,275,001	27,859,311	
Total Investment Portfolio			54,389,001	51,917,280	

* Money Market Fund (MMF) are AAA rated deposit facilities which have variable rates of interest but have constant net asset values. Interest rates are shown at the time of producing this report.

** Equity funds and the Property fund have variable rates of interest and also have fluctuating capital values, the

*** A Better Choice Of Property Ltd. is a solely owned subsidiary of ABC

Debt Portfolio as at 31 March 2020

Counter Party	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Fair Value	Comment
Temporary Borrowing					
Renfrewshire Council	22/08/2019	0.82%	5,000,000		Maturity 22/04/2020
Vale of Glamorgan Council	07/10/2019	0.78%	3,000,000		Maturity 01/04/2020
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	07/10/2019	0.75%	5,000,000		Maturity 17/04/200
Brighton & Hove City Council	07/10/2019	0.76%	3,000,000		Maturity 07/05/2020
Leicester City Council	07/10/2019	0.80%	5,000,000		Maturity 08/06/2020
Lichfield District Council	07/10/2019	0.76%	2,000,000		Maturity 07/07/2020
Derbyshire County Council PF	08/10/2019	0.79%	10,000,000		Maturity 08/04/2020
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea	21/10/2019	0.81%	7,500,000		Maturity 21/07/2020
Salford City Council	04/11/2019	0.75%	6,000,000		Maturity 30/04/2020
East Suffolk Council	22/11/2019	0.85%	5,000,000		Maturity 22/05/2020
London Borough of Newham Council	25/11/2019	0.80%	7,000,000		Maturity 01/04/2020
Warwickshire Council	05/02/2020	0.85%	10,000,000		Maturity 05/08/2020
Oldham Council	12/02/2020	0.82%	5,000,000		Maturity 06/04/2020
Skipton Building Society	19/02/2020	0.85%	10,000,000		Maturity 19/05/2020
Exeter City Council	25/02/2020	0.85%	5,000,000		Maturity 26/05/2020
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	28/02/2020	0.88%	6,000,000		Maturity 29/05/2020
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority	19/03/2020	0.75%	10,000,000		Maturity 20/04/2020
Aberdeenshire Council	26/03/2020	1.70%	5,000,000		Maturity 30/04/2020
Total Temporary Borrowing			109,500,000		
Long Term Borrowing					
Public Works Loan Board***	various	various	108,664,150		Maturity Date - various
Total Long Term Borrowing			108,664,150		
Grand Total Borrowing			218,164,150		

*** HRA borrowing

Detail of PWLB Loans Outstanding at 31 March 2020

Date of Advance	Loan Ref Number	Date of Repayment	Amount Outstanding £	Rate %
28/03/2012	499501	28/03/2021	2,000,000	2.21%
28/03/2012	499500	28/03/2022	7,000,000	0.90%
28/03/2012	499516	28/03/2022	2,000,000	2.40%
28/03/2012	499514	28/03/2023	2,000,000	2.56%
28/03/2012	499507	28/03/2024	3,000,000	2.70%
28/03/2012	499503	28/03/2025	3,000,000	2.82%
28/03/2012	499505	28/03/2026	1,000,000	2.92%
28/03/2012	499496	28/03/2027	1,000,000	3.01%
28/03/2012	499509	28/03/2028	2,000,000	3.08%
28/03/2012	499497	28/03/2029	2,000,000	3.15%
28/03/2012	499510	28/03/2030	2,000,000	3.21%
28/03/2012	499498	28/03/2031	8,000,000	3.26%
28/03/2012	499511	28/03/2032	9,000,000	3.30%
28/03/2012	499499	28/03/2033	10,000,000	3.34%
28/03/2012	499512	28/03/2034	11,000,000	3.37%
28/03/2012	499506	28/03/2035	12,000,000	3.40%
28/03/2012	499513	28/03/2036	9,000,000	3.42%
28/03/2012	499515	28/02/2037	16,713,000	3.44%
29/03/2011	498502	29/03/2061	5,951,150	5.26%
		Total	108,664,150	

* Variable Rate Loan, the others are fixed rate

A Better Choice for Property Loans as at 31 March 2020

Loans	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Principal Repaid £	Balance Outstanding £
Loan 3	12/02/2015	2.83%	400,000	59,820	340,180
Loan 9	22/07/2017	3.04%	1,445,000	32,627	1,412,373
Loan 12	25/03/2018	3.06%	240,000	4,275	235,725
Loan 13	04/05/2018	3.13%	2,490,000	32,396	2,457,604
Loan 14	05/06/2018	3.06%	1,196,311	15,851	1,180,460
Loan 15	05/07/2018	3.10%	113,000	1,481	111,519
Loan 16	25/09/2018	3.19%	823,000	10,501	812,499
Loan 17*	17/10/2018	3.45%	659,000	5,154	653,846
Loan 18	02/11/2018	3.31%	820,000	6,689	813,311
Loan 19	09/11/2018	3.29%	6,517,425	53,405	6,464,020
Loan 20*	01/02/2019	3.10%	93,890	814	93,076
Loan 21*	04/02/2019	3.10%	7,103,180	61,629	7,041,551
Loan 22	22/02/2019	3.03%	809,240	7,165	802,075
Loan 23*	04/03/2019	3.10%	941,360	8,176	933,184
Loan 24	17/06/2019	2.80%	160,000	752	159,248
Loan 25	01/07/2019	2.81%	91,776	431	91,345
Loan 26	06/09/2019	2.24%	568,400	3,173	565,227
Loan 27	08/09/2019	2.24%	3,821,595	13,265	3,808,330
Total loans to A Better Choice For Property Ltd			28,293,177	304,339	27,975,573
* These loans have been subsequently loaned to the companies subsidiary A Better Choice for Property Development Ltd.					

Agenda Item 7



Agenda Item No: 7

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 30th July 2020

Report Title: Recovery Plan 2020

Report Author & Job Title: Lorna Ford (Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications)
Jennifer Shaw (Strategy and Policy Manager)

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

Summary: This report presents the draft Recovery Plan 2020. The Plan sets out the council's approach to making a timely and successful recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic; the Plan reflects the difficult and challenging times ahead and the opportunities that are arising as we recover from the pandemic as an organisation and local leader. The Plan sets out how we can embrace the 'new normal' to build; a stronger local economy, increased community resilience and public participation and to encourage living more environmentally sustainable lifestyles, keeping our pledge to achieve carbon neutrality as a core focus of the Plan. Included is the long term ambition for the borough. Developed in consultation with a wide of range of stakeholders this ambition is the conduit for a consistent journey from recovery phase to implementing our key strategic documents in the near future. The Plan covers the next 18 months reflecting economic forecasting for the return of economic stability during the next two years. Given the many uncertainties faced at present on timing of easing of restrictions and as more is learnt about the pandemic and how to suppress further peaks in infection The Plan will need to be flexible and responsive. The Recovery Plan macro-economic forecast is based on the assumption of an orderly departure from the EU at the end of 2020. The actions set out are those that can be started within the next 9 months. The plan will be regularly reviewed and further actions brought forward at the time where they will assist with furthering recovery across the borough.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. **approve adoption of the Recovery Plan as the main strategic document of the council for the next 18 months;**
- II. **give delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to vary the Delivery Plan programme, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Recovery Monitoring and Advisory Group, in order to expedite a timely response to changing circumstances to support the recovery of local residents, communities and business;**
- III. **authorise the CEO, in consultation with the Leader and the relevant Portfolio Holder to commence delivery of the Recovery Plan prior to its being recommended for adoption at Full Council in October;**
- IV. **note the reallocation of Business Rate Pool funding (Economic Growth) from the town centre framework projects to the focus on the economic recovery priorities within the Recovery Plan delivery;**
- V. **note and agree the long-term ambition for the borough: and**
- VI. **note the Ashford Ambition Report (shaping a prosperous, sustainable & inclusive future for the Borough in 2030 & beyond) as the evidence base for the forthcoming Corporate Plan**

Policy Overview:

The government's Recovery Plan – Our Plan to Rebuild has guided the underlying principles of the Ashford Recovery Plan. The government plan sets out the steps it will take to keep people safe and reduce transmission of the coronavirus whilst easing restrictions to revitalise the economy and deliver a greener, more resilient future for everyone.

The Plan will be responsive to information, guidance and policy emerging from The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) as it assesses the impact of the coronavirus at a local level.

Financial Implications:

As a result of reduced income to the council while the stay at home restrictions were in force and the costs of responding to the coronavirus emergency the council has a budget deficit. The Recovery Plan is structured around supporting the council's financial position, economic recovery, carbon neutrality and community resilience over the next 18 months. The proposed actions are prioritised as they will contribute to balancing the MTFP through increasing efficiencies, income generation and / or commercialisation or are cost neutral or

have external funding sources and are meeting the assessment criteria set out in the Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan is funded by a combination of funds redirected from the NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rates) pool and delivery plan reserves (formerly project reserves). The Business Rate Pool funding (Economic Growth) has been reallocated from the town centre framework projects to the focus on the economic recovery priorities within the Recovery Plan delivery. The Pool funding was originally approved for town centre framework projects which was agreed in 2019.

Legal Implications:

Equalities Impact Assessment: See Attached. No negative impacts were identified.

Data Protection Impact Assessment: Where necessary individual actions will be assessed for any data protection implications, such as remote working.

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement): Potential risks arising as a result of the coronavirus pandemic have been assessed. The Recovery Plan mitigates those risks, which have been included on the corporate risk register.

A second wave of the coronavirus could result in funds being diverted away from delivering the Recovery Plan to deal with an emergency response that maybe required depending on the severity of any subsequent outbreak.

Sustainability Implications: The Recovery Plan has a **positive** impact on the council's commitment to achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2030. This remains an overriding commitment of the council and permeates through all four themes of the Recovery Plan. The proposed actions are considered in respect of their contribution to carbon reduction, promoting a green economy and encouraging; a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable way of living. This will set in place good foundations as the council moves out of the recovery phase and takes forward the Corporate Plan priority to be a 'Green Pioneer' and adopt the Carbon Neutral Strategy.

For example, actions that will contribute to achieving carbon neutrality include:

- Remote working for staff – reduces commuting by car, to offices and for meetings.
- Reviewing councils own assets – will include buildings, energy efficiency, water consumption etc.
- Increasing options for walking and cycling for work and leisure, reduced car dependency.
- Progressing with digital transformation to increase use of

virtual meetings and information sharing, both internally and with the wider public.

- Increasing local energy generation through renewable energy sources.
- Increasing biodiversity and provision of open space through improvements in our parks.
- Run promotional campaigns for staff and public to increase knowledge and share ideas for more sustainable lifestyles.
- Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes and actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough.

Other Material Implications:

None

Exempt from Publication:

NO

Background Papers:

UK Government Recovery Plan – Our Plan to Rebuild
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf

Ashford Ambition Report July 2020 (available on request from the authors)

Ashford Residents Survey 2020 Report (available on request from the authors)

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Report Title: Recovery Plan 2020

Introduction and Background

1. The Recovery Plan 2020 (Appendix 1) has been developed to put in place a framework to enable a timely and structured recovery from the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The plan sets out to deliver a number of actions that will allow the council to re-configure how it works and can most effectively deliver services to residents and how, in collaboration with others, help mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the local economy, communities and residents. The underlying principles are to build back to a greener, more prosperous, resilient and caring borough. The 'Principles for a Green Recovery' set out by the Kent Resilience Forum will be used as a guide to inform decision making. (An explanation of the principles for a green recovery are in appendix F of the Recovery Plan).
2. To inform the next Corporate Plan, consultants had been commissioned to undertake a study – 'Ashford Futures' (in consultation with members, staff and local stakeholders) to develop an aspirational ambition for the borough. This culminated in a report 'Ashford Ambition, shaping a prosperous, sustainable & inclusive future for the Borough in 2030 & beyond' and the ambition will be the guiding principle of key strategic documents, the Corporate Plan, the Economic Development Strategy, the Carbon Neutral Strategy and the Local Plan. As this work was drawing to a conclusion the coronavirus pandemic became prevalent in the UK and on the 23rd of March the government introduced 'lockdown' to save lives. The remaining consultation was carried out by online methods. The Executive Summary of the Ashford Ambition Report is at appendix H of the Recovery Plan)
3. The council's immediate priority turned to responding to the coronavirus pandemic; supporting communities, residents and business. This meant that the public consultation for the Corporate Plan, planned to take place during June and July, was suspended. As the implications of the lockdown became clearer; reduced income to the council, rapid introduction of different ways of working, the stalling of the economy and disruption and hardship to many local people it became evident that a Recovery Plan should developed to provide local leadership and direction to enable a timely recovery in what have and continue to be challenging and unprecedented circumstances.
4. The Leader has steered the development of the Recovery Plan, assisted by the Recovery Group of senior officers (Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of HR and Customer Services, Head of Finance and IT). It is recognised that the Recovery Plan will need to be responsive to potentially yet unknown consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and further guidance from the government as restrictions are eased and possibly re-imposed should infection rates increase. A Recovery Monitoring and Advisory Group,

nominated by The Leader will be formed, as a committee of the Cabinet, to oversee the delivery of the Recovery Plan.

5. Included within the Recovery Plan are;
- the revised Equalities Objectives and
 - the Service Design Principles

Equalities Objectives.

The Equalities Objectives were due to be reviewed concurrently with the Corporate Plan, in accordance with the legal requirement for public authorities to set at least one equality objective every four years to help focus attention on priority equality issues.

With the introduction of a new Corporate Plan paused to take stock of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, this Recovery Plan has been developed and our equalities objectives reviewed in light of the current circumstances. They will be kept under constant review and adapted accordingly.

Objective 1: Improve our understanding of our diverse communities in all that we do

Objective 2: Encourage all residents to have a say in the decisions that affect them and get involved in their local communities

Objective 3: Deliver services and customer care to meet the needs of all our residents

Objective 4: Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

The full equalities objectives are included in appendix D of the Recovery Plan

Service Design Principles

Service Design Principles are a set of considerations that form the basis of any good product/service. They provide a framework within which to operate, a structure made up of rules, guidelines and considerations that need to be considered when creating services/processes. They are fundamental pieces of advice that should make creating any new service/process easier as they give parameters that pre-empt tough questions and decisions.

The design principles have been developed in consultation with staff through a presentation and a series of workshops and are:

- Do the hard work, test and learn to keep it simple
- Focus on the customer journey, making it quick and uncomplicated to empower customers to do more for themselves
- Focus on the goals and delivery
- Less is more
- Distinctive
- Seamless approach
- Who needs this information?
- Tell customers what to expect and keep them up to date along the way
- This is for everyone

The full design principles are found in appendix E of the Recovery Plan.

Proposal

Members are requested to:

6. Approve adoption of the Recovery Plan as the main strategic document of the council for the next 18 months.
7. To give delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to vary the Delivery Plan programme, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Recovery Monitoring and Advisory Group, in order to expedite a timely response to changing circumstances to support the recovery of local residents, communities and business.
8. Authorise the CEO, in consultation with the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder to commence delivery of the Recovery Plan prior to its being recommended for adoption at Full Council in October;
9. Note the reallocation of Business Rate Pool funding (Economic Growth) from the town centre framework projects to the focus on the economic recovery priorities within the Recovery Plan delivery;
10. Note and agree the long-term ambition for the borough:

The Ashford Ambition: to be a thriving, productive and inclusive Borough in 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Kent and the South East where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector provide collective leadership to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing.
11. Note the Ashford Ambition report as the evidence base for the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Members are referred to the attached Assessment at Appendix 2. There are no negative impacts identified as arising from the implementation of the Recovery Plan

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. The Recovery Plan has been developed by The Leader and Management Team Recovery Group. The Cabinet was consulted on the draft Recovery Plan at Call Over on 2nd June 2020.
14. There has been extensive consultation with members, staff and local stakeholders to develop the long term ambition for the borough as part of the Ashford Futures study. In addition the Ashford Residents Survey asked questions relating to priorities for the Corporate Plan and achieving Carbon Neutrality. These have been taken into consideration in the development of

the Recovery Plan. The Recovery Plan is an intermediate step in the journey towards adopting the next Corporate Plan, The Economic Development Strategy and the Carbon Neutral Strategy. With stakeholders and residents views already gathered at its core, the Recovery Plan can be adopted without further delay. A summary of the consultation is in Appendix B of the Recovery Plan.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

15. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted on a number of areas of council business, our communities and local economy. It is important that a clear plan is in place to guide the council's strategic decision making as we recover from the pandemic and are able to respond flexibly to changing circumstances as and when they arise in the near future.
16. Delivering the actions in the Recovery Plan will enable the council to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities going forward over the next 18 months.
17. This provides a period in which to review the Corporate Plan, Economic Development Strategy and Carbon Neutral Strategy to ensure they are reflecting lessons learnt and focused on building back better for the longer term to achieve the ambition for Ashford borough in 2030 and beyond.

Next Steps in Process

18. The CEO commences delivering the Recovery Plan. This will provide a short timeframe to understand any further constraints and opportunities and where the plan will need to be flexible and/or revised ahead of it being present to Full Council for adoption.
19. Further to approval at Full Council the Recovery Plan will be published on the council's website.

Conclusion

20. The Recovery Plan provides a strong basis in which the council can move from an emergency response footing to instigating a well-planned recovery to the benefit of the council as an organisation, the local community and economy.
21. The Recovery Plan keeps at its core the commitment to achieve carbon neutrality, through the interventions and actions wherever possible, building back a more sustainable borough.
22. Comprehensive and regular review will ensure our recovery remains focused and on track to deliver a timely recovery that is inclusive and ensures those hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic are not disadvantaged.

Portfolio Holder's Views

23. This Plan represents an important step forward in ensuring the recovery of our communities and economy and prioritises what we must deliver to get there. In many ways we have already begun the journey to recovery.
24. As an organisation our working practices have had to change and indeed we are demonstrating better ways of working with added environmental benefits. There are opportunities we will take to embed longer term changes to the way we work whilst ensuring the quality of our services are maintained and delivered as efficiently as possible.
25. Throughout the coming months there will be many uncertainties facing us and regular review of this plan will be necessary in order to keep our Recovery Plan actively on track and responsive to changes be they global, national or local. In order to deliver this Recovery Plan for our borough of Ashford, it is important that we all work together to ensure that we return to prosperity and good health as speedily as possible.

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Ashford Borough Council

Recovery Plan

July 2020

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Foreword by Cllr Clarkson, Leader



When we embarked on renewing our new 5 year Corporate Plan, due for introduction in 2020, we could never have envisaged that we would be in the throes of a global pandemic, with such tragic loss of life. As we are now hopefully coming through this crisis, we find ourselves in the position of having to adopt a Recovery Plan to steer us through the next 18 months. By early 2022 we should have recovered enough to be back on track to forge ahead with our longer term ambitions for Ashford, which are also outlined in this Plan.

During the pandemic I was extremely heartened by how our communities rallied round to help those who were vulnerable or in need. This period of enforced social distancing has also caused us to take a closer look at what is important to us; caring for each other and valuing what we have and what others do to support us in our daily lives. Our pledge to become carbon neutral remains a firm commitment. Whilst the coronavirus is a significant setback to our economic and social

journey we must look ahead to how we can work together to build a brighter, greener more sustainable future for the borough now and for the generations to come.

As an organisation our working practices had to change and indeed have worked extremely well and provided environmental benefits. There are opportunities we will take to embed longer term changes to the way we work whilst ensuring the quality of our services are maintained and delivered as efficiently as possible.

Throughout the coming months there will be many uncertainties facing us and regular review will be necessary in order to keep our Recovery Plan actively on track and responsive to changes be they global, national or local. In order to deliver this Recovery Plan for our borough of Ashford, it is important that we all work together to ensure that we return to prosperity and good health as speedily as possible.



“

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1. Introduction

We find ourselves in an unprecedented position. There will be consequences of the coronavirus pandemic that will influence our lives now and in the years to come. This Recovery Plan sets out the action we will take over the next 18 months to address the challenges and grasp the opportunities whether they are economic, social or environmental.

There will be opportunities to be gained by working collectively across all sectors, statutory and voluntary.

We shall continue to support and collaborate with the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF). This will ensure we are acting consistently with the county wide approach, able to draw on experiences of others and deliver coordinated and consistent recovery messages to the public and business. We will actively engage with the KRF Recovery Advisory Group, which will provide us with increased knowledge, information and support, which will inform the decision making in each of the districts.

The voluntary organisations in the borough have been outstanding in their response and the joint working established must be continued to ensure all residents have access to support and advice for their physical, mental and financial wellbeing. We will need to be aware that some communities have suffered particular loss and hardship and may need additional, longer term support to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

There has been wide acknowledgment that the restrictions introduced to minimise transmission of the coronavirus have significantly reduced climate change emissions. There is now a global discussion about how this could become mainstream; supporting the green economy through helping business to transition away from carbon intensive activities, assisting individuals to work differently and smarter, utilising technology, less commuting and increasing active travel options which prioritise pedestrians and cyclists. The UK Climate Secretary said in April 2020 'the world must work together, as

it has to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, to support a green and resilient recovery, which leaves no one behind.' In this Recovery Plan our actions are carefully considered to ensure wherever possible they are contributing to carbon reduction by taking opportunities to introduce new ways of working and supporting changes to enable a more sustainable way of living. We will, wherever possible, use the Kent Resilience Forum 'principles for a green recovery' as a framework against which all our actions are considered in order to assist in prioritising those which have positive environmental outcomes.

As the restrictions are gradually eased we will need to be responsive and ready to advise, where necessary, how this can be effected safely such as the reopening of town and village centres, play areas and making space for cycling and walking.

This Recovery Plan will culminate in the knowledge that we have seized opportunities and addressed the challenges thrust upon us by the pandemic to build a better future.



2. Government Policy

From midnight on the 23rd March 2020 the government required as many people as possible to stay at home wherever possible and to only make essential journeys. All non-essential businesses and workplaces were required to close, in addition to the earlier closure of schools and the leisure and hospitality sectors. Social distancing was introduced for everyone and, for the most vulnerable to infection, a shielding programme was activated. These 'lockdown' measures were put in place until it was determined that the reproduction rate of the virus had fallen to a level to suppress the virus, save lives and protect the NHS.

At the beginning of May the reproduction rate had fallen, meaning the number of infected people is falling. On the 10th May the Prime Minister announced a slight easing of lockdown restrictions. The following day the government issued its COVID-19 recovery strategy – Our Plan to Rebuild. This plan recognises that there will not be a quick return or any easy answers and it will be necessary to adapt as more is learnt

about the virus. The long term solution lies with finding a vaccine or drug treatment to the virus but the time scale for this is unknown and it is possible that a vaccine will not be found. Therefore the government's overriding priority remains to save lives and to do that it must be acknowledged that life will be different for the foreseeable future. The easing of restrictions will take place in steps, determined by the reproduction rate of the virus and 4 other tests.

The government is acutely aware of the impact on the economy of lockdown and the devastation it is causing to some businesses and livelihoods, health and wellbeing.

The government refers to the impact of the virus on the global economy and that it is not expecting the world to return to normal. The UK must adapt and shape the new world to improve living standards across the nation and strive to deliver a UK and world economy which is stronger, cleaner, more sustainable and more resilient after this crisis.

The Government COVID-19 Recovery Strategy can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

A summary can be found in Appendix A.



3. Key Assumptions

3.1 Macro-Economic Position

The economic forecasts used to help set a baseline for our new Corporate Plan have been revised to reflect the potential impact to the UK economy and the rate of economic recovery which will be dependent in part on the easing of restrictions.

Our consultants, Experian, have shared analysis of four possible scenarios in terms of macro-economic recovery. It is understood that the UK government is basing its recovery plans on what is known as the 'delayed-V' scenario which assumes:

- COVID-19 successfully contained in Q3 of 2020.
- Suppression measures begin to unwind in September.
- Activity remains at very subdued levels for most of 2020 Q3.
- Government mitigation policies have a fair amount of success.
- A tightening in credit conditions proves mild and short lived, while Sterling stabilises.

This scenario also assumes that the UK exits the single market and customs union in an orderly way at the end of 2020 with a Free Trade Agreement coming into effect in early 2021.

3.2 ABC Financial Position

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, the council's Medium Term Financial Plan highlighted the risks and difficulties that the council was facing in terms of increasing demand for services and proposed reviews of funding mechanisms. However; the council was in a strong financial position and this will need to be deployed differently to support the council through the crisis and into recovery period. There are significant budgetary pressures that, despite government's allocation of nearly £1.4m in additional funding, will need careful management and the use of reserves to cover the gap.

As a result of the crisis the council's income from services has reduced and it has incurred expenditure to support the emergency response which has drawn on reserves.

Income will be severely reduced in the 3 months from April, as the stay at home, stay safe message prevails. Then, as lockdown is eased income will slowly increase. It is anticipated that income levels may not return to normal until the end of 2020, or indeed into 2021, as confidence grows and restrictions are lifted in a phased programme, determined nationally. Some income streams may take longer to recover due to uncertainty in the global economic outlook.

The 2020/21 budget will see a significant financial pressure. Government funding of £1.36m will cover the direct pressure on the budget in responding to the coronavirus but will only partly offset lost revenue. Any further government funding to local authorities will be a welcome contribution towards easing the pressure on our budgets.

There will be ongoing review of budgets over the coming months and the forecast will be refined to identify where efficiencies can be made, savings, our borrowing strategy and economic forecasting.

As part of the recovery the council will need to rise to the challenge of supporting the local community and economy after the crisis, the council will need to restore its financial strength and transform itself to enable it to deliver services in an appropriate way for the future. This will mean that further emphasis will need to be placed on developing further commercial initiatives and identifying efficiencies from the council's operations.

3.3 Local Economy

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant effect on the world-wide economy. It is recognised that there will be a period of recession, how long and how deep this is will be dependent on many factors, global, national and local.



The UK government has put in place a number of measures to help reduce the impact on business and to safeguard employment, however it is expected that there will be significant economic difficulties in the short and longer term.

Unemployment is predicted, by the ONS, to rise from around 4% in February 2020 to nearly 9% under lockdown. Three of the sectors that are expected to see a particularly negative impact from the coronavirus outbreak are the arts and entertainment, accommodation and catering, and much of the retail and wholesale sectors. These sectors represent approx. 30% of Ashford's employment and would therefore have a big impact on local unemployment and associated deprivation levels and consumer spending.

Finding alternative employment will be difficult as vacancies have dropped as businesses delay hiring people until they know the full scale of the impact to their business. The government's Furlough scheme is being taken up by many businesses, but many small and medium businesses will likely be forced to lay off high numbers of staff in order to address their cash flow problems.



Business growth is likely to be curtailed and some businesses will consider how they operate, which may lead to increased productivity in the longer term but could adversely affect employment opportunities as businesses streamline their activity and find alternative ways of making or selling products or services. In Ashford manufacturing accounts for approximately 5,000 jobs many of which will be affected as businesses close or reshape the operation to allow for more automation.

Business start-ups and survival will both be negatively affected. For start-ups it can be expected that the rate will decrease considering the uncertainty of the business landscape and the reduced amount of disposable income many households will have, together with a reluctance by investors to support higher risk businesses.

4. Challenges & Opportunities

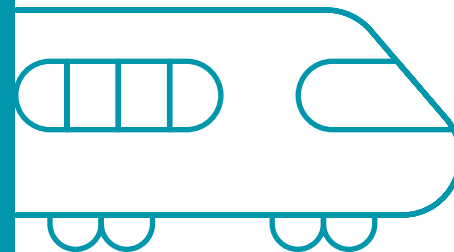
In our work to develop our next Corporate Plan, a number of challenges and opportunities were identified. Some of these have been heightened by the coronavirus pandemic, others will emerge as we recover. Over the next 18 months our endeavours will be focused on responding to the challenges we face and how everyone who lives and works in the borough can benefit from any opportunities that arise.

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Impacts on the Council

Challenges	Opportunities
Additional demand - Benefits / Debt Recovery / Homelessness / Environmental Health	Capturing changes to working practices as a result of remote working
Office accommodation (social distancing)	More staff able to homework, reduces travel and carbon emissions
Participation in meetings – actual and virtual	Virtual meetings, reduces travel and can increase public participation
Face to face customer contact and third party visits	To review Organisational Structure to dovetail in with new working practices
Loss of revenue	Digitalisation of services – more access for customers through online methods
	Introduce new Commercial Delivery Hub to assist with income and improve commercial acumen
	Develop a robust commercial approach to generate income



Impacts on the Economy

Challenges	Opportunities
Business survival	Encourage local businesses to adapt and re-establish themselves
Unemployment	Relocation of Government and business from London as they review costs and ways of working
Skills and knowledge	Capitalise on creating the green recovery
Consumer confidence (spending)	
Changes in consumer purchasing (move to online)	
Reduction in visitors to the borough	
Stalling of housebuilding and other infrastructure projects	

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Impacts on the Community

Challenges	Opportunities
Voluntary and charitable organisations funding decreasing	Resilience enhanced for communities and voluntary and charitable organisations
Less affluent neighbourhoods are disproportionately affected	Greater recognition of the established Ashford Volunteer Centre to assist ABC in delivering the Recovery Plan outcomes
Unemployment	Empowering communities to help themselves where possible
More people evicted from their homes	Increased clarity of community strengths and needs
Mental health and wellbeing issues	Greater collaborative work across sectors/organisations
	Improved wellbeing
	Enhance community safety and thus confidence
	Realign services where possible to support vulnerable groups, using our data to assist those most in need

5. Taking a Longer-term View

This Recovery Plan focuses on the next 18 months setting out what we can do to revitalise our local communities and local economy. Throughout this time it will be important to keep in mind the long term aspirations for the borough developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

This has also been informed by the most recent residents' survey findings carried out in February 2020. (Summary of consultation findings at Appendix B).

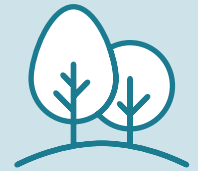
The priority actions included in this Recovery Plan are all contributing to achieving the overall long-term ambition for the borough.

The Ashford Ambition: to be a thriving, productive and inclusive borough in 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Kent and the South East where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector provide collective leadership to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing.



This ambition is supported by three themes:

1. Green Pioneer – Where businesses, communities and the public and third sector have come together to become carbon neutral, respect the local environment and ecology, and embrace a more sustainable way of living.



2. Caring Ashford – A caring and supportive place to live, with rich heritage; thriving towns, villages and rural communities; great schools; high-quality housing; a plethora of cultural activities and events; and a strong sense of civic pride.



3. Targeted Growth – A place where productive, innovative, responsible town and rural business communities offer good quality work to an agile and skilled local workforce who have embraced a culture of lifelong learning.



The following section sets out what we will do over the next 18 months to make a timely recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Supporting everyone through the recovery phase to strengthen the resilience of our communities and economy, taking the path to achieving our long term ambitions.

6. Our Recovery Plan

This plan has four themes each with a set of priority actions:

- Economic Recovery
- Community Recovery

Place Making, Regeneration, and Infrastructure
Organisational Change and Workforce Development

Each action has been assessed to make sure it meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Carbon reduction
- Building community resilience
- Improved customer experience
- Balancing our MTFP
- Income generation / Commercialisation

And how they contribute to achieving the three themes of the longer term aspiration for the borough as outlined in the section above.

- Green Pioneer
- Caring Ashford
- Targeted Growth



We continue to provide our 'day to day' services to support residents and business and the delivery of our strategic sites to attract inward investment for job creation and homes. Below we set out our actions that will be the priority to progress and deliver over the next 9 months. These will be constantly reviewed.

The Delivery Plan will be dynamic, responsive to change and regularly updated to bring in new actions to support recovery over the next 18 months, as we learn more about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our economy, communities and residents. The Delivery Plan will be monitored against milestones and measures to track the progress of how we are meeting each of our priority actions.



6.1 Economic Recovery

This Recovery Plan will need to balance resources available to support existing businesses and safeguard jobs that have suffered due to the coronavirus pandemic, alongside stimulating economic growth to create employment and increase productivity.

Priority Action	Benefits
Provide advice and support to existing businesses including specialist support	Safe reopening of local business. Revitalising the economy of local centres. Protecting jobs. Increased opportunities for independent local traders
Continue the programme to attract business	Revitalising the town centres of Ashford and Tenterden with a diverse and attractive offer to consumers
Enable the delivery of Newtown Works	Delivery of prestigious scheme with opportunities for new business growth and employment
Continue to engage with the largest local employers	Increased business resilience and supply chains
Work with Ashford college to ensure local skills needs are met	Skilled local workforce able to take up local employment offers in existing and new creative sector business attracted to the borough
Utilise any government funding to implement and promote new employment	Increased access to jobs market, particularly for young people and the unemployed
Support the Tourism industry to rebuild and adapt the tourism offer as recovery progresses	More resilient and sustainable tourist industry attracting increased visitors numbers and spend to the area
Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes and actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough	Contribute to reducing the borough's carbon footprint and achieving the aim of carbon neutrality. Increasing skills and employment opportunities

The following indicators will be used to monitor our performance in delivering economic recovery.

Indicator	Frequency	Indicator	Frequency
Parking usage	Quarterly	% of business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic	Annual
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	Quarterly		

We will also monitor the following indicators to help assess the wider impacts on our economic recovery using information from external sources.

Indicator	Frequency	Indicator	Frequency
Business survival rates	Annual	Unemployment 18 – 24 yr. olds	Quarterly
Unemployment	Quarterly		

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6.2 Community Recovery

The response of local communities, during the pandemic, to support and help others has been truly outstanding. Sharing information and working collaboratively, over the coming months, will be critical to forging stronger more cohesive communities that are enabled to protect and promote their own wellbeing. We will work with the statutory providers and assist the voluntary sector, to support the most vulnerable in our borough through the recovery phase, particularly those most adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Priority Action	Benefits
Maintain and strengthen the community and voluntary sector	The community spirit seen during the coronavirus pandemic is continued longer term. Volunteering opportunities are established and valued
Involve and enable individuals and communities to take an active part in civic society and local decision making	Residents actively engage in local democracy so decision making process is well informed by local knowledge. Communities share ideas and learn from each other increasing their resilience
Undertake a community engagement programme, funded by the Kent Violence Reduction Unit. Pilot programme to begin in Bockhanger and Beaver and, if successful, rolled out to other ward areas	Inequalities are reduced through communities identifying issues and taking action to improve and promote community wellbeing, safety and cohesion
Delivery of community safety recovery actions with partners, including the expanded KCC Community Warden service	Borough wide provision for victims of domestic abuse Safer communities with less anti-social behaviour
Work closely with our health colleagues including support for the The You Shop	Reducing health inequalities through residents leading healthier lifestyles
Enabling those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need	Reduce the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic



The following indicators will be used to monitor our performance in delivering community recovery.

Indicator	Frequency	Indicator	Frequency
Rent arrears/loss(HRA)	Quarterly	Lifeline answer speed	Quarterly
Homelessness presentations	Quarterly	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	Quarterly
Homelessness prevented	Quarterly	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	Quarterly
No. of complaints regarding poor conditions in the private rented sector	Quarterly	Universal credit new claims	Quarterly
% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	Quarterly	Welfare intervention number of new cases	Quarterly
No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	Quarterly	Number of community voluntary groups grant funded by ABC	Annual
Number of volunteering hours for grant funded organisations	Quarterly	Website visits to COVID-19 pages	Quarterly
Food hygiene rating	Quarterly	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	Quarterly

We will also monitor the following indicators to help assess the wider impacts on our community recovery using information from external sources.

Indicator	Frequency
Number of positive COVID-19 cases	Quarterly

6.3 Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

The council has a strong track record of delivering a wide range of projects, many in collaboration with partners, which have brought prosperity, events and heritage to the fore in the borough. As we adapt to the challenges post coronavirus, this Recovery Plan prioritises projects over the next 18 months that will make a significant contribution to creating sustainable places to live and work.

Priority Action	Benefits
Maintain appropriate housing delivery through our place making agenda	Economic recovery is supported by housing delivery. Improved health and wellbeing through good quality homes, suitable for the household's needs, and local facilities contribute to building sustainable communities. Our 5 year land supply is maintained
Continue our programme of affordable housing delivery - phases 5 and 6 HRA (and enabling work with our housing association partners)	Reduces number of households living in unsuitable accommodation, benefitting their health and wellbeing
Progress the temporary accommodation project at Henwood	Reduction in homelessness Savings made to general fund in reducing use of costly accommodation such as B&B
Complete the leisure procurement exercise	A range of affordable leisure and sports opportunities that encourage good health and wellbeing
Implement the Cycling and Walking Strategy and local cycling and walking infrastructure plan	Increased opportunities for exercise through walking and cycling, improved air quality as car dependency reduces. Lowering the borough's carbon emissions
Improve broadband coverage and reliability	Growth in online communication, working practices and business expansion, leading to job creation and reduction in carbon emissions through less travel
Increase clean energy generation through local renewable energy	Increased locally generated clean energy that, generate income to the council and reduces the borough's carbon footprint
Town centre reset	A clear direction of use of the town centre to create a vibrant local place to live, work and visit
Increase and improve public open space at Discovery Park, Victoria Park and Conningbrook Park	Well maintained, accessible, outdoor space improves individual health and wellbeing and provides space for communities to come together. Local biodiversity is protected and enhanced
Carry out preparatory work for forward plan for next waste collection service	Residents continue to receive high quality waste collection services and recycling protects the environment and reduces the use of valuable resources



The following indicators will be used to monitor our performance in delivering place making, regeneration and infrastructure.

Indicator	Frequency	Indicator	Frequency
No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	Quarterly	Number of live planning cases (reducing backlog)	Quarterly
No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	Quarterly	% of working population cycling to work	Annual
% of planning applications approved	Quarterly	Number of organisations committed to travel plans	Annual
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	Quarterly	Recycling rate	Quarterly
% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	Quarterly	Refuse collection rate	Quarterly
% of major planning application decisions overturned at appeal	Quarterly	Number of new garden waste users	Annual



6.4 Organisational Change and Workforce Development

The coronavirus pandemic has thrust upon many organisations a need to work differently. We must consider where it can be of continued benefit for our staff and customers to establish different approaches to how we work. Our income streams have been reduced and we must be innovative in how we adapt to a challenging financial outlook to maintain quality service delivery.

We will seek to improve our customers' experience of accessing services and participating in the democratic process whilst ensuring no-one is excluded. Our core values remain as; ambitious, creative and trustworthy. We will be guided by our service design principles and our equalities objectives.

We will embed across the organisation the council's aspiration to become a carbon neutral borough and use the Kent Resilience Forum 'principles for a green recovery' to ensure our decision making puts environmental sustainability that is well informed and thoughtful at its core.

Our Equalities Objectives:

These are refreshed every four years to ensure the council has due regard to; eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

Objective 1

Improve our understanding of our diverse communities in all that we do

Objective 2

Encourage all residents to have a say in the decisions that affect them and get involved in their local communities

Objective 3

Deliver services and customer care to meet the needs of all our residents

Objective 4

Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

The full explanation of our Equalities Objectives can be found at **Appendix D**.

Our Service Design Principles:

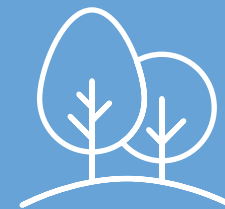
These will help guide teams to make appropriate decisions that are consistent across the entire council when designing services.

- Do the hard work, test and learn to keep it simple
- Focus on the customer journey, making it quick and uncomplicated to empower customers to do more for themselves
- Focus on the goals and delivery
- Less is more
- Distinctive
- Seamless approach
- Who needs this information?
- Tell customers what to expect and keep them up to date along the way
- This is for everyone

The full explanation of our Design Principles can be found in **Appendix E**.

Principles for a Green Recovery:

- All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain
- Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature
- Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycle way's and public transport
- Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events
- Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity
- Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand
- Greater partnership working and collaboration



A full explanation of the principles is found in **appendix F**

Priority Action	Benefits
Balance the MTFP through sound financial management and generate long term income through secure investment opportunities	Restoring a strong financial position Maintaining a low council tax for residents
Enable remote working for staff to continue where it is safe and productive to do so	Adherence to social distancing guidance Flexible working to retain and attract a diverse workforce Reductions in carbon emissions from commuting by car
Review council owned assets	Efficient use of council assets contributes to income generation and savings targets
Continue the digital transformation programme to increase access to services and public participation	Council decisions are better informed by residents views and opinions Customers confidently access online services to find information and complete transactions
Develop and run an environmental awareness raising campaign for staff to increase knowledge and understanding and instigate behaviour change	Staff become ambassadors for achieving carbon neutrality Reducing carbon emissions is a priority in all work and service level decision making
Deliver the council's commercial strategy to strengthen the council's commercial approach through generating income and improving the efficiency of services	Services are maintained and improved

The following indicators will be used to monitor our performance in delivering organisational change and workforce development.

Indicator	Frequency	Indicator	Frequency
Lifeline – number of new users	Quarterly	Income target % achieved	Quarterly
Contribution to budget from commercial investments (%)	Annual	Number of days sickness per full time equivalent – long and short term sickness	Annual
% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council	Quarterly	Litigation - % of cases on which formal proceedings are issued	Quarterly
% of council tax collected by the council	Quarterly	% of s106 completed within agreed timeframe	Quarterly
Savings target % achieved	Annual		

7. Delivery, Monitoring and Review



This Recovery Plan together with the Delivery Plan will be regularly monitored and reviewed in the light of any changing circumstances. This will ensure the intended outcomes are being delivered and we can adapt to any changes rapidly. There are many external factors, some unknown to us at this time, which will influence this plan over the next 18 months.

A Recovery Monitoring & Advisory Board will be created, chaired by the Deputy Leader this will be a committee of the Cabinet. The Leader of the Labour Party will be invited to attend as a contributing observer, without voting rights.

Delivery

The Management Team (MT), under the direction of the CEO, will have overall responsibility for the effective delivery of the Recovery Delivery Plan, which will in turn ensure delivery of the approved Recovery Plan on behalf of the council.

Heads of Service will liaise closely with and update their respective Portfolio Holders and feedback progress on delivery to MT, who under the direction of the CEO, will handle any day to day issues that arise. Any significant concerns or proposed changes to the approved Delivery Plan must be reported to the Leader, who will liaise with the CEO and Chair of the Recovery Monitoring & Advisory Board. The Leader in consultation with the CEO and Chair of the Board will decide on any appropriate action, which will in turn be reported to Cabinet and Council.

Monitoring

The Cabinet, will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Recovery Plan and for authorising any significant policy or practical changes, which will be reported to Full Council. The Recovery Monitoring & Advisory Board will meet bimonthly to receive a progress report from the Management Team under the direction of the CEO. The Board will report to Cabinet every quarter. In terms of any urgent decisions needed the Chair of the Board will consult with the Leader of the Council who in turn will liaise with the CEO and decide on any appropriate action, which will be reported to the Cabinet and Council.

Scrutiny

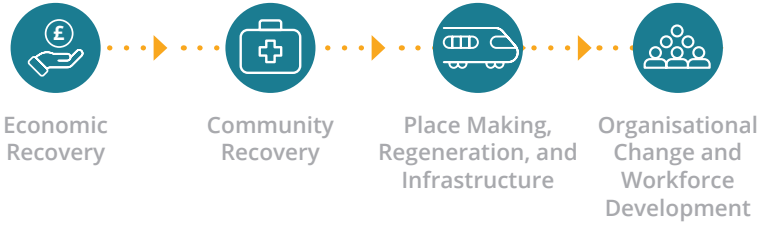
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive quarterly reports on progress and will be invited to scrutinise, comment and recommend as appropriate. In addition, the Leader will at his regular monthly meeting with Opposition Group Leaders, give an update on the current situation regarding Recovery.



Our Recovery Plan 2020 - 22

The Ashford Ambition: to be a thriving, productive and inclusive borough in 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Kent and the South East where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector provide collective leadership to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing.

Recovery Plan Themes



Our Objectives

Carbon reduction; Job creation; Building community resilience; Improving the customer journey; Revitalising the local economy; Promoting health and wellbeing; Tackling inequalities

Our Service Design Principles

This is a framework that guides us when designing services to ensure our services are;

- Efficient • Consistent • Inclusive
- Improve the customer experience

Green principles



- 1 All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain.
- 2 Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature.
- 3 Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycleways and public transport.
- 4 Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events
- 5 Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity.
- 6 Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand.
- 7 Greater partnership working and collaboration.



Equalities Objectives

These are refreshed every four years to ensure the council has due regard to; eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations



Improve our understanding of our diverse communities in all that we do



Encourage all residents to have a say in the decisions that affect them and get involved in their local communities



Deliver services and customer care to meet the needs of all our residents



Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

8. Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of the UK Government Recovery Strategy – Our Plan to Rebuild, May 2020.

From midnight on the 23rd March 2020 the government required as many people as possible to stay at home wherever possible and to only make essential journeys. All non-essential businesses and workplaces were required to close, in addition to the earlier closure of schools and the leisure and hospitality sectors. Social distancing was introduced for everyone and, for the most vulnerable to infection, a shielding programme was activated. These 'lockdown' measures were put in place until it was determined that the reproduction rate (the R value) had fallen to a level to suppress the virus, save lives and protect the NHS.

At the beginning of May the R value had fallen to below 1 meaning the number of infected people is falling. On the 10th May the Prime Minister announced a slight easing of lockdown restrictions. The following day the government issued its COVID-19 recovery strategy – Our Plan to Rebuild. This plan recognises that there will not be a quick return or any easy answers and it will be necessary to adapt as more is learnt about the virus. The long term solution lies with finding a vaccine or drug treatment to the virus but the time scale for this is unknown and it is possible that a vaccine will not be found. Therefore the government's overriding priority remains to save lives and to do that it must be acknowledged that life will be different for the foreseeable future. The government is acutely aware of the impact on the economy of lockdown and the devastation it is causing to some businesses and livelihoods, health and wellbeing.

'The longer the virus affects the economy, the greater the risks of long-term scarring and permanently lower economic activity, with business failures, persistently higher unemployment and lower earnings. This would damage the sustainability of the public finances and the ability to fund public services including the NHS. It would also likely lead to worse long-run physical and mental health outcomes, with a significant increase in the prevalence of chronic illness.'

The easing of restrictions will take place in steps. Each step being reviewed and should the R value start to increase then more stringent restrictions will be reinstated. Including the R value the government has 5 tests it will use to determine easing of lockdown measures.

The government reinstates that widespread compliance will be needed by everyone.

The easing of restrictions will enable a careful and planned return to work and limited social interaction and physical activity where social distancing can be observed or other measures to reduce transmission of the virus can be safely put in place. The government is enacting measures that have the largest effect on controlling the epidemic but the lowest health, economic and social costs, over the coming weeks and months. As more data and scientific evidence becomes available it may be that future restrictions are targeted more locally dependent on the risk in different locations.

They are increasing funding to promote and empower people to live healthier more active lives. Where there are public places those with responsibility for the spaces must be able to put in place appropriate measures for them to be used safely in accordance with the relevant COVID-19 secure guidance.

The government refers to the impact of the virus on the global economy and that it is not expecting the world to return to normal. The UK must adapt and shape the new world to improve living standards across the nation and strive to deliver a UK and world economy which is stronger, cleaner, more sustainable and more resilient after this crisis.



COVID-19 vulnerable groups

(as defined in the Government strategy – Our Plan to Rebuild)

Group	Explanation	Current and continuing guidance	Government support
Clinically extremely vulnerable people (all people in this cohort will have received communication from the NHS)	People defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable, meaning they are at the greatest risk of severe illness. This group includes solid organ transplant recipients, people receiving chemotherapy, renal dialysis patients and others.	Follow shielding guidance by staying at home at all times and avoiding all non-essential face-to-face contact. This guidance is in place until end June.	Support available from the National Shielding Programme, which includes food supplies (through food boxes and priority supermarket deliveries), pharmacy deliveries and care. Support is available via the NHS Volunteer Responders app.
Clinically vulnerable people	People considered to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Clinically vulnerable people include the following: People aged 70 or older, people with liver disease, people with diabetes, pregnant women and others.	Stay at home as much as possible. If you do go out, take particular care to minimise contact with others outside your household.	Range of support available while measures in place, including by local authorities and through voluntary and community groups. Support is available via the NHS Volunteer Responders app.
Vulnerable people (non-clinical)	There are a range of people who can be classified as 'vulnerable' due to non-clinical factors, such as children at risk of violence or with special education needs, victims of domestic abuse, rough sleepers and others.	People in this group will need to follow general guidance except where they are also clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable, where they should follow guidance as set out above.	For those who need it, a range of support and guidance across public services and the benefits system, including by central and local government and the voluntary and community sector.

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Appendix B - Consultation summary

Ashford Futures Study and Ashford Borough Council Residents' Survey.

The Ashford Futures Study commenced in October 2019 with face to face interviews with the Leader of the council and the Chief Executive. This was followed by workshops with Cabinet Members and the Management Team.

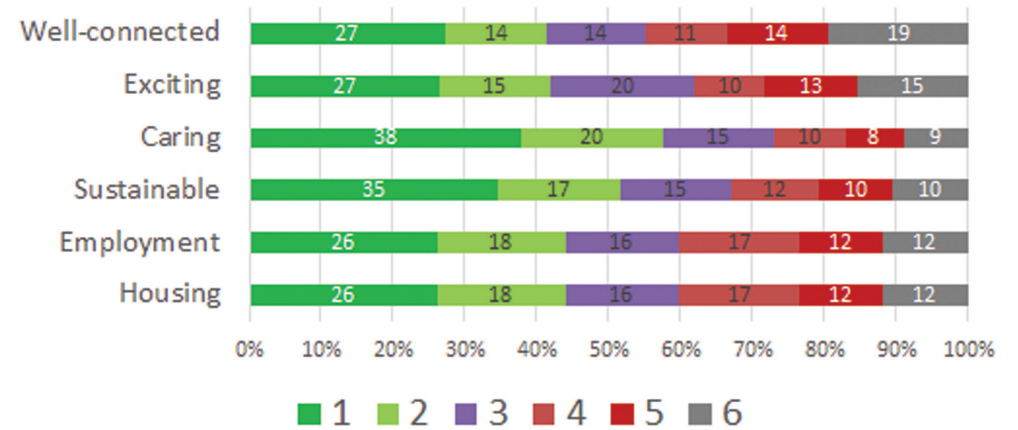
A visioning workshop which included a broad range of stakeholders was held in February 2020. Three further workshops to test and refine the vision developed in February were planned for March 2020. The first was undertaken the second and third moved to an online webinar and survey due to implications of the coronavirus lockdown.

The Ashford Residents' Survey was distributed to 10,000 households in February 2020. A 20% return rate was received.

Consultation findings:

Positively, the consultations highlighted strong support for the overall structure and content of the vision, with most comments suggesting more minor modifications rather than large revisions or changes. This is exemplified through the results from the online survey. Three quarters of the importance ratings for the different sub-themes and scenarios provided ratings at 7 or above (with a rating of 10 representing the highest importance). The most important outcome was for Ashford being a Caring place to live. This was followed by Responsible Growth, seeing Ashford as a productive place to work. The third most highly rated goal was the Global Green Pioneer. These results were supported by those from the Residents Survey 2020. The priorities with the highest importance ratings were 'Caring', 'Sustainable' and Employment.

Figure – Importance ratings attached to different priority outcomes



Source: Ashford Borough Council Residents Survey 2020, April 2020



The online survey also asked respondents about the words that best reflected Ashford's aspirations. The most popular were: thriving (59%), wellbeing (59%) and shared prosperity (46%). This again confirmed core dimensions of the vision.

In addition, the consultations explored local stakeholders' perspectives on the most effective actions that could be taken in the area. Whilst many stakeholders were concerned about the impact of COVID-19, and reflected on the implications, there was a general feeling that it is now more important than ever to agree strong effective local action to manage the effects and enhance the short and long term recovery. As such, there was an overwhelming view that the long term vision and plan provided a vital opportunity to shape a strong and coherent response for the borough, and that if the right action was prioritised that this would help to ensure the immediate negative effects were short term. The survey asked respondents to rate achievability.

Most scenarios secured high ratings with the majority of stakeholders suggesting they were achievable. The exception was the global green pioneer, which had the lowest scores in achievability (but even then just under half of respondents gave ratings of 7 or above for achievability).

The open-ended survey comments and feedback at the workshop and webinar gave a sense of what actions local stakeholders felt to be important. Some of the most common and important feedback has been summarised below.

Many stakeholders raised concerns about the economic impact of COVID-19 and outlined the importance of actions that protected the pre-existing strengths and assets in the local economy. This outlined the vital role that foundational sectors, such as retail, hospitality, leisure and recreation, and food and drink production were already playing in the area, and which had seen significant growth and employment. There was concern that these sectors were supported in the recovery, to continue to support future growth. Relatedly, there was a call for responsible business and greater recognition for the value of essential and key workers. This included demands for better working practices that provided good, well paid work and terms and conditions that created careers of first choice. Aspects of responsible practices developed through the lockdown period involving retaining staff through job retention schemes and developing comprehensive health and safety plans that considered staff welfare, whilst remote working, as well as their safe return to work were given as examples that could be built upon.

Another area of common concern related to the need to protect essential services and to ensure that they reached the needs of different parts of the community, especially those made most vulnerable such as younger and older age groups, people from lower socio-economic groups, and those with pre-existing health conditions for example. Unsurprisingly, a key focus was placed on the vital role of health and social care to effectively support the sick and manage the public health measures to protect public safety. But, there was an emphasis on wider social concerns too such as housing and general public wellbeing and the vital role of broader community and voluntary services in meeting these broader community needs. People cited examples of existing initiatives such as One You that had the potential to be further developed to create a wider range of community out-reach activities through networks and hubs. Stakeholders felt that COVID-19 effectively demonstrated the potential of providing services remotely using digitally enabled tools to reach far reaching parts of the community, and that once social distancing measures were lightened these could be complemented with community-based meeting points and facilities providing on-line access as well as face to face services.

In the context of broad economic uncertainty, stakeholders also raised the important role of education and employment services, in addition, to business support. It was recognised that it was now more important than ever that individuals and businesses alike could access a range of support and advice to ensure they could take the best course of action moving forward, whether that was: accessing job retention schemes; pursuing upskilling, training, and re-skilling activities; securing advice about the best future employment or business opportunities; and accessing finance to support future development activities. An onus was placed on integrating such services as much as possible so that priority courses available locally for example aligned to the jobs available.

In setting out key actions and agreeing priorities for investment, stakeholders also emphasised the importance of "geography", and moving beyond the usual priority areas such as the Ashford and Tenterden town centres. That means ensuring a sufficiently balanced approach which is appropriately targeted, and reaches out to the different needs of all parts of the community across the borough, including rural areas.

Appendix C – Recovery Delivery Plan

The table below illustrates how each priority action contributes to the overall recovery of the borough. For each action the darker shading represents the main contribution and the lighter shading additional contribution.

Economic Recovery												
Priority Action	ABC Lead	Partners	Savings	Income generation	Equalities objectives	Carbon reduction	Job creation	Building community resilience	Improving the customer journey	Revitalising the local economy	Promoting health and wellbeing	Tackling inequalities
Provide advice and support to existing businesses including specialist support	Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing / Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications	Business forum, Chamber of Commerce										
Continue the programme to attract business	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications / Head of Corporate Property and Projects											
Enable the delivery of Newtown Works	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications											
Continue to engage with the largest local employers	Economic Development Manager	Chamber of Commerce										
Work with Ashford college to ensure local skills needs are met	Economic Development Manager	East Kent College Group, local business										
Utilise any government funding to implement and promote new employment	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications	DWP, Job Centre Plus										
Support the Tourism industry to rebuild and adapt the tourism offer as recovery progresses	Head of Culture	Visit Kent, Tourism sector										
Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes and actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications											

Community Recovery												
Priority Action	ABC Lead	Partners	Savings	Income generation	Equalities objectives	Carbon reduction	Job creation	Building community resilience	Improving the customer journey	Revitalising the local economy	Promoting health and wellbeing	Tackling inequalities
Maintain and strengthen the community and voluntary sector	Arts and Cultural Industries Manager	Voluntary sector, parish councils, community councils, social enterprises										
Involve and enable individuals and communities to take an active part in civic society and local decision making	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications	parish councils, community councils										
Undertake a community engagement programme, funded by the Kent Violence Reduction Unit. Pilot programme to be agreed in Bockhanger and Beaver	Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager	Parish and community councils										
Delivery of community safety recovery actions with partners, including the expanded KCC Community Warden service.	Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing	CSP										
Work closely with our health colleagues including support for the One You Shop	Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing	AHWP, KCHFT, KCC										
Enabling those adversely impacted by COVID-19 to access the help they need	Housing Operations Manager											

Organisational change and workforce development												
Priority Action	ABC Lead	Partners	Savings	Income generation	Equalities objectives	Carbon reduction	Job creation	Building community resilience	Improving the customer journey	Revitalising the local economy	Promoting health and wellbeing	Tackling inequalities
Balance the MTFP through sound financial management and generate long term income through secure investment opportunities	Head of IT and Finance											
Enable remote working for staff to continue where it is safe and productive to do so	Head of HR and Customer Services / Head of IT and Finance											
Review council owned assets	Deputy Head of Corporate Property & Projects											
Continue the digital transformation programme to increase access to services and public participation	Head of HR and Customer Services / Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications											
Develop and run an environmental awareness raising campaign for staff to increase knowledge and understanding and instigate behaviour change	Head of Corporate Policy Economic Development and Communications											
Deliver the council's commercial strategy to strengthen the council's commercial approach through generating income and improving the efficiency of services	Head of Environment and Land Management											

Appendix D - Ashford Equalities Objectives

Objective 1

Improve our understanding of our diverse communities in all that we do

We will do this by:

- Improving the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to shape decision making (e.g. through use of analytical tools, data sources and performance measures).
- Disseminating our improved understanding of different characteristics within our communities to members and officers using tools such as the borough profile and training.
- Maintaining and strengthen community resilience (e.g. maintaining the good relations with our partners built through the Covid-19 response and working together to understand where we may need to target interventions).
- Developing a community action plan.

Objective 2

Encourage all residents to have a say in the decisions that affect them and get involved in their local communities.

We will do this by:

Further developing ways of engaging individual and communities to ensure their voice is heard (e.g. virtual meetings, social media campaigns, petition scheme).

Objective 3

Deliver services and customer care to meet the needs of all our residents

We will do this by:

- Enabling those adversely impacted by Covid-19 to get the help they need.
- Ensuring we are not leaving people behind when adapting our practices to take account of social distancing (e.g. allowing carers, interpreters and children to attend appointments).
- Delivering Digital transformation (e.g. new website that delivers our accessibility statement through embedded design principles).
- Including appropriate impact assessments in Cabinet reports and ensuring these are completed to a high standard (e.g. through regular reviews of draft Equality Impact Assessments).

Objective 4

Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

We will do this by:

- Organisational cultural change (e.g. mandatory equalities and diversity training).
- Remote working (e.g. review of HR policies, production of remote working guidance, recruitment and selection and employee engagement).

Appendix E – Ashford Design Principles

Do the hard work, test and learn to keep it simple.

We need to regularly review our process – just because we have done it for years doesn't mean it's the best way. Working in an agile way where feedback on processes is actioned. Customers should have less points of contact. It's ok to make mistakes, as long as we learn from them and share our experiences.

Focus on the customer journey, making it quick and uncomplicated to empower customers to do more for themselves.

We need to use data to inform the construction of the customer journey. Aligns with corporate values of Ambitious, Trustworthy and Creative. We must balance our digital persona with also being seen as human beings.

Focus on the goals and delivery.

We need to know the purpose of what we're hoping to achieve. There should be a clear path of how we will do this set out at the start of a project.

Less is more.

We need to work efficiently and smartly. Less is more. If something works we should look to reuse it elsewhere in the organisation.

Distinctive.

We should be seen by others as trailblazing and distinctive developing new and innovative services using open source so that we can share. Thinking outside of the box and be risk aware, not risk averse. Ask yourself: "How can you make this process more distinctive as an ABC service?" We should dare to innovate, whether that is using new ways of working or existing solutions.

Seamless approach.

We will put the customer at the heart of what we do. We'll provide easy to use digital services that collect information only once. We need to be consistent across council systems to provide resilience.

Who needs this information?

When designing content or a process we should always be asking ourselves this question. We need to have an understanding of the customer's needs and should only collect the information we need. This information should only be collected once, at the first point of contact. Please share this information with other departments who may find it useful.

Tell customers what to expect and keep them up to date along the way.

We must manage the expectations of our customers. They should be able to track the progress of their transactions/applications. We need to clearly communicate when they can expect to hear back from us and what else we may need. We should constantly seek feedback from our customers to continually improve services.

This is for everyone.

Consider the ability of those using our services and create content/processes that can be completed by anyone. Ensure services and customer journeys are accessible. Write in plain English, use heading styles, explain acronyms, use alt text and cater for users who have English as a second language.

Appendix F – Kent Resilience Forum – Principles for a Green Recovery

1. All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain. This means new infrastructure, developments, processes and businesses should be looking to minimise the use of energy and water, reduce waste, promote the circular economy and use renewable energy and sustainable materials where possible. It also means that investment doesn't lock in carbon emissions in the future.

2. Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature. This means benefiting from the health and wellbeing advantages associated with: warmer, more energy efficient homes; better air quality inside and outside; increased access to public green space; and a high quality natural environment thriving with wildlife.

3. Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycleways and public transport. This means active travel; public transport and low carbon vehicles are not only the best way to get around in our personal lives but the default for business travel and communications; virtual working is supported and encouraged; and homeworking is enabled to become the norm.

4. Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events. This means adaptations are in place to cope with, and build resilience against, increased drought, flooding and heatwaves, and new designs account for these from the beginning.

5. Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity. This means species are protected and, where threatened, are recovered; existing habitats and greenspaces are enhanced to regain and retain good health; communities are inspired by, and engaged with, their local environment and are realising the mental and physical health benefits of such a connection; and natural options to tackle climate change impacts such as flooding, temperature change and water management are considered before other options.

6. Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand. This means ensuring new greenspaces are planned in areas where everyone will see benefits and not just new development; and the delivery of clean growth does not affect some people disproportionately.

7. Greater partnership working and collaboration. This means engaging all parts of the community to contribute to and realise environmental, economic and social benefits.

Appendix G – Glossary

ABC	Ashford Borough Council
AHWP	Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership
B&B	Bed and Breakfast accommodation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DfT	Department for Transport
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
KCC	Kent County Council
KCHFT	Kent Community Health Foundation Trust
KRF	Kent Resilience Forum
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
NHS	National Health Service

Appendix H – The Ashford Ambition report - July 2020, Executive Summary

In October 2019, Ashford Borough Council appointed Work Advance Ltd and Experian PLC to undertake a major futures study for the local area. The work has encompassed a blend of research, forecasting, scenario planning and extensive engagement with local stakeholders, to understand their views and aspirations for the future.

This process has supported the development of the Ashford Ambition: a strategic framework to shape a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for Ashford, Tenterden and the surrounding villages and rural areas in 2030 and beyond.

The work was commissioned during a period of considerable uncertainty: a new Government and policy agenda; Britain's exit from the European Union (EU); growth stalling in the global economy.

Since then of course, the world has shifted even more dramatically in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid spread of the novel virus is creating unprecedented challenges for national and local government across the UK, as well as Governments around the world. Paramount among these concerns are treating the sick, enforcing social distancing, supporting the vulnerable, maintaining vital community services, ensuring public safety, and mitigating the economic fallout for local businesses and residents.

While minds are undoubtedly focussed on responding to the current crisis, once the situation begins to stabilise longer-term strategic planning will be vital.

Now more than ever Ashford will need an agreed direction of travel: to act decisively to drive the recovery and exploit opportunities; to prioritise fiercely, focussing finite resources and funding on those actions that will move Ashford towards a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future.

There was a strong sense amongst local stakeholders that while it was clearly vital to consider and respond to the changed context the Covid-19 pandemic presents, that it was important not to let the current crisis knock Ashford off the ambitious path it has forged.

Many of these local stakeholders - though themselves busy dealing with the immediate fallout of the pandemic - emphasised that having a clear view of the future of the Borough was made more vital. That the aspirations articulated – the Ambition of a “caring and supportive place; where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector come together to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing” – feel all the more compelling as we reflect on these unprecedented times. That this work could in fact galvanise the community behind a shared Ambition that they themselves have developed, in order to deliver real and lasting change.

The Ashford Ambition - as set out in the next few pages and throughout the rest of this document - is ambitious indeed. It reflects Ashford's 'go first' 'self-made' attitude, forward-thinking mindset and appetite for growth and innovation. It is founded on what has been achieved in the past: the Borough's impressive growth performance, strategic location and investment decisions; distinct assets and sense of place. It acknowledges the diversity of the Borough - its mix of towns, villages and rural areas - and how this strengthens its position and offer. It seeks to reflect a place that is proud of its history but also keen to look to the future.

The weights and measures assigned to different outcomes has proved one of the most interesting findings from this work. Growth has and will continue to be a feature of Ashford's story - indeed it is central. In October 2019, Ashford Borough Council appointed Work Advance Ltd and Experian PLC to undertake a major futures study for the local area. The work has encompassed a blend of research,



forecasting, scenario planning and extensive engagement with local stakeholders, to understand their views and aspirations for the future. This process has supported the development of the Ashford Ambition: a strategic framework to shape a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for Ashford, Tenterden and the surrounding villages and rural areas in 2030 and beyond. to improving earnings and living standards. But stakeholders were clear that this should not come at cost to the environment and ecology of the Borough, only bring benefits to select people or places, or risk driving divides within the local community.

Rather, in line with a growing global agenda, [there was a strong consensus that the Borough should be prioritising other outcomes alongside growth, such as ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to thrive in Ashford, strengthening cohesion, improving wellbeing and embracing a more sustainable way of life.](#)

The Ashford Ambition paints a picture of the Borough in 2030 and beyond that reflects these goals. There is much already underway - from the design principles of Chilmington Green, the Taittinger investment in local vineyards and plans at Newtown Works, to the 'Made in Ashford' and 'Ashford For' initiatives, the Scale Up programme, You Shop and the Council's success in reducing its own carbon footprint (to name a few). These set the Borough on the right course and there is no lack of ambition or commitment amongst local stakeholders to push forward at pace.

In identifying priority actions for the future we have looked back at past efforts and there is much on which to build. The 15 priority actions identified - which span the 5 strategic themes of economy; work and skills; communities;

environment and the visitor economy - emphasise the importance of existing interventions, explore how to enhance them further learning from best practice from elsewhere, and seek to promote greater alignment between local activities and county, regional and national initiatives. Further, many of these priority actions are mutually reinforcing - their collective impact will undoubtedly be greater than the sum of the parts. How the Borough measures impact and tracks progress towards the Ashford Ambition will be important too. A key aspect of our approach has been to model and quantify desired outcomes - to establish tangible goals to work towards, allowing Ashford Borough Council and its partners to 'start with the end in mind'.

Some of these targets have been economic in focus, for example increasing the numbers of jobs in the knowledge economy or driving significant improvements in productivity. Some consider other outcomes, such as improving qualifications, reducing the number of children affected by income deprivation or dramatically cutting and wholly offsetting carbon emissions, which are equally important. In addition, we argue that a new Ambition for inclusive and sustainable growth requires a new framework for [measuring what matters most to local people.](#)

We establish a robust and wide-ranging framework structured around five strategic themes. In a climate where local resources are limited and funding is stretched, this framework will be vital to ensure that effort and spend is directed towards those things that matter most to local residents and businesses, and will deliver greatest returns in achieving the Ashford Ambition: a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for the Borough in 2030 and beyond.





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 / Jennifer Shaw
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Recovery Plan 2020/21
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	30 th July 2020
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 Recovery Plan sets out the councils actions to aid the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic over the next 18 months.</p> <p>The Plan sets out how the council will bring forward new ways of working, enable the delivery of key infrastructure, support economic recovery and strengthen community resilience. Central to the Plan is achieving a more sustainable way of living for residents, communities and business.</p> <p>The outcome of the Recovery Plan is to give Ashford a secure basis on which to work towards achieving its long term ambition through the adoption of the Corporate Plan, Economic Development Strategy and Carbon Neutral Strategy in 2022.</p> <p>Everyone living and working in the borough will have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic to some extent.</p> <p>Therefore the Recovery Plan will be relevant to most residents, business owners and employers depending on their own circumstances and the level to which their life and livelihoods have been disrupted.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The Ashford Futures study, to inform the long term ambition for the borough and the next Corporate Plan and Economic Development Strategy was extensively consulted on prior to the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent restrictions.</p> <p>Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Policy carried out the council's biennial Residents' Survey, which assesses resident's opinions of the council, its service provision and the local area. This survey is pivotal in understanding issues affecting particular groups in the borough through cross-tab analysis. In particular, older people generally have a lower opinion of Ashford Town Centre and the council as a whole. Notably, the survey highlighted some issues faced by residents with physical disabilities, such as the lack of toilet provision and accessibility issues in some places. The survey data provides a better understanding of potential equalities challenges moving forward.</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>Ashford Futures study and residents survey are informing this Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Informal consultation, revision by MT and the Cabinet members</p> <p>Due to pandemic unable to undertake face to face and formal consultation is minimum of six weeks which would delay implementation.</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	High – impacts of coronavirus on health and wellbeing due to shielding and underlying health issues	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support. Continuing partnership working with voluntary sector.
Middle age	Medium – economic hardship e.g. furloughed, potential job losses, child care stresses	Positive (Major) - economic regeneration measures, support / advice for business, creation of new industries, skills development
Young adult	High – more impact for young people particularly those seeking entry level employment. Disruption to education.	Positive (Major) - economic regeneration measures, support / advice for business, creation of new industries, skills development, working with college and local business
Children	Medium – disruption to education High – safeguarding issues	Positive (minor) - flexible working practices for ABC employees.

		Maintaining safeguarding procedures and awareness
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	High – impacts of coronavirus on health and wellbeing due to shielding and underlying health issues, accessing public transport, isolation	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support. Continuing partnership working with voluntary sector
Mental	High – isolation, unable to access services / support, pressures from financial hardship	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support. Continuing partnership working with voluntary sector
Sensory	High – isolation, unable to access services / support, pressures from financial hardship	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support. Continuing partnership working with voluntary sector
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	Medium – heighten possibility of domestic abuse	Positive (minor) - community engagement for well-being and safety. Usual safeguarding practices.
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	N/A	N/A
<u>RACE</u>	High – disproportionate negative impact of coronavirus on BAME groups, health and financial status	Positive (major) - targeting less affluent neighbourhoods and providing ongoing support through community initiatives
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	Low - risk of unemployment is higher in lower paid employment	Positive (minor) economic interventions but not specifically targeted at men
Women	Medium – potentially high unemployment for women in part time and low paid work	Positive (minor) economic interventions but not specifically targeted at women
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Neutral

Former service personnel	Medium - risk of homelessness	Positive (major) housing intervention and temporary housing interventions that will be of benefit to homeless persons
Service families	Low	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	Regular monitoring of coronavirus and our recovery plan actions will ensure any negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics are recognised and reported to ensure mitigating steps can be taken.
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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 Recovery Plan is not discriminatory
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

Conclusion:	Local data has been used (Ashford Futures study and Residents Survey) as well as monitoring of national trends. The Recovery Plan should have positive outcomes across groups who have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. And to enable a swift recovery for all groups of the community. The Recovery Plan will be monitored by the Management Team reporting to the Recovery Monitoring and Advisory Group. The Interim Equalities Objectives will be adopted at the same time as the Recovery Plan to ensure any potential impacts arising from Recovery Plan actions are noted and intervention completed accordingly.
<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?	
EIA completion date:	26 June 2020

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Agenda Item No: 8
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 30 July 2020
Report Title: Update on the Broadband improvements in the Ashford Borough
Report Author: Thomas Jenkins, Economic Development Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT

Summary:

This report analyses the latest data on fixed and mobile telecommunications access within the borough. This shows 99% mobile coverage by at least one of the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), 90% coverage of premises with superfast broadband connections (>30Mbps), and 6% coverage of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP). Due to the predominantly rural geography of the borough this highlights the continuing requirements for improvements in telecommunications access to ensure residents and businesses have the right access and speeds in this increasingly changing market place.

This report updates members on the activities undertaken to attract investment and improve infrastructure within the borough by private sector operators. In particular the implementation of EMP6 within the Ashford Local Plan.

The report also sets out the potential areas to prioritise moving forward and the importance of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure within the Council's Recovery Plan.

Key Decision: NO
Affected Wards: All Wards
Recommendations: **Cabinet are asked to:-**

- I. Note the content of this report and the Broadband work undertaken in recent years.**
- II. To note that the delivery of broadband is a key priority in the council's Recovery Plan.**

Policy Overview: The Council's existing Five Year Corporate Plan 2015-2020, aimed to "Continue to secure high speed broadband improvements with operators, especially to tackle areas with slow speeds." This was set out in Priority 1, Enterprising Ashford: Economic Investment and Growth.

The Ashford Local Plan (Adopted in February 2019) also identifies the importance of great telecommunications

infrastructure through the adoption of Policy EMP 6 – Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP).

The Draft Ashford Borough Council Recovery Plan July 2020 is being reported to this Cabinet meeting for approval. Under the key theme of Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure, a key action is identified to “Improve broadband coverage and reliability”.

Each of these strategic documents prioritise the requirement for improvements to the existing telecommunications infrastructure.

Financial Implications:

If the recommendations are approved, officers will review the current resources available to identify options for enhanced resources to stimulate greater private sector and government supported investment into broadband and mobile infrastructure within the borough.

Legal Implications:

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N/A
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Risk Assessment

Please see Section 27 within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

A fundamental priority in improving affordable broadband and mobile access for residents and businesses within the borough, is to reduce social exclusion and rural isolation. The aspiration to level up access across the borough will look to reduce the current inequalities in access.

Exemption Clauses:

Contacts:

Tom.jenkins@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330 326

Report Title: Update on the Broadband improvements in the Ashford Borough.

Purpose of the Report

1. To report to Cabinet on the latest activity undertaken by officers regarding broadband improvements in the borough, provide an update on Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) and Superfast broadband coverage and outline plans for ongoing work.

Issue to be Decided

2. Cabinet to take note of the update on the latest position and note the priority and requirements for improved broadband as set out in the Ashford Borough Council Recovery Plan.

Background

3. The UK government is increasingly supportive of faster digital connectivity, and is providing both financial and regulatory support to help meet its ambition of full gigabit coverage of residential premises by 2025. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has committed £5bn to support a series of programmes including: “outside in” deployment of FTTP in areas unlikely to be commercially viable; FTTP via schemes such as the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN); Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes for the final 20%; and a Gigabit voucher scheme. Furthermore in the 2020 March Budget, the Chancellor reiterated the Government’s plans to invest £5bn to ensure gigabit-capable broadband is able to reach every UK home by the end of 2025.
4. Ashford Borough Council has been pro-actively supporting the rollout of superfast broadband across the borough for many years and is recognised by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as one of the best case studies of Local Authorities taking the lead on broadband improvement. The major development in this sector has been ABC’s inclusion of Policy EMP6 (Promotion of Fibre to the Premises) in its Local Plan from February 2019, which requires nearly all new developments in the borough to provide fibre broadband connections to the premises.
5. The Economic Development team is also actively involved in conversations with individual providers to lobby for improved commercial coverage of the borough, and works closely with KCC’s Broadband team on promoting the Government’s Voucher schemes and Community Fibre Partnerships.

Ashford borough broadband status

6. The Ofcom Connected Nations Report explains in detail the digital connectivity under different technologies, different speeds and different areas. We have

attached to this report as Appendix 1 the results from the latest report (2020 Interim). The following key measures can be identified for Ashford Borough:

- Number of premises with Superfast broadband (>30Mbps): 52,354 (90%)
Superfast broadband UK average: 95%
Ashford change since Summer 2019: +1,899 (no % change),
- Number of premises with Full Fibre (FTTP): 3,477 (6%)
Full Fibre UK average: 12%
Ashford change since Summer 2019: +1,159 (+2% change),
- Number of premises below USO level (<10Mbps): 2,333 (4%)
USO premises UK average: 2%
Ashford change since Summer 2019: +33 (no % change),
- Percentage premises covered with 4G indoors by at least one MNO: 99%
Average across all LAs in UK: 98.9%
Ashford change since Summer 2019: +0.16%
- Percentage premises covered with 4G indoors by all 4 MNOs: 72.9%
Average across all LAs in UK: 76.9%
Ashford change since Summer 2019: +2.3%

7. The figures above need context alongside the comparative UK figures to explain what they mean for Ashford as a predominantly rural borough and why they are like this. The Superfast broadband percentage of properties covered matches approximately population densities due to the required Return On Investment (ROI) by providers in reaching clusters of premises. The more rural an area, the lower the population density and the less percentage of premises are likely to be covered. This is evidenced by the fact that across the country, Tewkesbury (which has the same population density as Ashford – 223 people per km²) also has 90% coverage and Sedgemoor (slightly higher population density - 218) has 91% coverage. In Kent, Folkestone and Hythe has a higher density (316) with 93% coverage and Thanet (much higher density – 1,372) has 97%. Reaching rural areas will always be an issue for commercial infrastructure builds which is why it is important for the council to lead, coordinate and lobby for investment.
8. We would note that the introduction of Local Plan Policy EMP6 is contributing to the increased superfast and FTTP figures with 6% of premises now covered within the Borough, the 6th highest percentage in districts within Kent. Significant % increases will not however be achieved until existing premises are connected to FTTP such as through the investment planned for Tenterden. The changes brought in by Ofcom under USO mean that properties with lower download speeds than 10Mbps are legally entitled to request an improved connection. This is a higher speed level than was previously considered 'decent' under government guidelines and therefore has brought under its scope more properties. Finally we would add that when comparing Ashford borough to other districts in Kent or more widely, the lower

density and higher proportion of rural areas in hard to reach locations is likely to always affect any rankings.

9. The mobile percentage figures have been included to show 4G coverage at 99% of premises within the Borough by at least one of the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs). These figures however highlight the fact that there are still areas within the borough that need a joined up approach to ensure greater coverage by all the main networks, which is why officers are in conversation with Mobile UK about the Shared Rural Network (SRN).

Gigabit Voucher schemes and Community Fibre Partnerships update

10. The Economic Development team has been working closely with KCC to ensure that the Government's vouchers schemes have been publicised and that communities across the borough are able to improve their connections. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) and Rural Gigabit Connectivity scheme (RGC) together with a Kent Top Up Voucher, have allowed residents and businesses to install gigabit capable connections at their premises. The GBVS offered up to £2,500 to help businesses and homes gain access to a 1Gbps capable broadband and the RGC offers up to £3,500 for small businesses and up to £1,500 for residents. The Kent Top Up voucher allows households in Kent to claim a further £1,000 on top of the RGC voucher. The GBVS was closed in May 2020 but the Rural and Kent vouchers are still available.
11. A map has recently been published on ispreview.co.uk which shows data from DCMS relating to vouchers issued and premises connected across the UK. Within Ashford borough some areas accessed vouchers from both the GBVS and the RGC. Henwood, Beaver Green, Hinxhill, Smarden, Shadoxhurst and Tenterden accessed these schemes with 44 GBVS vouchers issued, 9 GBVS premises connected, 40 RGC vouchers issued and 0 RGC premises connected. We should point out that the issued vouchers have a validity of 12 months, so connections from vouchers that have been issued but not yet connected, and their associated payments when the connection is live, will continue for a further 12 months. As a result final numbers for the scheme will not be available until after Spring 2021.
12. Alongside the voucher schemes, the Economic Development team has been working more closely with KCC on Community Fibre Partnerships (CfP). These are the main mechanism employed by Openreach to increase demand-led community-led broadband installation in hard to reach locations. The project requires a community to come together and work with Openreach on installing FTTP to their premises. The community has to agree however to use BT as its sole supplier as a result of the improved connections, which appears to be a key issue with take-up of the programme so far. The reporting of Community Fibre Partnerships (CfP) creations and deliveries is subject to a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) between KCC and Openreach. We can however report to Members that Godmersham, Hastingleigh and Mersham are projects being set up or progressed under the CfP programme.

Council-focussed work update

13. Members will be familiar with the fact that Ashford Borough Council has implemented the first Local Plan policy in the country which requires developers to install Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) on most new developments in the borough. Whilst there are exceptions, this policy is proving effective in ensuring that residential and commercial properties in the borough are future-proofed. The Policy has required a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be written which acts as key guidance for developers and providers in delivering FTTP across new developments. This document helps clarify the policy by giving context and offering examples of information required at various stages during the Planning process. The Economic Development team, together with colleagues in Planning Policy have been progressing the SPD which will be brought to Cabinet in July 2020 for final approval.
14. Ashford Borough Council's Housing Operations team has also been progressing work to install FTTP or gigabit-capable connections to residential premises in our ownership. This project was set up in 2019 with the view to future-proofing the council's residential portfolio. Continuing discussions are being undertaken by the Economic Development team to seek a partner who can progress this project to deliver fast and reliable broadband to our tenants.
15. The Economic Development team has also recently signed Ashford Borough Council as a member of INCA (Independent Network Cooperative Association). The members of INCA are supporting, planning, building and operating sustainable, independent and interconnected networks that advance the economic and social development of the communities they serve and permit the provision of applications and services through open competition, innovation and diversity. They are working together to create cohesive interconnected next generation networks. This membership will allow Ashford to interact more directly with providers and gain valuable insight into market and government updates.

Provider updates

16. Whilst updates on specific projects and build plans are commercially sensitive, there are some updates that are in the public domain which Members should be aware of.
17. Openreach announced the extension of their Fibre First programme to include villages in rural locations. Fibre First is Openreach's programme to connect four million homes and business in the UK to a gigabit-capable connection by March 2021. Most of this infrastructure is still being delivered at the "lower end" of their £300 – £400 per premises passed cost range however they have included premises in higher ranges as part of this expansion. Tenterden and St Michaels exchange has been included on their Fibre First programme which means that a retro-fit of FTTP is planned for the majority of premises served by the Tenterden exchange. Full details of this part of the programme are commercially sensitive and have not been shared with any local authority at present.

18. Virgin Media have gained permission from KCC to undertake works at Willesborough, however this has been scheduled for much later in 2020. This is likely to be further delayed now due to the coronavirus crisis. Virgin Media have been running a similar programme called the Lightning Project which would connect 4 million premises in the UK to gigabit capable infrastructure by the end of 2020. According to the figures this deadline is unlikely to be met and our understanding is that there are no plans for Ashford to be included in this programme currently.
19. NextGenAccess Ltd is a fibre optic network builder that has signed a 20 year lease with High Speed 1. This should support a track-side rail deployment of new fibre to help bring “essential ultra-fast broadband” within easy reach of Kent local authorities, providers, mobile operators and business communities. The project is privately funded. The Economic Development team have been engaging with NextGenAccess to ensure the borough is served with points of presence including Ashford town centre, Newtown Works, MOJO and Waterbrook.

Digital connectivity work going forward

20. Broadband has been a growing priority for many, with technology evolving constantly and social trends changing at an increased pace. Residents and businesses in the borough’s communities rely on this technology and we need to ensure the future-proofing of infrastructure to enable better digital connectivity. The Coronavirus pandemic has further highlighted this need, with vulnerable residents in isolation and many people working from home. Digital connectivity has been identified as a top priority for the council in the emerging Recovery Plan being considered by Cabinet in July.
21. Whilst broadband, in particular FTTP, has been the sole focus of this work to date, there are other aspects of digital connectivity which will require action in order to deliver a fully improved digital borough.
22. Mobile coverage in parts of the borough is known to be an issue, with approximately 1% of premises not being able to access 4G indoors and some premises having issues with 2G and 3G. The Economic Development Team have not undertaken work with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to date however have reached out to Mobile UK, the trade association for MNOs in the UK. Mobile UK is coordinating the Shared Rural Network (SRN) which will see the main MNOs improve their mobile capability to reach more premises in hard-to-reach areas.
23. Furthermore the increase in the Internet of Things (IoT) is leading many council’s to investigate Smart Cities where some problems and tasks can be in part addressed by using smart equipment (such as intelligent traffic systems, smart bins or remote lighting). This particular aspect of digital connectivity could have a beneficial impact financially as well as physically for Ashford and the wider borough. This also links with a long-standing ambition to provide public WiFi in Ashford town centre which can have a multitude of benefits for visitors and businesses.
24. Whilst controversial, the increase in market rollout of 5G is something that will need to be considered as well. Maidstone have recently been announced as

having had investment in 5G technology and Ashford were announced as being part of a scheme from O2. O2 announced at the beginning of June that Ashford was one of 60 locations across the UK where they will be rolling out 5G networks.

25. To date the Economic Development team, together with colleagues across the council, have managed to attract investment from providers, create a policy which will future proof developments and continued to promote ways for broadband improvements to take place. The work is undertaken across a number of teams but coordinated by the Economic Development Officer, with support from the Economic Development Manager. The Economic Development Officer (EDO) dedicates approximately a third of their time to this activity, and the work undertaken over the past year has included:
 - i. Working with Planning Policy on the development of the Policy EMP6 SPD as well as working with Planning on implementing the policy as conditions for applications
 - ii. Light touch engagement with providers currently building in the borough or with plans for future builds
 - iii. Regular updates with KCC colleagues on work such as the Voucher schemes and Community Fibre Partnerships as well as any Government updates
 - iv. Attendance at relevant events or meetings (primarily Connected Britain and DCMS/BDUK updates) when possible.

26. As part of the increased priority for Broadband within the emerging Coronavirus Recovery plan, further activity could be considered with the prioritisation of resources in this area. If the council decides that further work in this area is essential, the other elements that could be taken forward include:
 - i. Be more proactive in lobbying and attracting commercial investment from providers
 - ii. Take a leading role in coordinating programmes such as the Voucher schemes and Community Fibre Partnerships
 - iii. Provide increased presence at broadband and digital related events or meetings, raising the profile of Ashford for investors.
 - iv. Be at the forefront of emerging funding, programmes and trials being rolled out by Government or providers
 - v. Proactively engage with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Mobile UK to progress the Shared Rural Network (SRN) and improve mobile connectivity in the borough
 - vi. Develop a strategy for digital connectivity to include investigating new and future technology within the realms of the Internet of Things (IoT), Smart Cities and 5G

Risk Assessment

27. The main key risks currently identified are:
 - a. Lower levels of access to broadband and mobile networks will impact on the economic aspirations for the borough to target more knowledge based businesses and employees.
 - b. Lower levels of access will impact students within the area with increasing use of online education and training.

- c. Lower access impacts resident's levels of social inclusion and isolation from services, and have the potential to increase inequality.
- d. The Council's, residents and businesses digital transformation plans will be impacted by the levels of broadband and mobile access throughout the borough.

Options Considered

28. In considering the options for Ashford Borough Council to act, the principle objective has been to maximise the opportunities for residents and businesses within the Borough to access affordable ultrafast broadband and mobile telecommunications.
29. The chosen option has been to dedicate officer time, where possible, to attract investment, work with partner organisations and support improved broadband rollout across the borough. The scope and prioritisation of this work stream is widening and should include mobile coverage and future technologies as well. Improved broadband and telecommunications has therefore been prioritised within the Council's Recovery Plan.

Next Steps in the Process

30. If the Recovery Plan is approved at this Cabinet meeting, officers will undertake a review of the available resources to support greater activity and expertise within this area. Resources will be prioritised to extend the good work already achieved over recent years and attract increasing commercial investment during the next few years.

Conclusions

31. Ashford Borough Council is one of the few local authorities to have dedicated officer time to improving broadband within Kent. Successes such as the implementation of Policy EMP6 (Fibre to the Premises) in Ashford's Local Plan and the trials run by Openreach at Godinton Park (one of two pilot projects nationally investigating new technology for infrastructure delivery) have placed Ashford as a leading authority on broadband improvements. However, it is clear that more can be done and should be done to improve digital connectivity for residents and businesses in the borough. Improved connections and technologies are likely to be rolled out as they become the norm in towns and cities across the UK. This would likely happen in most areas of the Borough over a number of years without much stimulus or proactive engagement from the Council. However if Ashford wants to ensure it is future proofed, that ultrafast broadband covers as many difficult to reach rural properties as possible, and is at the forefront of digital connectivity, it will need to prioritise Digital Connectivity through the delivery of the Recovery Plan.

Portfolio Holder's Views

32. "This should be one of the main priorities for the Council and is crucial to our Recovery Plan moving forward.

This excellent report highlights where the borough currently is regarding broadband and what we are currently doing.

However, I would draw colleagues' attention to paragraphs 26 & 27 in particular. These describe what more we could do and the risks of inadequate broadband."

33. Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT

Contact: Tom Jenkins, Economic Development Officer

Email: tom.jenkins@ashford.gov.uk

Current Coverage and Situation (Connected Nations Report 2020 Interim)

laura_name	All Premises	All Matched Premises	SFBB availability (% premises)	UFBB availability (% premises)	Full Fibre availability (% premises)	% of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	% of premises below the USO	% of premises with NGA	% of premises with decent broadband from FWA	% of premises with SFBB from FWA
ASHFORD	58131	58054	90.1	44	6	0.4	1.8	3.8	9.8	4	98.4	0	0
CANTERBURY	74670	74474	93.4	2.9	2.9	0.2	0.6	1.2	6.3	1.5	99.2	0	0
DARTFORD	48938	48918	95.6	49	12	0.2	0.6	1.5	4.4	1.9	97.7	0	0
DOVER	55311	55261	92.7	28.6	1.9	0.5	1	2.1	7.2	2.4	98.1	0	0
FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE	54227	54182	93.3	37.9	1.9	0.5	1.2	2.3	6.6	2.5	97.9	0	0
GRAVESHAM	45061	45046	95.9	63.9	6.4	0	0.4	0.8	4.1	0.8	98.5	0	0
MAIDSTONE	76815	76707	91.9	49.9	5.1	0.5	1.6	2.8	7.9	3	97.5	0	0
MEDWAY	121257	121150	97.1	73.4	1.6	0	0.3	0.7	2.8	0.9	98.6	0	0
SEVENOAKS	53115	53079	91.5	28	4	0.3	0.6	1.4	8.4	1.5	99.3	0	0
SWALE	66896	66654	93	31.5	1.8	0.2	0.9	2	6.6	2.5	98.4	0	0
THANET	72763	72568	96.9	43	43	0	0.5	1.3	2.9	1.6	99.3	0	0
TONBRIDGE AND MALLING	56895	56828	94.6	55.3	7.4	0.2	0.5	1.4	5.3	1.6	98.4	0	0
TUNBRIDGE WELLS	52221	52162	91	46.2	7.2	0.1	1.2	2.9	8.9	3.1	98.3	0	0

laura_name	All Premises	All Matched Premises	Number of premises with SFBB availability	Number of premises with UFBB availability	Number of premises with Full Fibre availability	Number of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	Number of premises below the USO	Number of premises with NGA	Number of premises able to receive decent broadband from FWA	Number of premises able to receive SFBB from FWA
ASHFORD	58131	58054	52354	25598	3477	214	1029	2185	5700	2333	57204	0	0

Notes for Connected Nations Report 2020 Interim figures

ACRONYMS:

SFBB – Superfast Broadband

UFBB – Ultrafast Broadband

USO – Universal Service Obligation

WISP – Wireless Internet Service Provider

FWA – Fixed Wireless Access

Column Header meanings (the same definition applies to percentage and number figures)

Current headers	Note
laua_name	Local and Unitary Authority Names
All premises	Count of all premises, in scope, based on Ordnance Survey AddressBase® Premium Epoch 73
All matched premises	Count of all premises matched to operator records with a nonzero recorded coverage. Unmatched premises are unclassified
SFBB availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Superfast Broadband (30Mbit/s or greater) coverage from fixed broadband
UFBB availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Ultrafast Broadband (300Mbit/s or greater) coverage from fixed broadband
Full Fibre availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have coverage from a full fibre service from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 2Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 5Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 10Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 30Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises below the USO	Percentage of premises that do not have access to download speeds at or above 10Mbit/s and upload speeds at or above 1Mbit/s including non-matched records and zero predicted speeds from fixed broadband, WISPs and EE FWA

% of premises with NGA	Percentage of premises with Next Generation Access from fixed broadband
% of premises able to receive decent broadband from FWA	Percentage of premises with Decent Broadband from WISPs
% of premises able to receive SFBB from FWA	Percentage of premises with Superfast Broadband (30Mbit/s or above) from WISPs

Connected Nations 2020 LSOA data associated to Wards (Graph).

Superfast Broadband

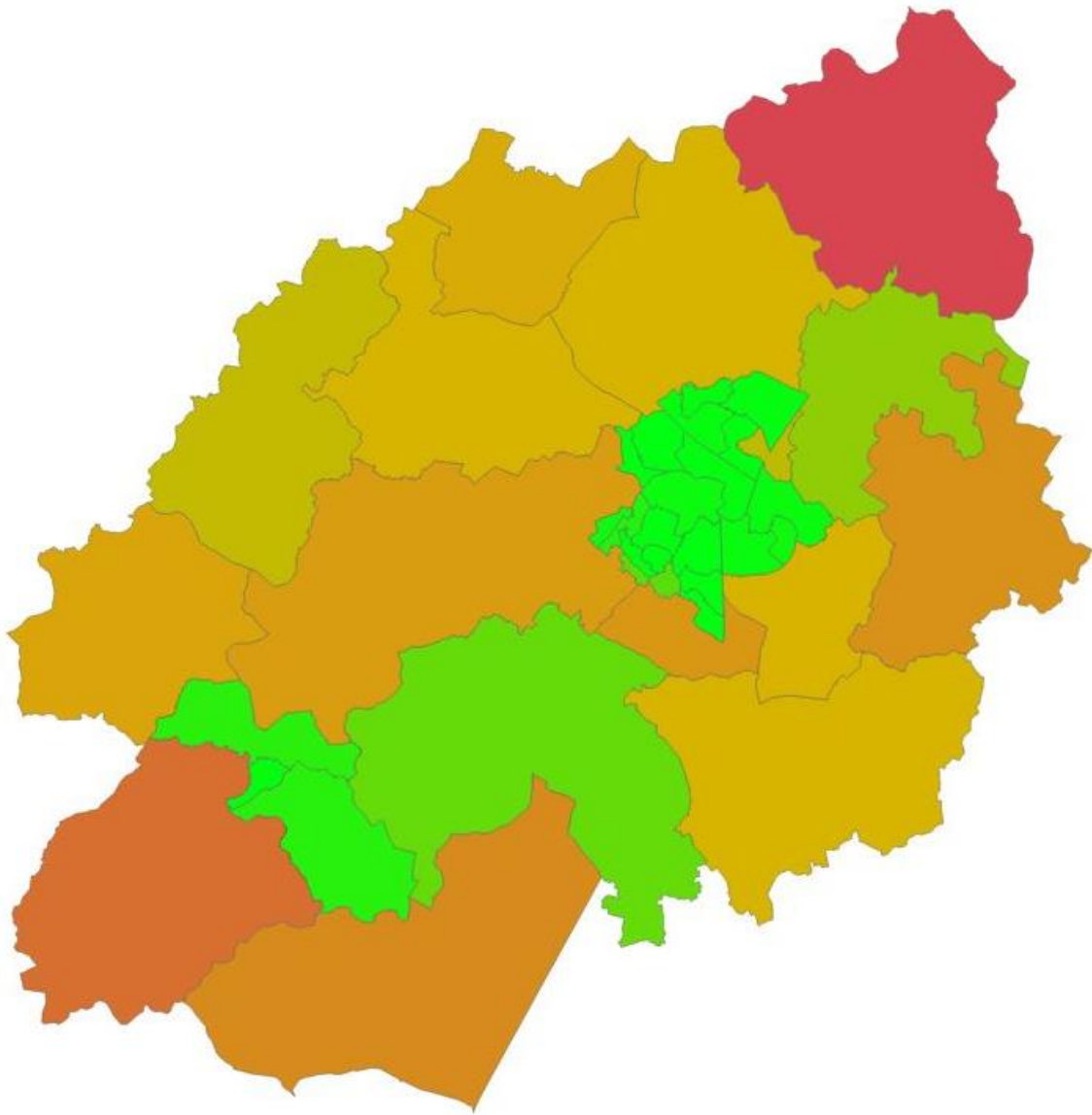


Figure 1. Superfast Broadband (download speeds >30Mbps) - Average % availability by ward. Red (low) to Green (High) sliding scale. Actual figures for each ward are in the table below.

Full Fibre Broadband (FTTP)

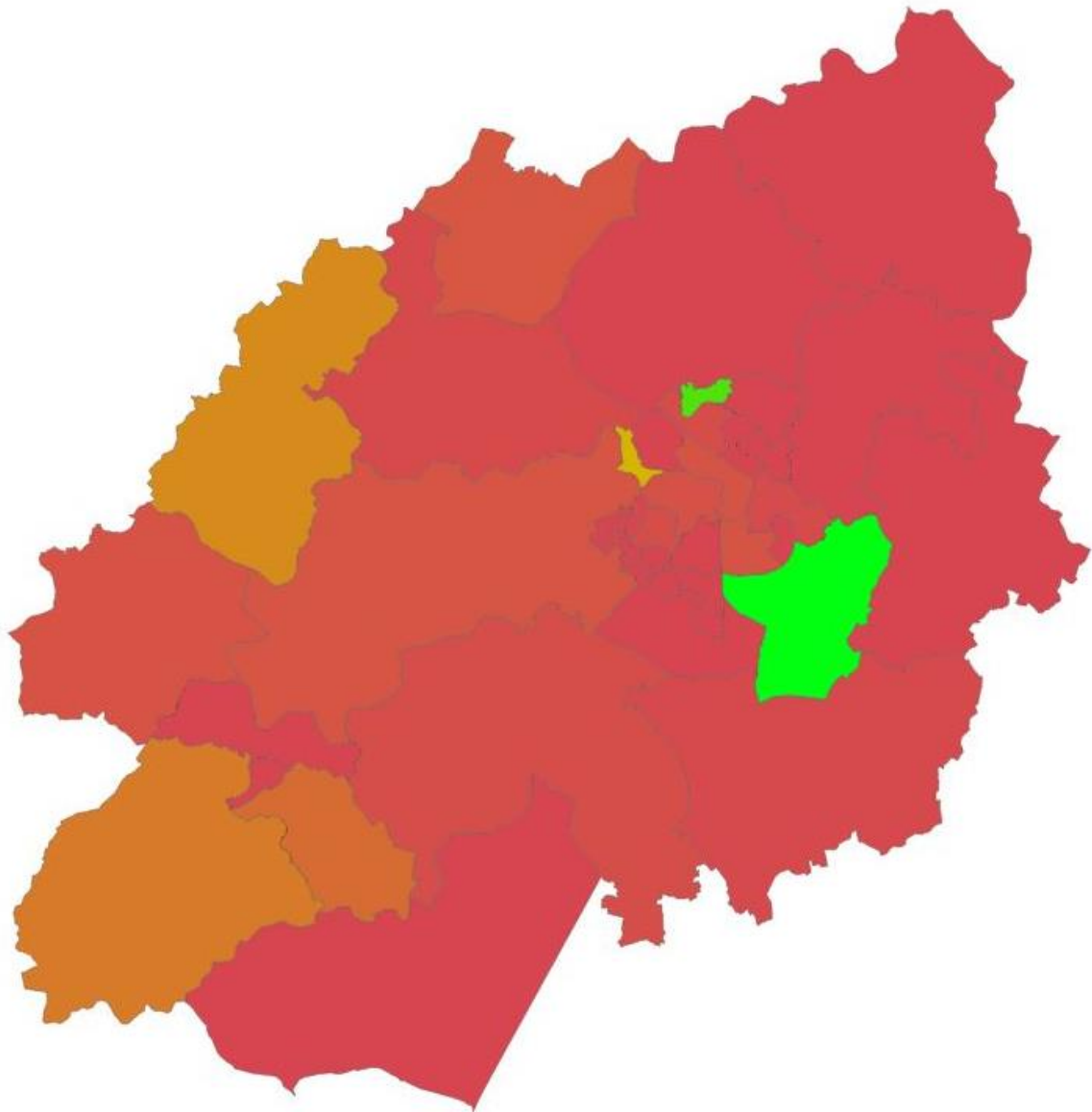


Figure 2. Full Fibre (FTTP) – Average % availability by ward. Red (low) to Green (High) sliding scale. Actual figures for each ward are in the table below.

Connected Nations 2020 LSOA data associated to Wards (Table)

	SFBB availability (% premises)	Full Fibre availability (% premises)
Aylesford & East Stour	98.9	2.4
Beaver	100.0	1.4
Biddenden	74.0	2.2
Bircholt	69.9	0.0
Bockhanger	99.1	1.2
Bybrook	100.0	0.0
Charing	75.3	2.8
Conningbrook & Little Burton Farm	79.8	0.0
Downs North	53.9	0.0
Downs West	77.3	0.0
Furley	99.5	2.4
Goat Lees	99.5	27.5
Godinton	99.9	17.0
Highfield	98.1	0.0
Isle of Oxney	68.5	0.0
Kennington	99.5	0.0
Kingsnorth Village & Bridgefield	71.2	0.0
Mersham, Sevington South with Finberry	77.1	33.9
Norman	99.9	0.0
Park Farm North	100.0	0.0
Park Farm South	100.0	0.0
Repton	100.0	0.0
Rolvenden & Tenterden West	62.7	8.2
Roman	90.3	0.0
Saxon Shore	77.2	0.7
Singleton East	96.3	0.5
Singleton West	98.5	0.0
Stanhope	99.9	0.0
Tenterden North	99.3	0.0
Tenterden South	95.7	5.9
Tenterden St Michael's	95.4	0.0
Upper Weald	77.1	0.8
Victoria	98.7	1.9
Washford	99.9	0.0
Weald Central	72.3	2.4
Weald North	79.1	10.9
Weald South	89.2	1.4
Willesborough	99.0	0.9
Wye with Hinxhill	84.7	0.1



Agenda Item No: 9
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 July 2020
Report Title: Commercial Services Strategy
Report Author & Job Title: Mrs Tracey Butler
Head of Environment and Land Management
Portfolio Holder Cllr. Nell Bell
Portfolio Holder for: Head of Finance and IT

Summary: This commercial service delivery strategy is required to assist in addressing the financial challenges currently facing the council, which have intensified as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

This strategy is intended to provide a consistent approach and approved guidance for Councillors and Officers to work within and will be supported by an annual delivery plan, detailing the specific work programmes and projects that will help achieve our commercial service ambitions. These ambitions are designed to support the overall service delivery of the council and are an integral part of the Councils wider recovery plan.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: None specifically

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

- I. Note the contents of the report**
- II. Adopt the Commercial services delivery strategy.**

Policy Overview: As detailed in the Summary

Financial Implications: The strategy promotes commercial services development (income generation and cost reduction) as a means to support service delivery across the council.

Legal Implications: Each proposed project will be examined on its merits and have appropriate legal advice provided for the proposal including alternative delivery models where they are proposed.

Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not appropriate at this stage, individual commercial initiatives will need to be assessed for their impacts
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Not appropriate at this stage, individual commercial initiatives will need to be assessed for their impacts.
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Each project uses the corporately agreed risk assessment and management process, will be tracked and monitored on our project management system and will be reported to Members through TEB and on to Cabinet.
Sustainability Implications:	The delivery plan for commercial services will include tracking of carbon reduction objectives.
Contact:	tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330875

Report Title: Commercial Services Strategy

Introduction and Background

1. The commercial services strategy is a strand of Ashford Borough Councils recovery plan. The strategy is intended to live beyond recovery and into the support of future service provision for Ashford Borough Council.
2. This commercial service delivery strategy is required to assist in addressing the financial challenges currently facing the council, which have intensified as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
3. Now, more than ever, it is important that the Council reviews the way it performs its statutory and discretionary functions by investigating and implementing new ways of working to improve the Council's financial position, ensuring continued services provision.
4. The Council has always been keen to be self-sufficient and manage its finances prudently; this is ever more critical. Other future changes to central government funding, offers increased risks to the Councils budget but also potential opportunities arising from the localisation of business rates. However, with a delay in the Governments Fair Funding review (2021/22) and the financial future uncertain, we will need to do everything we can to support our finances ourselves.
5. Ashford Borough Council acknowledges the challenges that it faces, but also views the current funding picture as an opportunity to affect fundamental changes to how we do business; with improvements to services we deliver as a result.
6. An exercise has been carried out in each service area, described as a sprint, to look at the opportunities for income generation and cost reduction both in those services and with multi service support.
7. That review has helped to identify the greatest opportunities for income generation or cost reduction in the short, medium and longer term.

Proposal

8. To adopt the attached Commercial services strategy as a template for driving innovation and capturing income generation and cost savings to support service delivery across the Council.
9. To use the areas identified in the strategy as a catalyst for commercial services development to expand and grow. Under the guidance of the Trading and Enterprise Board, the strategy will allow those staff participating in the first

tranche of projects highlighted to develop their knowledge in a range of business skills. This will enable them to not only develop their own projects but to go on to mentor and empower other staff to do the same in the future.

10. This strategy, under the guidance of Members, will have the opportunity to explore service opportunities, developing market penetration in the services we currently offer but will also consider diversification opportunities for those and other services.
11. It is anticipated that each project's starting point will be the service being offered in house but ventures with third parties will be explored when considering market diversification and developing future opportunities for commercial delivery.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Not necessary at this stage but assessments may be required to assess individual activities to identify and where appropriate mitigate any impacts.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. A stakeholder workshop has been undertaken with Members on commercialisation.
14. Workshops have been held with Management Team on commercialisation and how to add value to ventures being explored.
15. Workshops have been undertaken with staff on the first tranche of projects and a marketing working group has been set up to work around the development of a plan, as an exemplar, for two of the project areas.

Other Options Considered

16. We could do nothing. Members could choose to offer services "as they are" and not consider further income generating opportunities or cost savings. However, we have a fiduciary duty to offer services at the best value for public money. When we have a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that indicates we need to further income generate and cost save, we must act to ensure we can continue to offer services that our residents value and need.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

17. To date we have some service areas that generate a modest income for the Council, delivering services to our residents. This income is used to support the base budget of the Council, providing quality services our residents want and need (based on the results of our residents' survey).

18. To ensure we continue to meet the expectations of our residents, we need to explore all opportunities to deliver services efficiently and effectively, reducing unnecessary expenditure. Income generation is not designed to be at the expense of services provided, rather a tool that allows us to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our residents.

Next Steps in Process

19. With the workshops having been undertaken and e-learning in place, a governance structure has been proposed for each project with the relevant tools to assist in setting objectives and delivery timetables.
20. Projects leads will come together at the first delivery hub meeting to finalise proposed stretch objectives. A meeting of TEB will review objectives and provide guidance on the projects moving forward to populate and develop the delivery plan that will go from TEB to Cabinet with recommendations for work being undertaken and proposed.

Conclusion

21. The proposed strategy will form a part of the Councils response to the budget deficits identified in the MTFP and will form part of the recovery strategy from the impacts on the councils' finances of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Portfolio Holder's Views

22. As a council we have always been pro-active in the management of our finances. We have explored our commercial investment and development opportunities to enable us be a dynamic and entrepreneurial council.
23. This strategy sets out our approach to further develop commercial opportunities through our services, investigating market penetration for current offers and diversifying where further opportunities become available. This strategy will support us in our continued delivery of the quality services our residents need.

Contact and Email

24. Tracey Butler, Head of Environment and Land management
25. tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330875

APPENDIX

DRAFT COMMERCIAL SERVICES STRATEGY – ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Background

- 1.1 This commercial service delivery strategy is required to assist in addressing the financial challenges currently facing the council, which have intensified as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. It is important that the Council reviews the way it performs its statutory and discretionary functions by investigating and implementing new ways of working to improve the Council's financial position, which is part of business as usual. However, we are now in the position that we have implemented different ways of working due to the current circumstances and this presents an opportunity to capitalise on those and push forward our commercial approach.
- 1.2 This strategy is intended to provide a consistent approach and approved guidance for Councillors and Officers to work within and will be supported by an annual delivery plan detailing the specific work programmes and projects that will help achieve our commercial ambitions. A Commercial Delivery Hub will draw together the annual delivery plan and TEB (Trading and Enterprise Board) will have oversight of this, reporting on to Cabinet.
- 1.3 Other future changes to central government funding, offers increased risks to the Councils budget but also potential opportunities arising from the localisation of business rates. However, with a delay in the Governments Fair Funding review (2021 / 22) and the financial future uncertain, we will need to do everything we can to support our finances ourselves.
- 1.4 Ashford Borough Council acknowledges the challenges that it faces, but also views the current funding picture as an opportunity to affect fundamental changes to how we do business; with improvements to services we deliver as a result.
- 1.5 The success of the delivery of the Commercial Strategy will be measured by a series of Key Deliverables and Performance Indicators as part of our Performance Management Framework.
- 1.6 To increase and expand the Council's commercial vision we will require a shift in the core back office services to enable increased commercial skills and approaches within the systems and operations.

- 1.7 For those Council service areas that have not previously looked at the opportunities a more commercial approach can offer, particularly to improve and expand their services, there will be active challenge under the new strategy to explore these opportunities.
- 1.8 In some areas of the Council commercial activity is nothing new. In these areas we will look to further develop commercial activity within these services to enhance this already successful provision.
- 1.9 This strategy will highlight priority areas to focus key resources on in the short term in order to accelerate the commercial development process as part of the organisation's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.
- 1.10 This strategy will also look to consolidate the Council's existing commercial activity and provide a framework, with defined objectives, for new commercial services projects and for the delivery of future commercial services activity.

2.0 What Commercialisation means to Ashford Borough Council

- 2.1 Commercialism is a broad subject and can apply to many different areas. The Capita report, *'Creating council commercialism – A conversation'* November 2013, notes how it can be difficult to precisely define what commercialism means for Council's:

'Commercialism means different things to different people, and is being implemented in different ways all over the country. This is a good thing – local government is enjoying a flowering of diverse approaches to problems as well as more freedom to act than previously. There is not – and there shouldn't be – one right approach to commercialism, nor just one useful definition.'

- 2.2 Our strategy looks to formalise the Council's commercial activity through two main work streams. These work streams which will help to realise the ambition of commercialisation set out in this strategy:

Commercial acumen - Enhancing the Council's commercial acumen and capability.

We are setting this vision to foster innovation through collaborative working across the departments of the council in a non-hierarchical Commercial Delivery Hub. We will use expertise from across the council and advisory partners to leverage opportunities. We will advise Members of and mitigate risks against the agreed corporate framework, assessing the potential of business opportunities inclusively and realistically but moving swiftly to ensure we seize market opportunities as they present themselves. We will take the

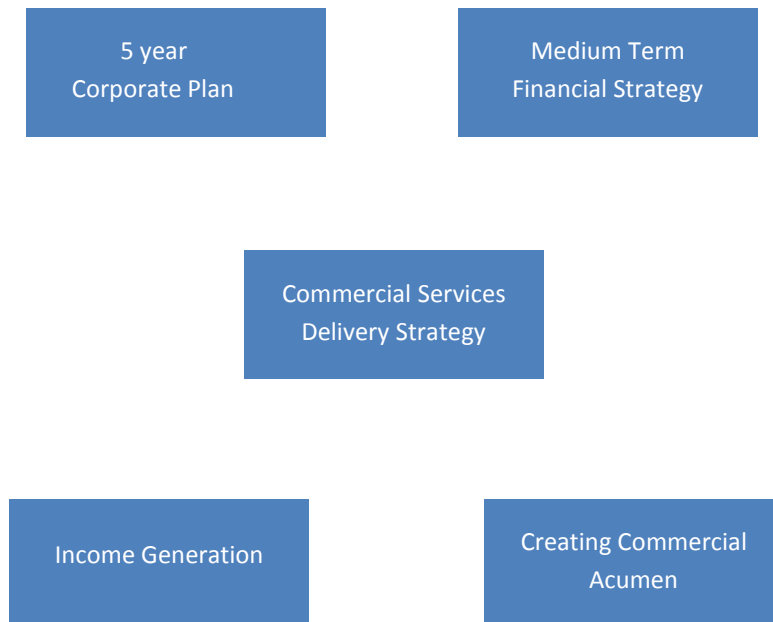
opportunity to set demanding but realistic performance targets, unleashing the untapped potential of staff who do the work to drive the innovation. Today's project leads will use their experience to mentor leads of the future.

Improving net revenue – Improving the financial position of the council through a combination of income generation, capturing internal savings and savings from third party suppliers

- 2.3 The success of the delivery of these work streams will be measured by a series of Key Deliverables and Performance Indicators. These specific, measurable goals are both financial and operational.
- 2.4 The delivery of these work streams will be supported by the introduction of an approved commercial framework. This will be used to evaluate existing commercial services and new ideas to ensure the right things are done in the right way and at the right time.

3.0 Strategic links

3.1 The interdependence and delivery of the Commercial Strategy is shown below:



4.0 Key aims and objectives

4.1 The overarching aim of this strategy is to deliver a financial return which contributes to the Council's efficiencies and income targets, helping to safeguard frontline services that the Council currently provides.

- 4.2 Given the scale of funding cuts efficiencies and additional income required (4.3million) it is anticipated that a cashable saving / income generation of £1million over the next two years should be aimed for.
- 4.3 The successful delivery of the Commercial Strategy will mitigate some of the savings that the Council will have to make. We will look to carefully manage and control any risks associated with the implementation of this strategy. Funding is required for the successful implementation of this strategy however it is expected to be self-financing in its own right.
- 4.4 It is important to note that the benefits of pursuing the Commercial Strategy are not purely financial. Becoming a commercially focused organisation means putting the customer at the heart of everything we do, using service design principles to inform service planning decisions and transformation. We will actively encourage creative thinking to develop more effective ways to deliver our services.
- 4.5 Under this framework, staff will be trained and encouraged to take business-like decisions, manage risk and seize new opportunities, using methodologies approved by our Members and with the membership in the Commercial Delivery Hub of a lead from our audit partnership, checking, challenging and providing best practice insight. Members will have oversight and guidance of this work through the Trading and Enterprise Board (TEB). This will help to improve the quality and speed of decision making, thereby improving the services we deliver to customers. An empowered workforce means more engagement, higher customer satisfaction, increased productivity and also better business intelligence. The result of this is that the Council's ability to attract and retain top talent is enhanced.
- 4.6 Through growing the commercial activity of the Council we are looking to benefit the people of Ashford, ensuring that wealth generated in the borough stays in the borough. In turn this will help to attract businesses, professionals and entrepreneurs to the area. It is anticipated that increased prosperity within the borough will positively affect the household income of residents, helping to reduce the barriers to social inclusion.
- 4.7 The key aims of the strategy are broken down as follows:

Short Term Goals (2020)	Medium Term Goals (2021-2023)	Long Term Goals (2023 onwards)
General		
Commercial Strategy to be adopted by Ashford Borough Council	Continue to develop commercial and investment opportunities to impact on annual targets	<p>Generate £1million inside 2 years and set a target going forwards</p> <p>Brought together the structure and function of the top 20 contracts for the Council, providing oversight and contract mentoring for the organisation as a whole</p> <p>Completed initial contract category segmentation management, aligning all future procurement in segments, preventing deviation other than in exceptional circumstance</p>
Net Revenue		
Commercial Framework to be adopted by Ashford Borough Council	Continue to develop commercial opportunities in line with this strategy	
Short term commercial priority areas identified in route map are implemented	Develop business cases for other commercial initiatives and opportunities	Reinvest income generated to improve the services we deliver
Develop marketing plan to use for priority areas to achieve greater market share	Continue to promote existing services whilst bring online new income generating services	Increased awareness throughout the borough of the services the Council can provide
Develop business cases for longer term commercial opportunities	Continue to develop and explore commercial opportunities	Establish successful delivery mechanism that contributes profits annually to be reinvested in Council services
Creating Commercial Acumen		
Identify Council's current level of knowledge and	Implement plan using organisational change	Council to have adopted appropriate positive

Short Term Goals (2020)	Medium Term Goals (2021-2023)	Long Term Goals (2023 onwards)
develop plan on how we can achieve desired future informed state	model to align resources behind achieving a common goal	attitudes and behaviours associated with commercial organisations
Complete back-office service reviews to assess if current delivery model used is most effective and cost-efficient	Review services periodically to ensure assertions in service reviews are still applicable	To become a commercially focused organisation with a national reputation for high quality services

5.0 How we will deliver the strategy

- 5.1 The Council is already exploring a number of commercial opportunities. Where new opportunities are developed, their merits will be assessed, and a robust business case brought to the Commercial Services Delivery Hub for initial approval. The hub will have HoS representation as the Chair for decisions for implementation to follow directly from the hub meeting. The Chair of the Commercial Services Delivery Hub will update the Leader and Chief Executive as appropriate on any matters arising with a formal quarterly report to TEB.
- 5.2 Where services are already trading commercially, we will look to generate additional income by improving their effectiveness and promoting the service further through sales and marketing.
- 5.3 The following are the initial priority areas identified that are seen as the activities that will have the biggest net impact on our budget over the next 18 months. Not all of these will be brought to a successful financial conclusion but they would have been fully evaluated and progressed where the need and market allows. It may be that 50% come to financial fruition but progression of this work will develop staff who will then have the skills required to mentor the next generation of staff and projects as they emerge:
- CCTV Service – Selling to other LAs, businesses and selling to monitoring centre to other LAs to provide monitoring for their Lifeline Services.
 - Lifeline Service – active marketing of the service to increase users
 - Parking – using Parking 360 to offer savings to KCC and other district councils by taking over the service other districts currently provide for KCC
 - Garden Waste – increase users following improvements to online ordering and payment system and proactive marketing
 - Category Management and contract management consolidation – drive work to consolidate contracts for efficient procurement and bring

contract management across the organisation into a consolidated structure.

- 5.4 The following steps have been identified as the building blocks needed to efficiently and effectively deliver, not only the short term priorities listed above, but to also create the right environment for commercial development into the future:

Step 1 -Development of a Commercial Delivery Hub

- 5.5 A Commercial Services Delivery Hub should be set up to drive commercial activity and monitor progress against performance targets. The hub will be given delegated authority to act in the best interests of the Council. Membership of the rest of the hub will include Service Managers who have responsibility for the services listed above: CCTV, Lifeline, Parking, Garden Waste and Property. A senior representative from Finance should also be in the hub as will a senior representative from the Mid Kent audit partnership.

Suggested Terms of Reference for the hub can be found in Appendix 1.

Step 2 - Resources to Deliver

- 5.6 The projects highlighted at 5.3 should be understood by Service Managers and the hub to determine how to ensure the required resources are put towards the commercial area. This could be through re-prioritising existing service plans or by bringing in additional external resources for a time-specific period, to be agreed with the Leader and Chief Executive.

Step 3 – Development of Performance Indicators

- 5.7 The hub will monitor the overall performance of the commercial programme through a set of Key Performance Indicators that are updated quarterly. Individual projects should report against these indicators, but they may also have additional project specific indicators.

It is suggested the following indicators are used by the hub team to manage the commercial programme:

- Income generated
- Savings made
- New customers
- Qualified leads
- Savings identified
- Environmental Impact
- Digital transformation

- 5.8 These indicators enable the hub team to measure and monitor both the outcome of the programme (income generated, and savings made) together

with activity that will lead to the outcomes (new customers, qualified leads, savings identified) and the impact of the programme (environmental impact and the way in which our customers interact with us [digital transformation]).

- 5.9 The indicators should be used to set programme targets with milestone targets also used at three and six month intervals.
- 5.10 The development of a Commercial Framework will also look to create a culture and coherent structure which allows new commercial ideas to develop and commercial projects to be implemented, giving them every chance of becoming successful commercial ventures.

The diagram below highlights the stages of the approved Commercial Framework.



If the risk matrix is sound, take “business ready” proposal to TEB for approval.

6.0 The role of the Commercial Services Delivery Hub within the Council

6.1 As the Council is looking to operate more commercially it is vital that adequate resources are in place to support service managers to undertake this. The role of the Commercial Delivery Hub is as follows:

- To develop and maintain the approved Commercial Framework which provides the basis for all of the Council's commercial activity
- Oversee all commercial projects proposed here and that emerge through the progression of the hub team.
- Provide advice to Service Managers on the development of commercial opportunities
- To assist with commercial business plan writing and financial modelling
- To hold the commercial projects register
- To provide analysis of the performance and impact of projects and the contribution towards efficiencies and additional income targets
- To provide recommendations and advice to Members on the approval of commercial business plans
- Highlight any potential commercial conflicts of interest to the Senior Management Team and Members for direction
- To implement Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and measure success of commercial projects

7.0 How we will develop existing commercial services

7.1 The Council will look to enhance existing commercial services by providing support in areas such as sales, marketing and business development to ensure that we are able to maximise market share within the borough (and in some cases more widely) in that particular service area.

7.2 The decision on whether to charge or trade would need to be reviewed should the service achieve market saturation within the borough or an opportunity to trade outside of the borough was presented which could be potentially be beneficial for the Council. The model for business growth within a public sector environment is as follows:

Internal provision

7.3.1 This involves providing a service that the Council already provides and marketing it towards an existing customer (i.e. Ashford residents) in order to achieve business growth.

7.3.2 This is the least risky growth strategy as the Council already has processes in place to provide this service. It is however targeted towards a limited market and could result in market saturation.

Other public sector

7.4.1 This involves providing the service to other public sector organisations outside of the borough boundaries. The General Power of Competence allows the Council to trade in the same way any other business would within the borough.

7.4.2 The Council can, in some circumstances, carry out work outside of the borough without the need for a trading vehicle on behalf of other public sector organisations. This is only the case when a shared service arrangement has been entered into or the Council has been appointed as an agent to carry out the work by the neighbouring authority.

Direct to public

7.5.1 This involves trading either through existing council structures or through Local Alternative Delivery Models (ADM) to provide a service to the residents of Ashford. There are various reasons why Council's look to deliver services through an ADMs such as being able to compete in a wider area or to make them more efficient. This does however increase the level of risk as it involves an entirely new way of operating. ADMs are only legally required if significant profits will be made (or operating with an external partner) and before then other internal structures maybe quicker and easier to get off the ground.

Trading with private sector

7.6.1 Trading through existing council structures or ADMs in the open market is another option which could be considered.

7.6.2 Any new commercial proposals will be backed up by robust business cases to allow the Council to reduce or mitigate any risks and ensure there is every possibility of success in all commercial ventures.

8.0 How we will develop new ideas

8.1 When potential commercial opportunities are identified, a proposal will be put to the Commercial Services Delivery Hub through an approved completed Commercial Framework document. From this initial idea, the hub will assess the idea and, if appropriate, prepare for action. This will usually involve a more

detailed completion of the Commercial Framework following on from market and cost analysis.

- 8.2 Commercial initiatives will be given the correct level of autonomy, enabling them to effectively compete in their markets. Service managers will be able to set prices, develop marketing campaigns within brand guidelines and enter into contractual relationships with customers with the correct support from internal support services. They will be supported at the hub to ensure the correct balance between strong governance and swift commercial decision making and ultimately report on to TEB.
- 8.3 Once the initial financial hurdle is overcome the hub will look to reinvest around 25% of any surplus generated in the commercial scheme to ensure sustainability through competitiveness is maintained.

9.0 Communications

- 9.1 The Council is extending its commercial approach by developing services at our disposal. The Human Resources and Communications Team will ensure internal and external stakeholders understand this approach.

10.0 How we will manage risks

- 10.1 Risk management is embedded in all of the decision-making processes within the Council. Effective risk management requires an informed understanding of relevant risks, an assessment of their relative priority and rigorous approach to monitoring and controlling them. All risks associated with any commercial activity will be managed through the Council's Risk Management Framework and become part of the quarterly performance management report to Cabinet and full Council.
- 10.2 A key part of the Council's Risk Management Framework is the Strategic Risk Register which contains all risks that may have an impact on core services and both strategic and operational objectives. As such, commercialisation will be added to the Strategic Risk Register.
- 10.3 In any commercial venture there will always be an inherent element of risk. The presence of risk is not always entirely negative as it can be a driver of innovation and a motivator to staff.
- 10.4 Given the potential risks involved it would be easy to take a risk averse approach, however this approach would hinder potentially highly beneficial opportunities or innovation. We will look to identify risks early in the strategic planning phase and implement approaches to mitigate or manage these risks where possible. Conflicts of interest on any proposals will be reported to Members by the Councils Monitoring Officer.

Appendix 1

Commercial Services Delivery Hub structure

Ashford Borough Council – Commercial Services Delivery Hub

Terms of Reference

1. Constitution

The Commercial Services Delivery Hub is an officer led group comprising of Commercial lead for ABC (Tracey Butler), managers from the main commercial initiatives of ABC and managers from support services. It is supported by a senior member of the finance team and by a lead officer from the Mid Kent Audit partnership and by specialist management assistance.

The Chair of the Commercial Services Delivery Hub will review these Terms of Reference on an annual basis and make recommendations for changes, in consultation with the Leader and Chief Executive and where agreed on to TEB.

2. Authority

The Commercial Services Delivery Hub is directly accountable to the Leader and Chief Executive.

The Commercial Services Delivery Hub is authorised by the Council to investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek any information it requires from any employee and all employees are directed to cooperate with any request made by the Service.

As projects become finalised “business ready” proposals they will be reported to, discussed and approved or otherwise by TEB.

3. Aim

The aim of the Commercial Services Delivery Hub is to facilitate the delivery of commercial services activities of the Council and provide Members with assurance that income generation initiatives are in line with Ashford Borough Council's Strategy.

4. Objectives

Specific duties of the Commercial Delivery Hub include:

- To ensure proposed commercial services activities are in line with the approved Commercial Framework
- Facilitates the delivery of all commercial services projects
- Providing advice to Service Managers on the development of commercial opportunities
- Assisting with commercial business plan writing and financial modelling
- Holding the commercial projects register
- Providing analysis of the performance and impact of projects and the contribution towards efficiencies and additional income targets
- Providing recommendations and advice to the Council on the approval of commercial business plans
- Highlighting any potential commercial conflicts of interest to the monitoring officer for guidance and advice
- To implement Key Performance indicators (KPI's) and measure success of commercial projects

5. Method of working

A standard agenda as follows will be used by the Commercial Service Delivery Hub:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Action Log

4. Review of commercial performance
5. Problem solving
6. Ideas for commercial development
7. Action setting
8. Any Other Business
9. Date of next meeting

All meetings will receive an action log (detailing progress against actions agreed at the previous meeting) for the purposes of review and follow-up to update project plans

6. Membership

6.1 Service Membership

The members of the Commercial Delivery Hub shall comprise, Ashford Borough Council Commercial Services Lead, Service Managers of the main commercial priority services, a senior manager from Finance plus a Mid Kent audit representative. The membership of this hub will vary from time to time where specialist advice is required (see below attendees).

6.2 Service Chair

The Chair for the Commercial Services lead for Ashford Borough Council, Tracey Butler.

6.3 Attendees

Only members of the Commercial Services Delivery Hub have the right to attend meetings. However, other individuals, including external advisors, may be invited to attend all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate.

7. Frequency of Meetings

The Commercial Delivery Hub will hold monthly meetings.

Extraordinary meetings of the Hub may be called at short notice with the agreement of the Chair.



Agenda Item No:	10
Report To:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	30 July 2019
Report Title:	Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership annual report 2019/20
Report Author & Job Title:	Angela d'Urso, public health advisor
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Peter Feacey
Portfolio Holder for:	Community safety and wellbeing

Summary:	This report highlights some of the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership's activity during 2019/20 to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.
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Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:

- I. **Note the achievements made by the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership in 2019/20**
- II. **Note the changing sub-regional and regional health and wellbeing arrangements.**
- III. **Note the work being undertaken by the AHWP as part of the council's recovery plan.**

Policy Overview: The council has an emerging corporate plan, with an emerging priority to be caring and supportive of communities in Ashford.

There are a number of national, regional and sub-regional strategies and plans that focus on health and wellbeing, and which impact across a range of partners.

Financial Implications: It is likely some specific projects referred to as part of the recovery plan will require funding from across the partnership. Where relevant to the council, this will happen through the council's project initiation document (PID) process. Resource allocation as connected to the delivery of the emerging corporate plan will be fully scoped out as part of the planning process.

Legal Implications There are no legal implications in relation to this report.

Equalities Impact Not required for this report, although specific work of the

Assessment	Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership considers inequalities and activity to reduce inequality of health and wellbeing outcome.
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	None
Contact:	angela.durso@ashford.gov.uk

Ashford’s approach to health and wellbeing

Introduction and background

Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership 2019/20

1. A significant amount of work was undertaken by the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership (AHWP) in 2019/20, with a number of success stories. A full annual report can be found as Appendix 1.

Proposals / issues for consideration

2. The AHWP aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in Ashford, ensuring bespoke delivery tailored to our needs and our communities. The AHWP has the following priorities:

- **Innovation**
- **Inequalities**
- **Infrastructure**

3. Each priority has an action plan, with a sub group assembled to deliver the plan. Details of achievements in each priority area are contained in the annual report (Appendix 1), but key highlights are:

- **Innovation**

- The move of the One You shop to a bigger and better location, with monthly footfall doubling as a result (289 visitors in May 2019 compared to 596 visitors in February 2020) and a range of new interventions and activities on offer

- **Inequalities**

- Successful awareness raising and enforcement activity related to illicit tobacco, with public roadshows and educational activity in three key primary schools
- Establishing the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Reference Group (AHWRG), a new mechanism to engage with the community and voluntary sector groups

- **Infrastructure**

- A partnership options appraisal on health and wellbeing estate – both now and in the longer term allowing for development such as the South Ashford Garden Community. Phase 1 has been completed and phase 2 will be commence shortly.

4. The AHWP has made significant process in 2019/20 in achieving priority aims. Our key achievement is the reduction in the numbers of adults smoking in Ashford, as the below table shows:

Year	Estimated number of adult smokers in Ashford	Percentage of adults smoking in Ashford	Percentage of adults smoking in Kent	Percentage of adults smoking in England
2018	21,409	21.5%	15%	14.4%
2019	10,027	10.1%	13.7%	13.9%

5. This shows a phenomenal reduction, with an estimated 11,382 adults in Ashford quitting smoking between 2018 and 2019. Ashford has also achieved a significantly larger percentage decrease compared to both Kent and England - from 21.5% of the adult population smoking to 10.1%, and less than the Kent (13.7%) and England (13.9%) percentage levels for the first time. Not only does this represent significant savings to the public purse and society as a whole, but on a very real level has saved lives.

Changing partnership environment

6. There have been many changes during 2019/20 with more planned for 2020/21 and beyond, as the NHS Long Term Plan 2019 is implemented. Changes so far include:
 - From July 2019 GP surgeries came together in the creation of primary care networks (PCNs), with two PCNs established in Ashford - Ashford Stour and Ashford Rural.
 - A single clinical commissioning group for Kent and Medway was launched in April 2020. It's led by local doctors to take a bird's eye view of health priorities for local people and explore where we can tackle shared challenges together such as cancer and mental health.
 - Four integrated care partnerships (ICPs) were created, drawing together all the NHS organisations in a given area such as hospitals, general practice, community, mental health and social care. While each organisation will hold a budget, they will agree together how funding is spent locally. There will be an ICP covering East Kent.
 - An integrated care system - all organisations in health and social care work together in different, more joined-up ways – with the aim for this to be in place by April 2021.
7. The AHWP has adapted to incorporate and respond to these changes, and will continue to do so as further changes are implemented.

Implications

Resource and financial implications

8. This will be considered as part of the corporate planning and recovery planning process, resources will be reconfigured as required. Any required additionally will go through the partnership and council processes, for example the programme management group or will pursue external funding options.

Equalities impact assessment

9. An equalities impact assessment is not necessary for this report, although they will be carried out as required for discrete project activity.

Consultation planned or undertaken

10. All AHWP members have been consulted and involved in the production of the annual report 2019/20.

11. In relation to discrete projects emerging from the priority action plans, consultation will be carried out as required. We will work closely with partners to ensure a partnership approach to consultation and to creating an ongoing dialogue with our communities.

Other options considered

12. The council could decide to not lead or be involved in the AHWP, although this would have a significant impact upon the delivery of health and wellbeing interventions across the borough and would have a detrimental impact upon the public sector and community leadership role of the council. It would also impact upon our ability to deliver our Recovery Plan.

Reasons for supporting option recommended

13. Creating healthy communities will be a key element of caring Ashford and of the Recovery Plan. Health and wellbeing issues are of increasing importance to our communities and partnership working enables to tackle these issues in a systemic and holistic fashion.

Next steps

14. The meetings of the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership are taking place, with sub groups established to ensure delivery of the priority action plans. An extraordinary meeting of the AHWP will agree a partnership recovery plan, with sub groups taking on the delivery of actions. We are, and will continue to, work to ensure we support the council's Recovery Plan, with key elements of the plan contained within sub group action plans.
15. Sub group action plans for 2020/21 will include the following:
 - **Inequalities**
 - Ensuring interventions for those disproportionately impacted by Covid19
 - Effective community engagement and communication
 - Supporting delivery of a community-engagement programme CHESS™ (Community Health Engagement Survey Solutions) which is an evidence-based approach that supports local communities by engaging them as 'citizen scientists' in an investigation about their health and the built environment) building long-term wellbeing
 - **Innovation**
 - The safe and effective reopening of the One You facility, ensuring that reduced service capacity is targeted at those who need them the most
 - Service transformation, including enabling digital approaches
 - **Infrastructure**
 - Delivering phase 2 of the partnership estate option appraisal and related projects
16. The AHWP will continue to play a full part in regional and sub-regional working, and will ensure we balance working with new structures such as the East Kent ICP and delivery of our local priorities.

Conclusion

7. Ashford Borough Council is committed to excellence in health and wellbeing and work will continue in 2020/21 and beyond to ensure we deliver against our commitments and plans, as well as ensuring all work supports our Recovery Plan.

Portfolio holder's views

17. This report shows the excellent work that the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership drives forward to deliver best quality health and wellbeing services and standards. I would like to recognise the work of other Cabinet colleagues and partners in driving this agenda forward in their own areas.

Contact and email

Angela d'Urso, public health advisor
angela.durso@ashford.gov.uk

ASHFORD HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



a year's overview

INTRODUCTION

Who we are

Health and Wellbeing Boards were introduced by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Establishing Boards was a statutory requirement for all upper tier authorities. Although not an upper tier authority, Ashford Borough Council established a health and wellbeing board in 2013.

In 2018/19, Ashford's Board rethought its purpose and ways of working and in 2019/20, we launched the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership (AHWP). Partners include local authorities, clinical commissioners and health and social care providers.

Our vision

The AHWP will, through effective partnership working, deliver continuous improvement in health and wellbeing services and outcomes for the people of Ashford.

The AHWP aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in Ashford, ensuring bespoke delivery tailored to our needs and our communities.

Our priorities

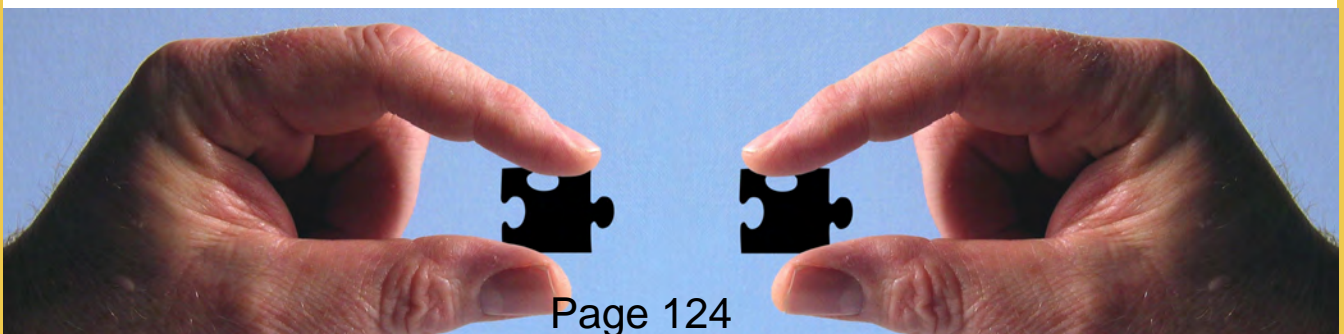
The AHWP has three priority areas of focus - and action plans for each priority is delivered by a sub group:

- Innovation - delivering tailor made interventions at the cutting edge
- Inequalities - reducing the biggest inequalities in health and wellbeing outcomes across communities
- Infrastructure - making sure buildings and work force are fit for purpose now, and in the future

What we do

Essentially, we work together to tackle some of the most pressing health and wellbeing issues in Ashford. Our work ranges from sharing intelligence and information, to working together to redesign services and systems, to developing new approaches and innovative interventions.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken by the AHWP in 2019/20, as detailed in this report.



some key facts

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN ASHFORD

15.5%

children live in low income families

54%

cancer diagnosed early

4.9

years difference in life expectancy between men in the most deprived wards and the least deprived wards

67.4%

adults in Ashford are overweight or obese

21.5%

adults in Ashford smoke

Smoking is the biggest cause of preventable ill health and premature mortality

14%

expectant mothers in Ashford smoke

By 2026, it is anticipated approximately 40% of Ashford residents will be aged 50 and over

17.3%

children aged 10-11 in Ashford are obese

Air pollution contributes to 50 deaths every year

76.3%

new mothers who start breastfeeding

27 residents committed suicide between 2016-18

Page 125

INNOVATION

Supporting innovation across the healthcare system is more important than ever, and is central to securing transformation and improved patient outcomes. Innovation is something new, or at least significantly different. Innovation can be in policy, process, products, delivery mechanisms, technologies etc,

The innovation sub group works to create the conditions for a collaborative approach and to ensure success is captured and scaled up.

In 2019/20, the innovation sub group focused on developing our One You shop service offer and to fulfil an ambition to bring care options closer to home.



THERE'S ONLY ONE YOU

The One You shop is our flagship response to improving health and wellbeing - it's a free to access service based in a converted shop in Ashford town centre, providing free health services, support and advice. The One You shop is the only health and wellbeing dedicated shop in the country.

The One You shop focuses on services for adults, with the aim of reducing smoking rates and obesity rates and decreasing health inequalities. We know the key to sustainable change is helping people to make their own healthier choices. The One You offers a wide range of interventions to support our residents, be it stop smoking, getting more active, losing weight, managing stress, drinking less or having better mental health.

The shop was a runner-up of the prestigious 'Health on the High Street' Award at the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) Awards 2018. The RSPH is an independent health education charity and the world's longest-established public health body. Its Health & Wellbeing Awards are the UK's premier awards scheme for this type of work.



Since launching in February 2017 the shop has gone from strength to strength. The fantastic success of the shop has meant that we have outgrown the premises more quickly than we ever expected to. In 2018/19 Ashford Borough Council agreed to invest a sum of money to enable the shop to move to a new, improved location.

The new shop opened in July 2019, and it can be found not far from the old shop in Park Mall, in Ashford town centre. It is now a much bigger facility, complete with upstairs space, in a much more prominent location. A number of additional services can now be accessed at the One You.

SPENDING EVERY PENNY AS IF IT WERE OUR OWN

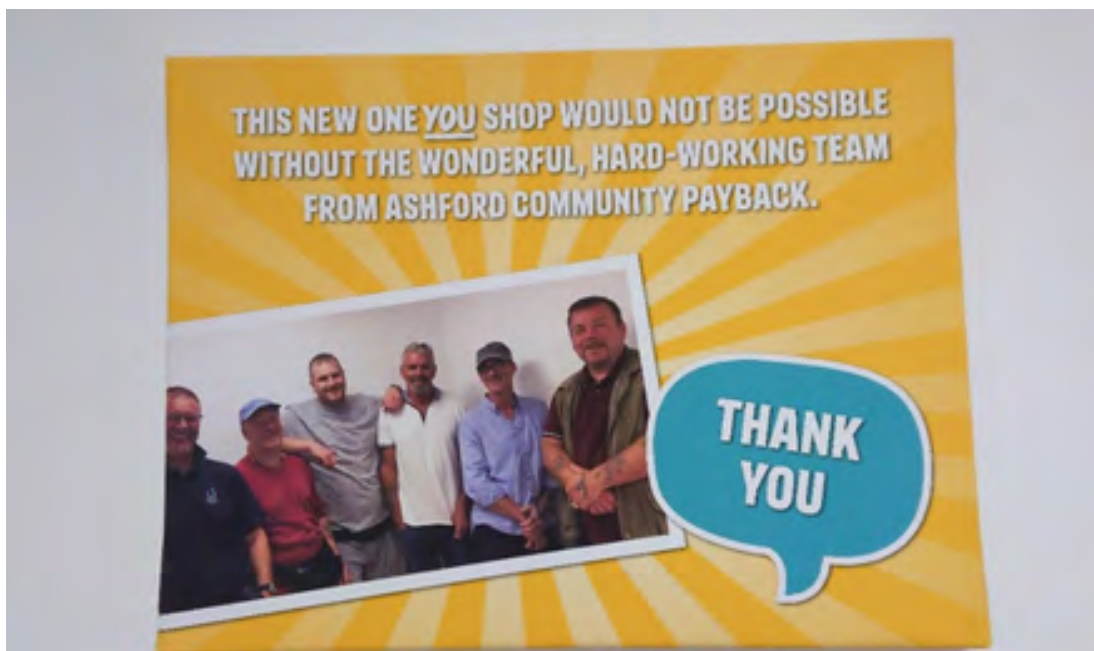
We aim to do everything as efficiently as we possibly can, and always explore innovative ways to reduce costs to the public purse. We know that the One You services support people to stop smoking, lose weight and take care of their mental and physical health - all of which provide for savings to the the health and care sector. But we also know its important to deliver our services as cost effectively as possible.

The relocation of the One You was a real partnership effort. We received support and donations from local companies including Benchmarx and Prices (who donated kitchens) B&Q, Tesco and Asda. Absolutely key to the delivery of the new One You was our excellent partnership working with Kent, Sussex and East Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company Community Payback.

Community Payback is a scheme where low risk offenders can be sentenced by courts to up to 300 hours of unpaid work that directly benefits local communities. A skilled supervisor oversees the work of service users on projects. Community Payback provides:

- Punishment - challenging and demanding work which acts as a visible punishment and deterrent
- Reparation - service users can pay back local communities that suffer as a result of crime
- Rehabilitation - the opportunity for service users to make a positive contribution to the local community and develop skills that will help them find work

The Community Payback team worked with us on many substantial jobs, including demolishing the shop's original fittings, creating new rooms, installing new flooring, and painting and decorating the shop.



IMPROVING THE FACILITY



The new shop offers some fantastic new facilities, enabling us to improve our service offer to the residents of Ashford. New facilities include:

- More consultation rooms, providing space for an increased footfall, as well as increasing the number and type of interventions on offer - ensuring a holistic approach to health and wellbeing
- A new kitchen space - ensuring practical learning, not just the theory of eating healthily
- A new exercise space - ensuring we provide practical support to those wanting to lead more active lifestyles
- A Changing Places bathroom - improving accessibility to the town centre in general and ensuring dignity for all when using the bathroom
- A large, flexible open space with public seating and toys - open for anyone to use, including parents who need a place to feed their babies
- A place to refill water bottles for free
- Meeting room facilities, for group work and for partnership use
- Increased space to act as a FareShare Kent food distribution point - providing access to cheap and healthy food

All of the facilities are available to hire - as a voluntary or community group, as a business or as a commissioned service. Contact donna.wilks@nhs.net for further information.



Feb 2017 - March 2020

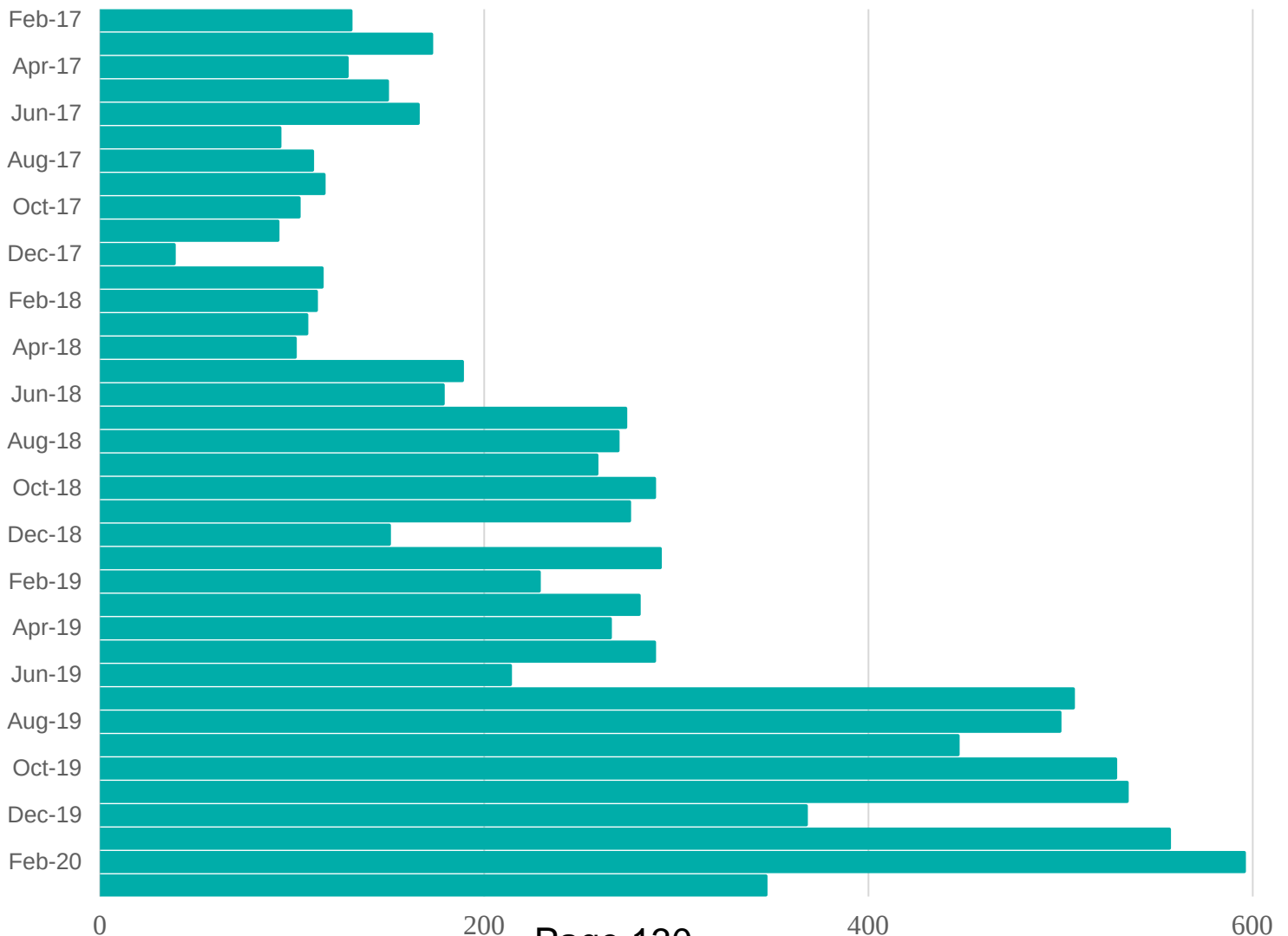
INCREASING USERS

The One You shop has seen significant successes since it's launch in February 2017. In 2017/18, there were 979 visitors to the shop. In 2018/19, there were 2,753 visitors to the One You shop. In 2019/20, there were 5,155 visitors - this includes periods of time when the shop was shut for the move and due to Covid-19.

The below chart shows the number of visits to the shop every month since it opened. It also shows the step change in number of visitors once we moved to the new location in July 2019.

9,590
visits to the One You

10,787
interventions delivered

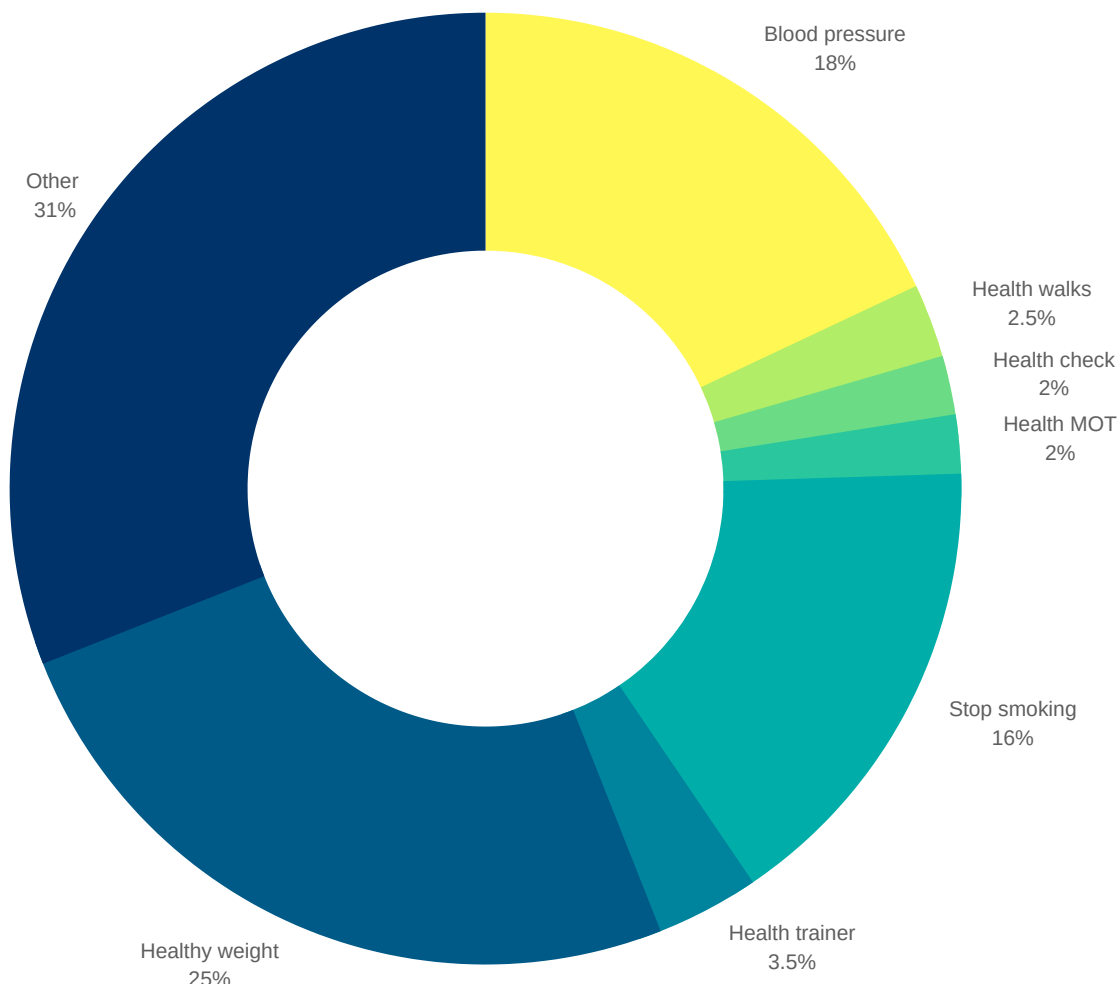


Right place, right time

SERVICES PEOPLE NEED

The One You offers a range of other services by working with partners. Services available at the One You include mental health, dementia friends, breastfeeding support, debt advice and food parcels. Since the relocation, the increase in available space has allowed us to increase the number of partners providing services at the One You.

This is reflected in the data - we have seen a big increase in 2019/20 of people accessing 'other' services. Healthy weight services continue to be the most popular interventions provided by the One You staff, followed by smoking cessation services. There has also been an increase in the percentage of people accessing the blood pressure service.



making impacts

FOR THOSE IN NEED

Our data and intelligence tells us there are places and people in more need of help to change than others. The One You always has an open door to all, but we also build pathways to reach out to those in most need.

Based on data from February 2017 - March 2020, 2,922 (30.5%) of all customers visiting the One You shop in this period live in the top most 6 deprived wards in Ashford (Stanhope, Aylesford Green, Norman, Victoria, Beaver and Bockhanger). This group have received a total of 3,413 interventions (31.6% of all interventions).

Unsurprisingly, residents of Victoria ward have made the most visits to the One You shop (1,164 people - 12% of all attendees), as well as received more interventions than other Ashford wards. Victoria has the highest obesity rates in Ashford and our data tells us more residents from this ward have shown interest in the Healthy Weight support (374) at the One You shop than residents from any other ward. Victoria ward also has the most number of people accessing stop smoking support. There have been 176 stop smoking interventions from Victoria Ward (10.4% of all stop smoking support).

Ward	Healthy weight	Stop smoking	Walks / physical activity	Blood pressure	Health trainer / lifestyle advisor	Health check/ MOT	Other	Total
Stanhope	57	60	12	41	11	2	93	276
Aylesford Grn	97	73	8	45	18	16	112	369
Norman	94	41	17	62	10	19	78	321
Victoria	374	176	43	242	34	49	427	1345
Beaver	166	131	11	147	13	28	134	468
Bockhanger	161	28	7	138	9	9	120	472
Total	949	509	98	675	95	123	964	3,413

The second table shows the five wards with the highest rates of attendance at the One You. Work will continue into 2019/20 to continue to increase the footfall of the shop from the most deprived areas in the borough, as well as ensuring excellent promotion and communication across the borough, ensuring anyone who needs help can access the One You.

Ward	Ashford wards rank of deprivation	Number attending	Number of interventions
Victoria	4 th	1,164	1,345
Stanhope	13 th	875	955
Godinton	24 th	665	777
Beaver Green	5 th	538	630
North Willlesborough	21 st	538	596
Total		3,780	4,303

it's not just numbers

REAL PEOPLE, REAL CHANGE

Sandra P. is 82 years old. She has always kept busy in retirement, attending dance exercise classes and volunteering in her local community centre.

Sandra started popping into the One You shop to purchase some of the FareShare produce on offer there. She did this to access healthy food and to get tips on different recipes to cook. She always enjoyed talking to all the 'jolly encouraging people in the shop.'



Whilst in the shop one day, she took advantage of the opportunity to have a free, quick health check. The check revealed she had dangerously high blood pressure and high cholesterol. After advice from the staff in the shop to do so, she went straight to her GP, who warned her she was at risk of having a stroke.

Sandra wasn't keen on medication as a solution to her issues, so went along to One You weight loss course. 'It was great to be challenged and learn from the trainer and the others on the course.'

She has started going along to the new pilates class at the One You shop. 'At my age, it can be very lonely. You really need to keep active mentally and physically. Find what you love, and keep doing it.'

Sandra P has lost weight and says her trousers feel looser now. Her blood pressure and cholesterol are now under control, and her risks of stroke have reduced.

ONE YOU

So what?

IMPACTS & OUTCOMES

As well as the stop smoking services in the One You, the AHWP has worked together to ensure a full range of stop smoking interventions are in place. These include:

- Smoking Plus pilot - GPs are offering nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), which are the most commonly used family of quit smoking medications. NRT reduces withdrawal feelings by giving a small controlled amount of nicotine, but none of the other dangerous chemicals found in cigarettes
- Specialised quit services, for example Kent County Council youth services offer a bespoke quit service for young people in Ashford
- Delivering a number of communication campaigns, including the smoking in pregnancy campaign 'What the bump?'
- Other interventions outlined in the inequalities section of this annual report

All of these partnership activities, plus the increase of stop smoking interventions delivered at the One You shop has yielded fantastic results. Based on responses from the Annual Population Survey (weighted, showing best estimates rather than actual numbers) comparing 2018 to 2019:

Year	Estimated number of adult smokers in Ashford	Percentage of adults smoking in Ashford	Percentage of adults smoking in Kent	Percentage of adults smoking in England
2018	21,409	21.5%	15%	14.4%
2019	10,027	10.1%	13.7%	13.9%

This shows a phenomenal reduction, with an estimated 11,382 adults in Ashford quitting smoking between 2018 - 2019! Ashford has also achieved a significantly larger percentage decrease compared to both Kent and England - from 21.5% of the adult population smoking to 10.1%, and less than the Kent (13.7%) and England (13.9%) percentage levels for the first time.

Based on 2018 data, smoking in Ashford cost society approximately £31.4 million. This includes costs for health and social care, business loss of productivity, fire services and litter services. Based on 2019 data, we have seen more than 50% of smokers stop, and we would expect to see a corresponding reduction in costs to society in 2019.

We hope to continue this trend into the future - intelligence for 2020 suggests record numbers of people stopping smoking in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.



INEQUALITIES

Health inequalities are ultimately about differences in the status of people's health. The term is also commonly used to refer to differences in the care that people receive and the opportunities that they have to lead healthy lives, both of which can contribute to their health status.

Health inequalities can involve differences in:

- Health status - for example life expectancy and prevalence of health conditions, including mental health
- Access to and quality and experience of care -for example levels of patient satisfaction
- Behavioural risks to health such as smoking rates, obesity
- Wider determinants of health, including quality of housing

Differences in health status and the things that determine it can be experienced by people grouped by a range of factors. In England, health inequalities are often considered against four main themes:

- Socio-economic factors such as income
- Geography, for example region or whether urban or rural
- Specific characteristics including those protected in law e.g. sex, ethnicity or disability
- Socially excluded groups, such as people experiencing homelessness

In 2017, the European Parliament estimated that losses linked to health inequalities cost around 1.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) within the European Union. This rises from losses in productivity and taxes, and from higher welfare payments and health care costs. Reducing health inequalities benefits everyone.

As our key health and wellbeing facts show, there are health inequalities impacting upon the residents of Ashford. It is the work of the inequalities sub group to develop and implement interventions and projects to reduce health inequalities.



SMOKING CESSATION

The Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership has developed a number of interventions to support people to stop smoking, including smoke free school gates and smoke free zones (including the council's civic centre).

Illegal tobacco

A recent survey of Kent residents told us that 1 in 7 smokers buy illegal tobacco and that 70% of smokers were comfortable buying their tobacco in town centre shops in the knowledge that it was illegal. Illegal tobacco can take many different forms, such as illicit (illegally imported and without the appropriate health warnings), counterfeit tobacco (illegally made) and genuine tobacco (smuggled into the county without duty being paid).

There are a number of dangers associated with the sale of illegal tobacco. These include bringing organised crime into the area, and undermining efforts to protect young people from the dangers of smoking. In addition, illicit tobacco can often contain poor-quality tobacco, plastic and human or rat faeces which amplify the existing risks of smoking.

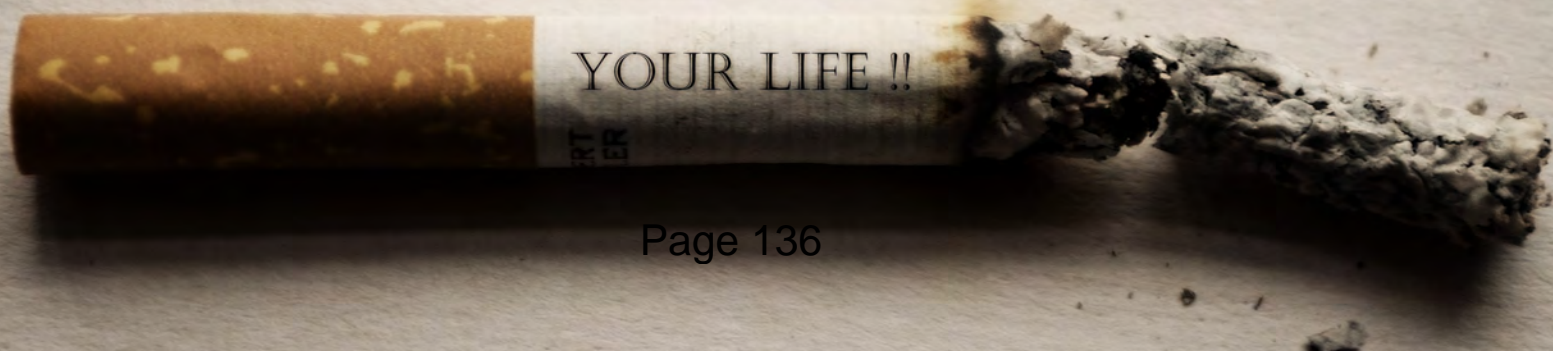
In 2019/20, the AHWP worked with other East Kent districts and Kent County Council's Trading Standards team to deliver 15 public roadshows to raise awareness about illicit tobacco and the harm it can cause individuals and communities, as well as undertake targeted enforcement activity. Three roadshows were held in Ashford between September - November 2019.



The roadshows were attended by KCC trading standards, police and fire services, One You advisors, KCC community wardens and Ashford community safety staff. Trained sniffer dogs and their handlers provided demonstrations on how they search for illicit tobacco.

Across the 15 roadshows, 81 direct intelligence reports were received. 179,240 cigarettes (or 8,962 packets of 20 cigarettes) and 71.1kg of hand rolling tobacco were removed from premises.

Anyone with information on illegal tobacco can report it anonymously through stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk or by calling 0300 999 6999.



A SMOKE FREE GENERATION

Smoking rates have remained stubbornly higher amongst those in our society who already suffer from poorer health and other disadvantages. Smoking rates are almost three times higher amongst the lowest earners, compared to the highest earners. Smoking accounts for approximately half the difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest in society.

We have undertaken activity that seeks to prevent children from starting smoking - including targeting schools attended by children who are most at risk of starting smoking.

Meet the stinkers

Working with Kent County Council and other east Kent districts, a theatre group was commissioned to target key schools and educate pupils on the dangers of smoking. Three schools in Ashford were involved, and the teachers have shared that the production was very popular, enjoyable and informative. Pre and post performance questionnaires were completed, and we are awaiting detailed findings.



Safety in Action

In June 2019, Ashford's Community Safety Partnership ran their annual Safety in Action week. 36 out of the 39 primary schools across the borough took part in the latest Safety in Action. The event aims to empower children with knowledge of, and skills to respond to, some of the hidden dangers and pressures they may encounter when they join secondary school.

Workshops included:

- Dangers of drugs and alcohol
- The importance of school attendance
- Internet safety
- Personal choices and good mental health
- First aid



High quality housing

DAENMORE

The connection between high quality, fit for purpose housing and good health outcomes are well known, and the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Partnership works locally and regionally to support the housing and health agenda.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal officially opened Ashford Borough Council's (ABC) new £7.5m Danemore sheltered housing scheme in Tenterden on Wednesday 12 February.

Danemore is designed to be dementia-friendly throughout, taking into account colour schemes, light, corridor lengths, patterns and memory shelves. It has been devised in recognition of the need to make special provision for an ageing population

The council has a strong track record of taking an innovative approach to delivering quality accommodation that meets the needs of residents. Our approach to the health and housing agenda is leading the way and is giving people the chance to live independently, providing a range of cost, social and health benefits.

Danemore residents enjoy a range of high quality facilities. There is a large cosy communal lounge and kitchen, laundry room, guest suite, buggy store and cycle racks. A treatment room provides hair dressing, nail bar and podiatrist and chiropodist massage chair plus foot spa.

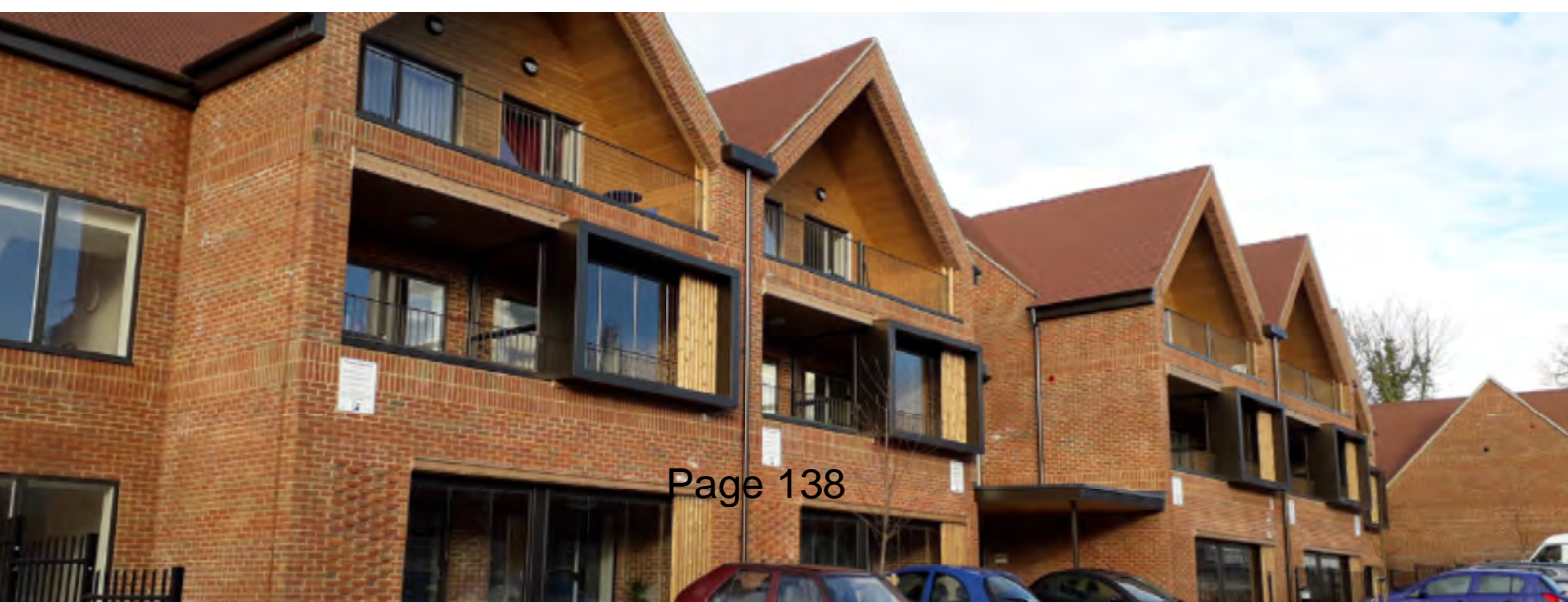


A real community spirit is fostered by the inclusion of shared facilities, including 'hub' lounges in addition to a main communal lounge. The scheme has been designed to maximise natural daylight in each home and through the many shared spaces.

Just as much care has gone into designing exterior spaces. The traditionally built carbon friendly flats incorporate a large area of green roofing, with each flat benefiting from a winter garden balcony. There are architect landscaped designed garden spaces with potting shed and raised beds for residents to use.

Security and connectivity are high priorities - the scheme has CCTV, a video door entry system, a sprinkler system fitted in every apartment, the ABC controlled Lifeline system installed and free WiFi in the lounge.

A manager is available to ensure the smooth running of the scheme, while ABC's own handyman service is able to help with maintenance work.



WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Working as lead partners, the Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Ashford Borough Council established the Health and Wellbeing Reference Group (AHWRG) in 2019, with the first meeting held in July.

The AHWP is facing many challenges in the delivery of health and wellbeing services in Ashford and is working hard to deliver better healthcare. The AHWRG ensures residents, communities and voluntary groups are able to help shape future services and work with us to improve health and wellbeing for everyone in Ashford.

During 2019/20 there were four AHWRG events. Topics discussed have included:

- The development of primary care networks in the Ashford area
- Safe discharge of frail, vulnerable and elderly patients into the community
- Vision and priorities for the AHWP
- The new One You facility

The AHWRG will continue in 2020/21, with plans afoot for a roadshow event.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Estate fit for the future

We know that the high quality facilities, in the right places for the people who need them are crucial to achieving good health and wellbeing for all. The physical infrastructure sub group seeks to consider the partnership estate, and the direction of travel required to achieve local, regional and national policies and plans and the increasing demand for services based on a locally expanding population.

The sub group has been working on a partnership wide options appraisal to inform decision making. The current condition, location and utilisation of estate across the wider health and well being partnership varies considerably in Ashford. Effective estates planning across the partnership is a critical requirement in delivering integrated care and system financial sustainability. The location and design of current and future facilities will also contribute to addressing the health inequalities of Ashford residents, as well as financial, quality and workforce challenges.

The South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) includes the Chilmington, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green developments. SAGC received Garden Village Status from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in summer 2019, meaning it has support and investment from central government and is a focus for accelerated housing delivery. SAGC is being built on garden city principles which include the integration of many agendas which collectively create sustainable, healthy communities, through both facilities and programmes which help future residents to lead healthy, active lives in a vibrant and green community. Health provision within the garden community is integral to this.

Due mainly to these housing developments, Ashford's population is expected to grow by 49.81% by 2030 – the highest projected increase in Kent. Ashford also has increasing complexity of needs and a growing ageing population.

There are also a number of other challenges, for example ongoing consultation of hospital provision in East Kent, increasing local care approaches and improving efficiency – such as shared services and digital transformation. All of these will impact upon our future estate needs, likewise buildings will be essential enablers in the delivery of our strategies and plans – local, regional and national.

The outcomes of the options appraisal will inform our estate decision making now and into the future.

OUR WORKFORCE

The workforce crisis has been described as the worst problem currently facing the NHS, and the Care Quality Commission's State of Care report for 2018/19 said it is having a direct impact on care.

Nationally, around 1.2 million full-time equivalent (FTE) staff work in the NHS, and 1.1 million work in adult social care. Around 78% of social care jobs are in the independent sector. Providers across NHS England are reporting a shortage of over 100,000 FTE staff. Adult social care is facing even starker recruitment and retention challenges, with an estimated 122,000 FTE vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of around 8% for both the NHS and adult social care, compared with a vacancy rate of under 3% for jobs across the UK economy.

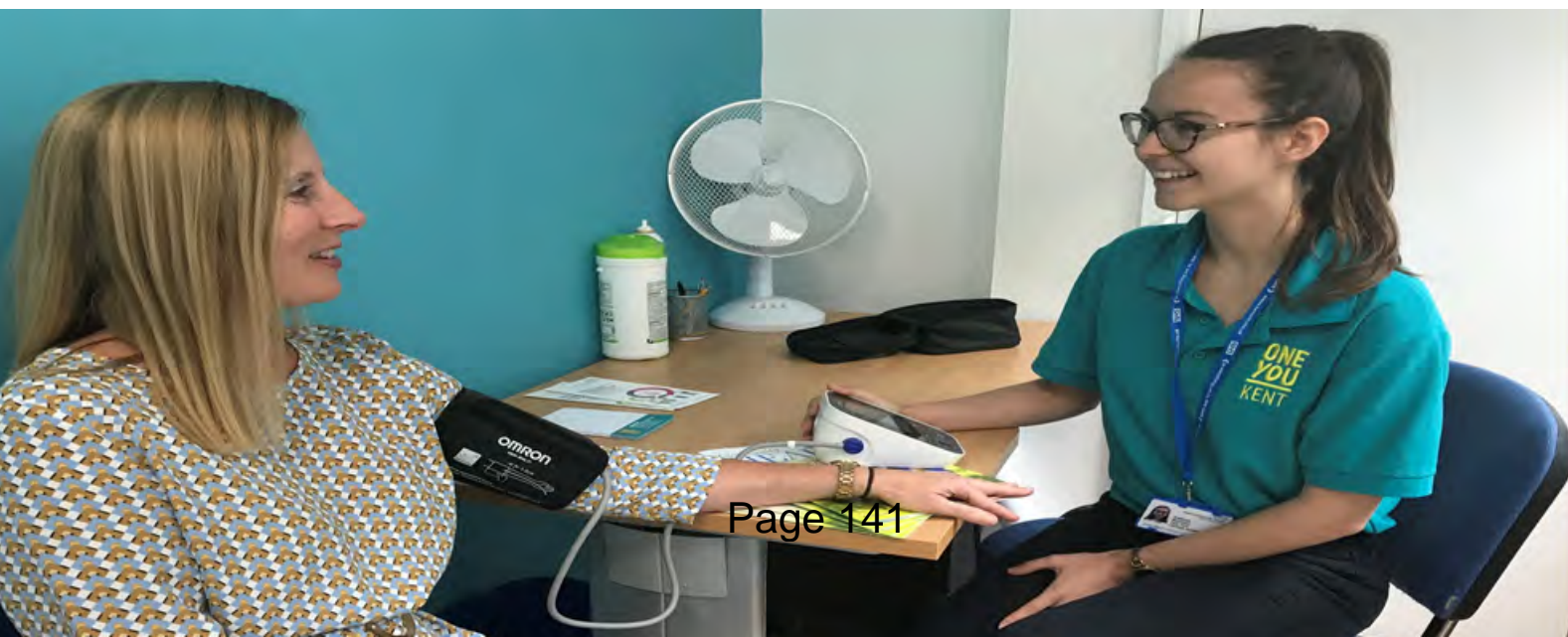
Analysis by the King's Fund suggests the NHS workforce gap could reach almost 250,000 by 2030. Nursing is facing one of the greatest problems with one in eight posts vacant. The Interim NHS People Plan identified nursing shortages as "the single biggest and most urgent we need to address." This is partly due to the integral role of nurses in delivering the NHS Long Term Plan, but also due to the number of vacancies. There are significant shortages in learning disability, primary and community nursing, whilst the mental health nursing workforce dropped by 11% between 2009 and 2019.

In adult social care, around one in 10 social worker and one in 11 care worker roles are reportedly unfilled. The demand for social care workers is expected to rise in line with the UK's ageing population. Skills for Care have estimated a need for 650,000 to 950,000 new adult social care jobs by 2035.

The infrastructure sub group is developing plans to address these issues in Ashford, by making best use of partnership tools. We will not achieve our aims if we do not attract and keep a vibrant health and social care workforce.

If staffing were in line with the national average, there would be 175 more GPs in Kent and Medway. Over half our practice nurses are aged over 50 and could retire within 10 years.

There is a shortage of skilled staff, especially senior hospital doctors, to cover rotas 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



THE FUTURE



Implementing the NHS long term plan

SYSTEMS WORKING

As part of our work to develop our new approach, we have recognised the vital importance of closer sub regional and regional working. We have led the way in setting a new sub regional direction of travel, working closely with partners across east Kent - establishing the East Kent Wellbeing and Health Partnership (EKWHP).

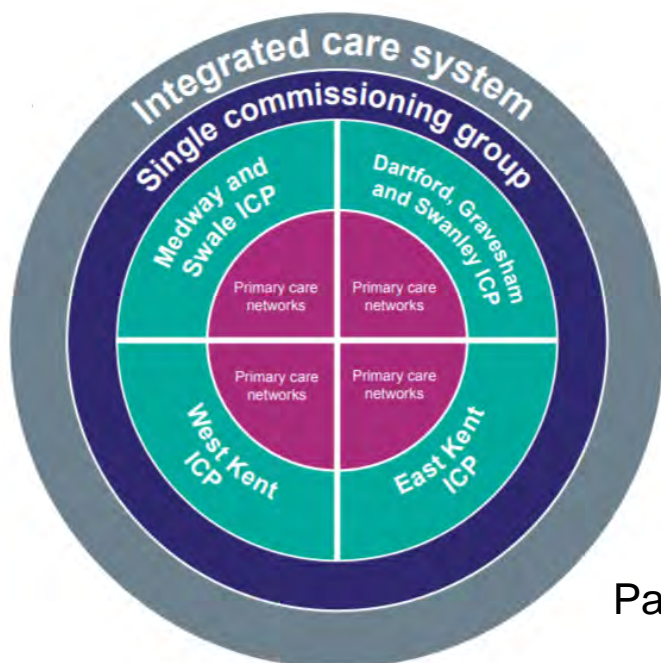
There have been many structural changes for partners during 2019/20, and more planned for 2020/21. All changes aim to create better and more joined-up services. These changes include:

- From July 2019 GP surgeries came together in the creation of primary care networks (PCNs), with two PCNs established in Ashford - Ashford Stour and Ashford Rural.
- A single clinical commissioning group for Kent and Medway was launched in April 2020. It's led by local doctors to take a bird's eye view of health priorities for local people and explore where we can tackle shared challenges together such as cancer and mental health.
- Four integrated care partnerships (ICPs) were created, drawing together all the NHS organisations in a given area such as hospitals, general practice, community, mental health and social care. While each organisation will hold a budget, they will agree together how funding is spent locally.
- An integrated care system - all organisations in health and social care work together in different, more joined-up ways - with the aim for this to be in place by April 2021.

The East Kent ICP is being developed and we are working out what they will look like and how they will work to deliver priorities. ICPs are expected to:

- Free up staff to work in teams based on skills and patient needs, regardless of who they work for
- Help local people to support their health and wellbeing, focusing on the areas with greatest need
- Reduce unacceptable differences in health and life expectancy by tailoring help to different communities in the way they need support (such as people with severe and enduring mental illness)
- Design and deliver the best services to meet the needs of everyone they serve, within the funding available, achieving the best value for money.
- Work across council services - it's not just about the obvious services - social care, public health - but also the importance of education, planning, housing, environmental health, leisure and more.

Key for the AHWP in 2020/21 will be amending our local and sub regional (EKWHIP) governance structures to work effectively alongside these new bodies, as well as ensuring we add value to the new arrangements and retain our focus to our own, local priority areas.



a changing world

COVID-19

We find ourselves in an unprecedented position, with the future uncertain. There will be consequences to the Covid-19 pandemic that will influence our lives and our health and wellbeing now and in years to come. In May 2020 government issued its Covid-19 recovery strategy - Our Plan to Rebuild.

This plan details the approach we will take to recover from Covid-19 impacts and also be best prepared for any future resurgence or Covid-19 related issues. There are 14 key elements to the plan:

- NHS and care capacity and operating model
- Protecting care homes
- Smarter shielding of most vulnerable
- More effective risk based targeting of protection measures
- Accurate disease monitoring and reactive measures
- Testing and tracing
- Increased scientific understanding
- 'Covid19 Secure' guidelines
- Better distancing measures
- Economic and social support to maintain livelihoods and restore the economy
- Treatments and vaccines
- International action and awareness
- Public communications, understanding and enforcement
- Sustainable government structures

The AHWP will ensure we work as a partnership and as independent agencies to work to support the 14 key elements of the plan. We will also ensure we engage with the Kent Resilience Forum structures, particularly in relation to the local outbreak plans.

The AHWP will in 2020/21 ensure we understand the impacts of Covid-19, and the work of the inequalities sub-group in particular will be informed by these findings. This will include:

- Vulnerable community settings e.g. care homes
- Vulnerable community groups e.g. those with underlying health conditions, obesity, black and minority ethnic groups (BAME)

The Government has announced it will invest in preventative and personalised solutions to ill-health, empowering individuals to live healthier and more active lives. This will involve expanding the infrastructure for active travel (cycling and walking) and expanding health screening services, especially through the NHS Health Check programme. We will ensure we are in a position to apply any investment in Ashford to ensure maximum outcomes and impacts.



Ashford
Borough Council



Kent and Medway
Clinical Commissioning Group



Kent Community Health
NHS Foundation Trust



East Kent
Hospitals University
NHS Foundation Trust

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Agenda Item No: 11
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30th July 2020
Report Title: Adoption of the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
Report Author & Job Title: Daniel Carter, Team Leader Spatial Planning Team
Portfolio Holder Cllr. Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Planning & Development

Summary:

The report introduces a proposal to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) entitled 'Fibre to the Premises' to provide advice and guidance for applications relevant to adopted Local Plan Policy EMP6 (*Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)*) for the purposes of decision-making on planning applications.

The draft document was presented to the May 2020 Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group which agreed to the recommendation to Cabinet and Full Council adoption.

This report summarises the comments received following the Council's consultation on the draft Fibre to the Premises SPD and details the recommended response

The report seeks the Cabinet's approval to adopt the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Borough wide

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

- I. Notes the responses to the representations received and changes made to the SPD contained within Appendix 1 to this report and approve the final version of the SPD contained within Appendix 2 to this report;**
- II. Recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document.**

Policy Overview: Local Plan policy EMP6 is important in the consideration of applications for new residential and employment development in the borough. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) contained within this report clarify the details required as part of the EMP6 policy. The SPD will, when adopted, be used as a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Financial Implications:	There are no financial implications. Once adopted, the contents of the SPD will have more weight in planning terms.
Legal Implications:	None, other than the standard process for adopting SPD.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See Attached
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	None
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	None.
Sustainability Implications:	The promotion of Fibre to the Premises in new-build developments will help to futureproof the availability of superfast broadband across the borough and delivery of sustainable infrastructure to help promoting working from home.
Other Material Implications:	None.
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Appendix 1: Responses to consultation Appendix 2: Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) SPD
Contact:	daniel.carter@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330238

Report Title: Adoption of the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Introduction and Background

1. The Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2019) includes Policy EMP6 'Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)'. The primary purpose of Policy EMP6 is to require qualifying residential and employment development to deliver FTTP.
2. A supplementary planning document (SPD) was drafted to provide further details on the requirements of Policy EMP6. This SPD provides further guidance to applicants on the specific, but does not seek to alter or introduce new policy requirements.
3. To be clear, the SPD also does not endorse broadband provider companies and or influence the providers that the residents may choose to use. This is beyond the scope of the planning system.

Proposal

4. This Cabinet report outlines the responses made during the formal public consultation on the draft Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) SPD; it sets out the Council's response to these representations and details the changes that have been made to the draft SPD.
5. This report recommends to Cabinet that the SPD in this report is recommended to Full Council for adoption.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6. An equalities impact assessment is appended to the report. No significant issues require attention.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

7. The draft SPD went out for public consultation over an 8 week period between 6th March and 1st May 2020. A total of 7 representations were received.
8. Appendix 1 to this report summarises the representations received and the response to the issues raised, including any proposed minor amendments.
9. The responses to the draft SPD and the minor changes were considered and agreed by the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group on the 27th May 2020.

COVID-19

10. Members should note that COVID-19 became a prominent issue during the consultation period. However, the consultation had been held for 3 weeks before the lockdown restrictions started.
11. The low response rate (7 representations) of the consultation undoubtedly reflects this issue and many potential responders may have been dealing with other issues during this period.
12. However, it is worth noting that this is to a degree countered by the 8 week consultation period, which is 4 weeks longer than the period required through the Regulations.
13. The focus from Government to keep progressing despite the current climate, and the benefits that the document will deliver, suggests that the Council can continue with the progress of the SPD. The likely outcome from this SPD is that there will be an expansion of the Borough's fibre network, leading to more secure and reliable broadband. The COVID-19 outbreak shows how important this will be in the future.

Other Options Considered

14. Other options for providing this guidance include relying on the broad guidance outlined in the NPPF, or to not produce an SPD to support the policy. Whilst these approaches will continue to deliver FTTP, the draft SPD will provide advice and guidance for developers to implement suitable FTTP in schemes.
15. The Government is currently also in the process of developing policy regarding Fibre provision in new development. The production of the SPD was to dovetail with the national consultation to improve broadband across the country. Delays in the Government's consultations has resulted in the SPD being produced prior to government policies on FTTP.
16. Whilst other options have been considered, the SPD is recommended to enable the Council to provide details on the Policy EMP6 to aid delivery of FTTP to qualifying development schemes in the borough.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

17. This SPD document will provide additional details on the adopted Policy EMP6 (*Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)*). This will help to increase compliance of planning applications with the policy and increase the delivery of FTTP within the borough.
18. The adoption of the draft SPD will enable the full weight of the guidance contained to be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Next Steps in Process

19. If the Cabinet approves the SPD, the next step will be the formal adoption of the 'Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)' SPD at Full Council on 15th October.
20. As Ashford are the first Council to be producing an SPD of this nature, the SPD itself recognises the potential need for regular review, to reflect changes in government advice and legislation. Therefore any significant changes in the marketplace or government advice can be reflected in updates to the SPD.

Conclusion

21. The approval of the draft SPD with the amendments proposed, will provide applicants with useful advice to assist them in submitting successful applications. It will also provide decision makers with guidance on how to evaluate proposals for FTTP qualifying development and will help to futureproof the availability of superfast broadband across the borough.
22. The approval of the changes to the SPD will improve the clarity of the document and ensure that it is utilised to its best effect, with the agreement of key actors, once adopted.

Portfolio Holder's Views (Cllr. Shorter)

23. Awaiting comments.

Contact and Email

24. daniel.carter@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330238

Appendix 1: Responses to SPD representations

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
Cllr Knowles	FTTP is needed to future proof developments within the borough for all new manners of future technology. The current COVID19 crisis has highlighted the requirement for video conferencing for medical use and for staying in contact with friends and family.	We support the comments.	None.
G Coleman	Irrespective of government guidelines, in light of current and future technology advances, if Ashford is to remain a destination of choice for both business & residential the council should ideally aim for 100MB connectivity along with insisting that 5G technology be rolled out with existing & new developments in both zone A & zone B (which should really be amalgamated into one zone). There is no reason that this should not be achievable or add any additional cost to implementation, if you insist on it. With regard to zone C, this should aim for a minimum of 60Mb, where not possible then emphasis should be on 5G connectivity as a minimum.	We have noted the comments, however the scope of the SPD is limited to Policy EMP6 and the details within the policy. An SPD does not propose alterations to the adopted policy, and therefore the SPD does not address other elements or technologies, such as 5G. We accept that technologies continually advance and that there may be a need to adapt at a future point. Speed considerations and 5G will form part of a wider strategy for the Council's future consideration, but the focus of the SPD will be limited to FTTP.	None.
Highways England	Dear Sirs Thank you for consulting Highways England on 9 March regarding the above, seeking a response no later than 1 May 2020. Highways England has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such Highways England works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and	We note the comments made by Highways England and propose minor changes to the document. This will include an element in the Highways section of the SPD to explain the information raised in this representation, see change 3.	Change 3: Insert new paragraph (paragraph 60). <u>Highways England is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the M20 and</u>

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>integrity. Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the M20 and A2070 in the vicinity of Ashford Borough.</p> <p>We note the contents of the draft SPD.</p> <p>For the sake of clarity and avoidance of doubt, we would suggest including text in the final document regarding any works that could affect the SRN.</p> <p>Any activity on the SRN falls in the realms of New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) and Traffic Management Act (TMA) and any works promotor will need to abide by these. In particular there are restrictions with regards motorways and other special roads. Even works on adjacent land may be restricted; for example, in order to avoid any distraction or danger for travellers by virtue of the installation, use or maintenance of fibre related equipment. Therefore, works promoters are advised to contact Highways England at the earliest opportunity to ensure that any proposed works that could affect the SRN are acceptable and deliverable both in principle and in practice.</p> <p>We hope that these comments assist and look forward to receiving a final version of the SPD.</p>		<p><u>A2070 in the vicinity of Ashford Borough. Any activity on the SRN falls in the realms of New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) and Traffic Management Act (TMA) and any works promotor will need to abide by these. In particular there are restrictions with regards motorways and other special roads. Even works on adjacent land may be restricted. For more information please visit the Highways England website or contact Highways England (tel: 0300 123 5000, email: info@highwaysengland.co.uk)</u></p>
Cllr Burgess	<p>Please could the responsibility of the maintenance of the network be added to the SPD.</p> <p>Also compatibility of systems between different suppliers to ensure usefulness by users and equipment suppliers.</p>	<p>We note the comments, however these matters cannot be addressed in the limited scope of the SPD. The responsibility of the maintenance and compatibility of the fibre network is not addressed within policy EMP6 and therefore not within the scope of the SPD.</p>	None.
Smeeth Parish Council	<p>Good morning</p> <p>Smeeth Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this document and is supportive of the</p>	We note the comments.	None.

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	initiative to secure advanced and high quality communication infrastructure in new build developments.		
BUUK	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document. Due to the text box limitation on the portal questionnaire form, I have provided the text below via email as recommended by the Council's website. Whilst being supportive of the aspirations there are a number of points that we would bring to your attention and hence the reason for identifying an objection.</p> <p>General statement BUUK has been building Open Access FTTP fibre networks supporting Gigabit services at new build sites via its Group companies, GTC, Metropolitan and Power On Connections for more than 10 years, this includes many sites in the Ashford Area. BUUK agrees with Ashford's aspirations for ensuring all new developments are connected to a full fibre infrastructure for broadband and telecoms services. In line with recent DCMS publications these services should, wherever practically possible, provide gigabit services to the new properties from day one of occupation.</p> <p>Statement 24 There are a significant number of active telecoms infrastructure providers operating throughout the UK, including the South East of England. It appears inappropriate for the Council, which is subject to public procurement rules, to be signposting potential new build developers to specific service providers. We would suggest that you either refer to all potential suppliers of fibre infrastructure to new homes or do not mention any at all. It is for the individual developers to assess the market and make their choices based on a range of</p>	<p>We note the comments made and welcome BUUK's support of the overall aims of the SPD. Our comments are as follows:</p> <p>Statement 24 We note BUUK's position and will include their contacts on the provider list, see change 5. This list currently contains providers that are already active within the borough and will be able to provide engagement with the developers. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list and does not exclude other providers from engaging and working in the area. We propose to include a paragraph to state that the Council does not endorse the companies mentioned in the table and that developers should assess the market before choosing a developer, see change 6. We are also proposing to set up a 'live' list of suppliers on our website to ensure that all providers which wish to be made visible can be contacted. We propose to also remove paragraph 24 which references Openreach and other named providers, see change 1.</p> <p>Statement 52d The aim of the SPD is to encourage earlier engagement between developers and providers for FTTP in the planning of new-</p>	<p>Change 5: Section 7 Table: Insert new row on table Provider – BUUK</p> <p>Table Contents:</p> <p>BUUK Ltd https://www.buuk.co.uk/contact-us 0135 924 0363</p> <p>Change 6: Insert new paragraph 65.</p> <p><u>Ashford Borough Council does not endorse the companies mentioned above and would suggest developers assess the whole market and make their own decision. Other companies are available however the list above are companies that are in contact with the council or are operating in or near the Ashford borough. If a provider wishes to be added to this list we will be maintaining an up to date list of registered providers on the council's</u></p>

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>commercial and service-based criteria.</p> <p>Statement 52 - Item (d) often the FTTP provider is not contracted until on or around the time planning approval has been granted. This is because developers do not want to make a contractual commitment to infrastructure providers before they have certainty that the scheme is going to progress.</p> <p>Therefore, at this stage, it is not necessary to provide a detailed layout and network design.</p> <p>Whilst general non site specific FTTP network architecture can be provided, the detailed site designs are unlikely to have been completed at this point. This in no way diminishes the assurance that the chosen provider will be installing gigabit capable fibre only infrastructure and in time to facilitate live connectivity at the point the new owner moves into their property. The developer will work closely with its chosen provider to ensure infrastructure is installed to create minimal aesthetic impact and to ensure the most efficient installation. An alternative approach could be for the developer to provide pre-defined planning assurances that aligns with the objectives of the finalised SPD, therefore committing the developer to meeting key planning FTTH attributes such as gigabit capability and the deployment of an open access network that will enable customer choice. This simple approach would also provide the council with the assurance that its SPD strategy would be followed for all new developments.</p> <p>Statement 57 Similar to above – the level of detail specific to the site may not have been designed at the preplanning stage of the process. Generic elements of the design can be provided ie – sites of a certain size may require a single</p>	<p>build developments. We note BUUK's concern of the current situation, however the ambition of the SPD is to ensure that developers engage with providers at earlier stages to ensure FTTP is delivered. We have made provision for different levels of information required at outline or full application stages to reflect the flexible nature of planning developments. Statement 53 explains that a detailed layout may not be needed at outline stage and Statement 54 explains that the level of detail required at each stage would be similar to other utilities. No changes are proposed in response to this comment.</p> <p>Statement 57 Please see the comments above. Furthermore, it should be noted that as part of the planning process, if providers and developers consider the submitted information commercially sensitive, they are entitled to request the information is redacted from the public. The council will consider these requests and will seek its own legal advice on a case by case basis. This point is set out in Statement 56 which explains that confidentiality is respected, however evidence of early engagement and discussion is what the council will require at a minimum. No changes are proposed in response to this comment.</p> <p>Statement 62 The Streetworks Toolkit cover page has</p>	<p><u>website here.</u></p> <p>Change 1: Deletion of paragraph 24.</p> <p>Openreach is a prominent provider of FTTP for new build premises, connecting 70% of developments. Openreach provides free FTTP to developments of more than 20 premises. For new build developments under 20 premises, Openreach has published a rate card to provide transparency over the costs per premises. Operators such as Virgin Media and Hyperoptic also provide FTTP connectivity to a significant number of new build developments, and there are many other alternative operators who offer FTTP connectivity solutions for new build developments.</p> <p>Change 4 Figure 8: Insert new text</p> <p><u>The Government's Streetworks Tool kit front cover</u></p>

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>cabinet located within the site boundary. Alternatively, for larger sites equipment may be accommodated in other shared infrastructure that is being installed on the site to facilitate other utility infrastructure e.g. electrical sub station building.</p> <p>Whilst general network routing and standard fittings attached to buildings can be provided at an early stage on a generic basis – detailed designs will not have been completed. Type of duct and chamber networks being deployed underground are not relevant to the overall provision of gigabit capable FTTP networks. On the basis this network is being installed to meet the overarching FTTP and gigabit capable pre-requisite – we would be keen to understand the basis for Ashford Council requiring detailed plans of the infrastructure architecture at the pre-planning stage and what would the criteria be for accepting or rejecting a planning application based on the details outlined in statement 57.</p> <p>Statement 62 Same comment as Statement 24.</p>	<p>been included for guidance. We will make sure the image is outlined and referenced to avoid doubt, see change 4.</p>	
<p>Kent County Council</p>	<p>Thank you for consulting Kent County Council (KCC) on the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>The County Council supports the ongoing commitment from Ashford Borough Council to ensure that new dwellings and employment units are delivered with fibre-to-the-premise (FTTP) broadband.</p> <p>The work that Ashford Borough Council has undertaken has been invaluable in demonstrating to Government the regulatory gaps that have enabled new homes to be completed without adequate broadband (i.e. connectivity that does not meet either current or future needs).</p>	<p>We note the comments.</p> <p>Regarding the Government Support comments – we will propose minor changes to the SPD. We will include a disclaimer in the SPD text to set out the funding mentioned, which had been included to show the commitment from Government, is not targeted at new-build developments. See change 2.</p> <p>Regarding the comments about the alignment of Policy EMP6/ SPD and the Government process – this has been noted and we will review the content of the</p>	<p>Change 2: Insert new sentence at end of paragraph 26.</p> <p>It should be noted that these funds are not available for new-build developments but do evidence the Government's commitment to FTTP roll-out.</p>

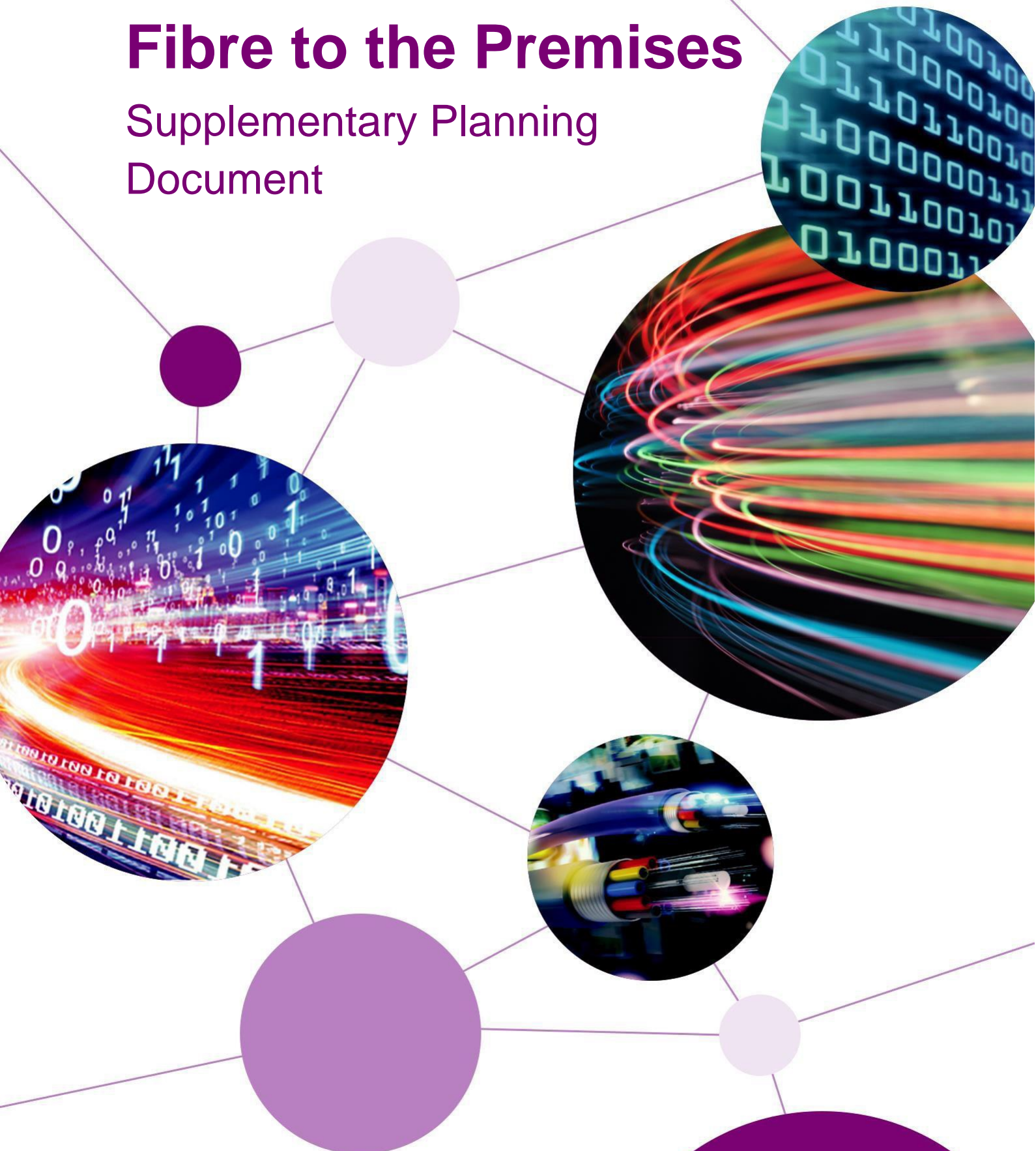
Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>The County Council notes the reference made in the SPD to the recent Government announcement on its intention to legislate to ensure that all new build homes are installed with gigabit broadband from the outset¹. The Government's response to the "New Build developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections" consultation (March 2020) outlines the final policy proposal, which includes the intention to amend Building Regulations 2010 to mandate FTTP-ready infrastructure in new-build premises². The Government has secured commitments from network operators to work with housing developers to provide gigabit-capable connectivity to all new build developments across the UK, including both developers and operators contributing to the costs of connection.</p> <p>The County Council supports the emphasis placed within the SPD on the need for good communication and engagement with FTTP providers, which is particularly important in the early stages of the planning process. KCC agrees with the proposed approach for broadband exclusivity clauses or agreements to be discouraged, as this restricts choice for new homeowners and tenants.</p> <p>In respect of the SPD section on Government Support, paragraph 26 sets out the financial support available from Government. The County Council would like to clarify that the financial support provided by the Government is not targeted towards new homes.</p> <p>The County Council recommends that there is a need to consider how the Government's new cost thresholds for gigabit capable connection for new builds will accord with the thresholds set out under Policy EMP6, which are based on scheme size and geographical location. There will also be a need to ensure that the FTTP</p>	<p>SPD when the changes to the Government process have been implemented. No changes to the SPD are proposed.</p> <p>Regarding the Heritage Statement comments – we note KCC's concern. However, it is noted that as part of the planning process, where a heritage asset is identified, a heritage statement or study will be produced and this will note any impact of FTTP, similar to other utilities. No changes to the SPD are proposed.</p>	

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>statement process is aligned with the connectivity plan process, as proposed by the Government. This includes where reasons are stated for exemption and specification requirements for alternatives where FTTP is deemed not viable.</p> <p>In respect of heritage conservation considerations, the installation of fibre connectivity has the potential to impact significantly on the historic environment in the following ways for both new and existing properties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The installation of the necessary cable trenches can impact on archaeological remains. This is well understood; and utility companies usually consult KCC's Heritage Conservation team on the possible impacts of their proposals, amending them when necessary or providing for recording of archaeological remains where the proposals cannot be amended; • The insertion of cables into buildings can impact their historic fabric. This can affect both Listed and non-Listed buildings; and • The infrastructure for providing fibre connectivity can impact on the setting of heritage assets, whether Listed Buildings, archaeological monuments or Conservation Areas. <p>To minimise such impacts, it is essential that applicants take account of any heritage assets when developing their proposals. This assessment should be carried out before the development proposals are finalised and planning applications submitted. The results of the assessment should be included in the Heritage Statement required under paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and referred to in the FTTP Statement.</p> <p>It should also be noted that, in some cases, fieldwork</p>		

Respondent	Comment	Officer Response	Officer's Proposed Change
	<p>could be required to assess the impact of the proposals. KCC recommends that where heritage assets are identified as being likely to be impacted by the proposals, KCC Heritage Conservation is consulted to advise on appropriate ways to minimise those impacts.</p> <p>Where the proposals involve Listed or historic buildings, KCC would also advise that the applicant should consult Historic England's online guidance³.</p>		

Fibre to the Premises

Supplementary Planning Document



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Section 1 – Introduction

Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

1. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides further guidance to applicants on specific policies within a Local Plan. It does not seek to alter or introduce new policy requirements and is focused on setting out how applications comply with a Local Plan policy.
2. This SPD provides further guidance on Policy EMP6 ‘Fibre to the Premises’ (FTTP) of the council’s Local Plan 2030 (adopted Feb 2019). For ease of reference, the actual policy is replicated below (see section 3). Applicants must have regard to the reasoned justification contained in the Local Plan that supports Policy EMP6 (see paragraphs 7.31 to 7.48 of the Local Plan 2030).
3. The primary driver of Policy EMP6 is to deliver as much FTTP enabled development in the borough as possible. In doing so, advanced and high quality communication infrastructure will be expanded in the local area
4. Ashford Borough Council has long recognised the importance of high speed broadband and its benefits. In 2008, local planning policy required developments to be supported by adequate ducting arrangements to facilitate high speed broadband technology. This has been successful in delivering a connected network around the town of Ashford.
5. The council now requires that the market is further tested, by focussing on FTTP technology. This technology is recognised as a ‘Next Generation Access’ technology and will effectively futureproof the borough and attract further investment. FTTP is already a key market driver; developers, occupiers and employers will require ever more fast and stable connections.
6. This document contains concise details to encourage applicants to engage with relevant stakeholders early in the planning process so that FTTP enabled development is delivered. It is not suggesting that developers become providers of FTTP.
7. Communication and engagement with FTTP providers is vital, particularly in early stages of the planning process. The council has ongoing engagement with these providers and operators for the formulation of Policy EMP6 and this SPD. Useful contact information for providers is provided in Section 7 of this SPD.

Who is the SPD for?

8. This SPD is to guide applicants to the evidence required for a planning application to ensure that the requirements in Policy EMP6 have been met.

Section 2 – Background context

The benefits of FTTP to residents, businesses and developers

9. The government has implemented a Universal Service Obligation. This gives every household and business the right to request a broadband connection of at least 10 Mbps. Providing superfast broadband in new developments will provide further benefits and opportunities.
10. **Demand and expectations are high and rising:** Quality and speed of internet connections is important to property buyers and this is expected to rise as smart home technology continues to develop. The Clutton's Home Ownership Aspirations Survey 2018 found that apart from budgets and planned purchasing timelines, 84% of those surveyed said that high speed broadband was the most important specification when deciding on their new home. Furthermore research carried out by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) shows that 94% of small business owners rate a reliable broadband connection as critical to the success of their business.
11. **Fibre rollout is speeding up:** Thousands more UK homes and business will get connected to the network next year. Internet service operators will be looking to establish more connections, by working alongside land and housing associations, to meet the government's target of 100% gigabit connectivity to residential premises by 2025.
12. **Broadband could have an impact on property values:** Buying a new home is a large investment and broadband speeds often form part of that decision. ISPreview.co.uk conducted a poll in July 2018 which found 54.7% of readers would reject a house if it couldn't deliver their desired broadband speed, and 33% require speeds over 100 Mbps. Housesimple's May 2019 study claimed that "ultra-slow" broadband speeds (under 1 Mbps) could knock 24% off the value of the property.
13. Both surveys highlight that as the quality of national broadband networks has improved, the expectations for our desired internet performance of a new property have also increased.
14. Broadband remains a marketable element in property sales. The quality of the broadband speeds and connections can influence how quickly developers can sell both residential and commercial properties.
15. An issue that arises with new build developments and broadband is exclusivity clauses or agreements. These allow exclusive rights of access for a nominated provider to own and use the broadband infrastructure for a

certain amount of time, leaving purchasers minimal or no choice in provider options.

16. The government is taking steps to promote and legislate, where appropriate, that all new build developments are connected with full fibre. This will provide homeowners the choice of provider. The market already provides competition at a retail level for consumers, with BT (incl. EE and Plusnet) accounting for 35% of fixed broadband connections, Sky 23%, Virgin Media 20% and TalkTalk 11%¹. Occasionally this market competition doesn't transpire to new developments if exclusivity rights are applied to one provider, restricting the choice for purchasers and tenants.
17. As suggested in the government's Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review², the council would welcome evidence that negotiations have been undertaken with multiple providers to incorporate more than one network into the development. This will then give residents and businesses in new build developments more choice for broadband providers. This is also in line with policy ideas being proposed in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) "New Build Developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections" consultation document³.
18. Fast, dependable broadband is essential for residents to benefit from online services, and for businesses to operate and reach their customers. It also contributes to the vibrancy of an area, in terms of both economic growth and social inclusion.
19. Ashford has been ahead of the national agenda in terms of the expansion of high speed broadband. As a result of the council's forward-thinking policies, in the past nine years superfast coverage (>24 Mbps) in the borough has increased from 52.6% of properties to 92.1%. Mean download speeds for the area have also increased from 2.8 Mbps in 2010 to 32.8 Mbps in 2019 and mean upload speeds increasing from 0.4 Mbps to 6.9 Mbps.
20. Whilst these figures demonstrate large improvements in broadband from this pro-active approach, there is still much more to do. The national picture shows that in the UK 96.1% of properties are connected to superfast broadband (>24 Mbps). In Kent 95.4% of properties are connected with some East Kent authorities having a better coverage than Ashford. With more than 13,500 dwellings due to be built in the borough over the next 11 years, together with many commercial premises, we must ensure that as many as

¹ Ofcom, The Communications Market (2019). <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/interactive-data>, 17 February 2020

² Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (2018). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-telecoms-infrastructure-review>, 4 March 2020

³ New Build Developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections consultation (2018). <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-build-developments-delivering-gigabit-capable-connections>, 4 March 2020

possible of these developments have access to superfast broadband. The council considers that FTTP is an essential infrastructure for both residential and commercial properties and wants superfast coverage to increase over this Local Plan period.

21. Although Ashford is making great improvements in the provision of FTTP, we understand that there are also instances where superfast broadband installation will not be possible for a number of reasons. This has been reflected in Policy EMP6 and we have given more detail in this document.

National Context

22. **Fast rising coverage:** FTTP deployment in the UK is increasing. 10% of premises in early 2020 were covered compared with 2.8% in 2017. In the borough, FTTP coverage is 3% in early 2020 compared with 0.5% in 2017⁴.
23. New-build developments are increasingly being built with FTTP connectivity. Nationwide, 78% of new-build premises were provided with FTTP in the first quarter of 2019, an increase from 70% in 2018 (see Figure 1). In the South East, more than 80% of new-build premises were provided with FTTP connectivity⁵.

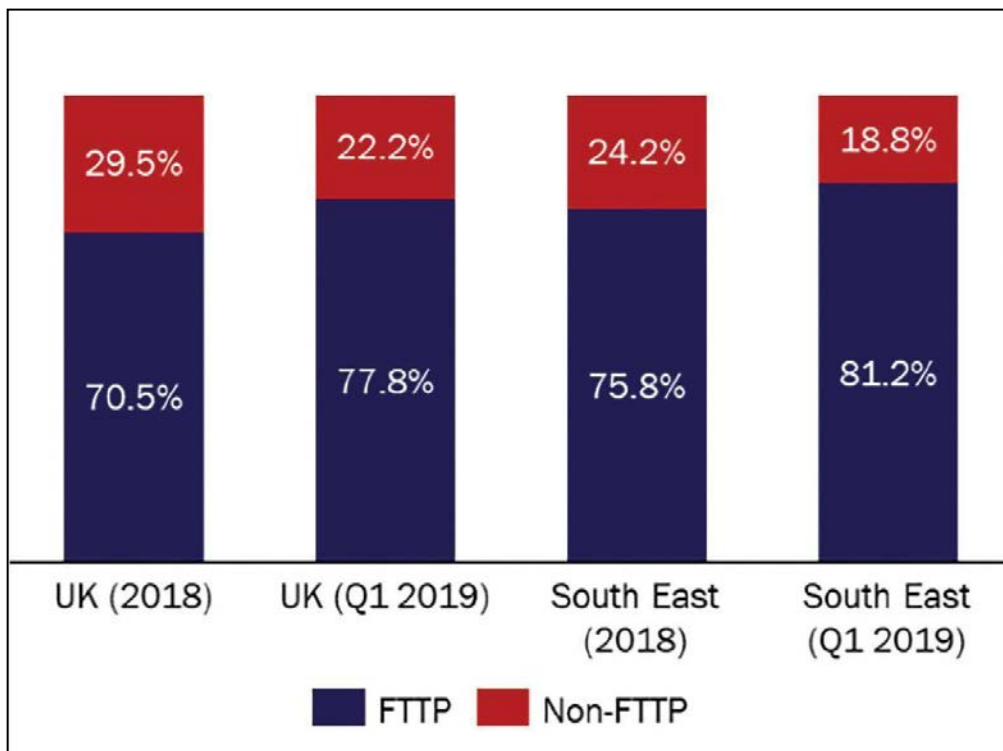


Figure 1 FTTP coverage in new-build developments [Source: ThinkBroadband, 2019]

⁴ <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E07000105>

⁵ <https://www.thinkbroadband.com/news/8583-new-build-premises-superfast-coverage-still-behind-uk-average>

24. **Growing investment:** The current wave of deployment is being driven by increasing levels of private investment in FTTP, which has grown rapidly in the last three years. Openreach is targeting four million premises to have FTTP availability by 2021 and 15 (space) million premises by 2025. It is currently deploying FTTP at a rate of approximately 26,000 premises per week. Virgin Media is part way through the roll-out of a hybrid cable/FTTP network extension covering four million premises by 2020, and has also announced plans to upgrade its existing network to DOCSIS3.1 by the end of 2021 – proving gigabit speeds across its footprint. Alternative operators (not including Openreach and Virgin Media) are also deploying FTTP networks, and have announced potential deployment plans that, when combined may cover more than 12 (space) million premises over the next few years.

Government Support

25. **Financial support:** The UK government is increasingly supportive of full fibre, and is providing both financial and regulatory support to help meet its ambition of full gigabit coverage of residential premises by 2025. The DCMS has committed £5 (space) billion to support an “outside in” deployment of FTTP in areas unlikely to be commercially viable, and is also providing funding for FTTP via schemes such as the Local Full Fibre Networks and Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes and a Gigabit voucher scheme. It should be noted that these funds are not available for new-build developments but do evidence the Government’s commitment to FTTP roll-out.

26. **Regulatory and policy support:** Ofcom is considering regulatory changes to promote full fibre investment. Ofcom has worked with Openreach to improve access to Openreach’s duct and pole network (Physical Infrastructure Access or PIA) and facilitate new infrastructure deployment. The DCMS also consulted on three proposals to promote full-fibre connectivity in new-build developments:

- Cost-sharing between developers and operators for FTTP infrastructure
- A “duty to connect” for network operators
- Amendments to the Building Regulations to mandate FTTP-ready infrastructure in new-build premises.

⁶ <https://telecoms.com/501763/openreach-decides-to-connect-more-new-builds-on-the-house/>

27. The consultation closed in December 2019, and the responses are being processed. The Queen’s Speech in December 2019 contained a commitment by the government to introduce legislation on both new-build connectivity and gigabit-capable connectivity including:

- Mending legislation so that all new build homes are required to have the infrastructure to support gigabit capable connections.
- Requiring developers to work with broadband companies to install gigabit capable connections in virtually all new build homes, up to a cost cap⁷.

28. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has updated the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2019 to suggest that all planning polices and decisions should support the expansion of telecoms networks – including full fibre broadband⁸. Irrespective of ongoing central government initiatives, local authorities are empowered to develop local planning regulations which are supportive of full-fibre deployment – including for new-build developments. A number of local authorities are also considering a similar approach to Ashford Borough Council.

⁷ <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8392>

⁸

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

Section 3 – Guidance on EMP6 Requirements

29. Policy EMP6 contains a number of requirements. For ease of reference, it is replicated below⁹:

Policy EMP6 – Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)

The council considers that FTTP is essential infrastructure and vital to the delivery of sustainable development. Therefore, all qualifying development shall deliver FTTP. Qualifying development includes:

- All residential and employment schemes proposed in, or adjoining, the urban area of Ashford, including on those sites allocated in this Local Plan on the periphery of the urban area of Ashford,
- residential schemes promoting 10 dwellings or more in the remaining parts of the borough,
- Employment schemes promoting 10 or more jobs (FTE) in the remaining parts of the borough.

Proposals for qualifying development will be required to be supported by an FTTP Statement, to be agreed by the council. This statement will establish how FTTP will be provided to serve the development and that it will be engaged at first occupation.

Exceptions to the approach outlined above could be justified in circumstances where it is not practical, viable or feasible to deliver FTTP. In such cases, evidence will be needed from the applicant to demonstrate that a departure from policy is justified.

For other residential and employment schemes, FTTP will be encouraged by the council as a means of expanding the local fibre network.

Where FTTP is not delivered, non-Next Generation Access technologies that can provide speeds in excess of 24Mbps should be provided as an alternative.

Figure 2 Policy EMP6 from Ashford Local Plan 2030

⁹ Regard is also needed to the reasoned justification that supports this policy as contained within paragraphs 7.31 to 7.48 of the council's Local Plan 2030 (Feb 2019).

What is meant by FTTP?

30. FTTP is where the entire line of connectivity is fibre from the exchange, all the way to the building or premises (the dwelling or place of employment). Please see diagram below.

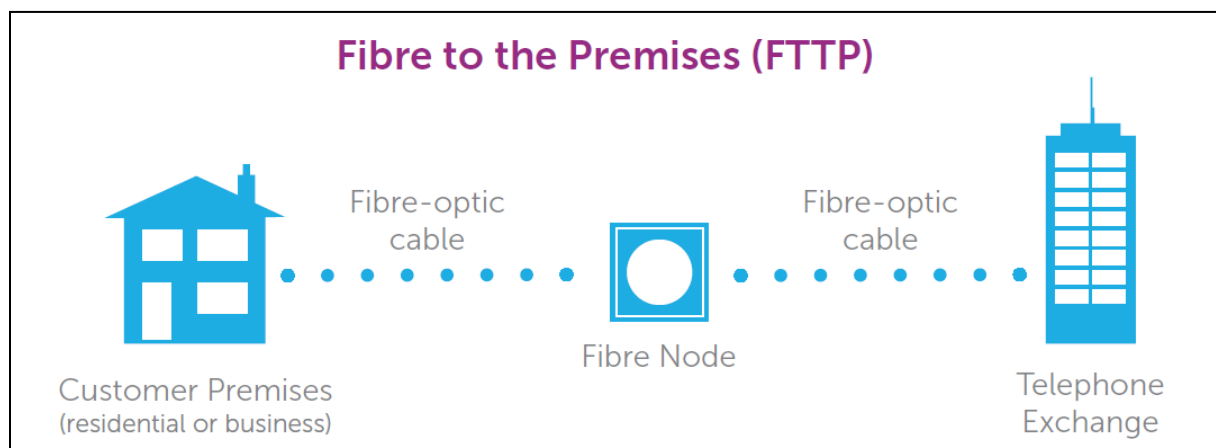


Figure 3 Diagram explaining FTTP

What is meant by 'qualifying development'?

31. 'Qualifying development' for the purpose of Policy EMP6 is:

- All schemes promoting residential or employment development 'in' or 'adjoining' the town of Ashford, or
- All residential schemes of 10 or more dwellings in the 'remaining parts of the borough', or
- All employment schemes promoting 10 or more full time jobs or equivalent in the 'remaining parts of the borough'.

32. Therefore a scheme for one dwelling or a scheme that delivers one additional full-time job, 'in' or 'adjoining' the town of Ashford will be required to comply with the requirements in Policy EMP6.

33. In the 'remaining parts of the borough'; this is limited to only those residential developments of 10 or more dwellings or employment developments that would yield 10 or more full time jobs or full time equivalent (FTE).

34. The FTE jobs can be determined by using the information contained in the Employment Densities Guide 3rd edition (2015), produced by the Homes and Communities Agency. Below is the main matrix identifying the number of square metre (sqm) per 1 FTE job. The document provides further guidance on employment densities however it is not readily available from the government so the council can help applicants in this respect.

Use Class	Sub-Category	Sub-Sector	Density (sqm)	Notes
B1a Offices	General Office	Corporate	13	NIA
		Professional Services	12	NIA
		Public Sector	12	NIA
		TMT	11	NIA
		Finance & Insurance	10	NIA
	Call Centres		8	NIA
B1b	R&D Space		40-60	NIA lower densities will be achieved in units with higher provision of shared or communal spaces
B1c	Light Industrial		47	NIA
B2	Industrial & Manufacturing		36	GIA
B8	Storage & Distribution	National Distribution Centre	95	GEA
		Regional Distribution Centre	77	GEA
		'Final Mile' Distribution Centre	70	GEA
Mixed B Class	Small Business Workspace	Incubator	30-60	B1a, B1b – the density will relate to balance between spaces, as the share of B1a increases so too will employment densities.
		Maker Spaces	15-40	B1c, B2, B8 - Difference between 'planned space' density and utilisation due to membership model
		Studio	20-40	B1c, B8
		Co-Working	10-15	B1a - Difference between 'planned space' density and utilisation due to membership model
		Managed Workspace	12-47	B1a, b, c
B8 / Sul Generis	Data Centres	Wholesale	200-950	
		Wholesale Dark Site	440-1,400	
		Co-location Facility	180-540	
A1	Retail	High Street	15-20	NIA
		Foodstore	15-20	NIA
		Retail Warehouse	90	NIA
A2	Finance & Professional Services		16	NIA
A3	Restaurants & Cafes		15-20	NIA
C1	Hotels	Limited Service / Budget	1 per 5 beds	FTE per bed
		Mid-scale	1 per 3 beds	FTE per bed
		Upscale	1 per 2 beds	FTE per bed
		Luxury	1 per 1 bed	FTE per bed
D2	Fitness Centres	Budget	100	GIA
		Mid Market	65	GIA – both types tend to generate between 40-50 jobs per gym
		Family		
	Cinema		200	GIA
	Visitor & Cultural Attractions		30-300	The diversity of the cultural attraction sector means a very wide range exists
	Amusement & Entertainment Centres		70	Potential range of 20-100sqm

Figure 4 Employment Density Guide 3rd edition Matrix, Homes & Communities Agency (2015).
GEA - Gross External Area. GIA - Gross Internal Area. NIA - Net Internal Area.

How do I determine if the proposal is located ‘in’ or ‘adjoining’ Ashford or the ‘remaining parts of the borough’?

35. At the time of drafting this SPD, the built confines for the town of Ashford have not been drawn on a map base. As such, there is no spatial area defined to help the planning applicant, or the decision maker. In such circumstances a degree of pragmatism is needed.
36. To make this process simpler for the applicant and decision maker, the SPD proposes to utilise the zones of the Affordable Housing Viability Areas map, as identified under Policy HOU1 of the Local Plan 2030.
37. Therefore, for the purposes of Policy EMP6, all application sites that fall within **zones A and B** (see figure 5) will be considered as being ‘in’ or ‘adjoining’ Ashford. All application sites that fall within **zone C** (see map below) will be considered as being in the ‘remaining parts of the borough’.

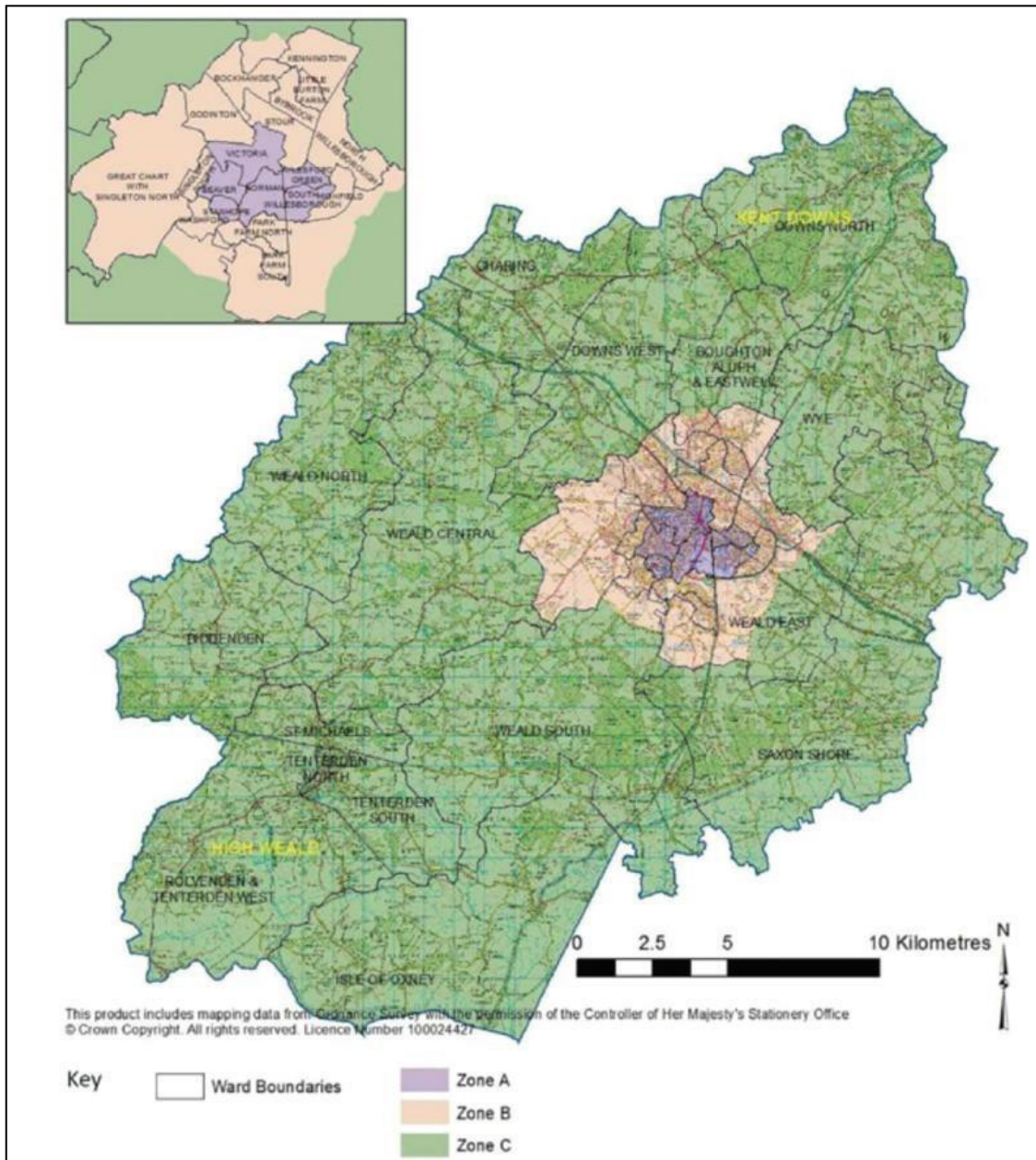


Figure 5 - Map derived from MAP2 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030: Affordable Housing Viability Areas

38. These zones were derived from a range of evidence relating to the local housing market, and are primarily used to help determine the council's affordable housing policy. The zones however also offer a simple and practical solution to helping to determine how Policy EMP6 should be applied, for two main reasons:

- i. Most of Ashford's existing fibre network is located within zones A and B. It houses all of the existing urban fibre enabled cabinets which have, in part, been delivered as result of the expansion of the town.
- ii. All of the 'Ashford Site Policies' in the Local Plan 2030 are located within zones A and B. All of these site allocations are required to

deliver FTTP. In doing so the existing urban fibre network will be enhanced or expanded. In this context, the large scale development of Chilmington Green (up to 5,750 homes and associated infrastructure) also falls within zones A and B.

39. In light of the above, all future planning applications coming forward in zones A and B will be in close proximity to both the existing and future fibre network in and around the town of Ashford, as well as existing cabinets (all of these are fully fibre enabled) and any expanded or new cabinets. It therefore follows that these sites should be treated as 'in' and 'adjoining' Ashford for the purpose of compliance with Policy EMP6.
40. Although the zones were derived for a separate purpose, it provides an opportunity to pragmatically and clearly define, on a map base, where the various components of Policy EMP6 apply.

What is an FTTP Statement?

41. An FTTP Statement is a document needed to support a planning application where a qualifying development is proposed. The Statements are required to demonstrate that the proposed development will be supported by FTTP at commencement. Please see section 4 of this SPD for what the FTTP Statement should cover.

What are the exceptions to the requirements of Policy EMP6 and how can they be justified?

42. Where FTTP cannot be delivered for a qualifying development, the applicant will be required to produce evidence justifying why. In line with Policy EMP6, these reasons will normally relate to issues surrounding viability, feasibility or the practicality of delivery, or a combination of these factors. Failure to demonstrate why non-compliance is justified may well result in the refusal of planning permission.
43. If non-compliance of policy EMP6 can be justified, varying levels of evidence will be required depending on the reasons FTTP cannot be delivered. For example, it could be that an appropriate physical trench cannot be dug, or that the scheme is too far from the nearest breakout point on the fibre network, or that there is an issue with the capacity of a nearby cabinet and this capacity cannot be increased. There may also be scenarios where operators or providers are unable to assist in the delivery of FTTP on a particular site.

44. Whatever the reason for non-compliance, the applicant is expected to produce thorough, transparent and robust evidence. Where appropriate, this should include non-commercially sensitive correspondence between the applicant and a provider.
45. If a viability case is being made, compliance with Policy IMP2 of the Local Plan 2030 is also required. Any viability case being made must be done so in a transparent way and will be rigorously tested by independent advisors, paid for by the applicant.

What is meant by ‘encouraged’ in relation to ‘other schemes’?

46. The council encourages all new development to be FTTP enabled. Doing so can only assist in delivering as full a fibre network across the borough as possible, while futureproofing and adding value to development. We encourage applicants for all schemes, including those that do not qualify for Policy EMP6, that deliver new residential or commercial premises across the borough, to evidence that superfast broadband connections have at least been considered. For schemes that do not qualify for Policy EMP6 we would anticipate evidence such as quotes from service providers, viability assessments and/or a statement explaining how broadband will be provided on the site.

Why is 24 Mbps the ‘fallback position’?

47. There is no single definition of superfast broadband. At the time of drafting policy EMP6 the UK government defined superfast broadband as download speeds of at least 24 Mbps. However, Ofcom and the EU define it as 30 Mbps. Given the advances in technology and the sector since Policy EMP6 was first drafted in 2017, the expectation now is that at least **30 Mbps** download speeds should be achieved as the fallback position, as opposed to the 24 Mbps speed stipulated in Policy EMP6. It is noted that recent BDUK contracts have adopted this speed as ‘superfast’ connectivity.

What is Next Generation Access?

48. Next-generation access (NGA) networks represent new, or upgraded, infrastructure which can provide superfast internet speeds. Ofcom defines two levels of service quality:
 - superfast broadband delivering a minimum download speed of 30 Mbit/s
 - ultrafast broadband delivering a minimum download speed of 300 Mbit/s

49. The UK government is basing its connectivity ambitions around a third definition – gigabit capable networks. Any NGA network that can deliver at least 1 Gbit/s connectivity meets the definition of a gigabit capable network. In Ashford, as in much of the UK, the way forward for delivering NGA superfast broadband is expected to be primarily via FTTP networks.

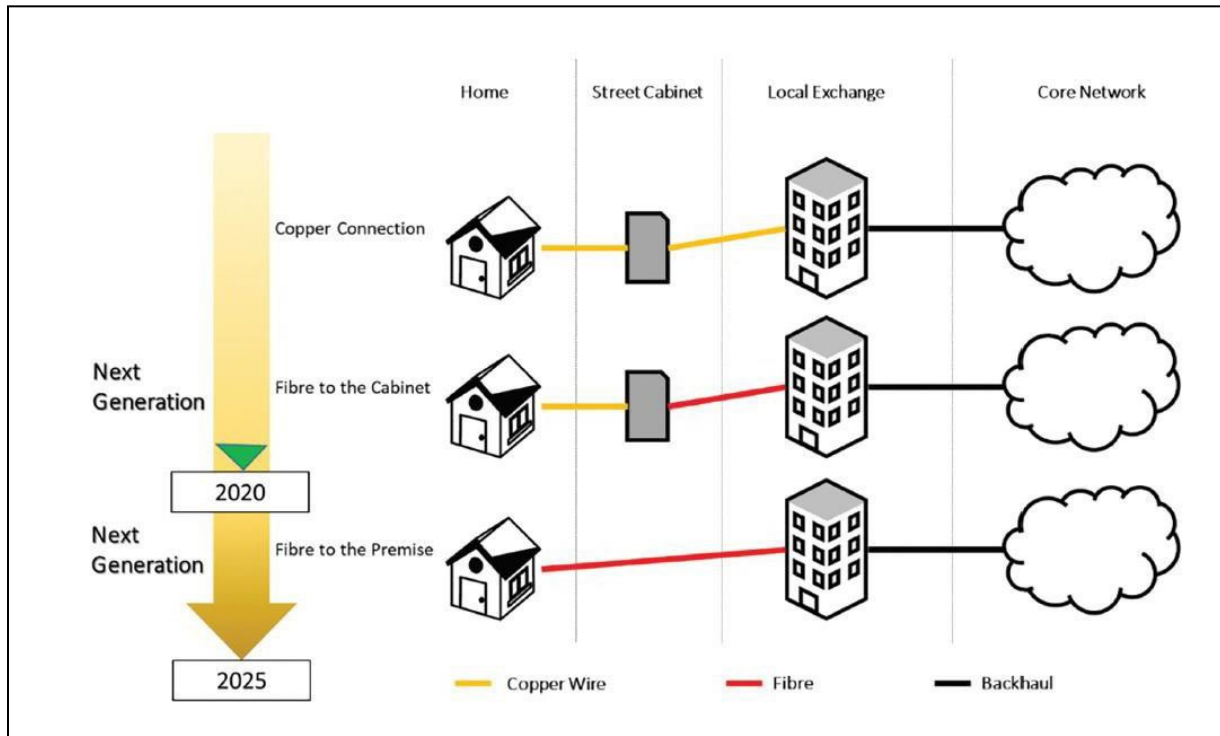


Figure 6 Cable connections over time based on Ofcom diagram

50. Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) can be considered as an alternative solution to FTTP and traditional fixed broadband services. FWA requires a fibre or wireless backhaul connection to a transmitter, which then uses a wireless link for the final connection to a home or business. This approach avoids the cost of installing a fibre connection into the building for the “last mile”. Ashford Borough Council would consider this as an alternative where FTTP is deemed to be unviable.

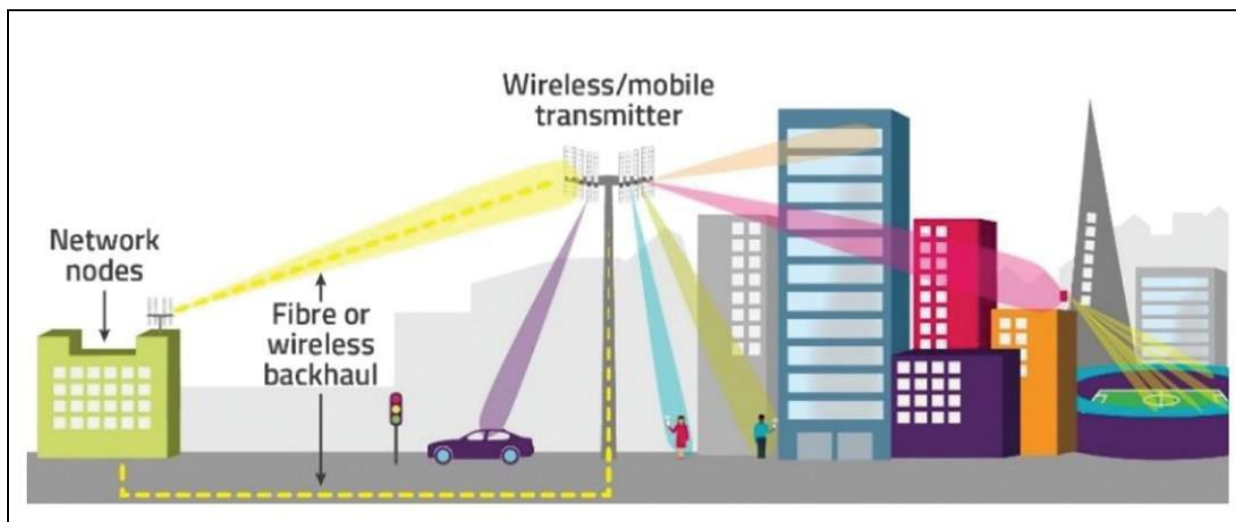


Figure 7 Schematic of FWA, Ofcom Connected Nations 2018

Section 4 – FTTP Statements

What is the purpose of FTTP Statements?

51. The main purpose of an FTTP Statement is to give the decision maker as much certainty as possible that qualifying developments will comply with Policy EMP6. The Statement should be provided as a standalone document. Statements will be expected to demonstrate:
- a) That appropriate and early discussion has been had with the telecom providers in relation to serving the development with FTTP,
 - b) That either the proposed development can be connected to existing infrastructure or that additional infrastructure is needed and how this will be provided,
 - c) That the infrastructure needed to enable FTTP will be available and in place, prior to occupation¹⁰,
 - d) How FTTP will be delivered in terms of the layout, design, connectivity to the cabinet and to the buildings proposed on-site.

What information is required at outline stage?

52. An FTTP statement is required at outline planning stage. It is accepted however, given the nature of an outline application, that it might contain less details in terms of specific implementation dates of FTTP from a provider, and/or might not include detailed layout information.
53. However, the FTTP statement for an outline application must provide enough information to satisfy the decision maker that Policy EMP6 will be complied with, or that non-compliance is justified. In this regard, the expectation is that the information provided should be similar to the level that is supplied to support other utility infrastructure, such as mains drainage of the supply of water.
54. In addition, planning conditions or obligations will be applied to outline consent to ensure that the necessary and remaining details to be covered in subsequent FTTP Statements is provided at reserved matters stage. Some example conditions are provided in section 6, as a guide.

¹⁰ The council's preference is that FTTP is delivered in such a way that provides a competitive choice, or that this choice will be available after an initial term has been passed. However the council accept that this can only be an aspiration as it is beyond the scope of the planning system.

What about confidentiality with telecom providers?

55. The council accepts that on some occasions, the detailed discussions between the telecom providers will need to be private, especially where correspondence is of a commercial nature. However, the minimum expectation is for an applicant to show that suitable liaison and discussion has been held with a number of providers and this has occurred early in the process.

What design and layout detail is needed?

56. In terms of fibre installation, the following issues should be addressed within the Statements, or as part of the application itself. It might be useful to provide such information in the form of a layout plan of the site. Issues to be addressed include:

- Type, size and likely location of the cabinet to be installed,
- The type of fibre/data cabling to be used and examples of the fittings to be attached to the building(s),
- Indicative fibre cabling routing through the site and beyond,
- The extent and type of external cabling,
- The extent and type of external ducting and chambers,
- How the infrastructure is to be delivered in terms of the phasing of the scheme and completion to conform to intended first occupancy date.

Section 5 – Example planning conditions

57. Planning conditions will be applied. Below are two examples of what applicants should expect:

Example 1:

Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling/s hereby permitted OR Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling/s in land forming phase _____, an FTTP Statement shall have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing for the installation of a high speed wholly FTTP connection to the development hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority (where supported by evidence detailing reasonable endeavours to secure the provision of FTTP and alternative provisions that been made in the absence of FTTP).

Thereafter, the infrastructure shall be laid out in accordance with the approved details and be available for use on the first occupation of any of the dwellings hereby approved.

Reason: To ensure that the new development in Ashford is provided with high quality broadband services enhancing Ashford as an attractive location in accordance with Policy EMP6 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030.

Example 2:

Prior to the first occupation of the premises, an FTTP Statement shall have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing for the installation of a high speed wholly FTTP connection to the development hereby approved.

Thereafter, the infrastructure shall be laid out in accordance with the approved details at the same time as other services during the construction process and be available for use on the first occupation of the building unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority (where supported by evidence detailing reasonable endeavours to secure the provision of FTTP and alternative provisions that been made in the absence of FTTP).

Reason: To ensure that the new development in Ashford is provided with high quality broadband services enhancing Ashford as an attractive location in accordance with Policy EMP6 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030.

Section 6 – Highways

58. The DCMS Digital Connectivity Portal provides a good level of guidance relating to street works and how local authorities/highways authorities and developers/operators can work in partnership. The Street Works Toolkit found in the Digital Connectivity Portal aims to improve consistency and thereby trust, promote collaboration and complement legislation.
59. Highways England is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). Highways England will be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact on the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the M20 and A2070 in the vicinity of Ashford Borough. Any activity on the SRN falls in the realms of New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) and Traffic Management Act (TMA) and any works promotor will need to abide by these. In particular there are restrictions with regards motorways and other special roads. Even works on adjacent land may be restricted. For more information please visit the [Highways England website](#) or contact Highways England (tel: 0300 123 5000, email: info@highwaysengland.co.uk)
60. There is a lot of emphasis on the need for providers, developers and local authorities to engage at an early stage in order to identify the standards expected, plan appropriately and ensure the efficient deployment of networks.
61. Please refer to the Street Works Toolkit on the Digital Connectivity Portal: www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-connectivity-portal.



Figure 8
The Government's Streetworks Toolkit front cover

Section 7 – Useful contacts and information

62. The expectation will be that the applicant will have made contact with FTTP providers. Some key contacts are provided below:

Provider	Website	Telephone
Openreach ¹¹	https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/fibre-for-developers/registering-your-site	
Virgin Media	https://www.virginmedia.com/lightning/network-expansion/property-developers	0800 408 088
Hyperoptic	https://www.hyperoptic.com/property/	0333 332 1111
City Fibre	https://www.cityfibre.com/contact-us/	0800 083 6160
Trooli ¹²	https://www.trooli.com/help/	0800 358 7680
BUUK Ltd	https://www.bu-uk.co.uk/contact-us	0135 924 0363

63. Some providers have specific guidance for property developers that can be downloaded for information. Please use the contact details above to access these.

64. Ashford Borough Council does not endorse the companies mentioned above and would suggest developers assess the whole market and make their own decision. Other companies are available however the list above are companies that are in contact with the council or are operating in or near the Ashford borough. If a provider wishes to be added to this list we will be maintaining an up to date list of registered providers on the council's website here.

¹¹ You may register your development site on their website

¹² While not active in the Ashford borough at the time of writing, *Trooli* are a Kent-based provider worth contacting

Section 8 – The need to monitor and review

65. The council recognises that the e-technology sector is a rapidly changing environment, where innovations occur on a regular basis. Government policy is also evolving all the time, as it tries to keep pace.
66. It therefore needs to be recognised that government policy could be introduced, even in the short term, which would supersede the guidance contained in this SPD.
67. Given this context, the council will continually monitor the sector and any changes to national policy or legislation. If a revision to this SPD is necessary, the council will progress alterations as soon as reasonably practical to do so.

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:	Dan Carter
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Notes the responses to the representations received and changes made to the SPD contained within Appendix 1 to this report and approve the final version of the SPD contained within Appendix 2 to this report; II. Recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Fibre to the Premises Supplementary Planning Document.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	30 July 2020
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 Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2019) includes Policy EMP6 ‘Promotion of Fibre to the Premise’. The primary purpose of Policy EMP6 is to require most new residential and employment development to be served by Fibre cabling, to the premise.</p> <p>A supplementary planning document (SPD) was drafted to provide further details on the requirements of Policy EMP6. An SPD provides further guidance to applicants on specific policies within a Local Plan and does not seek to alter or introduce new policy requirements.</p> <p>Adoption of the SPD will provide developers with advice and guidance to provide Fibre infrastructure in application and to support development management decisions.</p> <p>This SPD will have affect towards applicants of relevant planning application of the borough who qualify to the requirements of this policy.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The recommended decision has been informed by relevant planning legislation, namely Part 5 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.</p>
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 	<p>Consultation was undertaken in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Consultation included advertisements across both electronic and traditional media.</p> <p>Consultees had the option of submitting comments in hard copy or online through the council’s designated consultation hub. Please refer to the accompanying consultation statement.</p>

people with different protected characteristics?		
<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 young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Low	Neutral
Middle age	Low	Neutral
Young adult	Low	Neutral
Children	Low	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Low	Neutral
Mental	Low	Neutral
Sensory	Low	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
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Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	No negative impact identified.
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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	Yes
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

Conclusion:	<p>The SPD provides extra details to qualifying development of the policy EMP6 for the provision of Fibre infrastructure. A comprehensive consultation process was undertaken with the community and key stakeholders, including developers. The consultation was advertised across electronic and traditional media types.</p> <p>The SPD enable positive planning for the area through the provision of infrastructure which is vital to the delivery of sustainable development.</p> <p>Adoption of these documents has development management implications and will impact decisions. These impacts are to be reviewed as part of the overall service review of development management and changes in government advice and policy.</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? 	
EIA completion date:	20/07/2020

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Agenda Item No: 12
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30th July 2020
Report Title: Adoption of Brook village envelope boundary map
Report Author & Job Title: Daniel Carter, Team Leader Spatial Planning
Portfolio Holder Cllr. Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Planning & Development

Summary:

The adopted Local Plan include policies that refer to the 'built-up confines' of settlements. Officers have prepared a village envelope map of Brook to indicate where the Council currently considers the existing built-up confines of Brook are. This map will help to clarify the written definition in the Local Plan for the purposes of decision-making on planning applications.

The report seeks the Cabinet's approval to adopt the Brook village envelope boundary as informal guidance for development management purposes.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Bircholt

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

- I. Adopt the village envelope boundary shown in the appendix to this report as informal guidance for development management purposes; and**
- II. Delegate authority to the Spatial Planning Manager following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development to amend, where relevant, the village envelope boundary to account for the construction of new development.**

Policy Overview: Local Plan policy HOU3a is important in the consideration of applications for new residential development in the borough. The policy interpretation relies on a written definition of the 'built-up confines' of a settlement set out in the Plan. The proposed village envelope boundary contained within this reports reflects this interpretation in broad terms taking account of local geography and would be used as informal guidance to assist in the interpretation of what constitutes the 'built-up confines' in individual cases.

Financial There are no financial implications

Implications:	Once approved, the map can be used for development management purposes and applied to relevant planning applications.
Legal Implications:	None, aside from the map now having greater planning weight as a material consideration
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	None
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	None
Sustainability Implications:	None specifically. The endorsement of the map is a visual representation of existing Local Plan policy.
Other Material Implications:	None.
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Appendix 1: Brook Village Envelope Map
Contact:	daniel.carter@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330238

Report Title: Adoption of the Brook village envelope boundary map

Introduction and Background

1. Over successive Local Plan, the 'built-up confines' or village 'envelope' of a settlement has been defined in written terms as the "*limits of continuous and contiguous development forming the existing built-up area of the settlement, excluding any curtilage beyond the built footprint of the buildings on the site (e.g. garden areas).*"
2. At the Cabinet meeting in April 2019, Members agreed to adopt a series of village envelope plans for a range of rural settlements in the borough as informal guidance for development management purposes, to aid in the interpretation of policies HOU3a and HOU5 of the Local Plan.
3. In the case of Brook village, this envelope was deferred at the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group in March 2019 and not brought forward to the April 2019 Cabinet meeting. This was to allow the determination of a planning application prior to a decision being taken on where to draw the built-up confines boundary.
4. This application has now been granted planning permission and the village envelope has been produced to reflect the site's inclusion in the built-up confines.

Proposal

5. This report seeks the Cabinet's approval to adopt the village envelope boundaries for Brook, as shown in Appendix 1 as informal guidance for development management purposes.

Implications and Risk Assessment

6. If the Cabinet agree the recommendation for adoption, then the village envelope map contained in the appendix will become material consideration in the application of policy HOU3a in the determination of planning applications. This will establish guidance on the clear principle of whether development should be permitted or not.
7. It is recognised that the village envelope map recommended for adoption is based on a broad interpretation of the written definition of built-up confines in the Local Plan. This results in some very minor inconsistencies where in some cases, for example, garden areas have been excluded and in other, included within the village envelope, or where some areas of ribbon development on roads entering settlements have or have not been included.

8. For these issues, an element of subjectivity and local context has been applied but this would also be the case where schemes would be determined in the context of just the written definition and so any level of risk here is regarded as minimal.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

9. The village envelope boundary went out for consultation with the parish council in November 2018. This raised the area of concern for Brook Parish Council regarding the site of the planning application. The decision was to defer the village envelope until the planning application was determined.
10. The permission for 3 dwellings was granted and the site was considered as inside the village confines. The outcome of this decision was material to the village envelope and the proposed village envelope, shown in Appendix 1 to this Report, includes this site within the confines.
11. The Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group on the 27th May 2020 endorsed the proposed village envelope for Brook to use as informal guidance for development management purposes.

Other Options Considered

12. In a situation where a village envelope was to be adopted that was not in broad conformity with the written definition of built-up confines in the Local Plan, this would potentially place any decision taken to permit development to take place in locations outside where the written definition would suggest at risk of legal challenge, particularly in the context of settlements identified under policy HOU3a of the Local Plan. Similarly, if it were proposed to limit the extent of a village envelope boundary where the location of existing development on the ground would not justify such a boundary in light of the written definition on the Local Plan, then again any decisions to refuse permission for development based on such a boundary would be at risk of legal challenge. Consequently, the written definition of built-up confines in the adopted Local Plan 2030 is considered to be the robust basis for this exercise.

Next Steps in Process

13. This report recommends the Cabinet to adopt the village envelope boundary shown in the appendix to this report as informal guidance for development management purposes.

Conclusion

14. Debates about the precise position of where the built-up confines of settlements are located has been along running theme in the determination of many planning applications over the years. In many settlements, the footprint of development will be fairly obvious in large part but often there will be a

minority of places where it is inevitably a subjective view and could be defined in more than one way.

15. Of course, development is not static and villages may grow and evolve and villages' envelopes will need to respond to this. Therefore, the village envelope map will need to be a 'live' document and updates will be produced as and when new development that would naturally extend a village envelope is constructed and reviewed on at least an annual basis as part of the Council's housing completions monitoring.

Portfolio Holder's Views (Cllr. Shorter)

16. Awaiting comments.

Contact and Email

17. Daniel.carter@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330238

Appendix 1: Brook Village Envelope Map





Agenda Item No: 13

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 30th July 2020

Report Title: Memorial Safety in Burial Grounds

Report Author & Job Title: Colin Munro: Grounds Maintenance Safety, Health, Environment and Quality Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Buchanan
Portfolio Holder for: Environment and Land Management

Summary:

In 2016 members endorsed a policy and procedure for inspecting memorial headstones in both open and closed cemeteries. Following the completion of the inspections, the risk assessment for the activity has been reviewed in line with guidance issued by the Ministry of Justice and the Health and Safety Executive also using data gathered during the inspection process. The report provides Members with an update on the present position, summarises key findings of the reviewed risk assessment and details proposed changes to the policy and procedures for the safe management of memorials in the Borough.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All wards in Ashford

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

- I. Note the current position with regard to memorial testing and inspection; and**
- II. Adopt the updated policy and operational procedures as set out in Appendix 1**

Policy Overview: Original policy adopted at Cabinet in 2016, reported on in 2018 and revised in this paper.

Financial Implications: Reduced burden to record every inspection, the process will be leaner as not every inspection will need to be recorded. Potential for officer time to be used more productively, elsewhere.

Legal Implications: Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999; Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984; and Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977.

Equalities Impact Assessment: Not required

**Data Protection
Impact
Assessment:**

Not applicable

**Risk Assessment
(Risk Appetite
Statement):**

The risk of injury or death from unstable memorials is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive as being low. Research carried out by the Ministry of Justice in 2009 found that nationally a falling memorial has killed eight people in the previous 30 years. Given the population of the country and the number of memorials, the risk of being killed by a falling memorial is inherently low and in the broadly acceptable risk region nationally speaking. The risk assessment relating to the activity was reviewed in line with data from council burial grounds following initial inspection.

**Sustainability
Implications:**

**Other Material
Implications:**

**Exempt from
Publication:**

NO

**Background
Papers:**

Contact:

colin.munro@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330418

Report Title: Memorial Safety in Burial Grounds

Introduction and Background

1. When Members endorsed the original Policy and Procedures for the Management of Memorials in 2016, no inspections had previously been undertaken under the proposed methodology. Therefore, it was unknown how many defective memorials there were within the Borough and what level of risk management would be proportionate.
2. This report outlines the changes proposed to the Policy and Procedures for the Management of Memorials. The changes are proposed because following initial benchmarking inspections, the reviewed risk assessment for the activity has determined that recording an inspection for every single memorial, irrespective of its risk category is time consuming and disproportionate to the risk.
3. Memorials are categorised as follows: category 1 are immediately dangerous; category 2 are not immediately dangerous, but not fully stable; and category 3 are perfectly stable.
4. At the time the risk assessment was reviewed (October 2019) all category 1 memorials had either been laid flat or were in the process of being repaired. 253 (3 percent) of memorials were deemed to be category 2 with the remainder of memorials found to be category 3. Category 2 memorials require an annual inspection and category 3 memorials require an inspection every five years.

Proposal

5. Make revisions to the previously agreed policy as detailed below (and final amended policy appears at Appendix 1). These amendments reflect Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved guidance and have been agreed with the Councils Corporate Risk and Safety Officer. This has also been agreed with the Mid Kent audit partnership on the report produced on the Cemetery service in May 2020.
6. Record inspections of category 1 and 2 memorials only. Where a category 3 memorial becomes a category 2 memorial that will be included in this recording.
7. Under the Paragraph 4 in the Key Aims of the Policy and Procedures for the Management of Memorials, remove references to good practice published by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers (ICCM). The ICCM guidance would require a record of all inspections to be made and is not in line with the HSE approved guidance from the Ministry of Justice.
8. Under Clause 7 (Inspection Process), remove the sentence that refers to inspections being carried out in line with guidance from Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers. Replace this sentence with the following: "The

inspections of memorials will be undertaken in line with the risk assessment for this activity. The risk assessment was recently reviewed following an initial benchmarking inspection exercise and will be subject to further review if there is a significant change or a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid”.

9. Under Clause 11 (Inspection Process), remove the reference to inspections being undertaken by properly trained and certificated personnel and replace with inspections being undertaken by competent personnel. This is an unnecessarily restrictive clause and there is no requirement for personnel to be certificated.
10. Under Clause 12 (Inspection Process), remove all references to mechanical force device tests with the exception of where a hand stress test is inconclusive. Ministry of Justice and Health and Safety Executive guidance suggests that results from these instruments are liable to overestimate the actual risks.
11. Under Clause 14 (Inspection Process), remove references to the installation of support using staking and protective banding. Ministry of Justice and Health and Safety Executive guidance suggests that there is a risk of harm during the installation of such supports and that the operation risks damaging the memorial.
12. Add “The installation of a temporary barrier to the perimeter of the memorial or sections of a cemetery where there is more than one Category 1 assessed memorial” to Clause 14a (Inspection Process).
13. Add “In circumstances where the memorial poses a significant risk, such as an imminent collapse in a way which could cause death or serious injury, the memorial will be made safe by removal and will be laid flat as soon as is reasonably practicable” to Clause 14b (Inspection Process).
14. Clause 17 (Records and Information) becomes “Appropriate records relating to defective memorials will be kept for a period of five years. After this time they will be archived. Following initial inspection, category 3 memorials will not be recorded as part of the inspection process. All memorials will be inspected once at least every five years. However, a detailed record will only be made of the inspection where a defect is found” (negative exception reporting) as it is felt that this is proportionate to the current risk.
15. Remove Clause 18b as this will not be possible unless all inspections are recorded.

Equalities Impact Assessment

16. Not applicable

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

17. Not applicable

Other Options Considered

18. Maintaining the requirement to record all inspections as per the endorsed policy and procedure is the other option. However, the risk assessment for the activity shows that this is time consuming and disproportionate. The endorsed policy results in over 8,500 additional records over a five-year period. As each record takes time to input into the system, this equates to just over 3.5 weeks of officer time to record the category 3 (completely stable) memorials.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

19. The proposed approach of recording only memorials with defects apparent will streamline the inspection process. Baseline data from the first round of inspections demonstrates that the level of risk to the Council is low, which is further supported by national data. This ensures that the management of the risks from memorials is proportionate and officer time is able to be spent more productively, whilst the safety of our memorials is maintained.
20. Aligning the council's inspection methodology to that endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive is likely to be viewed favourably in the unlikely event of enforcement action, as the Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing agency.

Next Steps in Process

21. Adopt the revised policy and procedure and continue with streamlined inspection programme.

Conclusion

22. Extensive time could be saved by streamlining the requirements of inspection records, allowing resource to be deployed effectively elsewhere.
23. Aligning the process with guidance endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive is sensible from a compliance point of view.
24. All recommendations appear as the final revised policy in Appendix 1.

Portfolio Holder's Views

25. The communication with memorial owners, inspection, making safe and re-inspection of memorials in our open and closed cemeteries has been a lengthy and thorough undertaking. Due to the diligence of the entire team involved in the work, the considered communication with memorial owners and the co-operation of those owners in undertaking the work required, this has been a very successful project. As we continue to ensure public safety, this policy revision reflects the risk based approach to the undertaking, with the maximum efficiency, whilst ensuring the needs of the memorial owners are respected. Consequently, I wholeheartedly support this revision.

Contact and Email

26. Colin Munro, Grounds Maintenance Safety, Health, Environment and Quality Manager, 01233 330418
27. colin.munro@ashford.gov.uk

**Ashford Borough Council
Policy and Procedures for the Management of Memorials 2020**

Key Aims

1. Ashford Borough Council (The Council) recognises that the management of memorials in burial grounds needs to be undertaken in a sensitive and sympathetic manner. In operating this policy and associated procedures it will seek to achieve the best balance possible between the interests of grave and memorial owners, legitimate safety concerns and amenity or aesthetic considerations.
2. The Council will carry out an inspection of all memorials which prioritises those assessed as higher risk over a period not exceeding 5 years.
3. The Council will do all that is reasonably practicable to minimise the risks to people associated with memorials in burial grounds (cemeteries and any closed churchyards) where it has a direct or other management responsibility.

In applying these policies and procedures the Council will draw upon recognised good practice published by the Health and Safety Executive and The Ministry of Justice.

Publicity and Communication

1. The Council undertakes to keep all interested parties and the general public informed of any inspections or works programmed for memorials in burial grounds (cemeteries and any closed churchyards) where it has a direct or other management responsibility.
2. The Council will make clear in its relevant agreements the primary responsibility of owners of memorials and the terms and conditions it requires to be entered into when granting a right to erect a memorial.
3. Before undertaking any memorials inspection programme the Council will:
 - a) Place prominent notices on the site to be inspected for up to 6 weeks prior to commencement which will include the sections and plot numbers covered by the inspection
 - b) Place advertisements in local newspapers accompanied by press releases
 - c) Provide detailed information and guidance on the Councils website, signposted as appropriate, to include an explanation of any elements to be operated forming part of this policy and procedure
 - d) Write to the last known address, where held, of owners of graves / memorials especially where it is considered that removal, re-positioning or other disturbance of memorials may occur:

- i. For a period going back 30 years from the date of the planned inspection;
 - ii. To advise or remind owners or families of their responsibilities and invite direct discussion of any concerns; and
 - iii. To advise that the Council will write again following the inspection of the memorial.
4. Following the completion of any set of inspections the Council will write again to grave / memorial owners advising:
 - a) The assessed condition of the memorial and if satisfactory when it will be scheduled for inspection again;
 - b) What, if any, temporary actions the Council has considered necessary after the inspection of their memorial and in accordance with its published policy and procedures;
 - c) What action, if any, they are required to take to make the memorial safe arising from the inspection and period of time for them to undertake it to the required standards with evidence to be supplied the Council; and
 - d) What the Council may do should works for which the owner is responsible not be completed and in accordance with its published policy and procedures.
5. Information relating to the general findings of any inspection undertaken will also be placed in prominent places around the relevant site and on the Councils website.
6. General information, to include guidance and frequently asked questions, will be placed on the Council's website along with a copy of the Council's policy and procedures for the management of memorials.

Inspection Process

7. The inspection of memorials will be undertaken in line with the risk assessment for this activity. The risk assessment was recently reviewed following an initial benchmarking inspection exercise and will be subject to further review if there is a significant change or a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid.
8. The inspection process has been informed and guided by an initial assessment of relevant sites to determine:
 - a) potential hazards- site geology and topography, general age of memorials, site layout (roads, access) and proximity of memorials to them;
 - b) who may be harmed and how – visitors, cemetery workers or other; and

- c) what the risk might be – of a memorial falling or with the potential to fall or otherwise part collapse accounting for known site or other factors.
9. Findings will be recorded and immediate action taken arising from any risks classified as Category 1 (see 13) below.
10. The risk assessment and any material changes that may affect it will be reviewed at a date consistent with the findings.
11. Competent personnel will undertake inspections.
12. Memorials will be inspected in accordance with the following categories:
 - a) Memorials up to 500mm: full visual inspection and hand stress test;
 - b) Memorials 500mm – 1500mm: full visual inspection, hand stress test
 - c) Memorials 1500mm – 2500mm: full visual inspection, primary hand stress test (non complex structures), review for more complex structures in line with (d) below; and
 - d) Memorials over 2500mm and complex structures: full visual inspection, note potential problems and consider cordon off, follow up full inspection supported by a structural engineer and/or qualified stonemason.
 - e) Where deemed necessary by inconclusive hand stress test, a mechanical force test will be carried out by a competent individual.
13. Memorials inspected will be classified into one of three categories:
 - a) Category 1 - Immediate action is required to make the memorial safe or to stop the public accessing the memorial; or
 - b) Category 2 – The memorial is not an immediate danger but is not fully stable and will, therefore, need to be monitored every 12 months to assess any further deterioration of the memorial; or
 - c) Category 3 – The memorial is perfectly stable and will only need to be inspected in 5 years time.
14. Memorials that are classified as Category 1 will be made temporarily safe by:
 - a) The installation of a temporary barrier to the perimeter of the memorial or sections of a cemetery where there is more than one Category 1 assessed memorial.
 - b) In circumstances where the memorial poses a significant risk, such as an imminent collapse in a way which could cause death or serious injury, the memorial will be made safe by removal and will be laid flat as soon as is reasonably practicable.

15. Any barrier will remain in place for a minimum period of 3 months to enable any communication with grave/memorial owners to take place or further actions to be considered by the Council.
16. Any memorial which is the subject of a barrier will have appropriate and clear warning signs, Council contact information and a brief explanation of the Council's policy attached to or around it.

Records and Information

17. Appropriate records relating to defective memorials will be kept for a period of five years. After this time they will be archived. Following initial inspection, Category three memorials will not be recorded as part of the inspection process. All memorials will be inspected once at least every five years. However, a detailed record will only be made of the inspection where a memorial is found to be defective.
18. Ashford Borough Council will keep and place information relating to the following on it's website and in writing upon request:
 - a) Memorial inspection programme(s)
 - i. Current programme details
 - ii. Forward plan (future years and/or re-inspection)
 - b) Inspection results: by site: generic information (section and plot numbers)
 - c) Information relating to:
 - i. It's general memorial management policy and procedures
 - ii. Guidance on the responsibilities of memorial owners to include the standards required for new memorial installations
 - iii. Agreements that the Council requires to be entered into when seeking to erect a memorial in the Councils burial grounds
 - iv. Contact information for the Borough (or local Diocese for enquiries relating to closed churchyards).

All records will be held and stored in line with the associated regulatory, legislation or the Council's adopted information or financial policies.



Agenda Item No: 14
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30th July 2020
Report Title: Fees for replacement bins and increases to garden waste service fees.
Report Author & Job Title: Mark Goodman, Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Manager
Portfolio Holder Cllr. Andrew Buchanan
Portfolio Holder for: Environment and Land Management

Summary:

This report provides information and options with respect to provision of fees being applied for replacement of waste and recycle containers (bins). It provides information with respect to garden waste service fees and proposed increases.

Currently only new developments pay for bins. The fees and charges provide for separate purchase of bin types, but a full set is available to new homes at £77. A fee is also applied for multiple unit dwellings for 1100L bulk bins. There is no fee applied for replacement of bins. The annual cost for provision of bins for 2019 – 2020 financial year was £173,372 with cost recovered for new developments at £53,391. Annual budget for provision of bins is currently £145,000. The introduction of the fee is seen as aligning with the need for a commercialised approach in conducting business. It is also seen as a means to reduce false requests from residents who want to obtain additional bins.

We consider that we need to apply fees for all replacement containers with the exception of the garden bin service, and food waste containers. The garden bin service has systems in place that identify a valid customer, so risk of false replacement requesting is low. On the grounds of risk and the issue that this is an optional service, the cost of replacement should be covered within the fees recovered from revenues. If garden customers buy the bin sign up or replacement it becomes their property and we cannot remove it when service is not renewed. We intend recovering bins from residents who do not continue their garden service.

Currently the garden waste service is £37.50 per annum and has an approved increase to £40 per annum next financial year. The cabinet report identifies benchmarking of that service in comparison to authorities in Kent, and the commercial approach of improving and marketing the service with cost options for Members to consider. Our service objective is to significantly increase the number of customers whilst providing value for money service.

Key Decision: Yes

Significantly Affected Wards:	All wards in the Ashford Borough
Recommendations:	<p>Cabinet is asked to recommend:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. That a fee be applied for supply of any replacement of collection containers excluding garden waste and food waste containers. II. That incremental increase be applied over three successive financial years for the garden waste collection service.
Policy Overview:	The Recycling and Waste Collection Policy and Procedure Statement sets out collection service operations including provision of containers (bins).
Financial Implications:	Currently the replacement of bins is a budgetary pressure that is increasing. This report seeks to recover the cost of provision of replacement bins outside of the current cross subsidising. This will release finances for other use.
Legal Implications:	None identified
Equalities Impact Assessment:	An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for this report.
Contact:	mark.goodman@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330897

Report Title: Fees for replacement bins and increases to garden waste service fees

Introduction and Background

Fees for Replacement Bins

1. Currently only new developments pay for a set of bins with a full set being provided at £77 per set. This includes a grey refuse bin, a green recycle bin, an orange and black food caddy and a silver food caddy for use in the kitchen.
2. New developments or multiple units that require bulk 1100L bins are provided bins according to the number of units and pay for provision of those bins in accordance with the fees set in fees and charges.
3. If a resident reports a missing or damaged bin we provide a new bin without direct cost to the resident.
4. If an owner or management of a multiple unit dwelling requires replacement of a bulk bin, cost of replacement is recovered.
5. Annual budget for provision of bins is currently £145,000. The annual cost for provision of bins for 2019 – 2020 financial year was £173,372. Cost recovered for provision to new developments was £53,391. Total cost of replacement bins was £119,981.
6. The Council only provides additional waste bins to residents in certain circumstances. The requests are evaluated and in accordance with policy are either supported or rejected. Residents can and are likely to be avoiding this check by requesting replacement bins. The collection crews often identify where residents present more than one bin that does not appear on their system, and the bin is retrieved. Staff have attended premises and identified false reports of missing bins. A fee being applied is likely to deter this activity and associated cost impact towards honest ratepayers.
7. Four out of twelve Kent districts are currently applying fees for replacement of bins. The fees applied range between £38 and £50. Table 1 provides comparison for viewing.

Authority	Comment	Residual	Recycle
Dover DC	Charged for all bins with the exception of any bin lost or damaged on collection day.	£50.00	£50.00
Folkestone & Hythe	Charged for all bins with the exception of any bin lost or damaged on collection day.	£50.00	£50.00
Canterbury CC	Charged for all bins with the exception of any bin lost or damaged on collection day.	£46.60	£51.95
Thanet DC	Charged for all bins with the exception of any bin lost or damaged on collection day.	£38.00	£48.00

Garden waste service fees

8. Currently the garden waste service is £37.50 per annum and has an approved increase to £40 per annum next financial year.
9. The current service provides efficient value for money that provides easy disposal for residents. It saves time in attending the Kent County Council Household Waste and Recycle Centre. It also lowers the carbon footprint of the district by servicing residents in a single pass rather than them attend to disposal individually. The material collected is composted and re-used which is a great outcome for the environment.
10. The following table provides comparison for garden service fees across Kent districts. The average is £44.77. Three boroughs charge £40 including Mid-Kent Partners. The lowest fee at present is Ashford and the Highest at £54 per annum is Canterbury.

Authority	Fees	Other charges
Ashford	£37.50	
Canterbury	£27 for six months	Additional bin £21
Dartford	£38	£47.50 delivery
Dover	£46	£4 per sack
Folkestone & Hythe	£47	£29.95 delivery
Maidstone	£40	
Sevenoaks	£47	£32 additional bins
Swale	£40	
Thanet	£51	£35 delivery
Tonbridge & Malling	£40	£25 additional bins
Tunbridge Wells	£52 per bin	

Proposal/Current Position

Fees for replacement bins

11. Currently Ashford Borough Council does not apply a fee for replacement of waste or recycle bins to households.
12. First proposal is that a fee be applied for replacement of bins for households. Options for consideration are;
 - a) Apply £40 replacement fee commencing FY 2021-2022
 - b) A lower fee of £25 for replacement bins to commence October 2020 which recovers the cost of the bin only.
 - c) Continue to cross subsidize the replacement of bins from Council Tax
13. A fee will not apply for bins damaged by the contractor or if the bin falls into the rear of the collection vehicle or is stolen.
14. A Police Report Number will be required for any stolen bin request to be processed further.
15. A fee will not apply towards garden bins.

16. That the fee for supply of a new 1100L bin for multiple unit dwellings also applies should replacement be needed.
17. A fee will not apply for replacement of food waste caddies (Black and Orange containers).

Garden waste collection fees

18. Currently Ashford Borough Council fees for the current financial year for garden waste collection is £37.50. This is set to increase to £40 in the 2021 – 2022 financial year.
19. Second proposal is that garden service fees be increased incrementally in consideration with market expectations and the drive to increase the number of participants.
20. The proposal is that the garden service fee increase by £2.50 a year over the next three financial years to £40 as approved for FY 2021-2022 and to £42.50 for FY 2022-2023, then £45 FY 2023-2024.
21. There is concern that increasing fees at present will impact on the goal to grow the service by an additional 10,000 customers in two years.
22. The next increase to £40 per annum aligns us with our partner authorities in the Mid-Kent Joint Waste Management Contract.

Implications and Risk Assessment

23. The introduction of a replacement bin fee;
 - a) Residents not replace and create more waste or contaminate the recycle stream.
 - b) Residents buy their own which will not “hook up” to the lift on the RCV – only our bins are to be presented.
 - c) That they not replace a bin and place sacks for collection instead (which will not be acceptable).
 - d) May even choose to fly tip the material.
24. All of the above can be managed. We empower crews to follow the practices of rejecting contaminated recycle bins and not collecting side waste. Those actions will push residents to purchase a bin. Fly tipping may be a risk but by experience from other LAs that charge for bins, not an issue. No charge will apply if a bin falls into the collection vehicle. There is likely to be a reduction in false claims of missing bins, therefore relieving pressure on resources and the budget.
25. The incremental rise of the cost for provision of garden waste collection services;
 - a) Our objective is to increase the customer base and increasing the fee may dissuade new customers and those renewing.
 - b) The negative impact on continuing growth of the service if the price is not comparable to other districts.
 - c) The incremental increase will see increase in income generated whilst meeting public expectation of value for money.

Equalities Impact Assessment

26. The implementation of fees does not impact on any particular equality group in our borough as it applies to all community members that are considered a householder under the Act.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

27. Consultation with Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder.
28. Marketing Plan to be developed for Garden Waste Collection Services.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

29. Introduction of a fee for replacement containers will reduce pressure on the budget.
30. Introduction of a fee for replacement containers will have a deterrent effect on those falsely obtaining an extra bin.
31. Increasing the fees for garden waste service will likely impact on new sign-up and those choosing to renew.
32. Multiple increases within a financial year will add complexity to the renewal process.
33. The garden service fees need to closely align with our Mid-Kent Joint Waste Partners.

Next Steps in Process

34. Communicate any application of fee changes to Customer Services.
35. Ensure public facing information is clear and available to view online.
36. Ensure increases in fees for garden waste collection service is applied to system.

Conclusion

37. The Cabinet is asked to agree as recommended that a fee be applied for replacement of bins.
 - a) That a fee of £25 be applied from September 2020 onwards.
38. The Cabinet is asked to agree that increases to the garden waste collection service be increased by £2.50 per annum for three successive years.
 - a) FY 2021-2022 - £40.00
 - b) FY 2022 – 2023 - £42.50
 - c) FY 2023 – 2024 - £45.00

Portfolio Holder's Views

39. The introduction of the proposed fee for the replacement of a container is seen as a modest fee. It does take into consideration that collection activities may impact on what happens to a bin. Not introducing a fee for food waste containers is based on the level of wear and tear that occurs towards the caddies and our drive to encourage more participation in food waste recycling. The proposed progressive increases for the garden service fees are also in line with the current benchmarks across Kent. Ashford sees continued growth in this service. We will continue to drive service delivery in what is a good environmental outcome for the community, and is value for money.

Contact and Email

Mark Goodman, Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Manager

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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 **27th May 2020**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Ledger, Michael, Spain.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Shorter, Walder.

Also In attendance:

Cllrs. Burgess, T Heyes.

Team Leader – Spatial Planning (DC), Team Leader – Spatial Planning (IG), Deputy Team Leader – Spatial Planning, Interim Head of Planning & Development, Graduate Planner, Policy Planner, Development Partnership Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Notes of the last meetings

- 1.1 The Notes of the meetings of 15th January and 11th February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Local Plan Update

- 2.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. He drew Members’ attention to the recommendations at the end of the report and explained that all proposals for policies would come back before the Task Group before they were finalised.

- 2.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/comments were raised:

- A Member noted that some of the consultation responses indicated public concern regarding windfall sites and the likelihood of development in unallocated areas. The Team Leader – Spatial Planning responded that this was a realistic concern and that a balance should be sought in the Plan to provide certainty to the market in terms of allocations, as well as setting

out need and target numbers. It would be necessary for the windfall policy in the Plan to cover all eventualities over the next 10 year period. Too much reliance on windfall sites would present a risk, but there would need to be some provision for windfall sites.

- A Member congratulated Officers on the work undertaken on a complex subject. He asked for clarification on a couple of points. The Deputy Team Leader responded that on page 21, the penultimate paragraph should refer to Option 2, rather than Option B. She also confirmed that a word 'turnover' was missing from page 29, after 'reduced' - first sentence of the second paragraph.
- In response to a Member's question, the Team Leader – Spatial Planning explained that it was necessary to make a choice whether to have a Local Plan which incorporated Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs, or whether to have a separate plan for those needs outside of the Local Plan. He explained that in Officers' opinion it was preferable to keep the two plans separate. The Planning Inspector supported this approach as long as the Council produced a timely plan to deal with Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and that it could be evidenced that this plan was being progressed. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Plan would adopt a similar approach to the Local Plan with allocations to meet the majority of need, and buffers and windfall sites to meet any need over and above the allocations.
- A Member questioned whether windfall sites should be incorporated as a percentage of need or treated as bonus sites. The Deputy Team Leader replied that the percentage option could be tricky in view of unforeseen changes on private pitches. If the allocated sites did not come forward, there was a risk of having insufficient sites. She recommended that work was done to tighten up the HOU16 policy, rather than adopt the percentage approach. Members expressed their agreement with this suggestion, and requested that the recommendations be amended to include tightening up HOU16.
- A Member asked about approaches taken by neighbouring authorities regarding separate plans. She also said she did not wish to see an oversupply of pitches. The Team Leader – Spatial Planning replied that neighbouring authorities appeared to be adopting the approach of including Gypsy and Traveller needs policies within their Local Plans. He also explained that the buffer approach was precautionary, and, although it might lead to a slight oversupply, it would enable to Council to resist hostile applications.
- A Member noted that the graphs within the report showed percentage, but not actual numbers. The Team Leader – Spatial Planning responded that he would add those numbers to the graphs and circulate to the Task Group for information.

- In response to a number of questions, the Deputy Team Leader explained that Officers were currently working with Housing and Corporate Property staff to identify potential sites for a large public site, and they considered that 10 – 15 pitches was an appropriate size. Regarding a county transit site, a Kent-wide Officer working group was currently being established to move this forward. She explained that a new caravan on an existing site was counted as a new pitch, but if the new caravan was part of a current household, it was not considered a new pitch. There was a difference between caravan numbers and pitch numbers. The development management application process had been amended to seek more clarity about household additions in order to establish whether new additions were a new pitch or additional caravans to meet household need. Officers were working on new monitoring methods and seeking to ensure that the right questions were asked to help establish more accurate statistics.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group notes the feedback from the recent consultation on the Regulation 18 version of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Local Plan and agrees, subject to the above discussion, that:

- 1. The plan should be progressed in a timely way and that the site identification parts of the process should continue (subject to C-19 risk assessments),**
- 2. Assessment of existing G&T policies (HOU16 and HOU17) and drafting of new topic policies (pitch design) will be progressed through the Sustainability Appraisal process,**
- 3. The plan period should use the PPTS figures (not cultural) as the basis for identifying need,**
- 4. A % of Chilmington Turnover (not the full amount) will be counted towards a supply as a 'buffer' only,**
- 5. The plan period should cover until 2030, or a date near to this figure depending on evidence, and not a 15-year post adoption date,**
- 6. The LDS should be updated to reflect the expected new timescales for the production of the Plan,**
- 7. That the proposals for future pitch monitoring should be taken forward (subject to C-19 risk assessments),**
- 8. The comments made at Regulation 18 stage can be released into the public domain.**

3 Draft Fibre to the Premises SPD

- 3.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and explained that a report on this topic had been considered at the previous Task Group. The consultation period of the SPD had been affected by COVID-19 issues and for this reason had been extended to 8 weeks. However, only 7 comments had been received. The SPD advised that revisions may be needed in due course as this was a fast-moving area.

3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/comments were made:

- A Member asked who owned the trunking in new developments, and whether it could be moved into communal ownership. The Team Leader – Spatial Planning responded that all trunking fibre infrastructure was owned by the operator, which effectively tied home owners to a single provider. At present this was legally sound, but far from ideal, as it was preferable for residents to have a choice of provider. It was hoped that this situation would be resolved as cabling became a standard feature of infrastructure on all new developments.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Policy Task Group agree:

- i. The responses to the representations received on the draft FTTP SPD,**
- ii. The changes proposed to the draft FTTP SPD as contained within Appendix 2 of this report and subsequently approve the final version of the SPD as amended (Appendix 3),**
- iii. That the SPD, as amended, is recommended to Cabinet for final adoption, to be subsequently agreed by Full Council,**
- iv. That any minor changes or editing to the FTTP SPD can be actioned by the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, and**
- v. That the comments received on the SPD can now be published.**

4 Village Envelope – Brook

4.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item, and explained that this was the last village envelope to be agreed by the Task Group. He also confirmed that the Ward Member had indicated support for the proposals.

Resolved

That the Task Group endorse the Brook village envelope map and recommend that Cabinet adopts this envelope as informal guidance for development management purposes.

5 Date of Next Meeting

5.1 26th June at 3pm on Microsoft Teams.

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **26th June 2020**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)
Cllr. Shorter (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Ledger, Spain, Walder.

Apologies:

Development Partnership Manager

Also Present

Cllrs. Burgess, Harman

In attendance:

Team Leader – Spatial Planning, Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure, Interim Head of Planning & Development, Planning Policy Officer, Graduate Planner, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services Liaison Manager.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.

2 Notes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 27th May 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Housing Delivery Action Plan

- 3.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report. He also advised that the Action Plan was required to be published by August this year.
- 3.2 The Chairman said that he believed the Action Plan was an important document and he drew particular attention to Page 16 of the Agenda, which dealt with existing schemes for flatted development, the use of sustainable brownfield sites and schemes at Chilmington and the South of Ashford Garden Community. He

then opened up the item for discussion and the following points/comments were raised:

- A Member considered that whilst infrastructure was mentioned in the report and in the Action Plan there was a need to broaden this to include comments about rail and bus provision. He also considered that there was competition between towns in terms of development and therefore there was a need for this issue to be explored with developers.
- A Member said that the team should be congratulated for producing the document and said he was pleased to see the provision from windfall schemes included. He asked whether given the slowdown in the economy caused by the Covid 19 pandemic whether the housing targets would be reduced? The Member also suggested that the Action Plan in terms of the Brownfield Sites Register needed to be looked at in more detail, particularly in respect of exploring viability. The Chairman said that from his understanding the government would not offer any latitude in terms of the housing target figures. The Vice Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, concurred with the response from the Chairman in that there would be no give on the target figures.
- A Member asked that the Action Plan review long term projections and consider improving dialogue with Parish Councils. The Chairman agreed that there was a need to work better with both Parish Councils and Ward Members to ensure that they fully understood the position the Council faced in terms of delivery of the housing targets and to also have discussions about emerging schemes/sites at an early stage in the process. Another Member said that she hoped that the Action Plan could be shared directly with Parish Councils. The Chairman asked for the final version of the Action Plan to be appended to the Task Group notes when they were submitted to the Cabinet.
- A Member said that it was important for the Council to work with the issues it had control over and explained that whilst the Council could allocate development sites and grant planning permissions it could not force developers to construct the dwellings, particularly if they were aware that they would have difficulty in selling the properties. The Member said that perhaps the Government should consider developing a mortgage scheme to assist people in terms of buying the properties.
- A Member said that she supported the comments made about improving communication with the Parish Councils but she considered that the consultation process on emerging schemes should also be improved as often the consultation events conducted by developers only took place during working hours, thereby excluding working residents. She suggested that developers should communicate more broadly and also digitally.
- In response to comments raised during the discussion the Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development explained that the Notes of this meeting

would be presented to the Cabinet on 30 July and would therefore be published as a public document on 22 July. He saw no reason why the final Action Plan could not be appended to those Notes and also published on the Council web site at the same time.

- The Team Leader – Spatial Planning referred to the various points raised during the discussion and explained that the content of the narrative was for the Officers to determine in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. In summary he agreed to amend the Action Plan to include matters raised by the Task Group, specifically in terms of Infrastructure (transport and health); early consultation between developers and local people and representatives; communication with Parish Councils and Ward Members; and details of developments/sites which had been delayed.

3.3 The Chairman drew attention to the recommendation as set out in the report and advised that the final approval of the document would rest with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Head of Planning and Development. The Action Plan would also be sent to Parish Councils and Members, with a covering letter signed by the Portfolio Holder.

Resolved:

That:

- (i) the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2020 be endorsed for publication on the Council's website, subject to it first being amended to reflect the comments made at the meeting as summarised above and with any subsequent minor amendments required to the Action Plan, prior to publication, being made in agreement between the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and the Head of Planning and Development.**
- (ii) the final version of the Action Plan be appended to the Notes of this meeting when they are considered by the Cabinet on the 30th July 2020.**
- (iii) the final version of the Action Plan be circulated to all Parish Councils and all Members not on the Cabinet, accompanied by a letter of explanation from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.**

4 Duty to Co-operate Update Report

4.1 The Team Leader – Spatial Planning introduced this item and explained that it set out the current position regarding the 'Duty to Co-operate' in relation to local authorities surrounding and adjoining the Borough and highlighted some of the emerging issues that were likely to arise in the future.

4.2 A Member asked about the position in terms of the London Boroughs, and the Team Leader – Spatial Planning confirmed that they did not have a duty to co-operate with ABC, although ABC had a duty to co-operate with them. ABC also had a Duty to co-operate with Kent County Council and also East Sussex County

Council. He said that he would be happy to bring an update report to the Task Group on London Issues in due course.

- 4.3 The Chairman suggested that it would be appropriate for an Annual Report to be submitted to the Task Group in 12 months' time, which could also include an update on the position in terms of the London Boroughs.

Resolved:

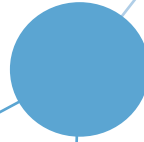
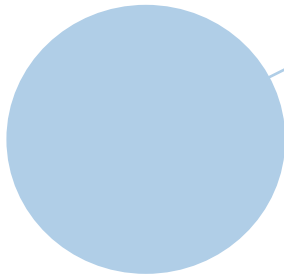
That the report be received and noted and an Annual Report be submitted in July 2021, to include information on the Duty to Co-operate with London Boroughs.

5 Date of Next Meeting

- 5.1 29th July at 2pm on Microsoft Teams.

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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1) INTRODUCTION

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) set out the need to complete a Housing Delivery Test (HDT). This test measures the number of homes required (as prescribed by Government) over a three-year period against the number of homes delivered and calculates the result as a percentage.

The latest HDT covers the monitoring years for Ashford borough from 2016/17 to 2018/19 and the results were published in February 2020.

Ashford scored an HDT result of **93%**

Please note that the original publication of the HDT for Ashford wrongly calculated the figure as 88%. As the MHCLG only publish the measurement annually, the publication will not be amended, but the letter below states that 93% is the correct figure.

[View letter from MHCLG explaining Ashford's re-calculated HDT \[pdf\] 108KB](#)

Delivery performance of less than 95% requires a Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) to be prepared and the application of a 5% buffer to our 5-year housing land supply figure (this will be published later in the year).

This HDAP explores the reasons for under-delivery and establishes actions to reduce the risk of under-delivery getting worse and sets out the measures the Council intends to take to rectify the position.

This HDAP is intended to be a practical document, focussed on effective measures aimed at improving delivery within an area underpinned by local evidence and research of key issues. This is the Council's first HDAP and has been produced within 6 months of the HDT 2019 results.

2) HOUSING DELIVERY IN ASHFORD

Ashford is a diverse borough and continues to be a sought after location for housebuilding investment, competing with other nearby markets within the South East. The Borough enjoys excellent connectivity, including the High Speed 1 service which enables 38 minute journey times to London and an excellent road network to local and nearby Kent markets. This has been enhanced recently through the delivery of a new Junction 10a of the M20 – a multi-million pound project, delivered by substantial public funding.

The Council have long recognised the importance of housing delivery in terms of the social and economic benefits it brings. This delivery has been consistently shaped by a range of Local Plans that have provided a clear plan-led approach to help steer and shape the market. This focus continues. The Council's Local Plan 2030 was adopted as recently as 2019. It provides a comprehensive planning policy framework to deliver sustainable housing growth in the borough.

However, it is not about delivering housing above all else. The Council have always placed great importance on the quality of the places that are to be delivered, including how the communities will grow and flourish and ensuring that they are supported by infrastructure.

That said, the Council also recognise that it is the development industry and housebuilders who directly impact how many houses are built. This needs to be understood when looking at housing delivery.

The housing market is sensitive to market forces and fluctuations, such as the local and national economic situation and other influences. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic highlights this fact. As does the previous 2008 market crash and national recession. This clearly restricted public spending on projects and the markets ability to deliver houses, for several years, on a national scale.

Therefore, it is accepted that the rate of housing delivery in the borough will fluctuate over various cycles, despite the Council providing a robust, sound and positively prepared policy framework to help shape its delivery and this framework being up to date.

The recent Housing Delivery Test result of 93% demonstrates how the market can fluctuate and we welcome the opportunity to prepare this Action Plan, as a means of highlighting some of the key issues and establishing actions for addressing these issues.

3) TAKING STOCK

This section of the Action Plan provides a snapshot of various issues that relate to the local housing market and its ability to delivery housing.

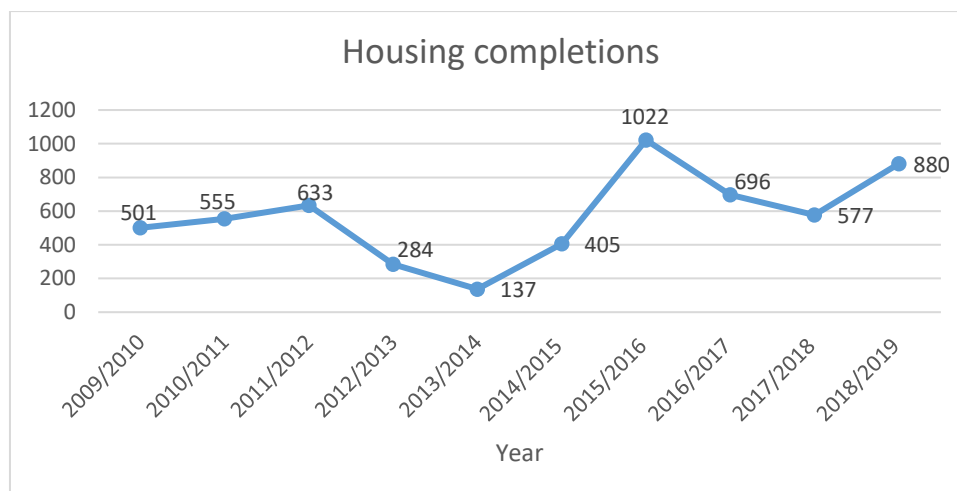
It should be noted however, that Government guidance suggests that engagement with stakeholders is required to understand the nature of the housing market and identify any barriers to housing delivery. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some of this engagement has had to be curtailed. It will be undertaken shortly.

This is countered somewhat as the Council recently undertook extensive preparation to support the Local Plan 2030 which was adopted in Feb 2019. This process involved significant engagement with the local housing market, including developers and land agents.

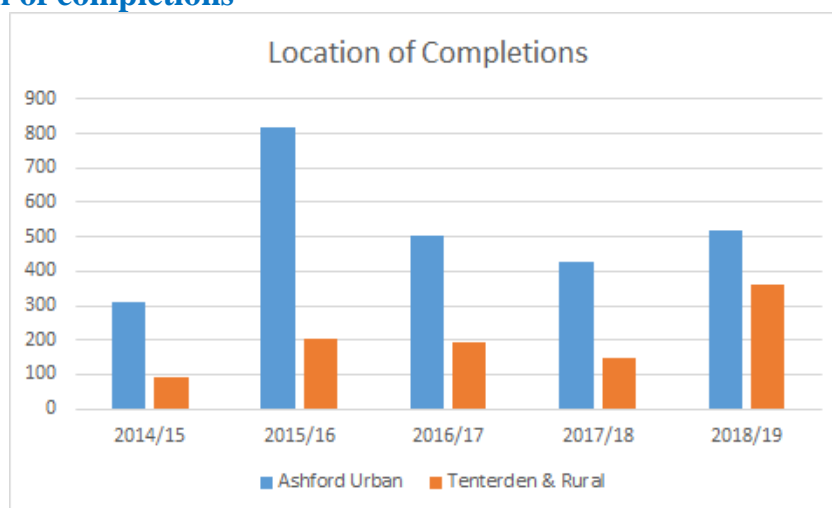
1) HOUSING DELIVERY AND PLANNING DATA

Housing completions: In the past 10 years 5,690 dwellings have been completed in the borough.

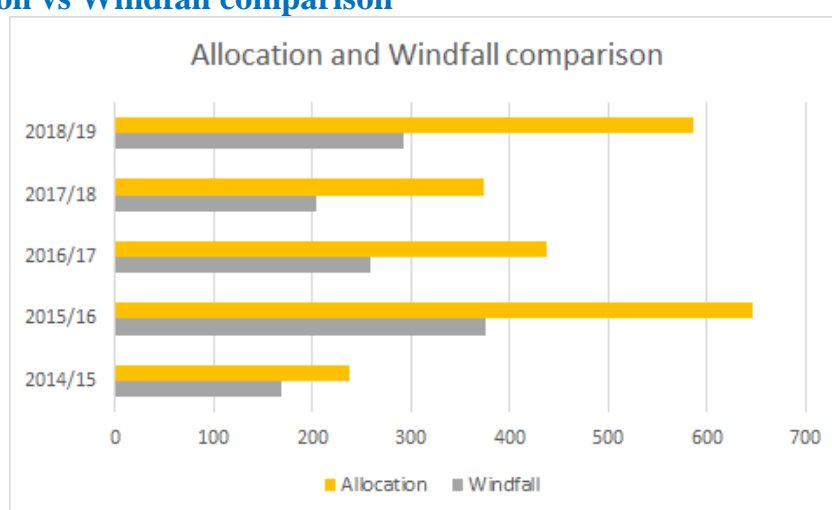
Year	Housing completions
2009/2010	501
2010/2011	555
2011/2012	633
2012/2013	284
2013/2014	137
2014/2015	405
2015/2016	1022
2016/2017	696
2017/2018	577
2018/2019	880



Location of completions



Allocation vs Windfall comparison



Number of dwellings granted over the last 5 years



(Note: this does not include the 12/00400/AS Chilmington Green application for 5,750 homes granted permission in 2016-2017)

Five year housing land supply: The Housing Land Supply Calculation set out in the update for 2019-2024, published November 2019, shows that the Council is able to demonstrate a housing land supply of 5.12 years, including a 5%

buffer. Further details can be found in the Council's AMR¹ and the [Five Year Housing Land Supply Update Report](#)².

2) THE NATURE OF THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Active operators: There are a range of operators active in the housing market within the borough, ranging from national house builders to smaller more local ones. This mix brings diversity to the local housing market and makes it more resilient.

Mix of housing sites: The housing strategy adopted in the Local Plan 2030 recognised the demand from the market for a variety of housing products in the borough. This responds to people's various needs, but also the desire to make the local housing market as diverse as possible – again with resilience in mind.

In doing so, the Local Plan 2030 allocated sites that provided a range of choice and competition to the market, thus providing the greatest chance that housing will be consistently delivered over the whole plan period. Some key examples are as follows:

- ***Flatted development in the traditional Town Centre:*** Over recent years there has been clear market demand to deliver flatted accommodation in the traditional town centre area, utilising High Speed One (HS1) with its excellent and frequent connections to London.

Many of these flats are now under construction. However, as this has been a new housing product for the Town it has taken longer than perhaps anticipated for the market to deliver them. This is to be expected, and market confidence remains sensitive.

However, a balanced view needs to be taken. These sites are now coming forward and they have the ability to deliver large numbers of new housing in the short to medium term, in what are highly sustainable brownfield locations within the urban area – an area which is well supported by existing infrastructure and infrastructure that is planned to be delivered.

- ***Chilmington Green and the South of Ashford Garden Community:*** Chilmington Green is another type of housing product within borough. It is planned to be a sustainable urban community that will deliver 5,750 homes, over 1,000 jobs, five schools and associated infrastructure. The scheme is underpinned by many of the Garden City principles. The emerging development being planned at Court Lodge will extend this sustainable urban community further east.

¹ Ashford Borough Council's 2018/2019 AMR available at:
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/9166/annual-monitoring-reports-2018-19.pdf>

² Five Year Housing Land Supply Update 2019-2024 Report available at:
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/8875/five-year-housing-land-supply-update-19-24.pdf>

However, delivering such a large development has taken time. This experience is not limited to Chilmington Green – many large-scale developments across the country face similar problems when moving from the planning phase to the delivery phase.

Issues such as securing financial agreements, establishing robust cash flow models and land assembly has all resulted in significant lead in times and subsequently delayed housing delivery from what was originally planned. It also takes time to properly plan and deliver the much needed supporting infrastructure, such as the desire to deliver health facilities in the surrounding area – important to ensure that the development delivers a quality and sustainable place.

Housing completions are now coming forward at Chilmington Green. There is little doubt that this scheme can deliver substantial levels of new houses in the short, medium and longer term in a sustainable location which has a robust policy framework supporting delivery.

- ***Sites in the rural areas:*** The Borough has an extensive rural area. Most of this area is countryside, including two internationally protected sites, two nature reserves, 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 68 Local Wildlife sites. A significant proportion of the countryside falls within two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This context was recognised in the recent Local Plan 2030 in terms of housing sites. The strategy is to target appropriate levels of housing growth to different rural settlements based on their relative sustainability whilst also protecting the attractive characteristics of the countryside and existing rural settlements.

As such, a broad and varied range of rural residential site allocations were identified in the Local Plan 2030 to provide the local housing market with choice. Most of these rural site allocations were phased to be delivered early in the plan process, to assist housing supply in the short to medium term.

The approach to housing in the rural area remains a balanced one – a scale of development is proposed which can be sustainably accommodated in the rural area. This reflects the local circumstances and remains appropriate. This position has recently been supported by two independently appointed Planning Inspectors, as part of the Local Plan 2030.

3) **INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES**

To ensure great places are delivered, it is essential that new residential development is supported by the necessary social, community, physical and e-technology infrastructure, facilities and services. This is a key Strategic Objective in the Council's Local Plan 2030 and something which the Council

has a strong record of delivering, through working with public stakeholders and partners, as well as developers.

Recent successes include improvements of Junction 9 and Junction 10 of the M20. In addition, a new Junction 10a has recently opened which provides greater capacity. Also, upgrades have been recently delivered at Bybrook Wastewater Treatment works to increase its capacity.

However, infrastructure issues remain. These include issues associated with the wider A28 corridor to the south west of Ashford. Discussions on this are progressing.

The Council continue to engage in discussions with key stakeholders through various channels, including:

- ***South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP):*** The SELEP is the key body determining strategic economic priorities and investments for the area which includes East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. The Borough has already benefitted from significant funding for projects through the SELEP Growth Plan and Local Growth Fund, including major contributions towards M20 Junction 10a, Chart Road and Ashford College.
- ***Ashford Strategic Delivery Board:*** The Board comprises Ashford Borough Council and other key public sector partners including Kent County Council, Homes England, Skills Funding Agency, Arts Council England, the Highways Agency and Ashford College. The local Member of Parliament is also a Board member and the Board has a good track record in helping to get projects delivered and funded.
- ***Kent County Council:*** The Borough and County Councils have already achieved a lot by working together on projects over recent years. This approach is reflected in the 'District Deal' signed by both Councils - a formally agreed statement of the Councils' shared commitment to work together in key areas. This is the first such agreement in Kent. A District Deal board oversees delivery of the agreed projects.
- ***Chilmington Green Delivery and Implementation Board:*** The "Chilmington Together Delivery and Implementation Board" is a public / private partnership made up of nine representatives to facilitate, nurture and sustain long-term value-creating relationships through the delivery of the Chilmington Green development. Reporting on a quarterly basis to the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board (ASDB), the DIB sets out actions on a rolling 12-month delivery plan, identifies and secures public / private sector investment to the project, and champions a placemaking approach to the new community of Chilmington Green.

4) THE ACTION PLAN

<u>Theme 1 – Understanding the barriers to delivery</u>			
Action	Purpose	Timing	Priority
Assess relevant planning data	Assess the available data to determine whether some planning consents aren't being implemented and whether any trends arise – are certain site typologies or locations presenting issues more than others, and if so, map a way forward.	Short term	High
Market feedback	Pro-actively contact landowners/site owners where applications have been granted for a time, and not yet commenced. And, Pro-actively contact landowners/site owners where applications have not been submitted on sites allocated in either the Local Plan 2030 or adopted Neighbourhood Plans.	Short term	High
Developer/ Land Agent workshop	Set up a general stakeholder working group to include developers and land agents as a means of discussing emerging issues to delivery with local stakeholders (ideally every six months)	Short term	High
Establish better working practices	Progress a more collaborative approach with all delivery partners to understand what barriers might exist and what is needed to unlock delivery	Medium / Longer term	Medium
<u>Theme 2 – The Planning Process</u>			
Action	Purpose	Timing	Priority
S106 process	To review the S106 process to see whether it is fit for purpose and as efficient as possible. To include liaison with key partners.	Short term	High

Action	Purpose	Timing	Priority
Review Planning Committee data	Review planning committee data to see if any trends emerge.	Medium term	Medium
PAS review implementation	To implement the PAS review where it relates to improving planning performance.	Short term	High
Planning Performance Agreements	To review the use of Planning Performance Agreements when staffing levels return to a suitable level.	Medium term	Medium
To review planning application process	To review the wider planning application process, ranging from pre-commencement conditions, the role of pre-app advice, on-going case management and the service we provide to customers.	Short term	High
Planning application prioritisation	To review whether certain types of planning applications need to be prioritised above others.	Medium term	Medium
Engagement with Stakeholders	To review and enhance engagement methods with Ward Members, Parish Councils, Community Groups and the public on development schemes and plan making process	Ongoing	High
<u>Theme 3 – Infrastructure Delivery</u>			
Action	Purpose	Timing	Priority
Engagement with key partners	Continue to work proactively with key partners and stakeholders in relation to the delivery of key infrastructure.	Ongoing	High
Funding opportunities	Continue to actively review and pursue relevant funding from Government in order to unlock key developments and support our partners aspirations.	Ongoing	High

Theme 4 – Maintain a Plan led approach

Action	Purpose	Timing	Priority
Local Plan	Continue to adopt a comprehensive plan led system through assisting in the implementation of the recent Local Plan 2030.	Ongoing	High
Neighbourhood Plans	Continue to provide appropriate levels of support and advice to bodies engaged in Neighbourhood Plans and ensure that their objectives are clear regarding housing delivery.	Ongoing	Medium
Monitoring data	Establish better practices for the monitoring of housing data, including housing completions so that we are more aware of the issues in a timely way so we can map a response more quickly.	Medium	High
Brownfield Register	Review and update the brownfield register to grant permission in principle.	Medium	High
Local Plan Review	Trigger a Local Plan review if needed and if considered to be a suitable response to emerging issues. Work to include a 'call for sites' exercise, reviewing housing and economic land availability assessments and potential revisions to existing policies / introduction of new ones.	Longer term	Low (at this point)

5) MONITORING AND REVIEW

The actions from the HDAP will be implemented in due course and then monitored. This will allow the Council to better understand any root causes of under delivery. If required (depending on the outcome of a future Housing Delivery Test), another Action Plan will be produced next year. This will review the actions and successes from this Action Plan, as well as highlighting if further actions (including new actions) are needed.

NOTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION & INVESTMENT BOARD

23rd June 2020

Attending: Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)
Cllr. Bartlett
Cllr. Clokie
Cllr. Ovenden
Cllr. Shorter

Also Present: Chief Executive
Director of Finance & Economy
Communications & Marketing Manager
Head of Corporate Property & Projects
Estates & Facilities Manager
Head of Finance & IT
Head of Housing
Chartered Legal Executive
Member Services & Ombudsman Liaison Officer

Apologies:

	ACTION
<p>1. <u>Notes of the Previous Meeting</u></p> <p>The Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on 29th January 2020 were agreed and confirmed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>2. <u>Rent Concessions for the Tenanted Estates</u></p> <p>The Estates & Facilities Manager introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within his report. A Member thanked him and congratulated him on a well-crafted report.</p> <p>A Member asked about the drop in rental income between June and the following months. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained that the true costs would only become apparent once negotiations had taken place with tenants across the board, but the figures set out a worst case scenario snapshot across the tenanted portfolio.</p> <p>A Member said he considered some elements of the scoring table were slightly skewed and that this needed reviewing and refining. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained that each property and business were individual. The current proposal provided an objective means of applying a similar scoring approach to all. He confirmed that Officers</p>	DK/PM

would be investigating more deeply into the financial position of any businesses who were identified as possible recipients of assistance. The Director of Finance & Economy added that the Investigations Team would be on hand to assist with this work, if necessary.

A Member noted that there were several businesses operating in International House, and asked that this figure was broken down further into individual businesses. The Estates & Facilities Manager explained that the schedule provided with the report supplied figures for the International House rentals broken down by individual occupier.

Members accepted that there would be a new level of rental normality following lockdown which would be likely to affect market rent levels in future.

Members expressed a desire to support local businesses financially through the strains of the current COVID-19 situation. However, they questioned how long this support could be extended by the Council and considered that a realistic approach must be taken and assistance must be time-limited. Members agreed that the Council should not provide financial assistance to businesses which were not able to prove their viability prior to the lockdown period, or those that were likely to fail. They also asked Officers to be diligent in drilling down to identify genuine need and to exercise caution in applying concessions.

Subject to the above discussion, the Board agreed the Recommendations contained in the report.

It was agreed that Officers would in due course report back with recommendations on a case by case basis.

Agenda Item No: 17
Report To: CABINET
Date: 30TH JULY 2020



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:

danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 01233 330349

**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; Matthew Forest; 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
30th July 2020					
Final Outturn 2019/20	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	14/6/19
Recovery Plan	<i>In response to the CO-VID 19 crisis and to include elements of previously advertised as part of the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025; Carbon Neutral Action Plan; and Economic Development Strategy.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Lorna Ford/ Jennifer Shaw	Open	7/5/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Broadband Update	<i>To analyse the latest data on fixed and mobile telecommunications access within the Borough, update Members on the activities undertaken to attract investment and improve infrastructure within the Borough by private sector operators, in particular the implementation of EMP6 within the Ashford Local Plan, and to set out the potential areas to prioritise moving forward with a request that Members instruct Officers to review the prioritisation of resources to support the Broadband actions recommended within the Ashford Borough Council Recovery Plan July 2020.</i>	Cllr Bell	Tom Jenkins	Open	16/3/20
Health and Wellbeing Annual Review	<i>To outline the key achievements of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership over the last financial year and consider its priorities moving forward including activity relevant to COVID-19 recovery.</i>	Cllr Feacey	Natalie Pearce	Open	1/5/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Fibre to the Premises SPD	<i>To introduce a proposal to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) entitled 'Fibre to the Premises' to provide advice and guidance for applications relevant to adopted Local Plan Policy EMP6 (Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP)) for the purposes of decision-making on planning applications, to summarise the comments received following the Council's consultation on the draft Fibre to the Premises SPD and detail the recommended response The report also seeks the Cabinet's approval to adopt the Fibre to the Premises SPD.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Daniel Carter	Open	5/5/20
Brook Village Confines	<i>The report seeks the Cabinet's approval to adopt the Brook village envelope boundary as informal guidance for development management purposes.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Daniel Carter	Open	18/5/20
Commercial Services Strategy	<i>To present a strategy which is required to assist in addressing the financial challenges currently facing the Council, which have intensified as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Tracey Butler	Open	26/5/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Revision of Policy and Procedure for Inspecting Memorial Headstones	<i>To explain a point raised at audit, how that point has been addressed, which guidance the inspection team for memorial headstones are following and why and what are the consequent suggested changes to the policy and inspection procedure as a result.</i>	Cllr Buchanan	Tracey Butler	Open	28/5/20
Fees for Replacement Bins and Garden Waste Service	<i>To propose that a fee be applied for replacement bins provided for collection services excluding garden waste bins, to provide comparison with other Local Authorities that also apply fees for replacement of bins and to provide benchmarking with other Local Authorities for garden waste collection fees.</i>	Cllr Buchanan	Mark Goodman	Open	23/6/20
27th August 2020					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					
24th September 2020					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	13/9/19
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	Tom Swain	Open	13/9/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
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	13/9/19
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	Gilian Macinnes	Open	13/9/19
Bockhanger Consultation – Outcomes		Cllr Barrett	Rebecca Wilcox/ Yaz Aboubakar	Open	30/10/19
Ashford Borough Council Tree Policy		Cllr Buchanan	Tracey Butler	Open	23/6/20
Aspire Tree Dedication Scheme		Cllr Buchanan	Tracey Butler	Open	23/6/20
Bench Policy		Cllr Buchanan	Tracey Butler	Open	23/6/20
Planning Software Procurement		Cllr Shorter	Louise Lambourn	Open	13/7/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
29th October 2020					
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	2/12/19
26th November 2020					
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	Tom Swain	Open	2/12/19
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	2/12/19
Draft Budget 2021/22	<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	2/12/19
Council Tax Base 2021/22	<i>To present for approval the estimated 2021/22 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	2/12/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Update of Local Development Scheme	<i>The (LDS) is an existing document that needs updating. It sets out to the public/stakeholders what planning documents are going to be reviewed/written and consulted on so that interested parties are aware of upcoming consultations. It also helps ensure the Council has robust planning documents.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Bethan Hall	Open	15/5/20
17th December 2020					
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2020-2050		Cllr Barrett	Sharon Williams	Open	31/12/19
28th January 2021					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	3/2/20
25th February 2021					
Revenue Budget 2021/22	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2021/22 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
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	Tom Swain	Open	28/2/20
25th March 2021					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (Including Review for 2021/22)	<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
29th April 2021					
27th May 2021					
24th June 2021					
Final Outturn 2020/21	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	26/6/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 4) and Annual Performance Report 2020/21	<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	Tom Swain	Open	26/6/20

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

21/7/20

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