



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, 17th December, 2020 at 6.00 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-meetingsandelections/councillorsandmeetings/public-participation/application-to-speak-at-a-publicmeeting/> 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-meetingsandelections/councillorsandmeetings/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, 16th December, 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.

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10 December 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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Ashford Borough Council : Cabinet

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Cabinet held on Microsoft Teams on the **26th November 2020**.

Present:

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

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

Also Present:

Cllrs. Anckorn, Burgess, Campkin, Chilton, Cornish, Farrell, Harman, Hayward, B Heyes, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Krause, Ledger, Michael, Mulholland, Ovenden, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Walder, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Personnel and Development, Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, Head of Culture, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Finance and IT, Head of Planning and Development, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Accountancy Manager, Cultural Projects Manager, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Economic Development Manager, Human Resources Manager, Town Centre Regeneration Manager, Environmental Protection and Licensing Team Leader, Team Leader – Spatial Planning, Senior Accountant, Governance and Data Protection Officer, Communications Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational).

140 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Member of Kennington Community Council and Sevington with Finberry Parish Council.	146
	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Trustee of the Central Ashford Community Forum.	150
	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he lived adjacent to the Sevington Border Control Post site.	153

141 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 24th September 2020 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

142 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that he first wanted to say that he was sure all would be disappointed that Ashford had earlier that day been placed in Tier 3 in the latest coronavirus restrictions, along with the rest of Kent. Although numbers in Ashford were relatively low, he said it was important that numbers remained low and they all continued to follow the rules laid down by Government and playing their part in encouraging others to do so. He hoped they would not be in Tier 3 for very long and said Kent could take some comfort from other areas, such as Liverpool, who were in Tier 3 previously but had now come down to Tier 2.

On a brighter and more pleasing note, the Leader advised that Ashford had been successful in securing a significant grant of £1.45m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to replace the aging power plant at the Stour Centre. The leisure centre was currently undergoing a multi-million pound refurbishment and this grant would help to provide a state of the art power system which would slash running costs and reduce carbon emissions. The money would be spent on replacing the existing gas fired heating plant with hi-tech air-to water heat pumps along with other improvements including the installation of PV solar panels to provide electricity to power the new system. The benefits of this investment were fourfold: - reduction of the Stour Centre's annual carbon emissions by approximately 657 tonnes or 45%; ongoing energy savings of 40% reducing running costs; significant contributions to the Council's goal of a carbon neutral Borough by 2030; and freeing up vital Council funds that would have had to be spent in any event on the existing system, to be used on other projects. This was clearly very good news for the Council that he was pleased to share with colleagues.

143 Motion Referred by Full Council – Ashford's Approach to Equalities, Inclusion and Diversity.

The Leader introduced the report which had been produced in response to a Notice of Motion put to Full Council on the 15th October 2020 relating to Ashford's approach to equalities. The Council referred the Motion to the Cabinet for a more detailed report on how the proposals set out in the Motion could be taken forward.

The Ward Member for Rolvenden and Tenterden West, who had submitted the original Motion to Council, thanked the Cabinet for the report. She knew that this was an issue which the Leader was very passionate about and she was delighted with

the response. Another Member thanked Officers for the report and said it was commendable that there had been a commitment to this significant work as part of the Recovery Plan at a time when so many other things were going on. There was a lot of work already going on with the BAME community and anything that could be done to include those communities even more and bring them closer to the work of the Council and others should be pursued.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing said that he welcomed the report and considered it highlighted the good work in this area that had been going on for a number of years, evidenced by the recent National Inclusion and Diversity Award given to the Council for its work on the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Project. He also drew attention to the work carried out by the Ashford Volunteer Centre, and funded by the Council, with BAME groups including the Community Connection Project which was currently underway to bring community groups together.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Council's current approach to the points raised in the Notice of Motion be noted.**
- (ii) it be noted that a draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy is in development, which will set out the Council's approach for the future.**

144 Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Digital Transformation Task Group

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that during last year's Budget Scrutiny process, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to form a Task Group to review the Council's Digital Transformation Programme. The report set out the findings of the Task Group's review and made eight recommendations to the Cabinet. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee said that one of the very few positives to come from the Covid-19 pandemic had been the move towards more digital working and how well the Council had managed that transition and he wanted to thank everyone involved in both that process and this Task Group.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture reminded Members of the work of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee which he Chaired, and encouraged everyone to bring forward any questions or suggestions that they had to that Committee.

A Member referred to the decision to supply Members with iPads at the start of this Council term and how this had proved to be a mistake as they were not compatible with the Teams Live Event meetings that were now taking place. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that the decision was taken on the best advice at the time as iPads were the preferred device for use in the move to Modern.Gov for online meeting papers. This is what they had been intended to be used for rather than Teams meetings and the iPads worked perfectly for that purpose. Nobody could really have foreseen a global pandemic, and moving to Microsoft Teams meetings. Officers had moved quickly to provide alternative

equipment to those Members who needed it and one of the recommendations in the report referred to reviewing the systems to support virtual meetings at the next opportunity.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the implementation of the digital strategy to date be noted and the emerging digital programme to be delivered up until 2025 be endorsed.**
 - (ii) a digital survey regarding homeworking and virtual meetings be conducted for Members, to find out what lessons have been learnt since the new arrangements were introduced in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19, and what can be improved for the future.**
 - (iii) homeworking, virtual meetings and hybrid meetings continue to be supported as valid ways of running Council services and meetings in the future and the Council ensure that there are adequate IT systems in place to deliver these efficiently.**
 - (iv) a Corporate Etiquette Protocol be created for Microsoft Teams that covered making calls, leaving messages and showing availability.**
 - (v) the online calendar function on Modern.Gov be updated regularly to inform Members of future meetings for at least the next six months.**
 - (vi) the Council proceed with the creation of an online central database for local and national data that residents are able to access and view statistics regarding the Ashford Borough.**
 - (vii) a fact sheet be produced for all Members and staff with advice on broadband and how to check your connectivity whilst working remotely.**
 - (viii) the completion of an IT asset register be prioritised, to ensure that all Council owned equipment is logged and returned to the Civic Centre when appropriate.**

145 Corporate Performance Report – Quarter 2 2020/21

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which summarised performance against the Performance Indicators introduced in the Recovery Plan presented to the Cabinet in July 2020. This detailed the Council's approach to making a timely and successful recovery from the impact of the coronavirus.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

146 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – a budget forecast including underlying assumptions covering the five year period from 2021 to 2026 for the General Fund. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be reported separately in the HRA Business Plan, which would be presented to the Cabinet in December. The Draft Budget was built using the assumptions in the MTFP and the Draft Budget would also be reported to the Cabinet in December.

The Leader clarified that following discussions on the table at Paragraph 35 of the report, it had been agreed to move £679,000 from Unearmarked General Reserves to give some flexibility but also remain at the 15% Unearmarked reserves requirement as dictated by the Council's reserves policy (approximately £2.5m).

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the forecast and the underlying assumptions be noted.**
 - (ii) it be noted that 2021/22 funding is based on current funding with spending reviews, fair funding and Business Rate changes now to be implemented from 2022/23.**
 - (iii) the Reserves Strategy (as contained at Paragraphs 33 to 43 of the report), and as amended above, be endorsed.**
 - (iv) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Economy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to agree the Council's continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool.**

147 Council Tax Base 2021/22

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Council was required to approve the tax base used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2021/22. It was calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast of new properties), which were then converted to Band D equivalents. The tax base had been calculated at 45,173 Band D properties, a decrease of 2,127 (or 4.5%) on the current year.

Members asked about the future of Council Tax Support grants for Parish Councils and it was confirmed that this issue would be considered in future budget reports to the Cabinet and during the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Scrutiny process. The Portfolio Holder encouraged any Members who had any concerns about the budget to attend the Budget Scrutiny meetings and raise those points in good time.

Resolved:

- That (i) the 2021/22 'Net' tax base of 45,173 Band D equivalent properties be agreed.
- (ii) it be noted that 2021/22 funding is based on current funding with spending reviews, fair funding and Business Rate changes now to be implemented from 2022/23.

148 Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report

The report presented the Quarter 2 budget monitoring position for 2020/21 up to 30th September 2020. The report also included updates of the Capital Programme, Treasury Management activity and movements from reserves and additional information on a Decarbonisation Scheme (Appendix C to the report) and leisure centre support (exempt Appendix D to the report).

Resolved:

- That (i) the forecast outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be noted.
- (ii) the Collection Fund position be noted.
- (iii) the contribution from reserves be noted.
- (iv) the Capital Programme position be noted.
- (v) the Treasury Management position be noted.
- (vi) the grant application for the Decarbonisation Scheme (as detailed at Appendix C to the report) be noted.
- (vii) subject to a positive outcome of the Council's application, the Head of Corporate Property and Projects be delegated authority to expedite the capital expenditure in line with the conditions set out in the grant conditions.
- (viii) the procurement be expedited in line with the requirement to spend the grant funding by the 30th June 2021.
- (ix) given the tight timescales for application, it be noted that the Head of Corporate Property and Projects used his delegated powers to procure the consultancy services of Leisure Energy to assess and submit further schemes for Tenterden Leisure Centre and the Civic Centre, through the Single Source Supplier procurement process for the next bidding round in January 2021.

- (x) **the use of the Chief Executive's Urgency Powers for the Leisure Services Support Scheme (as detailed at Exempt Appendix D to the report) be noted.**
- (xi) **the extended procurement exercise for Tenterden Leisure Centre and the revised funding arrangement with Tenterden Leisure Centre Trust (as detailed at Exempt Appendix D to the report) be noted.**

149 Taxi Licensing Policy Review

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented a number of amendments to the Taxi Licensing Policy 2017 - 2022 as a result of the issue of 'Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles Standards' published by the Department for Transport. Each of the amendments was designed to ensure consistency between Licensing Authorities and increase protections to members of the public.

Recommended:

That the proposed amendments to the Taxi Licensing Policy 2017 – 2022 be adopted.

150 Town Centre Reset

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property and Projects introduced the report which presented the Town Centre Reset. This sought to consolidate areas of focus in Ashford Town Centre. Concentrating on market investment demonstrated from the International Station in the past five years, the report emphasised defining an investment corridor and an area of emphasis along Elwick Road and Bank Street. Corporate, cross-departmental projects would be established to identify areas of opportunity with a clear direction for the future. It was stressed that the report should be seen as a blueprint and a springboard to improve, grow and rejuvenate the Town Centre. Ashford was not unique and Town Centres across the country would have to adapt to the changing circumstances they found themselves in.

Other Cabinet Members commended the report and considered it demonstrated a clear commitment by the Council to rejuvenate and improve the Town Centre. There were clearly a number of issues to tackle, but this report provided a good starting point for that work.

The Leader advised that the Council had been successful in purchasing the NCP Car Park in Park Mall. It would be added to the Council's portfolio of Wilkos and Park Mall itself and be a useful asset in the longer term redevelopment of the Town Centre.

A number of Members made comments and asked questions on particular points of detail on the Town Centre. It was advised that many of these were outside the scope of this initial report, but were topics that could be taken up as the process developed.

During the course of debate the following issues were raised as particular areas that the Town Centre Reset could begin to focus on: -

- Litter in the Lower High Street and vermin, rats and gulls picking at the waste behind the shops in that area.
- It would be vital to reach out to the community and the businesses in the Town Centre and engage them in genuine and meaningful consultation. They had much to contribute to this work. It would also be important to feed back on the outcome of suggestions so even those who made suggestions that were not taken forward did not feel ignored.
- Cultural/Leisure offer.
- Flatted development and associated car parking capacity.
- The future of the former Mecca Bingo Site.
- The Operational Working Group which would be made up of a mixture of Council representatives as well as residents and businesses. It would not just be a Cabinet Member group.
- Green spaces.
- Policing and tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Transport, disabled access and encouraging people from the rural parts of the Borough to use Ashford Town Centre.
- The impact of out of town retail.
- The type of retail offer that was actually wanted in the Town Centre.

Resolved:

That (i) the Town Centre Reset be adopted.

(ii) authority be delegated to the Ashford Town Centre Redevelopment Advisory Committee to develop the action plan and monitor the delivery of this document.

151 Personnel Policies (Flexible Working, Remote Working, Flexible Retirement and Virtual Meetings)

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought approval of four personnel policies that materially altered existing policies in the current Conditions of Service.

Recommended:

That the following new policy documents be approved and adopted : - Flexible Working Policy; Remote Working Policy; Flexible Retirement Policy; and Virtual Meeting Addendum (New).

152 Personnel Policies (Sickness Policy Review, New Attendance Support and Management Policy and New Probation Policy)

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought approval of three new personnel policies. Two were brand new policies and the Sickness Policy materially altered the existing policy in the Current Conditions of Service.

Recommended:

That the following new policy documents be approved and adopted : - Probation Policy; Sickness Policy; and Attendance Management and Support Policy.

153 Ashford Borough Council Enforcement at Sevington Border Control Post (BCP)

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that as a consequence of the EU Transition, the Council would become responsible for delivering port health controls at the new Sevington Border Control Post (BCP). It advised on the new service the Council would be providing, the support being given by DEFRA towards establishing the service, the challenges therein and the collaborative work with Dover District Council. The service was to be introduced on a phased approach with documentary checks starting on the 1st April 2021 and physical checks three months later.

The Cabinet wished to express their thanks to the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, and all of the staff involved for the work they had undertaken thus far at short notice, and would continue to do, to get this up and running at a time when they were already extremely stretched with other work. The Leader said he also wanted to thank the Deputy Leader for his collaborative work with KCC, Ministers and Government Departments on the wider Sevington Inland Border Facility. Another Member said that the amount of time and effort involved in establishing this facility should not be underestimated and he hoped that both Members and members of the public would appreciate this. When individuals were under that sort of pressure to meet certain timescales, work did have to be prioritised and he hoped all would understand and recognise that and be reasonable with their demands.

The Deputy Leader advised that the tarmac being used at the facility was being produced in the Borough at Hothfield and this was a particular benefit to a local company. Those working on the site were doing a really good job at engaging with the local community and they were very keen to ensure they were not impinging too much on their quality of life. As the local Ward Member, this was something that he welcomed.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) progress to date in preparation for the Council undertaking port health controls at the BCP be noted.
 - (ii) the Chief Executive and the Director of Law and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, to take all necessary steps and enter any necessary agreement:
 - (a) To secure funding for the Council to undertake all required port health functions in relation to Sevington BCP.
 - (b) Use such funding for the agreed purposes, and
 - (c) Establish and manage a service providing all required port health and related or subsidiary functions for the Sevington BCP in accordance with statutory requirements.
 - (iii) the Cabinet express its commitment to implementing the necessary changes that will arise from the UK's departure from the EU as relevant to discharging its port health responsibilities.
 - (iv) subsequent reports on the progress of the BCP be submitted to the Cabinet as necessary.

154 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 15th September 2020

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 15th September 2020 be received and noted.

155 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 22nd September 2020

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 22nd September 2020 be received and noted.

156 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 24th September 2020

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 24th September 2020 be received and noted.

157 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – Notes of 16th October 2020

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 16th October 2020 be received and noted.

158 Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board – Notes of 14th October 2020

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the 14th October 2020 be received and noted.

159 Compliance and Enforcement Board – Notes of 27th October 2020

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on the 27th October 2020 be received and noted.

160 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.

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Agenda Item No: 6

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 17th December 2020

Report Title: Affordable housing – our delivery, aspiration and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Report Author & Job Title: Mark James, Development Partnership Manager
Lee Foreman, Senior Accountant

Portfolio Holders Cllr. Bill Barrett and Cllr. Neil Bell

Portfolio Holders for: Housing and Finance

Summary: The purpose of this annual report is to set out the priorities within the HRA. The Council must have a 30-year Business Plan for its HRA. The viability of this plan is the foundation of every decision taken in the HRA. This ensures a holistic approach to balancing the need to increase our stock (given demand) while providing quality, energy efficient homes and sustaining tenancies.

Our tenants want to call the borough home and be a part of the communities in which they live. The recently published Social Housing White Paper talks about eliminating the stigma attached to living in social housing. This report details how our policies will place this respect at the heart of our work liaising with, and providing for, our residents.

During lockdown, construction was deemed an essential industry. Therefore, work has continued as the Council's new-build schemes are delivered. The report details a strong pipeline of sites and a refined acquisitions programme – crucial in light of the continued national focus on housing delivery. Additions can only be achieved by paying meticulous attention to our finances and resources. These are critical factors at any point in time, but in the context of the recovery phase of a pandemic, are more so.

The HRA Business Plan still depicts a robust and viable business. It is able to deliver key priorities, even in the context of increased development, management and maintenance programmes – and a pandemic. The effects of the pandemic, pre-empted as far as possible, mean that national political, economic and legislative changes could adversely affect this financial position, so any projects must continue to be fully risk assessed to ensure resilience within the overall model. We will continue to budget responsibly.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None.

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

- I. Note the progress in delivering affordable housing in the HRA and temporary accommodation within the General Fund.**
- II. Review and agree the updated HRA Business Plan and financial projections.**
- III. Note Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) will review the HRA Business Plan financial projections as part of the budget scrutiny process**
- IV. Agree the HRA priorities set out clearly in the report in paragraph 10**
- V. Agree that the Council will no longer issue five-year fixed-term tenancies, offering only secure tenancies following the successful completion of an introductory tenancy**
- VI. Agree that the Council will, after careful consideration, cease the Ashford Promise**
- VII. Agree that the Council will continue with the on-street purchase programme in quantities outlined in the report, recognising that 20 units will be cross-subsidised in later financial years, and set affordable rents**
- VIII. Note the Council's plans for future housing delivery as set out in Appendix B, which presents projects under way or in consultation phase, and delegate authority to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Head of Finance and IT and the Portfolio holders for Housing and Finance and IT to vary the programme as necessary**

Policy Overview: Building on solid foundations: delivering affordable homes in Ashford – our delivery plan for 2019-2023
Housing Strategy Framework Priority 1 – Improve the supply of affordable housing to meet local housing needs in urban and rural areas, and Housing Statement 2018-2023
Reform of HRA – Cabinet endorsed five key priorities for further spend, as a result of greater freedom within the HRA.
National Housing Strategy 2011 – delivering new homes

under the affordable rent model.

A Charter For Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper 2020.

Financial Implications:

This paper provides an update to the financial position of the HRA over the next 30 years and forecasts that the HRA business plan continues to be a robust and viable business and is able to deliver its key priorities.

The financial model is a tool for testing existing priorities, the impact of changes in Government policies and changes in key business sensitivities to ensure plans remain affordable.

Delivery of new build Council housing is achieved using grant funding, HRA cash resources and Right-to-Buy receipts (known as 1-4-1 monies). This ensures the HRA remains able to meet its debt repayment commitments.

Legal Implications

Homes England requires the Council to enter into a formal agreement in relation to any grant funding it provides.

The Council is formally required to have a 30-year HRA Business Plan.

Equalities Impact Assessment

See attached at Appendix D. The assessment does not identify any adverse impacts on any client group.

Data Protection Assessment

Assessment on the impact on data protection will be undertaken on each individual project at the appropriate time

Risk Assessment

Risk is identified in the report itself in terms of the Business Plan. Risk assessments have been undertaken on each of the projects being taken forward within the Business Plan and risk is assessed fortnightly by officers within the appropriate teams involved in the projects. These meetings identify any implications for the pipeline of sites being progressed. Further risk assessments are undertaken on each individual project at the appropriate time.

Sustainability Assessment

Under the Corporate Plan one of the three emerging themes is 'Green Pioneer' citing the Council's ambition for carbon neutrality. The report talks about the decarbonisation of HRA stock and each project and acquisition assesses sustainability as part of its due diligence process.

Other Material Implications:

Design and construction standards will comply with Ashford spatial standards (complying with Residential Space and Layout SPD), Lifetime Homes (a standard the Council has set out for Registered Social Landlords) and Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 (which has been committed to for

Homes England purposes), and level 4 on energy.
Emphasis on the building envelope will deliver the greatest
benefits for landlord and tenant.

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Report Title: Affordable housing – our delivery, aspiration and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Introduction and background

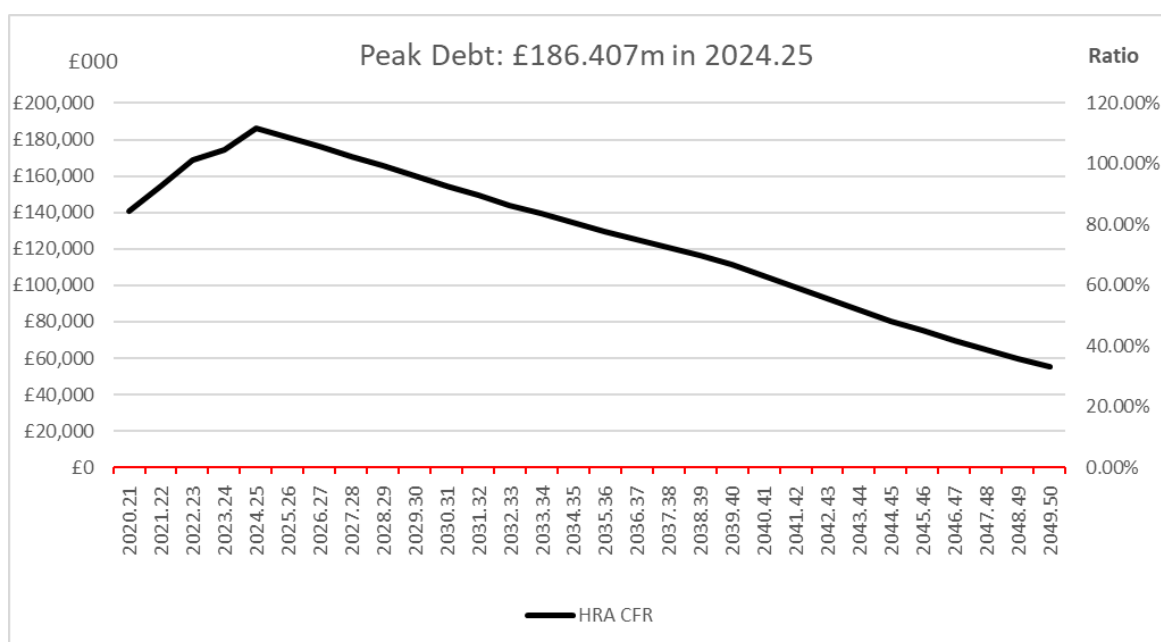
Delivery in the current climate

1. 2020 has been a challenging year. The Council has worked hard across the organisation to support vulnerable people and within its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to ensure that the human toll on residents within its own homes has been carefully managed. This is paramount as the Council has over 400 residents within its independent living schemes. The Council has also delivered a coordinated response to ensure that the financial impacts of the coronavirus have not had an adverse impact on residents' ability to sustain their tenancies, or on its own ability to build, acquire, manage or maintain homes in its stock in the future.
2. In October 2019 members agreed a bold delivery plan for Ashford Borough Council's housing services team. Since the start of the 2019-20 financial year, using a range of tools agreed by Cabinet, the Council has built or acquired 219 homes (including the 109 to come from the 'New Quarter' building and 93 from the on-street purchase (OSP) programme, including those where offers have been agreed and are in the conveyancing process). It has also enabled 154 homes that have been delivered by registered providers (RPs) who continue to invest strongly in the borough. A further 77 homes will be built by the Council across three sites where construction is already under way.
3. The statement made by the Council, acquiring the 'New Quarter' building (where the west block will be renamed Somerset Heights and the east block Stour Heights), offering tenants the same leisure, learning, job and lifestyle opportunities as those choosing to live in private apartments in the town centre, is a sentiment at the heart of this year's HRA report. The Council's commitment to providing quality affordable housing, recognising the vital role of all keyworkers and creating housing pathways to reduce its reliance on temporary accommodation, are notable actions taken in the HRA this year.
4. Yet this report comes to Cabinet at an unprecedented time. While the HRA Business Plan remains in a strong position, the metrics alone do not tell the whole story. To get to this point, all of the Council's new-build projects have been risk assessed again to ensure that they are viable both on a standalone basis and as part of the overall Business Plan in the context of all HRA spend.
5. That such a strong programme for new-build delivery and acquisitions still exists is in part down to its flexible and competent approach to rent collection. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was anticipated that rental income could drop by 20%. In fact, despite a small increase in Universal Credit claimants, rental arrears have actually reduced by £28,000 since mid-March 2020 – a strong performance given the initial projection.
6. The HRA Business Plan is a complex model that is built using a number of assumptions. The starting point for building the model is to use the current financial year's (2020-21) estimates and forecast from that point. Built in are known items of income and expenditure along with a number of other

assumptions. These are based on historic evidence, as well as advice from experts, who have experience and knowledge in areas such as interest rates, inflation and, in the current climate, can relay anecdotal evidence of what other authorities are planning for given the pandemic.

7. As a reminder for members, the model does not allow for slippage in spend. Therefore, if there are any underspends or if timescales change then, as a ring-fenced account, any un-spent funds are placed into reserves and re-invested. Additionally, by law, the HRA must not have a negative balance, therefore it is recommended that the HRA maintains a reserve of broadly £1m through the life of the business model which was seen as prudent following previous discussions with the portfolio holder. The HRA business model demonstrates that despite dipping slightly below £1m over the first few years of the plan, the reserve target of £1m is achieved in 2025-26 and remains at that level for the remainder of the plan.
8. One of the key metrics of a sustainable HRA is the ability for the ring-fenced fund to repay its debt. Graph 1 shows the HRA increasing its debt to £186m over the next five years as the capital plans are progressed, but then the debt can be seen to track in a downward trajectory over the remaining life of the business plan model.

Graph 1 – Peak debt and repayment trajectory



9. What the Business Plan demonstrates most effectively is that there are always tough choices to be made in terms of how priorities, projects and spend are managed. It is not possible to undertake all projects at once and do everything that the Council aspires to achieve in the early years of the plan. Therefore, decisions must be made about when spend and projects are brought forward. Its priorities going forward are therefore set out below and discussed in detail.

Setting out the HRA priorities

10. This report sets out the priorities within the HRA. These priorities will ensure that the Council’s HRA delivers on key objectives in the Council’s wider recovery plan. In terms of being a green pioneer, the aim is for the HRA stock

to contribute to the Council's objective of becoming carbon neutral, encouraging sustainability in its new build homes. In terms of creating a caring Ashford, Council homes will contribute towards the borough being a caring and supportive place to live, with thriving communities and high-quality housing, creating a strong sense of civic pride. The HRA priorities are:

- Continuing to have a good maintenance programme
 - Decarbonisation
 - Compliance with the social housing regulator
 - Maximising new provision
 - Supporting the corporate agenda
11. These priorities will be balanced by ensuring that the Council is meeting the minimum requirements for compliance with building safety and the social housing regulator requirements for decent homes, allowing funds to be redirected to achieving the other priorities listed.

Continuing to have a good maintenance programme

12. In order to deliver quality housing and homes for all, it is imperative that the Council maintains the quality of its assets. The Regulator of Social Housing requires that homes made available for social rent are maintained by landlords to the Government's Decent Homes Standard, which sets out the statutory minimum standard for housing – requiring that homes:
- Are free of serious hazards (as assessed by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS])
 - Are in a reasonable state of repair
 - Have reasonably modern facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms
 - Have efficient heating and effective insulation
13. Keeping properties in good repair by ensuring that they are compliant with the Decent Homes Standard and ensuring that responsive repairs are completed correctly the first time they are reported are important factors. Maintaining building safety so that the Council is fully compliant with its health and safety obligations, such as gas, electrical, fire, water and lift safety is essential. These checks may need to be undertaken more frequently, particularly in buildings with communal areas to help it comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Gas Safety Regulations of 1998. These are points raised in the White Paper and are functions the Council performs well.
14. The Council has an in-depth knowledge of its housing stock. Stock condition is currently managed using a life-cycle replacement model and an annual validation process, where the lifecycle of over 54,000 building components is assessed. The lifecycles are based on Government standards, such as the Decent Homes Standard, guidance from professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), supplier product specifications and previous experience. The approach is supported by well-defined practice, which provides a guidance framework and structure to ensure that the Decent Homes Standard is met.
15. The fixtures and fittings the Council specifies and installs are of good quality. For example, bathrooms have an anticipated lifespan of 30 years and

kitchens have a planned renewal of 20 years. The products chosen are affordable, appropriate, sturdy, low maintenance and serviceable.

16. The low capital maintenance spend is due to the Council's previous diligence in meeting decent homes standards. Its homes remain in a good condition and the replacement time of some elements can be extended if their condition still meets acceptable standards. Where the condition of the components due for replacement are in good or serviceable condition, the replacement date will simply be rescheduled for a future year. This approach minimises unnecessary expenditure while ensuring the quality of our properties and freeing up money to support other areas within the Business Plan as a whole.
17. To build on this further, the Council intends to undertake a survey of its assets in the 2021-22 financial year. This will ensure that it is able to understand any changes to its estimated costs and scheduling of planned works. It will also enable a greater understanding of the measures needed to meet new compliance rules and objectives around decarbonisation. The anticipated cost of this survey is accounted for within the Business Plan and the most efficient method for undertaking the survey will be determined shortly. The combination of rigorous information sets and the additional survey work will ensure that individual property records are updated accordingly.

Repairs

18. The Council's responsive repairs team supports the allocations process and plays a pivotal part in the buy-back work stream by ensuring that properties are safe and secure, meet the Decent Homes Standard and the Council's property-letting standard. Additionally, the repair service ensures the Council complies with the Right to Repair, Disrepair and Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018. The team provides a 24/7, 365 days of the year emergency repairs service with a target attendance time of two hours – night or day. It undertakes around 10,000 repairs a year and is considered by the majority of Council tenants as their most valued service.

Decarbonisation

19. Last year members were advised that in order to ensure the HRA took appropriate steps towards carbon neutrality a 10% additional sum had been added to the cost of the Council's new build schemes. The aforementioned survey of Council assets will determine the amount that it will cost to work towards decarbonisation in the HRA stock.
20. This is a challenging but vital strand of work. In line with the Social Housing White Paper, the HRA seeks to move towards a position where all of its homes achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) 'C' rating. Currently there is no requirement for Council properties to have an EPC unless there is a new tenancy or it undertakes works that may change the EPC assessment. Currently 50% of Council homes do not have an EPC and 4% of homes have a grading of 'E' or lower – these homes generally are off-gas and have solid fuel or electric heating.
21. The Social Housing White Paper states that homes contribute 14% of all UK greenhouse emissions. The Council is committed to playing its part in reducing carbon emissions through its housing stock. The White Paper also suggests that the Decent Homes Standard will be reviewed to consider if it should be updated (and probably upgraded), including how it can better

- support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social homes, and improve communal and green spaces around them. It is therefore likely that Government expectations will increase as we strive to hit our own targets.
22. Improving the energy efficiency of its properties is an integral part of maintaining the Council's stock to a reasonable standard. Energy efficient properties ensure residents' homes are warm, easier and more affordable to heat, which has positive benefits, particularly to those in fuel poverty. The Council's aim is to create an energy model that will allow it to complete an analysis of its homes and identify those homes that will require investment above the current 'fabric first' approach and also those homes that will struggle to achieve energy performance standards and will require more detailed appraisal work.
 23. 'New' technologies, such as solar PV and heating panels, air source heat pumps, mechanical heat recovery systems and battery storage systems receive a lot of media coverage, as do major retrofit approaches, such as a whole property or multiple property approach. While many of these solutions are likely have a part to play in improving a property's energy efficiency, they often involve expensive and invasive installations that can be difficult to fund or justify their cost benefit.
 24. The Council's planned approach is to categorise its properties in around 450 archetypes for which it will complete a 'SAP' assessment. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is how the Government assesses and compares the energy and environmental performance of buildings. The Council will then create a costed carbon reduction plan for each archetype based upon the efficiency measures available, to reduce its carbon footprint and achieve its target of a minimum EPC rating of 'C'.
 25. This approach will enable the Council to project the results to its whole stock so that every property has a costed carbon reduction plan, selecting the most appropriate measures for each property archetype and understanding the contribution and cost of each measure and, furthermore, its effectiveness.
 26. The Business Plan supports an increase in the annual planned maintenance programme, which ranges between £5m and £7m per annum over the next five years. This increase partly includes some higher specification works, which support the carbon neutral agenda. The Council will also be discussing this wider agenda with colleagues in the Kent Housing Group. It will also maximise opportunities to bid for additional resources to support this agenda as and when they arise. In addition we will consider how the measures installed impact upon the tenant and explore how charges to the tenant may be considered against electricity usage to offset costs. Discussions are taking place with Engie, our current repairs contractor to review the possibilities and options available in this context.
 27. It is important to note that this is an area that will need to be kept under careful review as our data sets are developed. By the time we review the Business Plan next year the aim is that we will have more robust information to understand the costs of decarbonisation and can refine our initial projections regarding the impact upon the plan.

Compliance with the Social Housing Regulator

28. This report is presented to Cabinet following the publication in late November 2020 of the Government's long awaited White Paper "*The Charter for Social Housing Residents*", which sets out its plans for social housing. It contains several strands that permeate throughout this report. In short, the Council is comfortable it can meet all requirements of the new Social Housing Charter for tenants, though tenant engagement is an area that needs more attention.
29. The document states that Government will work with the Regulator of Social Housing to create a stronger requirement for landlords to be transparent about their performance, the decisions they make that affect their tenants, and how effective their overall engagement with their tenants actually is. The report also looks at safety concerns following the Grenfell disaster and addresses how complaints are made to the Housing Ombudsman.
30. Residents, where possible, will be encouraged to purchase their own homes, including through a new shared ownership model, though the right for tenants to acquire a Shared Ownership lease of their current property extends only to housing associations at this time.
31. Ashford Borough Council is absolutely committed to helping those living in its homes achieve what they want to achieve. This is why it is so important that people registered on the housing waiting list have access to homes in all parts of the borough – both in the town centre, and for those in rural areas. This integration is pivotal to creating cohesive communities – with one example in the borough being the way in which all residents have bonded on the TENT1 developments. With access to new homes in the town centre being given to keyworkers who have played a vital part in helping Ashford's economy through the height of the pandemic and into the recovery phase, life chances are being offered that see no one disadvantaged.
32. The White Paper and, within it, the new Social Housing Charter for residents is to be welcomed. As the Prime Minister states in his introduction to the White Paper, in levelling up the country and making it fairer for everyone, this must include making sure social housing tenants are treated with the respect they deserve. The Government believes that offering residents choice, and providing them with the highest level of customer service is therefore a priority for social housing landlords.
33. The Social Housing White Paper demands that tenants feel empowered and are involved or at the very least informed about spending decisions. It also stresses that tenants have a voice and an opportunity to challenge decisions. Complaints processes must be fair, and a 'responsible person' should be appointed who will ensure that the Council is complying with the regulations. Furthermore, a path is required to be clearly delineated for residents, so they know how to approach the Housing Ombudsman if things go wrong. The Paper states the best landlords engage well with their residents and listen to them with respect. While the Council already has a clear and robust complaints process, a review of this area is under way using the Government's suggested self-assessment tool, and any areas that require attention following this process will be addressed in order to ensure that we meet the regulator's expected standards.
34. There is a possibility that the Council could be inspected more regularly as the White Paper says the regulator can inspect larger social landlords every four years. It remains to be seen whether the Council will fall into this bracket.

Rent standard

35. In addition to maintaining homes well, the White Paper demands that social landlords look at how they set their rents. In April 2016, during the height of austerity, rents were reduced by 1% per annum for a period of four years. This was good news for tenants but a setback for the Council's development programme with East Stour Court, which was earmarked for remodelling at the time, only now on site as priorities were forced to change with limited resources. To help mitigate the reduction in rental income, based upon previous investment, the Council's repairs and maintenance investment was also reduced by £6m for the four-year term, though despite this the decent homes standard has been maintained.
36. A revised rent standard, in place since April 2020, has enabled the Council to return to an annual increase of CPI + 1% for at least five years. From the 2025-/26 financial year the HRA Business Plan assumes a more modest increase of CPI + 0.5%. The Council will monitor the economic context in the next year to provide a stronger basis for these assumptions going forward and assess next steps.
37. The Council's approach remains to seek to deliver 'affordable' rents (in this instance up to 80% of market rent) but as close to social rent (60% of market rent) as is viable within the Business Plan to ensure a return on each project. Rents set on the Council's own developments differ to those set on the OSP programme as there is a variation on the amount of grant awarded. Homes England have endorsed this approach and grant funding remains available within its 2016-21 programme that will enable schemes to be delivered by an extended deadline, due to the pandemic, of March 2022.

Management of the stock

38. Of course, as more homes are introduced into stock, it is important to ensure that there is appropriate resource to manage these homes. The Social Housing White Paper actually points out that residents in social housing are more likely to experience antisocial behaviour and states that tenants have a right to feel safe in their homes, without the stress, fear and tensions that anti-social behaviour and crime can cause.
39. The Council has boosted the resilience of its management function with the creation of the post that will manage the 109 'New Quarter' units. This post will initially be based in the building and over time, once all residents have settled in and any snagging matters have been resolved, the post holder will gradually manage more homes, while retaining the block as part of their 'patch'. With each neighbourhood management officer ordinarily actually having around 800 units to look after, it will be necessary to blend the New Quarter officer back into the wider team following the settling in period to redistribute workloads more evenly among the team.

Providing effective services

40. The Council does, and will continue to provide effective services. It will set out how it has performed in an annual review for tenants, detailing metrics based on the key points raised in paragraph 29. These tenant satisfaction measures will be the barometer for how the Council is performing.
41. This shift is important because the White Paper suggests that stigma is one of the biggest obstacles that must be overcome. This stigma manifests itself in many ways. Often, affordable housing is easily distinguishable on a new-build

site from the open market housing, or put in one section of a development. This visual trigger can lead to corrosive behaviours.

42. Residents in Council homes should receive the same high quality of customer service as those not living in social housing. This is something the Council's housing services team prides itself on but it will continue to proactively promote stories of cohesive communities to prevent misconceptions that lead to tenants feeling as though they are second class citizens.
43. The Social Housing White Paper says it is vital that social housing is treated as an integral and valued part of the housing system, rather than being separated or segregated from other forms of housing. That aspiration is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. It also emphasises the need for planning policies and decisions to promote social interaction and provide shared spaces and facilities.

The Ashford Promise

44. With a shifting housing landscape, it is considered right to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ashford Promise, introduced in 2014, and the issuing of fixed-term tenancies, issued by the Council since 2013.
45. The Ashford Promise is a system that introduced a policy of offering different service levels to tenants based on the conduct of their tenancy. Those in full compliance with their tenancy conditions were to be eligible for our full range of services while those in some form of breach were only to receive a reduced, statutory minimum service. However, while it was an initiative that was felt to be worth implementing when it was introduced, it has not delivered the anticipated results and has not achieved what we wanted it to.
46. The key principle of the 'Ashford Promise' was seeking to achieve a better landlord-tenant relationship, where the tenants more fully understood that to be eligible for works such as improved kitchens and bathrooms, they must be fully compliant with their tenancy conditions, including pre-paying their rent. The theory was that in achieving that aim, not only would the Council improve its income levels (which remain at a very high percentage compared to all other social landlords) but do so in a way that made Council tenants better understand their obligations.
47. The housing team has progressed greatly since the scheme was implemented and thinking among other RPs who offered something similar and the national Government has led to this careful evaluation. With an established rent arrears area managers' team and an estates area managers' team, aided by housing management support officers, a much more targeted and specialised approach to dealing with antisocial behaviour and rent arrears separately is now undertaken. This was not in place when the Ashford Promise began and was introduced after a review of the Housing Service in 2016.
48. To illustrate the point, in some instances where the Ashford Promise has been invoked and tenants have not had their planned improvements undertaken, it has made no difference, with the tenants still in arrears. In other cases, rent arrears have been cleared but have soon fallen back into arrears and those arrears continue in the long term, with the tenant falling back into arrears within six months. It is therefore more sensible for the Council's rent arrears officers to work with the tenant to assess any issues behind this rather than penalising the tenant further.

49. The planned maintenance team would also benefit from not having to rearrange one-off bathroom and kitchen refurbishments when a tenant is put back into the scheme. The logistical and financial cost of sending back a contractor to complete a refurbishment once they have left the area is significant and in many cases is often greater than any increased revenue from the increased collection of rent. The housing team now uses new tools to support tenants so they have successful tenancies, rather than face sanctions that do not help build thriving communities or reduce stigma.
50. In short, the Council should not reward tenants for adhering to their tenancy agreement; it should be expected of them. Members are therefore recommended to acknowledge that though the programme has been extensively tested, after a robust appraisal of the scheme, the Ashford Promise should be ceased.

Fixed-term tenancies

51. While there was considerable merit in introducing five-year fixed-term tenancies, it is now believed that the Council should follow the spirit of the Social Housing White Paper, and the Green Paper before it, as well as the lead of RPs, and only issue lifetime secured tenancies, following an introductory period.
52. Originally fixed-term tenancies were introduced in the context of the Localism Act 2011. The Council offered tenancies for a fixed term with a view to reviewing that household's need at the time the tenancy was due to expire, with updated circumstances determining if the tenancy was to be renewed or the household obliged to then seek a private sector housing solution.
53. Secure lifetime tenancies have continued to be offered where the circumstances of a household were unlikely to change over time, for example older people and vulnerable households moving to a home that should be suited to their long-term requirements.
54. While it is fair to say that fixed-term tenancies provide the opportunity to balance a tenant's requirements for stability and affordability for the long term, this is outweighed by the need for tenants to feel secure in their own homes.
55. The evidence the Council has, and that it has gained from other housing providers, is that fixed-term tenancies are not working and actually contradict the aims of the White paper, in reducing the stigma associated with a tenant's longstanding place in the community. The Government had originally planned to end secure lifetime tenancies as per the Housing and Planning Act 2016 but this decision has been reversed.
56. Conversations held with members of the Kent Housing Group (a group of local authorities and RPs who operate in the county) and the Chartered Institute of Housing have shown the desire for many providers to revert to offering secure lifetime tenancies. This gives stability for families and their children's schooling. It also plays a part in celebrating thriving communities.
57. Fixed-term tenancies appear to act as a barrier to mobility with residents not wanting to lose their security of tenure, rather than aspiring to move onto private rented accommodation or shared ownership. It is important that the Council shares the Government's determination to tackle social stigma by ending fixed-term tenancies and continuing to develop and acquire new tools to help our tenants thrive and build successful communities.

58. During their implementation, the Council has ended a small number of fixed-term tenancies. Members will be reassured there are no proposals to remove introductory tenancies and that tenants will be issued with introductory tenancies still, so that behaviour can be monitored during the initial stages of a tenancy, and that those tenants not under a notice of seeking possession will be transferred to secure tenancies by the end April 2021.
59. This move to no longer issue fixed-term tenancies is at the Council's discretion and does not need further consultation. Members are therefore recommended to agree that the Council will no longer issue fixed-term tenancies and will support people in putting down firm roots in communities.

Digitalisation

60. The Council continues to seek innovative ways to engage with tenants and the Pandemic has really heightened the Council's ability to adapt – for example, using electronic signature software, YOTI (Your Own Trusted Identity), which is the corporately chosen app for electronic signatures. This has been successfully introduced where electronic signatures are required for tenancy sign-ups, and has been agreed with the Legal Team.
61. Furthermore, with viewings tough to undertake within social distancing guidelines and without PPE, officers have been undertaking 'virtual viewings' – using a 360 degree camera to indicate the size and layout of the home on offer. These have been welcomed by residents and have not slowed the void process in any way. This work will continue and is actually being undertaken for the acquisition of the 109 units at the "New Quarter", where several videos are being produced to illustrate the various alternative layouts on offer.
62. The Council has already achieved significant digitalisation of the majority of its forms, which can now be completed online for customer ease using Abavus. Other strands of work that will enhance customer experience are based around the way in which the housing service manages its documents, its repairs appointments and reporting systems, and the way tenants can make payments. Mobile working has improved for officers in the housing team too. Crucially, going forward the way in which it records customer feedback and requests will also be developed. Customers expect services to be delivered in this way and the Council must, and will, deliver.

Maximising new provision

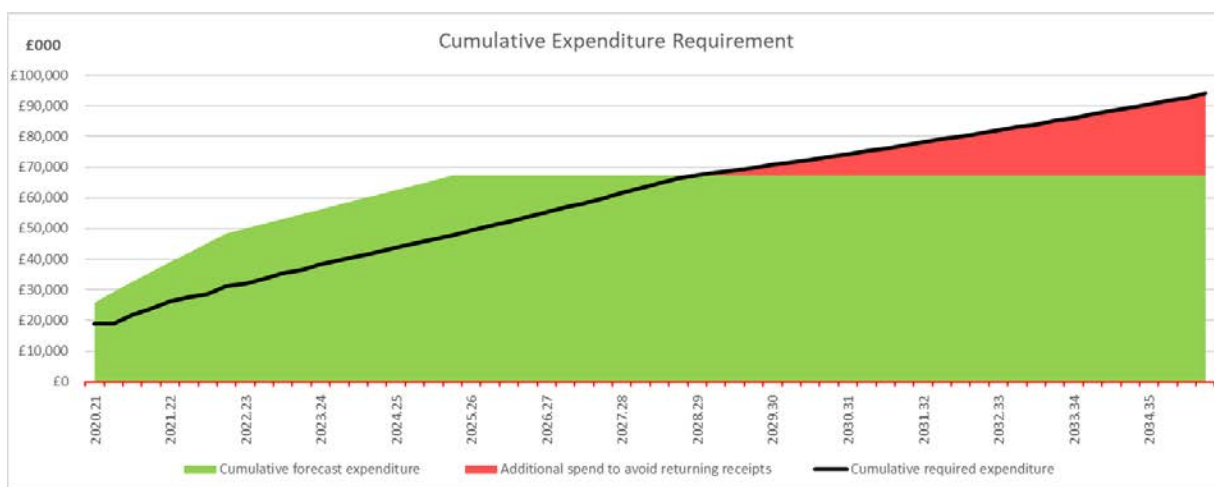
The On-Street Purchase Programme (including 1-4-1 monies position)

63. The Council has been able to devise safe working practices to continue with its ambitious OSP programme, which has accelerated since May 2019. Formulated as a means to both increase housing stock (as outlined in last year's Cabinet report) and use right-to-buy (RTB) receipts, known as 1-4-1 monies, before they have to be repaid to the Government after three years with 4% interest, the programme has succeeded in adding to stock numbers.
64. The OSP programme largely works as the 1-4-1 monies act as a subsidy to support the viability of each individual purchase, funding around 30% of the cost. Each property needs to offer a sensible rate of internal rate of return (IRR) so that they do not affect the overall Business Plan when bought in large quantities. Current projections show that RTB receipts are more than on track to be spent by their deadline, although officers will continue to monitor

- this on a regular basis. It is likely that the Council will have spent the available 1-4-1 monies by the beginning of the 2022-23 financial year.
65. The target of around 75 homes per year, as noted by members last year, will therefore be set to a more modest 50 for the next five financial years – with circa £10,000,000 set aside in each of those financial years for the OSP programme. This uses up the 1-4-1 monies more slowly while still adding to the stock levels in the HRA.
 66. The average number of RTB sales is around 25 per annum (this may fall as a result of the pandemic). This number of sales can be used to support 'grant' funding for around 30 OSP properties but due to other successful projects within the HRA we could choose to subsidise a further 20 OSPs without affecting the overall viability of the Business Plan as a whole.
 67. At a time when the Stodmarsh wastewater nutrient issue is causing some concern about the Council's ability to obtain planning permission for its own new-build homes, having a mechanism in place to deliver these individual acquisitions in good numbers is vital. In view of this it is proposed to set a target for OSP of 50 homes per annum.
 68. This is a number that will not only negate the number of homes lost to RTBs but will ensure the Council can reasonably prioritise rehousing those in temporary accommodation into these homes, which will create movement in our stock and will continue to reduce dependency on paid-for nightly accommodation that puts financial pressure on the General Fund.
 69. Since the beginning of the pandemic, when the OSP programme was risk assessed, the Council took the view that street purchases should only be acquired at social rent levels (in this instance around 50% of market rent) – to ensure that the rent will be genuinely affordable for residents. This has also had an adverse impact though, as with a small IRR and lower rents being set, the properties – in the volume that they have been acquired – have added a little pressure to the Business Plan. Therefore, in light of the need to make sure all properties meet individual viability targets, taking into account carbon goals and delivering an IRR of around 2%, the Council now needs to set rents at affordable levels (in this instance around 60% of market rent). The aim is always for OSP rents to be set at the lowest rate possible to meet viability.
 70. Setting rents at this level should ensure that properties are not beyond the affordability of tenants, nor should it hamper collection rates. It will actually enable the Council to continue to acquire 50 units per annum.
 71. Members are asked therefore to endorse the Council's approach of acquiring 50 OSP programme homes per annum within the HRA at affordable rents, taking into account the fact that some of the purchases will need to be fully funded by debt. The acquisition procedure for OSPs will remain as per that agreed by members in the October 2019 report, with delegated authority (as long as purchases fall within the agreed financial annual limits set in paragraph 65) for all purchases to be approved by the Head of Housing after consultation with the Head of Finance and IT). If the financial annual limit set would be exceeded by a proposed purchase, then prior consultation will be required with the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Finance and IT. However this target will be kept under review and we will seek to reduce the number of OSPs in future years as the delivery of new housing provision increases to help meet demand.

72. While the RTB scheme has been a long-term success in enabling tenants to acquire their own home and get on the housing ladder, members may be interested to know that the Council will be lobbying Central Government to reform the scheme to enable it to continue to accelerate deliver and spent the receipts wisely.
73. The following graph illustrates the spend profile of 1-4-1 receipts (green shading) against the spending requirement which is represented by the black line. The graph shows the impact of the OSP scheme, which is utilising receipts ahead of need. The expenditure flatlines in five years as no usage has been allowed for in the model. As the plan rolls forward the requirement to spend 1-4-1 receipts will be kept under review and plans will be developed to utilise these receipts accordingly. This could include further extension to the OSP scheme or use of receipts for redevelopments if Government grants are harder to source, through demand for Homes England's 2021-26 programme.

Graph 2 – Spend of 1-4-1 monies



New-build affordable homes programme

74. The aforementioned nutrient issue at Stodmarsh does not impede the progress of any homes with planning permission already in place. Phase 6 of the Council's new-build programme therefore continues at a strong pace, alongside its independent living programme. The schemes at East Stour Court (delivering 29 units of independent living accommodation) and the former Poplars site (which will be renamed Berry Place and will deliver 31 units of independent living accommodation) are well under way. As both sites were at an early groundworks stage during the initial lockdown progress has remained relatively on track, with social distancing not being an issue and no issues being reported with supply chains or materials. Both build projects have been successfully awarded grant from Homes England's 2016-21 programme, totalling a combined £2.5m.
75. The construction of Halstow Way (delivering 17 units of general needs accommodation) began on site in October 2020 and a grant bid has been submitted to Homes England for this site. Christchurch Lodge has delivered eight units of short-stay temporary accommodation to complement the facility at Christchurch House. This will relieve some of the pressure on the General Fund (which will manage the units) by reducing the Council's reliance on paid-nightly accommodation and creating housing pathways. This is evidence that the HRA can play a wider, proactive role within an authority.

76. In terms of its future build programme, the Housing Services team thanks those ward members with whom it has spoken about proposed new schemes in their wards or changes to previous plans. Their interaction, feedback and understanding of the need to hold consultation events online in the pandemic has been greatly appreciated. Appendix B details the projects under way on site and those that have been consulted on to date. There remains scope for additional projects but these must be selected carefully in order to retain a balanced HRA Business Plan.
77. Other sites have been approved for further investigation by Cabinet members at previous meetings (in exempt appendices) and are factored into the HRA Business Plan and financial modelling. Details of these schemes will be released into the public domain once community consultation events begin. Please note that parish councils and ward members will have been consulted before this point, a responsibility the housing services team takes seriously.
78. Members are recommended to agree that the Council's affordable homes programme can be varied as necessary by the delegated authority set out in Recommendation VIII based on site-specific financial and logistical factors.
79. Further to the projects on site, a strong pipeline of delivery has been established and this is detailed in Appendix B. Community consultations have been ongoing during the last few months on sites in the borough – these being Oakleigh House in South Ashford, 55 Mabledon Avenue in Willesborough and Harper Road in South Ashford. Further consultations are to follow on a range of infill sites and other developments and the Council is in discussions with parish councils and ward members about these sites.
80. The Council remains adaptable in terms of how it utilises available funding. It will continue to bid for funding from Homes England's 2021-26 affordable homes programme (for which £7bn is available outside of London) and, where it spent 1-4-1 monies in acquiring the former Piper Joinery site, it will use £1.4m of RTB receipts to deliver this project, currently out for public consultation. Given the land was originally acquired using RTB receipts it cannot now be mixed with Homes England grant.
81. One aspect of increasing delivery is the development of a range of 'house types' – in a similar way to which developers have in their armoury. The Council is keen to have different house types that it has available to use – these would mean that when land was purchased, it would be simple to know that X 'house type A' homes, X 'house type B' homes and so on would fit on a site. This would aid viability calculations. This is a work in progress within the development team across different departments. However, while a degree of uniformity to keep costs down so that not every site requires a bespoke build is welcome, the Council must make sure its homes blend in with the surrounding streetscape, thus helping to eliminate the stigma of social housing for its tenants by the way the homes look.
82. With reference to the work required by the Social Housing Regulator in terms of making homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, the Council makes residents feel secure and uses development to help tackle anti-social behaviour, designing out any issues communities face as it has done effectively on some of its previous infill developments. Its independent living schemes have delivered ways of living that combat isolation and, as a result of the pandemic, there is an awareness that it must enhance or reprovide green space surrounding its schemes where possible. Space standards

remain important to the Council and we pride ourselves on upholding the Council's rules on internal and external spaces.

83. Therefore, the Council's new provision maximises both the number of homes that can be delivered on its sites and with its available resources, as it funds each project leveraging in the maximum amount of subsidy. It delivers a holistic solution – benefitting maintenance teams by installing systems that are easier to maintain, building homes where the stock can be managed easily, where they are needed and where there are amenities available for residents. Additionally, the way that the sites are allocated is also addressed – developing local lettings plans where required, allocating to those with an identified local need where appropriate.

Building Information Modelling

84. Housing, maintenance and corporate property teams within the Council are working closely together on new HRA developments with contractors to look at building information modelling (BIM). This is a way of better managing information flow on project development, planning ahead, frontloading information into the project so that briefs are clear and ultimately carried out on time to specification. A digital version of an operating manual can also be produced, which provides all of the information about a new building in a multi-dimensional model.

Homes delivered by the Council

85. Though the Council mainly delivers affordable and social rented homes, it has delivered shared ownership units on occasions where, as endorsed by members in the Council's affordable housing delivery plan, it has acquired s106 homes on small rural sites. Sometimes if RPs have no stock nearby will not be keen to take on these units. The Council, therefore, steps in. The Council prefers to deliver additionality but it steps in so that these homes are not lost – as a commuted sum (which is the alternative) does not deliver a home there and then. As a small revenue raiser, the Council has offered to manage units for some RPs interested in small rural sites.
86. Some of the entries listed in Appendix B indicate that the homes have been acquired through s106 agreements. Where this is the case, these were offered with an entry level of 25% and were sold via a local agent at shares ranging from 25% to 40%. The Council enjoys a good rapport with all local agents based on its OSP work detailed earlier in this report.
87. Furthermore, in the same Appendix, Jubilee Field and Calland are listed, which both had four properties on their respective sites. Jubilee field saw two allocations to people with a connection to Wittersham and two allocations to people with connection to adjoining parishes, while Calland saw three allocations to people with a connection to Smeeth and/or Brabourne (these two parishes are very close to each other) and one allocation to a person with a connection to an adjoining parish. All allocations were discussed with parish councils prior to offering.

Additional work by the development team

88. In addition to accelerating delivery and increasing numbers, part of the role of the Council's development team is to make the best use of its available stock. This sees it working on identifying homes for those with complex needs, or who are over or under-occupying. It also works with colleagues in the

department to provide an adequate programme of disabled adaptations to meet the needs of disabled tenants within a reasonable timeframe.

89. Mutual exchanges are an effective way of tenants moving to accommodation more suited to their needs. They maximise the use of the existing stock. Often those people looking to move are needing to do so due to changes in their family size, requiring more or less bedrooms. Between 3rd February 2020 and 28th September 2020, 30 households completed a mutual exchange, and nine of these rightsized – i.e. moved into a home more suited to their family size.
90. Homeswapper is a database where tenants can advertise their homes, at no cost to themselves, and search for properties that meet their own requirements. This proactive approach places the control back with tenants in trying to address their own housing need and is often a much quicker route than bidding through the housing waiting list.
91. Currently work is being completed to ascertain whether it is beneficial to extend the assisted move programme to those looking to rightsize through a mutual exchange. The assisted move programme provides support and financial incentives to those over 50 leaving family-sized accommodation. The incentives can include up to £1,000, removal costs and post redirection. By extending the scheme it is hoped it will encourage more people to downsize to allow those families currently in overcrowded accommodation to move into homes that they desperately require, thus making our stock more resilient and offering new starts for our residents.

Enabling

92. Around half of all new affordable homes in the country are delivered through developer contributions, and are negotiated as part of the planning system (in the form of Section 106 planning obligations). The Council enjoys a strong rapport with the RPs who serve the Ashford borough and continue to invest here in good numbers. A quarterly forum is held with representatives of RPs – these have continued during lockdown, in addition to one-to-one meetings.
93. It should be mentioned that the Council's inward investment programme, with multiple major projects being delivered, continues to attract RPs to invest in the borough. It is central to the plans of RPs to know that the Council remains proactive, that businesses continue to invest here and that there are job, leisure, lifestyle and learning opportunities for those who want to live here.
94. The Council continues to explore innovative ways to deliver affordable housing. It continues to work with an incorporated community land trust (CLT), play an active part in discussion forums and continues to look at how it may deliver homes in partnership with RPs through a housing delivery framework. This would see it working in tandem with an RP to deliver out sites that may be too large to deliver on our own. Backed by the delegated authority on land acquisition afforded by members last year, the Council hopes to get this project under way during the next 12 months. The Council continues to explore other possible methods of bringing forward affordable housing. These innovations will be reported to members in due course if headway is made.

Supporting the corporate agenda

95. The Council's commitment to aiding the General Fund through the delivery of temporary accommodation facilities remains strong. The housing team is currently undertaking research into possible sites that will increase the

Council's ability to house those to whom it accepts a homelessness duty while reducing reliance on expensive paid-nightly accommodation that puts a pressure on the General Fund. It is looking to use modern methods of construction to hopefully cut the delivery time for this project once it reaches site – subject to planning permission. More details will be made public soon.

96. Of course, the aforementioned OSP greatly supports the wider corporate agenda as it enables housing pathways to be created and provides higher resilience in the temporary accommodation at the Council's disposal.
97. The Council is also addressing its decarbonisation goals, as referenced in earlier paragraphs. It is also committed to the place-making agenda – making Ashford an attractive place to live for everyone. Remodelling its stock is a key part of this vision and this work is continuing apace.

Other Business Plan assumptions

Inflation Forecast

98. Inflation is a key sensitivity in any financial modelling; the HRA financial model applies a number of assumptions to costs and income items in the budget.
99. Inflation assumptions have been updated in the model to reflect the actual September 2020 figures as published by the Office of National Statistics and are then forecast for the remainder of the model using the Bank of England (BOE) target of 2% as a benchmark for the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Interest Rates and the Amounts that are Set Aside to Repay Debt or Invest in Future Capital Projects

100. The vast majority of the HRA's current borrowing was taken out at fixed rates and therefore is protected from interest rate risk. Future borrowing requirements will be assessed at the time of need in conjunction with the Council's Treasury Management Advisors Arlingclose.
101. The model assumes the authority will use HRA balances to repay additional borrowing where it can, while holding a reserve balance of circa £1m for the life of the plan.

Other Assumptions Included in the Model

102. Following discussions with councillors, work on play areas is due to commence in 2021-23, the business model has allowed £60,000 per annum (inflation linked) for these works. There is discussion with the Culture team at this time about the programme being brought forward and this will be reflected in the Business Plan once discussions have been finalised.
103. The model makes the assumption that the remaining PFI stock is returned to housing at the end of the 30-year contract. This is over a decade away and though early preparatory work is being considered, further plans will be shared with members in subsequent reports.

Risks to the HRA Business Plan

Implications and Risk Assessment

104. The Business Plan financial projections continue to be viable and include the current spending commitments. Each new-build project is assessed for its

own individual viability and the effect its inclusion within the Council's affordable homes programme has on the Business Plan overall.

105. As the Business Plan is built over a 30-year period it is inevitable that Government policy will change. The current model is based on the current regulatory framework. In the event of any material changes to this framework the Business Plan will need to be reviewed. Members may note that the debt, as presented in this year's report, has stretched out beyond the life of the business model, compared to last year, as a result of modelling the New Quarter acquisition over a 40-year period.
106. Other risks to the Business Plan include variations in costs, for example, capital repairs and maintenance may be higher or lower than anticipated, which over the life of the Business Plan, could have a substantial impact. In addition to this, inflation is also a risk, which not only affects materials and contractor costs in the supply chain but also rental income, for which increases are based on CPI. The reality is that these risks are difficult to quantify exactly but the Business Plan will be adjusted as and when impacts of increases or underspends are known. In relation to our own stock, the position will be refreshed after the stock condition survey.
107. Interest rates are a risk to the model especially although with much of the debt at fixed rates this risk is largely mitigated. It is necessary however to ensure that new developments are appropriately appraised using current rates to ensure schemes are financially viable. The accountancy team monitors interest rates and appropriate borrowing strategies will be made to mitigate risk where possible.
108. The on-going introduction of Universal Credit leaves the HRA business plan open to a degree of risk, in particular, to the Council's dwelling income. This risk is one that is being managed by the work being done by the housing team, although with the impact of Covid-19 yet to be fully realised, this will need to be carefully monitored.
109. The Business Plan model includes a number of sites, as detailed in Appendix B to this report. However not all sites have completed a legal conveyancing process or been given planning consent, which puts completion at risk until there is absolute certainty over their delivery. To reduce this risk, alternative sites will be sought to ensure a steady pipeline of delivery comes forward. Nonetheless some may fall away reducing the delivery commitment. The Council's housing services team measures the sites underway and the pipeline of sites in design and early consultation as a mechanism for ensuring that its key performance indicators (KPIs) are met.

EU Exit

110. The UK will be leaving the European Union on 31st December 2020, and the potential impact of Brexit is still unclear. However, work is being done on this corporately to determine any local impacts on how the Council operates. However, from a business planning perspective, officers will continue to heed the advice from the Council's treasury advisors and ensure the Business Plan is updated in line with any advice going forward.
111. It is thought that the main risks at this time could be in relation to the labour force (primarily for the Council's contractors), and additional costs arising through currency fluctuations. Likewise, there may be a reduction in the availability of materials. If so, costs could increase. It should be pointed out

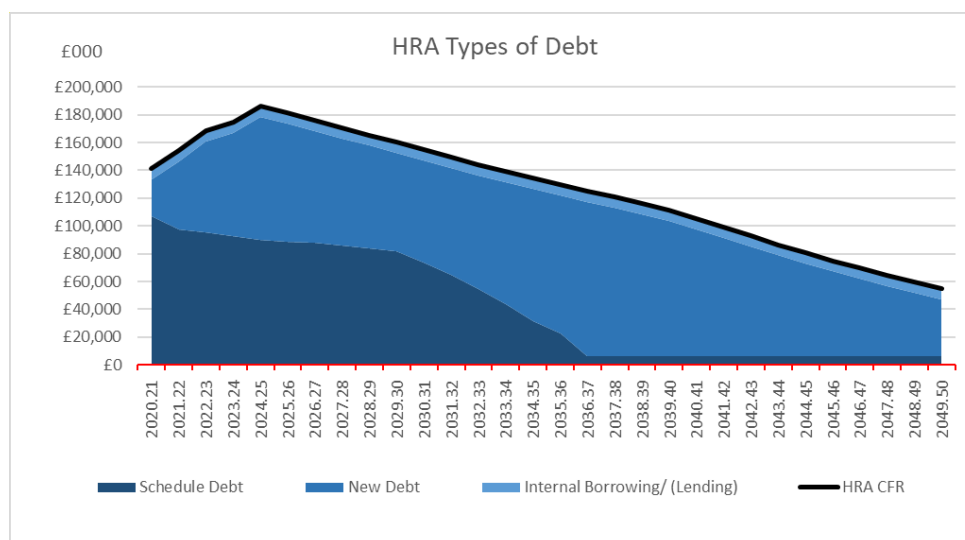
though that after the first lockdown the only shortage of materials reported among developers were plaster and plasterboard – and with our projects in the early stages of their build process, this did not affect our projects on site.

112. Officers will continue to review these issues and will liaise with members should mitigating action be needed, such as delaying projects to ensure the Council has the resources available. The HRA priorities will be reflected in corporate brexit risk management plans.

Modelling Outcomes

113. The model shows that the HRA is balanced and sustainable throughout the 30 years projected. The model allows the HRA to meet the cost of day-to-day management and repairs, and investment in the projects detailed at Appendix B and the OSP programme.
114. A table illustrating the model for the first 10 years of the business plan is attached to this report at Appendix A and details the cash inflows and outflows for the HRA, providing an estimated HRA balance at the end of each year.
115. The model is based on the assumption that the Council will be repaying debt, although the current debt forecast goes beyond the life of the model (as explained above) and will be settled around 2062-63 if you followed the trajectory down. While this is not a problem at present, the prolonging of the debt will need to be monitored in future models.

Graph 3 - Amount of HRA Debt Held (values shown in £000's, year 1 – 2020-21)

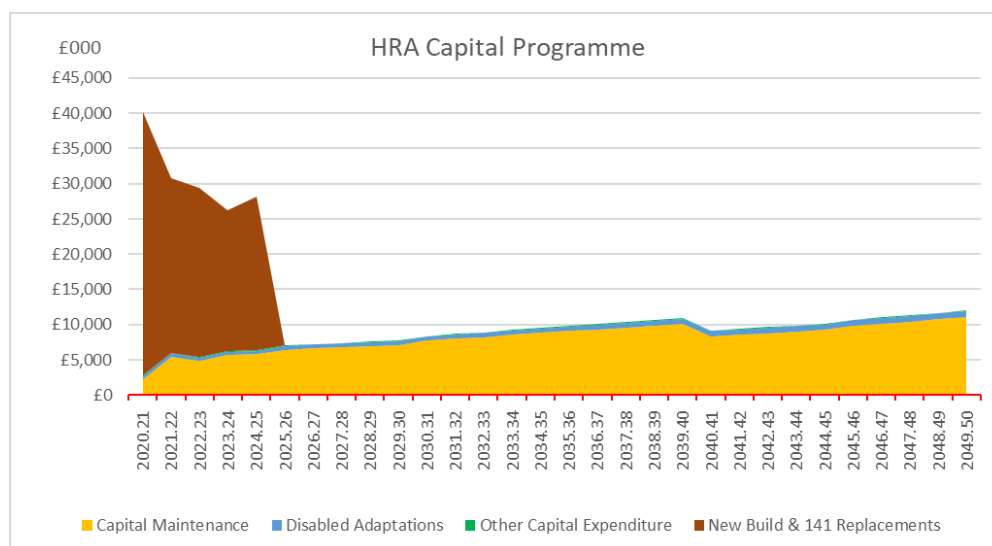


116. Graph 1, above, shows the HRA CFR (the Capital Financing Requirement is a measure of the level of debt needed) for the life of the HRA Business Plan and how it is made up. The current debt portfolio (shown in dark blue) reduces over time, whereas additional borrowing is taken out, not only as the existing loans mature, but also to facilitate the planned projects.
117. The HRA debt peaks in 2024-25 at around £186m to facilitate the capital programme, despite making significant repayments the model still shows a residual balance of £55m at the end of the model. Members are reminded that the reason for this is that the plan, as far as is possible, deals in certainty, and therefore in terms of expenditure on acquisitions and new-build sites, the Council only projects forward for the next five financial years. There is

capacity within the Business Plan for other project sites to be identified but their inclusion in the plan going forward will need to be carefully assessed.

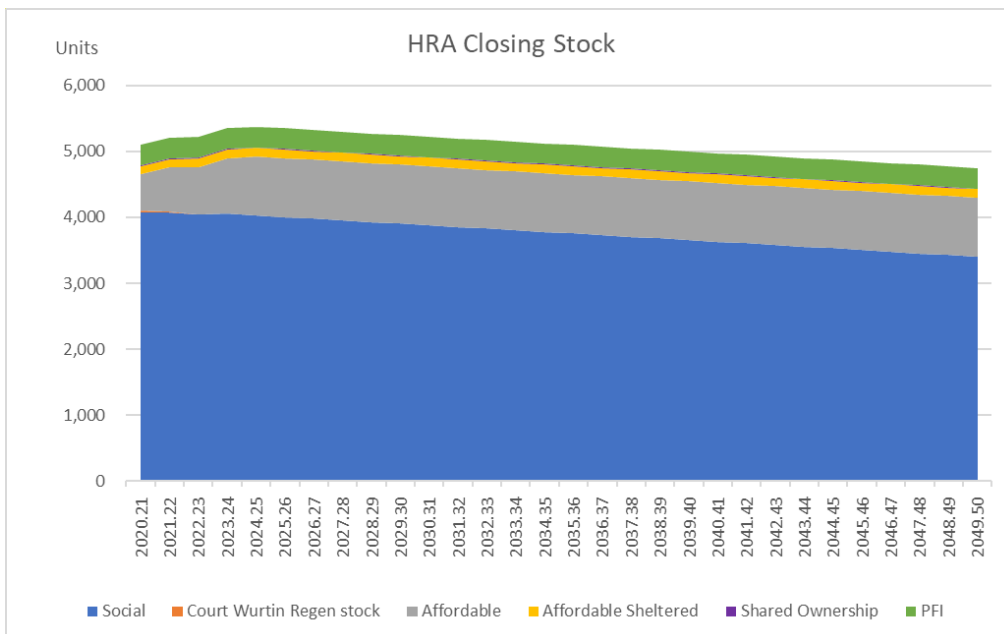
118. The profile of debt (as shown in Graph 3) is based on the current, known projects; this could change in future, depending on proposals and variations to the build programme, projects that are not yet included in the model, or any changes in priorities, as agreed by Members. This is a flexible approach, which will be monitored as new projects are considered and approved.

Graph 4 - Capital Programme (values shown in £000's, year 1 – 2020-21)



119. The Business Plan model also tracks the levels of planned capital expenditure and the availability of resources, and highlights any years where there are insufficient resources available to meet the financial demands.
120. Graph 4, above, shows the make-up of the capital programme, the majority of the programme is new build and street purchases. Funding is coming from a variety of sources, not only borrowing, but also reserves, 1-4-1 money, and grants (such as those from Homes England). If there were any unfunded projects these would show in red.
121. The large orange section across the breadth of the graph represents the planned maintenance programme for the HRA. As can be seen from the graph this rises from the 2020-21 financial year to represent the additional works being undertaken to support carbon reduction measures.
122. If spend did exceed the availability of funds then mitigating action to make savings or delay projects would be considered. However, the programme, as it currently stands, is affordable and sustainable over the life of the plan.

Graph 3 - Forecast Stock numbers (values shown in £000's, year 1 – 2020-21)



123. The stock numbers in the table above are based on the projects that are likely to go ahead, as per the assumptions in the model. Stock numbers peak in 2024-25 at around 5,370 (compared to current unit numbers of 5,101) showing the positive impact of street purchases. Once the current build programme is completed, unit numbers then decrease, year-on-year, in line with projected right to buy sales. Maintaining and increasing stock numbers is crucial to the management of the housing waiting list. It also assists in the reduction of homelessness, as it provides an opportunity to help move on homeless families from temporary accommodation, which in turn alleviates any financial pressure on the General Fund.
124. It is highly likely of course that new-build projects and street purchases will continue after the 2024-25 financial year, so the aspiration is that these stock numbers will continue to increase, however there is not enough detail available to illustrate the financial implications at this time.

Equalities Impact Assessment

125. Members are referred to the attached assessment at Appendix D. There are no adverse impacts identified.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

126. Consultation will continue to be held with ward members where acquisitions or proposals fall in their ward boundaries. All sites within any future delivery programme are subject to planning approval and the formal consultation process as part of that. As referenced in the report, online consultation will take place with local residents and ward members – importantly before proposed plans are submitted – giving them an additional opportunity to respond to the proposals outside of the formal planning consultation process.
127. This additional stage of consultation gives local residents and other stakeholders a genuine opportunity to understand and influence the proposals, talking through the likely impact in more detail, albeit virtually, with officers and any experts involved in assisting the Council.

128. It is anticipated that we will be required to undertake a consultation exercise with our tenants as we move forward with plans to develop tenant engagement and meet the wider aspects set out in the Social Housing White Paper. The Council's housing service will liaise with the Corporate Policy team to take opportunities to link this in with wider resident engagement work and consultation planned to assist with creating a level playing field. One such example is that next year housing and corporate policy will launch a joint garden competition which will be available to all residents of the Borough and not just tenants or private home owners separately.

Next Steps in the Process

129. The Council will deliver the schemes it has outlined in Appendix B, which form its current delivery programme. The Council will map the process for those sites that have not yet been approved by planning or are not included in the HRA Business Plan model. It will then bring each site forward for consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Detailed project plans will be developed and necessary preparatory work and site investigations will commence as required. Relevant portfolio holders, ward members and parish councils will be kept informed.
130. The HRA Business Plan is used as a basis for building the 2021-22 budget, although officers continue to work on the assumptions in the Business Plan as new information becomes available. The HRA draft budget will be presented to Cabinet on 17th December 2020 and if approved it will be part of the public consultation on the draft budget. It will be presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny budget task group. The final budget report will be presented to Cabinet in February with final approval through Council a week later.

Conclusion

131. The report sets out the breadth of work that the Council's HRA is undertaking at the current time. After a period of pausing to reflect when the debt cap was removed, the Council has now set in place a strong delivery programme and is already delivering homes in great numbers – well on track to smash the target set in its affordable housing delivery plan presented to members last year. It is seeking to capitalise on opportunities presented to it such as in the acquisition of the 'New Quarter' building.
132. Following rigorous risk assessments in light of the pandemic, the Council's development programme is fully costed and the Business Plan illustrates that it is an affordable pipeline of solid sites. Their progress will be reported to members in subsequent reports. The conducting of an asset survey in the 2021-22 financial year will help the Council better understand the detailed condition of its stock and the work that is needed to contribute toward the decarbonisation target.
133. The publication of the Social Housing White Paper is welcome and it has put the focus on the fact that all residents must be treated with respect, irrespective of the tenure of their home. All of the measures included within this report are aimed at recognising that it is right that our tenants can put down permanent roots and have a voice. We will continue to provide a high-quality management service that will ensure tenants comply with our rules, as we comply with those of the Social Housing Regulator.

134. The Council prides itself on the strength of its proven track record in this sector. Housing is a service that links the General Fund and the HRA, and officers are abundantly aware of the role the HRA can play to mitigate pressures in the General Fund through timely, relevant provision. This report demonstrates that despite the pandemic the Council continues to perform strongly and runs its HRA viably.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Portfolio Holder for Housing

135. I am proud to present and endorse this report. We are one of the leading voices and deliverers of affordable housing in the county, and our profile is high. We remain at the forefront of new-build delivery in Kent and are respected by our peers. Our proven track record of delivery, our aspirations and the way we balance our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan illustrate why so many RPs and developers are choosing to invest in our borough, enhancing our economy as we recover from the pandemic. We thank them for their investment and continued engagement.
136. Following a period of necessary reflection after the removal of the HRA debt cap, what we present in this report are really strong figures – with well over 360 homes built, bought or enabled in the borough since April 2019 and hundreds more in the delivery phase. These are impressive figures and with many tools available to us and yet more being developed, we will continue to bring forward the much needed homes those on our waiting list and in our temporary accommodation so desperately need.
137. This report also sets the tone for how we will meet our obligations under the Social Housing Regulator and how we will heed the content of the Social Housing White Paper. It must be recognised that quality homes and secure tenancies contribute to better life chances – as families flourish in their communities, children are more settled in schooling and family members access employment. These are aspirations we all hold dear.
138. Overall, members can see the upward trajectory of our development and the pipeline we have established. Also clearly visible is the way we are thinking holistically about management, maintenance, finances and wider corporate objectives. This is a report that shows Ashford can be proud of its approach to delivering genuinely affordable housing.

Portfolio Holder for Finance

139. I am pleased to note this report, which fuses together the former HRA Business Plan report and the HRA delivery update into a much more contextual paper that gives real insight into the HRA. I am content with the viability of our overall plans and the sensible, measured approach taken to development and wider corporate goals.
140. In the volatile financial environment in which we find ourselves, an affordable, sustainable Business Plan that can repay its debt, despite significantly increased delivery and new Government initiatives is excellent news. Such a solid financial footing and awareness of our future expenditure expectations will only help us as we look to deliver, manage and maintain much-needed homes in the years ahead.

Contact and Email

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HRA Business Plan (extract) – Top level budget summary to 2028/29

© Housing Finance Associates	HRA Business Planning Model					Ashford Borough Council					
Description	1 2020.21	2 2021.22	3 2022.23	4 2023.24	5 2024.25	6 2025.26	7 2026.27	8 2027.28	9 2028.29	10 2029.30	11 2030.31
Income											
Gross Rental Income	£24,948	£25,959	£27,541	£28,615	£30,550	£31,448	£31,942	£32,442	£32,950	£33,465	£33,988
Void Losses	-£709	-£519	-£551	-£572	-£611	-£629	-£639	-£649	-£659	-£669	-£680
Other Rental Income	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Tenanted Service Charges	£1,016	£1,041	£1,067	£1,094	£1,121	£1,149	£1,178	£1,208	£1,238	£1,269	£1,301
Leasehold Service Charges	£114	£117	£120	£123	£126	£129	£133	£136	£139	£143	£146
Non-Dwelling Income	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Grants	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
Other Income	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total income	£28,369	£29,598	£31,177	£32,260	£34,187	£35,098	£35,614	£36,137	£36,668	£37,207	£37,755
Expenditure											
General Management	-£9,572	-£9,747	-£9,976	-£10,160	-£10,424	-£10,696	-£10,975	-£11,261	-£11,555	-£11,856	-£12,166
Special Management	-£839	-£845	-£859	-£865	-£884	-£904	-£924	-£944	-£965	-£986	-£1,008
Other Management	-£938	-£997	-£1,016	-£995	-£1,015	-£1,035	-£1,056	-£1,077	-£1,099	-£1,121	-£1,143
Bad Debt Provision	-£100	-£104	-£110	-£115	-£122	-£126	-£128	-£130	-£132	-£134	-£136
Responsive & Cyclical Repairs	-£4,084	-£4,200	-£4,310	-£4,414	-£4,541	-£4,779	-£4,996	-£5,162	-£5,417	-£5,592	-£5,730
Other revenue expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total expenditure	-£15,533	-£15,893	-£16,271	-£16,550	-£16,987	-£17,540	-£18,079	-£18,574	-£19,168	-£19,690	-£20,183
Capital financing costs											
Interest paid on debt	-£4,216	-£4,418	-£4,817	-£5,116	-£5,372	-£5,656	-£5,518	-£5,397	-£5,240	-£5,090	-£5,015
Interest paid on 141 receipts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	-£0	-£0	-£0	-£0
Debt management expenses	-£74	-£74	-£76	-£77	-£79	-£81	-£82	-£84	-£86	-£87	-£89
Interest Received	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Depreciation	-£5,619	-£5,865	-£6,048	-£6,254	-£6,473	-£6,603	-£6,704	-£6,806	-£6,909	-£7,014	-£7,120
Capital financing costs	-£9,909	-£10,356	-£10,940	-£11,447	-£11,924	-£12,340	-£12,304	-£12,286	-£12,235	-£12,192	-£12,225
Appropriations											
Revenue provision (HRA CFR)	-£2,000	-£5,545	-£901	-£4,166	-£5,360	-£5,009	-£5,228	-£5,276	-£5,266	-£5,325	-£5,347
RCCO	-£3,385	-£60	-£3,060	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other appropriations	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Appropriations	-£5,385	-£5,605	-£3,961	-£4,166	-£5,360	-£5,009	-£5,228	-£5,276	-£5,266	-£5,325	-£5,347
Net income/ (expenditure)	-£2,458	-£2,257	£5	£97	-£84	£210	£3	£1	-£0	£1	£0

Appendix B – Projects confirmed and consulted on to date

Project	Units / proposed scheme	Anticipated completion
Short stay accommodation facilities		
112 Beaver Road	8 x 1-bed units for short-stay temporary accommodation	December 2020
Affordable Homes Programme – Independent living accommodation		
East Stour Court, Willesborough	29 units of independent living accommodation 24 x 1-bed and 5 x 2-bed (with scheme manager)	May 2021 (on site now) Homes England (HE) 2016-21 grant – confirmed
The Poplars, South Ashford	31 units (15 x 1-bed and 16 x 2-bed) of independent living accommodation	October 2021 (on site now) Homes England (HE) 2016-21 grant – confirmed
Oakleigh House, South Ashford	66 units of independent living accommodation (including 12 learning disability units) (with scheme manager)	January 2023 (on site now)
Affordable Homes Programme – Phase 6		
Halstow Way, South Ashford	17 units of general needs accommodation (6 x 1-bed, 7 x 2-bed and 4 x 3-bed apartments – utilising Selah blocks)	September 2021
Piper Joinery, Willesborough	22 units of general needs accommodation (Proposed mix: 8 x 3-bed terraced houses, 4 x 2-bed terraced houses, 8 x 2-bed flats, 2 x 3-bed flats)	September 2022 1-4-1 (as site purchased using RTB receipts, so cannot mix RTB and HE grant) – so 30% for whole development
Harper Road	4 x 2-bed houses for affordable rent	TBC

Ashford Borough Council Homes built or acquired via s106 or off-plan since 2011

(n.b excludes street purchases)

Site	Properties (tenure = affordable rent unless specified)	Building	Status	Handover
Hunter Close, Ashford	3 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	23-Mar-11
Towers View, Ashford	5 x 1-bed bungalows	1 bed Bungalow	Completed	31-Mar-11
Towers View, Ashford	3 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	31-Mar-11
Towers View, Ashford	2 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	31-Mar-11
Breadlands Road, Quarry Close, Willesborough	7 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	27-Apr-11
Blake Court, Willesborough	3 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	31-May-11
Gerlach House, Ashford	2 x 1-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	31-May-11
Orchard View, Bethersden	3 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	11-Oct-11
The Chennells, High Halden	4 x 1-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	04-Nov-11
Nine Acres, Kennington	2 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	11-Nov-11
Sotherton, Willesborough	4 x 1-bed flats (for people with learning difficulties)	1 bed Flat	Completed	17-Nov-11
Sotherton, Willesborough	1 x 1-bed bungalow (for a person with learning difficulties)	1 bed Bungalow	Completed	17-Nov-11
Arlington, Ashford	3 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	01-Dec-11
Singleton Road, Ashford	4 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	01-Dec-11
Bybrook Road, Ashford	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	07-Dec-11
Bybrook Road, Ashford	1 x 3-bed house	3 bed House	Completed	20-Jan-12
Mardol Road, Ashford	3 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	07-Dec-11
Mardol Road, Ashford	1 x 3-bed house	3 bed House	Completed	03-Feb-12

Cheeselands, Biddenden	5 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	10-Feb-12
Beaver Lane, Ashford	2 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	12-Mar-12
Luckley House, Wye	9 x 1-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	26-Mar-12
Orion Way, Ashford	2 x 4-bed houses	4 bed House	Completed	26-Mar-12
Orion Way, Ashford	7 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	26-Mar-12
Birling Road, Ashford	1 x 3-bed house	3 bed House	Completed	27-Sep-13
Christchurch Road, Ashford	8 x 1-bed bedsits (for use as temporary accommodation) – note these properties sit in the General Fund	1 bed Bedsit	Completed	29-Aug-14
Hawthorn, Appledore	4 x 2-bed flats	2 bed Flat	Completed	21-Nov-14
Hawthorn, Appledore	4 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	18-Dec-14
Wind Hill, Charing	2 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	18-Dec-14
Wind Hill, Charing	1 x 3-bed bungalow	3 bed Bungalow	Completed	18-Dec-14
Manse Field, Brabourne	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-14
Randolph Gardens, Kennington	8 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-14
Riverview, Ashford	3 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-14
Riverview, Ashford	1 x 3-bed house	3 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-14
Arcon Road, Ashford	3 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	30-Jan-15
Simons Ave, Ashford	3 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	30-Jan-15
Cryol Road, Ashford	4 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	27-Feb-15
Cryol Road, Ashford	2 x 4-bed houses	4 bed House	Completed	27-Feb-15
Cryol Road, Ashford	1 x 6-bed house	6 bed House	Completed	27-Feb-15
Poppy Fields, Charing	7 x 2-bed houses (shared ownership)	2 bed House	Completed	16-Nov-15
Poppy Fields	1 x 3-bed house (shared ownership)	3 bed House	Completed	16-Nov-15
Poppy Fields	13 x 3-bed	3 bed House	Completed	16-Nov-15
Farrow Court	81 x 1-bed flats (14 for those with learning difficulties)	1 bed Flat	Completed	20-Nov-15
Farrow Court	23 x 2-bed flats	2 bed Flat	Completed	20-Nov-15

Boxley, Ashford	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	14-Dec-17
Noakes Meadow, Ashford	2 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	19-Feb-18
Beecholme Drive, Kennington	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	20-Mar-18
Priory Way, Tenterden	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	20-Mar-18
Belmont Place, Ashford	3 x 2-bed flats	2 bed Flat	Completed	28-Mar-18
Jubilee Fields, Wittersham	4 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	05-Dec-18
Brattle, Woodchurch	4 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	13-Dec-18
Calland HRA 15-18	2 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-18
Calland HRA 15-18	2 x 3-bed houses	3 bed House	Completed	19-Dec-18
Danemore, Tenterden	23 x 1-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	15-Feb-19
Danemore, Tenterden	11 x 2-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	15-Feb-19
Chequers Green, Shadoxhurst	2 x 2-bed houses (shared ownership)	2 bed House	Completed	01-Aug-19
Chequers Green, Shadoxhurst	2 x 2-bed houses	2 bed House	Completed	01-Aug-19
Kings Close, Shadoxhurst	4 x 1 bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	14-Oct-19
Kings Close, Shadoxhurst	1 x 2 bed house	2 bed House	Completed	14-Oct-19
Kings Close, Shadoxhurst	2 x 2 bed house (Shared Ownership)	2 bed house	Completed	14-Oct-19
Ragstone Hollow, Aldington	2 x 2-bed bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	11-Mar-20
Ragstone Hollow, Aldington	2 x 3-bed bungalows	3 bed Bungalow	Completed	11-Mar-20
The Weavers, Biddenden	2 x 2-bed chalet bungalows	2 bed Bungalow	Completed	13-Aug-20
New Quarter, West Block, Ashford	23 x 1-bed flats	1 bed Flat	Completed	24-Nov-20
New Quarter, West Block, Ashford	21 x 2-bed flats	2 bed Flat	Completed	24-Nov-20

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.

Case law principles

9. 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:	Mark James
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the progress in delivering affordable housing in the HRA and temporary accommodation within the General Fund. • Agree the proposed additions to the Council's affordable homes delivery programme. • Agree the HRA priorities and actions as set out in the report at paragraphs (??) • Review and agree the updated HRA Business Plan and financial projections. • Note that Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) will review the HRA Business Plan financial projections as part of the budget scrutiny process • Agree the Council's plans for future housing delivery as set out in Exempt Appendix B, which represents the full delivery programme, and delegate authority to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Head of Finance and IT and the Portfolio holders for Housing and Finance and IT to vary the programme as necessary
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	17 th December 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>Note the progress in delivering affordable housing in the HRA and temporary accommodation within the General Fund.</p> <p>Agree the HRA priorities and actions as set out in the report at paragraphs (??)</p> <p>Review and agree the updated HRA Business Plan and financial projections.</p> <p>Note that Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) will review the HRA Business Plan financial projections as part of the budget scrutiny process</p> <p>Agree the Council's plans for future housing delivery as set out in Exempt Appendix B, which represents the full delivery programme, and delegate authority to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Head of Finance and IT and the Portfolio holders for Housing and Finance and IT to vary the programme as necessary</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. 	<p>Building on solid foundations: delivering affordable homes in Ashford – our delivery plan for 2019-2023</p> <p>Housing Strategy Framework Priority 1 – Improve the supply of affordable housing to meet local housing needs in urban and rural areas, and Housing Statement 2018-2023</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>Reform of HRA – Cabinet endorsed five key priorities for further spend, as a result of greater freedom within the HRA. National Housing Strategy 2011 – delivering new homes under the affordable rent model.</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>Consultation has taken place with colleagues in Finance and ICT, the Housing Development Team, Housing Options and Corporate Property Services.</p> <p>Consultation has additionally taken place with Cabinet members and Ward members for those wards with forthcoming development identified in the report.</p> <p>With regards the HRA programme in general, the consultation has been to identify suitable areas to develop out affordable homes and the level of finance (inclusive of grant and capital contributions) required to achieve the programme.</p> <p>Other sites are alluded to in the report and other sites included in exempt appendices in the HRA reports of 2018 and 2019. Further consultation will be carried out with ward members and the communities in which new affordable homes are proposed. These consultations will be taken forward before any proposed scheme is submitted to the planning department.</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	Positive (major)
Middle age	High	Positive (major)
Young adult	High	Positive (major)
Children	High	Positive (major)
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	High	Positive (minor)
Mental	High	Neutral
Sensory	None	Neutral
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral

<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Neutral
Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the new developments planned and new acquisitions in the pipeline. This takes into account the fact that vulnerable adults will be allowed into the new 'New Quarter' building only should they have in place an appropriate support plan and that no more than 10% of the units will be let to those classed as vulnerable at any one time.</p> <p>The emphasis on keyworkers may mean that older people and those not in employment are not prioritised in the New Quarter development, but the units at East Stour Court and The former Poplars site are being constructed specifically for those in older age. Older applicants on our waiting list or in our stock already are well catered for in terms of our existing provision of independent living schemes and the ongoing work to deliver several new independent living schemes across the borough.</p>
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<p>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.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.</p> <p>No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.</p> <p>The effect on the community will be positive due to the aims of the programme delivery. No adjustments required.</p> <p>The programme will be monitored by a Housing Project group with regular updates to our Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>26th November 2020</p>

Agenda Item 7



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No: 7
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 17th December 2020
Report Title: Draft Budget 2021/22
Report Author & Job Title: Lee Foreman
Accountancy Manager
Portfolio Holder Cllr. Neil Bell
Portfolio Holder for: Finance & IT

Summary:

This paper presents the draft budget for 2021/22 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The draft budget is in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which was presented to Cabinet in November, and forms the basis for this draft budget.

The draft budget outlined in this report will be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Budget Task Group for review and the budget consultation processes.

The impact of the Covid19 Pandemic has significantly influenced the 2021/22 budget which has allowed for reductions in Parking, and Corporate Property Income of £1.3m, and reduction are also expected in the region £1m for both Council Tax and Business rates.

These reductions come on top of cuts in government funding which have seen new homes bonus receipts cut from £3m in 2020/21, to £1.68m in 2021/22, adding a further pressure of £1.3m to the budget.

Despite these reductions in income and grant, a balanced budget for 2021/22 is presented which includes £2.3m of savings from services, including the removal of 30 full time equivalent posts, an anticipated pay freeze, and a £1.1m contribution from reserves.

There are a number of risks to the delivery of this budget that are explored within the report.

The report also includes the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) draft budget which incorporates the assumptions in the 30 year Business Plan which is also on the December Cabinet agenda.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Approve the draft budget for 2021/22
- II. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2021/22 Section 2 of the report.
- III. Agree that this report will be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, parish councils and staff.
- IV. Agree the draft budget as set out in the report should now be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.

Policy Overview:

The Council's Revenue Budget is intended to support the priorities set out within the Recovery Plan and flows through from the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Council's Recovery Plan, which replaces the corporate plan as the Council recover from the impact of Covid19 is geared to ensure that priorities are delivered and that the council's service activities are managed within the constraints of the forecast cuts in government funding and the wider economic climate.

Financial Implications:

The council has a requirement to produce a MTFP and a balanced budget. This report is based on a further one year funding extension as government have deferred the spending review until 2022/23 to focus on the Covid19 response. This delay prolongs uncertainty over future funding streams, and with increasing levels of national debt further pressure may be placed upon Local Councils.

The HRA budget has been prepared using the 30 year Business Plan and shows that the plans for maintaining investment in housing stock are affordable and within the current resource forecasts.

Equalities Impact Assessment

A full assessment will be undertaken and forms part of the Final Budget report and a separated assessment will be undertaken for the saving proposals.

Other Material Implications:

Consultation will be undertaken with the Joint Consultative Committee and business community, with findings reported back in March in the Final Budget Report.

Exempt from Publication:

Yes – Appendix C

Not For Publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**Background
Papers:**

None

Contact:

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Report Title: Draft Budget 2021/22

Introduction and Background

1. This report sets the scene for Cabinet to consider the draft budget for 2021/22 and is based broadly in line with the assumption outlined within the MTFP which was presented to Cabinet in November 2020. The MTFP report provides important background and contextual information which has been considered in building the 2021/22 budget as presented within this report.
2. The 2021/22 budget is built on a further one year funding agreement with government spending reviews now expected to be announced from 2022/23 as they continue to focus on the Covid19. This will continue to create uncertainty around funding moving beyond 2021/22 as highlighted in the MTFP report, especially in light of mounting central government debt that will need to be funded.
3. The detailed budget for 2021/22 has now been drafted and is broadly in line with the targets established within the MTFP. The budget is based upon a £5.00 (3.0%) increase in Council Tax for Band D properties which will continue to see the Council maintaining its position as the lowest in Kent.
4. Section 2 of this report is in line with the HRA Business Plan that is elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda.
5. The forecast for the Council's capital and repairs & renewal reserves (Section 3 - Capital Resources) is included and shows that these resources remain under pressure and as a consequence borrowing will need to be used to fund the majority of capital investments which carries a higher revenue budget cost.
6. This report seeks Cabinet's approval to the draft budget that will then form the basis of the budget scrutiny and consultation processes with the final budget due to be reported to the February Cabinet for approval and recommendation to Full Council.

Structure of the report

7. For ease of consideration this report is split into sections;
 - i. Draft budget 2021/22
 - ii. Housing Revenue Account
 - iii. Capital resource forecast and capital programme implications
 - iv. Next steps

Section 1 - Draft Budget 2021/2022

8. The Services' draft budgets have been built broadly in line with the parameters set out within the MTFP report which was reported to the November Cabinet. As a reminder the setting of the MTFP involved making adjustments to reflect emerging pressures, which would have been identified through the budget monitoring process, discussions at Management Team, and with individual Heads of Service and Budget Managers. This process included reviewing potential savings and the financial implications of Covid19, considering the impact it will have both in the short, and long term for the Council.
9. This year as part of the MTFP process Services' were tasked with finding in the region of £3m to support the emerging budget gap identified within the MTFP. Officers and Portfolio Holders worked together and identified around £3m of savings per annum that can be fully delivered over the next few years. These savings will ensure that the Council can weather the economic shock of Covid19, make available funding for the recovery plan, and maintain financial stability during this unprecedented time. A full list of the savings identified and factored into the 2021/22 draft budget are summarised at Exempt **Appendix C**, and Members are asked to support these saving proposals.
10. Individual service budgets are then built by the budget managers in conjunction with the Accountancy Team, monitoring the overall position against the MTFP. Where service budgets materially differ from the MTFP assumptions, these movements are reviewed and challenged accordingly.
11. Due to the timing and information available at the time of preparing this budget, the 2021/22 budget does not contain any budgets for the new BCP (Border Control Facility). It is anticipated however that this new responsibility will be fully underwritten by Government and will not present a risk to the 2021/22 budget.
12. However, the BCP costs are being recorded and updates will be provided through the usual quarterly budget monitoring reports. Once a clearer view of the requirements is determined, an in year budget will be developed and put forward for approval. The Border Control Facility report was presented at the November Cabinet meeting.
13. The draft budget presented below includes a £5.00 (3%) increase in council tax, with the borough Council's element of the charge now being £172.50 (2020/21 was £167.50) for a band D property.
14. The draft budget is summarised below and shows the impact of Covid19 on the 2020/21 forecast outturn, and the reduction in 2021/22 draft budget.

Table 2: Draft General Fund Budget 2021/22

Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Directorate	Budget 2021/22 £
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(2,327,931)	(1,162,070)	(1,904,040)	Non service specific	(2,737,650)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
(16,521,843)	(15,967,490)	(19,033,910)	Financing	(13,565,740)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

15. The details of service expenditure are attached at **Appendix A**. Subject to Cabinet’s approval this budget will then be scrutinised and form the basis of the budget consultation process that will be completed in time for a final budget report to be presented to Cabinet in February and Council in March.
16. The Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan continues to be predicated on the aim to become entrepreneurial and enterprising to raise revenues, while ensuring the continued need to demonstrate good economy and efficiency of resources to ensure value for money. Accordingly, and despite the savings already made, the budget continues to include a £130,000 efficiency target. Furthermore as per the Council’s commercialisation strategy, £60,000 has been made available from commercially linked growth to support new ideas, and enable existing plans to mature.

Risks

17. The risks to the 2021/22 draft budget are shown at **Appendix B** and represent the risks to the budget at the time of writing this report. These risks will be reviewed throughout the budget setting cycle and be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task Group.
18. These risks will be amended as risks are identified and will form the basis of the Chief Financial Officers report over the robustness of the budget which will be included in the Final Budget report for February Cabinet.
19. These risks should be read alongside the more strategic risks that were reported within the MTFP report which was presented to Cabinet on the 26 November 2020.

Section 2 Housing Revenue Account

HRA Business Plan

21. The HRA Business Plan (also on this agenda of Cabinet) was built using many of the same assumptions included in this budget.
22. It is proposed that the HRA business plan should be scrutinised alongside the general fund draft budget as part of the budget scrutiny process.

Draft HRA Budget 2021/22

23. The HRA Budget has been built to enable the council to maintain Decent Homes Standards, service the debt incurred, as a result of the HRA subsidy reform.
24. The HRA Business Plan includes a number of ambitious projects to increase the Social and Affordable Housing in the Ashford Borough and improve independent living accommodation. The business plan includes the financing for all of these projects and annual revenue spend and is affordable of a 30-year period.
25. Rent income has been forecast to increase at CPI +1%, as per the Government formula. There is also an increase due to the estimated completion of the New Quarter, adding 108 apartments to the Housing stock.

Table 3 – Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

Revenue Budget				
Housing Revenue Account				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Detail	Budget 2021/22 £
(24,993,460)	(25,369,020)	(24,677,520)	Income	(27,186,640)
(1,354,620)	6,051,230	5,959,100	Supervision and Management	6,088,830
3,595,060	3,758,000	3,702,000	Repairs and Maintenance	4,024,420
492,396	231,640	220,240	New Builds	221,700
23,200,623	15,958,050	15,732,150	Other	21,121,320
940,000	629,900	935,970	Service Expenditure	4,269,630
(683,974)	0	0	Contribution To/(From) General Reserves	(1,620,000)
256,026	629,900	935,970	Net Revenue Expenditure	2,649,630

26. These figures are in line with the position forecast within the HRA business plan, with a forecast service expenditure of £4.3m in 2021/22. This spend is as a result of £9m of PWLB (Public Works Loans Board) debt being repaid in year. £4.8m of this debt can be repaid in year (2021/22 surplus) with a further contribution of £1.6m being financed from the housing revenue reserve. The remaining £2.7m will need to be re-financed; the best re-financing option will be considered when the borrowing requirement is clear.
27. Members are asked to approve the draft HRA budget for 2021/22 for scrutiny purposes.

Section 3 - Capital Resources

28. Capital resources are the means by which the Council's Capital Programme is funded and are drawn from the following funding streams:
- a. Internal resources
 - b. External borrowing
 - c. Third party grants and contributions
 - d. Section 106 developer contributions

Internal Resources

29. This funding stream includes capital receipts and reserves, however where possible the Council will look to utilise capital receipts initially as these can only be used for capital purposes, where general reserves are more flexible.
30. Capital receipts are generated through asset rationalisation, and each year a small amount is anticipated from the sale of small land parcels which are used to fund the Council's contribution to Disabled Facility Grant, and Community Grants Scheme. Where larger capital receipts are received, any outstanding finance is settled before with the balance is transferred to reserves to support capital projects. Capital receipts were £90,000 as at 31 March 2020 and are expected to be around £180,000 as at 31 March 2021.
31. Reserves are allocated for specific purposes including support for corporate projects. In recent years project reserves have been topped up from a proportion of the NHB (New Homes Bonus) funding, with Government phasing out NHB, this top up is currently not included in future years, although this will be reviewed once a replacement for NHB has been developed by Government.
32. As a result of the impact of Covid19, the Council has revisited its reserves positions and has repurposed them to support the Corporate Recovery plan, and provide the necessary flexibility to respond to the economic challenges as a result of the Covid19 Pandemic.
33. Following this repurposing of reserves, it is forecast that the funding available for recovery plan projects will be £533,000, the Leader has also earmarked £679,000 for smaller projects.
34. Where general fund reserves are used directly to fund non-income generating projects, the Council needs to be mindful that in addition to diminishing reserves, those reserves can no longer be invested and generate an income, therefore adding an ongoing pressure to the revenue budget.

The Housing Revenue Account – Capital Receipts

35. The HRA has two kinds of capital receipts, general capital receipts that can be used for any capital purpose, and one-for-one receipts that can only be used for the provision of new affordable housing.
36. One-for-one receipts need to be spent within three years of receipt or they need to be repaid to Government with interest. To ensure that this does not happen, the one-for-one receipts are monitored routinely to ensure that they are spent well in advance of need, this is currently the case with the on street purchases programme.

External Borrowing

37. External borrowing should ideally, only be considered for projects that generate a regular income above the financing costs of the project, as the Council needs to make an annual 'prudent' provision for the repayment of debt, this is known as MRP (minimum revenue provision).
38. Where external borrowing is considered, then a full business case should be required to demonstrate the financial viability of the project.
39. There are instances where the Council will borrow for projects that are not directly funded, such as the capital repairs and maintenance of Council assets, which is necessary to keep assets fit for purpose. Where this debt is incurred, it adds pressure to the MRP budget which has to be funded from the Council's annual revenues.
40. Where external borrowing is used to fund projects, the Accountancy Team (in conjunction with its treasury management advisors) will determine the best structure and funding strategy for the debt.
41. All external borrowing will be undertaken giving regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code, the Council's own Prudential Indicators, and Borrowing Strategy.

Third party grants and contributions

42. Third party grants and contributions can be applied for by the Council and we have had much success in securing funding in recent years. This source of funding is particularly attractive for projects which are to be fully funded by borrowing or reserves, as any subsequent funding can then be set against the Council's funding requirement.
43. Grants should only be applied for where they support the recovery plan, and the conditions of each grant should be considered before progressing. This due diligence is necessary as many grants require an element of match funding. If grants are applied for with match funding requirements outside of the approved schemes, reserves contributions may be necessary to meet the match funding requirement, and potentially add pressure to revenues budgets if future liabilities are created.

Section 106 developer contributions

44. Section 106 developer contributions are part of the planning process and represent an agreement between the developer and the Council which is used to mitigate the impact of new developments on the local community and infrastructure.
45. These agreements can be both for capital and revenue projects as outlined in the section 106 agreement. As at 31 March 2020 contributions amounting to £5.7m (capital & revenue) were held in reserves.
46. The Council prepares a capital programme annually based on the Corporate Priorities which is included in the final budget report. The capital programme includes those strategic projects that are linked to the recovery plan. New projects are assessed through PID's (Project initiation documents) which are used to assess the merits of each projects, so that the Council can deploy its limited resources to deliver the best outcomes for the Council.

48. The table below shows the capital receipts brought forward, and the annual forecast for receipts received from the sale of small land parcels which are used primarily to fund the Council's contribution to Disabled Facility Grant and Community Grants Scheme.

Table 4 – Capital resource forecast (General Fund)

Resources available	2020/21 £'000
Resources brought forward:	
Capital receipts	90
	90
Potential resources	
Estimate of capital receipts	250
	250
Current planned outlay financed by:	
Use of capital receipts	160
	160
Uncommitted resources carried forward	180

49. An asset realisation plan is currently underway and any future receipts, net of debt repayment, will be available in addition to the current funds.

Section 4 - Next Steps

51. Once approved by Cabinet to the draft budget will be submitted for formal scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Budget Scrutiny Task Group. This will include an examination of the base budget, assumptions on inflation, growth items and budget reduction proposals. The scrutiny process will be conducted in January 2021 with conclusions reported to the Cabinet in February.
52. The final budget report will also be presented to Cabinet in February and then will go onto Council in March. This will include any additional proposals for the budget, and recommend to Cabinet the measures necessary to bridge any budget gap arising.

Implications and Risk Assessment

53. Risk assessments are being completed by Services and will form part of the Scrutiny process and reported back to Council with any recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Task Group.

Equalities Impact Assessment

54. The assessment will be completed alongside the final budget reported to Cabinet in February and Council in March.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

55. This report will form the basis of consultation with the business community, the public and parish councils. A summary document will be produced and sent to key stakeholders and posted on the website for comment.
56. The results from this consultation will help inform the final budget and will be reported back to the February Cabinet.

Conclusion

57. Members are asked to consider the contextual information against which the MTFP and draft budget have been developed.
58. To approve the draft budget for 2021/22 for the purpose of public consultation, consultation with the parish councils, and form the basis of budget scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holder's Views

59. The impact of the Covid19 Pandemic has extended beyond 2020/21, and has had a significant influence on the 2021/22 budget which has allowed for reductions in Parking, and Corporate Property Income of £1.3m. Losses are also expected in the region £1m for both Council Tax and Business rates, with potentially more reductions to come when the Government furlough scheme ends.
60. These reductions come on top of cuts in government funding which have seen new homes bonus receipts cut from £3m in 2020/21, to £1.68m in 2021/22, and are forecasted to be cut again to £0.7m in 2022/23.
61. In response to the cuts of £2.6m above, Officers has worked diligently to identify in excess of £3m of savings that can be delivered over the next few years. These savings have required tough decisions to be taken and have

meant the deletion of roughly 30 full time equivalent posts, and an anticipated pay freeze, even before the Chancellors announcement on Public Sector pay.

62. With the expectation of further funding cuts when the next multiyear spending review is complete, further savings may be necessary, especially if the economy does not recover as forecast.
63. This budget is therefore presented with a significant focus on continuing to provide the statutory services to residents at existing levels, why accepting that only limited funds will be available to deliver projects in comparison to previous years.

Contact and Email

64. Lee Foreman – 01233 330509 – leeforeman@ashford.gov.uk

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
DIRECTORATE SUMMARY				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Directorate	Budget 2021/22 £
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710	Chief Executive	1,173,200
4,455,249	2,740,690	3,961,830	Director of Finance & Economy	2,908,790
2,358,303	2,050,770	3,455,000	Director of Law & Governance	2,100,460
10,590,003	10,970,290	12,620,640	Director of Place & Space	10,120,940
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(2,327,931)	(1,162,070)	(1,904,040)	Non service specific	(2,737,650)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
(16,521,843)	(15,967,490)	(19,033,910)	Financing	(13,565,740)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
SERVICE SUMMARY				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Service	Budget 2021/22 £
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710	Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	1,173,200
(978,623)	(1,778,020)	(763,610)	Corporate Property & Projects	(1,275,200)
3,641,761	3,658,460	3,498,210	Finance & IT	3,269,790
1,792,111	860,250	1,227,230	Housing General Fund Services	914,200
765,152	427,600	2,002,290	Community Safety and Wellbeing	711,520
76,808	197,340	112,430	HR & Customer Services	155,350
1,516,343	1,425,830	1,340,280	Legal & Democratic Services	1,233,590
3,512,553	3,342,230	4,378,330	Culture	3,208,300
5,238,038	5,453,140	5,286,860	Environmental & Land Management	4,744,550
1,839,412	2,174,920	2,955,450	Planning	2,168,090
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(4,934,028)	(2,587,480)	(3,182,340)	Capital Charges & Net Interest	(2,437,810)
264,151	270,500	270,500	Levies	276,000
2,341,946	1,154,910	1,007,800	Contribution to/(from) Balances	(575,840)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
			Income	
(277,324)	0	(3,066,420)	Government Grant	0
(5,697,644)	(4,991,320)	(4,991,320)	Retained Business Rates	(4,093,390)
(2,954,410)	(3,053,420)	(3,053,420)	New Homes Bonus	(1,680,000)
(7,592,465)	(7,922,750)	(7,922,750)	Council Tax	(7,792,350)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

General Fund Draft Budget 2021/22				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Department	Budget 2021/22 £
			Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	
323,404	280,250	280,690	Policy and Performance	276,120
635,567	638,660	646,210	Economic Development	451,800
450,752	448,900	464,810	Communications & Marketing	445,280
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710		1,173,200
			Corporate Property & Projects	
18,202	17,880	(156,210)	Project Delivery Team	17,600
668	2,820	(46,020)	Facilities Management	(10)
(997,493)	(1,798,720)	(561,380)	Corporate Property	(1,292,790)
(978,623)	(1,778,020)	(763,610)		(1,275,200)
			Finance & IT	
97,067	91,450	46,740	Accountancy	26,610
761	(10)	(10)	Audit Partnership	(20)
614,378	804,840	747,570	Benefits Administration	778,920
309,703	487,940	428,510	Council Tax Collection	367,610
121	2,100	(15,320)	Debtors/Debt Recovery	30
269,206	40,540	40,540	Miscellaneous Expenditure	35,130
76,353	68,000	80,360	Exchequer	57,540
(642,495)	(175,000)	(175,000)	Housing Benefits Payments	(280,000)
(91,281)	(40,090)	(43,970)	NNDR Collection	(52,920)
1,674,978	1,365,770	1,365,770	Non-Distributed Costs	1,419,400
79,311	26,310	28,290	ICT	11,080
29	220	12,240	Telephony	30
1,020,871	782,980	783,880	Strategic Corporate Costs	690,750
232,757	203,410	198,610	Corporate Management	215,630
3,641,761	3,658,460	3,498,210		3,269,790
			Housing General Fund Services	
211,809	144,600	144,600	Private Sector Housing	207,030
89,613	96,760	95,360	Housing Strategy and Enabling	114,600
1,218,720	609,520	1,001,450	Housing Options	605,150
246,326	3,620	0	Refugee Project	0
25,642	5,750	(14,180)	Gypsy Site - Chilmington	(12,580)
1,792,111	860,250	1,227,230		914,200
			Community Safety and Wellbeing	
648,258	692,610	808,310	Community Safety,AMC,Licencing	675,220
689,343	632,350	626,420	Environmental Health	579,590
(572,449)	(897,360)	567,560	Parking & Engineering	(543,290)
765,152	427,600	2,002,290		711,520

General Fund Draft Budget 2021/22

Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Department	Budget 2021/22 £
			HR & Customer Services	
17,889	181,220	132,300	Human Resources	143,730
58,919	16,120	(19,870)	Visitor & Call Centre	11,620
76,808	197,340	112,430		155,350
			Legal & Democratic Services	
840,219	851,890	836,870	Democratic Representation	791,980
613,541	478,990	470,150	Electoral Services	378,070
2,185	27,910	(26,780)	Legal	0
60,397	67,040	60,040	Mayor	63,540
1,516,343	1,425,830	1,340,280		1,233,590
			Culture	
305,837	318,750	348,080	Cultural Services Management	317,820
1,559,830	1,490,220	2,489,300	Leisure Centres	1,691,040
281,027	295,090	295,630	Open Spaces and Conservation	301,120
399,196	446,760	511,760	Single Grants Gateway	315,860
192,491	220,810	202,720	Tourism & Heritage	182,910
774,172	570,600	530,840	Cultural Projects	399,550
3,512,553	3,342,230	4,378,330		3,208,300
			Environmental & Land Management	
250,986	289,700	292,700	Street Scene	267,260
3,332,001	3,421,280	3,254,280	Refuse, Recycling, Street Clean	2,986,900
1,655,051	1,742,160	1,739,880	Grounds Maintenance	1,490,390
5,238,038	5,453,140	5,286,860		4,744,550
			Planning	
149,500	48,410	62,270	Chilmington	35,140
38,512	74,350	100,460	Building Control	88,310
1,069,729	949,490	1,923,900	Development Control	1,030,830
(19,456)	(1,770)	(1,770)	Land Charges	(70)
597	12,350	(2,360)	Planning Administration	(10)
600,530	1,092,090	872,950	Strategic Planning	1,013,890
1,839,412	2,174,920	2,955,450		2,168,090
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	16,303,390

2021/22 Draft Budget Report

The following table represents risks to the 2021/22 draft budget at both a service and economic level. These risks will be monitored throughout the Budget setting cycle and be updates accordingly before being presented to Cabinet in February as part of the final budget setting report.

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
1. Covid19 Pandemic	<p>The Covid19 pandemic has delivered an unprecedented economic shock across the Globe that will be felt for many years to come.</p> <p>For Ashford this has led to a significant reductions in income, increased costs to support public facilities in the Borough, and a rethink of its corporate priorities as we move forward.</p> <p>To deal with the economic shock of Covid19 immediately and into the medium term, the Council has identified savings to be delivered over the next few years in the region of £3m.</p> <p>Having identified the savings and factored them into the draft 2021/22 budget and MTFP, it is now imperative that we closely monitor the delivery of these savings.</p> <p>Failure not to deliver the required savings will result in further draws on reserves and undermine the MTFP and financial sustainability of the Council.</p>
2. EU Exit and the Border Control Facility	<p>As part of the plans for the EU Exit, a new Inland Border Facility (IBF) is being sited by Government at Sevington and the Council will be required to provide port health functions at the site.</p> <p>There is an End of Transition Risk Register which is monitored by an internal “cell” and has been reported to cabinet callover recently.</p> <p>The Council is working closely with Defra to ensure the overall outcome of supporting the IBF will have no detrimental impact on the Ashford Tax Payer.</p>
3. Government Spending Review	<p>The days of multi-year settlements seem distant as we enter a second successive one year settlement following the end of the four year deal.</p> <p>It is understandable that Government needs to focus on recovering from the Covid19 pandemic and EU Exit plans this continues to provide uncertainty around long term funding for the Council.</p> <p>The single year reviews have been positive in funding terms for the Council, however there is concern that funding of local government could be reduced as Government looks to recover some of the costs of the Covid19 Pandemic, and support pledges to other Government Departments.</p>

<p>4. Pressure on the 2020/21 Budget and impact going forward.</p>	<p>2020/21 is an exceptional year and the risks below will try to look through the one off pressures arising from Covid19 and focus on risks going forward.</p> <p>Homelessness – This area has been adversely impacted by Covid19 in 2020/21 which has resulted in the long term use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation which is expensive and adds pressure to the budget.</p> <p>Numbers are starting to decline and new initiatives such as Christchurch Lodge and the Henwood Modular units (once progressed) will increase affordable Temporary Accommodation capacity to reduce costs.</p> <p>This budget could again be put under pressure if the long term impact of Covid19 leads to further job cuts once the furlough scheme ends, and hardship which could see an increase in people presenting as Homeless where they may find it difficult to support existing accommodation costs.</p> <p>Corporate Property – Due to Covid19 income from corporate property has been under pressure during 2020/21 although new lettings at Elwick place have been strong.</p> <p>For 2021/22 the MTFP recognised the ongoing pressure which will be placed on Corporate Property incomes and reduced its overall income target so that realistic rental forecast could be made, and funding be available to support void costs.</p> <p>Economic risk will continue to undermine performance in this area for 2021/22 but the measures taken reduce this risk significantly and should provide a platform to grow income streams beyond 2020/21 as the economy recovers.</p> <p>Rent collection will continue to be vigorously monitored in 2021/22 to identify any emerging problems and be reported accordingly through the usual budget monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>The Council raised the repairs and renewals budget from £250,000 to £500,000 in 20/21. This level of support for ensuring council assets are maintained in good condition has been maintained for 2021/22, in addition to the £500,000 borrowing (capital budget) which continues to be allowed for.</p> <p>Parking Income</p> <p>The 2020-21 parking budget is forecasting 50% losses over the year although these have been strongly supported by the Governments sales fees and charges (SFC) scheme.</p> <p>Going forward it is anticipated that there could be a 15% reduction parking income and this has been reflected in the 2021/22 budget.</p> <p>This will continue to be a risk in 2021/22 though as Covid restrictions end and a 'new' base line for parking usage is established. Some support has been provided by Government which will see the SFC scheme extended for April, May and June 2021.</p>
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Budget Component	Financial standing and management
	<p>Planning</p> <p>Despite initial robustness, planning fee income has started to fall in 2020/21 and is expecting to be down by around 40% in 2020/21.</p> <p>Planning has also incurred additional costs in 2020/21 following the Natural England Report into Stodmarsh with the need to seek an effective mitigation strategy going forward.</p> <p>Going into 2021/22, Planning is one of the few areas where expenditure has actually increased to support the service needs for 2021/22. This is as a result of minimal savings being identified in the service as part of the Corporate savings target, additional funding being necessary going forward to assess the environmental impact of new applications in relation to Stodmarsh, £50,000 budget for Counsel fees to support planning enforcement, and £60,000 for a new software solution which should provide efficiencies over the long term.</p> <p>Clearly the Stodmarsh issues and current economic climate will be a risk to the planning budget in 2021/22. Furthermore, despite some allowance being available for counsel fees, any increase in Planning Enforcement activity or the need to defend against planning appeals will need to be funded from general reserves.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
5. Commercialisation	<p>2020/21 saw the introduction of the Councils commercialisation strategy and the creating of a commercial hub.</p> <p>This initiative is progressing well and increases in areas such as garden waste income are already seeing increased numbers as a result of commercially minded marketing strategies.</p> <p>This is seen as an area of recovery going into 2021/22 and a budget of for £60,000, funded from the additional income achieved from the scheme will be introduced into the 2021/22 budget to support existing and new ideas.</p> <p>In terms of the wider context, the Council continues to have good reserves which have recently been re-purposed as part of the MTFP report to provide greater flexibility to protect budgets from economic shocks and uncertainty.</p>
6. Transformation and digitalisation	<p>Digitalisation continues to be a key priority for the organisation to ensure systems work effectively and efficiently to deliver excellent services for our external stakeholders. The digitalisation programme is targeting systems to ensure efficiencies through digitalisation can be maximised to create staffing capacity to manage business growth within existing resources.</p> <p>One of the most significant areas under review will be the implementation of a new planning system.</p>
7. Assumptions about increases in service income.	<p>The budget setting purposes income has been increased by an average of 3.0%, for legislative reasons or demand some charges will be lower or higher than this.</p> <p>The proposed fees and charges are presented in detail as part of the budget report. Any amendments to the proposals may involve a slight risk to the budget.</p>
8. Housing Revenue Account	<p>The HRA debt cap has now been removed and the ability to build affordable housing without the restrictions of the debt cap. The business plan factors in these new developments which are included in the 30 years business plan.</p> <p>Although the business plan is currently affordable, this need to be kept under review to ensure that new opportunities are properly assessed for viability as to not place pressure on the HRA model.</p> <p>Regular updating of the HRA business plan and financial monitoring will occur during 2021/22.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
9. Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts.	<p>Capital receipts are now low in the General Fund, the budgets and financing of the capital plan reflects this.</p> <p>The Housing Revenue Account capital receipts had been increasing over the last couple of years due to the invigorated 'Right to Buy' policy, although this has slowed as a result of Covid19.</p> <p>The majority of RTB receipts need to be held to fund affordable housing (funds 30% of the total cost) within the Borough, and this Council took the opportunity to retain these receipts for this purpose, these receipts are called 1-4-1 capital receipts.</p> <p>The receipts and capital plans are being closely monitored and ensure these receipts are used to avoid repayment which would attract interest of 4% above base. These funds are currently being spent well in advance of need due to the on street purchasing programme.</p>
10. Major Capital Projects	<p>Due to the impact of Covid19 the Council has had to re-assess its corporate priorities and focus its resources on the recovery plan, and the projects identified within in it.</p> <p>To maintain financial stability Members and Officers need to focus on the recovery projects and new projects that will not increase annual revenue costs to the Council, by way of additional unfunded borrowing costs or maintenance liabilities.</p>
11. Business Rates	<p>Risks to the council's business rates yield is a major risk to the budget as the revaluation of rates and the level of appeals against new valuations are likely to affect the overall level of rateable value within the borough. Although Government has further delayed this business rates review and reset.</p> <p>The level of income from business rates is affected by the overall performance of the economy, and with Covid19 significantly impacting this, business rates forecast have been reduced accordingly.</p> <p>As lockdowns and Government support packages end for businesses, there could be increase pressure in this area. Business rates will be monitored regularly and any movement against budget will be flagged as part of the budget monitoring process.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
12. Inflation, Interest Rate and Pay Award	<p>Inflation is a factor that needs to be managed carefully within any financial planning regime. The council benefitted from the low levels of inflation over the last few years. Inflation is currently below the target of 2% set by the bank of England and is expected to recover back to target between 2022 and 2023.</p> <p>Interest rates have been forecast in line with the Arlingclose (Treasury Management Advisors) forecasts. As a net borrower the Council is exposed to interest rate risk on its borrowing portfolio, especially in line with its strategy. Interest forecast look flat over the period of the MTFP.</p> <p>Pay – the current budget assumes a freeze in pay although this is still to be formally agreed.</p>

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 17/12/2020

Report Title: Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community

Report Author & Job Title: Dan Daley – Masterplanning & Delivery Coordinator

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Neil Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Planning & Chilmington Green

Summary: Following 18 months of stakeholder and wider public engagement, a resulting Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community is presented for adoption. This document sets out clear and achievable actions to be delivered by different partners, helping to join-up high quality placemaking with community-led governance and long-term sustainable development.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Weald Central, Weald South, Singleton West, Singleton East, Roman, Kingsnorth Village & Bridgefield

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

- I. To recommend to Full Council, adoption of the draft Vision & Strategy and the forthcoming steps to implement the proposed action plan (along with strategic partners who have endorsed it)
- II. To delegate the Director of Finance & Economy and the Head of Planning, the authority to approve the final draft ahead of adoption by Full Council in March 2021

Policy Overview: The SAGC Vision & Strategy has been written with careful consideration to multiple Corporate and Planning policy documents. The two sites allocated within the Ashford Local Plan 2030 and are subject to relevant policies which the Vision & Strategy seeks to reinforce. These are detailed within the report.

Financial Implications: The high level objectives and associated action plan within the Vision & Strategy relates to existing budgets within respective ABC service plans. Further detail is included within the report.

Legal Implications:	None
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See attached
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	A DPIA is deemed not required. Whilst the Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community has not and will not require any large scale or high risk processing of personal data, the engagement of stakeholders and the wider public is crucial and this will involve the processing of basic personal information, opinions and views. As such considerations have been given to the nature, scope, context and purpose of any processing of personal data to ensure appropriate compliance and mitigation measures are in place to reduce any risks to the rights or freedoms of the individual.
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	<p>The draft SAGC Vision & Strategy is designed to add value to the project and to reduce risk for the Council by setting clear objectives and a clear plan for how key partners will help to deliver. This distribution of responsibility over a diverse range of actions, which is being endorsed by partners, will help to mitigate Council risk and ensure successful delivery. Without this Strategy, it is possible that the project will fall outside of the Council's risk appetite and therefore jeopardize deliverables.</p> <p>For more detail, see attached Service Risk Register.</p>
Sustainability Implications:	The Strategy has sustainability as a core theme, and it provides reasonable actions which detail how the South of Ashford Garden Community can help to meet the Borough's Carbon Neutral aims. If carbon reduction and increased biodiversity cannot be achieved within the Garden Community then this doesn't bode well for further housing development. The Garden Community must champion these aims and drive forward sustainable projects such as low-energy homes, community facilities which put energy back into the grid, green travel plans and the rewilding of designated ecological areas. Multiple partners play a role in these aims, including the Chilmington Management Organisation which will be responsible for some of the assets. The Department for Education is also making first steps to deliver one of the first carbon neutral secondary schools in the country, a great legacy project for the SAGC.
Other Material Implications:	N/A
Exempt from Publication:	NO

- Background Papers (blue cover pages)**
1. Report Back on the SAGC workshop outcomes – September 2019
 2. 'Our Garden Village' public survey results – September 2020
 3. Focus Group outputs for the CSG – September 2020
 4. **Draft Five Year SAGC Vision & Strategy**
 5. Table of feedback on draft SAGC Vision & Strategy

Contact: dan.daley@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 07934037619

Report Title: Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community

Introduction and Background

1. Having obtained Garden Community designation and funding from Homes England in 2019, a holistic programme of activities were set in place to masterplan three major development sites under a single Vision & Strategy. Chilmington Green, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green were to be guided by a Garden Communities framework adhering them to high quality design and placemaking. Central to this framework was the active participation of existing and future residents in the shaping of the Vision & Strategy. Since the spring of 2019, such community participation has been robust and has resulted in significant input to help shape the proposed Vision & Strategy. The core principles of this approach were supported by Planning Policy Task Group in July 2020.
2. Planning policy considerations included the Area Action Plan for Chilmington Green and relevant SPDs which apply, as well as the Design Codes produced for each of the sites. Within the Local Plan 2030, two key policies which the Vision & Strategy sought to address included:
 - a. Policy COM1, 'Meeting the Community's Needs' by taking a Hub approach to strategic parks within the Borough. This includes Discovery Park which is a central project to bind the wider SAGC together.
 - b. Policy IMP4 'Governance of Public Community Space and Facilities' makes a commitment to community-led governance and stewardship. This is working well at Chilmington Green and has since been modelled for Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green. Adherence by all developments to this policy is crucial to the success of the SAGC.
3. In addition to the above, there were wider ABC corporate policies to consider. These included the Council's sustainability aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. A number of activities which will put the Garden Community on track to meeting sustainability targets, including a first for the Borough (and the Country) with the first carbon neutral secondary school.
4. Recognising some of the challenges presented by these developments, (commercially-led, private land, uncertain economic outlook, local resistance to development to name a few), the Council plays a central role in place shaping terms. Through planning policy and corporate aims, there is an imperative for the Council to broker partnerships and to contract specialist advice in the formation of healthy new communities. It also plays a central role in building civic engagement and community leadership. Delivering such ambitious aims is not achievable by the council alone, therefore this Vision & Strategy seeks to distribute the workload amongst strategic public and private partners. Public and voluntary sector partners will be encouraged to work in partnership to deliver in keeping with their social aims. Private partners will be obligated both through partnership working, where appropriate and subject to

formal decision making, section 106 agreements and planning permissions, and incentivised through the economic returns gained from delivering high quality placemaking. Key strategic partners are being asked to endorse the Strategy and its action plan.

5. The missing piece in this puzzle is to take the vision of the developers at Chilmington Green, the proposals at Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green and the aspirations of existing residents, and to set holistic objectives which bring them all together. This umbrella vision needs to be broad yet specific, representative yet directional. It needs to be realistic and open to change whilst being underpinned by planning policy and securely funded by multiple partners.

Proposal

6. The SAGC Vision & Strategy sets out a vision statement followed by five strategic objectives. They encompass the priorities which were voiced by partners and local community members. Arguably these five objectives offer a considered mix of ingredients important to any emerging development of a similar scale. The SAGC objectives, however, make reference to specific qualities which will distinguish this development, making it an exemplary new community.
7. Under the five strategic objectives there is a detailed action plan which identifies a responsible party to lead each action; the partners needed to support, co-deliver or advise; key challenges/risks to overcome and a broad timeframe. The action plan includes seeking out additional funding. This will be coordinated by the existing Chilmington Project Team, something this team already delivers working alongside the Theme Leads, identified in the Chilmington Together Partnership. Similarly, many of the actions identified are ongoing or are part of the day job for those identified as responsible. The key here is to join-up the approach and to set the framework needed for partners to start meeting the strategic objectives of the SAGC. (eg. there has been good intention by many partners, with much ambition to date, but not a road map to focus this energy). The action plan will be evaluated and revised each year to reflect the current environment and progress made.
8. In terms of core funding, the Homes England Garden Communities programme for 2021/2022 is pending (notice due December 2020). The programme pays for much of the ABC corporate level coordination of the wider SAGC project, but again many of the actions identified are within existing Council resource or are to be delivered by strategic partners. The Strategy's action plan includes work to secure additional funds above and beyond what has been secured to date. Although unlikely, should the Garden Communities funding not be obtained, nor any further monies secured, the proposed action plan will be reduced and/or suspended until a time when adequate funding can be secured.
9. To date the process of creating the Vision & Strategy has been about listening, retaining and reflecting back. This document being presented to cabinet will be subject to further modifications. This is in keeping with how the process of shaping the Strategy began. It began as a participatory exercise and, whilst this is not the end, it is the beginning of many more years of involving many different perspectives. This is a reflection of that process and

should it obtain Cabinet approval, it will go on to reflect any further input necessary. Specifically there is a desire to spatialize (put on a map) the action plan. This exercise will be carried out and included in the final publication for March 2021.

10. It is important to note that the SAGC Strategy will not be a standalone document, but will be underpinned by a Garden Community SPD. This is in development with Planning Policy colleagues. The SPD will aim to provide the necessary hooks to ensure Developer partners deliver the strategic aims of the Vision & Strategy. The SPD will set out in planning terms what specifically applies within the SAGC area, adding greater detail to pre-existing policy guidance on quality placemaking and methods of delivery.

Equalities Impact Assessment

11. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. The key issues arising include a wide diversity of views on the existing and proposed developments within the SAGC. The Assessment reveals no negative impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics. Likely positive impacts will be felt by those in the young adult and middle age categories, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, disability, race or religion. This indicates an age related impact as the outcomes of the proposal are likely to serve younger generations seeking affordable homes.
12. There are further positive impacts for those with certain protected characteristics should the aims of the proposal be met. This is because several actions within the Strategy directly address accessibility and inclusion. Actions to ensure disabled access within all community facilities, alternative and safe means of travel, as well as inclusive approaches to governance. These all seek to make a positive impact. The inclusion of these actions is the result of consultation that heard from some of these particularly marginalised voices.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. As the Borough's largest housing allocation with a total of 7,250 homes and associated infrastructure across three sites, an ambitious yet achievable Vision & Strategy is essential. What has been drafted represents 18 months of stakeholder and wider public engagement with the South of Ashford Garden Community. This engagement has included two public events held locally with total attendance above 250 people; three focus groups with representation across the SAGC area; an online survey using ABC's own public survey provider; one public webinar; ongoing Community Stakeholder Group meetings on a bimonthly basis; presentations to the Chilmington Together Delivery & Implementation Board (DIB); the Chilmington Management Organisation (CMO) and direct feedback by all partners on the draft SAGC Strategy document itself.
14. Further consultation included final presentations to the DIB and CMO Board on the 1st and 8th of December respectively, both of which have confirmed their endorsement of the draft Vision & Strategy. Feedback on the draft document so far has been about the actions with little to no change of the fundamentals behind it.

Other Options Considered

15. Without a Vision & Strategy, the SAGC relies on broader policy and guidance, eg. Local Plan, Chilmington Green AAP, etc. Whilst these are important documents, they do not (and cannot) go far enough in detailing all of the important elements to creating a vibrant and active community. There are limitations to the planning system which mean that it is vital to produce a Strategy which will deliver on the council's ambitious plans for its garden community.
16. Not having a Strategy and Action Plan which brings together our partners and to produce a collective vision and ambitions upon which we can focus resource, monitor and evaluate delivery, was therefore not an option.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

17. When the council secured garden community status from central government, this elevates the development as one which will break new boundaries, be innovative and seek to provide a community for the future. The council therefore needs to ensure it focuses its limited resources and that of its partners in achieving these aims. A strategy and action plan provides the tools in which to do this and a framework upon which to deliver.
18. These are the reasons why producing a Strategy has been supported by senior officers, the portfolio holder, ward members and Planning Policy Task Group.

Next Steps in Process

19. Should Cabinet approve the SAGC Vision & Strategy, it will undergo further refinement along with the production of a spatial plan (map) indicating how some of the actions will be located within the SAGC area. This is part of improving the accessibility of the document by making it easier for all readers to understand, in a visual way, what the Strategy is trying to achieve. This will be done alongside further graphic illustration and iconography to be produced by ABC's communications team. The final designed publication would, subject to delegated powers, be signed off by the Director of Economy & Finance and the Head of Planning.
20. Further to the point on accessibility, the ABC communications team will also develop a microsite for the SAGC utilising the same methods applied in the recent re-design of the Council's own website. This will make the SAGC strategy accessible to a wider audience through the use of screen readers, speech recognition and audio recordings.
21. Subject to the adoption of the Strategy by Full Council in March 2021, several project working groups will be established. These will include Council officers, key partners and members of the public. These groups will pick up specific actions and implement. Bimonthly reporting to the Community Stakeholder Group will proceed from there with further monitoring and evaluation as set out in detail within the Strategy. Cabinet will receive an annual report on progress and evaluation, together with an updated action plan.

Conclusion

22. Given the current economic circumstances and the future outlook in post-Covid-19 recovery, Ashford Borough Council has now, more than ever, a leading role to play in the SAGC. This Vision & Strategy offers a bold way forward which utilises the strengths of many different actors. This distribution of resource at the local level will help to maintain the health and wellbeing of existing and new residents through the tides of economic uncertainty ahead. Of course there is much within the Strategy which depends on our Developer partners to deliver at pace. This is why the tested project governance arrangement for Chilmington Green must be continued with ABC resource to coordinate. This governance needs to extend to the SAGC in time.
23. Further to the above, there is much within the Strategy which can be delivered without reliance on the market. Many of the actions around active travel, ecological enhancement, community development, access and inclusion, to name a few, can be led with existing resource. This is a milestone in the history of these developments and a real opportunity to set the bar for future development in the Borough. The SAGC Vision & Strategy, along with the above mentioned Garden Community SPD, will be a practical suite of aims and guidance to achieve this. The recommendations are set out on the summary page.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Cllr Neil Shorter, Portfolio holder for Planning

24. Building communities in the style of historic villages that have evolved over hundreds if not thousands of years as places that people “own” and are fundamentally part of rather than simply dormitory estates that people live in and take decades to make “home” is vital. This is at the heart of what the SAGC is endeavouring to achieve.
25. Chilmington Green, as a new community, when it was in its early formation had put forward a new stewardship model. This took the form of the Chilmington Management Organisation which is beginning to prove its value. This concept emerged in the early 2000s to the final model agreed at Planning in 2014. The same will be true for the SAGC as it too must be governed in a way which allows for community-led stewardship. This is why the SAGC Vision & Strategy sets out a clear plan which brings further proposed developments on board in a way which will ensure community cohesion and joined-up infrastructures.

Cllr Jessamy Blanford, Ward Member

26. The SAGC gives us the opportunity to knit the new residents and the current residents into playing an important role in developing the area in which they live. As the new dwellings are built and occupied the residents will have the opportunity to promote leisure, sporting, environmental and public art opportunities to make the SAGC a really memorable place to live.

Contact and Email

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Equality Impact Assessment

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

Public sector equality duty

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

Protected characteristics

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

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

Due regard

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

Armed Forces Community

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

Case law principles

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

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

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

Lead officer:	Dan Daley – Masterplanning & Delivery Coordinator
Decision maker:	Ben Lockwood – Director of Finance & Economy
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Cabinet proposal to Full Council to adopt Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	17 December 2020
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim is for Cabinet Member’s approval to help bring a holistic vision for this project into focus; to champion the objectives and actions which the strategy proposes. • Once approved, the Strategy can be brought forward for adoption by Full Council in March, at which point all

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>partners and groups involved are invited to join working groups that will help implement the actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and future residents of the SAGC area are the primary benefactors of the Strategy. Its objectives are to shape a healthy new community within which they play a central role. The Strategy also affects all those named partners who are delivering new housing, key infrastructures and wider programming. They too will be expected to use the Strategy as a roadmap to successful delivery. • Whilst difficult to put a number on how many will be affected, likely in the immediate term this Strategy will affect hundreds. This will be nearer to thousands affected as actions taken over the next five years begin to impart a legacy on the SAGC.
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research behind this decision extends to some of the earliest policy frameworks developed for the area now defined as the SAGC. From the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF) in 2005 to the Area Action Plan for Chilmington in 2013, it was established in policy that Chilmington Green would be designed and built following Garden City principles. In 2018, the concept of a South of Ashford Garden Community was put forward by ABC and formally recognised in the Ashford Local Plan 2030. This allocated two further sites adjacent to Chilmington Green and it recognised the inherent relationship between the three. • In addition to the above mentioned policy documents, further research was carried out to understand best practice in other parts of the country. At the time, a strong relationship was formed with RegenCo (consultancy setup by East Hants District Council) who were leading the Whitehill & Bordon development. This 'Healthy New Town' had a bold vision (not unlike a Garden City) which offered plenty of learnings for Chilmington Green to adopt. RegenCo helped Chilmington Green implement a similar project governance arrangement in the form of the Delivery & Implementation Board. It was evident from this approach that public/private partnership and multi-stakeholder engagement were critical to delivering high quality placemaking.
<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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019, two public workshops on the SAGC Vision & Strategy were widely publicised (one in March and another in September). In 2020 a public survey was published and a series of focus groups were organised with local residents chairing. Finally, a public webinar was held at the end of September where the draft principles for the Vision & Strategy were presented. Throughout the past 18 months, the County Council along with other key partners including the Developers of the sites have been consulted upon through reports and presentations. • The idea of the SAGC (its approach to joining up multiple developments etc.) has been widely supported by all

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>partners and most residents. Where differing opinion was encountered, the consensus has always been that a Vision & Strategy is essential to governing large-scale development. Those with opposing views were about the principle of development at all, but a majority are in favour of development if done to a high quality. In terms of the varying protected characteristics within those consulted, it was evident that young adults were most in favour of the SAGC over older generations. Inclusivity was a prominent point of discussion, particularly for persons with disabilities. It is for this reason that the SAGC Vision & Strategy sets out a commitment to delivering more inclusive and accessible community facilities.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

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

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Positive (Minor)
Middle age	High	Positive (Major)
Young adult	High	Positive (Major)
Children	Medium	Positive (Minor)
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Positive (Minor)
Mental	Medium	Positive (Minor)
Sensory	Medium	Positive (Minor)
<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>	None	Neutral

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

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?	
Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes

Conclusion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have 	<p>Due regard for the equality duty has been taken from start to finish in the lead up to the proposed SAGC Vision & Strategy in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and transparent communication with all parties involved in the development of the Strategy. In-person consultations held in facilities at ground level which are accessible to all. A variety of different consultation methods utilised in order to reach a diversity of characteristics

<p>been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey published using latest technology available to support interpretation and any assistance requirements needed in order to limit barriers to participate. • All communication material written in plain English, minimising jargon and use of colloquialisms which may discriminate against certain groups • Active encouragement of those who have a protected characteristic to get involved in the process • Proactive steps taken to encourage consensus building and collaboration amongst all persons with or without a protected characteristic <p>Based on the above and the nature of the decision being brought to Cabinet, no further adjustments are deemed to be necessary.</p> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation of the SAGC Vision & Strategy is clearly outlined within the document. A reporting schedule is included which will review the action plan annually. Interim reporting to MT and continued management of the action plan will be led by the Chilmington Project Team.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>30 November 2020</p>

Risk mitigation log

Ref	Risk title/description	Risk Owner	Potential consequence	Current controls and mitigation	Impact breakdown					Inherent rating			Within acceptable tolerance?	Further key actions (and action owners)	Notes
					R	S	O	F	C	Impact	L'hood	Severity			
1.1	Without a Vision & Strategy for the SAGC	ABC	Lack of clear objectives and a plan to deliver which distibutes responsibility to partners, causing greater delays, disconnected designs and lack of cohesion for the benefit of residents	Extensive consultation and engagement in the past 18 months to shape a Vision & Strategy with action plan, a document that all partners and community members can sign-up to and champion	4	4	3	3	2	4	2	8	Y	A comprehensive strategy prepared which is being endorsed by each partner involved. The next step is for ABC Cabinet to propose that the strategy be adopted by Full Council.	Producing the Strategy is about adding value to what is the Borough's largest housing development. Whilst there are risks to the Council in delivering such a project, taking the current actions described (including producing a Vision & Strategy) will ensure the benefits outweigh the risks.
1.2	Risk of funding bids, namely Homes England Garden Communities funding coming to an end	Chilmington Project Team	Without replacement funds, some Officer roles would be at risk and the SAGC programme would not have the resources needed	Maintaining good communication with Homes England, delivering housing on track and meeting the aims within the Garden Community Framework	4	3	5	5	2	5	2	10	Y	The SAGC Vision & Strategy includes actions to seek out additional funding sources to distribute risk. Also, making best use of existing ABC service plans.	November Update; Homes England GC funding notification is due (could be December or early 2021 before confirmed)
1.5	Risk of staff being redeployed to support wider council functions eg. flu pandemic (or similar) OR Change in Council's corporate priorities	ABC	Service delivery affected meaning less focus on programme management and progression on planning applications and SAGC project delivery.	Programme management approach is now in place.	3	3	4	4	2	4	2	8	Y	Robust programme planning and S106 monitoring will enable ABC to better plan and organise its resources to meet obligations and commitments.	November Update; programme planning went under review and a new programme framework has been deployed.
1.7	Housing Land Supply not met due to A28 delays, wider recession, etc. Appeals increase putting financial pressure on Council.	ABC, developers	Increase in Appeals. Financial and resource implications for Council.	Council and partners very aware of challenges and forthcoming risks. Mitigation being put in place where possible.	4	5	5	4	5	5	2	10	Y	Continued work with developers to overcome challenges through DIB and Planning system at CL/KG.	Impact on housing market still unclear although sales continue to be strong across much of Chilmington. The recovery plan for the Housing market could have implications for Garden Communities .
1.8	Sustainability requirements of government place further financial pressures on council and developers	ABC	Increase in financial pressures on council and developers, requiring re-negotiation of S106, costing time and money. Impact on housing supply.	Chilmington S106 has some sustainability obligations which could be flexed. CL/KG will meet new policy requirements. Further funding sources being explored to add value.	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	9	Y	The Five Year SAGC Strategy includes detail of actions to be taken which address sustainability issues, providing framework for action and delivery	November Update; Strategy is included in the Council's newly revised carbon neutral action plan. Secondary school planned for Carbon Zero. Stodmarsh notification from Natural England will require further mitigation measures to protect biodiversity. These costs to be born by developments still in outline planning.
1.9	Risk that recession impacts on ability of developers to sell land, build and occupy houses.	ABC/Land Agents/Devel opers	Delay to housing occupations, impacting on Land Supply. Risk of further appeals, costing council time and resource	The DIB provides a forum for sharing issues and partnership working and the new programme framework provides a basis for discussion.	4	4	4	4	2	5	2	10	Y	Programme planning and S106 Monitoring system in place will aid careful and clear management of risks to council and its partners, providing mitigation where possible, ahead of time.	November update; Hodson, BDW & Jarvis still selling houses. Due to Sodmarsh, significant delays to progressing CL and KG applications are expected (committee dates not set) but progress is being made on other S106 heads of terms.

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Key:
Impact breakdown Impact assessment (1-5)

Monitoring questions
1) Have there been any changes to the risks?

R = Reputational Risk
S = Strategic risk
O = Operational risk
F = Financial risk
C = Compliance

1: Minimal
2: Minor
3: Moderate
4: Major
5: Catastrophic

Likelihood assessment (score 1-5)

- 1: Rare - very unlikely to occur, no recent similar instances elsewhere
- 2: Unlikely - could occur, not expected but not unheard of elsewhere
- 3: Possible - might occur, similar occurrences elsewhere
- 4: Likely - will probably occur; strong likelihood, know to occur often elsewhere
- 5: Almost certain - expected to occur in most circumstances; frequent similar occurrences elsewhere

- 2) Are there any emerging risks?
- 3) Have independencies with other risks been identified?
- 4) Are there risks not being mitigated against?
- 5) Are we comfortable that the controls are effective?
- 6) What is the progress against the key actions? Is it sufficient?

1

South of Ashford Garden Community

Report Back on the Workshop of Monday 30 September 2019



Report produced by Ashford Borough Council. For more information, please contact dan.daley@ashford.gov.uk

Background

On Monday 30 September 2019, two public workshop sessions on the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) were held at Homelands Football Club outside the village of Kingsnorth. This was a follow-on to a workshop held in March which focused on revised development proposals at Court Lodge.

This time around the emphasis was on the whole of the garden community which includes the sites of Court Lodge, Kingsnorth Green (in outline planning) and Chilmington (works on-site). The aim of which was to further consult on the outline plans and to ensure a joined-up approach to key infrastructure, open space provision and community facilities.

In addition to local residents, parish councillors and ward members, attendees included planning officers from Ashford Borough Council (ABC), highways and drainage experts from Kent County Council, urban design consultants Urban Wilderness, Feria Urbanism and the Land Management Institute, developer partners Jarvis Homes and Hallam Land, as well as representatives from Kent Wildlife Trust, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and Ashford Vineyard Church.

The proceeding pages map key issues and ideas along with the material collected during the group table sessions, summarising participant views through key themes at the end.

The following actions are to be progressed by ABC, developers and partners. These respond to some of the key issues raised during the workshop.

Key Actions in 2020

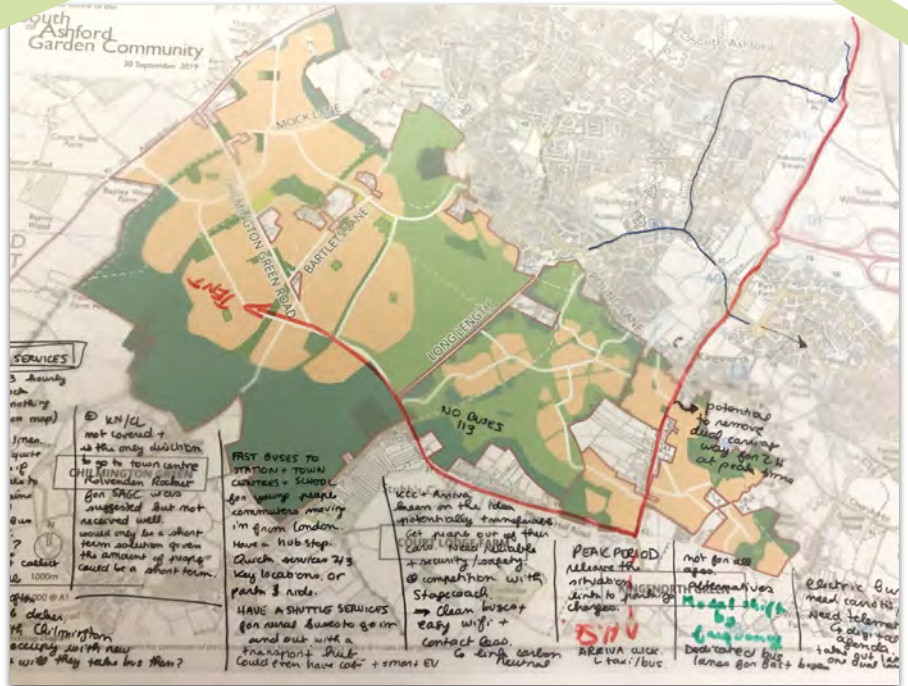
- ABC Culture to launch a project working group on the masterplanning of Discovery Park; looking at all aspects of the design and its requirements. To engage the public several more times as concepts evolve.
- ABC Planning with external partners to launch a project working group to create sustainability policy guidance in line with the Borough's wider action plan to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. Planning guidance on housing, public realm, energy provision etc.
- ABC's Chilmington Team (with support from Homes England) to draft a vision, strategy and programme plan for the SAGC, covering key areas of infrastructure delivery (highways, drainage, facilities), Section 106 triggers, quality monitoring and public engagement. And to identify additional funding opportunities.
- ABC and Developers to explore a revised project governance model which incorporates the SAGC, specifically redefining the role of the Chilmington Community Stakeholder group, including more voices and more opportunities to shape the SAGC strategy.
- ABC and Developers to continue strategic discussions with NHS about health provision in Ashford advocating for SAGC as a key opportunity for innovative approaches to health.

At the Table Sessions

Participants were invited to join one of six tables looking at different topic areas, each facilitated by an ABC officer or a consultant working on the SAGC project. Local residents and stakeholders more familiar with the SAGC were asked to sit at different tables where they felt they had the most expertise. Below are some of the table's notes with lists of key issues and ideas which were raised during the sessions.

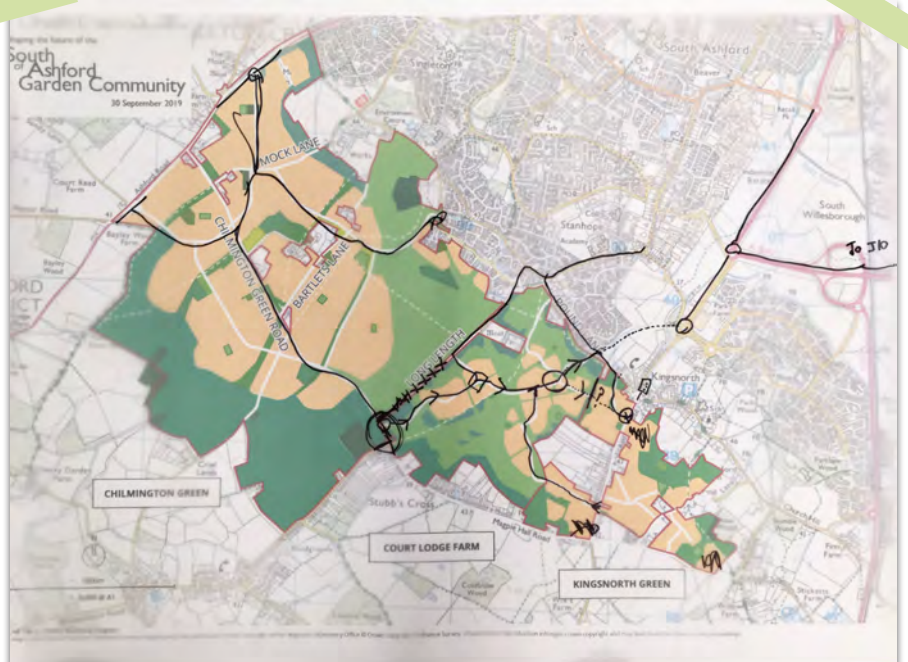
Sustainability

- Put PVs on every house and use them to charge electric cars
- Solar powered bus stops
- Build solar farms sensitively
- Follow Passivhaus standards
- Design-in better recycling systems
- Reduce carbon first, offset if necessary
- Provide a protected space for a community orchard
- Look at geothermal and other heating alternatives
- Provide electric shuttle buses, make taking the bus attractive



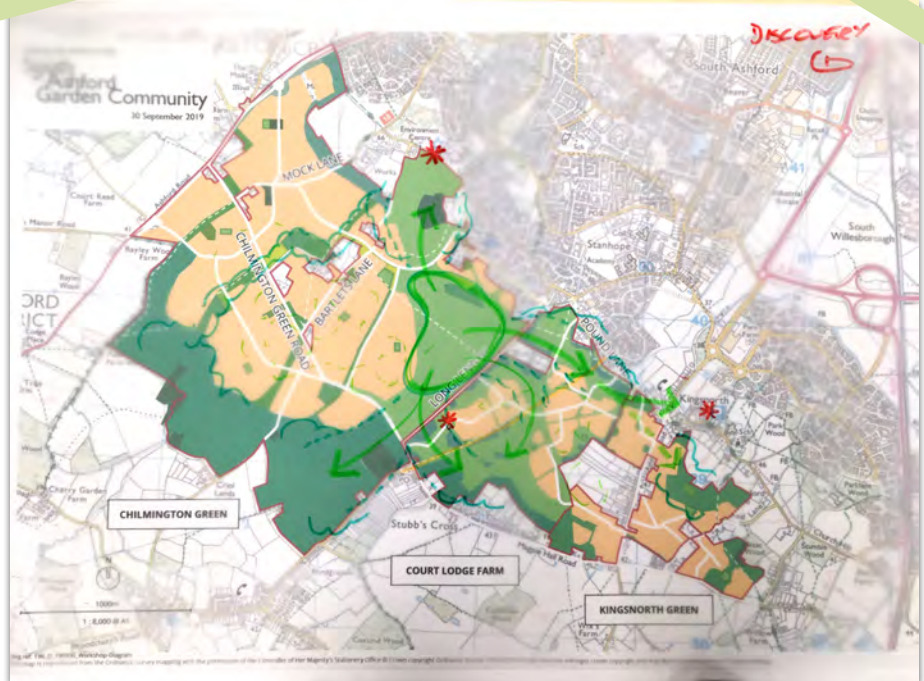
Transport & Infrastructure

- Make Pound Lane safer with 30mph and protected footpath
- Put a stop signal at Queen's Head junction
- Send traffic through Court Lodge centre, not Magpie Hall Road
- Consider impacts on Coulter Road
- Current layout of A28 isn't calming traffic, future expansion works need to consider all road users
- Need to look at HGV movements as they are using rural roads
- Ensure an east/west road link between Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- More transparency about sewage management and flood mitigation



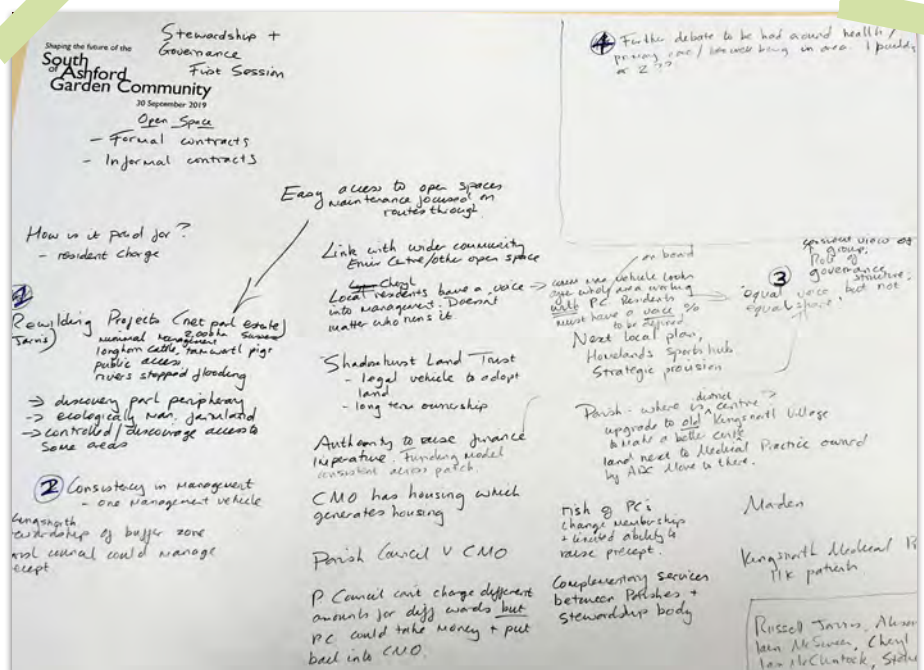
Discovery Park

- Close Long Length and make it a feature of the Park
- Create green corridors, buffer zones and ecologically protected areas
- Clarify the boundaries of Discovery Park
- Reduced development on the southwest corner of Court Lodge is good for the Park
- Placing formal sport next to informal parkland needs careful consideration
- Dogs often damage ecology along footpaths, but they need space too
- Who are the user groups of this future park?

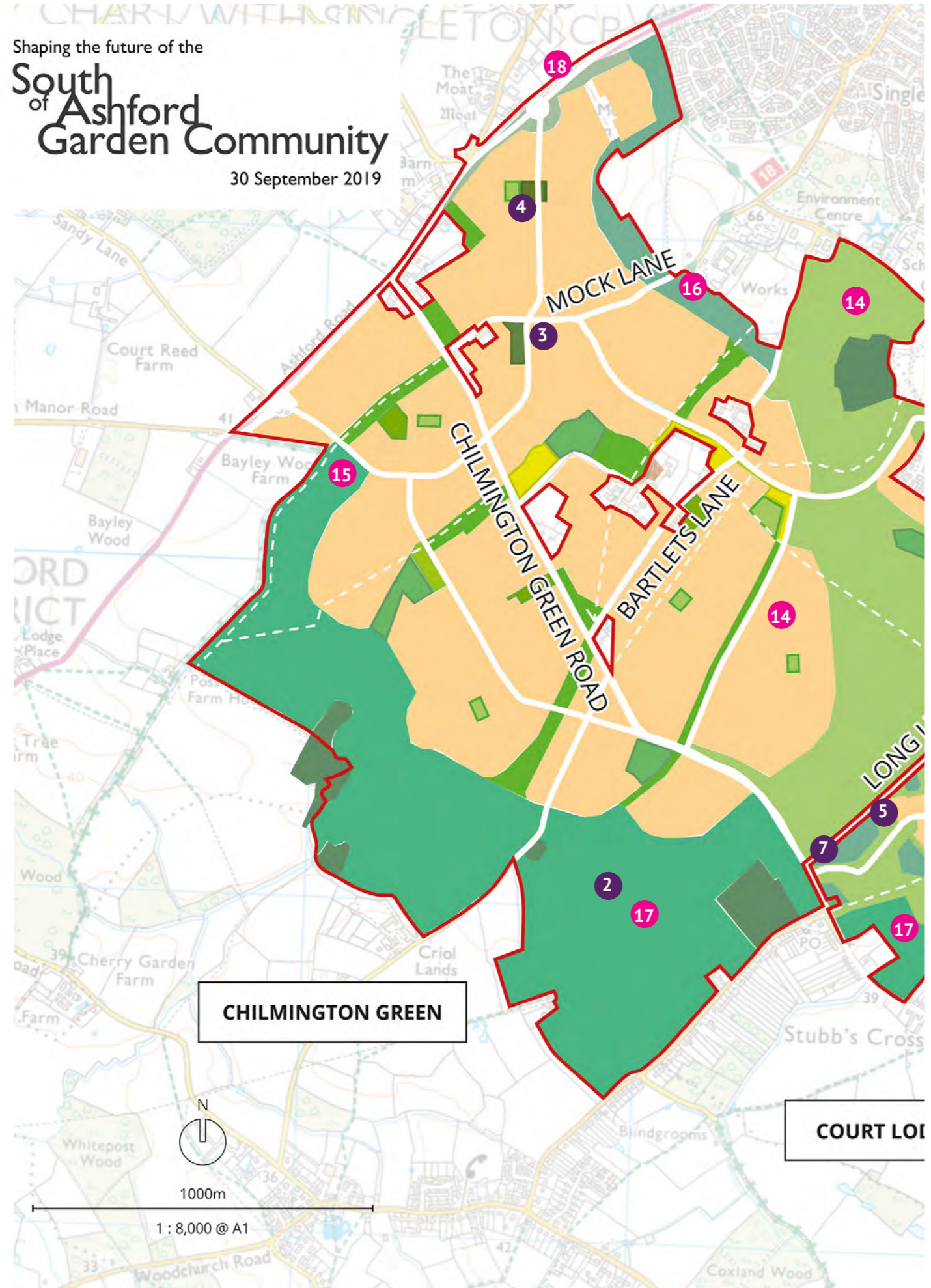


Stewardship & Governance

- Engage local knowledge early on to understand land management needs
- Give residents decision-making role within governance
- A mix of formal and informal arrangements can be a good thing
- Look at CMO and other examples to find the right balance
- Financial model needs to stand the test of time
- Don't neglect open areas, they can be managed by rewilding
- Work with the Parish Councils to find the right solutions
- Must be consistency of management whilst tailoring to different assets



Shaping the future of the
South of Ashford Garden Community
30 September 2019



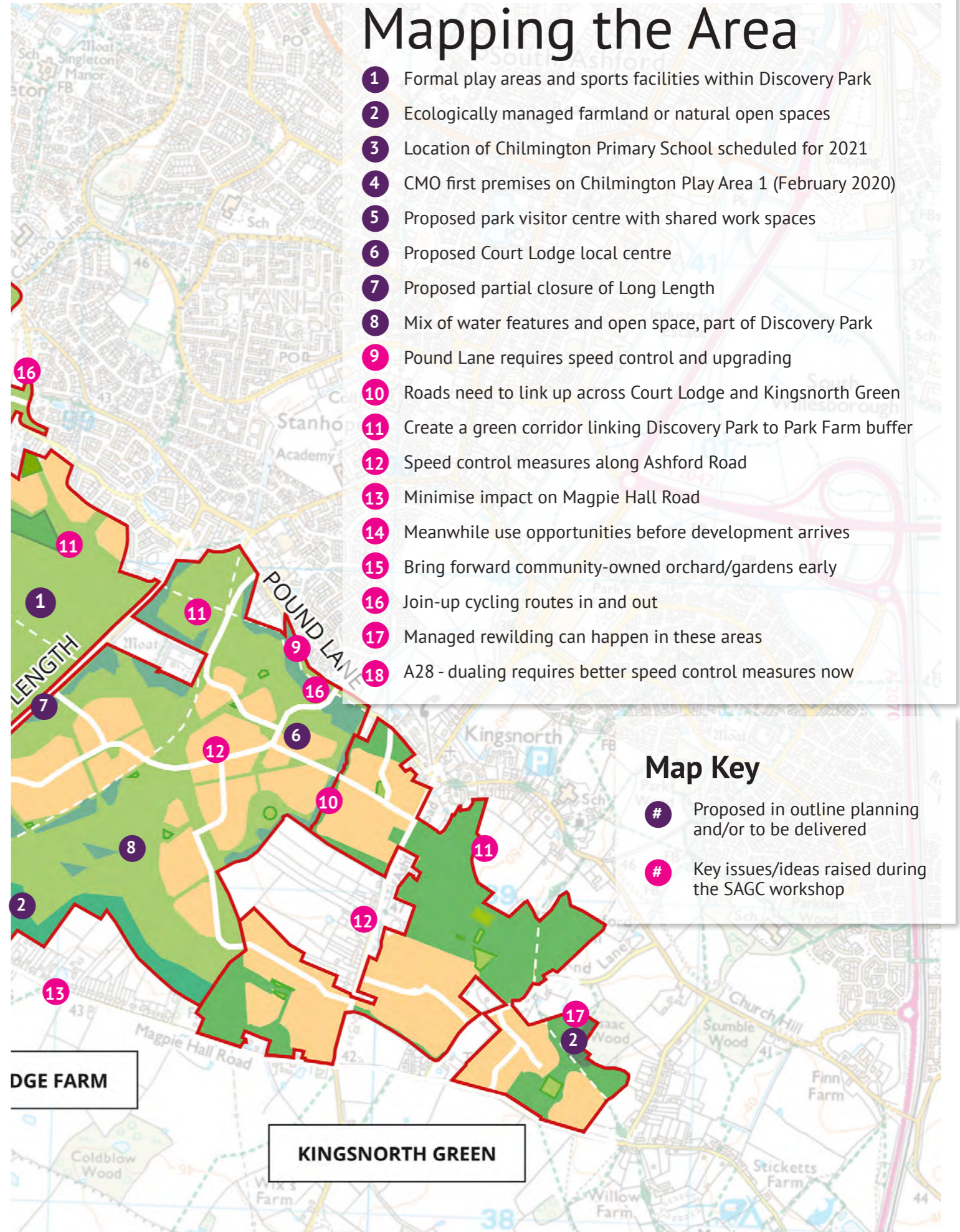
Page 103

Mapping the Area

- 1 Formal play areas and sports facilities within Discovery Park
- 2 Ecologically managed farmland or natural open spaces
- 3 Location of Chilmington Primary School scheduled for 2021
- 4 CMO first premises on Chilmington Play Area 1 (February 2020)
- 5 Proposed park visitor centre with shared work spaces
- 6 Proposed Court Lodge local centre
- 7 Proposed partial closure of Long Length
- 8 Mix of water features and open space, part of Discovery Park
- 9 Pound Lane requires speed control and upgrading
- 10 Roads need to link up across Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- 11 Create a green corridor linking Discovery Park to Park Farm buffer
- 12 Speed control measures along Ashford Road
- 13 Minimise impact on Magpie Hall Road
- 14 Meanwhile use opportunities before development arrives
- 15 Bring forward community-owned orchard/gardens early
- 16 Join-up cycling routes in and out
- 17 Managed rewilding can happen in these areas
- 18 A28 - dualing requires better speed control measures now

Map Key

- # Proposed in outline planning and/or to be delivered
- # Key issues/ideas raised during the SAGC workshop



Key Themes

The following key themes offer a broad summary of the views of participants during the table sessions, highlighting where consensus points were had. These are based on the initial topic areas proposed for the workshop and drawn together where connections could be found. They will feed into a strategic plan for SAGC being written and further consulted upon in early 2020.

Getting about... safely

Participants had a broad consensus about the wider road network surrounding the SAGC and its inability to cope with the projected increase in traffic numbers generated by these developments. East to West traffic movements along Magpie Hall Road and Pound Lane were of particular concern in terms of road degradation, HGV use and the safety of pedestrians. A strategic traffic management plan is required across the SAGC, not simply on a site-by-site basis but for current and future developments. This plan should utilise the new road through Court Lodge to offset traffic wanting to travel to and from the A2042, it should provide options for road upgrading where appropriate, help to calm traffic and protect pedestrians and to discourage vehicle movements along rural roads not being considered as strategic routes. Many see the proposed partial closure of Long Length as a positive for the pedestrian connectivity of Discovery Park, further encouraging road users to pass through Court Lodge's local centre. While the discussion focused primarily on motor vehicles, the prospect of the SAGC being a commutable place via bus and/or cycle was generally welcomed, but most had doubts about whether the development would reach a critical mass quickly enough to put sufficient and viable demand on alternative forms of travel.

Discovery Park (or by some other name), an adaptable, multipurpose park

By looking beyond redline boundaries, participants were able to see how vital "Discovery Park" could become to existing and new residents as a central feature which binds the garden community together. Many agreed this is an exciting project but it requires clarity on the boundary, design, ownership and its future management. As a strategic park, it must offer something to the whole of Ashford whilst positively impacting upon local residents. Much discussion was had about the protection of existing species by creating protected habitats that are linked like a necklace of ecological corridors. Key views across the park should be maintained and dealt with sensitively when considering the types of built structures to serve sports activities. Although there were concerns about the location of these facilities on flood prone terrain, if well designed with quality changing rooms, social spaces and other amenities, there's potential to offer something for many different interests. Car parking will be a necessity, but this should be designed to expand and retract as demand changes, just as the facilities should be adaptable to new trends which are likely to emerge later on. Equally, what is in the landscape already should not be ignored. Without much intervention, allowing nature to reclaim areas of the park will be of great benefit to future residents especially when considering the historical and geological significance of the landscape.

Healthy places, healthy people

Health provision was of particular weight in the discussions, not simply a single GP practice but a contemporary approach putting health and wellbeing at the centre of decision making. As part of an emerging NHS policy to deliver super surgeries, it was suggested that such a model could be piloted in the SAGC. These are surgeries which provide holistic health care, off-loading hospital demand and catering to requirements for more long-term therapeutic treatment centres. Whether this sort of facility can be located within one of the developments or not, it raised a wider question about the role of health and wellbeing within placemaking agendas, naturally pairing with active lifestyle choices which can be encouraged by a mix of hard infrastructure design (ie. cycle lanes) and soft measures such as rambler groups and 'try before you buy' cycle/scooter programmes.

Sorting land management from the off

Given the complexity of joining-up three developments at varying stages, long-term stewardship was one of the obvious issues to tackle early on with many curious as to how the Chilmington Management Organisation's unique approach could be shared. The principle of consistency in land management was welcomed but with a tailored approach to different types of assets. This could take the shape of one umbrella management organisation with several subsidiaries for different sites, or a partnership arrangement between the CMO and other groups such as the Parish Council and local farmers through formal and informal contracts. There was a clear desire to see financial commitments agreed through Section 106 agreements that help finance land management requirements in the early days until a time that these developments reach a sufficient scale. Keeping land management local, not outsourced, and held to a high standard will be the aim going forward; whether it is the existing CMO or some other body which leads the way.

Local governance and local economies

With a productive project governance model already in place at Chilmington, the question of how this evolves to include the wider SAGC (and any other potential development coming forward in future Local Plans) remains to be determined. Regardless of what shape this takes, greater representation from the wider area is needed and from younger generations too. Governance in terms of local economic development was also discussed as there was an appetite for the creation of a business forum or local business network. Developers could provide spaces on an initial short-term basis within their sites for existing businesses to pilot their services, testing the growing market and potentially scaling their operations if demand warrants. It was also suggested that emerging creative businesses and small startups are in need of subsidised space that's fit for purpose. This should be part of a creative economy strategy, integral to ensuring money is spent locally within the future SAGC.

The right facilities in the right places

Many identified uneven provision of community facilities and places for social activities, especially meeting places for teenagers and programmes designed for this age group. They also identified limited access to fresh foods and locally grown produce in the area, suggesting that a development of this size should offer its own farmer's market or an affordable food hub. It was clear that some essential facilities and services should be carefully considered through future Section 106 agreements and conditions whilst a parallel piece of work is needed to forecast how these facilities might be used in fifteen to twenty years time. Getting this combination right will help address isolation and mental health, giving people a sense of social cohesion and hopefully avoiding duplication of unnecessary facilities and services.

Everyone has a role in climate change

A constructive debate was had about actions the developers, the Borough and County Councils and others involved in the SAGC can take to tackle the effects of climate change. While some parcels within Chilmington have begun construction, actions taken now will influence requirements upon future parcels coming forward for planning approval. Ideas included a Passivhaus design guide demonstrating the long-term cost savings and added value for developers; things like putting PV's on garage roofs for car charging and using building materials with high-insulation standards. More widely, the SAGC has the potential to offer carbon sinks by planting and fostering wooded and meadow areas, funding solar powered bus stops and electric bus services. Just some examples of how climate action cross-cuts many areas of development. This led all to agree that efforts to cut carbon emissions must be considered across every theme and workplan for SAGC, not in isolation. This will be recommended across the Borough as part of a commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030.

Photos from the Workshop

Discovery Park group



Report back from the stewardship group



Stewardship & Governance group



Transport & Infrastructure group



Presentation from Ashford Vineyard



Discovery Park group



2

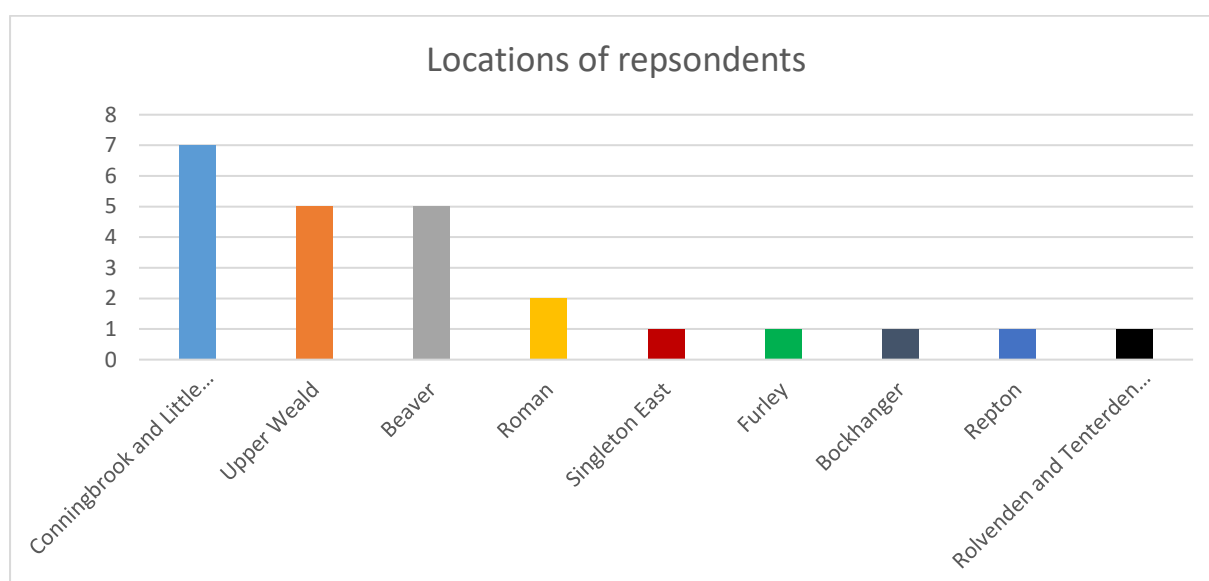
South of Ashford Garden Community

Survey Findings

Introduction

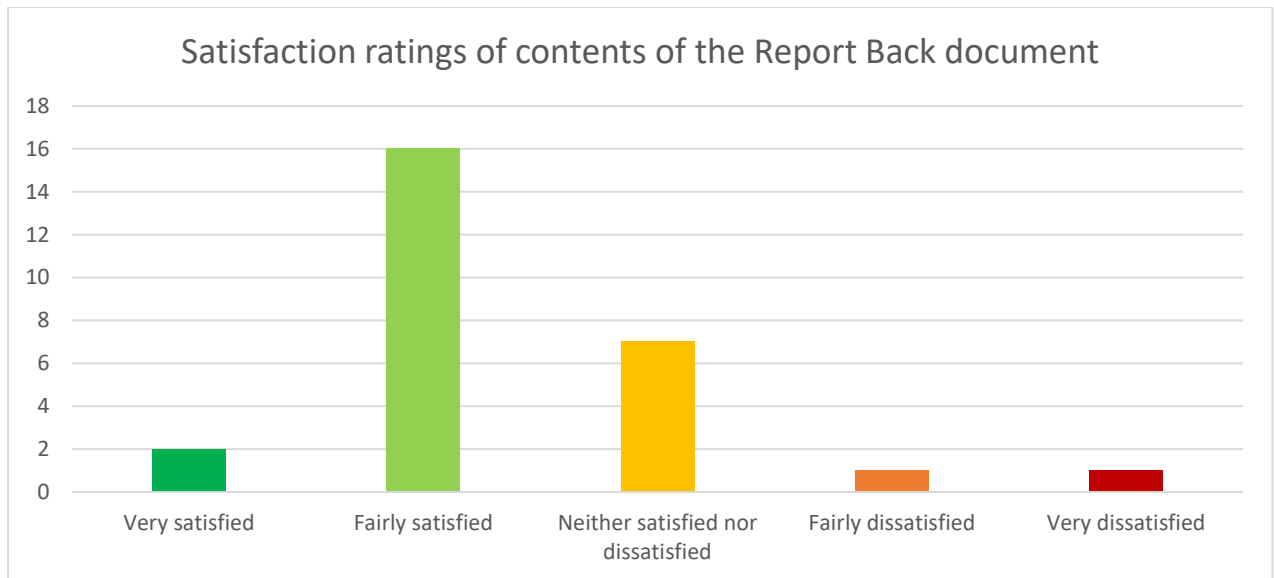
Between 2 September 2020 and 2 October 2020 Ashford Borough Council ran a public survey online on the priorities for the South of Ashford Garden Community. This was part of the suite of consultation events which took place in September. The survey follows consultation events in 2019, the results of which were used to create the Report Back document, in which residents and key stakeholders had shaped some initial priorities for the South of Ashford Garden Community.

In total, 27 people took part in the survey. This brief findings report outlines the survey results. Respondents were asked to read the Report Back document prior to taking part in the survey, as the questions were focused on what was missing from the document and which priorities needed amplification.



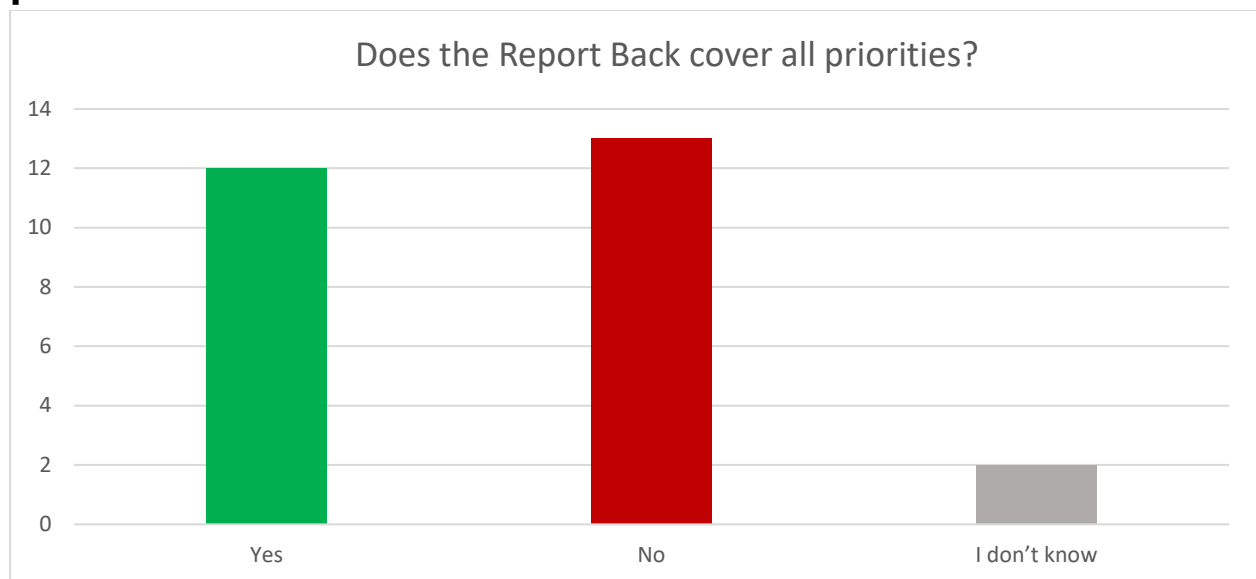
Respondents came from the wards outlined in the chart above. Some of the respondents postcodes were incomplete so could not be matched to a particular location in the borough.

How satisfied are you with the contents of the Report Back document?



Most of the respondents were fairly satisfied with the contents of the report back document (59%). No respondents selected the “I don’t know” response option. Only 2 respondents reported they were dissatisfied with the contents of the document to an extent (7%).

From your perspective does the Report Back cover all priorities?



12 respondents felt the Report Back document covered all priorities, whereas 13 respondents felt there were priorities missing from the document. These respondents were asked to elaborate on which priorities they felt were missing.

What do you feel is missing?

Broadly speaking, the two most frequently mentioned priorities that respondents felt were missing or under emphasised were regarding: conservation, ecology and greenspace, and healthcare provision.

With regards to conservation and green space, respondents felt the SAGC area should work towards integrating green space and conservation areas into the development, and link up with existing green space to create a “green corridor”. One respondent felt that residents should be encouraged to welcome wildlife in their own gardens. Another felt that the infrastructure of the houses should also be more environmentally friendly, such as with a roof water collection system. Overall, respondents felt that it was important to holistically integrate nature and conservation into the development from the outset, rather than it be included afterwards.

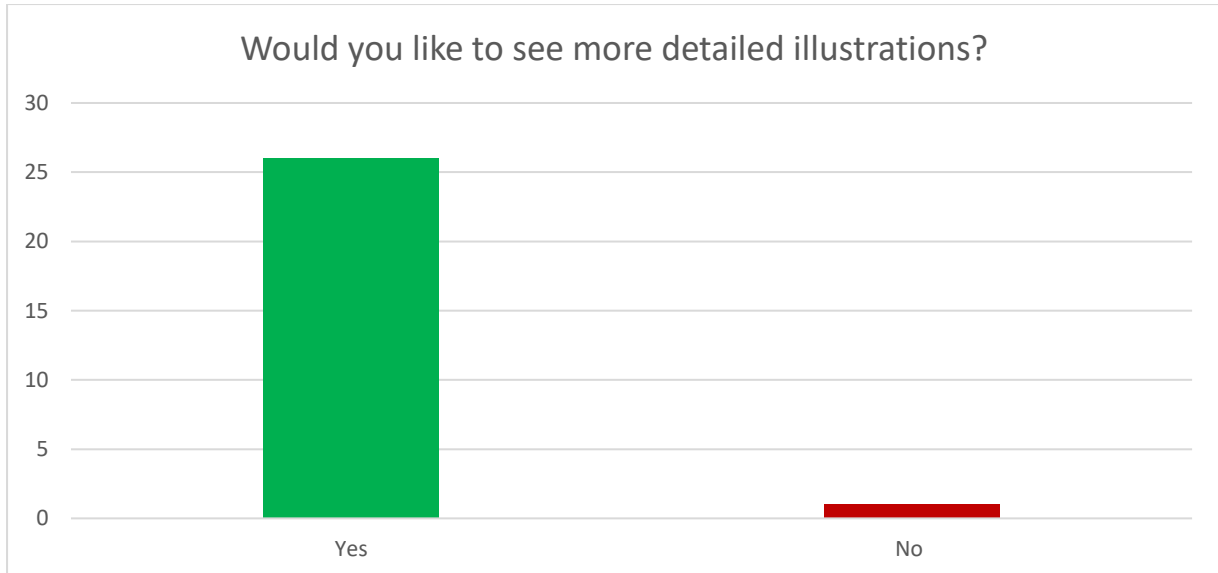
6 respondents mentioned greater emphasis on healthcare provision, primarily the implementation of doctor’s surgeries. Healthcare provision was also a focus of one of the focus groups ran in September with “fixed” healthcare provision like healthcare facilities being one of the topics discussed, among other ways to promote healthy lifestyles. However, survey respondents would mainly like to see plans set in place to provide medical centres to accommodate the influx of new residents.

Other topics mentioned include the following:

Topic	Mentions
Better road safety and traffic controls	2
Accessible education	1

Accessible shops	1
Emphasis on accessibility for disabled	1
Linking up with wider development operations	1
Allotments	1
Activities for children and young people	1
Cultural and leisure opportunities	
Job creation	1

Would you like to see a more detailed illustration of the SAGC in future, showing things like community facilities, public paths and other amenities?



All but one of the respondents said they would like to see more detailed illustrations of the SAGC in the future.

The survey asked a follow-up question, asking what respondents would like to see in particular.

If yes, anything else we should be trying to illustrate that would be helpful to you?

Areas which would be dedicated to environmental protection and provide space for wildlife were the most commonly mentioned additional illustration that the respondents would like to see. Respondents were keen for conservation and green areas to be integrated into the SAGC development, but would like it clearly detailed where these spaces will be and what their entry and exit points will be as well.

Another type of illustration which respondents would like to see is the location and type of community spaces or facilities, such as play areas, sports centres and walking trails.

Respondents also want to see the layout of housing on comparison to other facilities, and in particular, what the style of housing would be. Similarly, respondents also wanted the layout of footpaths and cycles routes illustrated and to see how road/pathway layouts link with other existing infrastructure and development sites.

Other aspects of the SAGC respondents would like to see are detailed in the table below:

Topic	Mentions
Road layout and traffic interventions	2

Parking	2
Health sites	1
Boundaries of the SAGC area	1
Timings for delivery of facilities and housing	1
Garden space	1
Map key	1

How to improve the vision statement

Respondents were asked to read and respond to the following:

“For the Five Year Vision & Strategy, it needs a bold vision to represent the views of local people and to set the tone for the future of these developments. Please see a draft Vision as an example below.

“The South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) will be the thread which fastens together a series of distinct neighbourhoods emerging amongst the existing communities to the South of Ashford over the next thirty years and beyond. By providing clear governance and a commitment to long-term stewardship, the SAGC will guide decision making on sustainable transport networks, green corridors, high quality landscaping and community facilities for the benefit of both new and existing residents. Priority will be given to pedestrian friendly spaces, inclusive venues and carbon neutral living using sustainable technologies where possible, whilst promoting healthy lifestyles and community leadership.”

We’d like to hear your thoughts on how you might improve this vision statement. In particular please tell us if you think anything is missing from this statement.”

22 respondents answered this question. As with previous questions, environmental and conservation aspects of the development were most mentioned. The key points raised are in the table below:

Topic	Mentions	Detail
Sustainable and environmentally friendly	8	These respondents felt that the vision statement needs to clearly outline the plans for environmental protection and promoting sustainability and conservation.
Inclusivity	4	These respondents referred to inclusivity in their comments: of the disabled, and both people young and old. The vision statement should emphasise creating a community that everyone is part of and catered for.
Make vision statement more succinct	3	A few respondents felt the current statement is too long and needs to be “snappier” in order for residents to clearly understand the statement.
Clean, tidy, well maintained	2	With regards to littering and enforcement, as well as maintenance of areas (e.g. hedgerows.)
Vision statement is fine as is	2	2 respondents felt the visions statement is fine in its current format.
Cycle routes	2	These respondents point out there is no mention of cycle routes or sustainable transport methods in the statements; they felt this should be included to promote this aspect of the development.
Health and wellbeing	1	This respondent felt health and wellbeing should be the priority

Lasting quality well thought infrastructure	1	In particular roads and pathways made to last the test of time
Covid nullifies original statement, think to the future	1	This respondents made the comment that the current vision statement is pre-covid. They state that in a post-covid world, the priorities and lifestyles of people may be very different. The statement should reflect these changes.
Strike a balance between natural and urban	1	Linking to nature conservation, the development should balance natural areas with housing and infrastructure.
Recreation spaces	1	In particular: play areas
Car-free	1	Linking with sustainability, this respondent feels the development should promote alternative transport to personal car use.
Traffic handling	1	This respondent was concerned with the level of traffic in and around Ashford. With the influx of new residents, they were worried about how the traffic would be handled.
Job creation	1	As new people move to the area, job creation will be integral to attracting and supporting new residents.

In your view, what are some of the priority actions to be included in [the] action plan?

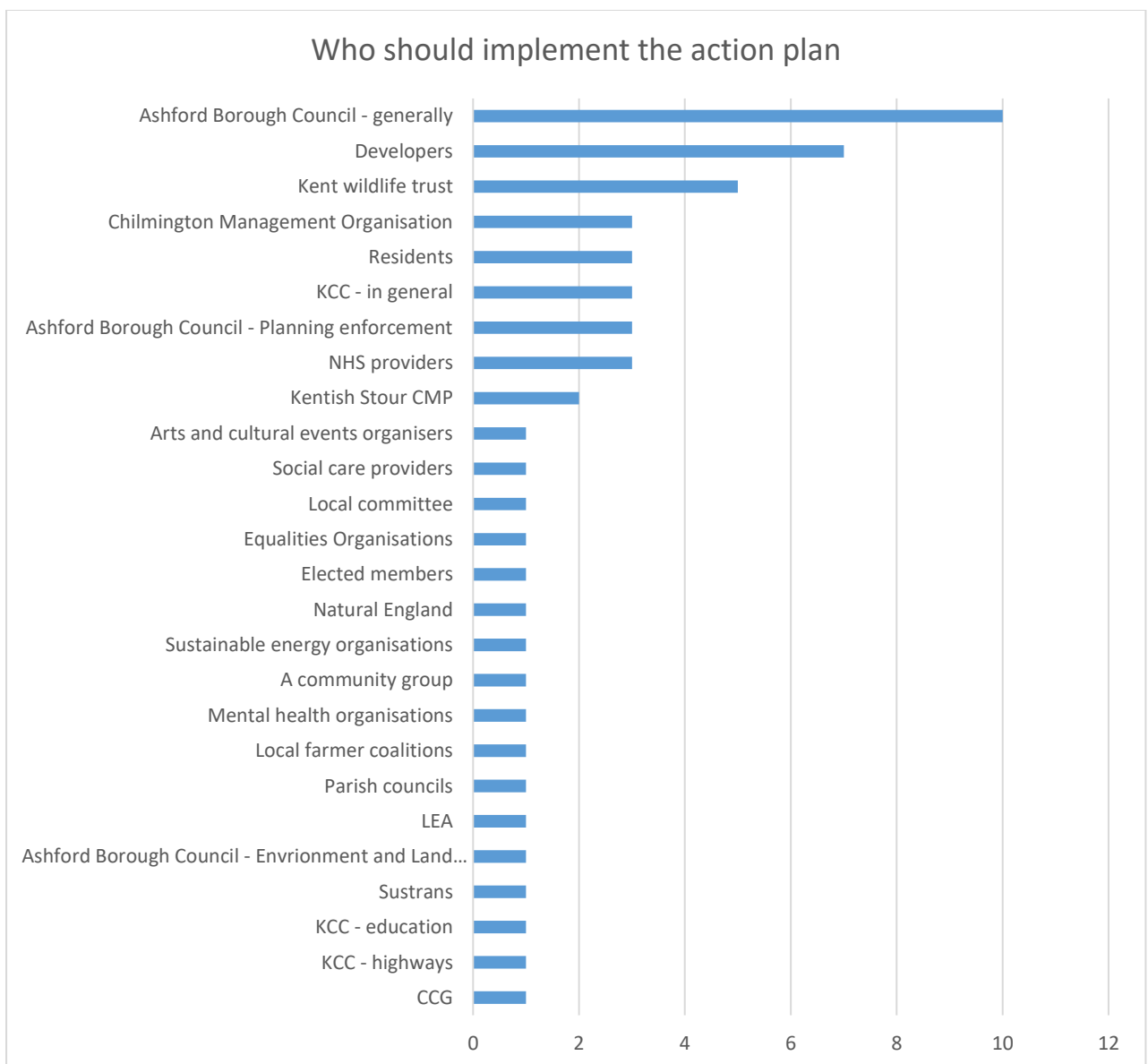
Respondents were asked to consider key actions to include in the action plan. 26 respondents answered this question. Key actions are outlined in the table below.

Action	Mentions	Detail
Landscaping and maintenance/protection of green areas	16	Ensure nature conservation is a key part of the development and it has dedicated, protected areas for wildlife, which are well-maintained
Good well-linked and thought-out infrastructure including roads and paths	11	Including cycle paths, roads and footpaths. Key to this is ensuring these are put in place at the start of the development to promote use of the cycleways and footpaths and make these fit for the future. Ensure this becomes a pedestrian friendly development
Primary health care	7	To accommodate the influx of residents and ensure they have healthcare provision e.g. doctor's surgery
Keep residents informed and involved	4	Keep up with engagement activities and keep local people up to date with what's going on. Listen to what local people have to say. Be inclusive.
Sustainable and carbon neutral	4	In particular, ensure housing and infrastructure is sustainable and carbon neutral
Education provision	3	Include school provision for new residents
Ensure we set out actions and co-operate with developers	3	Set out plans with developers so they can deliver actions
Community facilities	3	Build facilities at the start of the development and deliver promised facilities
LOCAL RETAIL	2	Ensure local retail provision
Safety	2	Make preparations to ensure the development will be safe
Appropriate, accessible housing	2	Ensure housing is appropriate for the area and the residents who will live there: e.g. accessible homes for disabled people.
Take into account other developments and circumstances (e.g. Covid)	1	Link up with what's going on in wider Ashford and take into account current events like Covid and operation Brock.
Consult experts	1	Consult experts throughout the development
Appoint project managers	1	Ensure ABC sets out who is in charge of each action
Parking	1	Ensure the parking is fit for purpose and there is enough space for parking without negatively impacting accessibility
Lighting	1	Ensure lighting is included for safety
Links to town	1	Ensure development links to the town centre so that this can be easily accessed from the development site

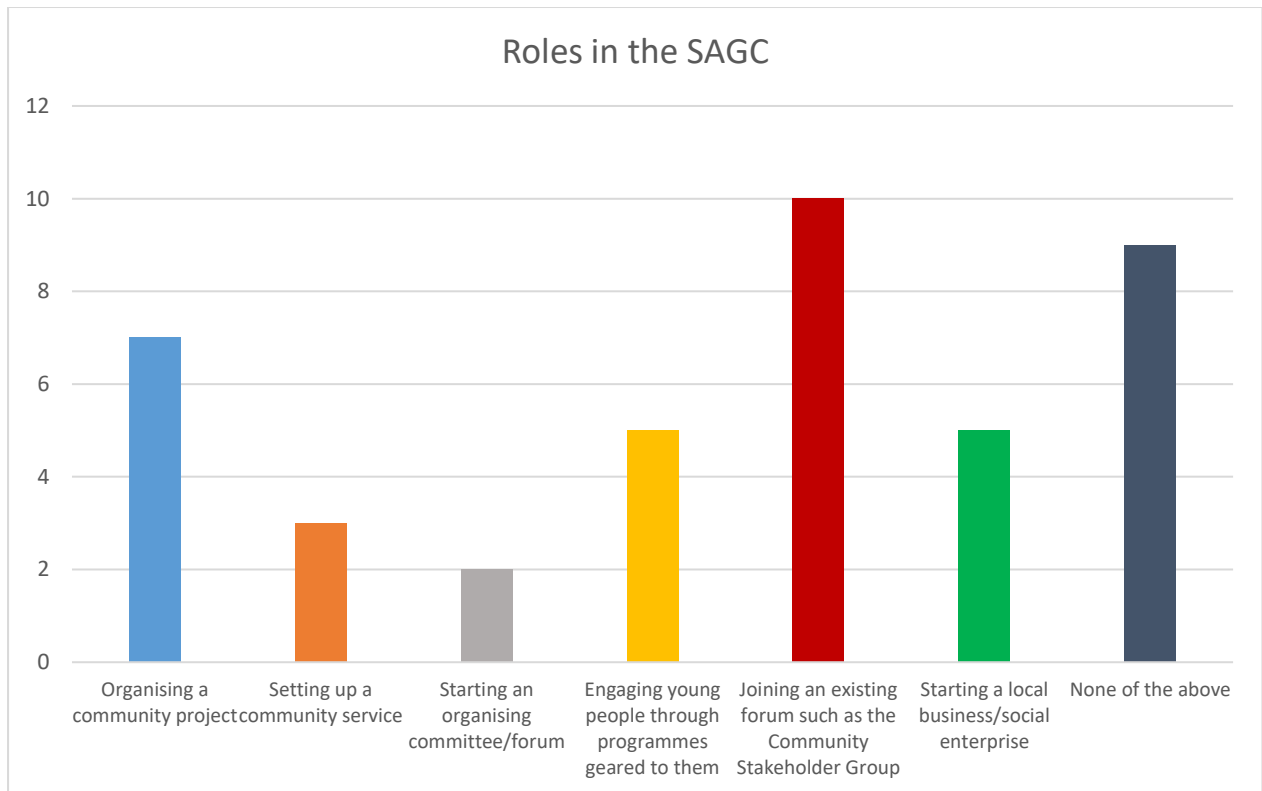
Job creation	1	Try to create jobs and work spaces for new residents
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Considering particular local organisations and businesses, who do you feel should implement the actions you have listed previously?

22 respondents gave answers to this question. Ashford Borough Council (generally, not a specific service or team) was mentioned 10 times, followed by developers for the site. Kent Wildlife Trust was also suggested to help deliver conservation and green space protection efforts, a topic that respondents felt strongly about throughout the survey.



Do you see yourself playing a role in the SAGC either now or in future?



Respondents could select multiple options for this question. 9 of the respondents felt none of these options were a role they would like to take part in. However, 10 respondents were interested in joining an existing forum, and 7 were interested in organising a community project.

Do you have any skills, experience or expertise you feel would be useful for the SAGC?

Just 13 respondents answered this question. Respondents felt they had expertise around conservation and were passionate about protecting wildlife, as well as a range of expertise in other areas such as healthcare, engagement, public speaking, law and skills from volunteering.

More broadly speaking, how do you feel the SAGC affects you, your family and where you live?

Some of the respondents felt that the SAGC development has the potential to affect their lives negatively if the right steps are not taken. The concerns raised are outlined below.

Topic	Mentions	Detail
Concerns about wildlife and green space protection	9	As with previous questions the protection of wildlife and green space was the most frequently mentioned concern. Some respondents felt that the development would remove the existing green space and have a detrimental impact on local wildlife.
Concerns about traffic volume	7	With the increased number of homes and increased residents travelling by car, respondents were concerned about the volume of traffic that may result from this development.
Concerns about the balance of housing with other features	5	Some respondents were concerned about balancing the level of housing with other aspects of the development; mainly green space but also cultural and leisure facilities. Some respondents felt that the area should not become too "urban".
Concerns about increased pollution	4	Regarding air pollution from increased traffic and homes, as well as noise pollution in the SAGC area.
Concerns about how to support new residents	3	With medical facilities, job opportunities, cultural and education facilities etc.
Concerns about the effect on existing cycle/walking opportunities	3	Some respondents noted they use the area for cycling and walking already and are concerned that development will result in these opportunities being lost. Their concerns are mitigated by the development implementing such opportunities early on.
Loss of rural identity	2	With the location bordering on rural Ashford, some respondents were concerned with losing their rural identity.
Foster community feeling	2	These 2 respondents were concerned with fostering a community feeling not only within the SAGC but between existing communities.
Concerns about flood risk	1	This respondent was concerned with the potential flood risk to the development and the properties built there.

Effect on house value	1	This respondent was concerned the new development would reduce their house value if they were to sell.
Support local business	1	This respondent was keen to see the development support new local businesses.
Concerns about the effect on job	1	This respondents was concerned about the effect on their job though they did not elaborate on what their job was or why it could be affected.

3

Our Garden Village

17 September 2020

Presentation to Members of the Community Stakeholder Group

Activities This Month

- Submitted bid to Homes England for funding to deliver on the SAGC Vision & Strategy
- Launch of a dedicated webpage for the SAGC on the ABC website
- Public Survey running until 2 October
- Three Focus Groups (30 participants) held the week of 7 September
- Working meeting with Focus Group participants on 14 September
- Our Garden Village Live Event via Teams on 25th September
- Ongoing meetings with local organisations

Survey URL:
haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk

Purpose of the Survey

To respond to this document published on the public workshops of 2019

South of Ashford Garden Community

Page 124

Report Back on the Workshop of Monday 30 September 2019



Report produced by Ashford Borough Council. For more information, please contact dan.daley@ashford.gov.uk

Background

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This time around the emphasis was on the whole of the garden community which includes the sites of Court Lodge, Kingsnorth Green (in outline planning) and Chilmington (works on-site). The aim of which was to further consult on the outline plans and to ensure a joined-up approach to key infrastructure, open space provision and community facilities.

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Photos from the Workshop

Discovery Park group



Report back from the stewardship group



Stewardship & Governance group



Transport & Infrastructure group



Presentation from Ashford Vineyard



Discovery Park group



Key Themes

The following key themes offer a broad summary of the views of participants during the table sessions. Highlighting where consensus points were had. These are based on the initial topic areas proposed for the workshop and drawn together where connections could be found. They will feed into a strategic plan for SAGC being written and further consulted upon in early 2020.

Getting about... safely

Participants had a broad consensus about the wider road network surrounding the SAGC and its inability to cope with the projected increase in traffic numbers generated by these developments. East to West traffic movements along Magpie Hill Road and Pound Lane were of particular concern in terms of road degradation, HGV use and the safety of pedestrians. A strategic traffic management plan is required across the SAGC, not simply on a site-by-site basis but for current and future developments. This plan should utilise the new road through Court Lodge to offset traffic wanting to travel to and from the A2042. It should provide options for road upgrading where appropriate, help to calm traffic and protect pedestrians and to discourage vehicle movements along rural roads not being considered as strategic routes. Many see the proposed partial closure of Long Length as a positive for the pedestrian connectivity of Discovery Park, further encouraging road users to pass through Court Lodge's local centre. While the discussion focused primarily on motor vehicles, the prospect of the SAGC being a commutable place via bus and/or cycle was generally welcomed, but most had doubts about whether the development would reach a critical mass quickly enough to put sufficient and viable demand on alternative forms of travel.

Discovery Park (or by some other name), an adaptable, multipurpose park

By looking beyond red-line boundaries, participants were able to see how vital "Discovery Park" could become to existing and new residents in a central focus which binds the garden community together. Many agreed this is an exciting project but it requires clarity on the boundary, design, ownership and its future management. As a strategic park, it must offer something to the whole of Ashford whilst positively impacting upon local residents. Much discussion was had about the protection of existing species by creating protected habitats that are linked like a necklace of ecological corridors. Key views across the park should be maintained and dealt with sensitively when considering the types of built structures to serve specific activities. Although there were concerns about the location of these facilities on flood prone terrain, if well designed with quality changing rooms, social spaces and other amenities there's potential to offer something for many different interests. Car parking will be a necessity, but this should be designed to expand and reflect as demand changes. Just as the facilities should be adaptable to new trends which are likely to emerge later on. Equally, what is in the landscape already should not be ignored. Without much intervention, allowing nature to reclaim areas of the park will be of great benefit to future residents especially when considering the historical and geological significance of the landscape.

Healthy places, healthy people

Health provision was of particular weight in the discussions, not simply a GP practice but a contemporary approach putting health and wellbeing at the centre of decision making. As part of an emerging NHS policy to deliver super surgeries, it was suggested that such a model could be piloted in the SAGC. These are surgeries which provide holistic health care, off-loading hospital demand and catering to requirements for more long term therapeutic treatment centres. Whether this sort of facility can be located within one of the developments or not, it is a wider question about the role of health and wellbeing within placemaking agendas, naturally paired with active lifestyle choices which can be encouraged by a mix of first infrastructure design (ie. cycle lanes) and soft measures such as amble groups and "try before you buy" cycle/roller programmes.

6

At the Table Sessions

Participants were invited to join one of six tables looking at different topic areas, each facilitated by an ABC officer or a consultant working on the SAGC project. Local residents and stakeholders more familiar with the SAGC were asked to sit at different tables where they felt they had the most expertise. Below are some of the table's notes with lists of key issues and ideas which were raised during the sessions.

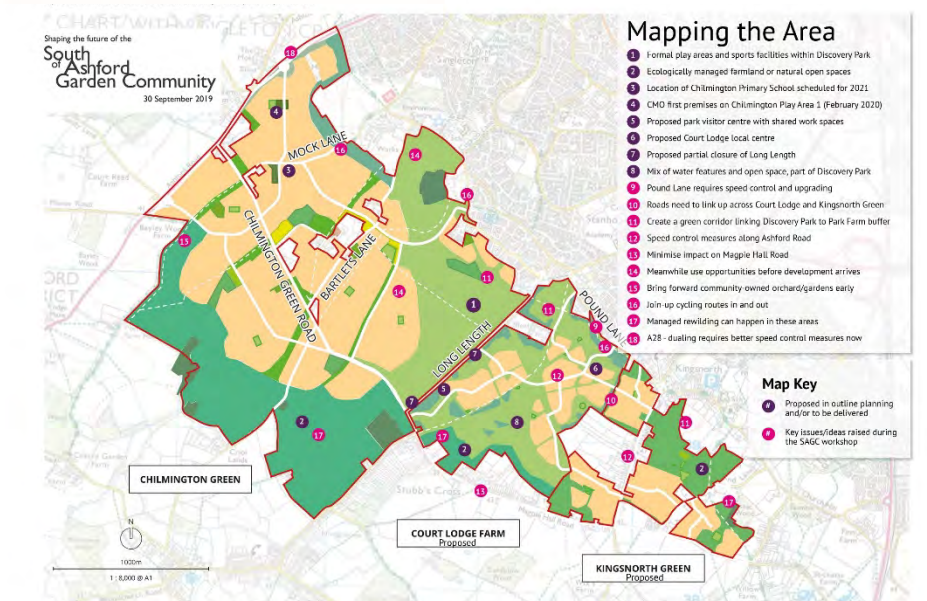
Sustainability

- Put PVs on every house and use them to charge electric cars
- Solar powered bus stops
- Build solar farms sensitively
- Follow Passivhaus standards
- Design in better recycling systems
- Reduce carbon first, offset if necessary
- Provide a protected space for a community orchard
- Look at geothermal and other heating alternatives
- Provide electric shuttle buses, make taking the bus attractive



Transport & Infrastructure

- Make Pound Lane safer with 30mph and protected footpath
- Put a stop signal at Queen's Head junction
- Send traffic through Court Lodge centre, not Magpie Hill Road
- Consider impacts on Coulter Road
- Current layout of A28 isn't calming traffic, future expansion works need to consider all road users
- Need to look at HGV movements as they are using rural roads
- Ensure an east-west road link between Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- More transparency about sewage management and flood mitigation



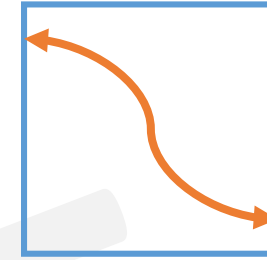
Testing the Ideas From the Focus Groups

Please read through the following 5 slides which are a collection of ideas, actions and principles proposed by participants of the Focus Groups. Whilst reading through, **keep in mind these are ideas in draft** but consider the following questions when reading them:

Questions to consider whilst reading through the following slides:

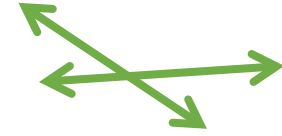
1. From these ideas put forward by the focus group participants, which do you like and/or not like?
2. Will these work? What needs further refinement to ensure it's actually deliverable?
3. What role can you play? Do you want to play a role and what would it be?

Flexible & Accessible Spaces



- *Multi-purpose spaces and radically inclusive thinking*
 - Facilities should be able to change over time dependent on changing needs
 - Facilities should have a minimum of two accessible entry-points for different user groups, setting an example for disabled access for others to follow
 - **Sports provision should be designed to be flexible (adaptable to new trends over time) whilst being high quality and low impact on the environment (for example, lighting, designed to focus where needed, mitigating impact at different times)**
 - Get the basics right in terms of sport provision (lean-tos, boot benches, lock-ups, places to change outside, accessible toilets)
 - Car parks, whilst needed should be well screened, creatively designed with permeable surfaces, and the demand for spaces should be offset by other means of transport & transport storage (cycle bays, lockers, charge-points etc.)
 - Culture-shift in modes of transport – alternatives need to be in place early on
- *Looking elsewhere:* sports and rec facilities which accommodate a diversity of uses, and minimise the impact of car parks

Local Connectivity



- *Meanwhile and permanent linkages early with a pedestrian first approach*
 - Active travel plans in the community and in the schools
 - Introduce a commuter programme for the Bus routing, call it the “Flyer”
 - Allow permissive paths in the meanwhile for adoption in future (taking a phased approach, ensuring early access)
 - Take small measures which link pathways (sleepers over ditches) other locally managed approaches to walkways and trails (old Kingsnorth Road running passed the KN medical practice)
 - **Introduce a Garden Village “twenty is plenty” speed control area with slightly higher speeds where necessary on main roads.**
 - **Take a pedestrian first approach, numerous crossing points, slow speeds, more lane space to walk or cycle (dropped curbs for access requirements)**
 - Wildlife corridors for the support of local species (often well located next to large motorways for example)
 - Capitalise on the digital agenda and the SPD for digital connectivity, tease out the new norm for many of our workplaces
 - Utilising GPS, other tech to identify management responsibility
 - A link across existing developments (example: Bridgefield) into SAGC (currently under utilised which could be pedestrian focused)

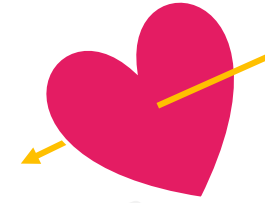
Looking elsewhere: Refer to TCPA guidance on sustainable transport

Leaders in Health & Wellbeing



- *Healthy living backed by innovative approaches to full patient care*
 - Take a comprehensive approach to health care, the full patient journey within one network of care professionals
 - Striking a careful balance between digitised services and in-person treatment
 - **Make the SAGC an area of opportunity for training the future health care workforce**
 - Setup local food growing (meanwhile or permanent) to incubate food businesses incentivising low impact / zero waste consumption
 - Recreational provision should be linked up with social subscribing (tackling mental health through activities such as gardening)
 - **Active travel programmes, rambler groups, mountain bike trails, and doorstep play are all informal opportunities to be prioritised in step with more formal provisions**
 - Prevention first to reduce impact on formal health care services, as opposed to reactive approaches

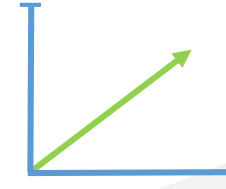
Looking elsewhere: The Limes in Roman Ward (involving refugees in gardening)
Also, Ebbsfleet and Cirencester developments as examples



• Community Ownership

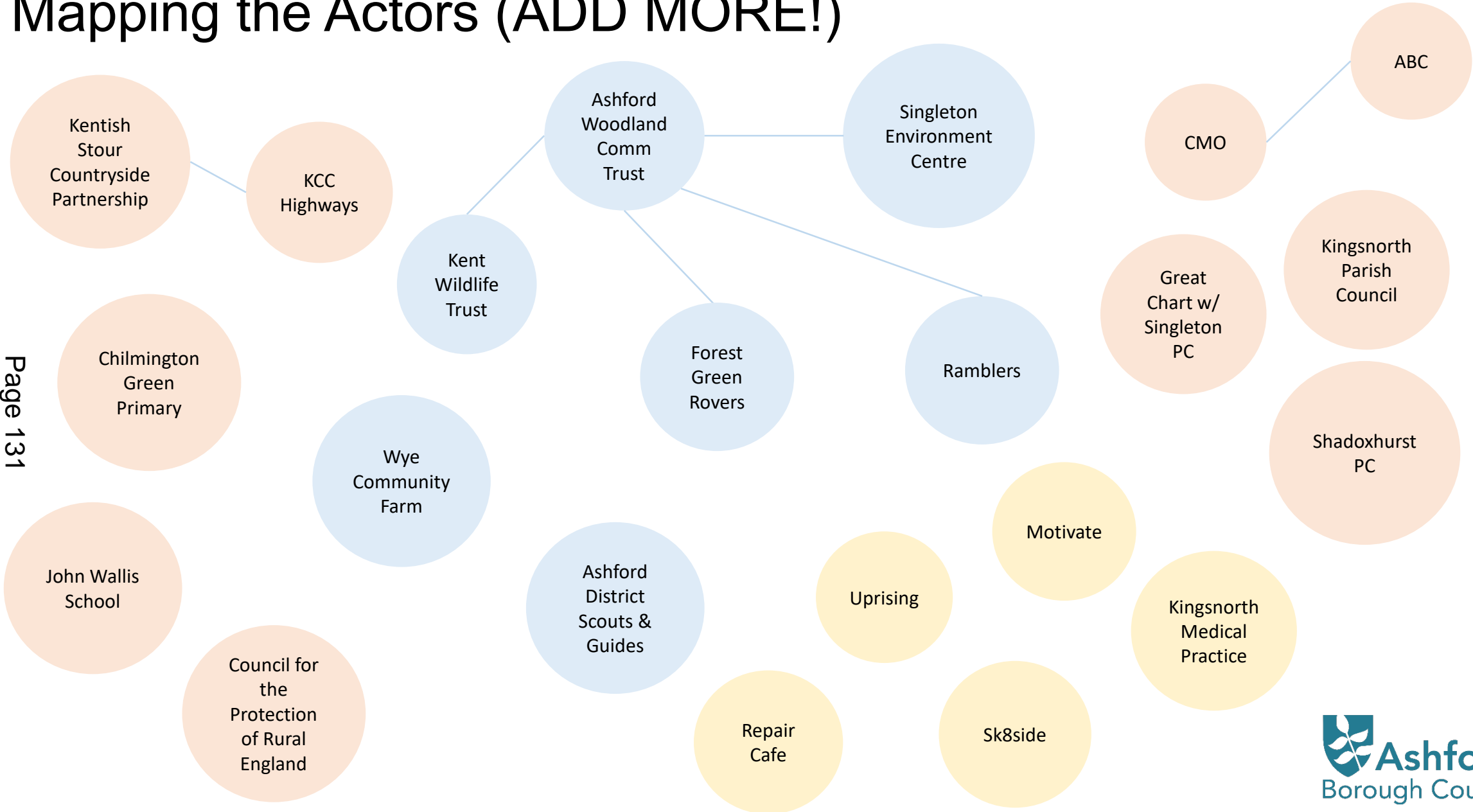
- *Strengthening the eyes and ears in the community*
 - Existing residents must be involved, and new residents must be brought into the fold as they arrive (Mandate to engage people the way they want to be engaged, finding different ways to meet them where they feel most comfortable)
 - **Active protection of Coleman’s Kitchen Wood, Joy’s Wood and others – define the roles for these places, might they have personas we can use to describe them?**
 - Projects such as community gardens help to create natural surveillance – what other projects do this?
 - Meanwhile projects such as wildflower meadows and forest school camps to educate young/old and to add meaning to the landscape (utilising parts of school lands)
 - Blue/Green management, not losing sight of the greater challenges around the Blue – water areas often require more thought (ponds for wildlife feeding, boating, fishing, not all in the same place, but consideration to each)
 - **Setup a Forum for the SAGC where governance and stewardship is discussed – this could have smaller groups responsible for specific areas/projects – or another model?**
 - *Looking elsewhere:* consider challenges at Kestral and Bridgefield, look to King’s Hill as a model

Building Community Value



- *Taking a community asset and ecological protection first approach*
 - **Local centres and facilities delivered with housing, not after**
 - Identify types of businesses in need of space which can operate without demand for passing trade in the early years
 - Propose creative ways to subsidise land for affordable housing and/or social/cultural use
 - Active protection of Coleman's Kitchen Wood, Joy's Wood and others
 - Diversify species and enhance existing habitats, tree growth, community gardens (and preservation of flora/fauna)
 - **A commitment to distinct character in terms of design and build – the SAGC is a Garden Village made up of distinct places, what do people value most when it comes to character?**
 - *Looking elsewhere:???*

Mapping the Actors (ADD MORE!)



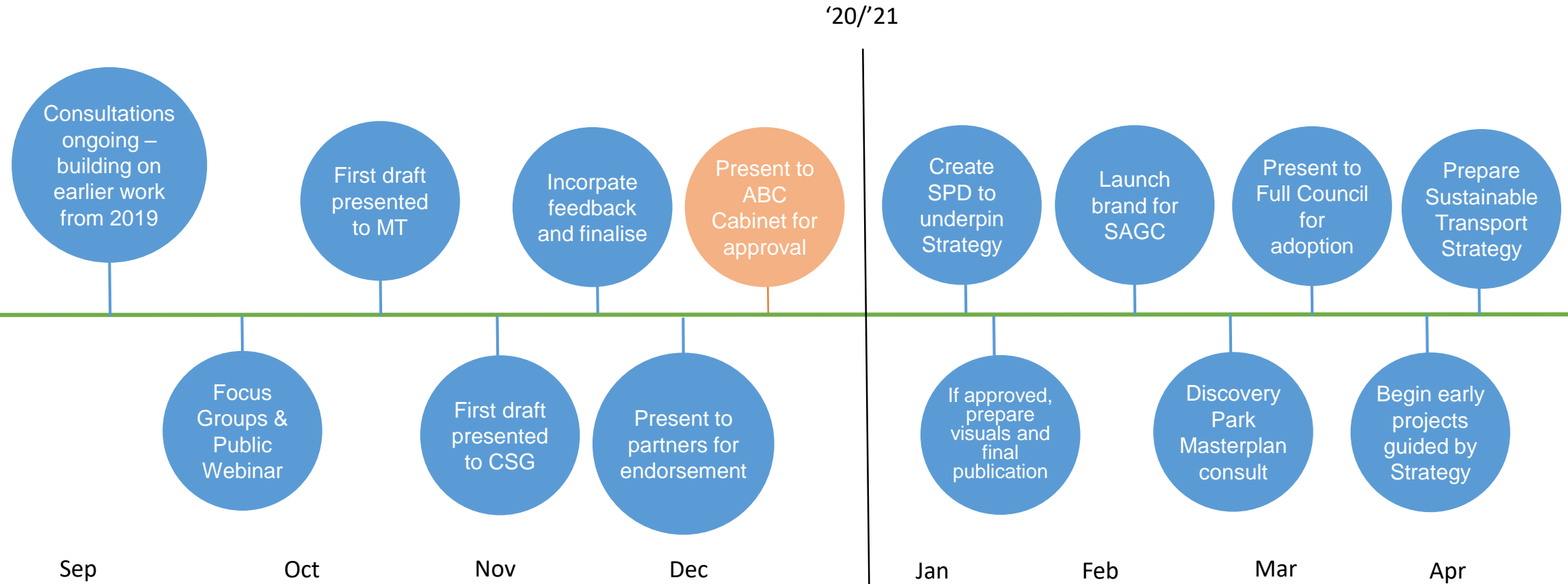
A Strategy in Draft

After 18 months of partner and local stakeholder engagement, a Vision for the South of Ashford Garden Community (inclusive of Chilmington Green, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green) has been drafted. This is accompanied by five strategic objectives and an action plan for the coming five years.

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Where we're at in the timeline



Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community

(draft document to Cabinet)

Contents

- Message from the Leader *(in draft, with Leader for review)*
- **The Story So Far**
- **A Vision & Five Key Objectives**
- Spatial Approach *(to be added to final publication)*
- **The Action Plan**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Appendices *(to be added to final publication)*
 - Background to creating this document
 - Summary of all feedback from partners, community members and local representatives
 - Governance and stewardship modelling
 - Equalities impact assessment

(Only items in bold are within the enclosed draft)

Message from the Leader (in review)

The Story So Far

On its surface, the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) was conceived as a way to link together three residential developments within the 2030 Local Plan; these were Chilmington Green, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green. What it actually represented was a complex endeavour to look holistically at the scale of potential development emerging in the South of Ashford. This was spurred by a growing shift in urban design practice, to depart from the ‘great estate’ and the conventions of placemaking which had been known to create poorly planned or over-planned communities. This was about achieving distinct character and design quality for each site whilst looking beyond the redline boundaries of individual building plots. It was about borrowing ideas from the Garden City, but updating them for the 21st century. And, critically, it was about taking a community-led approach to processes of governance and long-term stewardship.

No doubt the prospect of market-led development of this potential scale and its dramatic impact upon a predominately rural/agricultural landscape has never been fully embraced by all. There was always a balance to be struck for those looking to maintain things as they were, those looking for a new home and for those looking to return the landscape to a wilder past.

These diverse voices and those new voices yet to arrive here will continue to shape the future of this area even where, for example, elements of Chilmington Green are already planned. Still there remains years of work ahead to ensure the efforts of our house builders, the skills being developed and the ambitions for quality are not only met, but sustained. There remains a raft of infrastructural, programmatic and governance activities which will help these developments respond to shifting patterns in live/work arrangements and the imperative upon us all to reduce our carbon footprint.

The missing piece in this puzzle is to take the vision of the developers at Chilmington Green, the proposals at Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green and the aspirations of existing residents, and to set some holistic objectives which bring them all together. This umbrella vision needs to be broad yet specific, representative yet directional. It needs to be realistic and open to change whilst being underpinned by planning policy and securely funded by multiple partners.

The process of creating this document started in early 2019 with the aim of being inclusive and participatory for all who have taken part since. Throughout, all have been welcome to input thoughts and ideas whilst having opportunity to see their proposals reflected back to them.

The result is a set of five key objectives and an action plan which attempts to summarise their input. This is not a planning policy document, but it is a charter of commitments which should hold named groups and organisations to account. This charter will sit alongside a Garden Community Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will guide decision-making for Developers, the Local and County Councils. It will set out a governance approach to managing the action plan and how it will be funded, including efforts to seek out alternative sources of funding and revenue generation.

So far, Homes England has supported and will likely continue to recognise the SAGC as part of its Garden Communities programme. This comes with the funding which has delivered the process behind this document. And, it will help to support the implementation of the proposed action plan. Ashford Borough Council will monitor, evaluate and review this plan annually as part of its approach to securing ongoing funding.

A Vision & Five Key Objectives

The South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) will be the thread which fastens together a series of distinct neighbourhoods emerging amongst the existing communities to the South of Ashford over the next thirty years and beyond. By providing clear governance and a commitment to long-term stewardship, the SAGC will guide decision making on sustainable transport networks, green corridors, high quality landscaping and community facilities for the benefit of both new and existing residents. Priority will be given to pedestrian friendly spaces, inclusive venues and carbon neutral living using sustainable technologies where possible, whilst promoting healthy lifestyles and community leadership.

Led by local heritage, culture and community

The SAGC will be attractive to a diverse range of people, drawing upon existing local character, materials, crafts and traditions. Community buildings, sports facilities and communal spaces will be distinctive whilst adaptable to evolving needs, with a particular emphasis on access and inclusion. Early community programming will be prioritised with a mix of Council-led and locally led projects and activities designed to build lasting connections between residents new and old. SAGC will raise awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the archaeology of the area through both government and community led projects, connecting the new community to those who lived here in the past.

Sustainable and resilient in the long-term

The SAGC will seek to preserve and enhance existing habitats for wildlife through high quality landscaping which contributes to biodiversity net gain. The inclusion of robust ecological networks and the rewilding in some areas will help to connect people to nature whilst providing much needed spaces to capture and lock away carbon. Through clear governance and a commitment to long-term stewardship, mitigating impacts of development will be the responsibility of all stakeholders. The SAGC will work

towards carbon neutrality in line with the Borough's target of 2030, which will require retrofitting planned development (using sustainable tech where possible) and designing energy efficient (passive homes/facilities) into future development.

Well connected at every level

The SAGC will deliver upgrades to transport infrastructure with a renewed focus on active and sustainable transport using a mobility hub approach. These upgrades will also include speed control measures which improve public safety, giving priority to pedestrians and encouraging walkable neighbourhoods. Sustainable drainage systems will be prioritised in combination with other environmental improvement works, whilst digital connectivity is ensured for all in keeping with the Borough's pre-existing commitments.

A destination for health and wellbeing

The SAGC will design-in the health and wellbeing agenda across each development, both in terms of community programmes and in terms of built infrastructure. Planned GP services will include outpatient care and new approaches to holistic long-term treatment. Active travel networks will be put in place, and the use of green prescriptions will be promoted by partners able to facilitate resident engagement with nature. Social spaces will be more resilient to changes in social restrictions, with a focus on caring for all especially those most isolated within the community.

Governed by local people with a vibrant economy

The SAGC will borrow the principles of community-led stewardship similar to the approach taken at Chilmington, allowing some flexibility to different models of delivery. This will require an evolving governance arrangement which allows for emerging partners and new residents to take part. Residents should have a clear route to influence decision-making and opportunities to deliberate on changes within their communities. The SAGC will advocate for affordable housing, local economic investment and training for young people, key priorities to be maintained within the SAGC area.

Spatial Approach

(Illustration of the SAGC which reflects Vision & Objectives – to be developed for the final publication)

Action Plan

Guide to Acronyms in the Action Plan:

- HD – Hodson Developments, Lead developer at Chilmington
- SAGC Developers – Includes developers at Chilmington, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- ABC – Ashford Borough Council
- KCC – Kent County Council
- CMO – Chilmington Management Organisation
- KSCP – Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
- DSE- Design South East
- ISSK – Inclusion Support Service Kent
- EASS – Equality Advisory and Support Service
- SELEP – South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- KWT – Kent Wildlife Trust
- CPRE – Council for the Protection of Rural England
- EA – Environment Agency
- KPC – Kingsnorth Parish Council
- GCSPC – Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council

Led by local heritage, culture and community					
	Action	Responsible	Partners	Challenges	Timeframe
1.0	Ensure accessibility and inclusion aspects are featured in the design of all community assets, open spaces, where practical and possible, eg. establish working groups for the design brief and spec of the First Play Space and Discovery Park Masterplan	ABC	-CMO -KCC -Great Chart PC -ISSK -EASS	-Generating awareness, educating partners on what falls under Access & Inclusion -Influencing decision making, demonstrating best practice and greater return on investment across a variety of projects -Balancing multiple design and placemaking priorities	Already underway, to complete in 2021

1.1	Design South East to facilitate a design review for all future RM applications across each site.	SAGC Developers	-ABC -DSE -Lee Evans -KCC	-Future developers of Court Lodge unknown -Cost of design review weighs on the shoulders of developers	April 2021 onward
1.2	Setup of the Creative Chilmington Advisory Group with the first tranche of Public Art money at 99 occupations and deliver on first activities including: the launch the Civic Design Room & completion of the first phase of 'Welcome to Here' (artist-in-residence)	Alison Breese (Advisory Board Chair)	-ABC -CMO -Residents -Local artists & institutions Janetka Platun -Great Chart PC	-Bringing local people into the process so that they own the output -Evolving impacts of Covid-19 on community engagement -Innovating an approach to community engagement against the backdrop of many other tested approaches	March 2021
1.3	Evolve CSG into a group which shapes and implements local projects which benefit their communities. Attract new members to the group	CSG	-ABC -KCC -Great Chart PC -Kingsnorth PC -Residents -Other voluntary sector groups	-Finding a local champion to take a leading role -Keeping existing CSG members engaged in an evolving process whilst responding to ongoing site-management issues	January 2021 onward
1.4	Launch the proposed Community Development Programme at Chilmington, finding opportunities to overlap with wider SAGC activities	CMO	-ABC -SAGC Developers -Great Chart PC -Other voluntary sector groups -Registered Providers (when appropriate)	-Evolving impacts of Covid-19 on community engagement -Dependent on housing occupation trajectory	January 2021 onward
1.5	Establish a Strategy for Archaeological Resource Management which will set out a broad approach to identifying, conserving and	KCC and SAGC developers	-CMO -Parish Councils	-Generating awareness and understanding,	April 2021 onwards

	enhancing the heritage resource to the benefit of the community and develop the understanding and awareness of the historic environment for future generations.		-Local Heritage groups -HLF projects	-liaising with development-led and commercial archaeological investigations	
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Sustainable and resilient in the long-term					
	Action	Responsible	Partners	Challenges	Timeframe
2.0	Align with the Council's Carbon Neutral Action Plan. Eg SAGC could implement a zero single-use plastics programme	SAGC Developers	-ABC -KCC -KSCP -EA -CPRE -Local businesses -Local institutions	-Council's own operations to become carbon neutral as a priority, so Developers will need policy guidance, monitoring and evaluation in place as early as possible -Other organisations named are working on carbon reduction but more resource and investment needed -Likely needs to start with soft campaigns before turning to hard measures	2021 - 2030
2.1	Embed sustainability into the core of CMO activity and deliver an education programme on sustainable living	CMO	-ABC -KSCP -KWT	-CMO in care & maintenance mode into 2021 -Secure expertise to lead such a programme	2021 to 2023
2.2	Scope potential for community energy delivery; involves setting up a community benefit society which pools energy to be sold back into the grid.	A community energy charity	-ABC -KCC -UK power networks -SELEP	-Securing available land and funding -Bringing together the right investors and knowledge to deliver -Organising residents around the project, ensuring buy-in	2022 to 2025

2.3	Create a green travel plan for residents of the SAGC, supporting commitments made within KCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan – this includes early rewilding practices, some of which can easily be led by residents such as hedgehog ways and organised habitat management days.	KCC PROW	-ABC -Transport consultancy -Local cycle campaign -KSCP -KWT	-If active travel infrastructure is not timely, this will cause delays -A travel plan will need to be part of a wider sustainable transport strategy -Building enough momentum at the right time, critical mass of volunteers and outreach	2022
2.4	Engage with existing groups to explore the potential of a Garden Community food share through a social enterprise model	CMO	-ABC -Wye Community Farm -Limes Community Garden -FareShare Kent	-Plenty of desire to do this, but not necessarily the capacity -Existing groups could expand to take this on, but they will need funding and resource -Reaching a critical mass is key	Late 2021
2.5	Blue management, prioritise sustainable drainage, and scope potential for a protected Garden Community wetland. Whilst necessary at existing sites, this could also be part of new mitigation requirements upon sites yet to receive planning permission.	-SAGC Developers	-ABC -CPRE -KWT -KSCP -Natural England -KCC -EA -CMO	-The land exists for wetland formation, but the expertise and resource to deliver need to be assembled -matching blue/green open space enhancement with other requirements to mitigate needs a careful balance -Timeline of these measures not yet clear, could be an opportunity for multiple stakeholders to take leadership	January 2021 onward
2.6	Strategic tree planting programme to improve green corridors – start with evolution of Urban Tree Challenge moving towards active management of Coleman's Kitchen Wood. Look beyond to other sites within SAGC where early tree planting can be funded.	Aspire Landscape and the CMO	-KSCP -KWT -ABC -Singleton Environment Centre	-Maintaining momentum from Urban Tree Challenge (completes in spring 2021) -Bringing in additional funding beyond Forestry Commission's role	March 2021 onward

			-Great Chart PC -Kingsnorth PC	
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Well connected at every level					
	Action	Responsible	Partners	Challenges	Timeframe
3.0	Identify infrastructure funds for specific projects to be accelerated ahead of housing deliveries	ABC	-SAGC Developers -KCC	-Substantial funds needed to de-risk projects for market to deliver on -Implementation of sustainable transport needs greater investment	January 2021 onward
3.1	Scope potential for joint-authority investment in sustainable public transport – new technologies, alternative modes etc.	KCC	-Folkestone & Hythe Council -ABC -Department for Transport -Electric vehicle providers	-Establishing a formal partnership arrangement -Identifying new roles that could be shared whilst maximising existing resource	January to March 2021
3.2	Implement a safer streets campaign for limited speed zones within the Garden Community and create more opportunities for spontaneous play	KCC	-ABC -SAGC Developers	-Coordination with existing infrastructure planning -Aligning with existing traffic management plans	2021 - 2022
3.4	Deliver high quality 'play along the way' provision which is integrated into circular routes around the garden community	-SAGC Developers	-ABC -KCC	-Working with existing infrastructure -Finding early wins that demonstrate the model	2022 onward

3.5	Define the role that each partner plays in securing funding for both programming and infrastructure costs over the next five years	ABC	SAGC Developers -KCC -CMO -Other Voluntary Groups	-Looking beyond central government programmes -Developing alternative revenue streams	2022 onwards
3.6	Support policy team currently developing Garden Community SPD, ensure objectives of this strategy are embedded in its policies	ABC	-KCC -CSG	-Bringing this forward in a timely manner -Application of the SPD amongst other planning policies	January to March 2021
3.7	Produce a Sustainable Transport Strategy and action plan which includes the SAGC and wider area. Plan to include considerations around landscaping and the formation of ecological corridors.	KCC & Consultants	-SAGC Developers -Homes England -ABC	-Funding is pending for this piece of work -Ensuring this is specific and actionable -Being realistic about where movement can be reduced and where/when it needs to be more sustainable -Secure resource to coordinate and deliver action plan	March to May 2021

A destination for health and wellbeing					
	Action	Responsible	Partners	Challenges	Timeframe
4.0	Work with the CCG to identify additional site(s) for GP practices	CCG	-ABC -SAGC Developers	-Unlocking sites for delivery -Overcoming regulatory hurdles	March 2021 onward

4.1	Ensure preventative services are provided within the Garden Village as early as possible, eg. social subscribing and green prescriptions,	KCC Public Health	-CCG -Healthwatch Kent -ABC -CMO	-Reaching the demand at the right time -Attracting innovative approaches to health provision	2021 to 2025
4.2	Support the establishment of rambler groups, and other informal active lifestyle activities as part of the community development plan	Great Chart PC Kingsnorth PC	-ABC -CMO -KCC -Healthwatch Kent	-Capacity of existing groups, appropriately addressing the need to setup new groups -Securing funding to equipment or to pilot various programmes	July 2021
4.3	Incubate local food growing enterprises using the CMO's 'community cabin' as a base	CMO	-ABC -Ashford Vineyard -The Limes -GCSPC -KPC	-Building up critical mass amongst community members -Defining a mix of uses for the CMO's community cabin early on	2022 onward
4.4	Gearing up existing services in terms of health and education to meet needs of a rapidly growing community	KCC	-GCSPC -KPC	-Broad coordination of multi-tier services -Providing infrastructure for these services	2021 onward

Governed by local people with a vibrant economy

	Action	Responsible	Partners	Challenges	Timeframe
5.0	Setup garden community project governance arrangements including representation across all developments within the SAGC to help support quality agenda and to maintain delivery at pace	ABC	-KCC -SAGC Developers -GCSPC -CMO -KPC -Shadoxhurst PC	-Bringing existing partners on the journey -Anticipating future house builders at Court Lodge, and taking early steps to form a strong relationship -Demonstrating the benefits of the time and resource required through partnership working	May 2021 onward

			-Other voluntary groups -Registered Providers		
5.1	Setup stewardship body/ies at CL and KNG using best practices from CMO, and utilise HE capacity funding to support legal arrangements for stewardship.	Jarvis Homes Pentland Homes Hallam Land	-ABC -CMO -GCSPC -KPC	-Ensuring that adopted land management approaches have the potential to merge with the CMO in future, or the potential to mirror similar principles to stewardship -Aligning different stakeholder interests under a stewardship approach with a similar set of values.	-March 2021 onward
5.2	Develop an SAGC volunteering strategy which sets out opportunities for engaging and working with local people and the voluntary and community sectors	ABC	-Ashford Volunteer Centre -Great Chart PC -Singleton Environment Centre	-Making sure this strategy does not duplicate activities at Chilmington -Avoiding volunteer burnout and providing interesting projects with long-term outcomes	2022 onward
5.3	Develop brand for the SAGC through external and internal design resource, working with strategic partners and community members. This includes creating an annual programme of communications activity which actively promotes the garden community locally, regionally and nationally.	ABC and Consultants	-Lee Evans -CSG -SAGC Developers -Homes England -KCC	-Giving this process the time it needs, finding a brand that is relevant and timeless -Ensuring all partners and the wider community to recognise and adopt the brand.	January to April 2021
5.4	Create a dedicated website for the SAGC utilising best practices from other Garden Village sites	ABC and Consultants	-SAGC Developers -ABC	-Making the website relevant and practical, not simply a mouthpiece.	March 2021 onward

				-Finding a person/group interested in using the website as a platform to build networks	
5.5	Establishing economic opportunities, job creation and upskilling for local people through on-site training (apprenticeship scheme or other format)	ABC	-SAGC Developers -Ashford College -CMO	-Capacity of Developers to support / communicating mutual benefit -Space for training to take place either on or off site -Existing models that have been successful	August 2021 onward
5.6	Explore spaces for co-working in the early years ahead of permanent provision	SAGC Developers	-ABC -Social Enterprise Kent -Ashford BID	-Economic outlook remains unclear, whether working patterns will permanently change -Demand for such provision may take many years, timing is key	2022 onward
5.7	Produce a summit on garden villages and housing, what is the future of work which mitigates self-isolation? Post-Covid work/life balance in the future economy	ABC	-SAGC Developers -SELEP -Registered Providers	-Making sure this sort of event brings profile to the SAGC -Finding resources to organise and to maximise benefit for all participants	Autumn 2021
5.8	Take first steps towards the establishment of a new Parish for Chilmington Green, to encompass the larger population	ABC with Boundary Commission	-GCSPC	-Timing of this, and how it is done -Communicating the transition to residents	Early 2025

Monitoring & Evaluation

The action plan will be under an annual review by key partners named within and coordinated by the Chilmington Project Team. As the current project governance arrangement at Chilmington evolves into one for the wider SAGC, further partners will step in to support the review and management of the action plan.

Monitoring of the Strategy and action plan over the coming five years will include both internal and external reviews. These include:

- Bimonthly reports to the Community Stakeholder Group
- Every six months, report to ABC Management Team
- Every six months, report to Chilmington Together Development and Implementation Board
- Annual report to the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board

The Community Stakeholder Group

This existing group has evolved substantially since its establishment during the GADAF planning policy consultations. It now comprises a growing mix of residents from not only Chilmington Green, but also those living in the Parishes of Kingsnorth Green and Shadoxhurst. It is envisaged that this group will support/champion specific projects related to the objectives of this Strategy, but will primarily be focused on Chilmington Green in the first few years. Project leads will be nominated and their role will be to report back on their progress at the bimonthly meetings.

Those leading projects need to have a real understanding of what will be deemed a success for residents and what will help them to be engaged and empowered. Some measures of this can be outlined as:

- Know what has changed and what works about a project
- Know the extent and intensity of the change
- Benchmark and make comparisons
- Learn and make improvements
- Test assumptions
- Provide evidence of value for money
- Detect any unintended impacts

5

From	Comment(s)	Notes on edits
Vicky Ellis - CPRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting schemes. There is no scientific evidence that lack of street lighting increases RTAs or antisocial behaviour/crime rate. Therefore, the use of lighting should be kept to a minimum where possible. The use of off white LED bulbs should be utilised to have the least negative impact on invertebrates. No housing should face out so as to minimise window light pollution and outside lights. Street lights that are directional and do not flood out into the surrounding area should be utilized and avoided all together on the outskirts of the development and around the park area. • Housing. The use of bat bricks, house martin nests and other wildlife friendly nesting and roost boxes should be used whenever possible. • The area should designed in such a way as to encourage feeding corridors for bats at night, so the use of native hedges, low light or no light and areas of water bodies • Wherever possible, hedges should be used to mark boundaries and not fencing along with standard trees. Street lights should not be placed near canopies. • Any fencing should have hedgehog highways incorporated • Drives should be gravel rather block pave to allow for drainage • Green roofs should be used on any community building and grey water facilities utilized • Solar panels used on all roofs with the option of installing grey water facilities • Discovery Park sounds like the Discovery Park near Sandwich which is an industrial estate specializing in science – hence the name Discovery • Incorporate patches of wild areas in and around the park to create connectivity and to bring nature out from the park and into the estate and built up environment • Limit areas where dogs can go and place wild areas of the park away from housing due to recreational pressure and domestic cat predation 	Predominately environmental focus here as anticipated, ADD line on drainage and another on potential of green roofs on public buildings. Something focused on habitat corridors
Ian Wolverson -Resident and SAGC Focus Group Chair	The problem is you have had a very large number of comments and ideas passed to you. The assembling of all of those into five groups is great - along with the idea for 'objective' boxes within each of the five. I found 40 objective boxes a bit overpowering and also thought some perhaps overlapped. This led me to wonder if we were making the task look too big, especially considering the limited number of 'active' people we can call upon. Now, theres a lot of criticism - and without offering any sort of solution, other than perhaps attempting to combine some of the objective boxes to reduce the total.	Mainly focused on the structure and arrangement of the document – need to condense and refine

	<p>Both individuals and companies are named in the 'responsible' column. If the Strategy is a long term document those names will quickly become defunct. No criticism at all of the names listed, just that we have to think about when they have moved on, up or away.</p> <p>Do we have good enough developer support in this? If we have it across the board (i.e. the whole of SAGC) that's fine - but if not? I ask this as recent comments - from all over - concerning involvement by the main developer have not been at all 'exciting'?</p>	
<p>Kate Beswick – KCC Public Rights of Way & Access Service</p>	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the SAGC Draft Strategy. As a general statement, the Kent County Council (KCC) Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Access Service is keen to ensure that their interests are represented within the local policy frameworks of the Districts and Boroughs in Kent. The team is committed to working in partnership with Councils to achieve the aims contained within the KCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). This aims to provide a high-quality PRoW network, which will support the Kent economy, provide sustainable travel choices, encourage active lifestyles and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit.</p> <p>KCC PROW welcome the inclusion in the Vision and Five Key Objectives of the focus on Active Travel and sustainability with the aim of "Well Connected at Every Level".</p> <p>Action Plan: <i>Sustainable and resilient in the long term</i></p> <p>2.3 Green Travel Plan – request inclusion of KCC PROW in creation of Green Travel Plan, focusing on Active Travel utilising and investing in the significant network available.</p> <p>2.6 Sustainable Transport Strategy – see above.</p> <p>3.1 KCC PROW request participation to enable successful partnership working to continue and deliver improvements to the PRoW network in South Ashford. Joint delivery of a strategic plan will ensure significant benefits, while its omission could result in a loss of access to additional funding opportunities sought through development.</p> <p>Sustainable connectivity for all users across the developments, focusing on the impact on the wider area is a priority for KCC PROW. Increasing levels of Active Travel participation improves public health and well-being, in addition to improving air quality by reducing short vehicle journeys and vehicle congestion. We would therefore welcome inclusion as above and within any other relevant partnership.</p>	<p>Green travel plan, include KCC PROW creation in drafting, active travel network</p> <p>Enable partnership working and joint delivery of strat plan to ensure shared benefits.</p>

<p>Aline Hicks – Resident and Former Kingsnorth Parish Councillor</p>	<p>You may know that Kingsnorth Medical Practice is looking to expand and they have identified two possible site, however both of these are indicated green area, and in my opinion these green areas should not be sacrificed. I would welcome the allocation of another site that is more suitable and able to accommodate a large surgery perhaps similar to the new one at Ivycourt in Tenterden and giving room to expand in the future.</p>	
<p>Ian McIntock – Great Chart Parish Council</p>	<p>After having a brief look at this, I see the final item in the Action Plan is the formation of a Chilmington Parish, I made it quite clear early on that I would like to see this happen as early on as possible, legislation say at the point that 350 electors a new PC can be created.</p> <p>But, it is the Boundary Commission that are the creators of this and we are governed by them, unfortunately adjustments to our boundaries occurred in 2019 at the last elections which means there is a moratorium on changes for 5 years after that date - in reality this will mean the BC will not get round to looking at us again for another 6 to 8 years. This means the creation of a Chilmington PC will not happen until this time.</p> <p>The downside of this for our PC is it will mean some very careful thoughts about budgeting for the years approaching this change will mean that a fair number of houses will have been built that will be paying our precept, the loss of these houses sharing our precept will be removed in one instant. The effect this will have is our precept will be shared between less houses and will create a marked increase for those left to pay it.</p> <p>It was for this reason that I would have liked a PC to be created as early as possible, but the Boundary Commission have put paid to that, so we are left to deal with this issue is due course when it comes around?</p> <p>FOLLOW-ON COMMENT Parish Councils really don't work like that, the precept received is for the whole parish, we cannot 'ring fence' funds raised to specific areas - we don't get that complicated?</p> <p>Generally, what we plan and put in our budget should benefit the whole parish, as Chilmington member on the PC we might find that we are putting on something within Chilmington that would be open to the rest of the parish or by using the SEC there will be opportunities for working with and inviting all parishioners to those things.</p> <p>So I think there is some scope here and there looks like it could be a bit of a learning curve for us too as Singleton was well under way when I joined the PC and we are a very</p>	<p>Parish boundaries, how the change will be implemented within the coming 5 years – Ian wants to see this process begin as early as possible. Risk of increase precept to pay between fewer households in the transition until enough houses are built.</p>

	<p>different animal now than we were during the 1980's and 90's - so it looks to be an interesting time.</p>	
<p>Nicky Britton-Williams – Kent Wildlife Trust</p>	<p>We are supportive of the ambition to update the principles of Garden Communities for the 21st century. Whilst the principles of Garden Cities include the creation of “biodiversity rich parks” this is now an updated concept. It is widely accepted that wildlife should not be constrained to specific parks, but be an integral component of the scheme design. In updating these principles there should be a key focus on delivering the governments commitments to the environment within its 25 Year Plan for the Environment, including developing a nature recovery network and delivering biodiversity net gain. Whilst a district or county level nature recovery network is yet to be developed for Ashford or Kent, the SAGC should work to deliver this network locally, integrating Lawton’s principles into every aspect of its design; creating habitats which are bigger, better and more joined up. There is opportunity to use the SAGC as a model for high quality development which contributes to a nature recovery network, but this will only be possible if nature (and its multitude of benefits for the community) is at the heart of decision making. The ‘modern day’ garden community should seek to be the gold standard in the delivery of biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks.</p> <p><u>Vision:</u> The vision for the SAGC doesn’t seem to reflect aspirations for creating a garden community that supports both people and wildlife. The inclusion of green corridors is not a novel concept and does not reflect the aspirations of local residents (as raised multiple times during the webinar) to see the SAGC contribute to the creation of robust ecological networks, including the “rewilding” of parts of the site, connect people to nature and to use nature as a tool to improve health and wellbeing. May I suggest the inclusion of the following edits (or similar) to align the vision with the Governments aspirations for natures recovery:</p> <p><i>By providing clear governance and a commitment to long-term stewardship, the SAGC will guide decision making on sustainable transport networks, <u>a local nature recovery network</u>, high quality landscaping which contributes to biodiversity targets and community facilities for the benefit of both new and existing residents. Priority will be given to pedestrian friendly spaces, <u>protecting and restoring biodiversity</u>, <u>facilitating access to and the enjoyment of nature</u>, inclusive venues and carbon neutral living using sustainable technologies where possible, whilst promoting healthy lifestyles and community leadership.</i></p> <p><u>5 key objectives:</u></p>	<p>Written comments from Nicky, further detail awaited in phone call on 20 Nov</p>

	<p>Protecting and restoring wildlife, for the benefit of both people and wildlife, seems to have been overlooked within the objectives. The second objective lends itself most to nature conservation, however I do not think that this accurately reflects the Councils nor the residents aspirations for the natural environment. Whilst carbon neutrality and habitat protection and restoration do go hand in hand, it seems that the focus of target two is predominantly on carbon neutrality with habitat restoration as an afterthought. As I have only begun to speak with you recently regarding the SAGC I regret to have missed the stage where these objectives were first developed. I would strongly recommend that the issues of carbon neutrality and biodiversity enhancement be separated out to give six objectives. I propose the following (or similar) and would be happy to work through this with you further.</p> <p><i>Sustainable and resilient in the long-term: The SAGC will aim for <u>achieve</u> carbon neutrality in line with the Borough's target of 2030, which will require retrofitting planned development and designing in energy efficient approaches to future development, including opportunities for carbon offsetting. Alongside a programme of carbon reduction, <u>nature-based solutions will be employed to 'lock-up' carbon through habitat restoration and creation.</u></i></p> <p><u>The natural environment at its core: The SAGC will be designed with nature at its heart in line with the Borough's commitments to biodiversity set out in the Local Plan and the Governments commitments under the 25 Year Environment Plan. This will require the creation of a local nature recovery strategy which includes opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to engage and connect with wildlife and for biodiversity enhancements to be woven throughout the entirety of the SAGC. Alongside the benefits for local residents, the SAGC will be designed to leave areas to be "rewilded" solely for the benefit of Ashford's valuable wildlife, to ensure that our rich natural assets are available for future generations to enjoy.</u></p> <p>Failing this, at a minimum, I would suggest renaming the second target to reflect both issues equally and add specific objectives for biodiversity.</p> <p>In addition to my comments above, there is opportunity to incorporate biodiversity into all of the key objectives: 1) Connect people to both nature and their neighbours through a coordinated scheme of community engagement, with nature at its heart. 2) as above 3) Promote carbon neutral public transport and link to and extend the existing Ashford green corridor. Sustainable urban drainage should be designed and managed to also provide benefits for wildlife. The management of these features will be particularly important to ensure long-term benefits.</p>	
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	<p>4) Pioneer approaches to green prescriptions and green social prescribing. Kent Wildlife Trust have already been doing a lot of work in this area and I am aware of new projects starting to emerge next year.</p> <p>5) The governance of the SAGC should not just focus on two pillars of sustainability (social and economic) but also make decisions in the interest of the environment. I would advise the following revision: <i>This will require an evolving governance arrangement with local people at the table along with a diversity of project partners to ensure decision-making is in the interest of local socio-economic growth, <u>environmental protection and restoration,</u> access to affordable housing and other local amenities.</i></p> <p>Spatial approach: It would be useful to know how this was developed, what mapping work of biodiversity assets has been done and how this has/could inform the SAGC strategy. The SAGC should link with the Ashford Green corridor and a Nature Recovery Network for Ashford.</p> <p>Action Plan: Heritage, culture and community at its core: Inclusion of a target to ensure that people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities have access to nature as part of their daily lives. This could include the provision of community gardening for wildlife using accessible raised planters and facilities, nature walks and activities aimed at children, a variety of workshops aimed at adults to target health and wellbeing including social isolation and the inclusion of accessible nature trails.</p> <p>Action 1.7: Please could you expand on what the Community Development Programme will entail?</p> <p>Action 2.1: It would be great to discuss this further and to expand this to include elements of environmental stewardship, and environmental education. Our People Engagement Team and Consultancy would be very well placed to deliver this work.</p> <p>Action 2.2: Please can you expand further on this? Does this relate to the Local Electricity Bill? The Bill is currently on its second reading in the House of Commons and has the potential to reduce land requirement for solar energy generation. Whilst investment of renewable energy is essential if we are to meet climate change commitments, there is a risk of other adverse impacts to biodiversity through land take for these schemes. The SAGC could pilot a scheme – either under the Local Electricity Bill or by working with an existing energy supplier as a sponsor – where every suitable building is fitted with solar panels, and the SAGC residents benefit from surplus energy creation as a community (could perhaps supplement community facilities / landscape maintenance or provide additional community benefits voted for by the community).</p>	
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	<p>Action 2.7: Nothing to add, but it would be good to discuss further.</p> <p>Action 2.8: KWT would look to take a role in community led rewilding schemes and habitat management alongside the councils structured tree planting.</p> <p>4.1 – As detailed above, KWT has led numerous schemes aimed at improving health and wellbeing through nature (including our Take Root social prescribing project, our reserve volunteers and previous work with those with dementia and the elderly in care homes). I think that promoting preventative services such as these could be massively beneficial, and KWT could play a key role.</p> <p>4.2 – Informal activities could include organised habitat management days, KWT could support if involved with SAGC habitat management. Show some specific examples of green actions that we are achieving in this 5 year timeline -</p> <p>Biodiversity net gain – see what they can deliver on-site within their boundary.</p> <p>Ensuring that a ecological expert is on the team at the CMO and to help land management to be done in a way that is more holistic.</p>	
<p>Wendy Rogers – KCC Heritage</p>	<p>Thank you for sending us this draft SAGC strategy. We welcome the opportunity to provide comments.</p> <p>Set out below are a few general comments from Paul Cuming:</p> <p>It is important that the new community in south Ashford takes ownership of its own environment and heritage. The Community Archaeology programme embedded in the S106 for Chilmington is a good example of how this can happen and I would suggest that similar agreements be developed for future developments. If the area is to be integrated into a community as the Strategy envisages, however, it is important that such community archaeology programmes are not constrained by development boundaries and are allowed to work with the both the existing and new communities so that the two can be fully integrated.</p> <p>Ashford’s Green Infrastructure network</p> <p>If properly designed, Green Infrastructure has the potential to help new development be better integrated into the existing rural and urban landscape by ensuring that it fits into the</p>	

	<p>grain of what is already there. The pattern of roads, tracks and lanes in Ashford has been used for centuries to link Ashford's towns, villages, hamlets and countryside. By taking advantage of these existing and historic routeways people will be able to move through the Ashford area while retaining the historic geography of the region, but also following routes more likely to be accompanied by historic hedgerows and planting. This has the potential to unite heritage and ecology to help people access and enjoy GI features more easily and naturally.</p> <p>Using historic routeways also allows GI designers to incorporate heritage assets to provide features of interest. In turn this will help people accessing the GI to become more aware of and value Ashford's heritage which will in turn assist their conservation and re-use. GI can also be used to support public health and well-being by providing leisure and exercise opportunities by linking heritage assets in trails.</p> <p>To fully appreciate Ashford's landscape character and incorporate it into GI effectively, it is first important to understand it. The main method for investigation historic landscape character is by historic landscape characterisation. This is a method of assessing the pattern of tracks, lanes, field boundaries and other features that comprise the historic character of the modern landscape. The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) has identified the broad historic character of the landscape of Kent but more detailed refinement is needed to bring the baseline data for the rest of Ashford up to a more detailed standard. We would be happy to discuss this further.</p> <p>The text rightly highlights the contribution of GI to health. Historic England has released research that demonstrates how heritage actively supports health and well-being through contributing to a generally more attractive environment, allowing activities that encourage participation and inclusion and by encouraging outdoors activities.</p> <p>Ashford's blue infrastructure network</p> <p>The ponds and streams of south Ashford have the potential to play an important role in making the landscape more attractive and thereby helping the new development be successful. Many of these will be of heritage interest, representing historic features that have played a role in the community for centuries. This heritage should be studied and revealed so that their potential can be realised. Similarly, any works associated with the creation of the BI must ensure the conservation or enhancement of any heritage assets affected.</p> <p>A few more specific comments from me:</p>	
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	<p>A Vision and Five Key Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage, culture and community at its core – the culture and community elements are in the paragraph but not heritage. As such can I suggest a sentence specifically on heritage such as: “the SAGC will raise awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the archaeology of the area through both council and community led projects, connecting the new community to those who lived here in the past.” • Sustainable and resilient in the long-term – “Positive sustainability measures include conservation of archaeology and archaeological landscapes where possible through design.” <p>In the Action Plan table, can I suggest another bullet point for the Heritage, culture and community at its core section:</p> <p>1.8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: Establish a Strategy for Archaeological Resource Management which will set out a broad approach to identifying, conserving and enhancing the heritage resource to the benefit of the community and develop the understanding and awareness of the historic environment for future generations. • Responsible: ABC, SAGC, developers • Partners: KCC, Parish Councils, Local Heritage groups, Other local groups, HLF projects • Challenges: generating awareness and understanding, liaising with development-led and commercial archaeological investigations • Timeframe: April 2021 onwards 	
<p>Jennifer Wilson Planning Specialist Environment Agency</p>	<p>Dear Sir/Madam</p> <p>Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community Strategy – Draft November 2020.</p> <p>Thank you for consulting us on the above. We have the following comments to make.</p> <p>General Comments</p> <p>We welcome you looking at the sites in South Ashford strategically. This is something we support. The strategy is light on biodiversity / nature and we should request this area is strengthened.</p> <p>The idea of a wetland is welcomed. This should be multifunctional and could contribute to flood risk management, nutrient neutrality, water resources, biodiversity, leisure, health & well-being and landscape. Water efficiency should also be incorporated into the green credentials.</p>	

	<p>Groundwater and Contaminated Land</p> <p>We would recommend that site allocations on land with previous use will need to address potential contamination issues by adequate investigation and risk assessment. This includes historic landfills sites, a number of which are within the proposed boundary of this development.</p> <p>Detailed comments on any specific site will be provided at the planning application stage, to ensure adequate investigation and if necessary remediation is carried out to address any identified contamination and risks to controlled waters.</p> <p>Any new proposals should ensure that sustainable drainage design will achieve appropriate protection of groundwater.</p> <p>In the case of limited mains sewer provision, we would also object to major development sites that do not tie into upgrade of sewer capacity in the area. This is for the LPA and utility company to manage in terms of timing for release of permissions for sites being developed. This is particularly important in stressed groundwater catchments and where Nitrate Vulnerable Zones are evident.</p> <p>Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology <i>Objective 2 Sustainable and resilient in the long-term</i></p> <p>Unfortunately this document refers to sustainability but overlooks the developing requirements of the new Environment Bill, the (likely) mandatory need for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the development of Local Nature Recovery Network Strategies (LNRNS) to deliver the national Nature Recovery Network.</p> <p>The above will require addressing in detail and additional work to ensure this document incorporates the work of the Kent Nature Partnership on BNG and on the LNRNS, new legislation, new planning policies and, the Defra 25 Year Environment Plan.</p> <p>Flood Risk</p> <p>We have no detailed comments to make regarding flood risk, but reference is made to 'blue management'; it must be ensured that any management of waterways is fully compliant with the Environment Agency, the River Stour Internal Drainage Board, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council's existing regulatory regime and their associated guidance documentation.</p> <p>We look forward to reviewing an extensively revised document in due course</p>	
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Agenda Item No: 9

Report To: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting: 17th December 2020

Report Title: Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

Report Author & Job Title: Jennifer Shaw, Strategy and Policy Manager

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

Summary:

The council has been asked by Kent County Council to endorse the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. The strategy sets out a course of action to deliver clean growth, supporting the Kent Environment Strategy. Achieving zero carbon across the county by 2050 requires strong collaborative working across a range of sectors. Endorsing this strategy demonstrates the council's commitment not only to its own carbon reduction targets but to working in partnership to deliver the cross boundary action required that will contribute to reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change for everyone's benefit.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: ALL

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

- I. Endorse the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy**

Policy Overview:

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sits within the framework of the Kent Environment Strategy and sets out how the County will respond to the UK climate emergency and drive clean, resilient economic recovery across Kent and Medway. This is responding to the Government's policy direction where by it legislated to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. A number of national strategies are in place to guide achieving this requirement, namely:

- Home Energy Conservation Act 1995
- 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)
- Clean Growth Strategy (2017)
- Clean Air Strategy (2019)
- Clean Maritime Plan (2019)

Financial Implications:	None in endorsing the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.
Legal Implications:	None
Equalities Impact Assessment:	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken by KCC and is included at appendix 2.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	There are no data protection issues identified
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	There are no direct risks to the council from endorsing the principles of Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. When adopting our own Carbon Neutral Strategy and Action Plan we will take account of any risks in aligning with the priorities of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy through a thorough risk assessment. Not endorsing the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy could potentially isolate the council from opportunities to help achieve our own carbon neutral ambitions particularly where activity is cross boundary and involves agreement between a number of different organisations / sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Sustainability Implications:	The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy provides a foundation for partnership working which is central to achieving the council's carbon neutral ambitions.
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Kent Environment Strategy 2016 https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy
Contact:	jennifer.shaw@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330451)

Introduction and Background

1. Kent County Council has requested that all Kent Local Authorities endorse the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (Appendix 1).
2. The Strategy supports the Kent Environment Strategy and the delivery of the County Council's commitment to zero carbon across Kent by 2050
3. Endorsing the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy supports the council's own ambition to achieve carbon neutrality.
4. The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out how the county can respond to the UK climate emergency and ensure recovery from the coronavirus pandemic drives clean and resilient economic growth, eliminates poor air quality, reduces fuel poverty, and promotes the development of an affordable, clean and secure energy supply across Kent and Medway.
5. There are 10 priorities, each with a set of high level activities. The council through its own activity is already contributing to achieving several of these high level activities or has plans in place that accord with driving forward clean green growth.
6. A summary of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy priorities and high level actions, together with relevant ABC activity is found at Appendix 2.

Proposal

7. The Cabinet endorses the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

Equalities Impact Assessment

8. Members are referred to the attached assessment undertaken by KCC. (Appendix 3). The key issues arising are:

An adverse impact has been identified and mitigation considered: There is potential for barriers to access to parking bays with electric charge points for disabled and also carers. This needs to be considered when determining EV charge point locations and associated parking design for individual schemes.

A positive impact identified: the provision of cleaner vehicles and access to improved walking, cycling and public transport has positive advantages for the characteristics age, disability and pregnancy (unborn foetus).

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

9. KCC carried out a public consultation of the draft Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy from 2 July to 23 September 2019. The report is available at <https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/energyandlowemissionconsultation/consultationHome>

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

10. The causes and impacts of climate change in many cases have no boundaries. To tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions will require collaborative working across many sectors.
11. Many of the high level activities outlined in the strategy will contribute to achieving the council's own carbon reduction targets.
12. Endorsing the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy will help facilitate the partnership working required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with domestic dwellings and energy consumption, industry and business, transport options, energy generation and the degradation of the natural environment.
13. The benefits will be
 - Environmentally responsible decisive local leadership.
 - New developments that are sustainable, carbon neutral and climate resilient
 - Opportunities for offsetting and investment in climate friendly projects.
 - Existing buildings are improved to reduce their carbon footprint and fuel poverty is alleviated.
 - Transport options become cleaner and active travel increases, improving air quality and health and wellbeing.
 - Energy from renewable sources increases significantly and supports supply chain opportunities and a green economic recovery.
 - The natural environment is a valued resource to store carbon and offset greenhouse gas emissions: bringing additional benefits such as reduced air and water pollution, increased flood storage capacity, improved biodiversity and providing health, cultural and leisure opportunities for local communities.
 - Local business is supported to take advantage of opportunities to transition to low carbon economy.
 - People living, working and visiting are conscious of minimising their impact and adopting more sustainable lifestyles.

Next Steps in Process

14. Further to cabinet endorsing the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, local media communication can be issued demonstrating

the council's commitment to working with other local authorities and organisations to achieve carbon neutrality in the borough and county wide.

15. Achieving the council's own carbon neutral ambitions will be strengthened by aligning our actions with those in the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy to take full advantage of opportunities for joint working to achieve more effective and efficient outcomes.
16. The council is represented at an officer level on the Kent Climate Change Network will keep the Climate Change Working Group updated on progress.
17. The Climate Change Working Group will oversee monitoring Ashford's contribution to the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.

Conclusion

18. Endorsing the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy will increase opportunities for joint working to tackle climate change through reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Portfolio Holder's Views

19. The challenge of reducing our carbon emissions, both within our organisation and across the borough, supporting residents and business to make change, cannot be achieved alone. This strategy provides many opportunities to work together to address climate change and play our part in protecting our planet for this and future generations.
20. This strategy supports delivering our own ambitious carbon neutral pledge. As we recover from the coronavirus pandemic it will assist us in ensuring we are building back better, greener economies and sustainable, resilient communities, with decisive local leadership and collective action.

Contact and Email

21. Jennifer Shaw jennifer.shaw@ashford.gov.uk

KENT AND MEDWAY ENERGY AND LOW EMISSIONS STRATEGY

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MEETING THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

JUNE 2020



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FOREWORD

We've only got one world. Just one. And it's changing.

Some will say **"It's always changed"** but this time around humans are responsible. The decisions we make today set the course for our planet's future. We must do the right thing.

Our Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is a big document with a single, simple goal - to ensure that every resident, neighbourhood and business in the county takes some simple steps to care for this beautiful, productive yet fragile part of the world – the bit we call Kent.

It is part of Kent's wider Environment Strategy and offers you an invitation - an invitation to come with us and find something you can do for your world. Get involved. Join in.

The first step is to recognise this climate emergency and the second is to commit to the change we need to rescue and sustain our world. There is huge pressure for growth in our county and we need to find new ways to ensure it is GOOD growth. It matters to our environment, our economy and our health. As the gateway to Europe we are well placed to take a lead on energy and emissions and our contribution could have positive impacts far beyond our county boundaries.

The call to action is all around us. We see a growing number of severe weather events and nature's response of flooding and then water shortages, icy winters and then rising temperatures. Kent is a wonderful county full of opportunity, but the truth is that some of our people live in places where air quality is low or where fuel poverty is high.

We can all make better choices - when we travel, when we invest, where and when developers plan new homes, when we choose a vehicle or when we insulate our homes. Those decisions are better when advice and learning is shared and when private and public sectors work together.

Please take a look at this Strategy and commit yourself to be part of it.

It means the world to us.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Gough".

Roger Gough
Leader of Kent County Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Jarrett".

Alan Jarrett
Leader of Medway Council

VISION

By 2050 the county of Kent has reduced emissions to net-zero and is benefiting from a competitive, innovative and resilient low carbon economy, where no deaths are associated with poor air quality.



INTRODUCTION

The **coronavirus pandemic has changed the world**, but presents an opportunity to rebuild the county stronger, cleaner and more resilient. At the same time, **our climate is changing** and the effects are already being felt in Kent and Medway. Limiting our contribution to global warming and driving low carbon economic recovery will undoubtedly be the most urgent issues of this decade.

In recognition of the UK **environment and climate emergency**, all 14 local authorities in Kent and Medway have committed to ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest. Our joint action has already seen carbon dioxide emissions in the area fall by 37% since 2005, but fully decarbonising our economy

over the coming years will require momentous effort and rely on action taken in partnership.

The coronavirus pandemic will severely restrict growth in the short term, but as we emerge from this crisis the longer-term trajectory will be a **return to growth**, and this growth must be low carbon. By 2031 it is anticipated that there will be almost 180,000 new homes and nearly 400,000 extra people, a 24% increase from 2011 levels. The local economy is also expected to expand, creating an additional 170,300 jobs by 2031 a 21% increase from 2011 levels, in line with forecast population growth.

Economic recovery presents an opportunity to invest in new jobs and low carbon infrastructure; support innovation, re-skilling and retraining to expand the low carbon and environmental goods and services sector; and drive a shift in social norms and behaviour change that will benefit health and reduce emissions. A green, clean economic recovery will help protect the climate, air, land and water on which future generations depend.

Kent and Medway are already experiencing significant environmental issues and constraints.

Trees, hedgerows, grasslands, wetlands and saltmarsh all provide **natural carbon storage** that can provide a significant contribution to our net-zero targets; as well as other environmental and health benefits. However, these important habitats are

at risk from land use pressures, lack of appropriate management, climate change and diseases such as Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), which threatens Kent's most widespread tree species.

Although air quality is generally improving in line with national trends, there are still **43 Air Quality Management Areas** across Kent and Medway and significant pockets of poor air quality along the county's major road networks. It is estimated that in 2017, there were 922 deaths associated with particulate matter (PM2.5) exposure across Kent and Medway.¹

Pollution from road vehicles is the main cause of poor air quality across Kent and Medway and is also the largest source of carbon emissions. In addition, congestion continues to be a problem, with average journey times on A-roads increasing 6% since 2015. Keeping the county moving is a high priority, as congestion negatively impacts productivity levels and air quality.

Actions to improve and promote public transport and encourage walking and cycling for short journeys, will have the dual benefit of reducing harmful emissions and tackling congestion. Supporting the switch away from petrol and diesel to clean, alternatively fuelled vehicles will also be essential. Over 4,845 ultra-low emission vehicles are already registered in Kent.

The cost of energy is rising. The average annual domestic combined gas and electricity bill increased by 8.8% between 2017 and 2019 and now costs

£1,360.² Government data shows that in 2017, 9.6% of Kent and Medway residents were living in **fuel poverty**.

Many Kent and Medway homes, often those of the most vulnerable residents, are cold and poorly insulated. 34% of homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate have the lowest energy efficiency ratings (E, F and G); usually due to inadequate insulation and inefficient heating systems, which can result in higher energy bills.

In industry, approximately 75% of the energy used is to produce heat, much of which is wasted. This is also true across Kent and Medway. The Government expects **business and industry** to improve energy efficiency by at least 20% by 2030,³ this includes a focus on industrial heat recovery.

Ensuring an **affordable energy supply** for all and continuing to promote energy efficiency, forms a significant element of our Strategy. Supporting new forms of renewable low carbon energy supply will be an important part of the mix, and an opportunity to grow new low carbon sectors. The county has already seen an increase in renewable energy generation of 726% since 2012 (230MW to 1900MW). We must be bold and encourage new developments to create their own decentralised energy.

However, low carbon technologies such as electric vehicles and local renewable energy generation pose a challenge to the electricity grid network in Kent and Medway which is already significantly constrained, and which could inhibit future growth. Therefore,

we must work with the energy utility companies to create a more resilient, **smart and innovative local energy system** to ensure we have the energy we need, when we need it, at the right price and without any negative environmental impacts.

Economic recovery, if clean, is a significant opportunity for Kent and Medway. Measures to tackle poor air quality and lower greenhouse gas emissions will have multiple benefits. For instance, promoting walking and cycling for short journeys improves health and reduces congestion; increasing tree and hedgerow coverage can help improve air quality, manage flood risk and support biodiversity; and supporting a switch to more efficient, low carbon energy use creates jobs and new market opportunities.

By tackling poor air quality, energy and carbon constraints in parallel, and by working closely across the public sector, business and communities to scale up action, we can protect health, the environment and be a significant player in the low carbon environmental goods and services sector (LCEGS) both in the UK and internationally.



¹ Calculated using all age, all cause deaths

² Provisional estimated average bill, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (December 2019).

³ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, "Helping businesses to improve the way they use energy: call for evidence," 18th July 2018 [online]

PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out how we will respond to the UK climate emergency and drive clean, resilient economic recovery across Kent and Medway. Taking an evidence-based approach, it identifies a pathway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, eliminate poor air quality, reduce fuel poverty, and promote the development of an affordable, clean and secure energy supply for this county. It is informed by and delivers, but does not duplicate, the priorities and actions from other strategies related to energy and the environment. The strategy also builds on the strengths and activities of other partner organisations.

The Strategy has four strategic aims:

- 1. EVIDENCE:** Provide an ongoing evidence and intelligence base; linking data sets to identify hot spots and opportunities, and to build the business case for action across Kent and Medway
- 2. POLICY AND STRATEGY:** Facilitate the development of evidence-based policy and strategy to future-proof economic recovery, tackle emerging issues and realise opportunities
- 3. LEADERSHIP:** Support the public sector across Kent and Medway to play a strong leadership role with regards to challenges and opportunities
- 4. ACTION:** Facilitate increased and accelerated action and implementation across Kent and Medway

The priority actions to deliver these four aims over the next five years are described on pages 15-27. Further information on the detailed actions, timescales and outputs are provided in the technical implementation plan, which is published alongside this strategy.

SUPPORTING DELIVERY OF THE KENT ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sits within the framework of the Kent Environment Strategy, which was published in 2016.

The Kent Environment Strategy provides the basis for closer cross-sector partnership working between environment, health and economic agendas. It identifies the high-level priorities to support sustainable economic growth whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and sustaining vibrant, healthy and resilient communities.

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy delivers across all three themes of the Kent Environment Strategy:

THEME 1: BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR DELIVERY – aims to ensure decision makers have an evidence-based understanding of the risks and opportunities relating to energy and emissions and are incorporating them into strategies, plans and actions.

THEME 2: MAKING THE BEST USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES, AVOIDING OR MINIMISING NEGATIVE IMPACTS – aims to ensure existing infrastructure, assets and resources across the public, private and domestic sector are managed to reduce emissions and build a clean future energy supply.

THEME 3: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE – aims to ensure Kent and Medway's communities, businesses and public sector have embraced clean growth and are working towards developing a clean, affordable and secure local energy future.

POLICY CONTEXT

Climate change, energy and air quality issues are high on the national agenda. The Government has set a clear policy direction by revising the Climate Change Act 2008 to legislate for net-zero by 2050. Net-zero means reducing greenhouse gas emissions to almost zero and balancing any remaining emissions with schemes to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, such as tree planting or technology.

Further policy is set out in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), the Clean Growth Strategy (2017), the Clean Air Strategy (2019) and Clean Maritime Plan (2019), which aim to protect and enhance the environment, mitigate climate change, support clean, low carbon economic growth and address the negative impacts on health from a poor environment.

Local action will play a significant role in achieving these ambitions and therefore local policy must reflect these priorities. The key strategies that have influenced the development of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy are summarised in Figure 1. Further detail on the policies driving action are outlined in the ***Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Evidence Base***, which is published alongside this strategy.



FIGURE 1: Key national and regional strategies influencing the development of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN KENT AND MEDWAY

Carbon dioxide emissions in Kent and Medway fell 37% between 2005 and 2017, hitting our 2020 Kent Environment Strategy target two years early.



Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) has been identified in the Tri-LEP Energy Strategy as an exemplar project for replication across the south-east region. Supported by European funding, LoCASE provides free support to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions. Since LoCASE began in 2016, £3.5m has been awarded to 425 Kent and Medway businesses.



The installed capacity of solar, wind, waste and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) increased by 726% in five years, from 230MW in 2012 to 1,900MW in 2017.

Kent and Medway's non-domestic gas consumption decreased by 57% between 2005 and 2018, whilst domestic gas consumption fell by 20% over the same period.

The number of days of moderate or high air pollution in Kent and Medway fell between 2012 and 2016 and there have been improvements in most Air Quality Management Areas.



Since the Warm Homes Scheme began in 2014, over 2,400 energy efficiency measures have been installed in over 2,300 homes in Kent and Medway.



89% of newly built homes in Kent and Medway had an Energy Performance Certificate rating of A or B in 2017, meaning they have the highest energy performance, up from 62% in 2011.

Average household electricity use in Kent and Medway continues to fall; down from 4,117 kWh in 2015, to 3,894 kWh in 2018. A 5% reduction in three years.

4,845 ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) are registered in Kent (September 2019). In February 2019, Kent County Council was awarded £180,000 from the Government's Office of Low Emission Vehicles to install 8 rapid chargers for use by taxis in 6 Kent Districts.

In a 2018 survey of Kent residents, 85% reported that they have fitted energy efficiency measures, such as loft or cavity wall insulation, and 40% have fitted energy monitoring equipment.

There has been a 42% increase in people using train stations in Kent in the past ten years. In 2016/17, 1.8 million people used Ebbsfleet International Station.

KENT AND MEDWAY KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

54%

of total fuel consumption is from gas and electricity



Heat networks⁴ currently provide 2% of the UK heat demand, but this is estimated to rise to 43% by 2050.

EFG RATING

23% of homes and 19% of public buildings are E, F, or G rated, meaning they have the worst energy performance, highest energy running costs and make a bigger contribution to emissions.



11% of residents have reported that they struggle to pay their energy bills. 41% of those, live in rented accommodation.⁵

BY 2031 KENT AND MEDWAY ARE EXPECTING TO SEE⁶



178,600
additional homes
(24% growth)



396,300
additional people
(23% growth)



170,300
additional jobs
(21% growth)

This predicted population and economic growth will require a higher demand for energy. It is likely that domestic gas and electricity sales will rise by 23% and 19% respectively from 2014/15 to 2030/31.

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9.2M

vehicle movements at Port of Dover and Channel Tunnel every year



14.3% increase in the number of vehicles on major roads in Kent between 2006 and 2016



73,000

households in fuel poverty (2017)

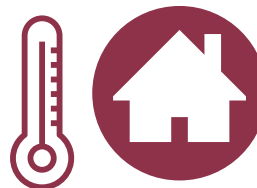


Only a 4.5% fall in carbon emissions from transport since 2005.

43 AIR QUALITY

Air Quality Management Areas, where air pollutants have been known to exceed government objectives.

Kent's rate of Excess Winter Mortality was the same as the South East and English averages in 2017/18.



Kent's rate of Excess Winter Mortality was the same as the South East and English averages in 2017/18.

Kent and Medway's mortality rate associated with poor air quality is worse than the national average.

⁴ Heat networks supply heat from a central source to consumers.

⁵ Kent Environment Strategy resident survey, July 2018

⁶ Figures identified by the Growth and Infrastructure Framework for Kent and Medway

OUR CHALLENGES

Despite the many successes and opportunities, Kent continues to face some significant challenges. These will need to be addressed in the short to medium-term if the environmental condition of the county is not to see considerable deterioration. The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Evidence Base identifies the key issues, which are summarised here:

SECURING A CLEAN, GREEN ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Supporting economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and accommodating the significant levels of housing growth currently required by government will be a major challenge for the county and is an influencing factor in all the key issues identified. This means not only creating new jobs and supporting low carbon innovation, but also advancing climate action in ways that make Kent and Medway more resilient and attractive places for low carbon companies to invest. Principles of Clean Growth (growing our economy whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions), must be factored into all planning and development polices and decisions, whilst not becoming a barrier to new development.

REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TO NET-ZERO

All local authorities in Kent and Medway have committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero. Our current progress is a 37% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions since 2005 but achieving our target will require a substantial step up in action, both in terms of scale and speed.

Whilst emissions from the industry and commercial sector and domestic sector have fallen significantly over the period (falling 57% and 35% respectively), emissions from the transport sector have only reduced by 4.5% (see Figure 2). The transport sector is now the largest source of emissions in Kent and Medway.

To date, much of the reduction in emissions has been due to a national decrease in the use of coal for electricity generation and the closure of a small number of energy-intensive industrial plants. However, in order to achieve net-zero, all

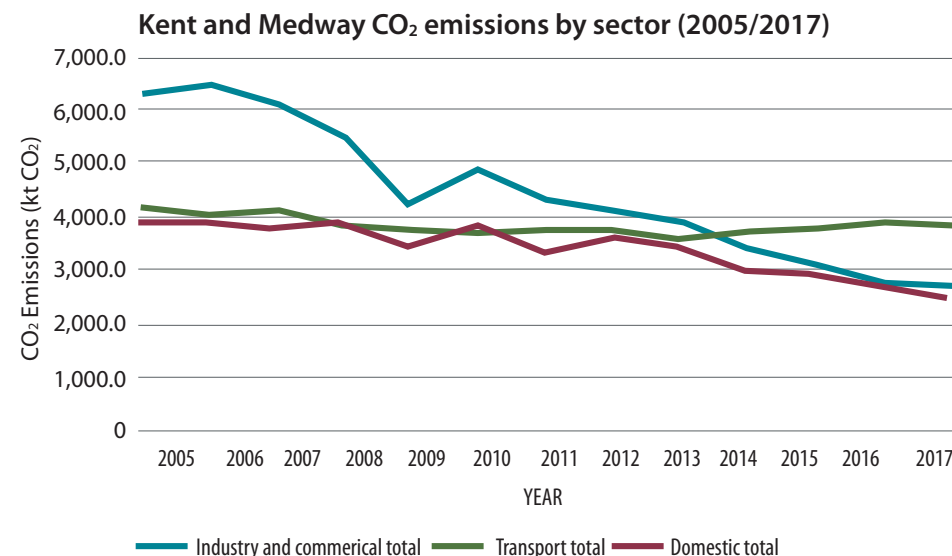


FIGURE 2: CO₂ emissions profile for Kent and Medway; this data includes estimated emissions for the industrial and commercial, transport and domestic sectors. Note: kt refers to kilotons

sectors will need to use resources much more efficiently and switch to low-carbon fuels for electricity, heating and transport.

We will also need to increase the amount of carbon stored in the natural environment; this is known as carbon sequestration. Soil and vegetation such as trees, hedges, wetlands and kelp all store carbon, so improving land management practices and increasing vegetation coverage will be essential if we are to achieve our net-zero target. These measures can also provide other benefits, such as reducing air and water pollution, reducing flood risk, improving biodiversity and providing health, cultural and leisure opportunities for local communities.

TACKLING HOT-SPOTS OF POOR AIR QUALITY

Poor air quality is a major health challenge for the UK causing both short and long-term effects on health. Long-term exposure to air pollution can impact on all stages of life; from asthma in children, to emerging evidence linking fine particulate matter (PM2.5) to the progression of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Public Health England estimates that the cumulative health and social care costs of air pollution (PM2.5 and NO₂) in England could reach £18.6 billion by 2035. Poor air quality also has adverse impacts on the natural environment through damage to vegetation, soils, rivers and lakes.

Although air quality in the county is generally improving in line with national trends, there are still 43 Air Quality Management Areas and significant pockets of poor air quality along the major road networks. Kent and Medway's position between London and the continent brings air quality challenges associated with cross-channel traffic, including a disproportionately large number of HGVs, with their associated diesel emissions. Around the coast and ports, shipping brings additional impacts from the use of marine diesel. Even air pollution sources from outside Kent and Medway impact the population; with easterly winds bringing pollution from continental sources and westerly winds bringing urban pollution from London.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

It is often the most vulnerable and deprived that suffer the most from poor air quality, cold homes and fuel poverty. Whilst air pollution is harmful to everyone, some people are at greater risk due to

- living in areas with high levels of air pollution
- learning or working near busy roads
- age; in the womb, infancy, early childhood and the elderly
- existing medical conditions, such as lung and heart disease and asthma.

These vulnerabilities are heightened among those living in the most deprived communities. This is due to poor housing and indoor air quality, the stress of living on a low income, unhealthy diet, smoking and limited access to green spaces.

Eliminating poor air quality and fuel poverty and achieving net-zero emissions will require changes to the way we travel, access services and use energy. We must therefore ensure that all residents in Kent and Medway are supported to make and benefit from these changes. For example, providing funding to help those in fuel poverty improve the energy efficiency of their home and ensuring superfast broadband, public transport and refuelling points for low carbon vehicles are widely available.

GROWTH WITHOUT GRIDLOCK – ENABLING INTEGRATED AND CONNECTED TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

A convenient, affordable and reliable transport network is vital for providing access to facilities and services, connecting businesses and communities and reducing social isolation. However, transport contributes over 40% of the county's carbon emissions and pollutants from road vehicles have a negative impact on air quality and human health.

Kent is already experiencing increased congestion on its road and rail network. The average delay on Kent's A-roads has increased almost 7% since 2015 and average speed has dropped 1% over the same period. With severe congestion on the highway network, particularly in major town centres, growth across the county will be constrained without investment.

Achieving safe and effective transport networks that support clean economic recovery is a significant challenge. Our action must not only focus on low carbon road transport such as electric and hydrogen vehicles, but also promote smarter driving and traffic management; improve infrastructure for walking and cycling (active travel); ensure convenient connections to clean public transport; and support new transport models such as car clubs, car sharing and automated vehicles through the use of smart technology.

Promoting and supporting active travel will be an essential element of the strategy, which will not just help to reduce emissions, but also bring numerous health benefits.

At the same time, we need to support smarter working practices. The coronavirus pandemic forced many organisations and businesses to adapt to home working

overnight. As restrictions are lifted and the economy recovers, we must utilise and learn from this experience, whilst continuing to improve broadband services and enhance access to digital services to ensure demand for travel reduces permanently. Over 95% of Kent and Medway's homes and businesses now have access to superfast broadband, but there are still significant challenges to get 100% consistent coverage and service across the county and ensure the full benefits of digitalisation are realised.

ENSURING ENERGY SUPPLIES ARE LOW-CARBON, SECURE, AFFORDABLE AND LOCAL WHERE POSSIBLE

Energy prices are increasing again. Government data estimates that the average annual domestic combined gas and electricity bill increased by 8.8% between 2017 and 2019 and now costs £1,360. Higher energy prices can have an impact on business recovery and residents' wellbeing. Although fuel poverty levels vary across the county; from 12.3% in Thanet, to 7.7% in Dartford, eight council areas recorded fuel poverty rates higher than the South East average of 8.7% in 2017.

Continued housing growth means that our energy consumption is set to rise. A study commissioned by Kent County Council revealed that between 2014/15 and 2030/31, domestic gas demand in Kent and Medway is expected to increase by 23% and domestic electricity demand is expected to increase by 19%.

Demand for energy is exacerbated by the fact that large amounts are wasted. The UK has some of the least energy efficient housing stock in Europe and much of the industrial heat produced in South East England is released into the atmosphere, despite the fact it could be reused. There is a huge opportunity to utilise more efficient technology to reduce energy demand and achieve cost savings for residents and businesses alike.

Demand for heat and electricity, together with generation and supply is intrinsically linked to carbon dioxide emissions, due to our current reliance on fossil fuels. It is therefore essential to understand how much energy is used, by whom, how and for what, and how this might change in the future. This will allow us to identify the most appropriate and cost-effective interventions to support the transition to a secure, affordable, low or zero carbon energy system.

The challenge of decarbonising energy at the local level will be threefold:

- Increase the supply of local, low carbon energy generation, at or near the point of use, whether domestic or industrial.
- Significantly cut consumption of energy derived from fossil fuels, for example, facilitating low-carbon energy connections for properties that are not connected to the gas network and still heated by coal or oil.
- Eliminate wasted energy through greater energy efficiency, targeting industrial processes, commercial buildings and homes.

OVERCOMING ENERGY GRID CONSTRAINTS

Energy security is vital to the development and growth of Kent and Medway in the coming years. However, the energy system in the UK and Kent is changing. Two-thirds of the UK's existing coal, gas and nuclear power stations are set to close by 2030 and any future power stations must be largely decarbonised, if the UK is to achieve its legally binding target of cutting carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050.

Much of the county is already subject to electricity grid network constraints, which is making new connections increasingly difficult, particularly for new energy generation projects. Electricity demand is also expected to grow significantly by 2050, driven by the growth in electric vehicles and increased electrification of heating, which could see up to 60% of homes using heat pumps. A drive towards locally generated renewable energy, often from smaller, more dispersed sources, will further ramp up pressure on an already constrained electricity grid network.

Changing supply and demand, though an enormous opportunity, also presents significant challenges to our existing system nationally and locally. It will require large amounts of investment in infrastructure and the transmission and distribution networks. It will be essential to map existing electricity and gas grid constraints against future development, to identify potential issues early and to identify any opportunities for local generation solutions, such as district heating systems.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS STRATEGY

Underpinning this Strategy is the *Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Evidence Base*, which is drawn from a wide range of sources:

- Government strategies, plans, reports and national data sets.
- The Tri-LEP Energy Strategy and Evidence Base.
- The Kent and Medway State of the Environment Report and annual monitoring report.
- AECOM Renewable Energy for Kent 2017 Update.
- Public health indicators and evidence covering national and local area data.
- Home energy conservation and fuel poverty action plans and reports.
- Air quality monitoring plans and reports from Kent District and Borough Councils and Medway Council.
- Public and private sector research and current activity on the topics of energy, fuel poverty, transport, air quality, growth and planning and the impacts on public health.
- The 2018 Kent Environment Strategy Public Perception Survey.

Central to the development of this strategy has been stakeholder engagement, through a dedicated cross-sector working group, workshops and consultations. Organisations and partners involved in the development of the strategy include, amongst others, all Local Authorities in Kent and Medway, Joint Chief Executives, Joint Kent Leaders, NHS, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, Public Health, Kent Housing Group, Kent and Medway Air Quality

Partnership, Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership, Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership, Kent Planning Officers Group and Kent Health and Wellbeing Board. A summary of the review process is shown in Figure 3.

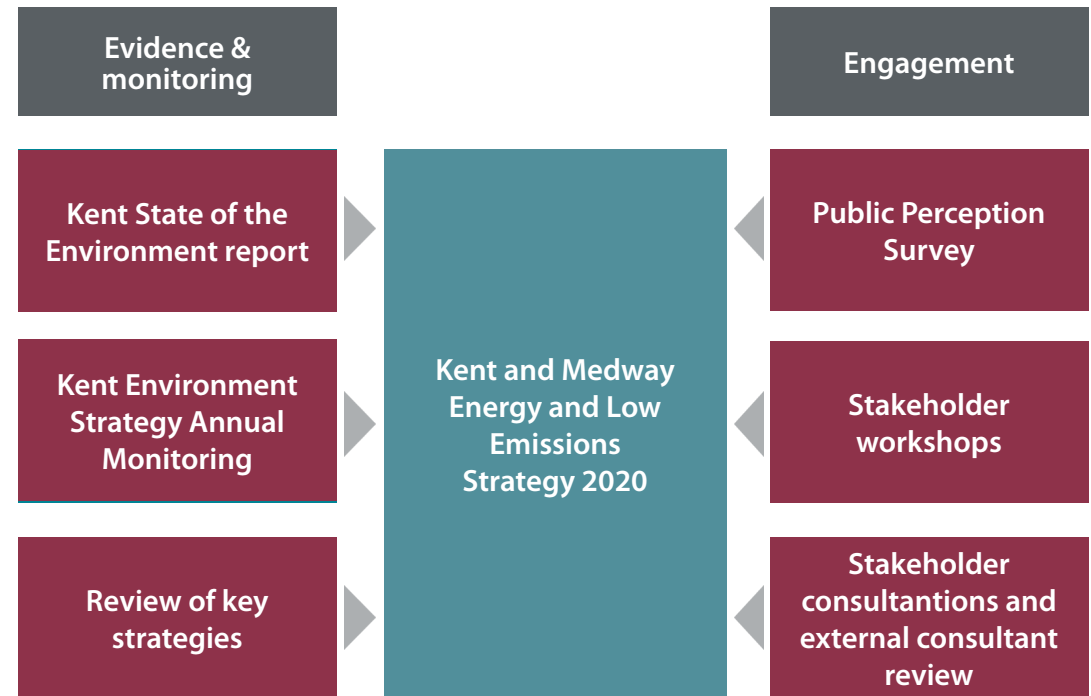


Figure 3: Summary of the review process used to develop the Kent and Medway Low Emissions Strategy

ENERGY SOUTH TO EAST: TOWARDS A LOW CARBON ECONOMY - THE TRI-LEP ENERGY STRATEGY

The Government’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has requested and provided the funding to all Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to produce regional Local Energy Opportunities Strategies, which should provide a clear analysis of the local opportunities and challenges across heat, transport and power.

In response to this request, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) has partnered with Coast to Capital and Enterprise M3, to develop an ambitious regional Local Energy Strategy, which aims to reduce emissions from energy and transport and support clean growth.

The strategy has identified five themes and 18 potential technological project model interventions, which are shown in Figure 4. These interventions will be scalable across the geography to increase impact and investment and develop partnership working across Local Enterprise Partnerships, including Kent and Medway. Where project models are relevant for Kent and Medway, suitable actions will be reflected in the Kent and Medway Low Emissions Strategy.

The full strategy can be found at www.southeastlep.com/our-strategy/energy-south2east.

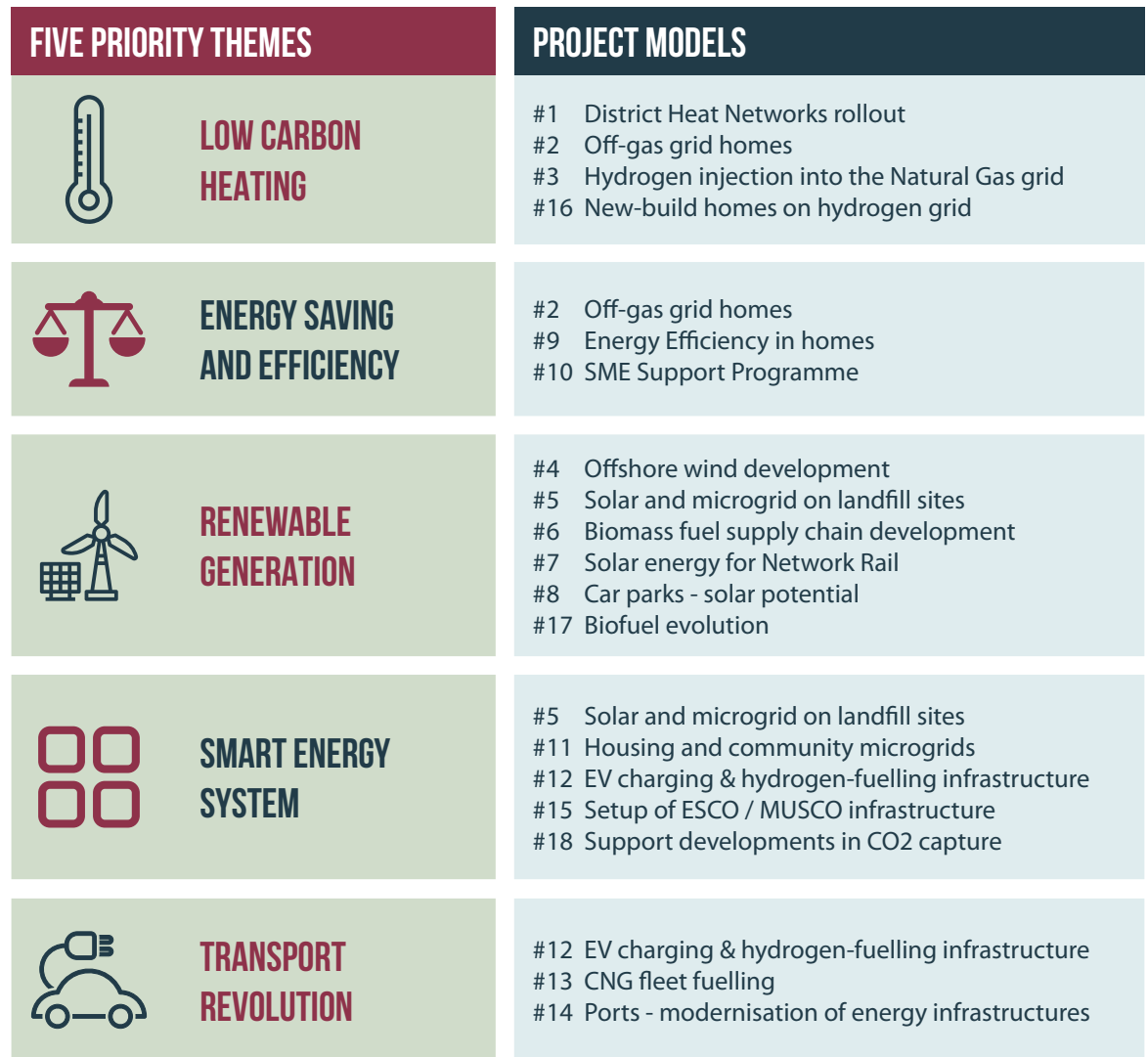


Figure 4: The 5 themes and 18 project models in the Energy South2East Action Plan.

OUR TEN PRIORITIES

Achieving our vision will require significant, coordinated action across all sectors for the next thirty years. The following pages describe the ten areas that have been identified as a priority for collaboration and the immediate, short- and longer-term actions required.

The priorities are not listed in order of importance and will be implemented concurrently. No regrets actions that should be undertaken immediately have also been included to ensure significant action takes place as soon as possible.

A technical implementation plan accompanies this strategy and provides detailed information on the specific actions that will be taken, action owners, timescales and outputs.





PRIORITY 1: EMISSION REDUCTION PATHWAYS TO 2050

Set five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050 for Kent and Medway, with significant reduction by 2030.

RATIONALE

Carbon budgets will set quotas for the amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted in five-year periods. These can then be used to identify the actions (or pathways), that will allow us to stay within our carbon budgets. Such evidence-based pathways will ensure we prioritise the most cost-effective activities and will support more collaborative working with partners across the county, region and nationally. It will also highlight where appropriate engagement is needed to influence aspects outside local authorities’ control.

OUTCOME

Everyone in Kent and Medway can see the scale of action required to achieve net-zero emission by 2050, with significant reductions in emissions by 2030. Decision makers understand where action and resources should be targeted. Progress is monitored and reported.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	Agree evidence and current baseline for five-year carbon budgets.
	Set local authority carbon budgets with emission reduction pathways to net zero by 2050, with significant reduction by 2030.
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	Set costed and jointly owned area-based carbon budgets for Kent and Medway.
	Set detailed, area-based emission reduction pathways to net zero by 2050, with significant reduction by 2030. Pathways to cover all public and private organisations and communities.
	Monitor and report progress publicly.
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	Develop a full carbon footprint for Kent and Medway based on consumption (not territorial or organisational boundaries), with consumption targets and reduction measures integrated into existing carbon budgets.



PRIORITY 2: PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION MAKING

Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement.

RATIONALE

The decisions made by Kent and Medway’s public sector affect the environment and everyone living and working in the area. Kent County Council alone spends over £1.5 billion each year providing a range of essential services to the people of Kent. Developing a simple way to assess, manage and mitigate these impacts will ensure public sector policies, services and spending support our environmental targets. In addition, the public sector’s influence and spending power will help drive demand and support innovation in the local clean growth sector.

OUTCOME

Public sector decisions and spending are consistent with our net-zero and clean growth targets and are utilising opportunities to drive market change and support expansion in the clean growth sector.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	Develop a simple checklist to identify where significant environmental issues and opportunities may arise, for use on imminent key decisions, major commissions and procurements.
	Revisit existing social value commitments within contracts and align to climate change and net-zero ambitions where possible.
	Stronger emphasis on reducing carbon miles and on buying local goods and services where possible.
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	Develop a full net-zero and climate change impact assessment and social value framework aligned with Kent and Medway targets, to include: specific policies such as requiring the supply chain to match net-zero commitments; simple checklists; guidance and tool kits; training and technical support.
	Develop a supply chain support programme to enable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), within large supply chains to effect change and reduce costs; adopt new lower impact processes and win new business.
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	Consider expanding to include a full carbon and ecological footprint, based on consumption and lifetime costs in strategy, policy, commissioning and procurement.



PRIORITY 3: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and incorporate climate resilience.

RATIONALE

Almost 180,000 new homes will have been built in Kent and Medway by 2031 and will still be in use after 2050. To ensure the buildings and infrastructure we construct today are fit for the zero-carbon future, we need to ensure planning policies and decisions embrace clean growth, support good quality sustainable design and promote low carbon travel, transport and digital connectivity. A joint evidence base and planning resource, together with shared position statements, guidance and policies will help inform planning decisions and future-proof new developments.

OUTCOME

New developments in the county are sustainable, carbon neutral and climate resilient. Kent and Medway's development and construction industry is supported to be cutting edge to enable a quicker economic recovery for the sector.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	Secure agreement for a joint Kent and Medway clean growth and climate change evidence base and planning resource, to ensure that planning decisions are fully informed by the latest evidence and advice.
	Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	Develop a jointly owned, clean growth and climate change evidence base for planning policy and development control.
	Develop a clean growth and climate change strategic planning framework for Local Plans and development, by identifying common guidance, position statements, policies and targets.
	Set stretching net-zero targets for any new development over 100 houses.
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	Fully integrate clean growth and climate change into Local Plans and planning policies.
	Aim for "energy positive" new developments and communities (communities producing more energy than they are using).



PRIORITY 4: **CLIMATE EMERGENCY INVESTMENT FUND**

Establish a trusted Kent and Medway ‘climate emergency’ carbon offset scheme and renewable energy investment fund

RATIONALE

Before the coronavirus pandemic, funding for climate emergency actions came from many disparate sources including; developer contributions, business rates, public sector funding, charitable donations from residents and businesses, and external grants and funding. There is likely to be significantly less funding available for environmental projects in the short to medium term, so ensuring money is invested in projects that have the greatest impact and bring multiple benefits will become increasingly important.

A climate emergency investment fund for Kent and Medway will pool the funding available and match it to the most cost effective and biggest impact schemes. The fund will be informed by renewable energy and natural capital opportunities studies.

OUTCOME

Developers, businesses, public sector and residents can offset their carbon emissions by investing in meaningful ‘climate emergency’ projects in Kent and Medway, such as tree and hedge planting, habitat improvement, renewable energy generation and building retrofit. The fund not only generates additional resources for delivering our climate emergency targets, but also brings environmental and social benefits.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	Review existing funding streams and see how they can be tweaked to provide additional resource.
	Package up quick wins and ‘oven-ready’ projects suitable for external funding such as crowd funding or business sponsorship
	Review external funding expertise and opportunities and look at increasing access to finance through collaboration and development of a central resource.
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	Develop and promote a Kent and Medway offset scheme and permanent crowd funding space to support new and existing local environmental projects and groups.
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	Further develop a cross-sector, multi-agency sequestration, offset and low carbon investment fund for Kent and Medway that can be used by the public, community and private sector.

CASE STUDY: WORKING WITH SCHOOLS TO TACKLE AIR POLLUTION

In 2018, Maidstone Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council environmental health teams worked with local schools to tackle local air pollution. Schools who signed up to the Clean Air for Schools Scheme were helped to undertake an engaging class experiment. Schools were provided with two free air monitoring tubes per month, along with a teaching pack and guidance on how to record data and report the results back to the council.

This hands-on approach allowed students to analyse the direct relationship between the volume of traffic outside their school and its impact on air pollution within the school grounds. The objective was to encourage a reduction in car journeys made by parents and to highlight the effects of leaving engines idling while dropping off and collecting children.

The project was launched in conjunction with the KM Charity Team's Green Champions and is sponsored by the Mid-Kent Environmental Health Team, with no funding required from the schools. For more information, or to register, visit: www.maidstone.gov.uk/cleanairforschools. Similar schemes are now also run by Medway Council and Swale Borough Council, in partnership with the KM Charity Team.



CASE STUDY: KENT AIR WEBSITE

The Kent and Medway Air Quality Monitoring Network is funded by the district and borough councils within the county, Medway Council and Kent County Council. The network aims to promote the improvement of air quality within the region, to help local authorities to meet their obligations under environmental regulations and to maintain an accessible database of robust measurements for public reporting, research and development.

The Kent Air website has been developed by the network to provide easy public access to live air quality levels, historic data measured from automatic monitoring and NO2 diffusion tubes, and published data and reports for Medway and all district and borough councils except for Dartford and Sevenoaks (whose data is hosted on the London Air Quality Network website: www.londonair.org.uk). The website also provides information about the health impacts of air pollution and recommended health advice for the forecast level of pollution.





PRIORITY 5: BUILDING RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Develop Kent and Medway net-zero buildings retrofit plans and programmes for public sector, domestic and business.

RATIONALE

Over the next 30 years, most of the emissions from the built environment will be from buildings or communities that are already in existence today. In addition, some of our most vulnerable residents are living in cold, energy inefficient homes which are expensive to run; worsening health problems and causing fuel poverty. Funding for building improvements is fragmented and complicated by property ownership issues, and projects often need to be done at scale to attract the investment needed.

In the short term, our activities will focus on expanding and accelerating existing domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty initiatives and supporting energy efficiency and low carbon heat generation in non-domestic buildings. These programmes will then need to be expanded to ensure retrofit is seen from the perspective of a 'place', linking public buildings and the public realm, schools, businesses and homes, both rented and owned.

OUTCOME

Greenhouse gas emissions from Kent and Medway's existing buildings are significantly reduced and the housing stock no longer exacerbates levels of fuel poverty. High volume retrofit programmes for homes, businesses and public sector buildings maximise external funding and finance, supporting the local retrofit industry to be cutting edge.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

<p>DO NOW</p>	<p>Undertake 'quick-wins' in public and commercial premises such as converting lighting to LEDs, installing energy and water efficiency measures and controls and training building managers.</p> <p>Utilise and promote existing funding pots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Warm Homes Programme and other domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty projects through the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP). • LOCASE (Low Carbon Across the South East) grant support programme to improve efficiency of local businesses.
<p>SHORT TERM (BY 2023)</p>	<p>Establish a public sector building retrofit programme, identifying joint initiatives that maximise economies of scale including shared buildings and facilities, EV charging and micro energy generation.</p> <p>Look to scale up housing retrofit by maximising government funding and developing innovative funding mechanisms with a focus on fuel poor; difficult to treat properties such as park homes; off-gas properties; private rented sector; and 'Able to Pay'.</p> <p>Scope cross-sector place-based approach, identifying quick wins and how we can work with private investors to scale up retrofit across Kent and Medway.</p>
<p>FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)</p>	<p>Develop a large scale, cross-sector, area-based retrofit programme. The programme will focus on place and public realm, including business and communities, to create net-zero and "energy positive" communities.</p>



PRIORITY 6: TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change.

RATIONALE

Tackling poor air quality and achieving safe and effective transport networks that support low carbon economic recovery have been highlighted as key challenges for Kent and Medway. Furthermore, greenhouse gas emissions from transport have remained stubbornly high, but the coronavirus pandemic triggered a change in digital and travel behaviours that could be utilised to ensure emissions from transport are reduced permanently.

Tackling these issues and opportunities will require a combination of measures that improve infrastructure and facilities to encourage low carbon travel and drive behaviour change. We must also continue to tackle poor air quality hotspots, through the implementation of Air Quality Management Plans.

OUTCOME

Greenhouse gas emissions from transport and travel are significantly reduced and air quality is improved.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	<p>Set a challenging 2030 business miles reduction target for the public sector.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out EV charging points and infrastructure for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Support public transport providers, including school transport providers, to use lower emission vehicles.</p> <p>Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Management Plans.</p>
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	<p>Develop and expand sustainable travel policies that reduce car use and business miles, through a hierarchy of travel options to reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport or increase car sharing.</p> <p>Implementation of low-carbon mobility hubs for electric cars, electric bikes and push bikes, to include battery storage and solar panels where possible.</p>
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	<p>Review and develop approaches that consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locating services nearer to public transport or within walking distance of communities • reallocation of road space in favour of more sustainable travel modes • increased control, regulation and charging for public parking in favour of electric vehicles and public transport • increased involvement in regulation of public transport and taxis to tackle poor air quality and lower greenhouse gas emissions • testing and roll-out of new technologies to enable the transition to low carbon transport and travel.

CASE STUDY: PARK AND PEDAL IN CANTERBURY

In June 2018, Canterbury City Council launched its Park and Pedal scheme at Wincheap Park and Ride. Over 1,200 journeys were recorded between July 2018 and January 2019. Of these journeys, 87% were by customers who were not regular users of the Wincheap Park and Ride and would normally have driven into the city centre.

Cyclists who sign-up to the scheme pay a £15 deposit for a key card that allows them to leave their bike in a high security compound. They are then able to drive to the car park each morning and park for free, before grabbing their bike and heading into the city, helping to cut the queues and improving air quality in the town centre.

The scheme was largely funded by a £21,300 grant from Kent County Council. The Park and Pedal map can be viewed on Canterbury City Council website and shows bike routes from Wincheap Park and Ride into the city, cycle racks and places to refill your water bottle.



CASE STUDY: MAKING KENT HOMES WARMER

Through a combination of schemes and initiatives, local authorities in Kent and Medway have been able to maximise funding and signpost residents to initiatives that make homes warmer, reduce health inequalities and lower carbon emissions.

Since 2013, Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Councils have offered a Collective Energy Switching scheme, called Energy Deal. Residents can register for free to take part in energy auctions (held 3 times a year), to identify lower energy tariffs without any obligation to switch. Since 2013, the Energy Deal has helped residents save £804,632 on their energy bills collectively.

Kent and Medway partners are also working together to promote the Warm Homes scheme that helps residents identify energy efficiency measures that will help lower their energy bills and make their homes feel warmer. Since the Warm Homes scheme began in 2014, over 2,400 energy efficiency measures have been installed in over 2,300 homes. In total, the measures are expected to save an estimated 39,000 tonnes of carbon and save residents £8.8 million over the course of the measures' life.

For more information visit www.energydealswitch.com and www.kent.gov.uk/warmhomes





PRIORITY 7: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation.

RATIONALE

Securing a low carbon, sustainable economic recovery will require us to transform the way we generate energy. Whilst some of this will be done at the national level, we must also support new low-carbon energy infrastructure opportunities, such as those presented in the Tri-LEP Energy Strategy. We will focus on supporting opportunities that allow more of our energy to be produced locally and from renewable sources and increasing the number of new developments supplied by local energy centres and district heating schemes.

OUTCOME

The county is an exemplar for renewable energy generation; producing more low carbon energy than it consumes and stimulating enhanced renewable energy supply chain opportunities that will support a green recovery.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	<p>Install roof-top solar panels on all suitable public sector buildings.</p> <p>Support residents and small businesses to install roof-top solar panels, by offering a group purchasing scheme such as Solar Together Kent.</p>
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	<p>Undertake a renewable electricity and heat energy generation opportunities study for Kent and Medway. The study will build on existing knowledge and focus on all existing and emerging technologies including solar, wind, nuclear, heat pumps, district heating and green gas such as hydrogen.</p>
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	<p>Develop a joint Future Energy Investment Programme for Kent and Medway looking at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydrogen • green gas • decentralised energy in new developments • community energy generation • other emerging energy technologies.



PRIORITY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Develop a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and soil health and increase biodiversity.

RATIONALE

Soil, trees, hedgerows, grassland, wetlands and maritime habitats all store carbon, so improving land management practices and increasing coverage of these habitats will be essential if we are to achieve our net-zero target. In addition, our actions to increase carbon storage can also support our efforts to respond to the ecological emergency, support the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and increase resilience to climate change. The development of an opportunity and investment programme will ensure resources can be targeted at the most appropriate projects, capable of generating the most benefits.

OUTCOME

There is increased capacity for Kent and Medway’s natural environment to store carbon and offset the county’s greenhouse gas emissions: bringing additional benefits such as reduced air and water pollution, increased flood storage capacity, improved biodiversity and providing health, cultural and leisure opportunities for local communities.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	<p>Identify natural environment ‘quick-wins’ and areas where tree establishment is needed, especially in relation to Ash Dieback.</p> <p>Produce tree planting guidance to ensure the right tree species are planted in the most appropriate places.</p>
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	<p>Assess the carbon and resilience value of natural capital in Kent and Medway, together with other potential functions.</p> <p>Scope develop and implement a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme.</p>
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	<p>Expand the natural capital opportunity and investment programme to include all sectors.</p>



PRIORITY 9: SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS

Develop and implement a Kent and Medway business recovery and support programme to cut costs and win new business.

RATIONALE

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on local businesses and many will need support to recover. In addition, whilst many local businesses have already taken action to save money and reduce their impact on the environment, our evidence shows that this activity needs to be expanded and rapidly accelerated if we are to achieve our low carbon vision. A dual pronged approach to local business support, which utilises the considerable purchasing power of Kent and Medway’s public sector and supports businesses to reduce their environmental impact will help drive a low carbon economic recovery.

OUTCOME

Greenhouse gas emissions from local small and medium sized enterprises are reduced and businesses are supported to make the most of the economic opportunities that arise as we transition to a low carbon economy.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	<p>Support public sector suppliers to complete Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training (or equivalent), in order to identify supply chain emissions and drive efficiencies where possible⁷</p> <p>Promote and refer businesses and supply chain to LOCASE, for support and access to grant funding to reduce their costs and access new markets.</p>
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	<p>Conduct public sector supply chain assessments, focusing on the largest suppliers.</p> <p>Undertake a supply chain analysis of the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector across Kent and Medway (funded through SELEP).</p> <p>Require public sector suppliers to undertake STEM or a similar scheme.</p> <p>Working in partnership with local authorities and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, develop a targeted business support supply chain programme for the Kent and Medway public sector, building on LOCASE.</p>
FOR LONGER TERM CONSIDERATION (BY 2030)	<p>Develop local supply chain, low carbon clusters or opportunities (dependent on supply chain analysis).</p>

⁷ The STEM accreditation scheme was developed through Low Carbon Across the South East (LOCASE) and is free to members of the Low Carbon Kent business network. It helps businesses improve their environmental performance through a series of assessments and certificates (blue, silver and gold), which correspond to National Standard BS 8555.



PRIORITY 10: COMMUNICATIONS

Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.

RATIONALE

We will not tackle the climate emergency through technology alone: our net-zero future will only be achieved if we successfully change perceptions, behaviour and social norms. Despite a recent surge in public interest in climate change there remain many psychological, social and cultural barriers to behaviour change, alongside a lack of physical capability or opportunity. These barriers are compounded by many competing voices seeking to advance their own part of the environmental agenda. We will need to work closely with our partners to develop simple, tailored and targeted communications that raise awareness and encourage a change in perceptions and behaviour.

OUTCOME

Residents, employees, businesses and visitors to Kent and Medway understand how their actions impact the environment; are aware of the risks of climate change and poor air quality; appreciate the value of the natural environment; and are sufficiently well informed and motivated to adopt more sustainable and low carbon behaviours. This increased awareness and engagement increases the impact of the other programmes developed through this Strategy.

HIGH LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DO NOW	Link up existing stakeholder communications and agree shared messages on topics such as air quality, fuel poverty, active travel and energy efficiency. Use the Kent Environment Strategy Conference as a mechanism to raise the profile of local authority collective action.
SHORT TERM (BY 2023)	Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and programme for residents, public sector staff and businesses. Monitor effectiveness of campaigns and develop into targeted behaviour change programmes.

CASE STUDY: ELECTRIC BUS TRIAL

In March 2018, Kent took part in an eight-week electric bus demonstrator trial commissioned by Volvo Bus UK and ABB UK. The trial aimed to demonstrate to Kent County Council, Prologis and Arriva (the bus operators), that electric buses can be operational without disrupting current schedules, whilst also improving air quality, energy efficiency, noise and passenger comfort, as well as providing financial benefits. The trial was conducted along the 23.6km-long 'Fastrack Route A', operating 20 hours daily between Dartford and Bluewater.

Data gathered from the trial showed that an energy saving of 69.3% could be realised on the Fastrack Route A (based on the annual energy use of current diesel buses; 2,063MW, versus the energy used by the bus on the trial; 634MW). Feedback from Arriva was positive, with the electric bus outperforming expectations and the drivers reporting that they preferred the electric vehicles. The public were also complimentary, with 70% of Twitter comments being neutral or positive.

The demonstration proved that the vehicle operated within Fastrack's operational requirements. It also helped promote the drive towards zero emissions technology and whilst the vehicle itself drew attention, the visual element of the charging infrastructure proved to be much more effective and thought provoking for the general public and stakeholders alike.



CASE STUDY: LOW CARBON ACROSS THE SOUTH EAST

The Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) project provides free support to help businesses become more competitive and profitable, by reducing environmental impacts through resource efficiencies and encouraging low carbon innovation. It does this through a three-pronged approach of stimulating demand, supporting supply and transferring knowledge. The scheme is administered by Kent County Council and supports businesses in Kent and Medway, Essex, Thurrock, Southend-on-Sea and East Sussex.

So far the project has seen nearly £3.5 million of EU grant funding approved for 425 Kent and Medway Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), towards a huge range of purposes. This investment is set to deliver over 4,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent of savings through 250 energy and resource efficiency projects; from simple lighting, heating and insulation works, to investing in more effective and sustainable business practices. To date this support has helped create 160 jobs, launch 45 new products or services and support 31 business start-ups in Kent and Medway's burgeoning Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services sector.

It was due to this success that LoCASE was identified as an exemplar project for replication across the south east in the Energy South2East regional local energy strategy. It was also selected as a runner-up by the President of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) Awards in 2018.

The project will continue to administer additional funding up to a value of £49 million to support businesses in the South East, in addition to expanding delivery into the neighbouring Local Economic Partnership (LEP) areas of Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3 and the Solent. This will open up access to LoCASE support to any SME based in Kent, Medway, Essex, Surrey, Hampshire and the Solent.

HOW WE WILL DELIVER THIS STRATEGY

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out how we will respond to the UK climate emergency and ensure our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic drives clean and resilient economic growth, eliminates poor air quality, reduces fuel poverty, and promotes the development of an affordable, clean and secure energy supply across Kent and Medway. Building on the strengths and activities of local authorities and their partners, the strategy identifies ten high level priorities for action now and in the short- and long-term.

The strategy is owned by all 14 Kent and Medway local authorities, but the actions will need to be taken in partnership with other public and private sector partners, academic and charitable organisations. In addition, the strategy will develop programmes that will require the support of local businesses, community groups and residents if they are to be successful.

A technical implementation plan accompanies this strategy and provides detailed information on the specific actions that will be taken to achieve each priority, the partners involved, timescales and outputs. Progress, risks and issues will be regularly reviewed by Kent Leaders, Kent Chief Executives and appropriate partnerships. Progress reports and the latest indicators will be published online at www.kent.gov.uk/environment.

The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is a sub-strategy of the Kent Environment Strategy and is intrinsically linked to several other strategic documents and policies across Kent. These are shown in Figure 4.

Regional	Energy South to East: Local Industrial Strategy
	Local Economic Plan and Strategic Economic Statement
	Transport Strategy for the South East
County wide	Environment Strategy
	Growth and Infrastructure Framework
	Biodiversity Strategy
	Local Transport Plan
	Active Travel Strategy (excluding Medway)
	Health and Wellbeing Strategy
	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
	Fuel Poverty Strategy
	Housing Strategy
	Enterprise and Productivity Strategy (in development)
	Sustainability and Transformation Plan
Local	Local Plans
	Covid-19 recovery plans
	Green Infrastructure Strategies
	Sustainable School Travel Strategy (Medway only)
	Walking and Cycling Strategies
	Air Quality Management Area Strategies

Figure 4: Key strategies linked to the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

MEASURING PROGRESS – OUR INDICATORS

To ensure our activities remain effective, it is essential that we monitor and evaluate progress against our priorities regularly. To do this we will establish and monitor the following key indicators; ensuring that they remain measurable over the lifetime of this strategy. These indicators will be monitored quarterly (as they are updated) and published online.

THEME	INDICATOR	BASELINE
Carbon dioxide emissions	Total carbon dioxide (CO ₂) emissions	8,958.2 kilo tonnes of CO ₂ (2017). Total CO ₂ emissions have fallen by 37% since 2005.
	Per capita carbon dioxide (CO ₂) emissions	4.9 tonnes per person (2017).
Air quality	Annual exceedance of key air pollutants	2 site failures for NO _x and 2 site failure for O ₃ (2018).
	Number of days of moderate or higher air pollution	78 days (21.3% of the year), where at least one pollutant recorded levels of moderate or higher air pollution (2018).
	Deaths associated with particulate matter (PM2.5)	922 deaths associated with particulate matter (2017).
	Number of air quality management areas	43 air quality management areas (2019).
Green infrastructure	Tree canopy coverage	To be developed
	Carbon storage value of habitats	To be developed
Energy	Annual energy consumption of local authority estate (all 14 councils)	To be developed
	Average domestic energy consumption (gas and electricity) per customer	16,781 kilowatt hours (2017).
	Carbon emissions from gas and electricity consumption	4.87 Mega tonnes CO ₂ (2017).
	Renewable electricity generation	1,751 Mega Watts (2018).

Transport	Carbon emissions from the transport sector	3,953.7 kilo tonnes of CO ₂ (2017).
	Active travel to school (walking, cycling, scooting)	64.2% of primary school children. 36.6% of secondary school children (2018).
	Active travel to work (census data – updated every 10 years)	In 2011, 32% of people that work within 5km of their home actively travelled to work in Kent.
	Journey delays on local A-roads (excluding Medway)	35.4 seconds per vehicle per mile (2018).
	Journey delays on local A-roads (Medway only)	46.9 seconds per vehicle per mile (2018).
	Electric Vehicle Registrations	4,845 electric vehicle registrations (December 2019).
	Road transport fuel consumption	1,182,943 tons of oil equivalent.
	Number of car share / car clubs in operation	To be developed
	Kilometres of footpath/cycle lane improved	To be developed
Housing and health	Households in fuel poverty	73,010 (9.6%) households in fuel poverty (2017).
	Excess winter deaths	1,610 excess winter deaths 29.6% averaged excess winter mortality (2017/18).
	Carbon emissions from the domestic sector	2,585.9 kilo tonnes of CO ₂ (2017).
	Household water consumption	To be developed
	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of homes	83% of new builds had an EPC rating of A or B (2018). 16% of all domestic EPC lodgements were rated A or B for energy efficiency (2018).
	Number of energy efficiency measures installed in homes	To be developed

GLOSSARY

Active travel - Travel and transport by physically active modes of transport such as cycling, walking or scooting.

Air quality - The composition of the air in terms of how much pollution it contains.

Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) – Where Local Authorities have found that air pollution objectives have been exceeded or are not likely to be achieved, an Air Quality Management Area must be declared. The size of these areas is not predefined and can vary.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) – Formed in 2016 The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial strategy is a government department responsible for business, industrial strategy, science and innovation and energy and climate change policy.

Car club – Car clubs allow you to rent a car by the hour. Car clubs offer the benefits of using a car without the expense or inconvenience of maintaining and running your own car.

Clean energy – Energy that is not produced from fossil fuels (coal, oil or natural gas)

Clean growth – set out in the Government’s Clean Growth Strategy, the concept aims to lower carbon emissions, protecting the environment and meeting

our climate change obligations, whilst stimulating growth and prosperity, increasing earning power and creating and supporting thousands of jobs.

Combined Heat and Power (CHP) - When electricity is generated, up to 60% of the energy can be wasted as lost heat. Combined Heat and Power schemes are designed to recover most of this waste heat and use it to power a turbine and generate more electricity.

Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – Formed in 2001, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is the government department responsible for environmental protection, food production and standards, agriculture, fisheries and rural communities in England.

District heating - A district heating system is a network of insulated pipes, which delivers heat (or chilled water) from a centralised energy centre to multiple end users [see also Heat Network].

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) - EPCs are intended to inform potential buyers or tenants about the energy performance of a building, so they can consider energy efficiency as part of their investment or business decision. The scale is from A-G, A being the most efficient.

Energy switching – a process carried out by consumers aiming to reduce their energy bills by changing their energy provider.

Excess Winter Deaths – is defined as the difference between the number of deaths which occurred in winter (December to March) and the average number of deaths during the preceding months (August to November) and the subsequent four months (April to July).

Flexible working - Flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee’s needs, for example having flexible start and finish times, or working from home.

Fuel poverty - Fuel poverty in England is measured by the Low Income High Costs definition, which considers a household to be in fuel poverty if they have fuel costs that are above average (the national median level) and where if they were to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) – A computer system that allows analysis of spatial data by organising layers of information into visual maps and 3D scenes. Commonly used GIS applications are ArcGIS and MapInfo.

Greenhouse gases - As defined under the Kyoto Protocol, these include:

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) Methane (CH₄) Nitrous oxide (N₂O)

Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆)

Green infrastructure - Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities.

Growth and Infrastructure Framework – prepared by Kent County Council to provide a view of emerging development and infrastructure requirements to support growth across Kent and Medway. It provides a strategic framework across the County, for identifying and prioritising investment across a range of infrastructure, for planned growth up to 2031.

Hard-to-treat homes – homes that cannot accommodate routine, cost-effective energy efficiency measures. Homes considered hard-to-treat are often not connected to the gas network or are built with solid walls (without a cavity); this includes older properties and park homes.

Heat networks - A heat network, sometimes called district heating, is a distribution system of insulated pipes that takes heat from a central source and delivers it to a number of domestic or non-domestic buildings. The heat source might be a facility that provides a dedicated supply to the heat network, such as a combined heat and power plant; or heat recovered from industry and urban infrastructure, canals and rivers, or energy from waste plants.

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – LEPs are locally owned partnerships between local authorities and

businesses. They play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs.

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) – An EU funded project set up to help businesses tackle and adapt to climate change, by aiming to reduce costs by cutting emissions and promoting the opportunities of the low carbon and environmental goods and services market.

Low carbon economy - An economy which has a minimal output of greenhouse gas emissions.

Mega Watt (MW) - a measure of power, one million watts.

Net-zero – Achieving net-zero carbon emissions by deeply cutting emissions, with remaining emissions offset by removal from the atmosphere (eg. by trees or technology).

Renewable energy - Energy produced using naturally replenishing resources. This includes solar power, wind, wave, tide and hydroelectricity. Wood, straw and waste are often called solid renewable energy, while landfill gas and sewerage gas can be described as gaseous renewables.

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) - Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises who employ fewer than 250 people and which have an annual turnover of less than £25 million.

Superfast broadband - In the UK, 'superfast' broadband is defined as a connection with download speeds of 24Mb or above.

Sustainable development - Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is central to the economic, environmental and social success of the country and is the core principle underpinning the National Planning Policy Framework.

Tri-LEP – A term used to describe collaboration between the South East, Coast to Capital and Enterprise M3 Local Economic Partnerships. The Tri-LEP area covers much of south east England including Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Essex.

Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) – Ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs), also known as plug-in vehicles, emit extremely low levels of motor vehicle emissions compared to traditional petrol or diesel vehicles.

Vulnerable resident – A term for an individual who is at risk of harm due to life circumstances such as being homeless, frail or elderly or has a mental or physical illness.

KENT AND MEDWAY ENERGY AND LOW EMISSIONS STRATEGY

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ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 1: EMISSION REDUCTION PATHWAYS TO 2050</p> <p>Set five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050 for Kent and Medway, with significant reduction by 2030.</p>	Do Now	Agree evidence and current baseline for five-year carbon budgets.	The council has a carbon budget (tCO ₂ e) calculated by the Tyndall Centre to accord with the Paris Agreement
		Set local authority carbon budgets with emission reduction pathways to net zero by 2050, with significant reduction by 2030.	Ashford needs to achieve a 13.7% annual reduction in its emissions to reach near net zero by 2041. For ABC to meet its 2030 carbon pledge Ashford must achieve a minimum annual rate of reduction of 27.5% from 2021 to 2030
	Short Term (By 2023)	Set costed and jointly owned area-based carbon budgets for Kent and Medway	The council has costed (£) carbon reduction measures in its draft Carbon Neutral Strategy based on Ashden's 31 Climate Actions
		Set detailed, area-based emission reduction pathways to net zero by 2050, with significant reduction by 2030. Pathways to cover all public and private organisations and communities.	The draft carbon neutral strategy action plan details 72 actions that the council and others will need to undertake over the course of the next ten years to become carbon neutral as a council and a borough.
		Monitor and report progress publicly.	A Climate Advisory Committee, cross-party member group, has been involved in developing the draft carbon neutral strategy and will have internal oversight of the plan, once adopted. Progress will be made available publicly every year
	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Develop a full carbon footprint for Kent and Medway based on consumption (not territorial or	The borough's 2018/19 carbon footprint was 670,335 tCO ₂ e The per capita carbon footprint was 5.2

		organisational boundaries), with consumption targets and reduction measures integrated into existing carbon budgets.	In 2018/19, the council's carbon footprint was 2,782 tCO ₂ e, which represents 0.4% of the borough's carbon footprint.
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 2: PUBLIC SECTOR DECISIONMAKING</p> <p>Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement.</p>	Do Now	Develop a simple checklist to identify where significant environmental issues and opportunities may arise, for use on imminent key decisions, major commissions and procurements.	The council has embedded the KRF principles for a green recovery in its own Recovery Plan. The principles will guide decision making to ensure a green recovery and to 'build back better'.
		Revisit existing social value commitments within contracts and align to climate change and net-zero ambitions where possible.	The council is reviewing its procurement processes to enhance recognition and value of social value. Procurement and awarding contracts may need to be weighted to give more emphasis to achieving carbon reduction ambitions
		Stronger emphasis on reducing carbon miles and on buying local goods and services where possible.	The council's recovery plan actions relating to remote working for staff, digital transformation, implementing the cycling and walking strategy will assist with reducing carbon miles.
	Short Term (By 2023)	Develop a full net-zero and climate change impact assessment and social value framework aligned with Kent and Medway targets, to include: specific policies such as requiring the supply chain to match net-zero commitments; simple checklists; guidance and tool kits; training and technical support.	

		Develop a supply chain support programme to enable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), within large supply chains to effect change and reduce costs; adopt new lower impact processes and win new business.	
	For Longer term Consideration (By 2030)	Consider expanding to include a full carbon and ecological footprint, based on consumption and lifetime costs in strategy, policy, commissioning and procurement.	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 3: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning</p>	Do Now	Secure agreement for a joint Kent and Medway clean growth and climate change evidence base and planning resource, to ensure that planning decisions are fully informed by the latest evidence and advice.	The council is an active contributor to Kent Planning Officers Group, Kent Housing Group
		Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	
	Short Term (By 2023)	Develop a jointly owned, clean growth and climate change evidence base for planning policy and development control.	
		Develop a clean growth and climate change strategic planning framework	The council's draft carbon neutral strategy has an action to develop a climate change SPD

policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and incorporate climate resilience.		for Local Plans and development, by identifying common guidance, position statements, policies and targets.	
		Set stretching net-zero targets for any new development over 100 houses	
	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Fully integrate clean growth and climate change into Local Plans and planning policies.	
		Aim for “energy positive” new developments and communities (communities producing more energy than they are using).	Developing a low carbon community vision, strategy and policies for the South Ashford Garden Community could include being ‘energy positive’
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
PRIORITY 4: CLIMATE EMERGENCY INVESTMENT FUND Establish a trusted Kent and Medway ‘climate emergency’ carbon offset scheme and renewable energy investment fund	Do Now	Review existing funding streams and see how they can be tweaked to provide additional resource	Councils community funds and member grants could be revised to ensure that projects funded meet corporate priorities and contribute to achieving carbon neutrality
		Package up quick wins and ‘oven-ready’ projects suitable for external funding such as crowd funding or business sponsorship	The council is exploring use of Community Municipal Investment scheme to raise projects funds and engage local communities
		Review external funding expertise and opportunities and look at increasing access to finance through collaboration and development of a central resource.	
	Short Term (By 2023)	Develop and promote a Kent and Medway offset scheme and	

		permanent crowd funding space to support new and existing local environmental projects and groups.	
	For Longer term Consideration (By 2030)	Further develop a cross-sector, multi-agency sequestration, offset and low carbon investment fund for Kent and Medway that can be used by the public, community and private sector.	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 5: BUILDING RETROFIT PROGRAMME</p> <p>Develop Kent and Medway net-zero buildings retrofit plans and programmes for public sector, domestic and business.</p>	Do Now	Undertake ‘quick-wins’ in public and commercial premises such as converting lighting to LEDs, installing energy and water efficiency measures and controls and training building managers.	The council has undertaken a range of energy and water saving measures in its own properties including its housing stock. Successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation fund to assist with energy efficiency measures for the Stour Centre
		Utilise and promote existing funding pots: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Warm Homes Programme and other domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty projects through the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP). • LOCASE (Low Carbon Across the South East) grant support programme to improve efficiency of local businesses. 	The council promotes and signposts to national energy efficiency funds and runs a landlord accreditation energy grant scheme
	Short Term (By 2023)	Establish a public sector building retrofit programme, identifying joint initiatives that maximise economies	The council’s draft carbon neutral strategy has actions to consider reviewing its own assets including the HRA housing stock to assess where

		of scale including shared buildings and facilities, EV charging and micro energy generation.	energy and water savings can be made and to increase number of EV charging points.
		Look to scale up housing retrofit by maximising government funding and developing innovative funding mechanisms with a focus on fuel poor; difficult to treat properties such as park homes; off-gas properties; private rented sector; and ‘Able to Pay’.	Currently exploring opportunities with the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership to access funding through the government’s decarbonisation of social housing fund recently announced.
		Scope cross-sector place-based approach, identifying quick wins and how we can work with private investors to scale up retrofit across Kent and Medway.	
	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Develop a large scale, cross-sector, area-based retrofit programme. The programme will focus on place and public realm, including business and communities, to create net-zero and “energy positive” communities.	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
PRIORITY 6: TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY	Do Now	Set a challenging 2030 business miles reduction target for the public sector	Develop and implement the draft ABC travel plan to reduce mileage connected to council business and operations and supports the digital transformation agenda.
		Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out EV	The councils Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will complement this activity.

Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change.		charging points and infrastructure for walking and cycling.	The draft carbon neutral strategy has an action to increase number of EV charging points.
		Support public transport providers, including school transport providers, to use lower emission vehicles.	
		Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Management Plans.	
	Short Term (By 2023)	Develop and expand sustainable travel policies that reduce car use and business miles, through a hierarchy of travel options to reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport or increase car sharing.	Supported the introduction of the little and often bus service and two rural community mini bus schemes The draft carbon neutral strategy has a range of actions to reduce transport emissions and encourage a change to more sustainable and active transport options
		Implementation of low-carbon mobility hubs for electric cars, electric bikes and push bikes, to include battery storage and solar panels where possible.	As of Quarter 2 2019, Ashford has 309 ultra-low emission registered – 7% of Kent and Medway’s total
	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Review and develop approaches that consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locating services nearer to public transport or within walking distance of communities • reallocation of road space in favour of more sustainable travel modes • increased control, regulation and charging for public parking in favour 	A review of the efficiency of the civic centre could align itself to supporting a move to more efficient premises that supports the town centre re-set ambitions.

		<p>of electric vehicles and public transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased involvement in regulation of public transport and taxis to tackle poor air quality and lower greenhouse gas emissions • testing and roll-out of new technologies to enable the transition to low carbon transport and travel. 	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 7: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION</p> <p>Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation.</p>	Do Now	Install roof-top solar panels on all suitable public sector buildings.	PV panels on ABC owned properties are in place on HRA homes and the civic centre. The council continues to seek further options to increase PV on its buildings.
		Support residents and small businesses to install roof-top solar panels, by offering a group purchasing scheme such as Solar Together Kent.	In Ashford (end of 2018) there are 2,131 installation sites producing renewable electricity, 99.7% of these were photovoltaic specific. Council is promoting the Solar Together Scheme through its social media channels
	Short Term (By 2023)	Undertake a renewable electricity and heat energy generation opportunities study for Kent and Medway. The study will build on existing knowledge and focus on all existing and emerging technologies including solar, wind, nuclear, heat pumps, district heating and green gas such as hydrogen.	

	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Develop a joint Future Energy Investment Programme for Kent and Medway looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydrogen • green gas • decentralised energy in new developments • community energy generation • other emerging energy technologies. 	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
PRIORITY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE Develop a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and soil health and increase biodiversity	Do Now	Identify natural environment ‘quick-wins’ and areas where tree establishment is needed, especially in relation to Ash Dieback.	The council has successfully bid for funding to plant over 6000 trees at Chilmington.
		Produce tree planting guidance to ensure the right tree species are planted in the most appropriate places.	The draft carbon neutral strategy includes actions to map and identify trees in the borough to maintain and increase appropriate tree cover, to promote biodiversity, air quality, and carbon sequestration
	Short Term (By 2023)	Assess the carbon and resilience value of natural capital in Kent and Medway, together with other potential functions.	
		Scope develop and implement a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme.	

	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Expand the natural capital opportunity and investment programme to include all sectors.	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 9: SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS</p> <p>Develop and implement a Kent and Medway business recovery and support programme to cut costs and win new business</p>	Do Now	Support public sector suppliers to complete Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training (or equivalent), in order to identify supply chain emissions and drive efficiencies where possible.	
		Promote and refer businesses and supply chain to LOCASE, for support and access to grant funding to reduce their costs and access new markets.	The council's recovery plan and draft carbon neutral strategy include a number of actions to promote and encourage green business practice. In Ashford 46 SMEs have received and used grants for low carbon and energy efficiency measures, totalling £339,524.03. We will continue to support business to access funding to reduce carbon emissions.
	Short Term (By 2023)	Conduct public sector supply chain assessments, focusing on the largest suppliers.	
		Undertake a supply chain analysis of the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector across Kent and Medway (funded through SELEP).	
		Require public sector suppliers to undertake STEM or a similar scheme.	
		Working in partnership with local authorities and the Kent and Medway	

		Economic Partnership, develop a targeted business support supply chain programme for the Kent and Medway public sector, building on LOCASE.	
	For Longer Term Consideration (By 2030)	Develop local supply chain, low carbon clusters or opportunities (dependent on supply chain analysis).	
ELES Priority	ELES High Level Action		ABC current position / implications
<p>PRIORITY 10: COMMUNICATIONS</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.</p>	Do Now	Link up existing stakeholder communications and agree shared messages on topics such as air quality, fuel poverty, active travel and energy efficiency.	
		Use the Kent Environment Strategy Conference as a mechanism to raise the profile of local authority collective action.	All ABC members have received the invitation to the 2020 Kent Environment Strategy Conference.
	Short Term (By 2023)	Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and programme for residents, public sector staff and businesses	The council had a dedicated webpage for communicating information about reducing carbon emissions, links into wider campaigns and engages residents on environmental topics through its social media activity.
		Monitor effectiveness of campaigns and develop into targeted behaviour change programmes.	

KCC - Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate (GET).

Equality Analysis / Impact Assessment (EqIA) template

Name of decision, policy, procedure, project or service:

Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

Brief description of policy, procedure, project or service

To co-ordinate the development of an Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent & Medway. This identifies and prioritises action to reduce harmful emissions that contribute to climate change and poor air quality leading to impacts on people's health. The Strategy will also incorporate the strategic approach to energy across the County as there is significant overlap in activity and the resources that are delivering actions.

This Strategy will strengthen and support the UK government's Clean Air Strategy (under consultation), Kent Environment Strategy implementation plan and District Councils' air quality action plans.

It will also take into account the Government's Industrial Strategy, Clean Growth Strategy, the 25 Year Environment Plan and Road to Zero.

Aims and Objectives

Objectives of group

- To oversee the development of a Strategy and Action Plan for Kent & Medway that provides a comprehensive and cohesive framework, to set out the ambition and challenge for a step change in action.
- To seek out relevant data and information to ensure a robust evidence-based approach.
- Identify individuals, groups and organisations that have a key role to play in this agenda and ensure effective engagement and consultation to obtain their contributions and support.
- To identify the areas requiring a partnership approach to be most effective, opportunities for quick wins, synergies between KCC and District Councils.

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- Promote increased partnership action and information sharing.
- Take individual responsibility to promote opportunities, align action and foster a wider awareness of the development of the strategy and the challenges faced from this agenda through our own roles and interactions.

Outcomes

- Support the delivery of Kent & Medway air quality objectives, as defined by EU Directives and the UK's Air Quality Strategy to reduce the level of air pollutants
- To focus local authority action where it can positively influence more secure, sustainable and affordable energy (the energy trilemma) to benefit Kent residents and businesses
- Deliver a joined-up approach to tackling the challenges of climate change and air quality
- Demonstrate tangible improvements in tackling air pollution through more partnership activity
- Ensure actions and resources are focused where they are needed most and to benefit the most vulnerable residents

Outputs

- Strategy and Action plan
- Comprehensive evidence base and identified gaps, where more research is required
- Identify policies required to influence local planning/local plans
- Develop simple messages for the public, for partners to use in communications
- Develop Kent & Medway case studies
- Develop a knowledge hub of current/planned actions
- Joint funding opportunities

JUDGEMENT

- **Adjust and continue - adjust to remove barriers or better promote equality**

The initial screening did not identify any significant negative impacts, instead some low negative impacts are most likely to be outweighed by the wider positive benefits from the strategy and action plan.

During the development of the Strategy through 2018 and into 2019, further evidence was sought on the previously assumed negative impact for disabled access to hybrid and electric vehicles. This proved to be unfounded and has further identified the potential for barriers to parking bays with electric charge points due to location or design.

One Medium negative impact identified related to parking location and/or design with associated electric vehicle charging point, where access barriers could arise for disabled drivers and carers.

Equalities impacts evidence has been sought throughout the development of the Strategy and this impacts assessment supports the final version of the Strategy pre-public consultation.

The evidence obtained will be used to determine communications and engagement messages and channels to be used, as well as informing the resulting action plan.

This will aim to ensure that any negative impacts for specific protected characteristics are minimised or addressed as far as reasonably practicable.

I have found the Adverse Equality Impact Rating to be **Low**

GET Document Control

Revision History

Version	Date	Authors	Comment
V0.1	13/11/2017	D Kapaj	Initial screening grid completed by Sustainable Business & Communities team (team meeting)
V0.2	23/11/2017	D Kapaj	Review and development of first draft by first meeting of K&M energy and low emissions working group
V0.3	31/01/2018	D Kapaj	Further feedback from K&M energy and low emissions working group and EPE E&D groep
V0.4	19/02/2018	D Kapaj	Refined further based on additional feedback and evidence obtained
V0.5	28/03/2018	D Kapaj	Refined further based on additional feedback and evidence obtained
V0.6	05/04/2018	D Kapaj	Formatted into GET template and feedback from A Agyepong
V1	29/08/2018	D Kapaj	Finalised content to support Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee paper
V2	08/05/2019	D Kapaj	<p>Additional evidence obtained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - availability of electric/hybrids on Motability Scheme - barriers to walking for over 65s - benefits of 20mph zones - DfT report – disabled people behaviours and attitudes to travel - additional impacts identified by HTW EV Strategy EqIA <p>Revised impacts accordingly – risk level unchanged and no new significant negative impacts</p>

Document Sign-Off (this must be both the relevant Head of Service and the relevant Director)

Attestation

I have read and paid due regard to the Equality Analysis/Impact Assessment. I agree with the actions to mitigate any adverse impact(s) that has /have been identified.

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Issue
Carolyn McKenzie	<i>C McKenzie</i>	Head of Sustainable Business & Communities	13/05/2019
Stephanie Holt-Castle	<i>S Holt-Castle</i>	Interim Director of Environment Planning & Enforcement	15/05/2019

Part 1 - Screening

Regarding the decision, policy, procedure, project or service under consideration,

Could this policy, procedure, project or service, or any proposed changes to it, affect any Protected Group (listed below) less favourably (negatively) than others in Kent?

Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group?

Please note that there is no justification for direct discrimination; and indirect discrimination will need to be justified according to the legal requirements

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Protected Group	You MUST provide a brief commentary as to your findings, or this EqIA will be returned to you unsigned			High/Medium/Low Favourable Impact
	High Negative Impact	Medium Negative Impact	Low Negative Impact	
Age			Encouraging public transport over car potentially gives rise to personal safety concerns ie vulnerable to abuse/forced home. Those with memory problems feel particularly vulnerable. (although road safety stats show public transport is safer than cars ie fewer accidents) Evidence 5	High – children/young people due to evidence of air quality impact on lung development (up to age 9) and long-term effect on health into adulthood Medium – improving air quality and home energy efficiency will

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				<p>reduce risks of illness and/or early death particularly linked to conditions mainly affecting young children or older people or due to living in colder homes. (ie heart disease, stroke, COPD)</p> <p>Medium - Young people (aged 18-29) – 25% less likely to own a car, so reliant on public transport/ lift-share and active travel and this age group will benefit from improvements to this infrastructure and availability of pay-as-you-go car clubs.</p> <p>Medium – Young and older people are less likely to be injured or die where 20mph zones are in force (improved safety and reduced air pollution). Over 65s are more likely to walk in places</p>
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				where there are lower speed limits or where footpaths are well maintained. Evidence 3 & Evidence 6
Disability		Physical ability to access suitable parking with electric vehicle charging points could inhibit take up by this group. Evidence 4	Encouraging public transport over car potentially gives rise to personal safety/access concerns (DfT report confirms safety related incidents on and around transport are more likely for disabled people) Avoid excluding from active travel opportunities as far as reasonably practicable, although disabled are less likely to walk or cycle compared to non-disabled.	Low - Improving air quality may reduce symptoms of some disabling health conditions Low – Some energy efficiency improvements such as boilers are linked to disabled adaptations which can benefit those with a disability (e.g. disabled facilities grant) Low – disabled people are less likely to travel and when they do more likely to use buses and taxis compared to cars – improved access to and reducing emissions from these modes will benefit this group Evidence 5

Gender			Encouraging public transport over car potentially gives rise to a personal safety concern (perception by women that personally safer using own car – no recent evidence found for UK/Kent) (although road safety stats show public transport is safer than cars ie fewer accidents)	
Gender identity/ Transgender			Ensure inclusive promotions/communications Encouraging public transport over car potentially gives rise to a personal safety concern (although road safety stats show public transport is safer than cars ie fewer accidents)	
Race			Encouraging public transport over car potentially gives rise to a personal safety concern (although road safety stats show public transport is safer than cars ie fewer accidents) Using more reflective images of population in campaigns and promotions. Ensuring clear language is used and language barriers are reduced where possible in the promotion of schemes and projects under this strategy (inclusive promotions and schemes)	

Religion and Belief			Ensure inclusive promotions	
Sexual Orientation			Ensure inclusive promotions	
Pregnancy and Maternity			Encouraging public transport over car potentially a personal safety concern (although road safety stats show public transport is safer than cars ie fewer accidents)	Poor air quality impacts lung development of growing foetus (Evidence 1 Evidence 2) and young children. Improving air quality benefits this group
Marriage and Civil Partnerships			N/A	
Carer's Responsibilities		Physical ability to access suitable parking with electric vehicle charging points could inhibit take up by this group.	Carers may be more likely to need a car due to transporting children or cared for individuals, some with specific needs requiring larger (and potentially more polluting) vehicles Need for careful communications in encouraging less polluting transport modes.	

Conclusion: Overall no significant negative impacts identified, there is potentially one Medium impact for disabled people and carers, which requires the consideration of the selection of locations and design of parking spaces allocated for electric vehicle charging.

More positive benefits will be delivered for the young, old, disabled and maternity (unborn foetus).

Part 2 - Full Equality Analysis /Impact Assessment

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From the screening grid, identify the Protected Groups impacted

Disabled

Information and Data used to carry out your assessment

Evidence 1 Impacts of poor air quality on unborn foetus <https://www.bmj.com/content/359/bmj.j5299>

Evidence 2 Lifelong impact of air quality <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>

Evidence 3 Barriers to walking for over 65's <https://www.ciht.org.uk/news/uneven-footways-prevent-older-people-from-walking/>

Evidence 4 Availability of electric and hybrid vehicles for disabled people eligible under the UK motability scheme <https://www.motability.co.uk/>

Evidence 5 DfT report - Disabled peoples travel behaviour and attitudes to travel

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647703/disabled-peoples-travel-behaviour-and-attitudes-to-travel.pdf

Evidence 6 Impact of 20mph zones <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/34851/>

Who have you involved consulted and engaged with?

Sustainable Business and Communities team

Kent & Medway Energy & Low Emissions Working group

GET E&D group

A Agyepong, corporate E&D lead

Analysis

Benefits have been identified for Age (both young and old), disabled, gender, race and pregnancy (unborn foetus)

Adverse Impact,

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Version 1 - Assumed that disabled (specifically physical) may be at a disadvantage when using an Electric Vehicle
 This assumption has been further investigated and found that there are 72 hybrid and electric vehicle options available via the Motability scheme. Therefore, access to low emissions vehicles is not seen as a barrier for disabled drivers.

There is still potential for barriers to access to parking bays with electric charge points for disabled and also carers. This needs to be considered when determining EV charge point locations and associated parking design for individual schemes. This information has been passed on for consideration in the revision of parking standards for Kent Design.

Positive Impact:

The provision of cleaner vehicles and access to improved walking, cycling and public transport has positive advantages for the characteristics age, disability and pregnancy (unborn foetus).

Part 3 - Action Plan

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Resource implications
Disability Pregnancy and Maternity	Potential barrier to take up of electric vehicles due to inadequate parking design	Take into account when revising the parking standards under Kent Design	This will need to be taken account of by KCC and District partners when securing funding and establishing actions to expand EV infrastructure across Kent	S Bengé	October 2019	None

Have the actions been included in your business/ service plan?

The action is part of Economic Development’s business plan 2019-20 – Kent Design refresh

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Agenda Item No: 10

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 17 December 2020

Report Title: Review of Edinburgh Road car park

Report Author & Job Title: Mandy Cracknell – Parking, Highways and Transportation Team Leader
Alison Oates – Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Feacey
Portfolio Holder for: Community Safety and Wellbeing

Summary: Edinburgh Road car park (ERCP) provides a large number of town centre parking bays, however it does not operate 24 hours a day and is closed in accordance with the operating hours.

Due to the changing nature of Ashford town centre; namely the increase in residential premises being developed and the change in shopper behaviour linked to Covid-19 a review of this asset is necessary to ensure it is being utilised to meet these demands.

The proposals in this report will support the town centre re-set. They will help to alleviate the parking needs linked to the increase in town centre's new housing developments, as these properties would not meet criteria for on-street resident's permits.

It will also ensure that ERCP is meeting the needs of its customers by allowing them to access local amenities whilst using a parking facility that is managed effectively, efficiently and safely, which will have a major impact on customer experience and encourage footfall.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Victoria Ward

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Agree the new operating hours of Edinburgh Road car park
- II. Agree bespoke charging tariff for Edinburgh Road car park

III. Agree the introduction of reduced fees for customers using RingGo

Policy Overview: The review of Edinburgh Road car park is required to ensure an effective, efficient and sustainable service delivery. The proposed approach will boost drivers' options in the town centre and help to alleviate the parking need linked to the increase in the town centre's new housing developments, as these properties would not meet criteria for on-street resident's permits.

Financial Implications: We anticipate an increase in revenue through extension of chargeable hours and the utilisation of floors 3 and 4 (167 spaces) for residential season ticket holders. The introduction of residential season tickets has the potential to earn up to £99k per year, based on an annual residential season ticket being priced at £594.

There may be some increase in the issuance of penalty charge notices (PCNs) as Civil Enforcement Officers will make more visits due to the increased opening hours to check compliance.

There are costs associated with extending the opening hours, such as initial alterations to tariffs, ongoing utility charges and increased cleaning regimes, alongside back office systems to support tariff changes. However, it is anticipated that these will be more than offset by the additional income arising from different streams of users.

Legal Implications: Legal implications relevant to amendments to Traffic Regulation Orders are addressed within the body of the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment: See Attached

Data Protection Impact Assessment: NA

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement): There is a low risk in relation to the fact that ERCP is an established facility and the proposals should encourage increased usage.

As ERCP is ageing, we run the risk that potential users may be put off as it does not meet expectations. Running in line with these recommendations, we must have a life-care plan for the car park. The life-care plan would entail inspections, maintenance and necessary repairs so safety is maintained. We are also seeking solutions for installation of CCTV within the stairwells.

Sustainability Implications:	The extension of opening hours means that there will be an increase in use of electricity for lighting and power. A free lighting survey is being arranged to explore sustainable lighting options. Light plays an important role in providing safety in parking facilities and can dramatically reduce the number of luminaires required, thereby reducing both the carbon footprint and long-term management costs.
Other Material Implications:	<p>We need to have a clear communication and signage system to run hand in hand with any associated town developments and to move users to desired car park locations. Failure in not coordinating accordingly will leave the car park below capacity and earning potential. This decision has relevance to the Town Centre Reset work as presented at Cabinet on 26 November 2020.</p> <p>There will be some operational implications on parking resource, as we move to monitor the usage of the car park in line with expectations of revenue. In addition, ensuring review of risk assessments and arrangements to be made for additional nightly security checks to the site by a contractor.</p>
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	None
Contact:	<u>mandy.cracknell@ashford.gov.uk</u> <u>alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk</u>

Report Title: Review of Edinburgh Road car park

Introduction and Background

1. Edinburgh Road car park (ERCP) is a multi-storey facility that provides a large number of town centre parking bays (289, inclusive of 24 disabled bays). The car park currently operates between 0630 and 2030 hours during the week and 0630 and 1930 hours at the weekend. The car park is closed outside of these operating hours.
2. The car park offers free parking from 1500 hours to closing on Monday to Saturday and free on Sundays and Bank Holidays. This incentive was instigated in 2015 to increase usage and encourage visitors to the town centre businesses. During the parking charging period, average occupancy is 75%.
3. The reduction in local authority income due to Covid-19 has been widely publicised during the pandemic and this has triggered the Council to reflect on the best use of their assets. It is constructive to explore the use of ERCP and how this can be used to best effect to support the town centre regeneration, and alleviate parking need.

Proposal

4. The proposals are to increase the opening of ERCP to 24 hours a day, implement a bespoke charging tariff for this car park and introduce reduced fees for customers using RingGo. The proposals are detailed in the paragraphs below and **Appendix A** details the changes in a table format.
5. Having ERCP open 24 hours a day will add value to local residents and ties in to a broader approach as Ashford Borough Council looks to regenerate the Town Centre. This proposal will provide an additional parking facility for those that use the town in the evening such as members of public accessing the night time economy, shift workers and night workers.
6. This will also offer new residents to Ashford the opportunity to be able to purchase a residential season ticket and provides them access to a secure overnight parking facility, supported by CCTV and security inspections.
7. The introduction of residential season tickets will be specifically for those that are in developments that are not eligible for on-street parking permits. The annual cost is £594 which equates to £1.62 a day. The previous solution for such residents is that they purchase an annual season ticket for town centre car parks which is priced at £836.
8. The on-street residential permit scheme has been approved by Kent County Council and the accompanying Traffic Regulation Order does not allow the issuance of more permits than available parking spaces in each zone. Therefore we can offer residents that are unable to obtain an on-street permit a solution with this option.

9. These users will be made to park on the top two floors, which will allow disabled users and short stay customers to use the lower floors with ease. This approach will also reduce the number of payment machines, which are already listed to be removed as part of the recent cashless paper.
10. The reduction in costs for the customer using RingGo provides an opportunity to incentivise cashless payments. Since Covid-19, there has been a change in customer behaviour, and cash has not been the preferred option for many outlets. Those with the technological ability to take advantage of a cashless society find that it's more convenient. As long as you have your card or phone, you can pay for your parking without touching or queuing at terminals. The financial incentive could encourage users to move to this payment option.
11. The free parking arrangements will continue, however an overnight charge will be introduced to prevent misuse of the facility. Users can be assured that the car park is monitored by the CCTV team and extra security visits will be made. The patrols of the car park will be random, cover vulnerable areas of the site and provide a highly consistent and visible presence.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Members are referred to the attached assessment. The key issue arising is the lack of lifts operating 24 hours a day. As this car park is not adjacent to resident flats, having lifts operating 24/7 is less relevant. If they operate 24/7 this may lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour, more maintenance issues, break downs and more frequent periods of lifts being out of order for longer period of times.
13. Given the age and condition of the lifts, they are becoming ever more unreliable. We have a duty of care to ensure the premises are safe and free from risks to health. Disabled users with blue badges tend to steer clear of parking overnight in multi-storey car parks specifically due to these facts and will err on the side of caution and use on-street parking for convenience.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

14. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) will need to be amended in order to introduce the proposed arrangements. The public will have the opportunity of making representations before the orders are finalised.
15. The Council will have to give due weight to any objections and will have to balance the convenience of income generation on an asset to any likely increase in operating costs.
16. Ashford Access Group have been informed of the proposal and have been supportive of the measures as they are sensible and safe. If any concerns are raised, we would be review the position and make necessary adjustments. They have requested additional communication to the disabled groups making them aware, well in advance of what changes are being made to ERCP. This will form part of the overall communications plan.

Other Options Considered

17. Do nothing: As stated it is constructive to explore the use of ERCP and support the changing demands for parking within the town centre. Therefore it is not an option to do nothing as we would not be seeking solutions for the increasing demand for parking linked to increased residential developments within the town centre.
18. Immediate implementation: If this is implemented immediately, it will not allow the additional work to be completed on the car park to make it attractive to users and therefore may have a detrimental effect. We also need time to produce the relevant communications and publicise the changes to encourage interest and take up.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

19. The recommendations as detailed above will bring benefit to the council and the users of our services in the following manner:
- add value to local residents by offering different options to meet their needs
 - supports a broader approach to town centre regeneration
 - cost reductions in respect of coin processing
 - reduction in cost for machine provision and maintenance
 - staff time saved on financial reconciliation
 - modernisation of our services
 - lowers risk of virus transmission
 - increases safety of those using the car park
 - improvements and increased use will deter people committing anti-social behaviour

Next Steps in Process

20. It is anticipated that the recommendations would be implemented in accordance with the following timescale:

Edinburgh Road car park - phased implementation	
December 2020	Cabinet agreement
Phase 1 by spring 2021	Open the car park for 24/7 Introducing new options for customers such as the resident permits for the new developments for £594 per year.
Phase 2 by spring 2021	Introduction of bespoke charging tariff and RingGo initiatives
Phase 3 by summer of 2021	Introduce new options for customers such as the day passes as approved under suitable delegation by the Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSaW) Head of Service in consultation with the CSaW Portfolio Holder.

Conclusion

21. The Cabinet are asked to support the recommendations and allow the officers to work to the programme detailed above to increase the usage of the ERCP and support the changing parking need of the town centre. This underlines the council's commitment to making Ashford town centre an even more accessible and popular destination.

Portfolio Holder's Views

22. I support this report based on a phased programme of increasing the usage of Edinburgh Road car park and offering a variety of options for the residents and visitors to Ashford. This proposal will support the changing demands of parking within the town centre and I commend this report to the Cabinet.

Cllr Peter Feacey – Community Safety and Wellbeing

Contact and Email

23. Mandy.cracknell@ashford.gov.uk
Alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix A

Currently	Proposed Changes		Considerations
Opening hours Monday to Friday – between 6am and 8.30pm Saturday and Sunday – between 6am and 7.30pm N.B. THIS CAR PARK IS LOCKED OVERNIGHT	ERCP is open and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.		Amend Parking Order. Remove the need to pay for closing the car park, however more concentration on security and CCTV coverage out of normal office hours.
There is a £55 release fee for vehicles locked in the car park. The £55 release fee is paid by the motorist so no saving here.	N/A		Removed
Charging period 0700 am to 1500 pm	Charging period 24/7		Amend the tariffs charging period on all back office systems.
There are 289 bays in total which includes 24 disabled bays. Therefore there are 265 bays with only a charging period for 8 hours a day (2120 sessions)	Of the 265 paying bays, if charging for example is for 11 hours a day, this then gives (2915 sessions) a potential 28% uplift in income.		Increase revenue
Free parking	Retain		Retain
Ticket machines you can pay by cash, cards or use the cashless service, RingGo Monday to Saturday	Cheaper tariffs on offer- if driver uses Cashless - RingGo		Amend Tariffs
Tariff Hourly rate - £1.20, payable in 5p increments Minimum payment - 60p (30 minutes) Over 4 hours - £5.50 Free after 1500 pm	RingGo Hourly rate- £1.00 plus convenience fee Minimum payment - 1 hour Over 4 hours - £5.50 Overnight parking charge from 1800	P & D Hourly rate - £1.20, payable in 5p increments Minimum payment - 60p (30 minutes) Over 4 hours - £5.50 Overnight parking charge from	Incentive on Cashless Parking.

	through to 0700 £1.70. plus convenience fee (Total £2.00)	1800 through to 0700 £2.40 flat rate	
Season Tickets 1 Monthly £ 83 3 Monthly £236 6 Monthly £445 12 Monthly £836 All days	Introducing RingGo Season Tickets and Day Passes 5 day £17.50 10 day £35.00 15 day £50.00 20 day £65.00 25 day £80.00 includes convenience fee	Part of Virtual permits - Car park Vouchers £3.50 per day. Have to park on top 2 floors (There is a £2.50 which includes convenience fee and minimum vouchers is 10 vouchers, buying 10, 15 or 20 at a time).	Amend Parking Order.
No residential permits allowed	Introduce Resident Season Ticket Permits For all new housing developments which do not qualify for on street permits, £594.00 per annum. T & C's include 1 permit per household only to be used in this car park, and restricted to parking on top 2 floors only.		Amend Parking Order.

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:	<p>Alison Oates Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager</p> <p>Mandy Cracknell Parking, Highways and Transportation Team Leader</p>
Decision maker:	<p>Cabinet</p>
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<p>To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new operating hours of Edinburgh Road Car park • bespoke charging tariff for Edinburgh Road Car park • introduction of reduce fees for customers using RingGo
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	<p>17 December 2020</p>
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>This report covers three matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the new operating hours of Edinburgh Road Car park • Approve bespoke charging tariff for Edinburgh Road Car park • Approve the introduction of reduce fees for customers using RingGo <p>The report sets out the options for each of above.</p> <p>This report has been prepared for members to consider the aforementioned and consequential assistance this will provide in potentially reducing financial pressures by increasing some income streams, where car park is open longer, more hours charging for car parking and introducing a bespoke permit for residents of new developments who do not meet the criteria for on street parking. As well as incentives on payment options.</p> <p>The introduction of above will benefit to the customers as it will maximise convenience and satisfaction, through ease of use and access to local amenities, retail centres etc.</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>Edinburgh Rd Car park 24/7</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 pandemic many local authorities now face significant financial challenges over the coming years.</p> <p>It is constructive to explore the use of Edinburgh Road Car Park (ERCP) and how this car park will support the town centre regeneration, and will help to alleviate the parking need.</p> <p>A review of this asset is necessary to ensure it is being utilised to meet the changing demands.</p>

	<p>By opening 24/7 we are tapping into the evening economy and rather than limiting charging hours, expanding for increase income generation</p> <p>Parking charges and incentives We have seen an increase in the use of contactless payments in our car parks since the pandemic and the introduction of RingGo. The users are taking advantage of the simple RingGo app to park with ease and confidence. Figures show that drivers in the borough have increasingly been using RingGo when parking in council-owned car parks and to reduce going payment machine costs, we potentially could reduce cashless payment charges to give motorists an incentive to use in favour of coin and card.</p> <p>Alongside this, we wish to provide the residents of new developments with parking options and offer them parking in the third and fourth floor of the car park, so the car park meets all requirements for both long term stay and for the bottom floors to cater for short term stays and turnaround.</p>
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<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><i>Please outline the nature of any consultation undertaken, the groups this was with and the protected characteristics represented.</i></p> <p><i>The results should be presented proportionately i.e. for larger consultations analysis of the results may be appropriate, whilst for small-scale consultations a commentary on the results may suffice.</i></p> <p>Ofcom – “Adults media use and attitudes report 2018” – www.ofcom.org.uk Action on Hearing Loss – www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk Ashford Borough Council Parking services knowledge Ashford Borough Council Finance service knowledge</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

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

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Negative (minor)
Middle age	Low	Positive (minor)

Young adult	Low	Positive (minor)
Children	Low	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u>		
Physical	High	Negative (minor)
Mental	High	Negative (minor)
Sensory	High	Negative (minor)
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Low	Positive (minor)
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u>	None	Neutral
Men		
Women	None	positive
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u>	None	Neutral
Regular/Reserve personnel		
Former service personnel	None	Neutral
Service families	None	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Elderly The lift operating times were be clearly displayed throughout the car park and on our website to ensure that customers are aware before they chose this as an option as they will not be operating 24 hrs a day.</p> <p>Disability Disabled users will not be able to use the Car park lifts out of normal lift times when they shut down, however disabled blue badge holders can still park on street.</p> <p>Security measures for late night users of car park To improve customer safety and vehicle security in our car parks, we are looking at a number of initiatives. Increased security measures Page 207 reviewed including consideration for</p>
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	<p>deployment of additional CCTV, improved lighting and security inspections.</p> <p>Thereafter, looking to be awarded with the 'Park Mark Award for safer parking.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	NA
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	NA
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	NA

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advice 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The due regard for equality has been considered throughout this report. The negative impacts have been mitigated as detailed above and the impact on protected characteristic will be reviewed throughout the process and if required further adaptations can be made. There is no unlawful discrimination arising from this report The proposals are not considered to have any impacts on equality and will provide customers with easier and safer payments options. The negative impacts have been mitigated as explained above. Monitoring will be completed through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of usage data customer surveys attendance at relevant business / community forums during the implementation period monitoring of complaints and review of processes
EIA completion date:	24 November 2020

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL: NOTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION & INVESTMENT BOARD

22nd October 2020

Attending: Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)
Cllr. Bartlett
Cllr. Clokie
Cllr. Ovenden
Cllr. Shorter

**Also
in Attendance:** Cllr. B. Heyes
Cllr Wedgbury

Chief Executive
Director of Finance & Economy
Communications & Marketing Manager
Head of Corporate Property & Projects
Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager
Estates and Facilities Manager
Head of Planning and Development
Accountancy Manager
Senior Accountant
Chartered Legal Executive
Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure
Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development)
Member Services & Ombudsman Liaison Officer

Apologies: Cllr N. Bell

	ACTION
<p>1. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Cllr. Bartlett declared that he was a Community Councillor for Kennington Community Council.</p> <p>Cllr. Clarkson declared an Other Significant Interest, in that he was very friendly with the Managing Director of the company proposing to buy the Carlton Road premises and his family. He had already made this known to the Director of Law and Governance. He would take no part in this agenda item and would leave the meeting for the entirety of the item.</p> <p>Cllr. Heyes made a Voluntary Announcement as he lived near the units in Carlton Road.</p> <p>Cllr. Ovenden made a Voluntary Announcement as he owned a site</p>	

<p>opposite the Carlton Road premises.</p> <p>Cllrs. Bartlett and Shorter both made Voluntary Announcements that they were customers of the bakery in Beaver Road, Ashford.</p>	
<p>2. Notes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Property and Projects explained that, following the meeting on 11th August, he had advised Board Members that it was not possible to put a charge on the Jasmin Vardimon property but the Council would, instead, be entering into a Co-Investment Agreement with Kent County Council, the terms of which he had shared with Board Members. The Board had agreed to this, post meeting.</p> <p>The Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on 11th August 2020 were agreed and confirmed as a correct record, subject to the above post-meeting note.</p>	
<p>3. Adleys Yard</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Property and Projects introduced this item and explained that this project was not currently included in the Recovery Plan and Officers were seeking permission to reintroduce it. He reported that the Regeneration, Masterplanning and Project Co-ordination Board had agreed the proposal. Board Members discussed current parking arrangements on site and options for the future.</p> <p>Members agreed the car parking option proposed in the report, which would form part of an update to the agreed Recovery Plan. The only amendment was that the car park would be free and self policed initially with a review after 12 months.</p>	<p>PMcK</p>
<p>4. Asset Disposal</p> <p>Members discussed the assets put forward for disposal by the Corporate Property and Projects service and agreed the following:</p> <p><u>240 Beaver Road</u> – sale agreed.</p> <p><u>Units 28 and 29 Carlton Road</u> – see item 10.</p> <p><u>Woodchurch Windmill</u> – agreed that Officers would discuss with the Ward Member the options to transfer the Windmill to the Parish Council, and report back to the Board in due course.</p> <p><u>Flour Mills Car Park Ashford</u> – discussions with the developer still ongoing.</p> <p><u>Conningbrook Properties</u> – defer decision for a minimum of one year to be considered by a future Conningbrook stakeholder meeting.</p>	<p>PMcK/JF</p> <p>PMcK/JF</p>

<p>5. Conningbrook Commercial Update and Review</p> <p>The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager introduced this item and said Officers were seeking a steer from the Board on seeking new joint venture opportunities and how to secure the best overall approach for the site. Members were concerned that no decisions should be taken during the current COVID-19 situation, and agreed that any further consideration of this project should be halted for the time being and resurrected in 12-18 months time, to be considered by a future Conningbrook Stakeholder meeting.</p>	
<p>6. Court Wurtin</p> <p>The Estates and Facilities Manager introduced this item. He said that prior to the pandemic the Board had agreed to consider redevelopment of this area, and this was an opportunity to start that process. Members discussed the pros and cons of acquiring the site on a piecemeal basis. Members were in favour of the proposed purchase set out in the report and asked Officers to contact owners of the remaining properties periodically to gauge their appetite to sell.</p> <p>Members agreed that the purchase be concluded on the basis of the figures set out within the ERIB report of 24th March 2020 at Appendix 1.</p>	<p>DK</p>
<p>7. Tenanted Estate Rental Support</p> <p>The Estates and Facilities Manager introduced the report, which suggested ways to ameliorate the current economic situation for tenants across the tenanted estate. Some tenants had come forward and the report made proposals to the Board for rental concessions for these tenants.</p> <p>Members agreed that concessions would be awarded to the applicants set out within the table at the levels shown within the right hand column, and these figures would be offset against the applicant's rental account for their property.</p>	<p>DK</p>
<p>8. NCP Car Park</p> <p>The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager introduced this item and explained that the site was to go to auction in December 2020 but ABC had been given an opportunity to purchase off-market if the sale was completed in 2 to 3 weeks. Members discussed the redevelopment opportunities for the area, but noted the risks involved. A Member asked that legal advice be obtained regarding the lease, bearing in mind the future potential for redevelopment of the area.</p> <p>Members agreed to purchase the site at the price suggested and proceed to completion. The Chief Executive would, if necessary,</p>	<p>JB</p> <p>JF</p>

<p>use her Urgency delegation and report back to Members thereafter.</p>	
<p>9. Elwick 2</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Property and Projects introduced this item, gave further background and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report. Members noted the prime location of the site and some expressed regret that the site would not be used for providing cultural facilities. The Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development) advised Members that the potential future application referred to could be called to Planning Committee by the Portfolio Holder or a Ward Member, or Planning Officers could decide that it was a sensitive application that needed to be considered by Planning Committee. The Principal Solicitor further explained that due diligence in relation to the legal issues he had explained to the Board's meeting on 29 January 2020 was important in view of the value involved, and was currently ongoing, and subject to that he envisaged that the legal document terminating the development agreement would be a relatively short one.</p> <p>On the basis that there was no Cabinet meeting in October and it was not practical to convene one, Members endorsed the proposed use of the Chief Executive's delegation for urgent matters to authorise the proposed disposal and apportionment of the proceeds of sale (subject to the completion of the due diligence process to her satisfaction, in consultation with Leader and the Portfolio Holder) as contained within the Cabinet decision of February 2020.</p>	<p>TK</p>
<p>10. Units 28 & 29 Carlton Road Business Park</p> <p>Cllr. Clarkson left the meeting and Cllr. Bartlett took the Chair. Members and Officers discussed whether the rental fees of the units were appropriate and the issues and challenges surrounding Council ownership of this site.</p> <p>Members agreed that the Council accept the offer for the purchase of Units 28 & 29 at the Carlton Business Park.</p>	<p>DK</p>

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
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Information Technology & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 17th November 2020.

Present:

Cllr. Forrest

Cllrs. Krause, Pickering.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bell, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Customer Service & Digital Project Manager, IT Manager, Head of HR & Customer Services, Member Services Officer.

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th August 2020

- 1.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 11th August 2020 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

2 Digital Project (Pentana) Update

- 2.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager gave a detailed update on the Council's digital programme, explaining that each key project on Pentana was aligned to the Council's recovery and commercialisation plans.
- 2.2 There were 11 key projects; improving customer service, new planning system, revised garden waste system, lifeline procurement, lifeline application process, ANPR, virtual parking permits, garage commercialisation, contract management toolkit, corporate website and update system for procurement categories.
- 2.3 Alongside the key projects, other efforts continued including design of a sports pitch online booking system, work around risk assessments/homeworking, implementation of a pay plug-in tool, upgrades to the cemetery system, a separate Aspire website, and other internal website improvements.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

3 Update on Website Analytics

- 3.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager introduced this item. The new corporate website had been launched in August and there was a strong emphasis on analytics to monitor the usage and performance, in partnership with the Council's digital partner Visarc.
- 3.2 The website had experienced over 220000 views in September 2020, with 53000 new users. The bounce rate (where people left a webpage without taking an action, such as clicking on a link, filling out a form, or making a purchase) was 15.5% in August and September, compared to 27% over the last 2 months of the old website. Mobile devices were the preferred tool to access the website. The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager went onto explain that the team ensured the content was constantly evolving to fit with customers preferred options. In September 2020, Recycling and Planning topics remained the most popular areas of viewing, whilst Housing overtook Council Tax. There was increasing volume of traffic to Covid information pages, so a separate option for Covid was set onto the website's front page. Pages that were experiencing lower hits included leisure activities and 'Things to do in the local area', and the Committee agreed that this came as no surprise owing to the lockdown period throughout the pandemic.
- 3.3 In response to a question asking whether the search bar could remain at the top of the Home Page, the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager confirmed that the search bar was pinned, so would remain in view. He added that all services were available to view by clicking the menu button, but he would investigate whether any extra features pertaining to this could be built in.
- 3.4 The Chairman thanked the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager for the valuable update and it was agreed that a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

4 Report Tracker & Future Meetings

- 4.1 The Chairman noted the items already on the Tracker and made a couple of additional suggestions.
- 4.2 The topic of corporate security, in particular for Members, was an item he felt should be discussed. The IT Manager confirmed that a new system had been trialled within the IT Team, but there were concerns in regards to consistency. DUO remained the default system for corporate security. He added that the Council had recently been awarded the PSN Code of Compliance, which highlighted that ABC were up to date with their security measures and this was a mark of good practice. Several cyber-attacks had been made in recent

weeks, some of which were very complex. In response to a question asking whether the data protection banner on emails could be smaller, it was confirmed that this was a standard size. A further query asking whether incoming external emails could be coloured Red would be investigated further.

- 6.2 The Chairman's second topic for deliberation was around continuing digital meetings in the future, after lockdown measures were lifted completely, or in some part the option of a hybrid meeting. He had seen that East Sussex Council had comprehensively developed this idea. The Head of HR & Customer Services explained that this concept had previously been discussed at the Overview & Scrutiny IT Digital Transformation Task Group, and once their recommendations had been to the Cabinet, they would then be brought for discussion with this Committee.

Resolved:

That the Report Tracker & Future Meetings be received and noted.

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Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **21st October 2020**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Harman, B Heyes, Ledger, Spain, C Suddards.

Also Present

Cllrs. Burgess, Pickering, Sparks, Walder.

In attendance:

Head of Planning & Development, Interim Spatial Planning Manager, Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking), Team Leader (Placemaking), Development Partnership Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Planning & Development Solicitor, Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer

1 Notes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 24th September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

2 The Planning White Paper Consultation Response

- 2.1 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager introduced this item and explained that this meeting was to consider the items which were not discussed at the last Task Group meeting in relation to the Planning White Paper Consultation response. He advised that the emerging draft response had been circulated to Task Group members the previous week, but that amendments could be made up until the deadline. Members may also wish to have discussion on the draft covering letter to accompany the response to the White Paper proposals.
- 2.2 The Team Leader (Placemaking) gave a presentation which covered “Building Beautiful” and Design Code proposals. The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:
- A Member said that careful consideration was needed on how to respond to the Fast-Track for Beauty proposals as design should not be allowed to overcome function. She noted the Officer’s comment that the definition of Beauty should be decided by community preference and she considered

that there was a definite role for neighbourhood planning in this regard. She suggested that the Government could be called upon to support this either financially or in terms of resources. She commended the idea of a Chief Officer for Design and Place-making, but considered that this would require a different set of skills from normal planning qualifications as it would need qualifications and experience which encompassed design too. She was strongly against the concept of pattern books as the Council needed to be able to decide on the most appropriate designs for the Borough, including quirky and original ideas. The Team Leader (Placemaking) agreed that beauty in design was not just about aesthetics. He considered that the appropriate skill set was already available in the Planning team, with qualified urban designers in post. He also agreed that a pattern book approach was not desirable, and that the best design would take account of local vernacular and contextualization, and that this would be included in the response

- A Member suggested that it could be useful to have a representative from the Council on any national expert body for design that was established. She expressed concern that community engagement would be reduced to a tick box exercise. The Team Leader (Placemaking) agreed that it would be useful to have a Council representative on any national expert body, and that community engagement must be handled in a meaningful way, so that input from residents was at the heart of development.
- Another Member asked whether more energy generation requirements could be included in the planning process as he wished to see an emphasis on energy generation as well as energy efficiency in all types of new dwellings. He also suggested that open design competitions could be a good way to strengthen the quality of new buildings throughout the Borough. The Team Leader (Placemaking) drew attention to the design standards for energy efficiency, and agreed that a suggestion to include design competitions would be included in the response comments.
- A Member said it was important to build in 21st century style, where appropriate, and not hark back to the past. She wanted to see more adventurous design to signal that Ashford was a forward-looking Borough. Another Member said that good design should not mean automatic permission to build, although he did consider that pattern books could be useful, if certain conditions were imposed. He pointed out that good design also referred to internal arrangements, such as disabled provision. The Team Leader (Placemaking) replied that the White Paper was not clear regarding automatic planning permission resulting from Beautiful status, and that applications would still be subject to the planning rule book. He agreed regarding the need for 21st century design and noted the suggestions about contemporary energy efficiency.

2.3 The Head of Planning and Development gave a presentation which covered S106 and the Infrastructure Levy (IL). She advised that there was currently a lack of clarity on exactly what was proposed, but the proposal was that S106 and CIL may be scrapped in favour of the IL. The stated aim of the IL would be to capture

greater amounts of contributions. However, it was not clear to Officers how this would happen, especially in view of the wide range of land values that exist. S106 had many purposes which were not clearly covered by the introduction of IL and the White Paper proposals. Some of the proposals were welcomed, such as the fact that IL would capture all development, including permitted development changes of use. However, there were concerns over the proposals, particularly in relation to the risks to local authorities, that would arise from the expectation of them forward funding infrastructure prior to developments. It was unclear how the developer 'in kind' mechanism would work in practice. It appeared that there would be flexibility in how local authorities could spend IL money, but there could be issues with regard to transparency for the public in how it was spent and when, due to the timescales between agreeing the IL and payments being received. There were no proposals for government funding of infrastructure and it seemed clear that the IL would not be sufficient to cover more spatial infrastructure requirements.

- Members expressed concern over the level of risk to which local authorities would be exposed and considered that the Council's response should be strengthened to emphasise this point.
- A Member said that the Council's response should be drafted in such a way that emphasis was placed only where the Council felt most adamantly opposed to the proposals, and the rest of the response should identify issues and make constructive suggestions and comments. It was also suggested that the covering letter could reiterate key points.
- In response to a question, the Head of Planning and Development agreed that the Council's response needed to seek reassurance from government regarding central funding for larger infrastructure requirements.
- A Member said she considered that amendments to the current system would achieve the same result as the White Paper proposals and she believed that much of the White Paper was proposing change for change's sake. She was opposed to the suggestion that local authorities could pay IL into their general budgets, as she believed there was a risk that IL could become a political tool. The Head of Planning and Development agreed that the existing system could be amended to achieve the aspirations of the White Paper, and that this would be indicated in the Council's response.

2.4 The Development Partnership Manager gave a presentation which covered the Infrastructure Levy and Affordable Housing. He explained that the aim of the IL was to deliver on-site Affordable Housing, secured through 'in kind' delivery, and that the Council could specify forms and tenures, as well as accept land as levy payment. The quality of stock would be secured through a 'revert to levy' payment process. There was a proposal for first refusals for councils to buy a proportion of on-site stock, with the cost set nationally.

2.5 The Head of Planning and Development gave a presentation on funding and resourcing the Planning department. She said the White Paper had significant financial and resource implications for the department as it proposed a front-

loading approach as well as responsibility falling on local authorities to develop design codes. The Council was in the fortunate position of having design staff in post, but the nationally-set fees would not cover all costs. On a positive note, the White Paper appeared to recognize that funding proposals were needed for modernizing the planning system.

2.6 The Chairman led a discussion to approve in principle the individual responses and confirm whether Members had any further comments:

- Qs1 – 4 not appropriate for a Council reply.
- Q5 – include request for Council involvement in national expert panel.
- Q8a – with regard to the likely 25% increase in housing numbers, there was still no resolution on how to encourage developers to build out permissions. A Member noted the current Parliamentary Inquiry on this topic asking for evidence from local authorities. She considered that it was vital for the Council to respond to this Inquiry as this was a pressing problem. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager said that he would make further enquiries on this with a view to the Council making a contribution. The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking) displayed a table showing the difference between permissions granted and completions in the last few years. The Chairman asked her to circulate the document to Task Group members, including the numbers from the Chilmington Green development. A Member suggested that constructive proposals could be put forward on how government could motivate developers to build out, such as via a council tax on dwellings permitted but not built out within a specified time period.
- Q8b – the Chairman said that regarding the proposed standard method for assessing local housing need, the Council's response must be aimed at protecting areas of the Borough using an approach similar to Local Plan Policy SP7. It was also suggested that the response should refer to the need to protect areas of the Borough from excessive infill development.
- Q9a – Members were very opposed to this proposal and considered that it would erode the democratic system and weaken the role of Planning Committees. Members agreed that the response to this question needed strengthening.
- Q11 - the Chairman asked Officers to delete the reference to austerity.
- Q15 – the Chairman cited the Chilmington Green development as an exemplar of good design and a beautiful place, and suggested that the response should promote the good work done in this area.
- Proposal 17 – response to include reference to design competitions.
- Proposal 18 – response to include reference to energy generation and efficiency.

- Q22(d) – Members agreed that there should be some measure of underwriting from government in the event that IL from developers to repay forward funding did not materialise. A Member suggested that there could be a brief summary of the impacts on the community in the event that the Council was to become bankrupt.

2.7 It was agreed that the Interim Spatial Planning Manager would recirculate the draft letters to Task Group members, with a request for any comments within 24 hours. It was agreed that no reference should be made to the Council's request for buffer land at Mersham in the draft Planning White Paper response, and that it should be dealt with separately.

Resolved

The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

- Notes the contents of Appendix 1 to the report as a means of framing the Council's response to the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper, and**
- Agrees that the detailed and final responses to the consultation questions shall be agreed between the Head of Planning, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Chair of Task Group, subject to the points discussed at the meeting.**

3 Date of Next Meeting

3.1 26th November 2020 at 10am, Microsoft Teams (post-meeting note: this date replaces the previously-planned meeting on 4th November 2020)

16th December 2020 at 10am, Microsoft Teams

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Ashford Borough Council: 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 November 2020**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

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

Apologies:

Cllr. Shorter.

Also Present

Cllrs. Krause, Michael, Pickering, Walder.

In attendance:

Interim Spatial Planning Manager, Interim Strategic Development and Delivery Manager, Team Leader (Planmaking & Infrastructure), Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking), Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Cllr Bartlett declared that he was a Member of Kennington Community Council, which was in the adjoining ward to Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish.
- 1.2 Cllr Clokie made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.
- 1.3 Cllr Krause declared that he was the Ward Member for part of Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish.
- 1.4 Cllr Michael declared that he was the Ward Member for part of Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish.

2 Notes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 21st October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Five Year Housing Land Supply

3.1 The Interim Spatial Planning Manager introduced this item, and he and the Interim Strategic Development and Delivery Manager gave a presentation which covered:

- What is the Five Year Housing Land Supply test?
- Establishing the position – Housing 'Target'
- Establishing the position – Supply
- Position at July 2020, and why it is below 5 years
- What does 4.8 years position mean?
- The role of Policy HOU5
- What we can do to improve the position
- Beginning a Local Plan review
- Stodmarsh issue.

3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member asked what the Council was doing with regard to lobbying and engaging with central Government, bearing in mind the effect of the current pandemic on development. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager replied that this was a national concern and guidance had been sought by the Leader from central Government on how Councils should take account of this factor in terms of housing supply. The Stodmarsh situation added to the disruption to development at present and Officers were liaising with partners and other organisations to determine the best way to progress a solution. The Chairman noted that the housing supply was at risk due to factors outside the Council's control at the moment, such as the pandemic and the Stodmarsh delay. He also noted that the border facility to be established at Waterbrook could have an effect on the delivery of housing in the shorter term.
- A Member asked about the impact of the 4.8 year figure on applications at appeal stage. The Interim Strategic Development and Delivery Manager replied that the Stodmarsh issue currently frustrated development in the affected area. Any planning appeal would need to consider this fact, as it was a constraint on the Council in decision-making, and the Planning Inspector would also need to consider the prevailing Stodmarsh guidance. In the west of the Borough, outside the Stour Catchment area affected by the Stodmarsh situation, decisions would need to consider the five year housing land supply position in more detail.
- Another Member questioned whether, without a five year housing land supply figure, the Council was more vulnerable to ambitious development schemes, such as in the green corridor, where in other circumstances it would be easier to defend a decision to refuse. He suggested that it may not be possible to refuse such applications now due to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Interim Strategic Development and

Delivery Manager said it could be argued that it may be more difficult to refuse such applications for the reasons stated by the Member. However, applications must be considered on a case by case basis, and the Council was still in a strong position to defend against unsuitable schemes, and Local Plan policies could still be applied. He conceded that the Council would be in a stronger position if it could demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

- A Member suggested that it may be timely to establish a location for a new town or large village, so that a large amount of housing could be focused in one area, with the emphasis taken off villages to provide development to meet the housing figure. Several other Members agreed that this was a pragmatic approach. The Interim Strategic Development and Delivery Manager said that a similar situation some years ago had been addressed through the Local Plan. However, this was not an overnight solution and the current situation needed to be addressed through a balance between strategic solutions and more readily implementable solutions. The Chairman felt that these were matters that should be properly discussed at another time under the context of a Local Plan Review.
- A Member asked about the role of infrastructure in terms of non-delivery of houses. He also asked about conversation with developers to understand better the reasons for not building out. The Interim Spatial Manager explained that infrastructure could be a determining issue on whether sites would be delivered, as, where key infrastructure was required, developers may decide to deliver elsewhere where there was no such requirement. He questioned where the burden lay regarding housing delivery, and concluded that the Council must find a greater number of deliverable sites in order to achieve the required housing numbers.
- A Member suggested that Appendix 1 of the report should not be published with the current position statement as it would be out of date within a short time. The Interim Spatial Manager explained that the published figures were a snapshot in time, and that they would naturally evolve and change. The Appendix should be published as the position statement. He added that there was an option to establish a fixed 5 year housing supply figure through the Annual Position Statement process, but this would involve a 10% buffer requirement.
- The Chairman noted that more work could be done on existing developments to increase dwellings where permission had already been granted, and that there was an important role for working with existing developers.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

- i) endorses the broad approach advocated in this report,**

- ii) notes the next steps identified and agree the Actions,
- iii) agrees that the Position Statement is published on the Council's website in order to frame future decision making.

4 Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan – ABC Representation

- 4.1 The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking) introduced this item. She explained that no response had yet been received from Natural England, but it would be possible to move quickly once that arrived. The appointment of the Examiner was progressing. She said the Parish Council had done a good job in developing their Neighbourhood Plan and the Borough Council had taken a critical friend role throughout the drafting process. Under the regulations, the Local Authority could only formally assess a Neighbourhood Plan and whether it met 'basic conditions' after it had been through the examination process. For this reason, the Council sought to work with Neighbourhood Plan groups to iron out any concerns prior to examination. Officers currently had concerns with two of the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, and they had made these clear to the group, and would also make them clear to the Examiner. Officers would bring this item back to the Task Group to discuss the Examiner's findings.
- 4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:
- A Member asked about Policy NP2 and whether this would inhibit further development, given that the site was designated as a sports/recreation facility. One of the the Ward Members for the Parish asked whether Officers had concerns over the actual words or the general meaning of this part of the Plan. The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking) explained that Officers had no concerns regarding the local green space designation itself, but that the wording was more of a concern as the added layer of protection was not required. No work had yet been done to establish the specific details of what designated sports hubs needed, so it was not known whether future expansion would be desirable. The current wording of NP2 may preclude future development, such as a new sports building, for example.
 - A Member asked whether sports hubs were deliverable within the Local Plan. The Interim Spatial Planning Manager replied that hubs were identified as public facilities, with a likelihood that they would expand in some way in the future. Sports and recreation sites had been identified, but the exact requirements of the facilities were not yet known. The current wording in the Neighbourhood Plan would undermine the potential for development, and it was important to retain the ability for hubs to function as was considered most necessary. The Chairman said that the Task Group would consider sports hubs again during the next review of the Local Plan.

- A Member asked about Eureka site, and noted that the land had no designation at present. He was concerned that this land, identified for a local centre in NP7, may automatically become part of housing development. He questioned whether this should be left open for housing, or whether the wording should preclude this option. The Deputy Team Leader (Planmaking) said it was important to note that adopted policy S20 in the Local Plan allocated the whole area for housing and employment uses only and outlined a masterplanning requirement for the whole area. Officers were highlighting to the Examiner where the Neighbourhood Plan policy was in conflict with the Local Plan policy.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

Agrees that the letter in Appendix 1 (and copies of all historic communications on the matter) are submitted to the BAE NP group and the appointed Examiner as a representation on the Regulation 16 Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan.

5 Tunbridge Wells Draft Local Plan and Duty to Cooperate

- 5.1 The Team Leader (Planmaking & Infrastructure) introduced this item. He explained that this was a formal written approach from Tunbridge Wells Council for Ashford Borough Council to assist with their housing needs. This was part of Tunbridge Wells Council's Local Plan review process, and it was a formality for them to approach neighbouring Councils for assistance with housing provision before they could consider building on green belt land.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group:

Asks the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development to respond formally in writing to TWBC to thank them for their consultation and to indicate that the Borough Council is unable to assist in providing additional housing and employment development land to meet the needs of TWBC.

6 Date of Next Meeting

- 6.1 16th December 2020 at 10am, Microsoft Teams

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Agenda Item No: 14
Report To: CABINET
Date: 17TH DECEMBER 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 Papers: None

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**CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

The following Key Decisions will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet on the dates stated.

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Gerry Clarkson; 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
17th December 2020					
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
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2020-2050 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)	<i>To presenting the HRA Business Plan and the HRA Delivery Programme together to provide an accurate picture showing the full effect of the bold decisions being taken in the HRA to meet demand for social housing.</i>	Cllr Barrett	Sharon Williams/Mark James	Open	31/12/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community	<i>To propose a vision, with a set of themed objectives and a detailed action plan and to outline who is responsible for delivery with key partners identified, along with potential challenges and resource demands.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Dan Daley	Open	2/9/20
Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy	<i>To outline that tackling climate change requires a coordinated and joined up approach, and as such working collectively with other Local Authorities is a key component to achieving the Council's own carbon neutral ambition. The report will summarise the priorities of the ELES and show how the Council is and could contribute to achieving these priorities.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Jennifer Shaw	Open	21/9/20
Edinburgh Road Car Park Review	<i>To propose that the car park operates 24/7, removal of free parking after 3 pm, introduce new options for customers such as day sessions and residential permits and the introduction of reduced fees for customers using RingGo.</i>	Cllr Feacey	Alison Oates	Open	28/10/20
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

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Kent Music School - Supporting Relocation to Ashford	<i>To approve in principle loan funding for Kent Music School KMS to purchase a new facility in Ashford</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Tracey Kerly	Open	21/10/20
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
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
Vicarage Lane Update		Cllr Clokie	Paul McKenner	Open (with Exempt Appendix)	1/10/20
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

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
29 th April 2021					
Bockhanger Consultation – Outcomes		Cllr Barrett	Rebecca Wilcox	Open	30/10/19
27 th May 2021					
24 th June 2021					
Final Outturn 2020/21	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	26/6/20
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

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
29th July 2021					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	4/8/20
26th August 2021					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					
30th September 2021					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/9/20
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	28/9/20
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	28/9/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
28th October 2021					
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	21/10/20
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2021-2051 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)		Cllr Barrett	Sharon Williams/Mark James	Open	21/10/20
25th November 2021					
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
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
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	2/12/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Draft Budget 2022/23	<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	30/11/20

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

7/12/20

Cabinet – 17th December 2020 Addendum Papers

Agenda Item 7 – Draft Budget 2021/22

This tabled paper reflects some minor amendments to the 2021/22 Draft budget, following the original publication of the Agenda. Please see revised tables below (the version of the report on the website and Modern.Gov has already been updated: -

Revised - Table 2: Draft General Fund Budget 2021/22

Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Directorate	Budget 2021/22 £
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(2,327,931)	(1,162,070)	(1,904,040)	Non service specific	(2,737,650)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
(16,521,843)	(15,967,490)	(19,033,910)	Financing	(13,565,740)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

Revised - Table 3 – Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22

Revenue Budget				
Housing Revenue Account				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Detail	Budget 2021/22 £
(24,993,460)	(25,369,020)	(24,677,520)	Income	(27,186,640)
(1,354,620)	6,051,230	5,959,100	Supervision and Management	6,088,830
3,595,060	3,758,000	3,702,000	Repairs and Maintenance	4,024,420
492,396	231,640	220,240	New Builds	221,700
23,200,623	15,958,050	15,732,150	Other	21,121,320
940,000	629,900	935,970	Service Expenditure	4,269,630
(683,974)	0	0	Contribution To/(From) General Reserves	(1,620,000)
256,026	629,900	935,970	Net Revenue Expenditure	2,649,630

Revised - Appendix A

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
DIRECTORATE SUMMARY				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Directorate	Budget 2021/22 £
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710	Chief Executive	1,173,200
4,455,249	2,740,690	3,961,830	Director of Finance & Economy	2,908,790
2,358,303	2,050,770	3,455,000	Director of Law & Governance	2,100,460
10,590,003	10,970,290	12,620,640	Director of Place & Space	10,120,940
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(2,327,931)	(1,162,070)	(1,904,040)	Non service specific	(2,737,650)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
(16,521,843)	(15,967,490)	(19,033,910)	Financing	(13,565,740)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
SERVICE SUMMARY				
Actuals	Budget	Projected	Service	Budget
2019/20	2020/21	Outturn		2021/22
£	£	£		£
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710	Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	1,173,200
(978,623)	(1,778,020)	(763,610)	Corporate Property & Projects	(1,275,200)
3,641,761	3,658,460	3,498,210	Finance & IT	3,269,790
1,792,111	860,250	1,227,230	Housing General Fund Services	914,200
765,152	427,600	2,002,290	Community Safety and Wellbeing	711,520
76,808	197,340	112,430	HR & Customer Services	155,350
1,516,343	1,425,830	1,340,280	Legal & Democratic Services	1,233,590
3,512,553	3,342,230	4,378,330	Culture	3,208,300
5,238,038	5,453,140	5,286,860	Environmental & Land Management	4,744,550
1,839,412	2,174,920	2,955,450	Planning	2,168,090
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	Service Expenditure	16,303,390
(4,934,028)	(2,587,480)	(3,182,340)	Capital Charges & Net Interest	(2,437,810)
264,151	270,500	270,500	Levies	276,000
2,341,946	1,154,910	1,007,800	Contribution to/(from) Balances	(575,840)
16,485,347	15,967,490	19,525,140	ABC Budget Requirement	13,565,740
			Income	
(277,324)	0	(3,066,420)	Government Grant	0
(5,697,644)	(4,991,320)	(4,991,320)	Retained Business Rates	(4,093,390)
(2,954,410)	(3,053,420)	(3,053,420)	New Homes Bonus	(1,680,000)
(7,592,465)	(7,922,750)	(7,922,750)	Council Tax	(7,792,350)
(36,496)	0	491,230		0

General Fund Draft Budget 2021/22				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Department	Budget 2021/22 £
			Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	
323,404	280,250	280,690	Policy and Performance	276,120
635,567	638,660	646,210	Economic Development	451,800
450,752	448,900	464,810	Communications & Marketing	445,280
1,409,723	1,367,810	1,391,710		1,173,200
			Corporate Property & Projects	
18,202	17,880	(156,210)	Project Delivery Team	17,600
668	2,820	(46,020)	Facilities Management	(10)
(997,493)	(1,798,720)	(561,380)	Corporate Property	(1,292,790)
(978,623)	(1,778,020)	(763,610)		(1,275,200)
			Finance & IT	
97,067	91,450	46,740	Accountancy	26,610
761	(10)	(10)	Audit Partnership	(20)
614,378	804,840	747,570	Benefits Administration	778,920
309,703	487,940	428,510	Council Tax Collection	367,610
121	2,100	(15,320)	Debtors/Debt Recovery	30
269,206	40,540	40,540	Miscellaneous Expenditure	35,130
76,353	68,000	80,360	Exchequer	57,540
(642,495)	(175,000)	(175,000)	Housing Benefits Payments	(280,000)
(91,281)	(40,090)	(43,970)	NNDR Collection	(52,920)
1,674,978	1,365,770	1,365,770	Non-Distributed Costs	1,419,400
79,311	26,310	28,290	ICT	11,080
29	220	12,240	Telephony	30
1,020,871	782,980	783,880	Strategic Corporate Costs	690,750
232,757	203,410	198,610	Corporate Management	215,630
3,641,761	3,658,460	3,498,210		3,269,790
			Housing General Fund Services	
211,809	144,600	144,600	Private Sector Housing	207,030
89,613	96,760	95,360	Housing Strategy and Enabling	114,600
1,218,720	609,520	1,001,450	Housing Options	605,150
246,326	3,620	0	Refugee Project	0
25,642	5,750	(14,180)	Gypsy Site - Chilmington	(12,580)
1,792,111	860,250	1,227,230		914,200
			Community Safety and Wellbeing	
648,258	692,610	808,310	Community Safety,AMC,Licencing	675,220
689,343	632,350	626,420	Environmental Health	579,590
(572,449)	(897,360)	567,560	Parking & Engineering	(543,290)
765,152	427,600	2,002,290		711,520

General Fund Draft Budget 2021/22				
Actuals 2019/20 £	Budget 2020/21 £	Projected Outturn 2020/21 £	Department	Budget 2021/22 £
			HR & Customer Services	
17,889	181,220	132,300	Human Resources	143,730
58,919	16,120	(19,870)	Visitor & Call Centre	11,620
76,808	197,340	112,430		155,350
			Legal & Democratic Services	
840,219	851,890	836,870	Democratic Representation	791,980
613,541	478,990	470,150	Electoral Services	378,070
2,185	27,910	(26,780)	Legal	0
60,397	67,040	60,040	Mayor	63,540
1,516,343	1,425,830	1,340,280		1,233,590
			Culture	
305,837	318,750	348,080	Cultural Services Management	317,820
1,559,830	1,490,220	2,489,300	Leisure Centres	1,691,040
281,027	295,090	295,630	Open Spaces and Conservation	301,120
399,196	446,760	511,760	Single Grants Gateway	315,860
192,491	220,810	202,720	Tourism & Heritage	182,910
774,172	570,600	530,840	Cultural Projects	399,550
3,512,553	3,342,230	4,378,330		3,208,300
			Environmental & Land Management	
250,986	289,700	292,700	Street Scene	267,260
3,332,001	3,421,280	3,254,280	Refuse, Recycling, Street Clean	2,986,900
1,655,051	1,742,160	1,739,880	Grounds Maintenance	1,490,390
5,238,038	5,453,140	5,286,860		4,744,550
			Planning	
149,500	48,410	62,270	Chilmington	35,140
38,512	74,350	100,460	Building Control	88,310
1,069,729	949,490	1,923,900	Development Control	1,030,830
(19,456)	(1,770)	(1,770)	Land Charges	(70)
597	12,350	(2,360)	Planning Administration	(10)
600,530	1,092,090	872,950	Strategic Planning	1,013,890
1,839,412	2,174,920	2,955,450		2,168,090
18,813,278	17,129,560	21,429,180	NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	16,303,390

Agenda Item 8 – Five Year Vision and Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community

AMENDMENT TO:

Five Year Vision & Strategy for the South of Ashford Garden Community

DESCRIPTION:

As a result of changes to this report's section on 'Legal Implications', the 'Recommendations' accompanying this report have also been given some revision. The revised 'Recommendations' and the 'Legal Implications' text (as well as a change to paragraph 21) are below and should be read in replace of those sections contained within the complete report.

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. To approve in principle the adoption of the draft Vision & Strategy and the steps to implement the proposed action plan (along with strategic partners who have endorsed it)
- II. To delegate to the Head of Planning & Development, in consultation with the Director of Finance & Economy, the authority to approve the final document for publication

Legal Implications: The draft Five Year Vision & Strategy has negligible specific legal implications as it is not a formal planning policy document and should not be treated as such. Where its actions presume and/or are dependent upon any formal planning processes for their implementation, this decision does not pre-judge those planning processes and their outcomes.

Next Steps in Process

21. Subject to the adoption of the Vision & Strategy by Cabinet, several project working groups will be established. These will include Council officers, key partners and members of the public. These groups will pick up specific actions and implement. Bimonthly reporting to the Community Stakeholder Group will proceed from there with further monitoring and evaluation as set out in detail within the Strategy. Cabinet will receive an annual report on progress and evaluation, together with an updated action plan.

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

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