Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer, T W Mortimer LLB Solicitor CA

CABINET

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on **Thursday, 27th May, 2021 at 7.00 pm.**

The Members of the Cabinet are:-

Councillor Clarkson – Leader of the Council
Councillor Bartlett – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Port Health
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 FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT THIS MEETING

Subject to Coronavirus risk assessments and procedures, a very small number of members of the Press and public can register to attend and observe the Meeting in person (without speaking at it), on a first-come, first served basis.

To register to attend and observe the Meeting on this basis, please email membersservices@ashford.gov.uk You will be sent details of the procedures established by the Council in order to manage the risk of COVID-19 at the Meeting, which may include requirements such as to wear face coverings, and to not attend the Meeting if you are affected by any relevant circumstances relating to COVID-19. You will be expected to confirm your agreement to these requirements prior to attendance.

However, instead of attending and observing in person, **the Council encourages everyone to take advantage of the opportunity to watch and listen to the proceedings at the Meeting via a weblink, which will be publicised on the Council's website at www.ashford.gov.uk about 24 hours before the Meeting.**

Summary of Public Participation for Planning Committee Meetings after 6 May 2021

In line with legal requirements, and subject to Coronavirus risk assessments and procedures:-

- A small number of members of the Press and public can register to attend and observe the meeting in person;

- In addition, seats in the meeting room are provided for those who register to speak on each item1 , by following the procedure below:-

1. Written notice of a wish to speak at the meeting (by means of the procedure below) must be given, either to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk or on the Council's website at https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/committeesystem/haveyoursay.aspx **by 10:00 hours on the working day before the meeting.**

2. Registering to speak at the meeting confers the right to submit (and, if desired, make in person) a speech

3. All those registered to speak must submit to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk by 10:00 hours on the day of the meeting, a copy of their speech in written, legible English. Speeches must be no longer than 400 words, printed in 12-point non-italic sans-serif font (e.g. Arial); any text above 400 words will not be read out. No speech should contain personal data about individuals, other than the speaker's name and (if relevant) postal address. Any registered speakers who do not submit their speeches as above are not permitted to speak at the meeting (even if present in person).

4. At the meeting:- (i) Speakers who are present in person may read their previously submitted speeches when called to do so, but may not read any other material; (ii) If speakers are not present in person, their previously-submitted speeches will be read to the meeting by a competent Officer for and on behalf of the speakers, at the normal times and in the normal order (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 meeting by an Officer, each speaker accepts by submitting the speech to be fully responsible for all consequences thereof and to indemnify the Officer and the Council accordingly.

Agenda

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2. **Declarations of Interest** 1 - 2

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

   a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)
   b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)
   c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests

   See Agenda Item 2 for further details

3. **Minutes** 3 - 8

   To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Cabinet held on the 29th April 2021.

4. **To Receive any Petitions**

5. **Leader's Announcements**

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DS
20 May 2021

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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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Published 4th May 2021
Decisions effective from the 12th May 2021 unless they are called in or are recommended to the Council for approval

Ashford Borough Council: Cabinet

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Cabinet held on Microsoft Teams on the **29th April 2021.**

Present:

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

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Pickering, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Anckorn, Blanford, Burgess, Campkin, Chilton, Cornish, Harman, Hayward, Krause, Ledger, Michael, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager, Communications Officer Member Services Manager.

314 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 25th February 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

315 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that as they were in the pre-election purdah period he would not make any particular announcements, but he did just want to mention the 100-mile World Record, and a number of others, which had been broken at an event at the Julie Rose Stadium recently. He was pleased to see the elite facilities at the stadium hosting events once more.

316 Local Development Scheme

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the draft Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2021 set out the project plan and timetable for preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Local Plan until mid-2022. The LDS was required under legislation and compliance with it was a matter of 'soundness' for Local Plans. It was therefore essential that it was kept up to date. The draft LDS 2021 and revised Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Local Plan timetable conformed with the regulations.

Recommended:

That the Local Development Scheme 2021 be adopted, as required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).

317 Kent Downs AONB Management Plan - Adoption

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which explained that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required Local Authorities to produce, adopt and keep under review Management Plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Kent Downs AONB covered much of the area of the Local Authority and, working with other Authorities in the Kent Downs AONB, a review had been undertaken to update the current plan for the period 2021-2026. He proposed an amendment to recommendation (iii) which would require consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

A Member, who was also the Council's appointed representative on the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee, said she fully endorsed the document and knew how much work had gone in to updating it.

Recommended:

That (i) the revised Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 be adopted.

(ii) the formal date for adoption be shortly after the last of the 11 Local Authorities resolves to adopt the Plan – this date will be confirmed to the Council by the Kent Downs AONB Unit,

(iii) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to make minor changes and accept reasonable changes made by other Local Authorities during the adoption process, subsequent to this Council's decision being made.

318 Procurement Direction for Ashford Borough Council's Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Service

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the current contracted waste, recycling and street cleansing service for Ashford Borough Council would end in October 2023. The service was currently part of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership (MKJWP) between Ashford, Maidstone and Swale as Waste Collection Authorities and Kent County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority. The report drew on modelling work that had been produced by a specialist external waste consultant working with staff from across the MKJWP, and had previously been presented to the Cabinet, to provide information to Members for an informed decision. The report also confirmed the opportunities for the next service, previously presented, for Members consideration.

A Member asked about references to better IT systems being introduced to drive up performance and how this would work in practice. The Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager said that this was about real time reporting from crews which would allowing better data collection and identify issues with contamination much more quickly and precisely.

In response to a question about where the plastic put out for recycling was sent, the Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager advised that it was important to reassure residents that everything that was put out for recycling, and could be recycled, was indeed recycled. KCC managed the process and it would all go to a Material Recovery Facility. If a load was grossly contaminated it may have to go to Energy From Waste and be incinerated, which would be disappointing, but did still have a use.

Another Member asked if, given the success of Aspire, consideration had been given to setting up a Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) to manage this contract in the same way that Canterbury City Council had recently, rather than remaining with the MKJWP? The Portfolio Holder advised that all options had been considered and on balance it had been decided to propose renewal of the existing arrangements. One of the chief factors had been resilience and the example of being able to pool resources after the fire at the Ashford depot. It would not have been possible to maintain the service at that time if the Council had not had access to the partnership. Also, having undertaken the cost review, there were also no guarantees of benefits for the tax-payer by pursuing a single Authority LATCo. This would have required multiple Authorities and neighbours had not been keen to pursue this at this time. The Council would though keep an open mind over options for the future

The Leader said it was only right to mention the current contractor, Biffa, who had worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, including Bank Holidays, and through the serious fire at their depot last year, and they had continued to provide an excellent service to the people of the Borough at this tough time.

Resolved:

That (i) the Authority continue to provide an externally contracted (procured) service for waste, recycling and street cleansing for Ashford Borough Council.

(ii) the Authority continue providing the alternate weekly collection for co-mingled kerbside recycling, residual waste on alternate weeks, food waste collection weekly, and a separately chargeable garden waste service and bulk waste collection services.

(iii) the Authority continue to provide services as a member of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership including Ashford, Maidstone, Swale and Kent.

(iv) the Head of Environment and Land Management be delegated authority to take this work forward, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management.

319 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 2nd March 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 2nd March 2021 be received and noted.

320 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 23rd February 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 23rd February 2021 be received and noted.

321 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board – Notes of 22nd February 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on the 22nd February 2021 be received and noted.

322 Climate Change Advisory Committee – Notes of 2nd February 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee held on the 2nd February 2021 be received and noted.

323 IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee – Notes of 16th March 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on the 16th March 2021 be received and noted.

324 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 4th February and 25th March 2021.

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meetings of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 4th February and 25th March 2021 be received and noted.

325 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:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 27th May 2021

Report Title: Rural Housing Working Group – Findings and Recommendations

Report Author & Job Title: Mark James
Development Partnership Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Bill Barrett
Portfolio Holder for: Housing

Summary:

In August 2020, a group convened by the Deputy Housing Portfolio Holder, Cllr Ken Mulholland, began meeting to discuss affordable rural housing in the Ashford borough. The group consists of councillors, internal officers and an external expert from a rural housing association.

The report provides an up-to-date position on affordable housing in the Ashford borough, discussion of the challenges to increasing the number of rural, affordable homes and ideas discussed by the group to accelerate delivery. These include working with the rural housing enabler to increase the volume of local needs surveys to create a more accurate picture of need across Ashford's rural villages.

The report also highlights progress on rural schemes and discusses how the Council intends to raise awareness of the need for affordable rural housing with parish councils and communities – in addition to the Rural Protocol document recently launched by Kent Housing Group.

Key Decision: YES (as this has a financial implication that could exceed the threshold of a key decision, and it will affect all rural wards)

Significantly Affected Wards: The local needs surveys are primarily undertaken in rural wards, so this has the possibility to involve all rural wards but will be unlikely to involve the more urban areas of central and South Ashford

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

I. **Note the content of the report and endorse the work of the rural group**
II. **Agree to increase the number of rural local needs surveys – aiming for six per annum for three years, returning to four per annum after that**
III. **A commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025-26**

	IV. Agree that communications to parishes will be prepared and that delegate authority will sit with the Head of Housing to agree this in consultation with the housing portfolio holder
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. A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities (Kent Housing Group) – February 2021
Financial Implications:	The council's 'enabling' work sits outside of its housing revenue account (HRA) and so any additional funding to support local needs surveys will come from its General Fund. Depending on the size of the parish and the response rate to each survey, each report costs an average of £3,500, so there is an expenditure associated with this decision. Currently the 2021-22 budget has £14,000 allocated for this purpose, which it is anticipated will cover four surveys.
Legal Implications:	Homes England requires the Council to enter into a formal agreement in relation to any grant funding it provides for affordable housing delivery. The Council is formally required to have a 30-year HRA Business Plan.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See attached Appendix D
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Assessment on the impact on data protection will be undertaken at the appropriate time
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Risk is identified in the report itself in the context of the HRA 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	Under the Corporate Plan one of the three emerging themes

Implications:	is ‘Green Pioneer’ citing the Council’s ambition for carbon neutrality. Any project and acquisition in any area of the borough will assess sustainability as part of its due diligence process. It is of particular pertinence in rural areas.
Other Material Implications:	Local Plan Policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), 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.
Exempt from Publication:	**No**
Contact:	Mark.james@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233)

Agenda Item No.

Report Title:

Introduction and Background

1. Ashford is the most rural borough in Kent. Indeed, 85% of Kent is itself classed as being rural. Residents, young and old, from rural communities wish to stay where they grew up or where their support networks are. Unfortunately, market forces are such that properties in rural areas command a high market value, often out of the reach of those wishing to buy or stay in their locality, which is where affordable housing for rent or shared ownership has a major role to play.

2. Affordable housing serves a real purpose in these communities, helping families stay together and offer intergenerational support or providing local workers for shops and businesses. It can also provide a better solution for those looking to downsize in later life rather than having to contemplate moving away from family when they need that link most.

3. Ashford Borough Council has a proven track record of successfully delivering homes in rural areas:
    - Through smaller infill sites, such as Brattle in Woodchurch and Ragstone Hollow in Aldington, which it has delivered as part of its affordable homes new-build delivery programme
    - Danemore in Tenterden, an older person's scheme which the Council built as part of its plan to remodel its independent living schemes – this was of course officially recognised with the visit of HRH The Princess Royal in February 2020
    - Two smaller sites in Shadoxhurst, where it has delivered 11 homes, a tenure mix of affordable rent and shared ownership through section 106 (s106) agreements
    - Enablement work, where the housing service assists registered providers (RPs) of social housing to deliver their own schemes – be they land-led schemes or specific allocations they are taking through s106 agreements
    - English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) have delivered a strong array of exceptional schemes on exception sites across the borough – these remain as affordable housing in perpetuity

4. The working group comprises the Portfolio Holder for Planning, the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Housing, two members of the development team from the housing service, the Deputy Team Leader for Plan Making and Infrastructure, and an external expert from a rural-specific RP, in this case ERHA and we are very grateful to Alison Thompson from ERHA for her involvement and valuable input into this group.

5. The group has looked at stock levels among the Council and RPs in the borough, as well as strategies to increase this and deliver the right rural homes in the right rural places. It has also discussed changes in the approach

over time, due to financial constraints, to the delivery of local needs surveys and the difficulty in finding exception sites in recent times.

Previous delivery

6. Previous delivery of rural sites in the Ashford Borough is outlined in Appendices A and B that accompany this report. These detail the number of affordable homes, by size, currently owned and managed by Ashford Borough Council (1,536 homes) and RPs (530 homes) in the borough.

7. Though this report is to do with provision, we know that allocation is a consideration for members. Therefore, members may be interested to note that over the past year we have advertised 85 properties in rural areas, not including independent living accommodation. Of these affordable homes, 44 of these were advertised with a preference to people with a local connection, and 32 were allocated to people with that connection. Three of the homes are still waiting to be allocated.

8. It is worth, at the outset of this report, stipulating the distinction between local connection and local need for rural sites, as these are terms often referred to in discussions and the context for each is important.

Local connection

9. This is a criterion included in the Council's Lettings Policy, where over a period of two years, 50% of rural properties within the Council's stock will be offered to applicants who meet the local connection criteria set out in the policy. The applicant will have a need for the size and type of property available, we will not under occupy.

10. Where there are no applicants with a local connection, the property will be let to an applicant without the connection. These are not properties on exception sites. On new build sites in rural locations, again not exception sites, the Council will offer 100% of the properties to those applicants with a local connection on first let. Subsequent lets will be as per the usual lettings policy criteria as detailed above.

Local need property

11. These are properties built on exception sites determined by planning under a s106, for the purpose of providing housing for local people. The s106 planning agreement will specify the criteria applicants must meet and the cascade of parishes that will be considered if there are insufficient applicants from the principal parish. These homes are usually owned and managed by housing associations – in the Ashford Borough there are a large number of rural exception sites, mainly delivered by English Rural Housing Association, who have been a tremendous supporter and investor in Ashford's rural areas over a number of years.

12. These properties are let outside of the Council's Lettings Policy, although the properties are advertised through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, and applicants need to be registered on the housing register. The Council passes a shortlist of applicants with a connection to the appropriate parishes to the Housing Association once an advertisement has closed, and they then make a decision on who best fulfils the local connection criteria for that property.

They will prioritise those with a housing need, and who have the need for the type and size of property, but are able to let the property to someone without a housing need, or who would under occupy the property, if there is no one more suitable with the local connection.

Challenges

13. There are always barriers to housing delivery but rural areas shine a spotlight on issues such as viability and affordability. The Council's Local Plan to 2030 sees a smaller number of affordable homes for rent being delivered in rural areas under policy HOU1. This policy of course was rigorously viability tested as part of Examination and is based on the evidence from that part of the Local Plan process. It is necessarily National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) compliant to meet with the approval of the Inspector.

14. However, to illustrate the difference between the old and current Local Plans, as an example, the Tilden Gill site in Tenterden comprises 100 homes and, as it was assessed under the previous local plan, 35 of these homes are being delivered as affordable homes. The ratio is 21 to 14 in favour of affordable rent over affordable home ownership (specifically shared ownership in this instance). The same site coming forward now would deliver 40 homes in total, so an overall increase but crucially only 10 of the homes would now be for affordable rent and 30 would be for affordable home ownership. This halves the number of homes available for affordable rent and does little to assist with the 1,350 households on the Council's waiting list at any given point.

15. Officers of housing, legal and planning policy hold regular internal liaison meetings at which, among many other constructive conversations, the topic of taking the opportunity to review the affordable housing policy as part of a Local Plan review in due course has been discussed. Any revised policy will need to meet the same criteria listed above and take into account the proposed changes to NPPF policy relating to First Homes, which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

16. In terms of affordable home ownership specifically, affordability is a major consideration. With shared ownership, the entry level is set in the Council's current s106 document as being between 25% and 75%, with owners paying rent on the remaining portion of the property. Members may be aware of recent Government consultation that suggested this level could be set as low as 10% by RPs going forward, with residents able to 'staircase' (buy more of the property and rent less) in 1% increments if they so wish. It remains to be seen if implemented how popular or viable this option is. Currently, households can staircase in increments of 10% of the property's value. RPs report that very few owns actually do staircase to 100%.

17. It is worth pointing out the entry level of shared ownership as the Government is keen to roll-out the First Homes initiative it consulted on over a year ago. This would see homes purchased outright at an entry level of 70% of market value and remaining at 70% of market value in perpetuity. The aim is to make the properties affordable forever. Of course, the 'in perpetuity' element is to be welcomed but it ought to be noted that when the Council responded to the consultation it advocated local flexibility, with the entry level being lower at 60%, or even 50% where possible. This is because the Council has some shared equity schemes in rural areas of the borough and the prices of those

homes still remain beyond the first-time buyers for whom the homes are meant to be attainable.

18. Designated Protected Area (DPA) status applies to all of the borough other than the urban settlement of Ashford, Tenterden and a part of Wye. Houses in the DPA are subject to a cap on the staircasing of shared ownership homes, as the theory is that these homes are harder to replace. This is, however, not something borne out in discussions with the RPs that serve the Ashford borough, and therefore the Council adopted a policy in October 2019 of agreeing to 'waivers' on shared ownership units that are not on rural exception sites. The main reason for doing so is that there are very few mortgage lenders who understand the concept of not being able to own the property outright and so the Council applies on the RP's behalf – where requested to – for a waiver. This does mean that the homes could be lost if the owners were to staircase out to 100% but it is the most efficient way to enable households to access the housing ladder for shared ownership homes in rural communities. The Council's affordable housing delivery plan agreed at Cabinet in October 2019 details the approach the Council takes on this.

19. Finding exception sites is now a challenge as well. Exceptions sites are small sites used for affordable housing, retained as affordable housing in perpetuity, where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by housing households who are either current residents or have a live/work connection to the village in question. A small number of homes for market sale may be allowed at the discretion of the local authority, to cross subsidise the delivery of the affordable units.

20. The last such site was completed by ERHA in Warehorne over two years ago. The group now believes that more proactive work must be undertaken with parish councils to identify exception sites. The 'call for sites' element of the Local Plan process is one possible aspect that hinders the exception site identification process as landowners who are unsuccessful at that stage with their sites are subsequently not keen when only offered a much lower figure per plot than they may have been expecting were their site accepted into the Local Plan for market housing. To a greater degree though, the reduction of exception sites may relate closer to the Local Plan's windfall policy HOU5, which allows for new housing 'close to or adjoining' settlements. This may lead to more people reluctant to put land forward for 'exception' site housing.

21. Of course the Stodmarsh nutrient issue may impact delivery in some rural areas of the borough in the immediate term as a mitigation strategy is found.

22. The pandemic may have had an impact on some sites but in general the issues that have been faced on rural sites are site-specific issues such as archaeological or s106 matters, and not related to the pandemic causing issues with supply chains or workforce capacity. Of course, construction was designated as a priority industry during the pandemic.

Local Needs Surveys

23. The aim of a local needs survey (LNS) is to provide an independent and evidence-based picture of the scale of housing need in a village or parish. The rural housing enabler for Kent, Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)

undertakes these surveys and the detailed information gleaned from these surveys is used to ensure new homes built contribute towards meeting the needs of existing local residents.

24. Depending on the response rate and the size of the parish being surveyed, the survey costs around £3,500. After many years of being administered through a grant process and a service level agreement, which enabled the Council to undertake one solitary survey per year, the Council is proposing through this report to enter into a single source supplier arrangement with ACRK to enable it, subject to member approval, to have ACRK conduct the increased level of surveys that it is felt is required to re-establish a picture of true local need in the borough.

25. A budget of £14,000 to accommodate four surveys has already been allocated into the budget for the 2021-22 financial year. Ideally the group would like to play catch-up slightly quicker than four surveys per annum but it needs to bear in mind capacity within ACRK to undertake this additional work. The organisation already undertakes LNSs for other local authorities, some of whom have a rolling programme. In part this is to do with the fact that other areas have not had the success that Ashford has had with delivering rural exception sites and they are trying to initiate interest with parish councils about such sites. In part it is because they face their own local challenges, around viability and the availability of value-for-money land.

26. The working group felt that creating a rolling programme of local needs surveys in the Ashford borough could act as a catalyst to bring forward more rural local needs development – as opposed to commissioning surveys when sites have been identified. Experience dictates that there will always be a need, so having the local needs survey to act as the stimulus to assist with site identification and to guide planning consultee responses would be useful.

27. With regards those responses, the housing service responds to all planning applications where a trigger for affordable housing (either a minimum of 10 units or sites on 0.5ha or larger) is met. Having an up-to-date LNS provides a credible evidence base to detail the types of homes that are required in a community – for instance homes for small families looking to get on the housing ladder, as opposed to executive 4-bed homes maybe. Of course, there is negotiation to be had and the LNS results are not binding, but the survey evidence provides a useful snapshot of local need, is given weight by planners and each survey lasts for a five-year period.

28. Currently there are only seven parishes that have an up-to-date LNS in the borough. Some of these have been commissioned by the Council and some by the parish itself. The areas that have current housing needs surveys are:

- Appledore (current until 2022),
- Challock (current until 2022)
- Wye (current until 2023)
- Egerton (current until 2023)
- Wittersham (current until 2024)
- Tenterden (current until 2025)
- Bethersden (current until 2025)

29. The results of the Charing LNS carried out in January 2021 are now out and it is attached at Appendix C to demonstrate what a LNS is for members who are not familiar with them. Chilham and Shadoxhurst are expected to be the next areas, with parish councils and ward members being consulted on the survey ahead of it being issued to residents.

30. When thinking about areas to focus on initially, the Council, as indicated above, has a good understanding of areas keen to have the possibility for local needs housing in them and in which RPs or the council has the possibility of a site. In the section on communications that follows, the Council will contact parish Councils and offer them the opportunity to be considered sooner rather than later to see when they wish to have a survey undertaken in their parish. The Council will then draw up a plan for scheduling the surveys that will take place.

31. We will liaise closely with parishes about their surveys but the surveys are necessarily formulaic. While there may be a degree of flexibility to ask an additional question or two in the survey to perhaps reflect a local matter, the surveys have to have a similar methodology to them in order for accurate benchmarking to take place and for them to make sense to planners when they are considered as part of the evidence base for future applications. That way they become a standard measure when being formally considered.

32. While any LNS only provides a snapshot of need, with need always assumed to be slightly greater than that identified in the traditional 30% response rate, they also are not real-time. Therefore, this is why it is sometimes necessary when properties are completed to then subsequently allocate them to another household if no one with a local connection is available to take the property on when the properties are advertised.

Neighbourhood Plans

33. Neighbourhood plans also play a role in developing rural, affordable housing. Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and enables local communities to shape development and growth in their area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order, or a community right to build order.

34. A neighbourhood plan covers a geographic area and can be taken forward by town and parish councils or ‘neighbourhood forums’. It is the role of the local planning authority to agree what the neighbourhood area should be. A neighbourhood plan, if adopted, becomes part of the statutory development plan for that area and is then used in determining planning applications.

35. Three rural areas, Wye, Pluckley and Rolvenden, in the borough currently have an adopted neighbourhood plan, and a further nine rural areas are on the journey towards producing one. It is a major undertaking for local areas and parish councils to go through this process – providing a wide range of local evidence, conducting much local stakeholder engagement, preparing and structuring the plan, identifying sites and green spaces within the agreed area, considering infrastructure and national policy, and before the plan is independently assessed and finally a referendum is held on whether it comes into force. It is therefore to the immense credit of those areas that have completed or are working their way through this process.

Communications toolkit

36. Given the complexity of the housing process, not only site identification but the viability, affordability, planning, construction, allocation and management of any scheme, it is clear that the way forward is to show that by understanding the needs of the local community a better chance is stood of developing homes that meet the local needs that each LNS will identify.

37. Kent Housing Group (KHG) is a vital network of housing providers in the county, of which Ashford is proudly a member and of which its Head of Housing, Sharon Williams, is Chair for 2021. It is worth stating that in February 2021 KHG launched its Rural Housing Protocol. The guide is a very strong document, which is extremely well written and should form the basis of any communication that the Council has with parish councils.

38. It would seem highly sensible for the Council's housing service to liaise with parishes and refer to this toolkit as and when a local needs survey is commissioned. It is therefore proposed to contact all parish councils by email to notify them of the decision to undertake a rolling programme of LNSs and to share with them the excellent KHG Rural Housing Protocol document.

39. The recommendations of this report ask for delegated authority to be afforded to the head of housing to sign off the bespoke communication that will go to each parish council, given that some have a current local needs survey, some have a neighbourhood planning process that they are undertaking and others have neither.

Community led-housing

40. Community-led housing is a relatively new concept and sees local people playing a leading and long-term role in solving housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and resilient communities in ways that are difficult to achieve through mainstream housing. Community-led housing provides hope to people in housing need and delivers its affordable homes in perpetuity, which is a key selling point along with meaningful community consultation, stewardship and the community membership elements involved. Members may have heard of community land trusts (CLTs), for example.

41. CLTs are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes, among other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for future occupiers.

42. The role of CLTs is recognised at a national level, with the National Federation of Builders in particular supporting the way in which they are disrupting the market. Ordinarily, CLTs may be gifted land but, given that the Council has no land not already earmarked for its own development or preliminarily ruled out for development by planning, the Council has offered financial assistance at this stage to the one incorporated CLT within the borough, in Tenterden. The council will continue to support the group through networking as it seeks to develop homes in perpetuity for local residents and potentially team up with an RP to develop homes at the appropriate point.

43. The council remains an associate member of the National CLT Network and will continue to follow this rapidly growing sector, which the Government has previously invest £300m in.

Proposal

44. The working group wishes to increase the ability of the borough council and the parishes in the Ashford borough to deliver affordable homes in rural areas. Therefore, an uplift is required to the number of local needs surveys currently being undertaken, so it is proposed to increase this so that we aim for six per financial year. Currently £14,000 is allocated in the 2021-22 budget to accommodate around four surveys, which is the number that ACRK have indicated they have capacity to undertake. However, it is requested that the capacity is secured in the budget to spend £20,000 should six surveys be possible in any of the next three financial years up to 2023-24.

45. Better engagement with rural communities is essential to establish local need. To progress, we need to obtain a clearer picture of local need in our rural communities to better develop affordable, rural housing. Therefore, we will contact all parishes to notify them of our intention to increase the number of current LNSs in the borough and share the Rural Housing Protocol with them. The nature of this communication will obviously be bespoke depending on the circumstances in each parish.

46. The Council also wishes to continue to work with Neighbourhood Plan groups as well. As indicated in its affordable housing delivery plan, the ambition of the Council is to have every available tool in the affordable housing toolbox at its disposal to deliver the right results for all communities in the borough.

Equalities Impact Assessment

47. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. There are no adverse impacts on any protected characteristic as a result of this report.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

48. Future consultation would take place with local communities when new applications are put forward – this would either be done through the formal planning process if the site was submitted by an external developer or it would take place in the form of an informal planning application if the Council was consulting on a site in its own ownership.

49. Consultation, independent of the Council would take place if a CLT or a Neighbourhood Plan was established within any rural community.

Other Options Considered

50. Leaving everything as it is, and simply continuing to fund one survey per annum would obviously reduce financial expenditure but it leaves the authority

with an incomplete, inaccurate picture of housing need in rural areas. Additionally it would leave the Council without an adequate evidence-base to guide it when responding to planning applications received – particularly to those sites that would be a windfall or an exception site. It would also risk the Council falling behind when it has striven so hard to deliver genuinely affordable housing in rural communities that meets the known local need.

51. Relying solely on the Kent Housing Protocol document is also an option but may not engage parish councils within the borough on its own. The Council has a good rapport with parishes across the borough and wishes to work with them to deliver the right rural homes in the right rural places.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

52. The local needs surveys and additional consultation with parishes will deliver meaningful results – in terms of engaging key stakeholders on this important matter of where residents live both now and in the future. It will additionally raise the profile of the work that Ashford has done as a borough to deliver genuinely affordable rural homes in the past and re-state its intention to continue to lead the way in this endeavour, a key aim when Ashford is the most rural borough in the county.

53. In the context of the overall budget, the financial sums spoken about within this report are significant but not bank-breaking – especially so when the benefits to this and future generations are weighed up.

Next Steps in Process

54. If members agree the recommendations of the report then the housing services team within the Council will begin discussions with ACRK to schedule the surveys for the 2021-22 financial year. It will also begin to contact the parishes directly to make them aware of the Council's continued rural affordable housing ambitions and to share with them the KHG Rural Housing Protocol.

55. Further updates on this piece of work will be presented to members as part of the HRA Business Plan report and affordable housing programme update that are tabled to Cabinet in the autumn of each year.

Conclusion

56. Ashford must continue to lead the way in delivering affordable rural housing. The working group will continue to meet every other month and any further recommendations from the group requiring cabinet approval will be fed back in the appropriate way.

Portfolio Holder's Views

57. I commissioned the rural working group to see if we could continue our proven track record of delivering quality affordable housing in good numbers in our rural communities. This has to be pivotal to our overall success given that

Ashford is the most rural borough in Kent. I firmly agree with the working group's recommendations that more engagement with key stakeholders in those communities and increasing the number of local needs surveys will help us to identify more sites to try and bring delivery closer to demand.

58. Delivering quality homes for people in order for them to stay in the area in which they grew up, or have lived and been part of community life, is really important and we hope through these actions that we can continue to identify suitable sites that will ensure Ashford's rural affordable housing delivery continues to lead the way in the county.

Contact and Email

59. Mark James email: mark.james@ashford.gov.uk

60. Mark James phone: 01233 330687

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Area	1 bed flat rent	1 bed flat rent local need	1 bed house rent	2 bed flat rent	2 bed flat rent local need	2 bed flat shared ownership
Aldington						
	7			10		16
	4			2		
Appledore						
Bethersden		4				
Biddenden						
Charing		2			2	
	12					
Chilham		2				
	4					
Egerton		2			2	
Godmersham						
Hamstreet	6					
			6			
High Halden					2	
Mersham		2			2	
Pluckley		2			2	
Rolvenden		4				
	4					
Ruckinge						
Shadoxhurst						

Smarden		4				
Smeeth		4				
Stone						
Warehorne		2				
Wittersham						
Woodchurch						
Wye						
TOTAL	**37**	**28**	**6**	**12**	**10**	**16**

2 bed flat shared ownership local need	2 bed house rent	2 bed house rent local need	2 bed house shared ownership	2 bed house shared ownership local need	2 bed bungalow rent	2 bed bungalow rent local need	2 bed bungalow shared ownership local need
		4		2		2	
	2		2				
	13		10				
		4		2			
		2					
		5					
		6					
	4		2				
2				4			
		23					
		2		1			
	7				6		
		10				2	
			4				
		1		1			
		6					
		1		2		1	
	2		4				
	1						
		2					
		3					
		4		3		2	
	11						
		2		3			
	3		2				
		3		1			
		6		3			
			4				

		4		1			
	10		4				
		2		2			
		4				3	1
		2				4	
	6						
		8		7			
	3						
	3		2				
2	**65**	**104**	**34**	**32**	**6**	**14**	**1**

3 bed house rent	3 bed house rent local need	3 bed house shared ownership	3 bed house shared ownership local need	3 bed bungalow rent local need	3 bed bungalow shared ownership local need
	6		2		
7					
	4		2		
	3				
	1		1		
			2		
	14				
			1		
15					
	8				
6					
	1		1		
	5				
	3		1		
4		8			
2					
	2				
	1				
	4		4		
	2		1		
1		4			
	2				
	2				
		2			

	2		1		
3		2			
	3		1		
				1	1
4					
	9		7		
4					
1		3			
47	**72**	**19**	**24**	**1**	**1**

Registered provider
English Rural
Golding Homes
Housing & Care 21 Extra care
West Kent Housing
English Rural
West Kent Housing
Southern Housing
English Rural
Town & Country
English Rural
Southern Housing
English Rural
Southern Housing
Clarion
Orbit
English Rural
Sanctuary Housing
English Rural
Hyde Housing
Moat Housing
English Rural
English Rural
English Rural
Sanctuary Housing
Southern Housing
English Rural
West Kent Housing
English Rural
Hyde Housing
Orbit

English Rural
Southern Housing
English Rural
English Rural
English Rural
Southern Housing
English Rural
Hyde Housing
West Kent Housing
530

Charing Housing Needs Survey

April 2021

With the support of: Charing Parish Council
Ashford Borough Council

Rosemary Selling – Rural Housing Enabler
www.ruralkent.org.uk

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) undertook a parish wide survey to ascertain if there are shortfalls in affordable housing provision within the parish of Charing and to identify the needs of older residents seeking to downsize/move to more suitable housing. This report provides overall information as well as analysis of housing need.

A survey was posted to every household within the parish in February 2020. Approximately 1,466 surveys were distributed with 365 surveys being returned representing a 25% response rate.

High property prices and a predominance of privately-owned homes means that some local people are unable to afford a home within the parish. At the time of writing the report the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 3-bed semi-detached bungalow for £350,000; to afford to buy this home a deposit of approximately £52,250 would be required and an income of £66,111. To afford to rent privately, an income of approximately £30,000 would be required to afford the cheapest property found available to rent locally, which was a 1-bedroom apartment for £750 pcm (in Ashford).

A need for up to 11 affordable homes, for the following local households was identified:

- 6 single people
- 1 couple
- 4 families
- 7 households currently live in the parish, 4 live outside.

The survey also identified a requirement for 28 homes for older households.

- 11 single people
- 17 couples
- 8 of the older households require affordable housing.
- All 28 households currently live in Charing.

Overall, the survey has identified a total need for 19 affordable homes, 8 of which are for older households. In addition, there is a need for 20 open market properties suitable for older households who want to downsize / move to more suitable housing for their needs.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHARING HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) from Action in Communities in Rural Kent worked with Charing Parish Council and Ashford Borough to undertake a housing needs survey within the parish.

The aim of this survey is to identify in general terms if there is a housing need from local people. It is not to provide a list of names and addresses of individuals requiring a home. If the project proceeds to a more advanced stage a further Registration of Interest survey may be undertaken to update the levels of housing need. At this stage, further details such as name and address, income, housing need and details of local connection will be taken.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In a report published in June 2018 by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) it is stated that: 'The affordability gaps in rural areas are high compared to urban areas. The average rural house price is around £19,000 above the average for England as a whole, at £320,700 compared to £301,900, and is more than £87,000 higher than the urban average excluding London (£233,600)[1]

Small developments of local needs housing schemes can provide affordable housing for local people, thereby enabling them to stay in their community and contribute to village life. This can make a real difference to the vitality of village services.

The housing needs of older people in rural areas has also been a subject of concern given the growing numbers in that age group whose needs are not being met by the market. A nine month enquiry starting in 2017 on Housing and Care for Older People concluded in their report[2] that 'policy makers must recognise the growing housing needs of older people living in the countryside. It recommends that Local Planning Authorities ensure provision of new homes for older people, noting the value of both the building of small village developments – "perhaps six bungalows on an unused scrap of land" – or larger scale retirement schemes in towns close by.'

The Community Led Housing sector promotes the concept of cohousing schemes, that can provide supportive environments for older households wanting to downsize but stay in their village. Cohousing can be inter-generational, but there have been a number of successful cohousing schemes specifically for older households developed in the UK.

The Rural Housing Enabler Programme, which is delivered in Kent through Action with Communities in Rural Kent – the Rural Community Council for Kent and Medway, is supported by Local Authorities across Kent and Medway including Ashford Borough Council.

Action with Communities in Rural Kent is a registered charity (No. 212796) whose purpose is to improve the quality of life of local communities, particularly for disadvantaged people, and to facilitate the development of thriving, diverse and sustainable communities throughout rural Kent. Since March 1998 Action with Communities in Rural Kent has employed a Rural Housing Enabler whose role is to provide independent support, advice and information to Parish Councils and community groups concerned with the lack of local needs housing in their rural communities.

The RHE will assist with carrying out a housing needs survey, analyse the results and when appropriate help identify suitable sites in conjunction with the local authority and others, for a local needs housing scheme.

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[1] A New Rural Settlement: Fixing the affordable housing crisis in rural England https://www.ippr.org/files/2018-06/1530194000_a-new-rural-settlement-june18.pdf

[2] Rural Housing for an Ageing Population: Preserving Independence. Happi 4- The Rural HAPPI Inquiry. April 2018. Jeremy Porteus

4. METHOD

The Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent agreed the format of the survey and covering letter with the Parish Council; a copy of the survey was posted to every household in the parish in January 2021.

Surveys were returned in pre-paid envelopes to Action with Communities in Rural Kent. Copies of the survey were available to complete for anyone who had left the parish and wished to return, these were held by the Rural Housing Enabler. It was asked that completed survey forms were returned by **8th February 2021**. All surveys received at Action with Communities in Rural Kent by 15th February are included in this report to allow for delays with incoming post during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Approximately 1,466 surveys were distributed with 365 returned by this date representing a response rate of 25%

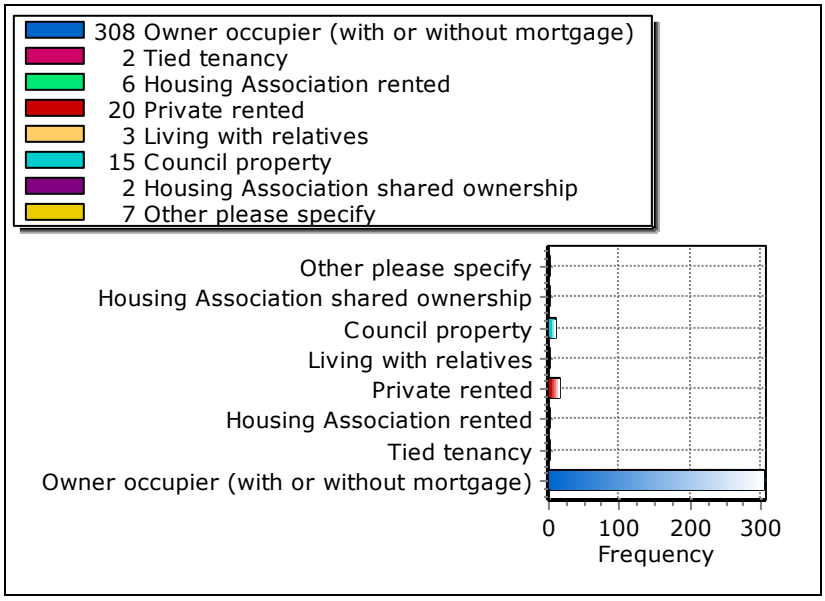
Some surveys were not fully completed therefore the results shown are for the total answers to each question.

5. RESULTS

Section 1

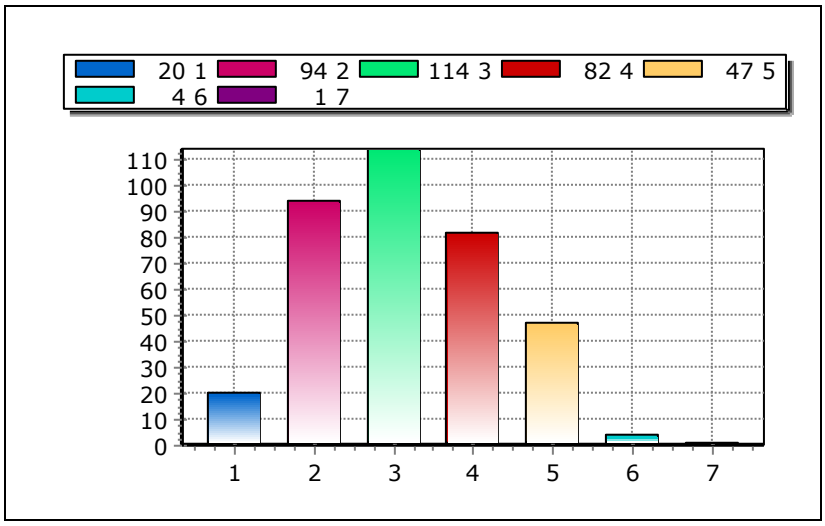
Listed below are the results of each question asked by the housing needs survey.

Question 1. What type of housing do you live in?

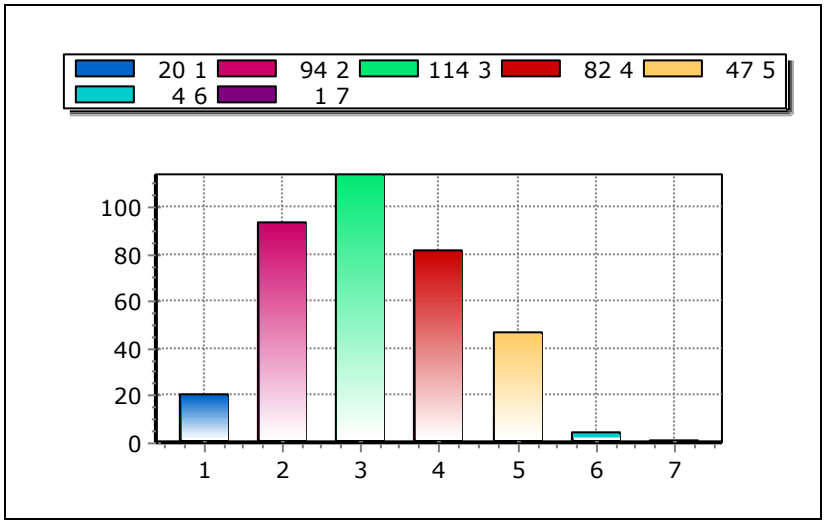


85% of respondents are owner occupiers.

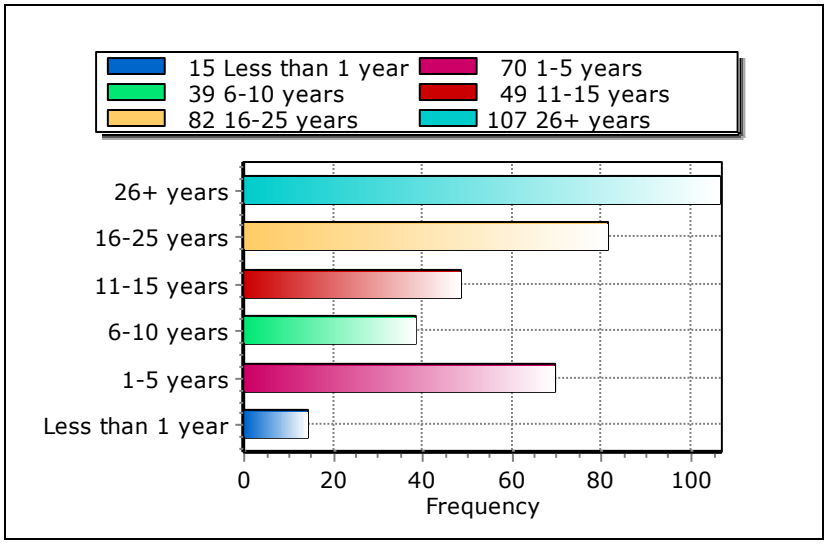
Question 2. Number of bedrooms in your home.



Number of people that currently live in the property.

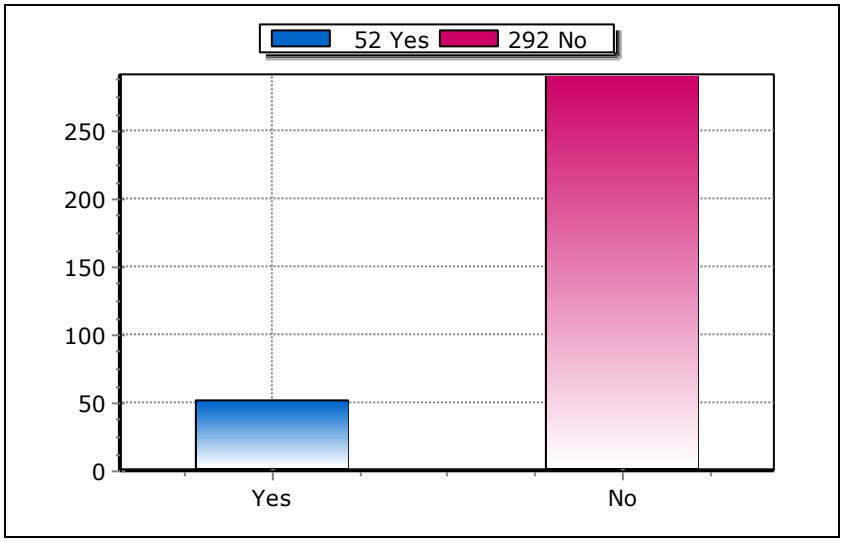


Question 3. How long have you lived in the parish?

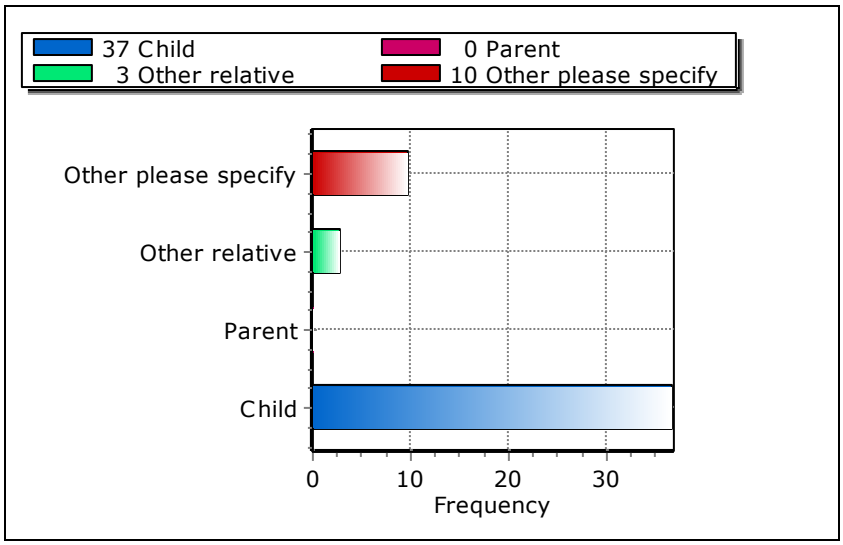


303 respondents (85%) have lived in the village for over 10 years.

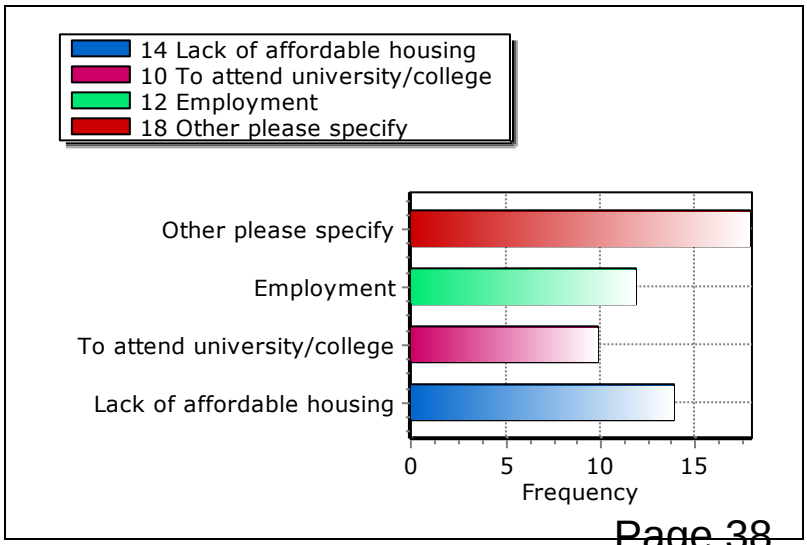
Question 4. Have any members of your family/household left the parish in the last 5 years?



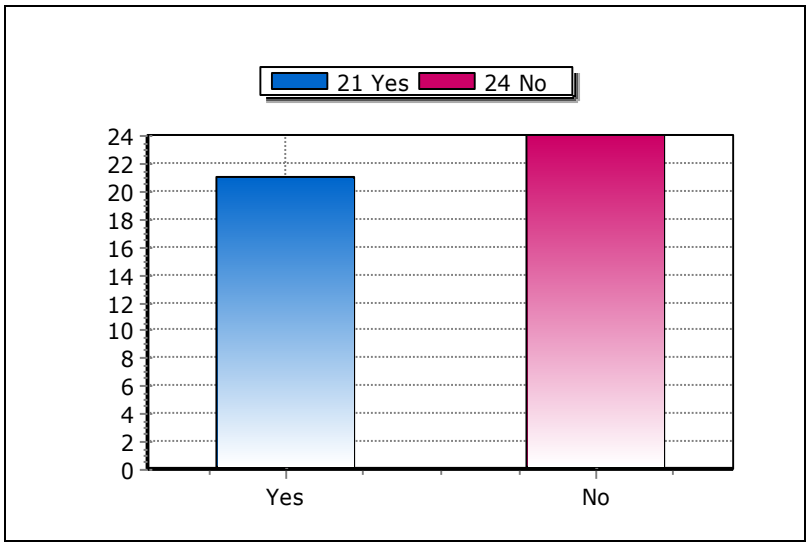
Question 5. If you answered yes to Q4, please state what relationship they have to you.



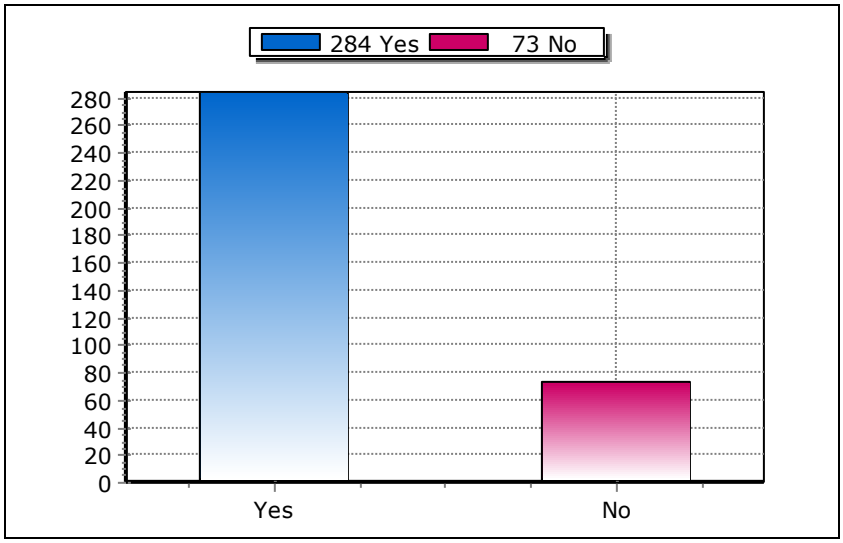
Q6. Please indicate the reason they left



Q7. Would they return if more affordable accommodation could be provided?



Q8. Would you support a small development of affordable housing if there was a proven need for people with a genuine local connection to the parish?

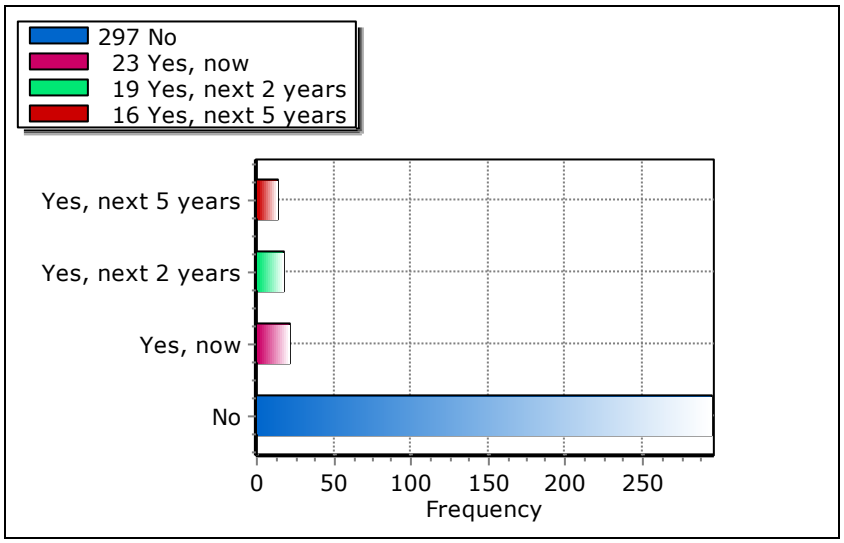


79% of respondents who answered the question (78% of all respondents) said they would support a development of housing for local people.

Q9. Please use this space if you wish to explain your answer to Question 8.

There were 173 responses to this question; a full list can be found in Appendix C1.

Q10. Do you or a member of your household need separate or alternative accommodation either now or in the next 2 or 5 years?



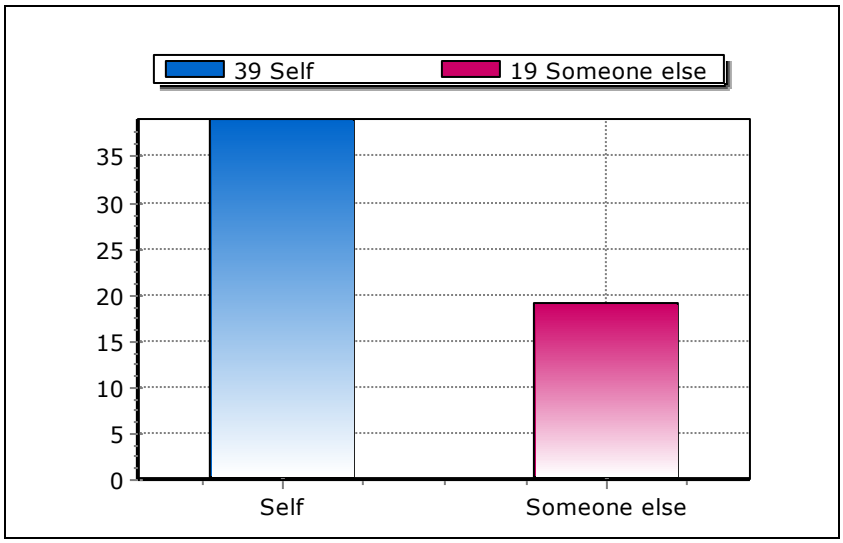
58 respondents said they had a housing need wither now or in the next 2 or 5 years.

Section 2 – Housing Needs

Only those respondents who deemed themselves in need of alternative housing were asked to complete Section 2.

58 respondents completed section 2.

Question 11. Are you completing this form for yourself or someone else?

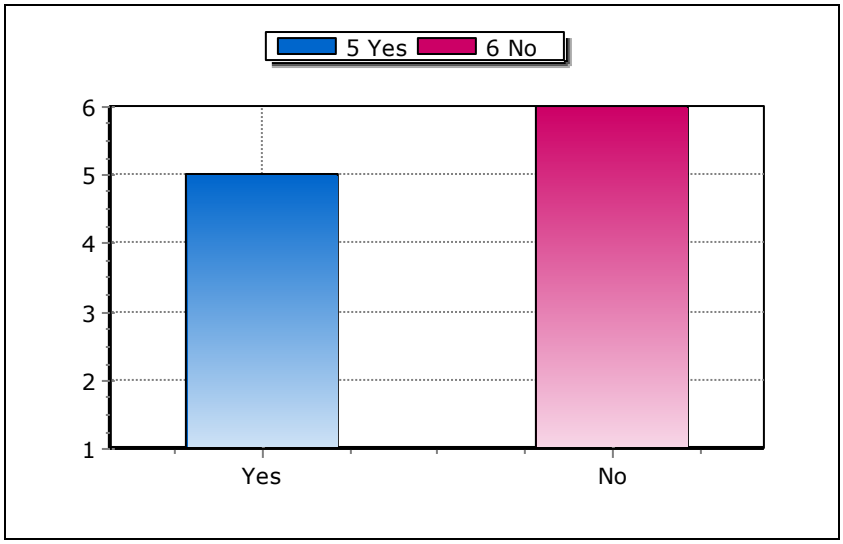


Question 12. If you are completing this form for someone else, please state their relationship to you and where they currently live e.g. with parents, private renting etc.

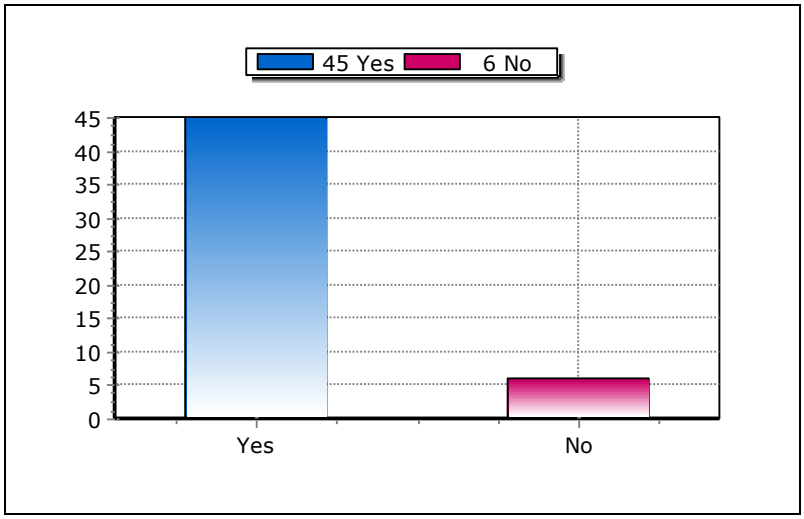
Respondents were mainly completing the form for their adult children living in the home or elsewhere.

Question 13. Personal details of respondents are not included in this report.

Question 14. If you live outside the parish, do you wish to return?



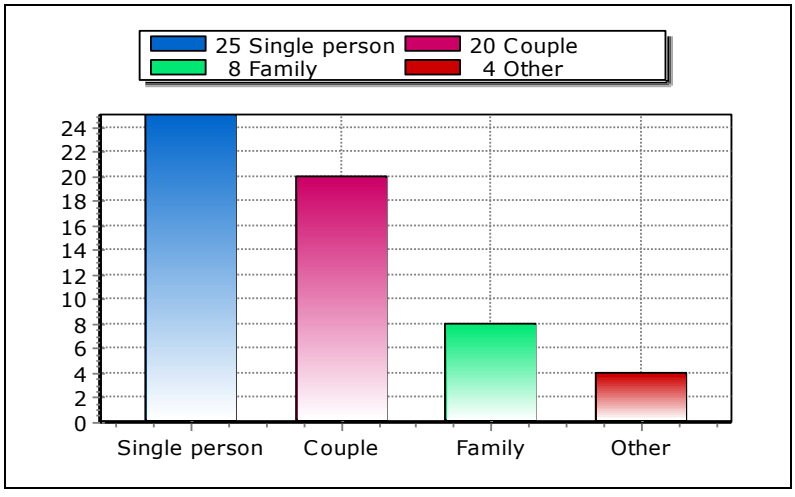
Question 15. If you live in the parish, do you wish to stay?



Q16. What is your connection with Charing? Please tick all that apply.

Local connection	Frequency
I currently live in Charing and have done so continuously for the last 5 years	31
I have previously lived in Charing and have immediate family who currently live there and have done so continuously for the last 10 years	5
I have lived in Charing for 7 of the last 10 years	10
I need to move to Charing to take up full or part time employment	0
I am in full or part time employment in the parish	2
I need to move to the parish to take up full time or part time* employment	1
I need to move to Charing to give or receive support to or from an immediate family member	4

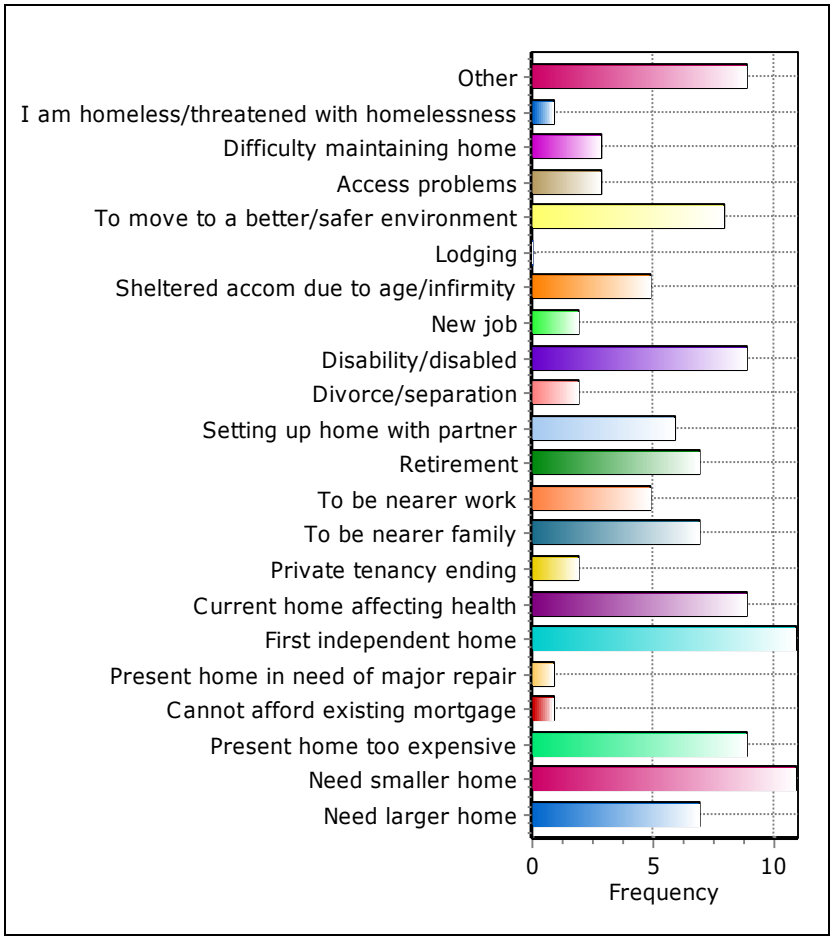
Question 17. What type of household will you be in alternative accommodation?



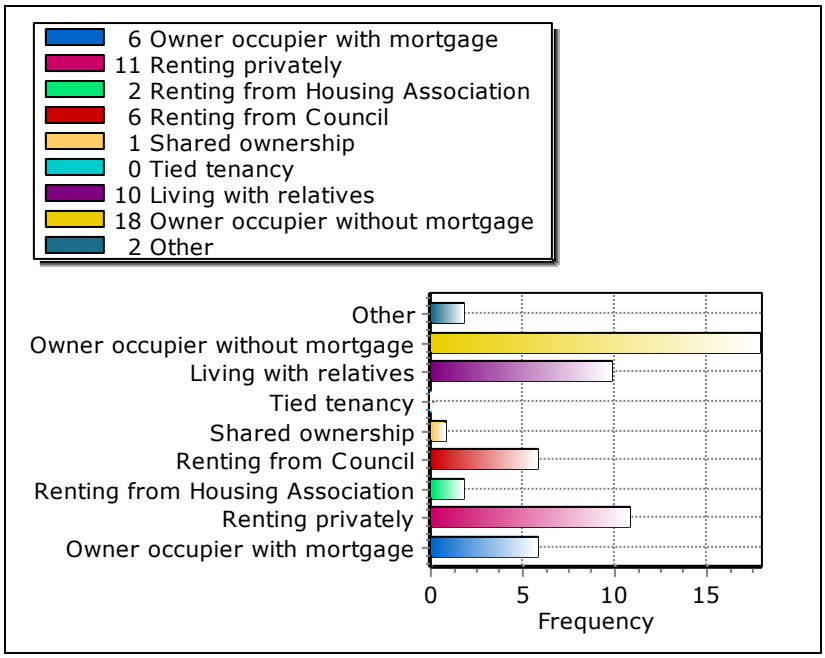
Question 18. How many people in each age group need alternative accommodation?

AGE	0 – 9	10 -15	16 - 19	20 -24	25 – 44	45 - 59	60 - 74	75+
Male	1	0	2	3	4	3	7	8
Female	1	0	0	2	2	1	13	15
Total	**2**	**0**	**2**	**5**	**6**	**4**	**20**	**23**

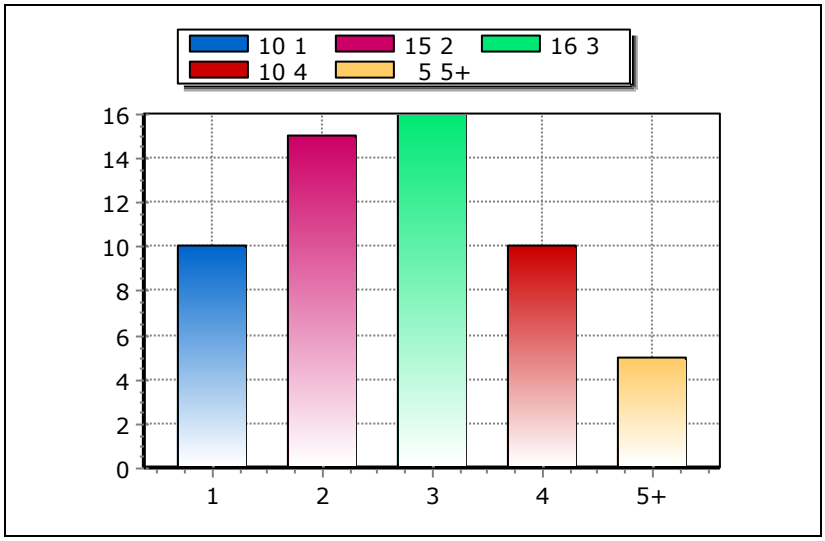
Question 19. Why are you seeking a new home? (please tick all that apply)



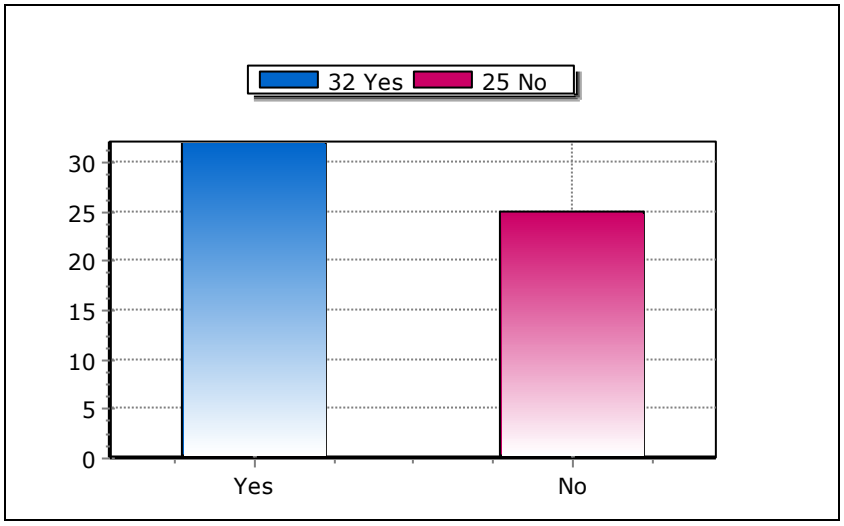
Question 20. What is your current housing situation?



Question 21. How many bedrooms does your current home have?



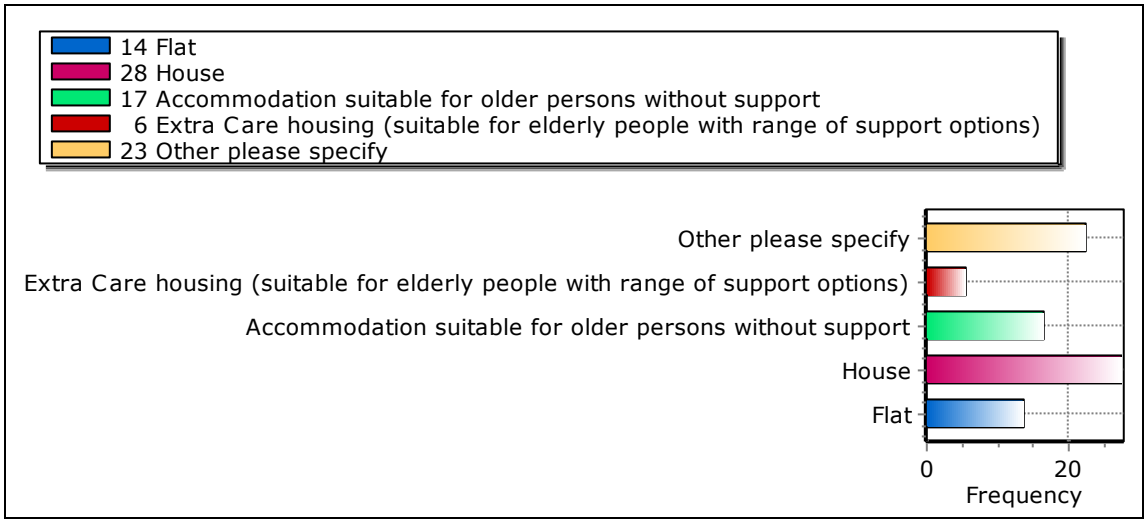
Question 22. Are you an older household wishing to downsize/move to more suitable for your needs?



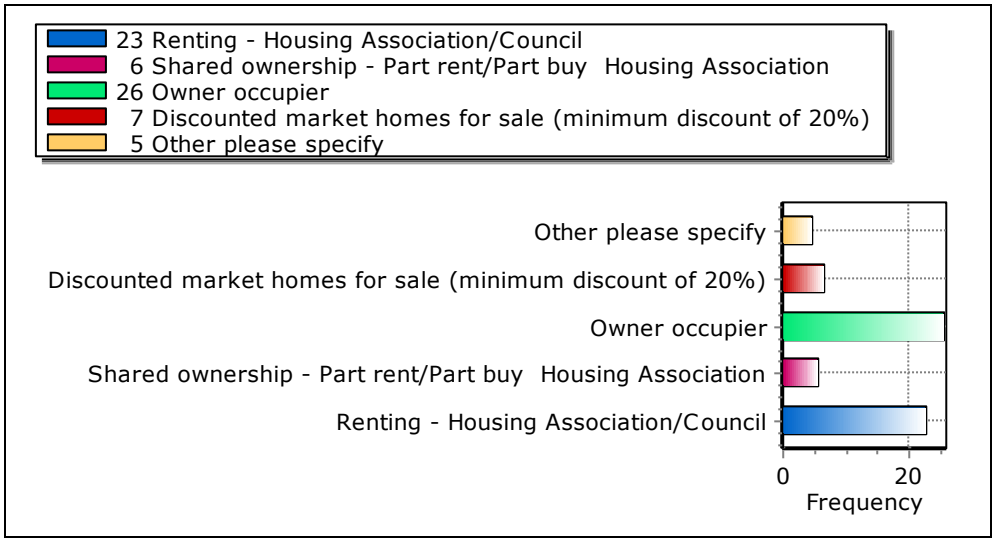
Question 23. Please tell us in your own words why you need to move and what prevents you from doing so.

There were 51 responses to this question. A full list of responses can be found in Appendix C2.

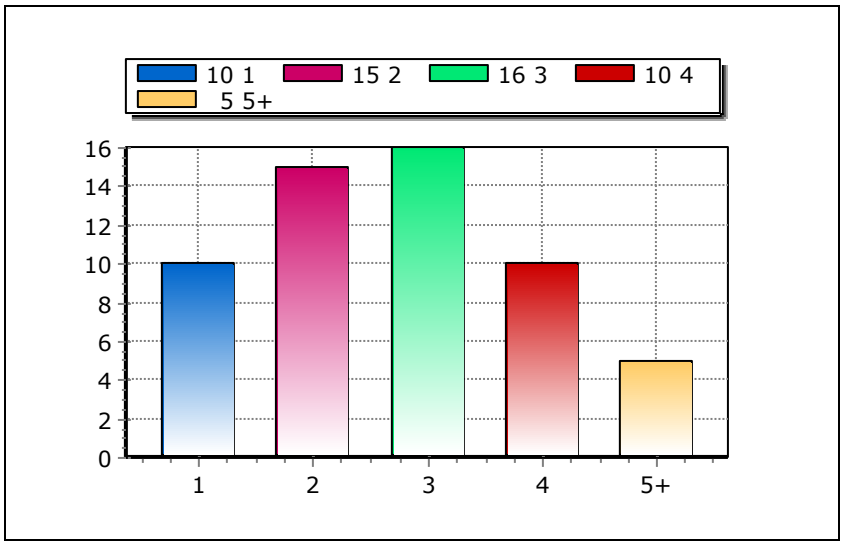
Question 24. What type of housing do you need, please tick all that apply?



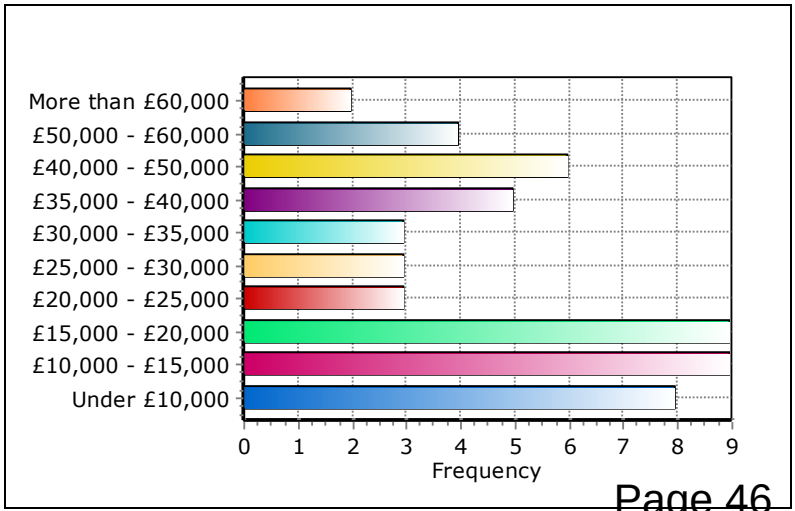
Question 25. Which tenure would best suit your housing need?



Question 26. How many bedrooms will you need?



Q27. Please indicate the total <u>gross annual</u> income (before tax) of the household in housing need (joint if a couple). Do not include housing benefit or council tax benefit.



Q28. If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home.

1 x £70,000
1 x £90,000
1 x £160,000
1 x £225,000
1 x £230,000
2 x £300,000
2 x £375,000
1 x £450,000
1 x £475,000
3 x 500,000
1 x £575,000
1 x £600,000
1 x £700,000
1 x £730,000
1 x £850,000
1x £1000,000

Question 29. How much money would you be able to release towards buying your own home? Either open market/shared ownership or discounted market sale tenure?

1 x £15,000
1 x £20,000
2 x £50,000
1 x £50,000
1 x £70,000
1 x £90,000
1 x £250,000
1 x 345,000
1 x £100,000

Question 30. Do you have any particular or specialised housing requirements e.g. to assist with a disability or special need? (Please provide details)

There were 27 responses to this question. A full list of responses can be found in Appendix C3.

6. LOCAL HOUSING COSTS

To fully assess local housing need it is important to look at open market prices in the private sector of houses both to rent and buy.

Property for sale

Searches of www.rightmove.co.uk which markets property for a number of leading local estate agents, in March 2021, found the following cheapest properties for sale in Charing.

Type of Property	Number of Bedrooms	Price £
Semi-detached house	3	£350,000
End of terrace	4	£375,000
Terraced house	4	£450,000
Semi-detached house	5	£475,000
House	4	£499,000

Property to rent

There were no properties to rent in Charing, the nearest properties to rent were found within 3 miles of Charing, in Ashford.

Type of Property	Number of Bedrooms	Price £pcm.
Apartment	1	750
Apartment	2	875
Terraced house	2	875
Terraced house	2	900

Household income required to afford current market prices.

Using local information, the table below shows gross income level needed to purchase a property in the area. The figures are calculated assuming a 10% deposit and using 4.5 x gross income. Monthly repayment is based on a 2-year fixed standard with HSBC at 3.4% (March 2021) 25-year mortgage term and is calculated using HSBC's mortgage calculator.

Type of Property	Price £	Deposit (10%)	Gross Income Level	Monthly Repayment
3 bed semi-detached	350 000	35,000	66,111	1509
4-bedroom end of terrace	375 000	37,500	70,833	1617
4-bedroom terraced house	450 000	67,500 (15% deposit required)	85,000	1715
5-bedroom semi-detached house	475 000	71,250 (15% deposit required)	89,722	1810
4-bedroom house	499 995	99,000 (20% deposit required)	88,888	1,704

To gauge the income level required to afford to rent privately the following calculations assume that 30% gross income is spent on housing. (A household is considered able to afford market rented housing in cases where the rent payable would constitute no more than 30% of gross income).

Type of Property	Price £ pcm	Approx. Gross Annual income £
Apartment	750	30 000
Apartment	875	35 000
Terraced house	875	35 000
Terraced house	900	36 000

Affordable Rent

The Government introduced changes relating to rents charged to new tenants of social housing from April 2011. Affordable Rent properties allow landlords to set rents anywhere between current social rent levels and up to 80% of local market rents. The following table shows housing benefit levels (known as Local Housing Allowance (LHA)) for the Ashford area. Affordability of the rent can be achieved through the input of Housing Benefit where eligible.

Size of Property	LHA Levels £pcm/Affordable Rent levels £pcm
1 bed	623
2 bed	728
3 bed	897
4 bed	1126

The table below shows income needed to afford the affordable rent levels using 30% of gross income as the indicator of what is affordable, for those who are not in receipt of housing benefit.

Property	Price £ pcm	Gross annual Income £
1 bed	623	24 920
2 bed	728	29 120
3 bed	897	35 880
4 bed	1126	45 040

Shared ownership

To give an indication of respondents' ability to afford shared ownership, levels of income and rent/mortgage have been taken into consideration on purchasing a 35% share of a property with estimated values of £190,000 for a 1 bed flat, £300,000 for a 2 bedroom house and £338,000 for a 3 bedroom house. Calculations are made using the Homes England's Target Income calculator and assume a 10% deposit of mortgage share. Property values are taken from information found at www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk for new build properties in the Ashford area (actual costs of properties in Charing may differ).

Property price £	Share	Deposit Required £	Monthly mortgage £	Monthly rent £	Monthly Service Charge	Monthly total £	Gross Income required
190,000	35	6,650	325	283	80	7,338	24,819
300,000	35	10,500	514	447	80	1,041	37,519
338,000	35	11,830	579	503	80	1,162	41,906

Discounted market sale/First Homes

First Homes is a new tenure being introduced by Government. The tables below show affordability of Discounted market sale with a 20% discount (an option included in the survey Q25) and First Homes with a 30% discount.

Discounted Market Sale

The table below shows the amount of deposit and income required to afford this tenure based on a 20% discount. The homes must not cost more than £250,000 after discount. Calculations are based on a minimum 10% deposit; eligibility includes having a household income not exceeding £80,000. Gross income required is based on x 4.5 salary. The full market values used are taken from information found at Help to Buy (see above).

Property price £	Discounted price (20%) £	Deposit Required £10%	Gross Income required
190,000	152,000	15,200	30,400
300,000	240,000	24,000	48,000
338,000	270,400 (not eligible as exceeds £250k limit)	N/A	N/A

First Homes

The table below shows the amount of deposit and income required to afford this tenure based on a 30% discount. Homes are sold with a standard discount of 30% below local market value; it can be possible for the Local Authority to seek discounts of up to 50% but the need for this must be evidenced. The homes must not cost more than £250,000 after discount. Calculations are based on a minimum 10% deposit; eligibility includes having a household income not exceeding £80,000. Gross income required is based on x 4.5 salary. The full market values used are taken from information found at Help to Buy (see above).

Property price £	Discounted price (30%) £	Deposit Required £10%	Gross Income required
190,000	133,000	13,300	26,600
300,000	210,000	21,000	42,000
338,000	236,600	23,660	47,320

7. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

This section is divided into two categories: the need for affordable housing and the needs of older people in the parish requiring alternative housing, either affordable or open market.

A total of 25 respondents said they needed affordable housing. 1 was immediately excluded as they did not provide sufficient information for an assessment of their eligibility to be made. There were a total of 24 responses.

7.1 Assessment of the need for affordable housing

This analysis is divided into categories of those who need housing now, in the next 2 years and in the next 5 years.

In total 24 respondents said they need affordable housing in the following timescales:

- Now x 8
- In the next 2 years x 11
- In the next 5 years x 5
-

Assessment of the 8 households seeking affordable housing in now.

Four respondents were excluded for the following reasons: two respondents did not wish to stay in the parish, one respondent did not provide sufficient information and one respondent wanted to buy on the open market only.

The 4 households in need of affordable housing in now are:

- 2 single people
- 2 families

Single people – there were 2 single people

Age	Frequency
20-24	1
45-59	1

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
To be nearer family	1
Divorce/separation	1
First independent home	1
Current home affecting health	1
Present home too expensive	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Renting privately	2

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
2	1
3	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
House	1
Flat/House	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Renting housing association/council	1
Shared ownership	1

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	1
2	1

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

House's joint gross annual income:

Income	Frequency
£10,000 - £15,000	1
£40,000 - £50,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

£100,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

None

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	2

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they both currently live outside the parish.

The following table shows the respondents' ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
£10,000 - £15,000	1	1 x 1 bed with HB	0	0	0	0
£40,000 - £50,000	1	N/A	1 x 2 bed	0	0	0

It is assumed that respondents who cannot afford the affordable rent levels will be eligible for housing benefit (HB).

Families - there were 2 families.

Age

	Adult Age	Adult Age	Child Age
Family 1	25-44	45-59	16-19 M
Family 2	20-24	20-24	0-9 baby

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Disability/disabled	1
First independent home	1
Need larger home	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Housing Association rented	1
Council property	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
3	1
1	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
Flat / House	2

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Renting Housing Association/council	2

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	2

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Household's joint gross annual income:

Income	Frequency
Under £10,000	2

Amount available towards a deposit:

None

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

One of the respondents is disabled and they explain that the respondent "really isn't good with stairs", also needs his partner nearby when using the shower.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	2

The respondents both indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they both currently live in Charing.

The following table shows the respondents' ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent. It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared Ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
Under £10,000	1	1 x 2 bed with HB	0	0	0	0
Under £10,000	1	1 x 2 bed with HB	0	0	0	0

It is assumed that respondents who cannot afford the affordable rent levels will be eligible for housing benefit (HB).

Assessment of the 11 households seeking affordable housing in the next 2 years.

6 respondents were excluded for the following reasons: one respondent indicated they wanted to relocate, one respondent did not meet local connection criteria, three respondents want to buy on the open market only and one does not wish to stay in the parish.

The 5 households in need of affordable housing in the next 2 years are:

- 3 single people
- 1 couple
- 1 family

Single people – there were 3 single people.

Age	Frequency
25-44	2
45-59	1

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Present home too expensive	1
Divorce/separation	1
Retirement	1
First independent home	2
Homeless/threatened with homelessness	1
Other	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Other	1
Living with relatives	1
Renting privately	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
House	2
Flat	1

Current number of bedrooms

Current beds	Frequency
1	1
2	1
4	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Discounted market homes for sale	1
Renting Housing Association/Council	2

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	1
2	2

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Income:

Income	Frequency
£10,000 - £15,000	2
£35,000 - £40,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

1 x £50,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

None

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	3

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; two respondents currently live in Charing, 1 respondent lives outside the parish and wants to return.

The following table shows the respondents' ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
£10,000 - £15,000	1	1 x 1 bed with HB	0	0	0	0
£10,000 - £15,000	1	1 x 1 bed with HB	0	0	0	0
£35,000 - £40,000	1		1 x 2 bed shared ownership	0	0	0

The first respondent indicated that they were interested in Discounted market sale, however they do not have sufficient income so have been assessed for Shared Ownership.

It is assumed that respondents who cannot afford the affordable rent levels will be eligible for housing benefit (HB)

Couples– there was 1 couple

Age

Age	Frequency
20-24	2

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Setting up home with partner	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Living with relatives	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
4	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
House	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Discounted market sale	1

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	1

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Income:

Income	Frequency
£40,00 - £50,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

£15,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:
No

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	1

The respondents indicated at least one local connection criteria; they currently live in the parish.

The following table shows the respondent's ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared Ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
£40,000 - £50,000	1	0	1 x 2 bed	0	0	0

The respondent indicated an interest in Discounted Market Home for sale but may not have sufficient deposit (£15,000) for the size of property they require, so they have been assessed for Shared Ownership.

Families - there was 1 family

Age

	Adult Age	Adult Age	Child Age	Child Age
Family 1	45-59M	25-44F	0-9 M	0-9 F

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Need larger home	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Private renting	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
3	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
House	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Discounted market sale	1

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
4	1

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Income:

Income	Frequency
£50,000 - £60,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

£15,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

Needs to be walking distance to the village school.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	1

The respondent indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they currently live in Charing.

The following table shows the respondent's ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared Ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
£50,000 - £60,000	1	0	1 x 3 bed	0	0	0

The respondent indicated they were interested in Discounted Market Sale, they may not have a sufficient deposit for the size of property they require so have been assessed for Shared Ownership.

Assessment of the 5 households seeking affordable housing in the next 5 years

3 respondents were excluded for the following reasons, one did not with to stay in the parish and two wanted to buy on the open market only.

The 2 households in need of affordable housing in the next 5 years are:

- 1 single person
- 1 family

Single people there was 1 single person

Age	Frequency
16-19	1

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Disability/Disabled	1
First independent home	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Living with relatives	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
Flat	1

Current number of bedrooms

Current beds	Frequency
4	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Renting Housing Association/Council	1

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	1

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Income:

Income	Frequency
Under £10,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

1x £20,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

Learning difficulties (autism) but parents live in village and wish to remain here.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	1

The respondent indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they currently live in Charing.

The following table shows the respondent's ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
Under £10,000	1	1 x 1 bed with HB	0	0	0	0

The respondent has a disability and would prefer extra care for adults that need simple support available.

It is assumed that respondents who cannot afford the affordable rent levels will be eligible for housing benefit (HB).

Families there was 1 family

	Adult Age	Adult Age	Child Age
Family 1	25-44 M	25-44 F	0-9 toddler

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
First independent home	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Renting privately	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
1	1

Type of housing needed: The answers given relate to the type of housing respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

Type of housing	Frequency
House	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Shared ownership	1

Number of bedrooms required: The answers given relate to the number of bedrooms respondents sought/preferred rather than an assessment of their need.

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	1

Number of bedrooms respondents are eligible for is dependent upon tenure and Ashford Borough Council's allocation policy.

Income:

Income	Frequency
£30,000 - £35,000	1

Amount available towards a deposit:

Not answered

Particular or specialised housing requirements:
None

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	1

The respondent indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they currently live outside the parish.

The following table shows the respondents' ability to afford the various forms of tenure they said they require plus affordability of open market housing to buy and rent.

It should be noted that actual affordability of the various forms of tenure required depends on income and the ability to pay the required deposit and other finances necessary to buy a home.

Income	Number of respondents	Renting HA	Shared Ownership	Open market purchase	Private rent	Discounted market sale
£30,000 - £35,000	1	1 x 2 bed	0	0	0	0

7.2 Assessment of the requirement for housing for older households

Householders were asked to respond to the survey if they were older people who needed to downsize and/or move to more suitable housing for their needs, this included owner occupiers.

The analysis is divided into categories of those who require alternative housing now, within the next 2 years and within the next 5 years.

In total, 31 respondents said they were older households wanting to downsize/move to more suitable housing for their needs.

The 31 older households wanted to move in the following timescales:

- Now x 12
- Within the next 2 years x 8
- Within the next 3-5 years x 11

Assessment of the 13 households who require alternative housing now:

3 respondents were excluded, all three respondents did not wish to stay in the parish.

The 10 households requiring alternative housing now are:

- 5 x single people
- 5 x couples

Single people – there were 5 single people.

Age	Frequency
60-74	3
75+	2

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Present home in need of major repair	1
Current home affecting heath	1
To move to a better /safer environment	1
To be nearer family	1
Need smaller home	1
Need larger home	1
Other	1
Retirement	1
Present home too expensive	1
Sheltered accommodation / infirmity	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Renting from the council	1
Owner occupier without mortgage	3
Renting privately	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current No.	Frequency
1	3
3	2

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
Extra Care housing (suitable for elderly people with a range of support options)	2
Accommodation suitable for older persons without support	3

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Renting Council / Housing Association	2
Owner occupier	2
Other	1

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	3
2	2

Particular or specialised housing requirements:
I am currently in accommodation for older people with assistance and will continue to need this.
No stairs.
Chronic back trouble for 40+ years means I may soon find stairs difficult and also longer term I may need to be closer to public transport for other health reasons.
Ground floor if possible due to arthritis.
Wheelchair access, all bathrooms with handrails.

Income:

Income	Frequency
Under £10,000	2
£15,000 - £20,000	2
£40,000 - £50,000	1

If you already own a home and wish to move to a more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home:
1 x £300,000
1 x £525,000

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market/shared ownership or discounted market sale tenure?
All of the sale price
Sufficient

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	5

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria all respondents currently live in Charing.

Couples – there were 5 couples

Age	Frequency
60-74	3
75	5

1 respondent did not state their ages.

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
To be nearer family	2
Disability/disabled	2
Sheltered accomm due to age/infirmity	1
To move to a better/safer environment	1
Need smaller home	1
Access problems	1
Difficulty maintaining home	2
Current home affecting health	2
Retirement	2

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Owner occupier	4
Private rented	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
1	1
2	3
5+	1

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
House	2
Extra care housing (suitable for elderly people without support)	3

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Owner occupier	2
Renting housing association /council, discounted market home, shared ownership, owner occupier	1
Renting housing association / council	2

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	1
2	3
5+	1

Particular or specialised housing requirements:
Husband has limited walking due to crumbling spine.
Not yet but possibly future mobility problems for my husband.
A wet room no stairs to fall, so it must be ground floor.
Disability after stroke, walking problems.

Income:

Income	Frequency
Under £10,000	1
£15,000 - £20,000	2
£35,000 - £40,000	1

One respondent did not specify their income.

If you already own your own home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home: Three respondents gave the following answers:

£230,000
£450,000 - £485,000
£600,000

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market or discounted market sale tenures? Three respondents gave the following answers:

Whatever is necessary.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
Yes	3
No	2

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they all currently live in the parish.

Assessment of the 7 households who require alternative housing within the next 2 years.

The 7 households seeking alternative housing within the next 2 years are:

- 5 single people
- 2 couples

Single people – there were 5 single people.

Age	Frequency
60-74	3
75+	1

One respondent did not specify their age.

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Present home too expensive	1
Need smaller home	2
Disability/disabled	1
Access problems	1
Private tenancy ending	1
Access problems	1
Other	`1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Owner occupier	4
Private rented	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current beds	Frequency
2	1
3	4

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
House	1
Other	1
Accommodation suitable for older persons without support	3

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Owner occupier	3
Renting council /housing association	2

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	1
3	4

Income:

Income	Frequency
Under £10,000	1
£10,000 - £15,000	3
£15,000 - £20,000	1

If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home: Three respondents gave the following answers:

1x £90,000
1x £300,000
1 x £375,000

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market/shared ownership or discounted market sale tenure: Two respondents gave the following answers:

Market value of property
£50,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

No responses to this question.

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they all currently live in the parish.

Couples – there were 2 couples.

Age	Frequency
60-74	2
75+	2

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Disability / disabled	1
Need smaller home	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Housing Association /rented	1
Owner occupier	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current No.	Frequency
60-74	1
75+	1

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
House / Accomodation suitable for older persons without support	1
Other	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Renting housing association / council	1
Owner occupier	1

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	2

Particular or specialised housing requirements:
No stairs, disabled toilet,

Income:

Income	Frequency
£15,000 - £20,000	1
£50,000 - £60,000	1

If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home: One respondent gave the following answer:

1 x £730,000

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market ownership or discounted market sale?

No responses were received for this question.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	2

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they all currently live in the parish.

Assessment of the 12 households who require alternative housing within the next 5 years

One respondent was excluded as they did not supply sufficient information.

The 11 households who require alternative housing within the next 5 years are:

- 1 single person
- 10 couples

Single people – there was 1 single person.

Age	Frequency
75+	1

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Other	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Owner occupier with or without mortgage	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current No.	Frequency
2	1

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
House/Accommodation suitable for older persons without support	1

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Owner occupier	1

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
2	1

Income:

Income	Frequency
£10,000-£15,000	1

If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable accommodation for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home:

1 x £160,000

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market ownership or discounted market sale?

1 x 250,000

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

Need bungalow as using a wheelchair outside and soon will need inside aids. Need shower room (not bath) and various rails. No or few steps.

Registered on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	1

The respondent indicated at least one of the local connection criteria, they currently live in the parish.

Couples – there were 10 couples.

Age and Gender	Frequency
60-74	8
75+	11

1 respondent did not specify their partner's age.

Reason for seeking new home:

Reason	Frequency
Sheltered accommodation due to age/infirmity	1
Present home too expensive	1
Need smaller home	1
Setting up home with partner	1
Need smaller home	1
Disability/disabled	1
To be nearer work	1
Cannot afford existing mortgage	1
Retirement	1

Current housing:

Current Housing	Frequency
Owner occupier without mortgage	8
Private rented	1
Other	1

Current number of bedrooms:

Current No.	Frequency
1	1
2	2
3	5
4	1
5	1

Type of housing needed:

Type of housing	Frequency
House/flat/extra care housing	1
House / extra care housing	1
Other – house or bungalow	1
Other – bungalow	1
House	2
Other - bungalow or accommodation suitable for older persons without support	2
Accommodation suitable for older person without support	4

Tenure best suited:

Tenure	Frequency
Owner occupier	7
Renting Housing Association / council / Shared Ownership	1
Renting Housing Association/council	2

Number of bedrooms required:

No of bedrooms	Frequency
1	1
2	4
3	3
4	1

One respondent did not specify how many bedrooms they would require.

Particular or specialised housing requirements:

Not yet.
Diabetes, mobility problems, high blood pressure and getting older.
Need a bungalow, stairs are difficult.
Not at present but mobility problems are expected.
Not at the moment but bearing in mind we are over 75 we would want easy access and low maintenance with an eye to the future. Well planned single storey accommodation would be ideal in the future.
Both of us have very limited walking ability.
Assist with disability needs.

Income:

Income	Frequency
£10,000 - £15,000	1
£15,000 - £20,000	1
£20,000 - £25,000	1
£25,000 - £30,000	1
£30,000 - £35,000	1
£35,000 - £40,000	3
£50,000 - £60,000	1

1 respondent did not specify their income.

If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home: Eight respondents gave the following answers:

1 x £70,000
1 x £225,000
1 x £475,000
2 x £500,000
1 x £850,000
1 x £875,000
1 x 1 million

How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home Either open market/shared ownership or discounted market tenures: Two respondents gave the following answers:

1 x £345,000
1 x £70,000

Registered on Ashford Borough Housing Register:

Housing Register	Frequency
No	9
Yes	1

The respondents indicated at least one of the local connection criteria; they all currently live in Charing.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The summary is divided into two sections: summary of the need for affordable housing and summary of the need for alternative housing for older households.

8.1 Summary of the need for Affordable Housing

The survey has identified a need for up to 11 homes for local households who are in of need affordable housing; they are 6 single people, 1 couple and 4 families. 4 of the households need housing now, 5 in the next 2 years and 2 in the next 5 years.

The 11 respondents in need of affordable housing indicated strong local connections to Charing. 7 currently live in the parish and 4 outside.

5 respondents are living with relatives, 4 are renting privately, 1 is living with friends (and hostel accommodation) and 1 is a council tenant.

In total there are 17 adults and 3 children (under 16) who have a need for affordable housing.

When asked how many bedrooms respondents sought/preferred, the following answers were given: 3 x 1 bed, 7 x 2 bed, 1 x 4 bed. Actual size of property that the respondents are eligible for in terms of rented housing will depend on the council's allocation policy. See below.

In total, 7 respondents indicated an interest in rented housing, 4 respondents indicated they were interested in Shared Ownership.

Taking into account the council's allocation policy, the mix of accommodation that respondents would be eligible for is:

Rented accommodation:

4 x 1 bed
3 x 2 bed

Shared Ownership
3 x 2 bed
1 x 3 bed

8.2 Summary of the requirement for housing for older households

The survey has found a need for alternative housing for 28 older households. They are 11 single people and 17 couples. All 28 of the households currently live in Charing.

10 households require housing now, 7 within the next 2 years and 11 within the next 5 years.

20 of the households are owner occupiers, 4 are renting privately, 1 is a housing association tenant, 2 are council tenants and 1 is currently an owner occupier that may be eligible for shared ownership.

The most frequently given reasons for needing an alternative home were the present home being too expensive; other reasons include having a disability, current home affecting health and needing to move to better/safer environment.

8 respondents said they need affordable housing: 1 of these respondents is living with relatives, 3 are renting privately, 1 is a housing association tenant, 2 are council tenants and 1 is an owner occupier (that may be eligible for shared ownership).

Rented Accommodation
1 x 1 bed accomodation suitable for older persons without support
1 x 1 bed extra care
2 x 2 bed other (both the respondents would prefer a bungalows)
1 x 2 bed accommodation suitable for older persons without support
1 x 1 bed house
1 x 2 bed house

Shared Ownership
1 x 2 bed accommodation suitable for older persons without support (owner occupier that may be eligible for 1 x 2 bed shared ownership.)

The remaining 20 households want to buy the following type and size of accommodation on the open market:

- 2 x 1 bed extra care housing suitable for older person with range of support
- 1 x 2 bed house/extra care housing (suitable for elderly people with range of support options)
- 1 x 2 bed flat/house/extra care housing
- 2 x 2 bed extra care suitable for elderly people with a range of support options/accommodation suitable for older persons without support
- 2 x 2 bed house/accommodation suitable for older persons without support
- 2 x 2 bed house (prefer bungalow)/suitable for older persons without support.
- 3 x 2 bed accommodation suitable or older person without support
- 3 x 3 bed accommodation suitable for older person without support
- 1 x 3 bed house
- 1 x 3 bed house/bungalow (suitable for disabled)
- 1 x 4 bed house (prefer single storey)
- 1 x accommodation suitable for older person (did not specify number of bedrooms)

Appendix C1

Question 9. Please use this space if you wish to explain your answer to Q8.

The only building that seems to occur in Charing Heath is large luxury developments totally unaffordable for most local people.

Homes are needed for first time buyers.

Current building programmes with affordable housing may change the pattern of need. 51 affordable housing units for the over 55s are currently under construction in the village, with 24% to be for affordable rent and 76% for shared ownership. Furthermore outline permission has already been given for 135 dwellings in land south of The Swan - 40% of which are to be affordable. The impact of both schemes, particularly the possible downsizing of the social housing occupants to the new flats, may free up more social housing family homes.

Houses in the parish are too expensive for many, particularly the young, who are needed in the parish. We know of people who wish to return to the parish where they were born or grew up.

More affordable housing for these with proven needs would help, and redress the balance between the young and the number of wealthy older parishioners.

Far too much development in this area, supposed to be 'The Garden of England', now it is ruined.

Already one in the village and more being built.

Housing for 1st time buyers is needed.

Too much development in Charing already.

I would actually support a large development of truly affordable housing in Charing. Charing has little affordable housing and most new developments are of executive type large family houses, rather than flats and small houses for young or single families from or working in this area.

There has already been a huge amount of development since I came here in l997 - the village has doubled in size with no corresponding increase in schools/GPs/shops, no dentist at all.

Small houses with gardens, not flats. Need more small bungalows too. We absolutely do not want more executive housing.

Affordable housing in the UK is a major issue. Too many building schemes do not cater for those who need more affordable housing.

Support small housing units which are not flats, especially bungalows for single people.

Charing is growing far too quickly. There are plenty of affordable houses nearby. If Charing continues to grow it would lose all the attributes that make people want to live here.

Communities must evolve to remain viable and that needs to allow for appropriate growth.

It is the right thing to offer/do. Village needs to evolve encompassing the needs of the people, if any family member wishes to return, they would have the means to.

It should be of quality and in keeping with the environment and surrounding area.

Enough new building development in this area already, especially ribbon development.

There is already affordable housing in Charing. To build even cheaper housing would change the character of the village.

I think there is insufficient housing in the area generally, and it would be beneficial to encourage new home building.

My view is there is so much building of new homes, it is destroying the village feel and the countryside.

Our family, two daughters, left the village as the housing was too expensive and too large.
I think that there is enough affordable housing in the area currently. Our daughter of 21 is about to move into her own place very soon. There is an awful lot of development in the area already. We moved here for the countryside - do not spoil that!

Yes, if the affordable housing comprises of 1-2 bed units, without huge (or any) gardens to suit the needs of younger or older people. Affordable flats are ok by me. No, if 5 or more bed units.

Subject to the development being within the village confines and not in surrounding countryside Council/HA rented accommodation is needed, not private purchase.

There are too many houses being built at the moment for the facilities that exist.

Charing needs to keep a balance of ages in the village. Affordable housing to keep young people in the village and bungalows or small houses for the older residents to release bigger houses to families (for sale, not part buy or rent).

There is already too much pressure on the road network in Charing. Affordable housing is already available on the Poppy Fields development. The village is becoming too congested with the limited infrastructure.

A local authority scheme is to happen shortly.

Not green belt, brown field only.

We have had too much development in what is supposed to be a conservation area!

Charing along with every parish needs council housing. Low-income individuals and families cannot afford private rented very expensive housing.

It would be nice if there were houses that were actually affordable rather than houses that are only affordable to the already wealthy!

Important to provide for young people, especially those with low incomes.

Yes, but consideration needs to be given to property size, gardens, facilities available locally i.e.

doctors.

Providing the infrastructure e.g. doctors could cope.

Overcrowding, school, doctors, infrastructure. Our whole country is being ruined by overcrowding.

There is already far too much new building. Soon there will be no village left. Our grandchildren will not know what a village was.

As long as this does not lead to overcrowding.

But only if for people with genuine local connection. This failed to happen at Poppy Fields.

It is badly needed.

There is a desperate need for accommodation for young people, families and old people needing small units, l/2 bedrooms only, at a reasonable rent.

The village needs to have younger people here to thrive.

Charing is already overpopulated for the infrastructure.

Does Charing need more houses being built? There is a lot on the A20 backing onto the playing fields We would both strongly support such a development.

To allow older people to downsize without leaving the village. To allow younger members of families to achieve independence and stay within the village.

More housing would put undue pressure on schools, Dr surgery and local roads, also would be detriment to local wildlife.

Affordable housing is a necessity for a community to survive. However, it should not be at the expense of developing over greenfield sites. All brownfield sites should be explored as a means of providing the space for affordable housing.

We have considerable housing with part ownership, council rented and new developments for elderly. Also another development in planning stage, mainly 2 beds and social housing.

I live in a small bed flat, 3rd floor with 2 children with one on the way so 3 children, 1 with special needs, so desperate to re house.

I live in Charing but in a small flat with my daughter. At the weekends we have my husbands 4 children to accommodate so have to sleep in living room due to age.

Hopefully, it would enable younger people to stay in the village.

Our adult son lives with us, but has autism - we would love to support him to live independently but could only do this if he were in the village.

Although neither of my children wish to return to the area, financially they would struggle to buy in the village. I am from the Lake District and they often have property available only to local occupancy rules.

If the homes could be made available for Charing residents and those that have a working connection to the area and not for the overspill of Ashford.

It is important for people to maintain local and family ties.

This really depends on the location and if they are in the middle of housing estate made up of £500,000 houses.

Presumably, there would be no guarantee these properties would not subsequently be sold on to others outside of the parish - providing no long term 'local needs' solution after all, resulting in a potential area of housing otherwise unsuited for the area or community.

We do not need any more houses in the village.

It would be nice to stay in this area, but we would like to have mortgage or maybe can do part buy/part rent? Affordable bungalows for disabled people (young).

Too much development being done already.

Have used a similar arrangement in Egerton in the past.

To many unaffordable houses being built in village.

It seems such a shame to impact on our environment further, although we appreciate people need homes. But aren't there enough already? My husband worries about the type of tenants too. We already had problems after my son's window was broken by one of the travelling community. He was born into Hothfield (my husband!).

As long as any development is sympathetic to surrounding area in terms of design, materials, and landscaping.

No, or little, suitable housing for overhoused older people to move down into (e.g. very nice bungalows), therefore larger houses do not get freed up for people moving up the housing ladder. Charing has already been forced to take on excessive number of additional houses in recent years, and has had plenty of opportunity to cater for local needs already.

My grandparents need more suitable accommodation due to mobility. My mum really needs to move to Charing to co-care for my grandparents. There is no way of her to do this. She has tried for last 3 years.

Building more only stimulates population growth. Lack of homes reduces birth rate. The planet needs a reduction in human population for life to continue. The current pandemic is being fuelled by too many people choosing to live in densely populated areas.

A village needs a balance of wealth, abilities, and ages (I think). I would prefer them to not be all in one place - even 8 seems a lot for one site. My impression is that we are top heavy with expensive properties.

There has been ample opportunity in the proposed housing developments within the parish, but the developers are only interested in profit not local needs. If past promises had been honoured my view would be different.

Providing development does not encroach on our already shrinking open spaces.

Depends on location.

The site should be close to village centre and close to A20 for good access.

A small development would be preferable as a large one would change the character of the village and require much more infrastructure.

I have ticked 'yes' in question 8 on the assumption 'support' means 'be in favour of'; if it means 'voluntarily subscribe to it' I would tick the 'no' box.

I will need to sell my home to free up equity to supplement my pension. I want to remain in Charing, the place of my birth.

House prices and rents are too high for many people on low or average earnings.

Anything that creates affordable local housing is a good thing.

Affordable housing is often poor quality and not necessarily for or used by local community.

Depending on where it was.

My mother moved out of the village a while back due to divorce and has been wanting to return since but cannot afford it.

Because we ourselves have benefitted from such an arrangement.

Gypsies seem to be moving in and causing trouble.

We have expanded the village enough in the past 20 years. Wilkinson Close, Tonner Close, Poppyfields - all examples of affordable housing.

10 is awfully little given your increase of 50% to our village (400 currently).

Depends on the location and the look of the accommodation. There has been development that is not sympathetic to the historic nature of the village.

As long as it was affordable housing and not an estate of buy to rent.

Only if they were truly affordable to locals. What we do not need are more large executive homes.

What constitutes affordable?

As an elderly couple we see the benefit of having younger family members nearby (or possible multigenerational households).

There are already lots of housing estates recently built and in the process of being built. Also many in nearby Lenham, Harrietsham and Ashford. We do not need more land lost to over development and loss of animal and bird habitat.

Too many houses already, far too much countryside being wiped out for housing.

I agree with keeping families together so the children of families have somewhere they can afford to live, and also older members that need a smaller home, e.g. bungalow or flat.

Recent developments in Charing have focussed on properties at the high end of the market. There is a need for smaller more affordable properties (to buy or rent) for both the young and elderly.

There are too many executive homes of some size being built. I would support affordable homes but not on flood plain or good farming land.

The importance of keeping a stable community.

Not a further development! There are already approved plans for loads of housing still to be built. Affordable housing for local people should be included in this

There is a great deal of affordable housing planned for Charing in the next few years. The problem is housing designated as affordable is still very expensive and a 3-bed semi in Charing sells at £350,000, the cost of a much bigger house in Ashford.

We have enough houses already and new ones are being built along A20. Our doctor's surgery is already stretched.

I thought about moving for personal reasons but did not want to leave the whole area, but could not find something that I could afford.

So needed in the area but this is dependent on many variables – we are now 80 and 87.

There is enough building going on already.

We moved here away from housing estates and all the trouble they bring. My neighbours are fields, and I would like to keep it that way.

Important to keep families in the community that have lived here many years.

Several developments already either completed, underway or planned. We risk using protected land and losing it forever. My son found what he needed in Ashford.

We want to remain a village so the less number of new homes the better. If the new homes are for genuine local connection, this should be for family to be close to their relatives.

This should be shared ownership housing (perhaps via a housing association) to ensure the properties do not fall into private hands, become gentrified and end up no longer available.

I believe Charing has too many new developments already and does not have the infrastructure to accommodate more.

It depends on where it will be.

Charing already has lots of planned developments and the affordable housing already given permission within these should be allocated to people with a local connection.

If they have a genuine local connection and were born in Charing, and go to the local schools.

I feel that this housing should have been included amongst the many new estates in and around Ashford/Charing. These housing estates have been built after numerous protests from residents.

There has been no thought about supporting infrastructure, e.g. hospitals, schools, GP surgeries and the inevitable congested road network.

Most people need affordable housing whatever the age group, but locally we do not need huge estates. The impact on local services needs to be addressed.

Lack of employment in the village and surrounding area. The problem is also the GENUINE connection to the parish.

When my son left home to live with his partner, he was very lucky to have been able to purchase 57% of a house on an English Rural development in Charing. They would not have been able to afford anything on the open market in Charing and would have had to move away.

Son with grandchildren housed in Ashford, both sets of grandparents, uncle, and aunts all in Charing.

There is too much development already and the infrastructure is inadequate, roads are too narrow, services are inadequate.

Would like to encourage families in the village, to use facilities and send children to local school. A lot of very expensive homes being built

So local families can stay local. So local families with young adults with disabilities/SEND can remain local with support.

Only if houses are not part of a large ugly estate, and are not sited inappropriately, e.g. need a railway line. These houses should not be allowed to be sold on for profit. 'Affordable' housing is not affordable to the homeless.

There are plenty of homes in Charing already, really have a need to protect what remains of the natural environment.

It would depend where being built, I think the council need to sort roads, path, services before building more homes, flooding is terrible round here.

More affordable bungalows needed for elderly.

Charing is overpopulated – we do not need more houses!

I feel that housing is so important to our society; as much as people love the beauty of the area, I feel that more people should be made welcome to enjoy this.

More affordable housing is required for low-income families.

It is a shame if young people have to move out of a village because of the cost of property/lack of affordable rentals.

We applied for a shared ownership property in the village but were turned down. It was for our son to enable him to stay in the village.

Depends on the proposal of the development and the needs at that time. Would question why this has not been incorporated into previous developments?

Local housing association has no cash/authority to ensure occupiers keep well presented, tidy, clean gardens/and property and therefore no inspections and therefore drags area into disarray.

There has been enough building in the past 20 years to provide for affordable accommodation several times over. The infrastructure is straining to support all the new people and no dentist still.
I would support it only if it were small dwelling for young people and young family. We have had enough executive housing built recently.

I have a friend living outside Charing village whose mobility is becoming increasingly restricted. She needs to move to the centre of the village to have access to public transport and shops.

We will strongly oppose, we have enough! There is far too much development in Charing. The village is losing its character. People needing low-cost housing will not appreciate.
ABC need to take into account the emerging neighbourhood plan for Charing before granting Planning Permission.

There are too many large and expensive properties being bult in Charing and not enough smaller or single storey properties.

Enough development as there is - without necessary infrastructure.

I am personally affected miserably by the new development built around my house, but I do not mind converting old build existing building into affordable houses.

People should not have to move from their local community. I would support a small carbon-neutral development, but only if building could take place in areas where the environment was not depleted, or current residents' properties were not devalued.

I would support the build of affordable housing, but I would not support the criteria of only allowing a 'genuine local connection'. Affordable housing should be available to all.

Important for those to feel support from family, friends, community. But not a range of housing schemes.

We need housing for the younger generation in our village.

Yes, within the village envelope.

Lack of money.

Subject to appropriate relationship with the existing village

Charing sits within the North Downs Area of Natural Beauty and is home to many unusual species of wildlife. To develop new homes would destroy habitats by removing more areas of countryside. This reduces biodiversity and destroys areas of natural beauty. We should preserve our countryside and protect our wildlife.

No problem with local houses, for local people with local needs but providing houses for working 10, 15, 20 miles away little or no support.

We believe there is a lot of new development in this parish already.

I know I could be in a position to need social housing should I lose my job.

Charing does not need more housing. It has had extensive new housing already

No, there is already too much development in Charing.

We do not need more large homes for commuters to London. They do not usually get involved in village life. Smaller homes of 2 or 3 bedrooms please.

We feel there should be affordable housing for families who wish to stay here in the village.

Rents are not protected in GB and are increasing and mortgages.

I accept we need more affordable housing for young people, but we also need more amenities and infrastructure, there is nothing to do in Charing.

Yes, preferably in Charing Heath. Need of OAP bungalows.

As long as it is a small development for people with a strong connection to Charing.

Far too many large, unaffordable houses being built in the neighbourhood and surrounding villages.

Affordable housing is needed to keep young people in the village.

The current amount of residential development and planned development in the area should already include the appropriate amount of affordable housing. If it does not, perhaps the planning policy and process for developments needs reviewing.

Too much building has been going on already. Roads and GP cannot accommodate.

I believe we already have had several such developments.

If they were in local low-income jobs.

It is vital to provide affordable housing here because if young people and families cannot afford to buy a property, eventually the village will die. There will be no school and shops will close which will be unthinkable.

We already have 3 developments in the parish, and another being built. These were advertised as affordable in the application forms. This is a village and does not need more infrastructure.

There is a need for affordable housing in the area to avoid recession in the housing industry. First time buyers need more opportunity to access the housing market.

We moved to the area for its lack of lots of people so the quieter the better.

Any new developments should be providing local needs housing, not as a separate development.

There is enough affordable housing, nobody needs to live in Charing, no industry.

10. Appendix C2

Question 23. Please tell us in your own words why you need to move and what prevents you from doing so.

Not enough open market 2 or 3 bedroom detached bungalows or chalet bungalows with decent sized garden and parking available in the village. The Covid pandemic may have suppressed this part of the market, at the moment. Recent developments have not included retirement bungalows and the orbital development is not appropriate for me, having downsized from a large house to be near my family for health reasons. For information there currently is a 2-bed shared ownership newish bungalow that has been on the market unsold for 3 months, would suit me, but I don't qualify to buy it.

I can't afford to rent privately, so I rent a room which is not ideal. I am a low wage earner and would like a one-bedroom property that I could afford to rent.

Working for a charity too little to afford to rent or buy.

Widowed in 2019 and want to leave this house. Cannot move because nothing suitable in Charing

Need to move to Canterbury for university, theatre, etc.

Finding right property is suitable location.

Finishing university study and starting work in another location within 18 months.

I am buying my own flat in Ashford to be independent but still close enough to Charing to be near my parents.

I have my 2 kids who are 14 and 11 stay with me on my days off and it would be nice for them to have their own rooms and I would like to live somewhere more central.

On housing register since 2016 for older persons accommodation and getting nowhere. Have made bids on nearly 80 properties. Flat (4 of them) on massive plot cannot manage it anymore.

We are moving from Charing in a few months to a cheaper rental nearer Maidstone (and work).

I have a disabled daughter who can no longer stay at my home because of access, stairs etc. This could be one of the reasons to move if something available.

Reasons stated above - lack of this type of housing for sale. House more suitable for a family as quite big.

There are no suitable properties to buy in the village in my price range. I would like my daughter to be able to visit me in my home instead of me always staying with her in her adapted bungalow

No suitable stock available. Require additional bedroom and potentially an annexe for ill parents, currently living outside the area.

I am happy where I am and would like to stay for a few more years. However due to the Covid situation my landlords are in the aircraft charter business, they have told me they will be looking to sell my home in the not-too-distant future. I have looked at other private rentals but at 63 years old I would not be able to private rent for many more years and suitable and affordable rented properties do not seem to be available.

I am 68 and currently still working. I would like to retire but find that I need to work to finance this flat. I am currently paying £850 pcm which includes rent, council tax and utilities.

Current pandemic delaying move to new home with partner.

We are an older couple still living in a large family home with a large garden and need to downsize.

Lack of availability of suitably sized homes, in particular bungalows, prevents this.

When one of us dies, the other will need smaller accommodation, probably sheltered because of our age. Alright while both alive.

I am having difficulties with stairs. Living accommodation is OK on one level but being mobile home I have stairs to access home.

Have learning difficulties and so would like to live independently within 5 years, but need to be close to my family who are carers.

Time of life, separated and split monies, do not want/afford 25-year mortgage which I would need but hate renting as throwing money away of sorts.

I have 2 daughters and family. They live near Maidstone and Swanley, to be near them for help, company, transport.

The life expectancy of my park home is nearing its end.

Not enough room for us, when wanting to start a family. Find it extremely difficult to move home when both have disabilities. Could someone maybe start a business with a van to help people like ourselves when family is also disabled?

We are a husband and wife living in a large property with a lot of land and outbuildings. We are over 75 and the maintenance is becoming too much for us. In the next 5 years we may be forced to downsize but like to stay in the area we have for 30 years.

We really want to be in Charing and would rather stay where we are (although it is cramped) than leave the village.

House is too large, and my mother requires 24-hour care.

I will need to care for an elderly parent and in the medium term (5-10 years) would like to have a property for semi-independent living for my disabled children.

Recently arrived from Spain due to having a stroke and now need family support to afford private renting and disabled needs.

We don't quite yet need to give up independence but are noticeably deteriorating steadily.

I am in a bungalow but cannot access the bath. See Q. 9 - Plus I cannot access the bath and would feel more independent with a shower but cannot afford to upgrade my bungalow.

House and garden now too big for us to cope with. Difficulty moving, finding suitable type of housing. Bungalow would be preferable.

I need to move as I cannot afford the mortgage and I am unable to find a property in this area I can afford. My current property is too big for us.

Needs a 2-bedroom property as have a toddler now.

Need to move will depend on health and mobility.

Need an extra bedroom as current property a bit small as I now have disability problems. We are prevented by HA.

Need to move to bungalow, downsize of house, having issues with stairs.

Lack of rural housing that suits our requirements.

I'm waiting until we are all told to move when this place is going to be demolished (but it should all be fine).

There are no bungalows that we can afford to buy in Charing, taking into account the selling price of our house, plus our total life savings. We are 86 and 76 years old and find the stairs too much for us now. Also the cleaning and maintenance of a house. We need a two-bedroom bungalow. But ABC never build bungalows for senior citizens.

Downsized to a house too small - need to upsize. Move to a safer area with less noise and pollution/traffic.

I am OK for now but have glaucoma and other physical disabilities. If (when) driving becomes impossible I will need to be near public transport as there is none anywhere near where I live.

We would like to move to a smaller bungalow with a smaller garden, within easy walking distance to the High Street.

Parents over 80 and 90. No council accommodation available (would consider swap).

Saving for house deposit.

I need to start living an independent life. Lack of regular income (I'm working on that!) and confidence.

Stairs and large garden cannot sell house.

Husband has MS. We would love to move within the village to either a bungalow or house where it is possible to have a stair lift, that we can afford.

Getting older and the house we live in has an upstairs kitchen, is very old and quirky. Although able at

the moment we are thinking about future needs.

I cannot afford any deposit for mortgage and private rent is out of my budget.

I would like to have my own home (as currently pregnant), so going to have my own family, but I don't want to move out of Charing as all my family live here. And I have been here since birth. My brother also does not want to leave Charing

11. Appendix C3

Question 30. Do you have any particular specialised housing requirements e.g. to assist with a disability or special need? (Please provide details)

Chronic back trouble for 40 years means I may soon find stairs difficult. A facial paralysis 4 years ago has caused severe dry eye and driving licence now limited to 3 years duration. If eyes deteriorate, I shall give up the car - so short walk to central village, important and access to public transport.

No stairs.

Level throughout.

Needs to be walking distance to the village school.

Ground floor if possible due to arthritis.

On the flat (no stairs).

Learning difficulties (autism) but parents live in village and intend to remain here.

Not at present but mobility problems are expected.

Yes, as stated on last page but also close parking, garage, easy access to house (no steps), plug sockets higher up on walls, room for chair seat for kitchen and other aids.

Not at the moment, but bearing in mind we are over 75 we would want easy access and low maintenance with an eye to the future. Well planned single storey accommodation would be ideal in the long term.

I am disabled and not really good with stairs also needs a shower unless I have my partner nearby.

Wheelchair access for all bathrooms w/c railings.

Would require wheelchair access but also a stairlift or walk-in lift if a house were available.

Disability after stroke, walking problems and one arm unable to use to any great extent.

Both of us have very limited walking ability.

Level access shower, level access to road and garden, ground floor accommodation.

Not yet, possibly mobility problems for my husband.

Diabetes, high blood pressure, mobility problems, getting older.

No stairs, disabled toilet, grab rails, walk in bath, small garden.

Bungalow/sheltered parking/green space.

I am currently in accommodation for older people with assistance and will continue needing it.

Husband has limited walking due to old age & crumbling spine.

Need bungalow as use wheelchair outside and soon will need inside aids. Need shower room (not bath) and various rails. No/ very few steps.

Need a bungalow, stairs are difficult.

A wet room and no stairs as inclined to fall so it must be ground floor.

Assist with disability needs.

Charing Housing Needs Survey

15th January 2021

Dear Resident,

Charing Housing Needs Survey

Ashford Borough Council is asking local residents in Charing whether there might be a need for "local needs" housing in the parish, so that residents who cannot afford to buy or rent locally, are not forced to move away. It also helps those who have already had to move away make a return to their family support networks and contribute to the local community. The aim of the survey is also to find out if there are older people or people with disabilities living in Charing, who would like to downsize or move to housing more suitable for their needs. This includes people who are owner-occupiers, as well as any other current living arrangements.

The council is working with Rosemary Selling, the Rural Housing Enabler from Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) who is assisting us to carry out the survey. The Housing Needs survey will assess the need and gauge the level of support for a small scheme of local needs housing. If a site to were to be found in the parish, the survey can guide the type and tenure of development that would be brought forward.

All personal information will be kept confidential. Once the results have been analysed, Rosemary will provide a summary report to the Ashford Borough Council and this will then be made publicly available.

Please take a few minutes to answer the survey. We would like to know your views even if you do not need alternative housing. THANK YOU. If you have family members who live elsewhere but who would like to return to live in the parish, please make them aware of the survey. Further copies can be obtained from Rosemary. Telephone: 01303 765645 or Email: rosemary.selling@ruralkent.org.uk. If you have any other queries, please do contact Rosemary.

Please return your completed survey form in the freepost envelope provided by 8th February 2021. It's really important we hear from as many residents as possible, so that the results give us an accurate picture of housing need in the parish.

Yours faithfully,

Mark James
Development Partnership Manager
Ashford Borough Council

The survey includes space for you to declare you have a housing need, and, if you wish, to identify yourself. Under terms of the General Data Protection Regulation, Action with Communities in Rural Kent requires consent to hold and process such personal data - and even if you provide that consent you have the right to withdraw it at any time. Further information is provided in a 'privacy notice' available from Action with Communities in Rural Kent, The Old Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, Canterbury Road, Brabourne, Kent TN25 5LL. Email info@ruralent.org.uk

HOUSING NEEDS IN THE PARISH OF CHARING

Please complete this survey on behalf of your household.

SECTION 1

Q1. What type of housing do you live in? ☐ *Council property* ☐ *Private rented* ☐ *Tied tenancy*

☐ *Housing Association rented* ☐ *Housing Association shared ownership* ☐ *Owner occupier (with or without mortgage)*

☐ *Other please specify* _____ ☐ *Living with relatives*

Q2. Please enter the following information -

Number of bedrooms in your home ☐ Number of people that currently live in the property ☐

Q3. How long have you lived in the parish?

☐ *Less than 1 year* ☐ *1-5 years* ☐ *6-10 years* ☐ *11-15 years* ☐ *16-25 years* ☐ *26+ years*

Q4. Have any members of your family/household left the parish in the last 5 years? If you answer is No, please go directly to Q8 ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Q5. If you answered yes to Q4, please state what relationship they have to you.

☐ *Child* ☐ *Parent* ☐ *Other relative* ☐ *Other please specify* _____

Q6. Please indicate the reason why they left

☐ *Lack of affordable housing* ☐ *To attend university/college* ☐ *Employment*

☐ *Other please specify* _____

Q7. Would they return if more affordable accommodation could be provided?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

If they would like to return they can complete Section 2 of this form or request a new form by contacting the Rural Housing Enabler on 01303 765 645 or email rosemary.selling@ruralkent.org.uk

Q8. Would you support a small development of affordable housing if there was a proven need for people with a genuine local connection to the parish? (Average size of local needs housing schemes are 8 - 10 homes)

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Q9. Please use this space if you wish to explain your answer to Question 8.

Q10. Do you or a member of your household need separate or alternative accommodation either now or in the next 2 or 5 years?

☐ *No* ☐ *Yes, now* ☐ *Yes, next 2 years* ☐ *Yes, next 5 years*

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES PLEASE CONTINUE WITH SECTION 2, IF YOU ANSWERED NO PLEASE NOW RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

SECTION 2 HOUSING NEEDS

If you or anyone else living in your house is in need of alternative housing, please continue with the questionnaire. Please complete one form per household in housing need e.g. if you have two adult children who want to move to a new home separately from each other they must complete one form per person. If you need another form please contact the Rural Housing Enabler on 01303 765 645 or email rosemary.selling@ruralkent.org.uk

Q11. Are you completing this form for yourself or someone else?

☐ *Self* ☐ *Someone else*

Q12. If you are completing this for someone else please state their relationship to you and where they currently live eg. with parents, private renting etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please continue to complete this form by answering the questions in respect of the person/household in need of alternative accommodation.

Q13. It would be useful if you could provide your contact details, as we may wish to contact you again to update the findings of this survey. However, you are not obliged to do so. Any information you do give will remain confidential to Action with Communities in Rural Kent. Please also see statement below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Postcode:** _____

Email Address: _____

I consent for my personal data to be held and processed by Action with Communities in Rural Kent solely for the purpose of enabling development of housing to meet local needs. This personal data will not be shared with any person or organisation external to Action with Communities in Rural Kent (please tick box) ☐

Q14. If you live outside the parish do you wish to return? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Q15. If you live in the parish do you wish to stay in the parish? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Q16. What is your connection with the parish? Please tick all that apply

☐ *I currently live in the parish and have done so continuously for the last 5 years*

☐ *I have previously lived in the parish and have immediate* family who currently live there and have done so continuously for the last 10 years*

☐ *I have lived in the parish for a total of 7 out of the last 10 years*

☐ *I am in full time or part time* employment in the parish*

☐ *I need to move to the parish to take up full time or part time* employment*

☐ *I need to move to the parish to give or receive support to or from an immediate family member*

*Immediate = mother, father, children or brother/sister
*Part time = a minimum of 10 hours per week

Q17. What type of household will you be in alternative accommodation?

☐ *Single person* ☐ *Couple* ☐ *Family* ☐ *Other* _____

Q18. How many people in each age group need alternative accommodation?

MALE

0-9 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 16-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-44 ☐ 45-59 ☐ 60-74 ☐ 75+ ☐

FEMALE

0-9 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 16-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-44 ☐ 45-59 ☐ 60-74 ☐ 75+ ☐

Q19. Why are you seeking a new home (please tick all that apply)

☐ *Present home in need of major repair* ☐ *To be nearer family* ☐ *To be nearer work* ☐ *Retirement*

☐ *Present home too expensive* ☐ *Need smaller home* ☐ *Divorce/separation*

☐ *Current home affecting health* ☐ *Private tenancy ending* ☐ *First independent home*

☐ *Setting up home with partner* ☐ *Need larger home* ☐ *Difficulty maintaining home*

☐ *Sheltered accom due to age/infirmity* ☐ *Disability/disabled* ☐ *Cannot afford existing mortgage*

☐ *To move to a better/safer environment* ☐ *Access problems* ☐ *I am homeless/threatened with homelessness*

☐ *Lodging* ☐ *New job* ☐ *Other* _____

Q20. What is your current housing situation?

☐ *Owner occupier with mortgage* ☐ *Owner occupier without mortgage* ☐ *Shared ownership*

☐ *Renting from Housing Association* ☐ *Tied tenancy* ☐ *Renting privately* ☐ *Renting from Council*

☐ *Living with relatives* ☐ *Other* _____

Q21. How many bedrooms does your current home have?

☐ *1* ☐ *2* ☐ *3* ☐ *4* ☐ *5+*

Q22. Are you an older person/household wanting to downsize/move to more suitable housing for your needs?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Q23. Please tell us in your own words why you need to move and what prevents you from doing so.

Q24. What type of housing do you need? Please tick any that apply.

☐ *Flat* ☐ *House* ☐ *Extra Care housing (suitable for elderly people with range of support options)*

☐ *Accommodation suitable for older persons without support*

☐ *Other please specify* _____

Q25. Which tenure would best suit your housing need?

☐ *Renting - Housing Association/Council*
☐ *Shared ownership - Part rent/Part buy Housing Association*
☐ *Discounted market homes for sale (minimum discount of 20%)*
☐ *Owner occupier*
☐ *Other please specify* _____

Q26. How many bedrooms will you need?

☐ *1* ☐ *2* ☐ *3* ☐ *4* ☐ *5+*

Q27. Please indicate the total gross annual income (before tax) of the household in housing need (joint if a couple). Do not include housing benefit or council tax benefit.

☐ *Under £10,000*
☐ *£10,000 - £15,000*
☐ *£15,000 - £20,000*
☐ *£20,000 - £25,000*
☐ *£25,000 - £30,000*
☐ *£30,000 - £35,000*
☐ *£35,000 - £40,000*
☐ *£40,000 - £50,000*
☐ *£50,000 - £60,000*
☐ *More than £60,000*

Q28. If you already own a home and wish to move to more suitable housing for your needs, please tell us the approximate valuation of your current home:

_____

Q29. How much money would you be able to raise as a deposit towards buying your own home? Either open market/shared ownerhip or discounted market sale tenures

_____

Q30. Do you have any particular or specialised housing requirements e.g. to assist with a disability or special need? (Please provide details).

Q31. Are you registered on the council's housing register? ☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

To be considered for affordable housing you must also register on Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register. If you would like to register contact the Property Team on 01233 330688 or go to www.kenthomechoice.org.uk

Information on this form will be used to provide a summary report of the level of housing need in Charing. Personal information will remain confidential to Action with Communities in Rural Kent

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY 8TH FEBRUARY 2021

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Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix D to Rural Cabinet report for May 2021

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: • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop	The Cabinet is recommended to:- I. Note the content of the report and endorse the work of the rural group II. Agree to increase the number of rural local needs surveys – aiming for six per annum for three years, returning to four per annum after that III. A commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025-26 IV. Agree that communications to parishes will be prepared and that delegate authority will sit with the Head of Housing to agree this in consultation with the housing portfolio holder
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	27th May 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected?	• Note the content of the report and endorse the work of the rural group • Agree to increase the number of rural local needs surveys – aiming for six per annum for three years, returning to four per annum after that • A commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025-26 • Agree that communications to parishes will be prepared and that delegate authority will sit with the Head of Housing to agree this in consultation with the housing portfolio holder
Information and research: • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings.	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. A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities (Kent Housing Group) – February 2021
Consultation: • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision?	Consultation has taken place with colleagues in Finance, the Housing Development Team, Housing Options and Corporate Property Services. Consultation in some instances has taken place with rural ward members, members on the working group itself, and

• 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?	with some parish councils. Of course, the report seeks to consult further with those parish councils and ward members not yet approached about having local needs surveys in their wards. Residents within those wards would receive a local needs survey and be able to contribute to the survey at that point to express their own views. Consultation will take place with residents, parish councils and ward members for those wards where development may be forthcoming as a result. These consultations will be taken forward before any proposed scheme is submitted to the planning department.

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**
AGE Elderly	High	Positive (major)
Middle age	Medium	Positive (minor)
Young adult	High	Positive (major)
Children	Medium	Positive (minor)
DISABILITY Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	None	Neutral
Sensory	None	Neutral
GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT	None	Neutral
MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	None	Neutral
PREGNANCY/MATERNITY	None	Neutral
RACE	None	Neutral
RELIGION OR BELIEF	None	Neutral
SEX Men	None	Neutral

Women	None	Neutral
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	None	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the new developments planned and new acquisitions in the pipeline. It also works on the report's premise, also outlined in the Kent Housing Group Rural Housing Protocol that affordable housing in rural communities truly helps those who wish to stay in their locality where their support networks are.

Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's *Essential Guide*, alongside fuller *PSED Technical Guidance*.

Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

Conclusion:	
• Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish.	Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.
• There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above).	No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.
• 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.	The effect on the community will be positive due to the aims of the programme delivery. No adjustments required.
• How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its	A programme of delivery in rural areas will be monitored by the Rural housing Working Group and any Housing Project group for

implementation be undertaken and reported?	specific projects with regular updates given to the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.
EIA completion date:	16th April 2021

Agenda Item No:

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 27th May 2021

Report Title: HRA acquisition - Chilmington s106

Report Author & Job Title: Mark James
Development Partnership Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Bill Barrett
Portfolio Holder for: Housing

Summary:

A golden opportunity has arisen for the Council to acquire a small residential stake in the Chilmington development and work with a reputable developer from whom it has previously secured quality homes for affordable housing.

The site is known as Parcel 'P' at Chilmington and 10 homes on the site will be part of the section 106 (s106) agreement.

In October 2019, in endorsing the council's affordable housing delivery plan, Cabinet members agreed that the Council's housing team could intervene in the market and acquire s106 homes delivered through the planning system if no registered providers (RPs) were in a position to (the report sets out the reasons why this may be).

Furthermore, Cabinet members had the vision to afford the housing service delegated authority to make acquisitions outside of Cabinet meetings to accelerate the delivery of its housing stock and to act quickly in the marketplace so opportunities were not lost.

This is one such opportunity that has multiple benefits as outlined in the report.

Under the Corporate Plan one of the three emerging themes is 'Caring Ashford' citing the Council's ambition for high quality housing to be brought forward and this acquisition will absolutely fit into that mould.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Weald Central

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

I. **Note the content of the report and endorse the acquisition of the homes for affordable housing subject to the conclusion of legal discussions between the Council's and developer's solicitors.**

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 Housing Revenue Account (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. A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities (Kent Housing Group [KHG]) – February 2021
Financial Implications:	The purchase amount is detailed in the report itself. This project will sit within the Council's Housing Revenue Account. This programme has been viability tested and does not pose a risk to any other project being delivered in the Council's HRA Business Plan.
Legal Implications:	The Council is formally required to have a 30-year HRA Business Plan. Note no Homes England grant is available for s106 homes as these are deemed to be something that should be delivered through the planning system. Though they represent additionality to the Council they do not represent additionality to Homes England in this sense.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See attached Appendix A
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Assessment on the impact on data protection will be undertaken at the appropriate time
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	A viability risk assessment has been undertaken on this acquisition and its place in the HRA Business Plan. Further evaluations of risk will be undertaken at the appropriate time on the acquisition but the principle of the acquisition is sound and that is driving the purchase.
Sustainability Implications:	Under the Corporate Plan one of the three emerging themes is 'Green Pioneer' citing the Council's ambition for carbon neutrality. This project will be bound by the s106 in terms of its green credentials but its sustainability will be further assessed during the acquisition process.
Other Material Implications:	Local Plan Policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), 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.
Exempt from Publication:	**No**
Contact:	Mark.james@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233)

Report Title:

Introduction and Background

1. Each autumn, members receive an annual report from the Council's housing and finance services that underlines the proactive work being undertaken to increase the delivery of homes within the HRA. This includes the new-build programme, and housing's off-plan acquisitions as well as purchases of homes on the open market, many of which are former Council properties once sold under the right to buy scheme.

2. Recently the Council has acquired a strong reputation among local estate agents and developers for its proactive approach to looking for land and off-plan acquisitions, as well as its ability to step in and intervene in the marketplace if there are no RPs in a position to acquire s106 homes that are being provided in the borough. This was an approach validated by members in 2019 when the Council's affordable housing delivery plan was endorsed.

3. This is how this opportunity has been presented to the Council and it provides an opportunity to continue a relationship that has seen the Council previously acquire homes of a very similar specification from the same developer elsewhere in the borough.

Proposal

4. An opportunity has arisen for the Council to take on 10 two-bedroomed s106 homes (six for affordable rent and four for shared ownership) on the flagship Chilmington site. These will be on Parcel 'P' of the site that is being built out by Jarvis Homes. The location and acquisition has several advantages.

5. Jarvis built some of the homes the HRA recently acquired in 2019, again through a s106 acquisition, at Chequers Green in Shadoxhurst. These were felt to be of excellent quality, and though the Council acquires these units as a straightforward purchase with no influence whatsoever over specification – this is necessary to comply with strict procurement rules – the product was strongly endorsed by development and maintenance colleagues within the housing team. With the Chilmington homes of a similar specification there is very limited risk entailed in the acquisition when both the product and the developer are known.

6. No RPs were in a position to acquire the homes on Parcel 'P' as the size of s106 element, at 10 units, is below the minimum of what many RPs are looking to deliver. Most RPs are looking at sites that have 20-30 s106 homes or above. This is because many have good grant levels and so are looking at land-led opportunities rather than simply s106 homes (which do not qualify for Homes England grant), and many state that the same level of administrative work is taken to purchase five units as it is to purchase 50 units, so they try to

deliver houses in bigger numbers. There is the ongoing management of those units once acquired too, as if an RP does not have stock in a rural area, they will not consider acquiring homes in those areas, as they may struggle to manage them going forward. The Council has offered itself as a management solution to RPs as a way of trying to overcome this issue.

7. One RP has looked at the site but having agreed a price decided not to proceed purely as they are at capacity for the number of s106 sites they wish to deliver out at the current time, many of which are in the Ashford borough. Therefore, without any RPs prepared to take these units on, the Council is seeking to do so. The housing service has the endorsement of cabinet colleagues to intervene in the market in exactly these circumstances – where the homes are effectively either bought by us or lost to a commuted sum that gives us money to the value of the build cost for these units but does not give us the asset there and then which can house a household on our waiting list.

8. The acquisition is important not just so that the s106 allocation is taken up, but it will have significance, as the HRA will then have a residential stake in the development at Chilmington, which it has advocated the need for over many years. This will reflect the residential stake the HRA has in the town centre with the New Quarter blocks, Somerset heights and Stour Heights.

9. The Council is able to manage shared ownership homes through its leaseholder services team and its area management teams in housing. Existing procedures are in place and all teams within the service will be fully briefed in order to play their part. Agents will be instructed to sell the shared ownership homes and they will also feature on the Help-to-Buy website.

10. Furthermore, for those organisations who own affordable housing on Chilmington there is the potential of a seat for an affordable housing representative on the Chilmington board. While the process of how that representative would be selected has yet to be discussed, they would need to represent all RPs and their tenants – something that perhaps the Council is uniquely placed to do given the development forums that it hosts for RPs and the forums that it sits on from a management perspective, in addition to its work with KHG. This could therefore allow the Council's housing team to continue its role as communicator and coordinator of RPs.

11. The Council has secured these homes for a competitive price. The acquisition falls well within the delegated authority that Cabinet afforded housing services in 2019. Contracts are therefore being organised and this report is brought to members for them to note the positive news. The acquisition offers an excellent rate of return and does not impact on other priorities within the HRA Business Plan.

12. In discussions, the developer, and indeed the previous RP, have both been transparent about the price that had been agreed and the Council is stepping in to take these homes on at that price.

13. Early work will be undertaken to understand annual estate costs and service charges for all residents in these homes.

Equalities Impact Assessment

14. Members will note the equalities impact assessment appended to this report at Appendix A. No adverse impacts are shown as a result of the assessment.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

15. Consultation was carried out when the application was submitted to planning, and housing has alerted both borough council ward members to the likelihood of the potential acquisition.

Other Options Considered

16. The Council could of course choose not to intervene in the market and not to acquire these units, but for the reasons illustrated above that would represent a missed opportunity to purchase high-quality properties on this strategically important site through this developer.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

17. At any given time there are around 1,350 households awaiting housing on the Council's waiting list. It is imperative that the Council continues to build and acquire homes. It has three projects on site at the moment and several more in the planning, or pre-application planning process. All of its acquisitions as well as its new-build programme are strategically thought through and this purchase demonstrates good value for money.

Next Steps in Process

18. A representative from the Council's legal services team is already working on the contracts with the solicitors from the developer's side and subject to the satisfactory conclusion of these negotiations, staged payments will be made to smooth the build process. Closer to the completion date the Council will advertise the homes on the portals relevant to both affordable rent and shared ownership and agree the occupiers.

Conclusion

19. This acquisition represents another opportunity for the Council to illustrate the proactive approach it takes to deliver quality affordable homes for residents of the borough. It enables the Council to have a residential stake on the Chilmington development and it potentially enables the Council to have a representative on the Board. It enables the Council to continue its good rapport with Jarvis, whose products are well respected by housing services. With certainty over the product, the tenure, the size and type of the homes and the price, this therefore represents as close to a risk-free acquisition as you could achieve in the current marketplace.

Portfolio Holder's Views

20. This off-plan purchase pleases me for many reasons. It continues to grow our stock, not just of affordable rented homes but supporting those who want to get on the housing ladder. It gives us a residential stake in a major development that we long advocated the need for as a Council. We know the homes will be of good quality, as we have bought a very similar specification product from the same developer elsewhere recently. But most of all we know that the buildings we are acquiring here will give affordable housing tenants the opportunity to be truly proud of their home.

21. These are the right homes in the right place at the right price. This is just another example of how innovation, being in touch with the market and engagement with key stakeholders is setting us apart as a Council to do business with. Housing have a proven track record of delivering, obtaining grant and both building and buying quality homes over the last decade. And we won't stop here as we seek to house those in need.

Contact and Email

22. Mark James email: mark.james@ashford.gov.uk

23. Mark James phone: 01233 330687

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.

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: • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop	The Cabinet is recommended to: Note the content of the report and endorse the acquisition of the homes for affordable housing subject to the conclusion of legal discussions between the Council's and developer's solicitors.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	27th May 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected?	Note the content of the report and endorse the acquisition of the homes for affordable housing subject to the conclusion of legal discussions between the Council's and developer's solicitors.
Information and research: • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings.	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 Housing Revenue Account (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. A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities (Kent Housing Group [KHG]) – February 2021
Consultation: • 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?	Consultation has taken place with colleagues in Finance, the Housing Development Team and Corporate Property Services. Consultation with the community took place through the planning process in establishing the principle of the development. The ward members have been notified. There are no adverse impacts on any individuals as a result of this acquisition.

• What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?	

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**
AGE Elderly	Low	Positive (minor)
Middle age	Medium	Positive (major)
Young adult	Medium	Positive (major)
Children	Medium	Positive (major)
DISABILITY Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	None	Neutral
Sensory	None	Neutral
GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT	None	Neutral
MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	None	Neutral
PREGNANCY/MATERNITY	None	Neutral
RACE	None	Neutral
RELIGION OR BELIEF	None	Neutral
SEX Men	None	Neutral
Women	None	Neutral
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	None	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the new acquisition.

Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's *Essential Guide*, alongside fuller *PSED Technical Guidance*.

Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

Conclusion:	
• Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish.	Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.
• There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above).	No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.
• 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.	The effect on the community will be positive due to the aims of the programme delivery. No adjustments required.
• How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?	The Council's lettings policy will be followed and the allocations carefully managed at the point the properties are ready to be let.
EIA completion date:	14th May 2021

Agenda Item No:	8
Report To:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	27 May 2021
Report Title:	Street Naming and Numbering for Site of Andrews Garage, Plain Road, Smeeth
Report Author & Job Title:	Kenneth Beach, GIS Technical Administrator, Deputy LLPG Custodian and Deputy Street Naming Officer
Portfolio Holder Portfolio Holder for:	Cllr. Shorter Planning and Development

Summary:	The Street Naming and Numbering policy requires that any request for naming a new road after a person, deceased or living, should be agreed by the Cabinet The name proposed for the development is considered to be relevant to the site

Key Decision:	No
Significantly Affected Wards:	Smeeth
Recommendations:	**The Cabinet is recommended to:-** **I. Approve the use of the name Andrews Close as set in paragraph 4**
Policy Overview:	The proposal is consistent with the Council's adopted Street Naming and Numbering policy
Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	None known
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	None
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	None
Sustainability Implications:	None

Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	**No**
Background Papers:	**None**
Contact:	kenneth.beach@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330626

Agenda Item No.

Report Title:
Street Naming and Numbering for Site of Andrews Garage, Plain Road, Smeeth

Introduction and Background

1. The Councils Street Naming and Numbering policy approved in July 2014 require that any proposed naming scheme dedicated to a person be approved by Cabinet

Proposal

2. The proposal is for the Site of Andrews Garage, Plain Road, Smeeth

3. The development for the purpose of naming an numbering currently consists of 5 dwellings approved under planning application 18/01454/AS

4. It is proposed that the name '**Andrews Close'** is named after the Andrews family; a local family to Smeeth. The Andrews family have been residents within and owned the garage site in Smeeth. Mrs Andrews currently lives next to the site.

5. Next of kin agreement received 05 February 2021

Equalities Impact Assessment

6. None

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

7. The proposal was sent to consultation on the 02 February 2021 to the following consultees:

Cllr Howard
Smeeth Parish Council
Royal Mail
Kent Fire and Rescue Database office

8. No objections have been received

Other Options Considered

9. No other options submitted or explored

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

10. The use of the prosed name is considered to be relevant and complies with the overall requirements of the Street Naming and Numbering policy around reference to a local historic meaning.

Next Steps in Process

11. Naming and Numbering confirmation issued to developers

Conclusion

12. The use of '**Andrews Close'** is considered acceptable in terms of the Street Naming and Numbering Policy

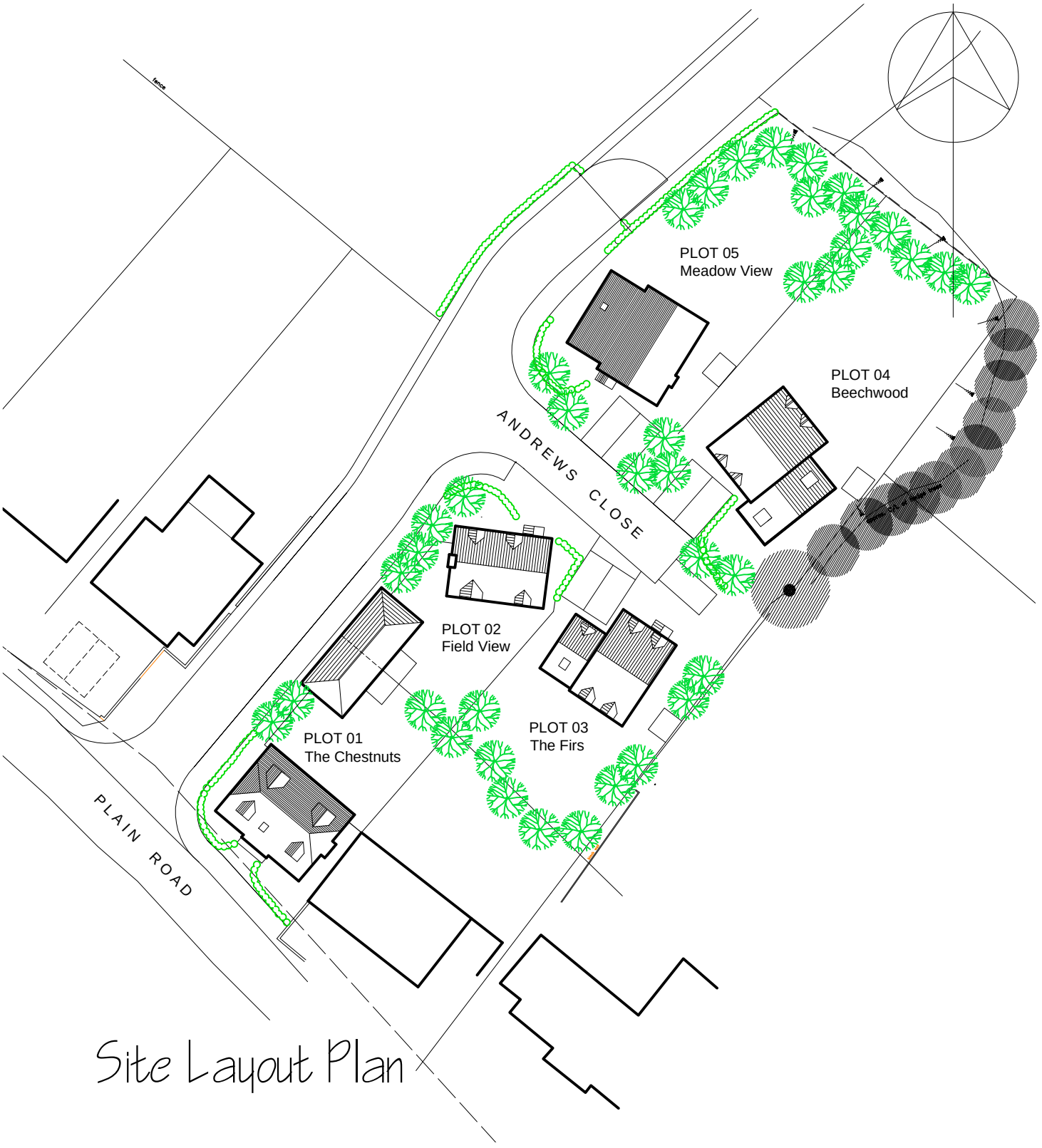
Portfolio Holder's Views

13. Pending

Contact and Email

14. Kenneth Beach 01233 330626

15. kenneth.beach@ashford.gov.uk



Site Layout Plan

project:	date:	scale:	drg. no:
Residential Development Site of the former Andrews Garage Plain Road, Smeeth, Ashford Kent TN25 6RA	04.01.21	1:500@ A4	rev: 17.2095.001

Maurice Ashenden-Bax
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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 27th May 2021

Report Title: Draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan

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

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

Summary:	This report sets out the process for consultation on the council's draft carbon neutral action plan and outlines a study to be undertaken to determine the council's carbon footprint and pathway to zero carbon.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: ALL

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

I. **Support the aim to achieve carbon neutrality within the council's own estate and operations by 2030.**

II. **Recognise the challenges to achieve carbon neutrality across the borough by 2030, whilst acknowledging national and regional targets, to remain committed to work in partnership to achieve carbon neutrality across the borough as soon as possible, supporting the UK government's target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.**

III. **Approve the draft carbon neutral action plan for consultation.**

IV. **Note the appointment of Laser Energy to undertake an emissions baseline and pathways study to inform the final draft action plan.**

Policy Overview: The United Nations 'Paris Agreement' came into force on 4 November 2016. The aim was to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the

temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius

In June 2019, the UK government brought in laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. The target will require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 with a commitment to reduce emissions in 2030 by at least 68% compared to 1990.

Kent County Council recognises the UK environment and climate emergency and stated that it will continue to commit resources and align its policies to address this (May 2019).

In July 2019 The Council declared its aim to become carbon neutral by 2030.

In December 2020, The Council endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, which facilitates the setting and agreement of a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 for Kent and Medway.

On 20th April 2021 the Prime Minister announced a more ambitious target will be brought in to law in June: This will require the UK to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This is in line with the recommendation from the independent Climate Change Committee, this sixth Carbon Budget limits the volume of greenhouse gases emitted over a 5-year period from 2033 to 2037, taking the UK more than three-quarters of the way to reaching net zero by 2050. This Carbon Budget will incorporate the UK's share of international aviation and shipping emissions for the first time.

A cross-government Net Zero Strategy will be published ahead of COP26 (the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) in November 2021.

Financial Implications:	Cost of the study to establish the council's emissions baseline and reduction pathway can be met from existing budgets. An overview of the financial costs of implementing the emissions reduction pathway will be included in the final action plan.
Legal Implications:	Local Authorities are expected to contribute to achieving the wider international and national commitments set out in the Paris Agreement and UK government legislation to achieve net zero by 2050.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	An EIA will be undertaken and accompany the final action plan and carbon neutral strategy.
Data Protection	The consultation for the carbon neutral action plan will be run

Impact Assessment:	in accordance with GDPR.
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	There is a reputational risk to the council if it fails to meet its carbon pledge. A risk of not costing the action plan is the council will not be able to make informed decisions on prioritising the actions that will achieve the most significant reductions in emissions. Failure to consult fully could jeopardise gaining the commitment of other stakeholders and local communities that is necessary to reduce borough wide greenhouse gas emissions.
Sustainability Implications:	The carbon neutral action plan sets out the council's eight priority areas to improve sustainability and achieve net zero carbon in its own operations and to influence and enable others to do the same for the benefit of the wider borough.
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	**NO**
Background Papers:	None
Contact:	lorna.ford@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330413 jennifer.shaw@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330451

Agenda Item No.

Report Title:

Introduction and Background

1. In July 2019 the council pledged the following commitment:

   'Ashford Borough and Ashford Borough Council will aim to become carbon neutral by 2030, and 80% by 2025. By actively seeking to address climate change, we will be improving the well-being and prosperity of all residents.'

2. Since this time the global coronavirus pandemic has ravaged the world, causing loss of life and economic hardship for many. In March 2020 the council focused its attention on supporting local people and business through these challenging times. As we moved from emergency response to recovery, creating a more sustainable future was central to our Recovery Plan.

3. The Recovery Plan included a number of actions that are consistent with achieving our carbon neutral ambition; embedding the Kent Resilience Partnerships 'principles for a green recovery' alongside the 'ambition for Ashford' that was derived from extensive consultation with stakeholders in late 2019/early 2020, to inform the next Corporate Plan.

4. The consequences of the pandemic mean there are new challenges and opportunities ahead in our journey to achieving carbon neutrality. We have reviewed the draft carbon neutral action plan that was in formation immediately prior to the onset of the pandemic and revisited the pledge made in 2019.

5. Much activity is already underway to reduce carbon emissions both within the council's own operations and through consistent messaging to local people through communications campaigns.

   - A training programme for all staff has been introduced to raise awareness and understanding of climate change and the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. 75% of staff had attended prior to the suspension of face to face training.
   - Home – working and virtual meetings successfully established in response to the 'work at home' directive and should continue in order to reduce emissions associated with commuting to office and attending meetings.
   - 6666 trees have been planted following a successful urban tree challenge bid.
   - Working with Sustrans to establish safe cycling routes between Chilmington and Victoria Park.
   - The council has been proactive in installing Solar PV on its buildings since 2011 and now generates an estimated average of 357,000kWh per year.
   - A study is in progress to understand demand and suitable locations to increase the number of public EV charging points.

- Since the late 1980's the housing service has been at the forefront of national standards in refurbishment, maintenance and new build. Currently a study is underway to determine the necessary works and investment required to ensure all council owned homes achieve an energy performance certificate banding of C (not an average) or above by 2030.
- A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme realised a £1.45m grant to enable the replacement of the gas fired boilers at the Stour Leisure Centre with air source heat pumps.
- The council continues to have the highest recycling rate in the county and route optimisation will make waste collection more efficient.

6. The Cabinet endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy in December 2020, signalling its willingness to work collaboratively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the county to net zero by 2050.

7. We are still committed to achieving carbon neutrality through an ambitious action plan. Acknowledging that everyone has a part to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and that we must take advantage of every opportunity to create a sustainable future for the borough, partnership working will be crucial to our success. The council will lead by example to inspire others to take action.

8. Our draft carbon neutral action plan (appendix 1) sets out how we will achieve carbon neutrality for the council's own operations by 2030 and for the wider borough. The council's housing stock sits outside the commitment to achieve carbon neutrality for the council's own estate and operations. It is imperative to reduce carbon emissions from the housing stock to contribute to achieving borough wide carbon neutrality. Modelling is underway to determine the works required, timescale and the financial cost to be factored into the HRA business plan.

9. The first stage is now to consult on the draft action plan to ensure it's a plan that everyone is willing to support and help deliver, be that as a resident a business, a voluntary or a statutory organisation.

10. The draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan – Ashford to Zero Plan has eight priorities:

- Priority 1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and increase understanding and knowledge
- Priority 2: Ensure the council's decision making processes, including those as the Local Planning Authority, strategic documents, plans and procedures contribute to reducing Carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change
- Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption
- Priority 4: Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency
- Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions
- Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

- Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife
- Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

Each priority has a series of objectives and actions that we will be consulting on over the coming months.

11. Simultaneously a study will be undertaken to fully understand the financial implications of achieving net zero within the council's own estate and operations. This will inform setting out the timeframe for our own actions in the final plan to make the most efficient use of existing resources and identify where additional resource will be required to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030.

12. Laser Energy have been appointed to undertake this study. A summary of works is:

a) Footprint & Forecast
Processing of data, production of footprint. Production of forecast showing future emissions in BAU scenario. Analysis, break-down and communication of results to identify and illustrate the relative significance of each emissions source at present and into the future. Grouping to display the significance of different operations or undertakings. Follow up and further breakdown as required

b) Area Emissions Study
Illustration of the district's emissions from energy consumption broken down by sector. Comparison with LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry) absorption. This element provides insight into emissions in the district as a whole and will put the council's own contribution into proportion for comparative purposes.

c) Science Based Targets & Pathway
Generation of bespoke report to provide a science-based carbon budget in line with the Paris Agreement, aimed at limiting global temperature rises to "well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C". Quantifies a "fair" contribution to emissions reductions and defines pathway. This element starkly demonstrates the extent of action needed and includes comparisons with current emissions and trajectory (requires footprint & forecast as precursor).

d) Supply Chain (Purchase Ledger) Analysis
To reviews our supplier spend and provide a high level screening of the associated Scope 3 emissions within the supply chain to assess significance and materiality. Emissions from upstream activities associated with the purchase of goods and services can be estimated with confidence, providing an insight into a wider array of Scope 3 emissions. Analysis allows for the identification of carbon emission hotspots within the supply chain and potential areas of focus for emission reductions.

e) Options Appraisal
Modelling of impacts on emissions and finance of different projects and interactions of projects under a number of different scenarios, modelling of

industry changes and assumptions. Communication, subsequent iterations of models to tailor to requirements and preferences.

f) Member Engagement
Interactive engagement workshop to gauge attitudes and priorities of members. Feedback gathered to evidence findings.

g) Carbon Descent Plan
Generation of substantive, formal document setting out and detailing the work done to date. The plan will also provide the background, detail the methodology and give references. Document details and provides explanation of different potential strategic options available to achieve net zero, including both direct carbon reduction options and green energy procurement. Details findings and recommendations stemming from the project.

Laser Energy fee for the above: £26,175

13. The Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC) has oversight of tackling climate change and achieving net zero carbon. The committee has been closely involved with the development of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan.

14. General comments from members of the CCAC on the draft action plan include:
    - The urgency of implementing the actions is not specific enough, need to set commencement and completion dates and ensure action plan is SMART.
    - Should assess additional resource requirements e.g. staff, finance, seeking funding etc. and prioritise supporting any additional requirements to deliver projects.
    - Each service to have a carbon neutral champion.
    - Carbon neutrality is a cross cutting issue therefore a Member champion should be appointed to promote carbon neutrality and challenge decision making to ensure opportunities for reducing carbon emissions are key considerations.
    - Prioritise areas which will have the greatest carbon savings such as retrofitting.
    - Increase communications on achieving carbon neutrality to local residents.
    - As Ashford grows active travel and public transport to be key considerations to help achieve carbon reduction targets.

    Comments on specific actions will be used to shape the final action plan.

Proposal

15. To reaffirm the council's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality within its own estate and operations by 2030 and to work with residents, the local community, business and partners to achieve net zero carbon for the wider borough, supporting the UK governments target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

16. To commence a wide ranging consultation on the draft carbon neutral action plan to ensure the final action plan is robust and deliverable.

17. To undertake a study to establish the council's own emissions baseline and carbon reduction pathway.

Equalities Impact Assessment

18. An EIA will be undertaken and brought forward with the final action plan.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

19. The consultation on the draft carbon neutral action plan will run for a minimum of 16 weeks, commencing in June 2021.

20. The consultation will seek the views of:
    - Elected members
    - Staff
    - Residents
    - Schools
    - Local councils and community groups
    - The local business community, including social enterprises and large local retailers
    - Construction industry including developers and builders
    - Local landowners and farmers
    - Voluntary and charitable organisations
    - Statutory organisations

21. A series of consultation question will be asked for individuals and business /organisations.

22. The questionnaire will seek to ascertain how strongly respondents agree with the eight priorities, what action they may already be taking to reduce carbon emissions and what they would like to do. This will help understand where the action plan can be strengthen to assist individuals or organisations to take more action themselves. The draft questionnaire is at appendix 2.

23. In addition to the questionnaire it is intended, over the consultation period, to engage more widely with a range of sectors and business. An engagement plan is at appendix 3.

24. The consultation responses will be analysed and used to inform the final carbon neutral action plan, which will be reported back to Cabinet before the end of 2021

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

25. To succeed in achieving the council's aim of reducing its own carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 requires a through understanding of the current position and the options available to make the most significant carbon reduction across the estate and operations. The Laser Energy study will provide evidence to inform these decisions.

26. A wide ranging consultation is necessary to engage others in reducing carbon emissions to achieve the borough wide aim to be carbon neutral as soon as

possible, supporting the UK government's ambition to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

27. Understanding the local appetite to achieve carbon reductions and will ensure the council can shape the action plan to enable everyone to play their part in reducing borough wide carbon emissions.

Next Steps in Process

28. Commence consultation
29. Assist Laser Energy to undertake the study for council baseline and emissions pathway
30. Consider consultation responses and outcome of study to finalise carbon neutral action plan
31. Present the final carbon neutral action plan and carbon neutral strategy to Cabinet for adoption before end of 2021

Conclusion

32. A well thought out, evidence based action plan that has the backing of the local community will set out the steps needing to be taken to achieve the carbon reduction aims.

33. The support and commitment of local people, communities and business is vital to its success. The consultation process will demonstrate that the council is committed to working in partnership, enabling and supporting others to reduce carbon emissions.

Portfolio Holder's Views

34. The resilience, commitment and dedication of our local communities was ably demonstrated throughout the coronavirus pandemic. As we now face the greatest threat to our planet and our health and wellbeing because of climate change it is imperative that our collaborative endeavours turn to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

35. The actions we take now will be our legacy for future generations. I recommend that we undertake the consultation on our carbon neutral action plan and carefully consider all the responses to ensure we bring forward a plan that everyone can be a part of delivering and benefit from.

36. In the meantime we must continue to lead by example; using the 'principles for a green recovery', that we endorsed in our Recovery Plan to guide our decision making. It is incumbent upon us that we prioritise tackling climate change, protecting the natural environment and supporting a sustainable local economy to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives and works in the borough now and in the future.

Contact and Email

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DRAFT

Ashford to Zero Plan

Our route to net zero carbon emissions

DRAFT

Consultation draft 2021

ASHFORD Climate Action

Ashford Borough Council

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Image courtesy of Alison Jane Miles.

Foreword

Climate change, caused by increased greenhouse gas emissions, is having a devastating impact on our planet. Without decisive action to reduce emissions, we are likely to experience an increase in damaging weather events and accelerated loss of habitats and species, which have serious negative consequences for all of us. We must make the most of the assets we have, reduce wasteful processes and respect our natural environment.

Our borough, sitting in the heart of the Garden of England, with its beautiful countryside, varied towns and villages, needs us all to consider how we can adapt and change our behaviour to lessen our impact locally. And in turn, influence and support positive change nationally and globally.

We have set out the actions we as the council can take to reduce emissions associated with our own activities, together with actions that need a collective approach to reduce emissions across the wider borough. Are there further actions we should include, how can you help achieve the actions? It is vital that everyone plays a part in ensuring the future health of our planet and therefore ourselves, by living more sustainably.

Our consultation process will culminate in an action plan for the borough and be presented together with our strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The commitment and determination we show now, to achieve carbon neutrality, will shape the future for generations to come. It is imperative that we all strive tirelessly to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions with a 'can do' attitude that inspires each and every one of us to tackle, this, the greatest of challenges and be successful.

Cllr Clarkson, Leader

1. Introduction

The council is consulting on the actions needed to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

Our ambition is to reach this target by 2030 for the council's own estate and operations. We will work with residents, business, statutory and voluntary organisations to deliver significant reductions in carbon emissions across the borough as rapidly as possible, reaching net zero by 2050.

In 2018 the borough's total carbon emissions was 598.6 $ktCO_2$ (BEIS Data). The pie chart below shows how different sectors make up this total. 70.2 $ktCO_2$ is absorbed by land use such as forests, cropland and grassland,

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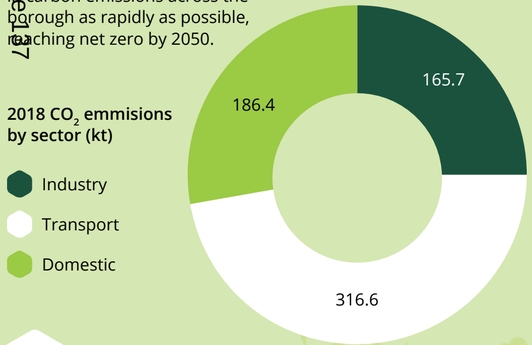
2018 CO_2 emmisions by sector (kt)



The Kent and Medway Emissions Pathway report identified a total of 681 ktCO2e for Ashford

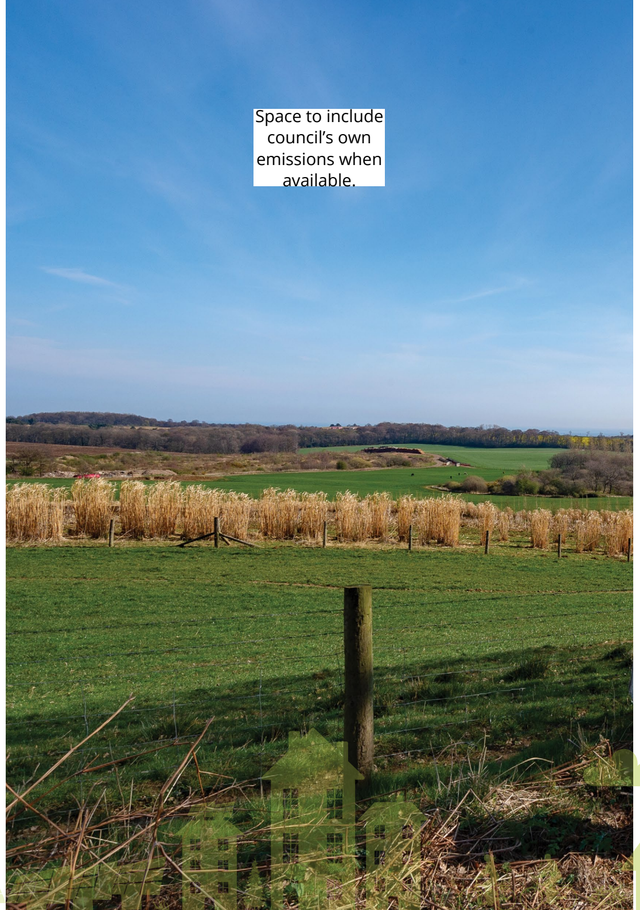
There are many wider benefits associated with tackling climate change: Improved health and wellbeing through cleaner air, warmer homes and increased opportunities for outdoor leisure and recreation; reversing the decline of habitats and species and protecting the natural environment; reducing adverse weather events; creating a circular economy to eliminate waste and ensure the safe use of natural resources.

The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) 'Principles for a Green Recovery', adopted as part of our Recovery Plan, will continue to guide decision making through the lifetime of this action plan.

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

A full description of the Principles for a Green Recovery is in Appendix 1.

In tandem with this consultation we are gathering information on the financial cost of implementing actions and the carbon savings they will achieve. This information will be used to set out a timeline to ensure we use our resources to maximise the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The principle of reduce first and then offset will be followed.



This action plan has eight priorities:

Priority 1: Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

Priority 2: Ensure the council's decision making processes, including those as the Local Planning Authority, strategic documents, plans and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Priority 4: Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

Headline actions for each of the priorities are set out in the following sections, together with key facts and a summary of what we are already doing.

2. Our consultation

We are keen to understand how we can best work with residents, business and local organisations to reduce carbon emissions across the borough. Everyone can play a part in tackling climate change be that by making personal changes in the way we live or looking at how we work, or as a business or organisation thinking about our products, services and processes and how to reduce their environmental footprint.
We are interested to know your views and what you are already doing or would like to do to reduce your carbon emissions.This will help us to understand what are the highest priorities and how we can enable everyone to contribute to tackling climate change.

For each of the 8 priorities we are asking:

1. **Do you agree with the priority?**
2. **What actions are you already taking which contribute to achieving the priority?**
3. **Are there any other actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to support achieving the priority?**
4. **How can the council help you take action to achieve the priority?**
5. **Are there any other actions you feel should be included in the priority?**

The consultation will run from June to October 2021, during this time an online questionnaire will be available at (link to be included)

We will also be running a residents Facebook group for discussion and questions and answers. To sign up please go to: www.ashford.gov.uk/environmental-concerns/carbon-neutral-agenda/green-agenda-focus-group-sign-up-form/

A series of workshops will be held to understand challenges and opportunities in specific priority areas and invitations will be sent as these workshops are arranged.

3. Action Plan

3.1 Priority 1 - Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

By providing information we can increase everyone's understanding of what they can do and then put that understanding into action. The actions each of us can take will be dependent on individual circumstances but doing the most we can is important.

Priority 1: Raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
1.1 Maintain ongoing internal and external 'carbon neutral' communications	Identify monthly themes and create plan Create new website page and content, making sure to use KCC and other local authorities' content Use residents survey results and other internal data such as active travel monitoring to inform comms plan. Explore research by other partners to gain insight to influence behavioural change, such as Keep Britain Tidy	Staff and residents are well informed about climate change and actions they need to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are motivated to make lifestyle changes and influence others	1. Number of views / hits / shares from ABC media 2. Number of local community media platforms with information on climate change 3. Percentage of residents survey returned with positive action to tackle climate change responses
1.2 Increase staff skills and knowledge	Continue roll out of Sustainability Friends training and investigate other training opportunities to increase knowledge and skills	Increased staff confidence to implement carbon neutral actions and challenge where decisions are not contributing to tackling climate change	1. Percentage of staff completing Sustainability Friends training
1.3 Encourage others to promote a low carbon, environmentally sustainable ethos	Highlight opportunities for schools and business to gain eco-certification, such as green flag status for schools Encourage event organisers to run sustainable events that minimise environmental impact	Increased awareness of climate change in young people Business community strives to be carbon neutral Local events have low carbon footprint and promote environmentally responsible behaviour	1. Number of schools and business with an eco-certification / award 2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions

What we've been doing:

Our website and social media channels are regularly updated with environmental information. We have run features on our dedicated web page, Facebook and Instagram covering issues such as food waste, saving water, recycling, including specific campaigns for Christmas and Easter, alongside linking to other wider campaigns such as Plant Britain and Kent Plan Bee.

A Green Agenda Facebook group has been opened up to residents to encourage them to have their say through lively debate on the things that really matter to them and help to make the borough a better place for all. This focus group will be about sustainability, carbon neutrality and environmental topics.

Our own staff training programme, **'Sustainability Friends'** has been completed bym **75%** of staff and will resume once we are able to return safely to the civic centre.

Engaging young people is very important and we are working with schools on a gardening and recycling project.

3.2 Priority 2 – Ensure the council's decision making processes, including those as the Local Planning Authority, strategic documents, plans and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Decisive leadership is critical to achieve our ambition to have the councils own estate and operations net zero carbon by 2030. Every decision, whether by the elected members or staff, will be carefully considered to ensure the outcome is positively contributing to reducing carbon emissions.

Priority 2: Ensure the council's decision making processes, strategic documents and procedures contribute to reducing carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
2.1 Review council policies to ensure alignment with carbon neutrality	Embed Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Green Principles (adopted in Recovery Plan) into Cabinet reports and Project Planning Processes to ensure decision making process supports the carbon neutral ambition	All decisions are made taking account of how the project / policy contributes to achieving carbon neutrality Goods and services purchased by the council have low or zero carbon footprint Staff travel is reduced Office space is rationalised resulting in lower energy input to Civic Centre Council funding supports lower carbon initiatives	1. Percentage of approved projects / policies making positive contribution to carbon neutrality 2. Percentage of suppliers with low carbon accreditation 3. Tonnes of carbon saved from reduced commuting/ business travel 4. Energy requirements of Civic Centre 5. Percentage of community grants awarded where project meets KRF green principles
	Introduce new procurement policies to include carbon neutral criteria to maximise carbon reduction through purchased services, materials and provision of low emissions fleets by contractors		
	Regularise homeworking arrangements; update policies and procedures to support a longer term home working strategy		
	Include the Kent Resilience Forum 'Principles for a Green Recovery' as criteria for consideration when assessing applications for community grants		
2.2 Take a design led approach to delivering sustainable communities	Adopt and deliver the South of Ashford Garden Community vision and strategy - including 'low carbon communities'	The South of Ashford Garden Community is recognised as an exemplar of low carbon living and a show case for good practice	1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Energy requirement per m^2 of new build 3. m^2 of open space per home
	Develop a Carbon Statement of Intent for Chilmington, to underpin decision making delivering current and future projects to exemplar environmental standards		
2.3 Develop evidence based planning policy and guidance	Develop a scoping document to inform the direction of travel in the next Local Plan. To identify issues and discuss options for 'green' standards for Ashford	Polices are developed to ensure future development meets high standards of environmental sustainability	1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Carbon footprint of each new development
	Create good practice guidance to encourage development of carbon neutral buildings (residential and commercial) in private and public sector.		
2.4 Introduce offsetting and adaptation measures	Align with Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy action to develop and promote Kent and Medway offset scheme	Council has ability to offset any remaining carbon emissions to achieve zero carbon after all reduction measures have been implemented Local communities have plans in place to deal with flooding incidents and reduce loss to life and property	1. Tonnes of CO_2 offset 2. Number of high risk parishes with emergency plans 3. Number of high risk parishes undertaking KRF training
	Set a budget provision to enable carbon offsetting		
	Increase number of parishes with high risk of flooding with emergency plans		

What we've been doing:

Home working is now established following its inception in response to the coronavirus pandemic 'work from home' requirement. Virtual meetings both internal and with external partners and the public have become accepted and are resulting in increased participation and engagement. It is estimated that the CO_2 saving from members attending meetings virtually rather than traveling to the Civic Centre saves approximately 7.3t CO_2 per year.

The Council endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy in December 2020, strengthening opportunities for collaborative working.

The Chilmington Management Organisation has identified the following projects; a carbon neutral secondary school, planting 6666 trees is underway through the successful urban tree challenge, a cycleway linking to Victoria Park is being scoped, Electronic Vehicle charging points will be integral to development.

3.3 Priority 3 - Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Decarbonisation of energy production is necessary to meet our carbon neutral ambitions. The demand for energy from renewable and low carbon sources will increase as we use more electricity to heat our homes and power vehicles, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) suggests that low-carbon electricity generation will need to quadruple (to 645 TWh in 2050) to replace existing fossil fuel generation and to meet the expected increased demand from transport and heating (CCC (2019), Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming). The majority of the energy we use is supplied from outside the borough, we can increase demand and therefore supply by purchasing energy from suppliers using renewable sources. In addition local renewable energy production reduces reliance on major energy suppliers and creates local income which can benefit local communities.

Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
3.1 Increase number of sites suitable for renewable energy generation	Include renewable energy in the call for sites in the next local plan	Local landowners put forward sites suitable for renewable energy generation	1. Number of suitable sites identified 2. Potential renewable energy capacity (MWh)
3.2 Increase local renewable energy generation	Encourage community groups to develop small scale renewable energy projects by signposting to information and advice	Overall energy consumption for the borough is supplied from renewable energy sources Local renewable energy generation increases and creates income for the council and local communities The council uses 100% green energy in its operations	1. Number of small scale community energy projects 2. MWh of renewable energy generated from council assets 3. Number of homes powered by renewable energy 4. Percentage of council's energy tariff attributed to green energy
	Continue assessing all council owned assets for potential to host solar PV panels and install where financially viable.		
	Explore feasibility and if viable invest in solar batteries (small scale and large scale storage site)		
	Complete feasibility study to determine viability of building a solar farm		
	If viable build solar farm		
	Consider and invest in wind power		
	Switch Civic Centre and other assets to green tariff		

What we've been doing:

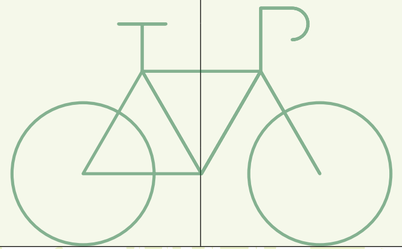
The council has been proactive in installing solar panels on properties since the introduction of the Feed in Tariff scheme. The first Solar PV system was installed in 2011, with the Civic Centre system following in 2012. All the solar PV panels installed by the council generate an estimated average of 357,000kWh per year. If an equivalent amount of electricity was purchased through the grid it would emit 82,481kg of CO_2. Further studies are underway to increase the supply of electricity through solar PV.

3.4 Priority 4 - Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

In 2018 transport within the borough accounted for 316 $KtCO_2$, 53% of total emissions (BEIS data). In the 2020 Residents Survey 70% of respondents said they typically use a car to travel to work or school. When asked what mode of transport they would prefer to use this decreased to 47% indicating a desire to reduce car use if there are suitable alternatives.

Priority 4: Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
4.1 Reduce transport emissions associated with council business and operations	Develop a green travel plan for staff and members for travel to and from work and work related journeys, informed by improved understanding of travel patterns	Greenhouse gas emissions from council related travel and operations reduces significantly through reduction in miles travelled and switching to cleaner forms of transport/vehicles Air quality in the borough improves	1. % of electric vehicles in council owned fleet 2. CO_2 reduction per year from council owned vehicles 3. Reduction in mileage claimed for staff travel 4. Number of staff purchasing EV through lease car scheme 5. Reduction in travel to /from home/work by car
	Enable increased use of public transport and active travel by provision of incentives and improved facilities such as cycle storage and changing facilities		
	Further explore use of electric bikes /scooters and potential for electric pool cars for use on council business		
	Investigate how to encourage / incentivise the take up of electric vehicles through the lease car scheme to coincide with next lease car contract		
	When vehicles within the grounds maintenance (Aspire) fleet are due for renewal / replacement, opportunities to minimise carbon emissions through route optimisation and vehicle specifications will be considered		
	Within the review of the waste contract consider minimising carbon emissions through route optimisation and contractors vehicle specifications		



4.2 Encourage active travel in the borough	Implement the agreed action plan for cycling and walking to include active travel plans for business, infrastructure improvements and community based initiatives	Increased confidence in local population to cycle/ walk to local destinations, improved health and wellbeing and local air quality	1. Number of businesses with active travel plans 2. Km of cycleway 3. Number of residents regularly walking and/or cycling
4.3 Enable and facilitate a borough wide reduction in transport related emissions	Develop a parking strategy to encourage an overall reduction in car usage and facilitate electric vehicle patronage	Overall reduction in car dependency, improved local air quality, fewer road traffic accidents, increased patronage of local bus services, all residents can access public transport options to travel to key services	1. Car park usage / revenue 2. Demand for EV charging points 3. % of 'clean' buses 4. Number of bus passengers 5. Number of residents served by community bus schemes 6. % of residents using community bus schemes 7. Number of cars owned per household 8. Number of residents regularly car sharing
	Identify areas that would benefit from 20mph speed restriction and make recommendation to Highways Authority		
	Review community bus scheme and assess demand for future programme		
	Promote existing rural transport services e.g. Kent Connects and Wealden Wheels		
	Work with the Quality Bus Partnership to improve services and patronage of buses including introducing cleaner buses		
	Strengthen anti-idling message promoted in schools through CEO road safety programme and other agencies		
	Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app		
	Improve understanding of future demand for EV charging points, infrastructure capacity and location. Implement a corporate approach to installation and maintenance of EV charging points		

What we've been doing:

The Cycling and Walking Strategy and Implementation Plan have been adopted. We are working with Sustrans to investigate where improvements are needed to link the South Ashford Garden Community to South Ashford.

Our Community Enforcements Officers use electric bikes and have a hybrid vehicle. The Housing Service has operated an electric pool car for several years.

There are 14 public electric vsehicle charging points in the borough. A study is underway to assess where there are suitable locations for further EV charging points, it is now estimated that 10% of recent car sales are electric vehicles.

Our services are looking at ways to reduce travel, an example of this is where we have enabled new customers to our lifeline service to install the equipment themselves reducing the need for a contractor to travel to their property. Over a six month period this has saved 240 miles of travelling.

Currently two local taxis are low emission vehicles. The green taxi scheme incentivises the uptake of low emission vehicles offering three years 'free' licensing for low emission vehicles.

3.5 Priority 5 - Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

The 'greening' of industrial and commercial businesses in the borough are crucial to reducing borough wide carbon emissions. Sharing good practice and maximising the uptake of government incentives will assist in this aim. Attracting environmentally sustainable industries and social enterprises to locate in the borough will create employment and increase productivity and local incomes.

Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
5.1 Encourage businesses to utilise schemes and advice to transition to lower carbon economy	Promote local low carbon schemes for business such as LoCase and STEM	Carbon footprint of businesses lowers and more 'green' industries locate in the borough and a low carbon circular economy develops Workforce is skilled in green technology	1. Number of businesses receiving LoCase and STEM grants 2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions 3. Number of tourism businesses engaged in Interreg Experience project
	Work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote low carbon business opportunities		
	Collaborate with partners to encourage and develop sustainable tourism opportunities for urban and rural business		
5.2 Provide information and advice to business	Develop a package of green business support/information materials for top employers	Employers are knowledgeable and able to implement sustainable business practice	1. Number of green business ambassadors 2. % of employees working in low carbon businesses
	Identify best practice and create local green business ambassadors to inspire other businesses		

What we've been doing:

Promoting the LoCase scheme enabled the UK Electric Bike Centre, based in Biddenden, to gain funding to purchase new equipment such as a bike trailers and e-bikes and also associated equipment such as helmets, locks etc. They were also able to optimise their website and commence a Google Adwords campaign in order to drive more business to the company. This resulted in the creation of seven new jobs, the promotion of green travel, an increase in GVA and the opportunity to explore a relationship with CyclePods, bike storage company.

An Interegg project is supporting sustainable tourism, increasing the off-season offer and linking with more sustainable visits and experiences. 15 local businesses have been successful in joining the programme and are working to develop their offers.

A cycle friendly initiative is being promoted to businesses in the borough.

3.6 Priority 6 - Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Across the UK only 5% of the energy used to heat our homes today is from low carbon sources (Ofgem decarbonisation action plan Feb 2020). There are many different types of buildings across the borough, however the approach should be to first reduce energy consumption as much as possible through the fabric and design of the building and the behaviour of its occupants. The remaining energy requirement can then be fulfilled from a renewable or low carbon source.

Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
6.1 Council led housing development to be built to highest environmental standards achievable	New build HRA homes to be built to attain EPC rating A or B	Lower carbon footprint of new homes, lower running costs for tenants, showcasing environmentally sustainable building techniques	1. % of EPC ratings at A or B 2. Average energy usage per m^2
6.2 Undertake retrofitting programme for council owned homes	Undertake stock condition survey	Overall carbon footprint of council homes is lowered, tenants benefit from increased thermal comfort and lower energy bills. Health and wellbeing of tenants improves	1. Number of homes retrofitted each year 2. % of home with EPC ratings at C or above 3. Level of satisfaction of tenants with their home
	Explore efficiencies of scale through joint working with other stock holding local authorities/ Registered Providers through Kent Housing Group		
	Develop a delivery plan for decarbonisation of homes to include types of properties, works required and timescales		
	Identify retrofitting pilot projects to test, assess and learn methods		
	Commence phased retrofitting programme		
6.3 Reduce water consumption across council owned assets	Install water saving measures in council owned commercial and residential properties	Residents actively use less water resulting in a reduction in overall water usage. Resilience to future water shortages improves	1. Per capita water use
	Encourage less water usage through behavioural change initiatives		
6.4 Retrofit councils own corporate property assets	Complete condition survey and undertake study to fully understand cost of retrofitting Civic Centre and likely carbon savings aligned with rationalising floor space and more flexible working arrangements for staff. Utilise this information to determine options for future use	Council assets contribute zero or minimal carbon emissions, assets are less expensive to run, improved conditions for staff and tenants	1. EPC rating of buildings 2. energy usage per m^2 3. Area (m^2) of buildings retrofitted 4. financial saving against cost of measures (ROI) 5. Satisfaction of tenants
	Maintain daily energy reporting to evaluate energy usage and potential reduction / savings		
	Continue ongoing asset management to ensure opportunities to reduce carbon emissions are identified and reflected in future reviews of Asset Management Strategy		
	Develop a planned approach to retrofitting corporate assets as identified by condition surveys and prioritise in Asset Management Strategy to maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions		
	Undertake post occupancy evaluations for corporate assets following completion of retrofitting works		
6.5 Improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private sector	Work with the Greater South East Energy Hub to deliver the allocated funding available through the Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Phase 2	Increase energy efficiency of homes Reduction in CO_2 emissions from private sector housing Reduction in fuel poverty	1) Amount of funding allocated / spent 2) Number of properties with improved EPC rating 3) Number of PRS properties improved from F and G to band E or above 4) Number of Accredited private rented properties 5) Number of households in fuel poverty
	Continue energy efficiency grants under the Landlord Accreditation scheme		
	Identify properties in PRS below band E requiring improvement under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and take enforcement action where necessary		
	Actively contribute to Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership to address fuel poverty		
	Promote energy efficiency schemes available to homeowners and private landlords		

What we've been doing:

From the late 1980's there has been an ongoing programme to improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings through insulation upgrades, more energy efficient windows and doors and heating systems. This improves the energy rating of the home and reduces the cost of space and water heating for the tenant. More recently renewable technology has been installed with properties benefiting from solar PV. Air source heat pumps have replaced oil-fired central heating systems (or inefficient Night Store Heaters) in off-gas areas and where a heating system has reached its replacement interval in our cyclic maintenance and improvement programme or where the existing heating system cannot be economically repaired.

The refurbishment of Christchurch Lodge, renovated to provide accommodation for homeless people, has achieved EPC rating of B, through using a fabric first approach with an innovative insulation solution in the 19th century building.

The council's own new build programme has put sustainability as a high priority.

The 2015/16 programme achieved the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, well exceeding the building regulations in force at that time. This including taking a fabric first approach, installing water saving measures, high efficiency heating systems and renewables.

We are looking at other assets and recently undertook a condition survey of the Civic Centre to understand how its energy efficiency can be improved and inform options for its refurbishment / future use.

A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will enable the replacement of the gas fired boilers at the Stour Leisure Centre with air source heat pumps. This will reduce the leisure centre's annual carbon emission total by 657 tonnes – (the equivalent to the CO_2 emissions from the annual heating of 243 average UK homes), a reduction of 45% with an energy saving of 40%.

3.7 Priority 7 - Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife

Ashford is a largely rural borough but we must not be complacent and forget the importance of our open spaces, in rural and urban areas, for our own wellbeing and that of the natural environment. Good habitat management can help store carbon and poor habitat management can result in carbon being released.

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
7.1 Improve biodiversity on council owned land	Develop and implement land management plans for council owned land which provide specific vision, aims and objectives for the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of parcels of land in a given locality	Enhanced biodiversity of open spaces in the borough increasing key species. Land management plans will support the balance of appropriate wildlife habitat and biodiversity within amenity spaces and urban areas ensuring that maintenance regimes are appropriate to the character of the land and ensure ecological, social and economic benefits are realised holistically	1. Tree numbers and species information 2. % increase in area (m^2) managed for wildlife / biodiversity 3. Number of trees planted 4. Number of trees felled 5. Total CO_2 sequestered
	Proactively manage ABC tree stock, which will inform future tree management and maintenance programmes	Understanding of tree numbers, species and maturity of tree stock and location Informed tree planting plans Tree warden scheme that will engage local people while supporting the overarching aim	
7.2 Support land based community projects	Publish community - based gardens guidance	Local people grow their own food and community cohesion improves. Health and wellbeing improves, through healthier eating. Awareness of food production encourages local food production and purchase with a reduction in food miles	1. Downloads of community gardens guidance 2. Number of community gardens created
7.3 Reduce environmental degradation through land management and habitat creation	Explore the creation of wildlife habitats in the borough	Improvement in river water quality Increase in biodiversity	1. Number of key species 2. Level of pollutants in local water courses
	Work with land based industries and relevant agencies to implement sustainable land management practices		

What we've been doing:

The management plan for Queen Mothers Park is in progress together with developing guidance for community gardens. A successful bid to the Urban Tree Challenge will result in 6666 trees being planted at Chilmington, with planting work underway and due to be completed by Spring 2021.

3.8 Priority 8 - Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

The council has a good record of recycling rates and continues to have the highest recycling rate in the county at 54.2% for 2019/20. It is important to maintain this excellent recycling rate but also to reduce the amount of waste produced.

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
8.1 Work with local businesses to reduce waste	Support reduction in plastic bag usage through reuse / 'use your own' initiatives	Residents are empowered to reduce the amount of waste they produce to reduce tonnage of non-recyclable material collected Local businesses actively support waste reduction initiatives	1. Tonnes of non-recyclable waste collected (residential and commercial) 2. Recycling and contamination rates 3. National and regional litter ranking 4. Number of refill points 5. Volume of water refilled (litres)
	Develop work stream as part of Town Centre reset to encourage upcycling and facilitate establishment of social enterprises with waste reduction objectives		
	Increase number of water refill points in local outlets		
8.2 Ensure council processes reduce waste and maximise recycling	Continue to move to electronic services and digital processes for staff and residents	Residents are confident to use digital services, reducing paper based processes. The council no longer uses single use plastic within its offices and non-recyclable waste is reduced	1. Number (%) of residents signed up for digital services 2. Number of staff undertaking recycling training 3. Volume of paper used in council publications / correspondence 4. Tonnes of non-recyclable plastic waste collected from council offices
	Recycle all the council's technological assets using WEEE and ADISA directives		
	Eliminate single-use plastic within the council office including rolling out consistent bin system removing plastic and paper cups from vending machines		
8.3 Encourage residents to reduce waste	Continue to promote waste reduction including through home composting and garden waste service	Residents are proactive in reducing waste	1. Tonnes of waste collected per household 2. Recycling rates 3. Garden waste services take up

What we've been doing:

As a council, we have consistently improved recycling rates through informative ongoing campaigns to residents and local businesses.

The green garden waste service has been reviewed to increase the use of this service therefore reducing journeys by householders to the tip. Working with our waste contractor collection routes have been optimised. The garden waste vehicles now travel 153 miles less over a two week period which will make an annual saving of 11984 kg carbon.

The council has rationalised the printers within its offices, reducing their usage, together with introducing virtual collaboration tools for effective joint working online.

4. Next steps

All the responses received will be used to finalise the action plan. The final action plan will also be informed by the outcome of a simultaneous study to understand how the council can reach net zero in its own estate and the associated financial costs. This will help us to prioritise the actions that will be most effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst using our resources most efficiently.

April **May** **June** **July** **August** **September** **October** **November**

December 2021
Adoption of Carbon Neutral Strategy and Action Plan

Cabinet approval to commence consultation gained

Widespread public consultation

Analysis and collation of consultation responses

Drafting of final Action Plan and Carbon Neutral Strategy

Emissions baseline and reductions pathway report

Study in progress to understand councils own emissions and reduction pathway

Through working with local business, organisations and statutory partners we will enable and encourage others to reduce their emissions to achieve our borough wide targets.

Appendix 1: Kent Resilience Forum - Principles for a Green Recovery

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 2: Glossary

ADISA	The Asset Disposal and Information Security Alliance (ADISA) underwrites best practices for data security for asset recovery and disposal companies. ADISA certification reflects the highest standards of safety, environmental responsibility and confidentiality in the industry.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity refers to the variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi. While Earth's biodiversity is so rich that many species have yet to be discovered, many species are being threatened with extinction due to human activities.
Carbon Footprint	A carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organisation, event or product.
Carbon Neutrality	Carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. Removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and then storing it is known as carbon sequestration. In order to achieve net zero emissions, all worldwide greenhouse gas emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration.
Carbon Offsetting	The balancing of the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) or other greenhouse gases (measured in carbon dioxide equivalents [CO_2e]) from an activity by providing for or investing in an emission reduction elsewhere. If carbon reductions are equivalent to the total carbon footprint of an activity, then the activity is said to be "carbon neutral."
Climate Change	Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.
CO_2	Carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases.
CO_2e	Carbon dioxide equivalent. Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.
Greenhouse gases	Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere absorb heat energy and prevent it all escaping into space. This keeps the Earth warmer than it would be without these gases. The increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is magnifying the greenhouse effect and increasing global temperatures. There are many greenhouse gases but these are some of the most important: water vapour H_2O, carbon dioxide CO_2, methane CH_4, nitrous oxide N_2O, CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons).
EPC	Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a building is and give it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient).

EV charging points	An electric vehicle charging point is equipment that connects an electric vehicle (EV) to a source of electricity to recharge electric cars.
Food miles	The distance between the place where food is grown or made and the place where it is eaten.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account a ring-fenced account of certain defined transactions, relating to local authority housing. It records expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities.
Interreg	Interreg Europe will co-finance a proportion of a project that is carried out in partnership with other policy organisations based in different countries in Europe.
KCC	Kent County Council.
KRF	The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) is a partnership of organisations and agencies who work together to improve the resilience of Kent and Medway, and to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities. The KRF is one of 42 of local resilience forums (LRFs) across England set up in response to the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.
LoCase	The Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund to provide a free business support programme in the South East. Its aim is to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions.
Renewable Energy	The International Energy Agency (IEA) defines renewable energy resources as those derived from natural processes and replenished at a faster rate than they are consumed.
Rewilding	The process of protecting an environment and returning it to its natural state, for example by bringing back wild animals that used to live there.
STEM	Steps to Environmental Management Scheme. The scheme helps businesses to improve their environmental performance through a series of assessments and certificates (blue, silver and gold).
Sustrans	A national charity whose mission is to make it easier for people to walk and cycle.
WEEE	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment recycling; a specialist part of the waste and recycling industry.

Introduction: We value your thoughts on our draft carbon neutral action plan and the eight priorities for action. We would like to understand what actions you are already taking, what else you would like to do and how the council could help you make changes to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. Your responses will help us to finalise the action plan to enable everyone play their part in reducing carbon emissions.	
Section 1: Are you answering this consultation as an	
Individual	Organisation or business
Section 2: About you or your organisation	
Please provide some details about you. We will use this information to gauge how important different priorities are to different groups of people.	Please provide some details about your organisation. We will use this information to gauge how important different priorities are to different types of organisations
Please tell us your age group ☐Under 18 ☐18 to 24 ☐25 to 34 ☐35 to 44 ☐45 to 54 ☐55 to 64 ☐65 and over	Please tells us about the type of business or organisation e.g. retail, manufacturing, financial service etc. charity, social enterprise etc.
Please tell us your employment status ☐Employed full-time ☐Employed part-time ☐Self-employed ☐Retired ☐Unemployed ☐Looking after the home/caring responsibilities	Please tell us how many people are employed in your organisation and/or volunteer Number of employees Number of volunteers
Please tell us your postcode (note: we cannot identify individual respondents based of postcodes. This tells us roughly where in the borough the response has come from)	We would like to set up a partnership group to work together to achieve net zero carbon across the borough. We are keen to understand what would encourage you to take part and make it worthwhile you becoming involved. Participation is voluntary, registering an interest does not commit you to taking part.

	If you are interested in joining the partnership group, please provide your details below: Please provide a contact email address Please provide a contact number
Section 3: Priority 1 - Raise awareness of Climate Change and increase understanding and knowledge	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking which contribute to raising awareness of climate change and increasing understanding and knowledge?	Q2: What actions are you already taking as a business/organisation which contribute to raising awareness of climate change and increasing understanding and knowledge?
Q3: Are there any other actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to help raise awareness of climate change or to increase your understanding and knowledge.	Q3: Are there any other actions you are planning to take or would like to take now or in the next 5 years to help raise awareness of climate change awareness and increase understanding and knowledge either for your own staff / organisation or for your customers
Q4: How can the council help you to raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge?	Q4: How can the council help you to raise awareness of climate change and increase understanding and knowledge?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 4: Priority 2 - Ensure the council's decision making processes, strategic documents and procedures contribute to reducing Carbon emissions and increasing local resilience to climate change	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to influence the council to reduce carbon emissions?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to ensure you are contributing to reducing carbon emissions?

Q3: Have you considered how climate change may affect your lifestyle (e.g. water shortages, air pollution, flooding) - yes / no and how?	Q3: Have you considered how climate change may affect your business /organisation - yes / no and how?
Q4: How can the council help you to increase your resilience to climate change?	Q4: How can the council help you to increase your resilience to climate change?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 5: Priority 3 - Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce your reliance on fossil fuels in your home?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in your business / organisation?
Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to further reduce your reliance on fossil fuels and use more renewable energy?	Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to further reduce your reliance on fossil fuels and use more renewable energy?
Q4: How can the council help you to reduce reliance on fossil fuels?	Q4: How can the council help you to reduce reliance on fossil fuels?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 6: Priority 4 - Encourage and enable a shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduce car dependency	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduced car dependency?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to shift towards cleaner modes of transport and reduced car dependency?
Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to further reduce carbon emissions linked to how you travel?	Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to further reduce carbon gas emissions linked to travel associated with your business/organisation?

Q4: How can the council help you to reduce car dependency and use cleaner modes of transport?	Q4: How can the council help you to reduce car dependency and use cleaner modes of transport?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 7: Priority 5 - Enable sustainable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to encourage sustainable businesses growth? E.g. shopping locally, buying environmentally responsible products.	Q2: What actions are you already taking to enable sustainable business / organisational growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions, if applicable?
Q3: What do you think businesses can do to reduce their carbon emissions and how could you support this?	Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to grow your business / organisation sustainably and reduce carbon emissions?
Q4: How do you think the council help business to grow sustainably and maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions.	Q4: How can the council help you to grow your business sustainably and maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions, if applicable?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 8: Priority 6 - Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce the environmental footprint of your home?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce the environmental footprint of your building, if applicable?
Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to environmental footprint of your home?	Q3: Are there any actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to environmental footprint of your building?
Q4: How can the council help you to reduce the environmental footprint of your home?	Q4: How can the council help you to reduce the environmental footprint of your building?

Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 9: Priority 7 - Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to enhance green space around you to increase wildlife (e.g. your garden at home), if applicable?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to enhance green space around you, if applicable?
Q3: How do you think public green spaces can be improved for wildlife?	Q3: How else could your business/organisation contribute to improving green spaces for wildlife?
Q4: How can the council help you to protect and enhance your local green spaces?	Q4: How can the council help you to protect and enhance your local green space?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 10: Priority 8 - Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling	
Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree	Q1: To what extent do you agree with this priority? ☐Strongly agree ☐Agree ☐Neither agree nor disagree ☐Disagree ☐Strongly disagree
Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce waste?	Q2: What actions are you already taking to reduce waste?
Q3: Are there any other actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to reduce the amount of waste from your household?	Q3: Are there any other actions you would like to take now or in the next 5 years to reduce the amount of waste generated by your business / organisation?
Q4: How can the council help you to reduce waste and recycle more?	Q4: How can the council help you to reduce waste and recycle more?
Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?	Q5: Are there any other actions you feel should be included in this priority?
Section 11:	
Q1: Considering all the priorities listed here, on a scale of 1 to 8, with 1 being the most important and 8 being the least important, how would you rate each priority?	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Priority 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 7	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Priority 8	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Draft Carbon Action Plan – Engagement Plan

Introduction:

The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions requires a concerted effort by every member of society; individually and as families, and collectively through work places and organisations, to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The council can lead by example and inspire others to take action.

Through consulting on our draft carbon neutral action plan we will understand where there are opportunities to do more, the barriers that need overcoming and the partnerships that are required.

Methods:

- A questionnaire will be available online
- Social media will be used to gather information. E.g. quick polls
- Focus groups/workshops will be run to gain in-depth insight for specific priority areas.

(Methods used will be dependent on COVID restrictions in place at the relevant time)

The consultation will seek the views of:

- Elected members
- Staff
- Residents
- Schools
- Local councils and community groups
- The local business community, including social enterprises and large local retailers
- Construction industry including developers and builders
- Local landowners and farmers
- Voluntary and charitable organisations
- Statutory organisations

Timeframe:

The consultation will commence in May 2021 and run for 16 weeks.

Promotion:

The consultation will be promoted through:

- ABC website and social media posts
- ABC Residents Magazine – Ashford for You
- Local media – press and radio
- Existing networks e.g. Town Centre Business Forum, Kent Developers Group, Ashford KALC.
- Face to face event (if possible within any COVID public health guidelines)

Consultation Method	**Who can take part?**	**How long will method go on for?**
Online survey	We encourage businesses, community groups and residents of all demographics to participate in this survey. This is a general, all-purpose survey to find out what people think of the plan. Breakdowns of the views of different demographic groups and different organisational types will be completed during the analysis.	16 weeks
Facebook focus group	This focus group is accessible to residents who are interested in helping shape carbon neutrality campaigns and actions, and have signed up to take part via an online form. This group is only available to residents, not any organisations or community groups. At this time the focus groups are only available to residents aged 18 and over.	Several months depending on how active the discussion of the group is.
Stakeholder workshops	These workshops will involve staff members and key members of organisations who want to help shape and deliver the carbon reduction agenda.	Workshops held to help shape the plan.
Young person's debate	Secondary school age young people.	As part of curriculum

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Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the
Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on Microsoft Teams on
Friday 30th April 2021 at 10.00am

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chairman) – Leader, ABC
Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Cllr Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Corporate Property, ABC
Mr Mike Whiting – Cabinet Member for Economic Development, KCC
Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive, ABC
Paul Harwood - Highways England,
Paul Sayers, East Kent College - (Substitute for Graham Razey)
Michael Claughton, Chairman, Ashford Access Group

Non Board Members

Cllr Peter Feacey, ABC
Cllr Matthew Forest, ABC
David Smith, KCC
Rebecca Anderson, KCC
Victoria Thistlewood, KCC
Simon Jones, KCC
Matt Hogben, KCC Highways and Transportation
Shona Johnstone, Homes England
Ben Lockwood, ABC
Paul McKenner, ABC
Lorna Ford. ABC
Andrew Osborne, ABC
Christina Fuller, ABC
Charlotte Hammersley, ABC
Simon Cole, ABC
Hannah Clayton-Peck, ABC
Len Mayatt, ABC
Dean Spurrell, ABC
Jeremy Druce, ABC
Linda Stringer, ABC
Danny Sheppard, ABC

Apologies

Cllr Neil Shorter, Mr Michael Payne, Graham Razey, Tim Read, Rebecca Spore, SallyAnne Logan.

Item	Notes	Action
1.	**Welcome** The Chairman welcomed all those present to this Virtual meeting. He apologised for the length of time since the last meeting but thought all would relate given the coronavirus pandemic and well as Ashford's own specific emerging issues with the Sevington Inland Border Facility and the Stodmarsh nitrates issue. He reminded all present that the meeting was expressly confidential.	
2.	**Notes of Previous Meeting – 16th October 2020** Noted.	
3.	**Ashford's Corporate Plan and Priority Projects** Tracey Kerly (TK) gave a presentation giving an update on ABC's Corporate Plan and strategic projects. It provided an update following the disruption of the last year and the pausing of the current five year plan, with the void being filled by an ambitious two year Recovery Plan to bring Ashford out of the pandemic, leading into a new Corporate Plan to 2024. The presentation focussed on: - the Ashford Ambition; Strategic, local and recovery projects (including examples which the Board would already be familiar with); ABC's own priority projects and how much was actually still happening; and watching brief projects. The Chairman wanted to reiterate that whilst certain projects had been paused, they had certainly not been cancelled and he outlined just a few of the many things that were continuing to go on in the Borough. It was important to keep the momentum going. Michael Claughton (MC) advised that he had already spoken on behalf of Ashford Access to Emma Wood on the Stour Centre refurbishment, and they would shortly be sending their comments on the facilities for the disabled. They had also had input on the Conningbrook Park which he was excited about. TK advised that the pace of the development of the park at Conningbrook would be somewhat reliant on the pace of the housing development and the S106 funding coming in from the developer.	

4.	**Levelling Up Fund** Andrew Osborne (AO) gave a presentation on the Levelling Up Fund, introduced by the Government in March 2021. He advised this was a Capital Fund accepting bids from District Councils of up to £20m, with match funding of at least 10% encouraged. Support from the local MP would also add weight to the process. KCC and Medway would also each be able to put a transport bid in, as the Highway Authority, of up to £50m. The first round bids were due by June 2021, but only for 'oven ready' projects that could start to be delivered by March 2022. AO advised that the three main priority themes for the fund were: - transport investments; regeneration and town centre investments; and cultural investments, and that all should contribute to the Government's net zero carbon objectives or wider environmental considerations. He also gave details of tiered system determining which were priority areas, and where Ashford fell within that for Kent. Ashford was not in a top priority tier, so Ashford's bids would have to be that much better to be successful. He outlined some of the parameters the Government would be looking at when assessing bids and three options that were currently being considered. The Board agreed the priority project that should be pursued and Damian Green (DG) agreed that this was the one he would support as MP. AO thanked the Board and reiterated that partners may be asked to demonstrate their support for the bid so there would be a role for everyone to play. Paul Sayers (PS) from East Kent College advised that there was a potential tie in for an exciting project to link Further Education and Skills with the scheme mentioned in the bid and potentially also address the higher than average youth unemployment figures in the Borough. PS also gave an update on the Community Renewal Fund for East Kent College Group. This was a separate fund to the Levelling Up Fund and essentially the pre-curser to what would become the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The College had devised a programme that would apply across the whole of East Kent to design a learning for life and work programme, assisting people to access the jobs market and employment. The College's new Employability Centre that had already been opened in Ashford would be a big part of this, working with local employers. It was an exciting bid and they were looking forward in working in partnership with ABC and others. The Chairman thanked PS for his update	**AO**

	and reiterated the Council's full support for this bid and the wider work of the College.	
5.	**Town Centre Recovery Response** Hannah Clayton-Peck (HCP) gave a presentation updating on town centre activity over the last year and plans for the upcoming year. The presentation focussed on: - the Town Centre Reset; Town Centre Footfall; One to One Business Support; The Maybe* Digital Platform; the new Love Ashford Website; Elwick Place and Park Mall; monthly Business Forums; Emergency Exit Arts; Made in Ashford; and the Welcome Back Fund. The Chairman thanked HCP for her presentation and the remarkable amount of work undertaken during the pandemic by her and her team. Her enthusiasm and number of ideas for the future shone through and this positive outlook would be vital in recovering from the pandemic. MC raised previous concerns about facilities for the disabled (and not just physical disabilities) in Ashford Town Centre and considered this would be vital in any reopening and recovery. HCP said she would be happy to liaise further with MC on this issue and how to help in getting that message across to businesses.	
6.	**Project Updates** The report enclosed with the agenda set out the latest position on progress in respect of the Big 8 projects and the Watching Brief projects, for noting. Mike Whiting (MW) said he just wanted to say how fascinating and forward thinking he found meetings of this Board and how impressed he had been with how Ashford took issues "by the horns" and attacked them, rather than running away from them. With KCC elections coming up, this may be his last meeting, so he wanted to congratulate Ashford on the work it was undertaking and thought this Board was an exemplar one for others to follow.	
7.	**Dates of Future Meetings** Friday 16th July 2021 Friday 15th October 2021 Friday 11th February 2022 Friday 22nd April 2022 all at 10.00am.	

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Compliance and Enforcement Board

Notes of a Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **27th April 2021.**

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);

Cllrs. Bartlett (ex-officio), Buchanan, Shorter, Spain, Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(c) Cllr. Webb attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Feacey.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Barrett, Feacey.

Also in attendance:

Cllrs. Harman, Ledger, Sparks.

Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Officer, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Team Leader – Planning Enforcement, Senior Planning Lawyer, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1. Declarations of Interest

1.1 Cllr. Buchanan made a Voluntary Announcement as he knew one of the owners of the sites referred to in the Planning Enforcement Update report.

1.2 Cllr Webb made a Voluntary Announcement as she was a Director of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.

2. Notes of the Meeting of 26th January 2021

2.1 The Board agreed the notes as an accurate record.

3. Environmental Crime Enforcement in Ashford

3.1 The Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Officer introduced the report which identified environmental crime enforcement activities for the period from January to April 2021, and highlighted the key points in the report. He explained that the Environment and Land Management service had moved forward with the implementation of the Environmental Crime Enforcement Team. The new team consisted of a Team Leader and an Enforcement Officer. It was now anticipated that enforcement team operations would commence in early July 2021.

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

- A Member asked about the feasibility of introducing a reward/bounty mechanism for reporting flytipping and providing information leading to prosecution. The Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Officer said this had not been considered and he would explore further. One Member said that he considered that there was sufficient community support and engagement in place without the need to introduce a reward system. Another Member urged caution, and said he was reluctant to support a reward system as he considered it could be divisive.

- A Member asked about the legislation in relation to domestic CCTV, and whether private CCTV could be used to record traffic on the public roads. The Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Officer said that there was a limited amount of legislation on domestic CCTV usage, but it was clear that it could not be used to cover other people's property and public spaces.

- In response to a question, the Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Officer advised that the Council was in liaison with the Environment Agency in relation to action on a business at Cobbs Wood, where there was concern over the correct storage and management of the product.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

4 Anti-Social Behaviour in Ashford - Update

4.1 The report provided the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) performance update for the period from 1st January to 31st March 2021. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager ran through the performance data in relation to the Community Safety Partnership and explained that 107 ASB reports had been dealt with by the Community Safety Unit (CSU) during this period, with 960 cases being handled by Kent Police. Details of the action taken on the incidents were set out in a table in the report. She drew Members' attention to the other key points raised in the report.

4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points were raised:

- With regard to the breaches at the Memorial Gardens, a Member asked whether a suitable screen, such as hawthorn, could be planted to prevent access to the Gardens. He said he would discuss this with officers outside the meeting.

- A Member asked for an update on the ongoing ASB concerns at Waitrose. She said that the complainant had not received any response to their contact on this matter. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said she would discuss this further with other

colleagues and ensure that a response was sent to the complainant from the appropriate service.

- A Member noted that the Public Safety Protection Order sign was not in place on Beaver Road. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said she would ensure that this was put in place as soon as possible.

- Another Member asked how much of the information contained in the report could be shared with relevant Parish Councils. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager explained that any information provided in the Members' Briefing could be shared widely, but the details provided in the report for this meeting were restricted. She said she would update the affected Members outside of the meeting.

- A Member said it would be useful to have a column included within the table at Appendix A, to show the percentage comparison with last year's figures for each type of ASB. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said that she would include this going forward.

- A Member said he was very pleased to hear that catapult activity in particular areas of the Borough was being addressed. He considered that there should be some publicity to show the public that action was taking place. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said she would discuss this with the Police Inspector. She reiterated that tackling ASB was a priority of the Community Safety Partnership.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

5 Planning Enforcement Update

5.1 The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement introduced this item, which provided Members with an overview of the work of the Planning Enforcement Team for the reporting period 1st January to 31st March 2021. She highlighted and expanded on the key points within the report.

5.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points were raised:

- A Member asked if the audit list which was referred to was available to all Members. The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement explained that this list arose from the audit undertaken in 2018, which had resulted in a number of low priority recommendations. These had subsequently been written off by the Audit Board but the team had informally agreed to comply with the low priority recommendations and were working their way through the list. She agreed to share the details with the Member outside the meeting.

- A Member asked how items were added to the anticipated actions list. The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement explained that items were added when formal action was first authorized and once negotiations were considered to have been exhausted.

- A Member questioned the meaning of 'not-expedient', as included in the table on page 23 of the agenda. The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement explained that many cases were closed without formal action because of the implications involved in pursuing the case any further. She agreed to discuss this further with the Member outside the meeting.

- In response to a question, the Team Leader – Planning Enforcement confirmed that when a case was closed it was procedure to notify the complainant formally.

- A Member asked about the average time for handling different priority cases. The Team Leader – Planning Enforcement explained that the criteria and timescale for each of the priorities was set at the initial investigation stage.

- The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development said that this report highlighted the quantity of investment that went into enforcement and that the success rate was very high. It was important to acknowledge the professional judgement used by officers in determining non-expediency in cases. He expressed his gratitude to the enforcement team for their time and efforts. Members were agreed that if more resources were required, this should be considered.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

6 Date of Next Meetings

6.1 27th July at 10am (venue TBC)
26th October at 10am (venue TBC)

Councillor Bell (Chairman)
Compliance and Enforcement Board

Information Technology & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 16th March 2021.

Present:

Cllr. Forest

Cllrs. Krause, Ovenden, Pickering.

Apology:

Cllr. Shorter.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Chilton, Feacey, Ledger, Spain, Sparks.

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

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th November 2020

1.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 17th November 2020 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

2 Digital Project Update

2.1 The Portfolio Holder introduced this item and highlighted how the Council had made digital progression a priority and transported Members into the 21st Century in terms of digital technology. He outlined the numerous projects currently being undertaken or completed, including Garden Waste, ANPR at Elwick Place car park, garage hire, the corporate website, Aspire, rough sleepers, Victoria Park to name just a few. He expressed his appreciation to the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager, IT Manager and their teams for all of their hard work and input into the project

2.2 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager went onto describe how the Team had continued their efforts, working remotely throughout the pandemic, and also acknowledged the work the IT Team had undertaken to support them. He then gave an update on some aspects of the Council's digital programme, including the implementation of Yoti Sign, and on-going work on the Report It app and Abavus. Process mapping within the Customer Services Team was a current priority and Environment and Land Management Service was the first area under review, since this subject was the second most popular page to be viewed, after Planning. Work on the

Aspire website had been completed and had enabled the team to develop a template for smaller websites coming forward in the future. Work was currently underway on developing a system on Abavus for online sports pitch bookings, and a shift pattern system was being explored for Ashford Port Health. He went onto speak about the new Planning System, which would be developed via Arcus Global. This would be developed over 2 phases, the first was to improve the processes and the second was the technology upgrade.

Discussing further work requests he advised that Food hygiene was being reviewed to enable remote and digital workflow for delivery of regulatory and statutory duties relating to Food Hygiene, Health & Safety and Animal Licensing.

The current database (Northgate M3) was of limited duration and work would need to commence to procure a new system. This would ideally happen once the Planning system (Arcus global) had been implemented, as this may be an option for the M3 replacement. In the meantime, this provided an opportunity to improve the ways of working and operational outcomes, and would be the focus of the project. The project was likely to be rolled out in two stages. The first developing improved systems using existing systems such as ABAVUS for electronic forms, with the second stage being full integration once the long-term database had been agreed.

2.3 The Chairman thanked the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager for his comprehensive update. The item was then opened up to the Task Group and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member expressed disappointment that the Planning system would not be complete until 2022 and said that constituents were becoming increasingly frustrated with the current system and the inability to be able to contact staff in Planning. The IT Manager explained that their focus was on developing a system that was fit for purpose and realistically this meant allowing a sufficient timeframe. If modules were developed and finished earlier, it may be possible to release those for use along the way. The Portfolio Holder added that the Planning departmental restructure needed to be taken into consideration also and the licence for the current Planning system expired in March 2022.

- A Member asked whether the new Planning system would be all-encompassing, and whether the current GIS system would be updated. The IT manager advised that due to the current planning system constraints some areas of GIS had not been able to be brought up to the current version which may have caused issues – this would be resolved with the new system.

- In response to a query regarding the Sports Pitch booking system, the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager confirmed that currently this was only available for Council owned pitches, but the option to include externally run facilities could be explored in the future. He added that contractual issues may prove problematic, but the functionality would be there.

- The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing voiced his full support for the Food Hygiene Project. He went onto ask whether it was necessary to wait for the Planning system to be introduced for work to start on the replacement. The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager explained that there was a resource issue and he needed to ensure a team was in place to be able to deliver the new system. He added that it would be beneficial to see how the Planning project played out and to make sure that it was the right system moving forward. A Member queried whether the Abavus system could be used for this and the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager explained that whilst the initial form was part of work within Abavus, it did not have the functionality that M3 already provided so would not be suitable in this instance.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

3 Update on Corporate Security

3.1 The IT Manager introduced this item, explaining that this centred mainly on cyber security. He confirmed that there had been one incident over the last three months whereby a staff members credentials had been compromised. Thankfully, an Officer in the Finance Team had sensed that certain details on an invoice were not correct and after contacting the supplier, they were able to prevent the payment from being processed. He accredited the mandatory cyber training in helping the Officer to recognise the deviations in that particular case. He encouraged all Members to undertake the training if they had not already done so.

3.2 Other incidents of national/international security breaches included the recent compromise to the Microsoft Exchange server, which had affected some local government authorities. ABC's IT dept. ran regular scans to identify this type of threat, and sat within the Kent Public Services Network, which provided an extra layer of defence to the council.

3.3 The IT Department had been externally audited twice over the last year. MHLCG had invited the department to be audited, and it was felt this was good practice since three local authorities had been exposed to cyber threats in recent times. The findings highlighted some weaknesses that the IT Manager explained were already being rolled out, including multi factor authentication. The Department had since received £200k funding for completing the audit and were exploring the best ways to use this, although there were some covenants on how the funding could be spent.

3.4 The Chairman thanked the IT Manager for the update and enquired about whether any future Dojo training sessions were planned, to which it was confirmed that this was in the pipeline and would be publicised once confirmed.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

4 Future Agenda Items and Report Tracker

4.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager introduced the report and spoke to the Committee about suggestions for agenda items for future Committee meetings. His report outlined the terms of reference for the Committee and had outlined suggested topics for future review including:

- Regular progress updates of the Councils corporate digital programme
- A presentation from project managers of current projects
- Revisiting original areas supported by the IT Committee intended to be the core of the strategy 2020-2025
- 6 monthly updates on the Councils Cyber Security measures
- Current technology and whether the Council is utilising it to its best use
- Lessons learnt from the pandemic
- A yearly update on Broadband and connectivity in the Borough

4.2 The Chairman agreed with the suggested topics and welcomed the updates on the project progress and broadband. The Group spoke about the topic of best use of current technology, with Modern.Gov and Microsoft Teams in mind, and a Member commented that more often, difficulties arose owing to password issues or software updates. He added that a refresher training session could prove useful for Members, after the prolonged period of working remotely.

4.3 Further discussion took place regarding the various devices available for use by Members and the IT Manager confirmed that the IPad continued to be the favoured device by the Council. He added that the laptops that had been loaned to Members during the pandemic would soon need to be returned.

Resolved:

That the Report be received and noted.

Agenda Item No:

Report To: **CABINET**

Date: **27TH MAY 2021**

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report Title: **SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

Report Author and Job Title: Danny Sheppard, Member Services Manager (Operational)

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holders are individually specified in the attached Schedule.

Summary: To set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet of Ashford Borough Council.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Where appropriate, individual Wards are indicated.

Recommendations **That the Cabinet receive and note the latest Schedule of Key Decisions.**

Policy Overview: Under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no longer a legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, however there is still a requirement to publish details of Key Decisions 28 clear days before the meeting they are to be considered at. The Council maintains a live, up to date rolling list of decision items on the Council's website, and that list will be presented to the Cabinet each month, in its current state, for Members' information.

Financial Implications: Nil

Legal Implications: n/a

Equalities Impact Assessment n/a

Other Material Implications: Nil

Exempt from publication: No

Background Papers: None

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CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN

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

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Gerry Clarkson; 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
27th May 2021					
Rural Housing Working Group - Findings and Recommendations	*To present the dataset accumulated by the Working Group to enable a discussion around the importance of rural affordable housing to community life and the significance of local housing needs surveys, with a view to increasing the volume of surveys will be made. The report will also highlight progress on rural schemes both by the Council and by RPs and discuss how to communicate increasing awareness of affordable rural housing with parish councils and communities – in addition to the Rural Protocol document recently launched by Kent Housing Group.*	Cllr Barrett	Mark James	Open	17/2/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Street Naming and Numbering – Andrew's Garage Site, Smeeth	*To seeks agreement for naming the access road after the Andrews family who have connections with and remain local to Smeeth*	Cllr Shorter	Louise Lambourn	Open	10/3/21
Draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan	*To agree a draft plan to go out for consultation.*	Cllr Clarkson	Jennifer Shaw	Open	4/2/21
Acquisition of Homes at Chilmington		Cllr Barrett	Mark James	Open	27/4/21
24th June 2021					
Final Outturn 2020/21	*Final budget outturn for previous financial year.*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	26/6/20
Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards – Financial Penalty Policy		Cllr Barrett	Julian Watts	Open	15/4/21
Electrical Safety Standards Regulations 2020 – Implementing Financial Penalties		Cllr Barrett	Julian Watts	Open	15/4/21
Fit and Proper Person Rest for Relevant Protected Sites		Cllr Barrett	Julian Watts	Open	15/4/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Digital Transformation of Visitor Information Services at Ashford Gateway		Cllr Forest	Sarah Barber	Open	10/3/21
Vicarage Lane Development	*The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the current proposals including the design, financial position and the programme timetable.*	Cllr Clokie	Jo Fox	Open (Exempt Appendix)	1/10/20
Ashford's First Zero Carbon Short-stay Housing Accommodation Facility - Henwood		Cllr Barrett	Mark James	Open	27/4/21
29th July 2021					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	*Proposed formal write-off of debts*	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	4/8/20
Recovery Plan Annual Report 2020/21 and Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024		Cllr Clarkson/Bell	Tom Swain	Open	29/4/21
Review of the Pay Policy Statement		Cllr Pickering	Michelle Pecci	Open	7/5/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
26th August 2021					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					
30th September 2021					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	*Quarterly budget monitoring report*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/9/20
Corporate Commercial Property Strategy – Annual Report	*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.*	Cllr Clokie	Paul McKenner	Open	28/9/20
Corporate Performance Report	*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'.*	Cllr Bell	Tom Swain	Open	28/9/20
Bockhanger Consultation – Outcomes		Cllr Barrett	Mark James	Open	30/10/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
28th October 2021					
Medium Term Financial Plan	*To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year's Budget process.*	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	*To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.*	Cllr Bell	Tom Swain	Open	27/11/20
Council Tax Base 2022/23	*To present for approval the estimated 2022/23 Council tax base calculation for the Borough and each parished area, on which the major preceptors and local Parish Councils will base their requirements.*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	27/11/20
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	*Quarterly budget monitoring report.*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	27/11/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
16th December 2021					
Draft Budget 2022/23	*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.*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	30/11/20
27th January 2022					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	*Proposed formal write-off of debts*	Cllr Bell	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	29/1/21
24th February 2022					
Revenue Budget 2021/22	*To present the draft revenue budget for 2021/22 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	*Quarterly budget monitoring report*	Cllr Bell	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20
Corporate Performance Report	*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'.*	Cllr Bell	Tom Swain	Open	28/2/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
31st March 2022					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (including Review for 2022/23)	*A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance.*	Cllr Pickering	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	19/3/21
28th April 2022					

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14/5/21