



# CABINET

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on  
**Thursday, 28th October, 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 Bell – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development  
Councillor Buchanan – Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management  
Councillor Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Housing  
Councillor Feacey – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing  
Councillor Forest – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism  
Councillor Iliffe – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Corporate Property  
Councillor Pickering – Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Customer Services  
Councillor Shorter – Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT THIS MEETING**

**Members of the Press and public are permitted to attend this meeting in person. Anyone attending will be requested to follow the measures introduced by the Council in order to manage the risk of COVID-19. This includes wearing face coverings until seated and not attending the meeting if you are displaying any symptoms of, or have tested positive for, COVID-19. You may also wish to consider taking a Lateral Flow Test no longer than 24 hours before attending the meeting.**

## Agenda

	Page Nos..
1. <b>Apologies</b>	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	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. <b>Minutes</b>	3 - 12

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

4. **To Receive any Petitions**
5. **Leader's Announcements**
6. **Medium Term Financial Plan** 13 - 24
7. **The Creation of Meadows and Enhanced Land Management Plans to Support Increased Biodiversity, Reduce Impacts of Climate Change and Connect People** 25 - 36
8. **Corporate Commercial Property Strategy - Annual Report** 37 - 46
9. **Queen's Platinum Jubilee & Albacore Event Programme** 47 - 60
10. **Trading and Enterprise Board - Minutes of 28th September 2021** 61 - 62
11. **Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board - Notes of 29th September 2021** 63 - 68
12. **Schedule of Key Decisions** 69 - 78
13. **Items for Future Meetings**

20 October 2021

---

Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Member Services  
Telephone: (01233) 330349 E-mail: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

## 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](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.**

This page is intentionally left blank

## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **30<sup>th</sup> September 2021**.

### Present:

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

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

### Apologies:

Cllr Clokie.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks, Wedgbury, Wright.

### In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Accountancy Manager, Economic Development Manager, Senior Economic Development Officer, Play and Open Spaces Project Officer, Member Services Manager.

## 117 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he had used some of his KCC Combined Members Grant to support the Rylands Road play area.	123
Wedgbury	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he had used some of his Member Grant for play equipment in Kingsnorth and he was a Member of Kingsnorth Parish Council.	123

## **118 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **119 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader said that he did want to provide some clarity to one issue. As colleagues would know the NCP car park in Ashford Town Centre had closed last week and it had been reported in the local media that this would be a permanent closure. The local newspaper had also reported this week that the Council had bought the car park over a year ago which was untrue. The reality was that the owners of the NCP car park had chosen to dispose of it, along with a number of its car parks, and once the Council had learned it was being disposed of they had entered negotiations and completed only that previous Friday (24<sup>th</sup> September).

The Council's intention was to ensure that the car park was fit for purpose. They were going to spend some money refurbishing it, including remedying the current leaks in to Park Mall and resurfacing it, and once those repairs were complete they would be re-opening the car park and reducing parking charges for the community in line with the Council's other car parks. It was hoped this would increase footfall for the premises in Park Mall.

## **120 Financial Monitoring Report – First Four Months to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the first budget monitoring position for 2021/22, up to 31 July 2021. This first update reported the General Fund (GF) as having a small surplus of £42,000. However, this included a pressure of £954,000 in services which was supported by additional investment income of £515,000 and £481,000 being transferred from reserves. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was forecasting an underspend of £2.468m against budget, which was due to slippages in planned maintenance works as a result of supply chain issues and continued delays from the Covid-19 Pandemic. The first quarter report also provides an update on the Collection Fund, Capital expenditure, Treasury Management and Reserve movements. The Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP), Courtside and Pitchside fees and charges, and Council write offs were also included within the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management said one point that concerned him was that the Housing Services (General Fund) budget was forecast at £914k and had gone up by another £90k. Although this was a modest amount, it did point to the fact that Temporary Accommodation costs for the homeless were still high. He asked if that were to be the end of year figure, would that be reduced down to around £500/£600k after Housing Benefit receipts had been taken into account, or was that roughly a net £1m on Temporary Accommodation? Secondly, with regard to

the Henwood Temporary Accommodation Scheme, he considered this was vitally important to this Council as an 'invest to save' project and thought that, looking at the figures, the Council may need to consider a second facility of this type as this was not something that could be allowed to continue indefinitely and did need to be addressed in the coming years. The Deputy Chief Executive said that whilst he would be happy to provide the Member with a more detailed answer outside of the meeting, it was important to note that the budget for Housing Services that had been highlighted was the budget for the entire budget for the General Fund element of the Service, not just Temporary Accommodation costs. The figure would also be net of Housing Benefit. It was true to say that the chief element of this was pressure from Temporary Accommodation costs and this was partly from delays to the Henwood scheme which had been factored in to the original budget. This was an pressure that was well known and understood and the Council were putting in place a number of measures to mitigate it. It was an important budgetary issue that would continue to be closely monitored. The Portfolio Holder said that the questions did stress the importance of regular Financial Monitoring reports being produced. These highlighted situations in almost real time and did not wait until the end of the year to identify issues and tweak delivery within the budget year if necessary.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the forecast outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be noted.**
  - (ii) the Collection Fund position be noted.**
  - (iii) the proposed contributions from reserves be approved and noted.**
  - (iv) the overspend on the capital programme for 'The Poplars' and how this can be funded from programme underspends (Paragraph 47 of the report refers) be noted.**
  - (v) the Treasury Management position be noted.**
  - (vi) a further application to the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Project be approved, which would lead to a request for Council approval for capital expenditure.**
  - (vii) the fees and charges for Courtside and Pitchside, as shown at Appendix C to the report, be noted.**
  - (viii) the HRA write offs totalling £239,583.22, which have been processed under delegated authority, be noted.**
  - (ix) the General Fund Housing write offs made under delegated authority be noted and the amounts over £1,000, as detailed in Exempt Appendix D to the report, be approved.**

**Recommended:**

**That the receipt of £764,235 of grant monies from Round 1 funding be noted and Council approve capital spend of £1.7m for the purchase of 10 General Fund properties.**

## **121 Corporate Performance Report – Quarter 1 2021/22**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which summarised performance against the performance indicators introduced in the Recovery Plan presented to the Cabinet in July 2020. He reinforced that the data within the report belonged to all Members and he encouraged all to interrogate the report where it applied to them.

The Deputy Leader referred to two areas – the proposed new car park in Adley's Yard which he hoped to see a delivery date for soon, and the potential closure of the Flour Mill car park, which he hoped would not again see Council staff parking displaced to the Mill Court residential area. The Leader said that the Adley's Yard Car Park had been approved and was progressing. He could not give an absolute date yet, but it would be delivered at pace. On Flour Mills, the Chief Executive advised that all staff now received free parking at the Civic Centre and the car parks there were big enough, so there would be no reason for displacement in to Mill Court.

**Resolved:**

**That the performance data for Quarter 1 2021/21 be received and noted.**

## **122 Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Parishes Neighbourhood Plan**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the amended and final version of the Neighbourhood Plan had been the subject of a local referendum in the Parish and 92.67% had voted in favour of the plan. Following the successful referendum it was now the Local Planning Authority's responsibility to formally 'make' (i.e. adopt) the Plan, which would confer full Development Plan status for decision making purposes. This must be agreed by Full Council. He said he wanted to express his thanks to those in the village who had put in the hard work to develop this plan and he was happy to endorse it.

**Recommended:**

**That Full Council 'make' the Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Parishes Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2030 in accordance with Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to become part of the Development Plan.**



## 123 Play Area Investment

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which proposed a Capital Play Regeneration Programme alongside a Repairs and Renewals Programme to safeguard appropriate play spaces and facilitate opportunities for ongoing improvement. The Programme included three key priority locations that required significant refurbishment and explained that £1.1m capital investment was required to make them fun, innovative and fully inclusive and accessible. To further safeguard play spaces owned by the Council, an enhanced Repairs and Renewals programme was proposed that included £200,000 in 2022/23 and £100,000 per annum thereafter, for refurbishment and maintenance of existing play, teen and outdoor gym facilities.

A Member said he taken a great interest in play areas over the years and was really pleased to see this report coming forward. He considered most Local Authorities would rely on Section 106 monies to provide play facilities and without proper maintenance these often failed and had to be removed, but Ashford's investment in to play areas was exciting. These were so important to communities and he was also pleased that local Members would be able to have a decent input in to conversations and he hoped that would be extended to Parish Councils as he knew Kingsnorth Parish Council, as one example, had a keen interest in this subject.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing said he fully supported this paper and stressed the importance of such facilities. He said he wanted to pay particular tribute to the residents of Rylands Road who he knew had been fundraising for their park and he considered that sort of investment from the local community would ensure a sustainable legacy for these facilities.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property and Projects said he was too excited by the proposals. He had heard anecdotally about people from certain communities having to drive to get to a decent play area and this would ensure that many more people would have a decent play area within walking distance. The addition of cycle racks and Public Rights of Way would also help to enhance the Council's Cycling and Walking Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder thanked everyone for their comments. On engagement with Kingsnorth Parish Council, he knew this was already in hand along with the Park Farm Playground Group. He agreed that such engagement gave a sense of ownership to communities and the play areas were more likely to be respected and looked after.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) £1.1m be invested for a Play Regeneration Programme from the Improvement and Corporate Projects Fund in three key priority play locations – Rylands Road, Bybrook; Central Park, Bluebell Road, Park Farm; and Spearpoint Recreation Ground, Kennington.**
- (ii) the Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure be delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to execute and**

**complete all tasks and documentation necessary to deliver the Play Regeneration Programme.**

- (iii) additional budget of £200,000 in 2022/23, and £100,000 each year thereafter, be allocated to the Repairs and Renewals budget, earmarked for maintenance, repair and replacement of individual play area assets as agreed by the Head of Environment and Land Management, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.**

## **124 Update on Broadband Improvements in the Ashford Borough**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which analysed the latest data on fixed and mobile telecommunications access in the Borough. It also updated Members on the activities undertaken to attract investment and improve infrastructure in the Borough by private sector operators, in particular the implementation of Policy EMP6 within the Ashford Local Plan. Finally, the report set out potential areas for Officers to investigate and work on moving forward given the importance of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure within the Council's Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024.

The Leader advised that following the recent Cabinet reshuffle, Councillor Neil Bell would continue to lead on broadband issues rather than Councillor Shorter.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the content of the report and the broadband work undertaken in the past year be noted.**
  - (ii) it be noted that the delivery of broadband is a key priority in the Council's draft Corporate Plan.**
  - (iii) the proposed actions for digital infrastructure (section 34 of the report refers) be incorporated into the final version of the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024.**

## **125 Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Albacore Event Programme 2022**

**Report Withdrawn.**

## **126 The Resettlement of Afghan Nationals Through the Government ARAP Scheme**

The report gave an overview of Ashford Borough Council's response to the Government's appeal to Local Authorities to assist in the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), and to the subsequent emergency evacuation of Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES) and their families and other qualifying Afghan

nationals. This showed how the Council continued to play its part in the national commitment to planned refugee resettlement under the UK Resettlement Scheme.

The Leader advised that further to this, a local hotel was being used as a 'bridging hotel' for some of the ALES and their families, before they were rehomed all over the country (not Ashford) - Ashford had made its own separate pledge to settle between five and ten families. The Portfolio Holder for Housing said it was important to acknowledge the amazing work going on at the bridging hotel and the donations and volunteers from businesses and the community and even the hotel staff themselves, that had all been forthcoming to help in all of that. It was really heart-warming to see what had gone on there. It was also important to note that the five to ten families would be provided with private rented accommodation, so there would be no impact on the Council's current housing waiting lists.

The Deputy Leader said that Ashford had really stood out for its speed and decisiveness in getting involved with this scheme and for its community response which had been astonishing. He asked about the size of the families, which were traditionally larger than UK families, and whether the Government were providing sufficient funding for them to be properly accommodated. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Government ARAP Scheme matched the previous Syrian Refugee Scheme in that the allocation of funding was per individual, so there was adequate funding. The intention was that the settlement of the Afghan nationals would be a lot quicker than the previous Syrian Refugees. Many already spoke English, had British passports and already had connections within the UK.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) debt of gratitude owed by the UK to the Afghan Locally Employed Staff be acknowledged.**
  - (ii) the offer to settle between five and ten families in Ashford under the ARAP scheme be supported.**
  - (iii) the continuing development of projects and infrastructure to promote and enable successful integration and promote community cohesion to benefit the wider Ashford community be supported.**
  - (iv) a future report will come before Members in due course to approve funding for the programme.**

## **127 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be received and noted.**

## **128 Compliance and Enforcement Board – Notes of 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 be received and noted.**

## **129 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board – Notes of 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021 be received and noted.**

## **130 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 be received and noted.**

## **131 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.**

## **132 Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved:**

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **133 Review of Housing Options Team**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the exempt report which advised that as a result of a review of the Housing Options Service, a new structure had been identified. Cabinet was required to recommend to Council the early release of pension costs associated with the review.

### **Recommended:**

**That the early release of pension costs arising from the Housing Options restructure be approved.**

---

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services  
Telephone: (01233) 330349 Email: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk](http://www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



**Agenda Item No:** 6  
**Report To:** Cabinet  
**Date of Meeting:** 28 October 2021  
**Report Title:** The Medium Term Financial Plan 2022 to 2027  
**Report Author & Job Title:** Maria Stevens  
Head of Finance & IT  
**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Neil Shorter  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Finance & IT

**Summary:** This report presents the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), a budget forecast including underlying assumptions, covering a five year period from 2022 to 2027 for the General Fund.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is reported separately in the HRA Business Plan, which will be report to Cabinet in November 2021.

The Draft Budget is built using the assumptions in the MTFP and the Draft Budget will be reported to Cabinet in November 2021.

The MTFP has been built from a backdrop of Covid and the EU Exit and although this Council has not suffered directly from these events, due to significant Government funding, the resulting pressure on inflation in the construction industry, increasing energy prices, and the increase in earnings are reflected in the MTFP.

The MTFP is based on the Council's current activities and resources. New priorities and projects will need to be fully planned and the impact on the budget understood before approval.

**Key Decision:** YES

**Significantly Affected Wards:** All

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

- I. Note the forecast and accept the underlying assumptions**
- II. Note that 2022/23 funding is based on current funding with spending reviews, fair funding and Business Rate changes now to be implemented**

from 2023/24

- III. **Endorse the Reserves Strategy (Paragraphs 35 to Error! Reference source not found.)**
- IV. **Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT to agree the Council's continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool**

**Policy Overview:** This report is in line with the Council Policy to prepare and approve an annual budget and update and review the Council's finances with a five year plan.

**Financial Implications:** The Medium Term Financial Plan has been prepared alongside the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2024, and includes future assumptions around inflationary movements and government levels of funding. It also includes the agreed saving plan that was presented and approved as part of the Final Budget for 2021/22 at Full Council earlier this year.

The Plan does include a number of risks and these are explored further in the risk section of the report.

**Legal Implications:** NA

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** The assessment is prepared as part of the Final Draft Budget Report, which will be reported to February 2022 Cabinet. This report forms the basis of the Budget Setting process.

**Data Protection Impact Assessment:** No personal data used to build the plan.

**Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):** Risks are explored in this report in the section below. There are many risks including, Government funding and the uncertainty within the economy. The Medium Term Financial Plan is used to assess these risks and the impact they could have on the viability of the Council over the next five years.

**Sustainability Implications:** NA

**Other Material Implications:** None

**Exempt from Publication:** **NO**

**Contact:** Maria.stevens@ashford.gov.uk



## Report Title: The Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-2027

### Introduction

1. This report presents the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP/the Plan) that has been built based on current service activities, current understanding of future levels of government funding and key assumptions sourced from government and advisors. The Plan also includes saving measures approved as part of the 2021/22 Budget. These savings amounted to £3m per annum and 2022/23 sees £762,800 reducing the projected spend with a further £79,000 in 2023/24. This brings the total saving per annum after 2023/24 to the £3m.
2. This report covers the General Fund Budget, the Council also has the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and this has its own 30 year Business Plan and is covered in a detailed Cabinet report. This report will be presented to Members at the Cabinet meeting held in December 2021.
3. The Draft Budget is built in conjunction with the MTFP and will be presented to Members at the December Cabinet.

### Background & Context

#### The Economy

4. The impact on the UK from coronavirus, together with its exit from the European Union and future trading arrangements will continue to have a major influence on the economy over the life of the MTFP. The resurgence of demand has led to an unexpected rise in inflationary pressures, which is heightened in the UK following its departure from the European Union and disruption to supply.
5. UK CPI (Consumer Price Inflation) for August 2021 was 3.2% and this is expected to increase beyond 4% in the near term. Although it is anticipated that transitional factors will unwind overtime, there is recent concern from the MPC (Monetary Policy Committee) that this could lead to longer term inflationary expectations that may require tighter fiscal policy to control (increase in interest rates).
6. The MTFP assumes bank rates to rise gradually over the term of the plan ranging from 0.15% in 2022/23 to 0.5% in 2026/27, although given recent events this assumption could be at risk over the medium term with the acceleration to 0.5% coming as soon as 2023/24. The BoE (Bank of England) MPC meetings will be monitored carefully in conjunction with market commentators to keep abreast of changes in base rate forecasts which will need to be factored into future models.
7. The most recent labour market data for the three months to August 2021 showed the unemployment rate to be 4.5% which is 0.6 percentage point higher than before the pandemic. The level of vacancies also continues to increase with 1.102m for the three months to September, some 318,000 above pre-pandemic levels.

8. Vacancies in the market and a smaller proportion of lower paid jobs are increasing average earnings with regular pay growth (excluding bonuses) reported at 6% for the 3 months to August 2021 (3.4% inflation adjusted).
9. To recognise increases in market rates, the new Health and Social Care Levy, and freezes to personal allowance increases, the MTFP has allowed for a 4.4% increase in employee costs for 2022/23, this includes 1.4% for incremental rises and employer costs relating to the new Health and Social Care Levy.

#### Government Agenda

10. Currently Ashford Borough Council is part of the Kent Pool for Business Rates that offers a number of benefits to the Council including benefiting from the business rate growth within the district.
11. Government's focus during 2021 has been the COVID19 pandemic and rolling out the vaccine, containment of the virus whilst balancing this against the pressures within the economy. The result of this is likely to see the reforms to various Local Government funding streams being delayed including the fair funding review, business rate retention scheme and the comprehensive spending review (multi year settlement) for a further year, and the Council has made the assumption that the reviews will now be implemented in 2023/24.
12. These reviews could fundamentally affect the funding position of Local Government. There is a strong policy driver to divert funding to Social Care, which has a potential to transfer resources away from District/Borough Councils to County Councils. This needs to be balanced against the impact on District/Borough Councils and the need to maintain key service priorities.
13. The New Homes Bonus Scheme is ending however, there has been a consultation which ended in April around reforming the scheme to target more focused housing delivery but the outcome of the consultation has yet to be published. The MTFP assumes a one off allocation for 2022/23 with no legacy payment contributing to the annual budget moving forward. This receipt will be set aside for corporate projects.
14. The EU Exit has had less of an early impact than anticipated, although this was largely mixed in with the emergence of the Covid Pandemic so it was difficult to differentiate between the two events. The two events are now progressing as covid support unwinds and the recovery phase begins. Pressures from the EU Exit are now materialising (as identified in the Economic section of this report) with trade deals and negotiations to alleviate things such as HGV driver shortages taking centre stage. The Council has been supported to manage disruption arising from the EU Exit as a gateway to Europe, but it is unclear if any further economic support will be given by Government to support rising costs.

#### Local impact of Government Policy

15. The Spending review will be restricted to a single year and we expect a settlement based on current year allocations with the methodology for distribution set to be retained for another year until the fair funding review is completed.
16. Perhaps the biggest areas where we are seeing the impact of government policy locally is the development of the Ashford Port Health Facility at

Sevington. In addition to this the Government has been very proactive in tackling Homelessness however, it is still a major budget pressure at Ashford and throughout Kent although the Council is looking to reduce costs through building its own specialised units

### Key Assumptions

17. The Medium Term Financial Plan is based on a number of assumptions, this section explores the more significant ones and **Appendix A** lists others such as interest rate forecasts.
18. The MTFP has benefitted this year from the prudent assumptions made in the 2021-2026 MTFP, as many of the pressures around the Collection Fund were not as bad as estimated at the time. It should be recognised that these benefits are one-off and should not be expected year on year.
19. Although this plan is not projecting a recession, there are some inflationary pressures in the short term that will have an impact on service and project delivery although, these are expected to dissipate over the medium term. Inflation is a factor that needs to be managed carefully within any financial planning regime. CPI is increasing sharply this year, and this is planned to continue until the end of this financial year. The Council is then forecasting CPI to fall within 2022/23 returning to the BOE 2% target by 2023/24. The Council uses Arlingclose (Treasury Management Advisors) for estimates and Government publications.
20. Interest rates have been forecast in line with the Arlingclose estimates although, there has recently been some upside risk added to those assumptions. As a short term borrower the Council is more open to interest rate risk. This strategy is in accordance with the Treasury Management Policy and is monitored by officers alongside Arlingclose treasury advisors. During 2021/22 the Council fixed £32m at a rate of 1.56%, this increases the cost of finance costs overall however, this is offset by reducing the risk of interest rate upward movements.
21. Cost of living pay increase is forecast to be 3% in 2022/23. The Council recognises that it needs to keep the salary bill under control so in future years the increases could be offset against reduction in staffing levels through digitalisation and other efficiencies, with a focus on natural wastage. The increment salary increases are contractual and are included in the all years of the plan at 0.7% of the total salary bill, and additional 0.7% was added to 2022/23 to cover the Employer element of the new Health and Social Care Levy.
22. There has been salary increases in the Aspire team adding a pressure of £75,000 in the base year, this was to recognise that they complete a 40 hour working week as opposed to normal officers who are contracted to a 37 hour week.
23. Assumptions for new properties have been based on information from the planning and visiting officer teams, looking at the number of properties under construction and taking a view on the delivery of sites with planning permission and allocated sites. It should be noted that the figures may differ from those in the emerging local plan but a lower figure is taken as historical data shows a lower level are usually completed than permitted. There is also downward pressure from developments that are captured by the Stodmarsh

issue, although there is a plan to mitigate this in the future a pressure is still coming through where work cannot be commenced until the mitigation strategy is approved. These assumptions drive figures for growth in tax base which ultimately impacts upon Council Tax Yield, and previously the new homes bonus receipts, so possibly a future scheme.

24. Last year Government capped the level that council tax could be increased by without a local referendum at 2% or £5 whichever is the greater. For planning purposes the MTFP has assumed the maximum increase available to the Council in each year of the Plan which would result in a £5.00 increase for 2022/23.
25. Council Tax base is estimated to show a strong recovery from levels estimated for 2021/22, the furlough scheme lessened the impact of estimated job losses and business rates and additional reliefs held up the business rate income, although partly from S31 grants. Although the furlough scheme is due to end soon there is a demand for staff so increased levels of Council Tax Support claims are not expected. There is also an expectation that people will go out and start spending, enabling business to continue to operate although recent inflationary pressures may subdue this.
26. Due to the delays in the reforms to local government finance we expect to see a one year settlement being agreed based on last year's settlement. Although funding levels have not been formally reported to the Council as yet the following assumption have been made:
  - a. New Homes Bonus will continue for one year however, we do not expect to receive any legacy payments resulting from the allocation. Historically there have been three years of legacy payments at the same value.
  - b. The Business Rate retention scheme has been under review and a number of government consultations have happen over the last couple of years. Due to current priorities we have made the assumption the business rate scheme will continue in its current form with the reform implementation date now being in 2023/24.
  - c. The Council is expecting a one off Lower Tier Grant in recognition that Government Funding has fallen and the Council is receiving funding below the calculated spending power of the authority. This is expected to be around £700,000 and forms part of the MTFP and budget.

#### Developing Future Income Streams

27. The Commercial Investment Strategy, comprises of three elements, Real Estate Investment, Loans to the Property Company and Strategic Investment.
28. The Medium Term Financial Plan includes income from projects that have been confirmed, such as investment in the Property Company, £850m included within the plan with significant drawdowns in 2022/23 to 2023/24. These loans have been re-profiled to recognise that developments coming forward have been delayed due to Stodmarsh. Future projects that have not yet been approved or started have not been included.
29. There is an expectation in the plan that the Council will earn £100,000 additional income per annum from commercial ventures.

## MTFP Forecast

30. The forecast detailed in the table below takes into account the items discussed above. The forecast, which is not cumulative, shows an overall balanced plan for the 5 years. However there are pressures in the early years of the plan and these need to be managed.
31. The 2022/23 budget has a pressure of £566,000 and will be managed through use of reserves that have been set aside to manage this pressure. This position will be closely managed throughout the year with Services realising savings through vacancies and only approving essential spend.
32. The additional pressure coming through in 2023/24 is the estimated impact of the retendering of the waste contract, which has been informed by current market intelligence. The Head of Environment and Land Management will explore various models of delivery to understand if this pressure can be reduced.
33. It should be noted that there could be significant changes to government funding that has not been reflected in the later years of this programme but could include a reduction in Business Rate income.
34. Overall the MTFP is roughly balanced across the 5 years with the cumulative position reporting an annual surplus of £111,000 in 2026/27.

**Table 1 – Medium Term Financial Plan projections**

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Government Grant	(779)	(83)	(83)	(83)	(83)
Retained Business Rates	(4,685)	(5,194)	(5,754)	(6,350)	(7,040)
New Homes Bonus (100% transferred to Improvement & Project Fund)	(730)	0	0	0	0
Council Tax (including estimated surplus £400k Grants)	(8,703)	(8,687)	(9,103)	(9,533)	(9,977)
Base Budget Gross Expenditure	58,968	60,935	60,811	61,437	62,078
Net Interest and MRP costs	1,775	2,918	3,625	3,917	3,725
Company and Commercial income (excl. debt)	(1,799)	(2,920)	(3,579)	(3,815)	(4,048)
Reserve Transfers	1,380	(730)	0	0	0
<b>BUDGET GAP</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>1,039</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>(377)</b>	<b>(1,686)</b>
<b>Cumulative GAP</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>1,605</b>	<b>1,952</b>	<b>1,575</b>	<b>(111)</b>

## Reserves Strategy

35. The Council holds a number of reserves to ensure it has enough money to respond to and cover future risks such as maintenance of assets, changes to government funding and prevailing economic conditions, such as Covid19. Some reserves are also identified to support the corporate plan priorities and promote economic growth with the borough.
36. The Cabinet review these reserve levels based on a recommended strategy that considers the Council's Net Revenue Budget, risks present and emerging, and the growing asset base.
37. The Council also holds a number of ring fenced reserves which, need to be held separately for the specific purposes.
38. The table shows reserve levels as at 31 March 20221 and the forecasted position as at 31 March 2022.

<b>General Fund Revenue Reserves</b>	<b>Balance at 31 March 2021</b>	<b>Balance at 31 March 2022</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'001</b>
<b>Unearmarked General Fund Reserve</b>	<b>2,562</b>	<b>2,562</b>
<b>Earmarked Reserves</b>		
Recovery Project Reserve (now including Victoria Park)	1,063	263
Climate Change Delivery Fund	2,000	2,000
Improvement Delivery Fund	3,000	3,215
Economic Growth and Risk Fund	9,000	8,385
Fund Future Expenditure (Risk, Legislation, Transformation)	4,553	4,617
Provide for Maintenance of Assets	3,500	4,050
<b>Provision for Discretionary Spend</b>	<b>23,116</b>	<b>22,530</b>
Required by Statute Reserves and other ring-fenced amounts	5,955	3,257
Section 31 grants and relief reserves (ring-fenced)	13,000	0
Developer Contributions	5,971	5,971
<b>Amount ring-fenced, held under statute</b>	<b>24,926</b>	<b>9,228</b>
<b>Total Reserves Position</b>	<b>50,604</b>	<b>34,320</b>

39. The Council's reserves policy is to hold a minimum 15% of Net Budget Requirement as the unearmarked General Fund Balance; this is around £2.5m.
40. The Council has a MTFP pressure of £1.95m over the next three years that will need to be funded from the Economic Growth and Risk Fund (Reserve), this can then be replenished (if appropriate) in years four and five of the plan when forecasted surpluses are anticipated.
41. The Council has a General Fund (property & land) asset base of around £130m, and at the start of this year asset management reserves held £2.5m, which is held within the Provide for Maintenance of Assets reserve. This amount is increased annually through a base budget contribution of £600,000 (previously £500,000) and an external borrowing limit of £500,000 per annum in the Capital Plan.

42. Consideration will need to be given as to whether reserves need to be grown to fund future projects, this will create a further pressure in the MTFP but currently any replacement for New Homes Bonus will be used for this purpose.
43. The new Corporate Plan for 2022-24 has a number of key priorities including progressing towards a Carbon Neutral Council for which a climate change delivery reserves has been established.
44. Future projects and priorities will need to be assessed and appropriate funding identified before they are approved. The following should be considered:
  - a. Capital reserves will be utilised if available for capital project.
  - b. Projects that generate a regular income above financing costs could attract borrowing for funding; a full business case would be required to access borrowing, giving regard to new restriction on borrowing for what could be classified as 'debt for yield'.
  - c. Projects outside of (a) and (b) will need to be consider alongside available reserves and staff resources. Grants and other external funding should also be considered to reduce the call on reserves. Grants should only be applied for to deliver approved projects, reducing Council liabilities.

## **Balancing the Budget Gap**

45. The MTFP for the Council shows a cumulative surplus over the 5 years period with sufficient reserves earmarked to fund the cumulative deficit through year one to four.
46. This positive position is a direct reflection of the difficult choices made in 2021/22 where £3m of savings were identified as part of the budget build, with £762,800 still to be delivered in 2022/23 the need to deliver on these proposals is fundamental to balancing the MTFP.
47. Clearly, there will be some need to add additional resources to the Council, income streams may over/under achieve, external factors such as inflation will add pressures, but having a strong MTFP base gives the Council scope to flex the plan without undermining the long term financial stability of the Council.
48. The council set out some objectives last year to manage pressures to reduce a widening budget gap however, despite the improved position these principles should continue to be adopted to further strengthen financial resilience and generate opportunities.
49. This will be achieved through:
  - a. Cost Awareness – Controlling our costs
  - b. Income generation – Exploiting opportunities
  - c. Working smarter – Empowering staff through digital and transformation
50. Digital transformation will aspire to manage growth in demand within resources through smarter working.

51. The Investment Strategy and generating future income to support the underlying budget is being continuously reviewed.

## **Risks**

52. Members are reminded the majority of the issues in this reports are risks in themselves. There are a number of smaller risks to the MTFP that have not been mentioned in the report and an assessment of those risks are explored in this section.
53. The Council has recruited a substantial number of Officers to deliver the Ashford Port Health Facility at Sevington. Despite Ashford being ready to deliver this statutory service, Government has delayed the opening of the facility and therefore no fees or charges are being collected to offset costs. The Council is working closely with DEFRA with the expectation that all lost income from the delays in opening will be met to cover expenditure. The Council will also push for a longer agreement to underwrite any losses in the first years of operation to mitigate any risk to the Ashford Tax Payer. Perhaps a greater risk is the need to build a specific contingency reserve to manage fluctuations in income streams in this business area. This contingency may not be funded by government and need to accrue over the first years of operation. If DEFRA do not support this then any costs could fall upon the Councils other earmarked reserves to manage
54. The key assumptions are built on the information available to us at this time. How these assumptions 'play out' will affect the overall MTFP position, for example On 20 October, the Office for National Statistics published the inflation figures for September. These are usually used for setting the business rates multiplier for the year ahead, and therefore the level of local authority funding from business rates retention. The 12 month CPI inflation amount was 3.1%, down from 3.2% in August 2021. In addition, the latest RPI figure was also published, at 4.9%, up from 4.8% in August 2021. It was expected that the government would cease from 2020 to provide an additional grant to local authorities making up the difference between CPI and RPI inflation on their business rates income. However, for 2020 and 2021 the grant continued, and authorities were given RPI via the multiplier cap grant. These figures are higher than in the MTFP. These movements will be picked up by the Budget Setting Process and monitored through the Financial Monitoring process and regularly reported through to Cabinet.
55. The Stodmarsh position has been considered when looking at building within the Ashford area however, if the proposed mitigation is delayed, there could be a continued pause in development affecting planning income and also the tax base growth assumed within the plan.
56. Government funding review outcomes are still uncertain and could fundamentally affect the MTFP position. Government has indicated that reviews will commence shortly but having already been delayed on several occasions certainty is not guaranteed. Local Government needs certainty on funding from government so that it can plan for the challenges ahead, until that it achieved it is very difficult to plan for the medium term.
57. Continued pressure on income streams, including Property Commercial Property income, there is an assumption income will recover over the plan. Parking income has been permanently reduced in the MTFP by 15%



however, there could be further reductions over the plan based changes in habit.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

58. The Draft Budget will be presented to the November 2021 Cabinet meeting requesting approval to be passed for budget consultation through the Overview & Scrutiny Task Group and externally (residents and businesses).
59. This consultation period will run in December and into January 2022 if necessary.

## **Next Steps in Process**

60. The Draft Budget is prepared on the basis of the Medium Term Financial Plan and this is presented to members at Cabinet on 25 November. The recommendation will ask Cabinet to send the Draft Budget to consultation to the Overview & Scrutiny Task Group and the public including residents and businesses within the Borough.
61. The Final Budget will incorporate any agreed changes following the consultation period and any significant changes understood since the Draft Budget and will be reported and presented to Cabinet in February 2022 and this will then be recommended for approval to Council on 3 March 2022.

## **Conclusion**

62. Members are asked to consider and note this report along with assumptions made, endorse the Inflation Strategy and the Reserves Strategy and delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Economy in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT to agree the Council's continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

63. I am pleased to see that the financial position of this Council is strong and although there are pressures in the first few years the Cabinet have set aside Reserves to cover these deficits.
64. I am pleased to see the reserves position, not only includes a safety net for the MTFP but also sets aside funding to address decarbonisation and corporate projects.
65. 2022/23 will be a challenging year as we face many risks including those from inflationary pressures, Stodmarsh and the introduction of Port Services. I know officers will monitor the financial position closely and report through to Cabinet regularly through the Financial Monitoring Process.

## **Contact and Email**

66. Maria Stevens
67. [maria.stevens@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:maria.stevens@ashford.gov.uk)

## Key Assumptions

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Inflation</b>					
Pay	4.40%	0.70%	1.70%	1.70%	1.70%
Contract	3.50%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Income	3.50%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
CPI (consumer Price Index)	2.50%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
RPI (Retail Price Index)	3.50%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Utilities	3.50%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
Benefits	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
CT increase	2.90%	2.82%	2.74%	2.67%	2.60%
Pension	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Bank of England Rate	0.15%	0.30%	0.30%	0.40%	0.50%
ST Borrowing	0.20%	0.20%	0.35%	0.50%	0.50%
LT Borrowing	1.55%	1.75%	1.95%	2.00%	2.25%
ST Investment	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.15%	0.25%
LT Investment	3.15%	3.30%	3.30%	3.40%	3.50%
Company lending	2.85%	3.05%	3.25%	3.30%	3.55%

# Agenda Item 7

**Agenda Item No:** 7

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Report Title:** The Creation of Meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans to support increased biodiversity, reduce impacts of climate change and connect people.

**Report Author & Job Title:** Tracey Butler, Head of Environment and Land Management, James Laidlaw, Aspire Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager

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



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Summary:** The government set out its plan for improving the natural environment with its 25 Year Environment Plan in 2018. “By using our land more sustainably and creating new habitats for wildlife, including by planting more trees, we can arrest the decline in native species and improve our biodiversity.”

Increasing biodiversity within the Borough is reflected in the draft Corporate Plan, through objective GP1 “Green Pioneer” which sets out to increase biodiversity within our borough and encourage sustainable lifestyles.

As both an organisation and a borough we have committed to tackling climate change. This year particularly we have seen climate change in action, as weather patterns have become more unpredictable, leading to significant and prolonged wet and warm conditions and extraordinary vegetation growth. Going forwards, a changing habitat is altering the native trees we can plant and the species our environment will support. The creation of long term sustainable habitats that will support a wide range of diverse species, as well as encouraging public understanding, participation and support for these habitats must be a priority for us going forwards.

In response to government agenda, our own corporate plan and our commitment to tackling climate change, Ashford Borough Council is acting boldly and decisively to increase bio-diversity within green spaces owned by the Council. We are developing land management plans and subsequently opportunities to enhance biodiversity of sites by introducing a variety of habitats and varying maintenance regimes to grass areas accordingly, for the benefit of wildlife and people. We have an overarching aim of increasing biodiversity and the wellbeing of our residents by connecting them with nature, as well as continuing to maintain our open spaces in a way that promotes a sense of place and space.

**Key Decision:** YES

**Significantly Affected Wards:** all

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

- I. **Agree to support the development of enhanced land management plans that further support increased biodiversity and connect people with the environment, to support health and well being.**
- II.

**Policy Overview:** The council will shortly be adopting a new Corporate Plan to 2025 and also a Carbon Neutral Action Plan which both set out the council's plans for tackling climate change. This project will help with delivering the council's aspirations set out in this emerging policy framework.

**Financial Implications:** The capital cost of additional grass collection equipment to support the development of grass areas set aside for biodiversity is £40,000 be funded through the work Aspire undertakes locally for external partners on a cost recovery basis.

**Legal Implications:** none

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** See Attached OR Not Required because.....(delete as appropriate)

**Data Protection Impact Assessment:** Not required as the project does not involve any significant processing of personal data.

**Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):** The project sits within the council's risk appetite. It will contribute to delivering the council's strategic aim to be a Green Pioneer as set out in the draft Corporate Plan to 2025. There are no significant compliance or financial risks associated with the project. It will contribute towards treating the council's strategic risk of not meeting our climate commitments.

**Sustainability Implications:** Positive for carbon reduction agenda and increased biodiversity

**Other Material Implications:** none

**Exempt from Publication:** NO

**Background  
Papers:**

**Contact:** [James.laidlaw@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:James.laidlaw@ashford.gov.uk) – Tel: (01233) 330346  
[Tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk)

**Report Title: The Creation of Meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans to support increased biodiversity, reduce impacts of climate change and connect people.**

**Introduction and Background**

1. The government set out its plan for improving the natural environment with its 25 Year Environment Plan in 2018. “By using our land more sustainably and creating new habitats for wildlife, including by planting more trees, we can arrest the decline in native species and improve our biodiversity.”
2. The overall aim of the plan was to “become the first generation to leave that environment in a better state than we found it and pass on to the next generation, a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future.”
3. This 25 Year Environment Plan had several themes, three of which we will focus on in this paper (“using and managing land sustainably”, “recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes” and “connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing”).
4. Connecting people with the environment as a source of health and well being has never been more important than through the pandemic. Having the ability to be active in green spaces through lockdown brought people a renewed passion for local green spaces and a sense of ownership. This ownership has played out for Aspire in the overwhelming response we have had to our initiative to create volunteer tree wardens who are diligently learning and working alongside us in our custodianship of our beautiful borough, in the heart of the garden of England.
5. Increasing biodiversity within the Borough is reflected in the draft Corporate Plan, through objective GP1 “Green Pioneer” which sets out to increase biodiversity within borough and encourage sustainable lifestyles. This aim accords with the government aspirations of the 25 Year Environment Plan.
6. The themes from the 25 Year Environment Plan have been translated into the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) Biodiversity Strategy 2020 – 2045. We are working as part of that partnership, to play our part in delivering a better natural environment for future generations. (See Appendix 1 for details of Partners in the KNP)
7. In the autumn this year we are expecting to see the publication of the Environment Bill. Currently in its third reading in the House of Lords, this Bill establishes a new Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), which will be responsible for oversight and enforcement of environmental law following the UK’s departure from the European Union.
8. This legislation will see the advent of the need for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as part of the planning process. Additionally, for organisations and people that manage their own land, there will be an adjustment in emphasis from managing

land for Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) (which focus mostly on nature only) to Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) which focus on benefits for “recovering nature” but also on the other two translated themes of the 25 Year Environment Plan – “using and managing land sustainably” and “connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing”.

9. In an attempt to set a baseline for LNRS, we have been advised that the Kent Wildlife Trust have been commissioned to produce a “state of nature” report for Kent (it should be noted that reporting sources feeding this report do not represent all land owners or managers in Kent but those that lodge data with Kent Botanical Recording Group). It is likely to represent a “call to action” for further work in supporting nature across Kent.
10. This “state of nature” report should produce a local action plan and a Kent landscape management action tool, which should be available to support work across Kent.
11. Although the final details of the Environment Bill is still to be announced, it is anticipated that the strategic direction for LNRS will sit with KCC and be developed and reported on at the district level.
12. In anticipation of coming changes, 2020 / 2021 has seen staff in Aspire Landscape management undertake a series of training programmes aimed at providing an understanding of ecology and biodiversity. This has been to ensure our understanding, landscape management approaches and methods of work are in keeping with the promotion of the correct habitat creation in the correct places and enhanced connectivity for wildlife.
13. In addition we have worked (and continue to work) with KCC and KNP in understanding the need for changing / selective maintenance regimes to create new habitats overtime, aiming to introduce “indicator” species that can be used as a proxy for the natural biodiversity “pulse” of the area.
14. We are also considering the carbon footprint of our service. In doing so we are considering what vehicles and equipment we use and where we can change those to reduce the carbon impact of our work. We are also considering the land management regimes we operate and the sustainability of the practices we undertake.
15. The spring and summer of 2021 has been a challenging time for Aspire landscape management. The combination of wet and warm weather throughout the season has meant that the grass has grown all summer, rather than dying back and lying dormant. Additionally shrub and hedge growth has been substantial.
16. Shifts in weather patterns due to climate change need to be considered and future maintenance regimes and flexibility “built in” will be needed to allow resources to be deployed accordingly.
17. It would be fair to say that grass growth has elicited a very mixed response from residents. Whilst some have demanded that we stop / reduce grass cutting others have been very vocal in their expectations that grass is cut short and kept short and tidy.

18. We work with Kent partners on the Kent Environment Strategy and through the Kent Nature Partnership. As part of that we support KCCs "Plan Bee", which does see verges mainly in rural areas left longer to support pollinators and by extension the bee population. However, the majority of the urban grass under highway ownership continues to be currently cut regularly, usually to at least a metre back from the highway with the remainder left longer, for safety / line of sight reasons.

## **Proposal**

19. With the coming expectations of LNRS, we need to consider our carbon impact and the sustainability of our service. We need to be mindful of the potential for climate change to play a significant factor in the service's ability to meet the demands and expectations of our residents and the unpredictability of our weather patterns.
20. We are proposing to make some changes to selected areas of land we manage in support of increasing biodiversity and connectivity for nature and people. This will include introducing areas of uncut grass for meadow creation.
21. This will not be a "one size fits all" approach. Some areas will still see high horticulture for aesthetics / borough presentation and for areas that have a variety of functions. As part of a land management approach we will consider land use and determine sites suitability to have areas set aside as uncut for increased bio-diversity. Equally, we will consider the amenity value of land to our residents and will take account of usage ensuring that biodiversity improvements still support residents use of facilities and importantly educate and inform residents about maintenance / natural development opportunities. We are aiming to balance a combination of appreciated aesthetics, nature, and residential use and engagement. We believe the key component in successfully initiating these changes is assessing land use and its functionality.
22. This approach will be undertaken iteratively. Over time we will institute changes in selected areas and gauge the public's opinion whilst extolling the virtues of making changes for recovering nature and connecting people.
23. In addition, as we start to develop land management plans for areas, we would like to explore other opportunities for increasing bio-diversity over time, such as ongoing street and urban tree planting, the introduction of wild flower seed to uncut areas and the planting of hedgerows.
24. Without incurring additional expenditure in the development of these meadow areas, we have run a pilot project over the last 6 months. That pilot has run this season in Queen Mothers Park, with the support of our Portfolio Holder. Here we have developed an ecological management plan for the enhancement of bio-diversity, increasing the existing meadow areas. By altering cutting regimes of previous cut and managed grass areas to gauge public opinion on a new approach.





*Queen Mothers Park – Before Meadow Extension*



*Queen Mothers Park – After Meadow Extension*

25. We have received very positive responses from residents both verbally and via email, especially around the good mix of cutting regimes, supporting increased biodiversity whilst still allowing usage for people, with a large area of amenity space being maintained as “kick about area” and cut pathways throughout the meadow areas for dog walking.
26. Our proposal pilot and any future sites, includes the installation of signage and simple interpretation panels to be installed, allowing residents to understand why areas have been left uncut. As areas are identified and developed, signage will be strategically placed in key locations.



27. We will highlight the forward initiative on social media with positive posts throughout early 2022, asking residents to “look out” for these signs and areas, highlighting their importance.
28. The next stage of the development of Queen Mothers Park, will be the installation of 40 specimen broad leafed mature trees across 2 planting seasons. The funding for the project has been achieved through an Urban Tree Funding bid to the forestry commission and will make an exciting addition to the development of this park.
29. Creating new meadows and leaving areas uncut as part of this wider forward project will lead to an increased workload in the early autumn and the added need for “cut and collect” operations being required. Whilst we appreciate that this will marginally increase the costs of disposal, it is important to ensure

natural grass cutting arisings are removed rather than left to add back nutrients to the area, to ensure we can encourage wildflower species to flourish. Meadow production thrives on low nutrient quality.

30. Currently, our service does not collect the majority of arisings. Therefore, additional collection equipment will be required to support these changes in cutting regimes. However the capital cost associated with the purchase of this equipment (circa £40,000) will be funded through the work Aspire undertakes locally with external partners on a cost recovery basis. This will also allow us to explore other “cut and collect” commercial opportunities.
31. The impact and saving on resources throughout the period of the “non-cutting” is likely to be minimal as the surrounding areas of land will continue to be maintained. However, where the introduction of meadows leads to any tangible savings in deployable time, it is anticipated these resources will be diverted to support the maintenance of the remaining grass and/or potential enhancement of cuts in key areas such as communal areas in deprived locations to increase the usability and amenity value and local pride in these areas accordingly.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

32. N/A

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

33. Feedback from the pilot within Queen Mothers Park suggests is that the changes have been positively welcomed and residents are pleased to see the balance and use of the open space; that wildlife and people have been considered and the mix of these elements has enhanced the entire park. This has had an overall positive impact on the appeal of the park.
34. The majority of comments received during the growing season of 2021, when due to weather grass was longer, suggested that people are accepting and supportive of relaxing grass cutting regimes in favour of enhancing biodiversity. However, this is recognised as something that needs to strike a balance with residents and needs considerable engagement and understanding to develop support. Through social media campaigns, supported by the Waste and Recycling Education Officer alongside expanding our newly formed team of volunteer Aspire Tree Wardens, we will explore new / expanded task groups who will champion bio-diversity alongside more community engagement in support of the proposed changes.

## **Other Options Considered**

35. This paper supports the draft Corporate Plan priority GP1 – Green Pioneer and the need to make changes to enhance biodiversity and engage with our residents to ensure they have an enhanced experience in our parks and open spaces. It demonstrates how small changes and investment in amenity

management regimes can have a positive impact on biodiversity and carbon reduction, with each square meter of meadow sequestering up to 300g of carbon per year (or 3t/Hectare/year). From work undertaken on the pilot project, we believe there is a ground swell of support that appreciates a change in management regimes for selected areas. We believe this approach supports our corporate plan agenda and wider government direction on future land management.

36. By continuing to manage all our land as we currently do would mean we would not be responding to this ground swell of public opinion and the need to enhance opportunities for further biodiversity. However changes to land management regimes will be made iteratively, in carefully chosen locations and with the full consultation of our Portfolio Holder.

### **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

37. The initiative supports the draft corporate plan and the Environmental Bill in bringing forward opportunities to use and manage land sustainably, further recover nature and enhance the beauty of our landscapes and further connect people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing.
38. Aspire will introduce a measured and staged approach not “one size fits all or broad brush change to the way areas are maintained. As such they will gauge opinion and take forward changes iteratively and sensitively.
39. Further developing land management plans as a method of assessing land usage and developing simple operational maintenance plans around sites will allow Aspire to adopt a balanced approach to maintenance, enhancing biodiversity without detriment to the overall use of land.

### **Next Steps in Process**

40. With the support and guidance of our Portfolio Holder, Aspire will identify sites which are suitable for the development of areas to be set aside for biodiversity / changed land management regimes and set about altering future maintenance regimes for these areas accordingly. Interpretation signage will be installed and the initiative will be publicised through social media and reaction and feedback will be monitored. Direct engagement will be through community volunteer groups and parish councils. Management plans will be developed over time with additional sites being identified along with other biodiversity enhancement opportunities. Biodiversity management and enhancement will be an embedded part of the services Aspire deliver.

### **Conclusion**

40. This initiative supports the corporate plan and the Environment Bill. Ashford Borough Council is acting to increase bio-diversity within green spaces owned by the Council by looking to further develop and diversify land management

plans. Part of this process will be identifying opportunities to enhance biodiversity of sites by introducing a variety of habitats and varying maintenance regimes to grass for the benefit of wildlife. This will be with the overarching aim of increasing biodiversity and the wellbeing of our residents by connecting them with nature as well as continuing to maintain our open spaces in a way that promotes a sense of place and space.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

41. I very much support this initiative. It is a great opportunity to carefully select areas to alter land management plans, developing biodiversity and engaging and educating our residents about the change.
42. Never have our green spaces been more important to our residents and never have we had a greater opportunity to bring our residents on the journey with us as we improve and enhance our open spaces, to ensure we leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

## **Contact and Email**

43. James.laidlaw@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330346  
Tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk

## **Appendix 1- Partners in the Kent Nature Partnership**

- Ashford Borough Council
- Buglife
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Butterfly Conservation
- CPRE
- Ebbsfleet Development Corporation
- Forestry Commission
- Gravesham Borough Council

- Kent Bat Group
- Kent Botanical Recording Group
- Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- Kent Mammal Group
- Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group
- Lloyd Bore
- Maidstone Borough Council
- NFU
- South East Rivers Trust
- Swale Borough Council
- Thanet DC
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Woodland Trust
- Zoological Society of London
- Brett Aggregates
- Canterbury City Council
- Country Land and Business Association
- Kent County Council
- Kent Downs AONB Unit
- Kent Public Health
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- Medway Council
- Natural England
- Countryside Management Partnerships
- Dover District Council
- Environment Agency
- Folkestone and Hythe Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
- Kent Public Health
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- High Weald AONB Unit
- Medway Council
- Natural England
- RSPB
- Southern Water
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- University of Kent

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 8



**Agenda Item No:** 8

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Report Title:** Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21

**Report Author:** David Kemp Estates Manager

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Illife, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property and Projects.

**Summary:** The revenue generated by the Council's corporate property portfolio contributes significantly to the Council's income. The income generated for the financial year ending March 2021 is shown in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1.

This report provides a summary of how our main commercial assets are performing and the work the Council is undertaking to improve or maintain such performance

**Key Decision:** No

**Affected Wards:** None specifically

**Recommendation:** That Cabinet is asked to:

- a) note the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2010/2021 as provided for in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 and;
- b) note the current position with a major commercial assets particularly in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

**Policy Overview:** The Council's investment in commercial property and development opportunities is crucial to delivering "*a viable and sustainable replacement for Formula Grant*". This is one of the underpinning parts of the council's Corporate Plan.

**Financial Implications:** The financial implications are detailed in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1.

<b>Legal Implications:</b>	None
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	There are none.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>The portfolio is risk assessed on a regular basis, prior to any acquisition, potentially with disposals and during the budget monitoring updates.</p> <p>The risks relating to each property are assessed at the time of acquisition and disposal as part of the insurance renewal process and where the tenants change. This report considers an assessment of the potential threats that the coronavirus pandemic may have on income from commercial assets and longer term implications.</p>
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>Appendix 1 – Corporate Property Income Schedule 2020/2021</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Annual reports are presented to Cabinet each September.
<b>Contact:</b>	David.Kemp@ashford.gov.uk



**Report Title:** Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/2021

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report, which comes to Cabinet annually, reports on the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2020-2021. It also advises of the work undertaken to increase and maintain the profitability of the portfolio and investment activity during the past twelve months and going forward.

**Background**

2. In March 2015 the Government produced a four year financial settlement for Local Government, the net effect of which was to reduce revenue support grant funding to zero by 2019/20. The Council, having been aware of the impending changes for some time, had taken steps to mitigate against the impact of this to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of Council services. This approach included the acquisition of property for investment purposes which can bring with it the additional benefits of borough wide regeneration. Disposals of assets have always been a part of the strategy but will now have a greater focus in assisting to replenish capital reserves.

**Financial Implications**

3. The income generated from the Council's corporate property portfolio during the period April 2020 to March 2021 is shown in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 and has been reported previously in the council's end of year outturn. The return is calculated in respect of the historical cost of the asset (the purchase price). The surplus for this period (before internal recharges) is approximately £1.9m on a total income of approximately £5.0m.
4. The surplus for 2020-2021 is approximately £500k lower than 2019/2020. This decrease has primarily been caused by a decrease in income from Elwick Place along with increased costs at a number of other sites.
5. Contained within the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 "rent income from general fund" distinguishes the rents collected from third parties to those rents charged to other Council services. Internal recharges are overheads and expenses apportioned pro-rata to each asset. The inclusion of internal recharges results in a more accurate calculation of return on investment.
6. It should also be borne in mind when considering the income generated by the Park Mall shopping centre, that it was not acquired as an investment but rather for regeneration purposes and to reinvigorate the town centre.

**Performance & Asset Update**

7. Over the previous twelve months a number of activities and initiatives have been undertaken with a view to improving the management and profitability of the real estate portfolio including the purchase of a number of new assets. Further details are provided below.

### **Asset Management**

8. The Corporate Property Service will soon have completed the development of the asset management system (Abavus) which will enable the service to manage and maintain its assets using a corporate property shared central asset database. This will assist with identifying asset specific compliance and condition assessments together with efficient and consistent property management and reporting.
9. Abavus is a multi-channel, modular and fully configurable platform currently used by other services also. This system will provide readily accessible information on assets such as basic property data and attributes, safety related information such as statutory compliance data as well as documentation and plans related to assets.
10. The garage commercialisation strategy has been developed and is now being implemented. Several garage blocks have been auctioned off with more to follow. The capital receipts from these sales will be invested in remaining garage block areas and will see improvement works such as refurbishment, demolition and rebuild where appropriate. Decisions as to which options will be implemented have been derived from previous condition surveys. As part of the digitalisation agenda the service has also introduced the online 'estate agents' which customers wishing to rent a garage can use to express their interest thus reducing time consuming record keeping.
11. Corporate Property has embarked on a programme to undertake stock condition surveys across its portfolio of assets to order to begin the development and implementation of a planned maintenance programme. This will reduce the ratio of responsive repairs to planned works in line with the Asset Management Strategy which will be reviewed in coming months.
12. Whilst the number of property acquisitions is increasing there are considerable maintenance liabilities which will be require funding over the coming years and decisions will need to be made on how these will be prioritised.

### **Elwick Place**

13. In December 2018 the council took possession of Elwick Place, a new retail and leisure development on Elwick Road. Built on the site of the old Ashford market the development is intended to grow the night time economy in Ashford and become a destination in its own right.

14. The development comprises of a hotel and cinema with the two anchor tenants of Travelodge and Picturehouse and 10 retail units.
15. The 2020/2021 financial year has seen the second full year of operation since the council took possession. However the pandemic led to significant disruption across the site with all units being forced to close at the outset of lockdown. Macknade were able to offer a food collection service as the first lockdown proceeded but were still significantly impacted by reduced trade during this period.
16. Travelodge and Picturehouse were even more affected by the pandemic with both closing throughout the whole year and not re-opening until May 2021. The impact on Travelodge was so significant that they were forced into a Company Voluntary Arrangement (“CVA”) under Part 1 of the Insolvency Act 1986. The CVA was approved by shareholders and creditors in June 2021. Under the terms of the CVA Travelodge have received a phased rent concession covering the period from the start of lockdown until the end of 2021 at which point full rent payment will recommence.
17. Picturehouse and its parent company Cineworld faced very similar issues as Travelodge. Whilst not undertaking a formal CVA they followed a similar procedure, making concession proposals to all their landlords. Following negotiations with Picturehouse agreement has been reached and the necessary legal agreement to enforce the agreement is being drawn up.
18. However, against this background, the council and its development partner, Stanhope plc, have been in negotiations with a number of parties interested in taking up leases within the development. Whilst the pandemic has slowed down discussions it is pleasing to be able to report that leases on all the units at Elwick place have now been agreed.
19. Units 1 to 5, 7c and 8 are open and trading whilst fit-out work continues with units 7a and 7b. Whilst the retail sector was already suffering significant challenges before the pandemic, with the pandemic and lockdown the retail sector has suffered even further. However it is hoped that over the next few years the new tenants at Elwick Place will be able to successfully establish themselves and help revitalise that part of the town centre.

### **International House**

20. International House continues to perform well and is currently operating with an occupancy level of approximately 95%, a very similar level to the previous year.
21. However, as reported last year, the office sector has not been immune to the pandemic. Now that the previous restrictions have been lifted companies are reviewing their use of office space and whether they can downsize or even stop using fixed office space due to the perceived success of homeworking. There are a number of tenants reviewing their office occupancy at International House and it is expected that we will see

a number of tenants wanting to reduce the amount of office space they utilise or leave altogether.

22. Whilst the above is undesirable it is possible that there will be some positive outcomes from companies reviewing their office usage. Those companies based in or around London may decide that they no longer need a permanent presence (or such a large one) in London and we could see companies moving from London and creating regional hubs which provide office space at a reduced cost but at the same time easy access to London.
23. With Ashford's location and transportation links into London it is possible that we will see an increase in interest in office space over the next few years which may off-set any reduction in office utilisation at International House.

### **Park Mall**

24. The council purchased the long term leasehold of Park Mall in 2015. The purchase was made to support the council's long term aspirations to develop and regenerate the town centre and, as such, was not made as a commercial investment. At the time of purchase approximately 30% of the units were vacant with those that were occupied being predominately charity shops.
25. Since the purchase the council has worked hard to develop the shopping centre and encourage traders to move to it. There is only one charity shop now in the centre and the occupancy rate for Park Mall is approximately 80%. However, as with Elwick Place, Park Mall was significantly impacted by the pandemic.
26. The majority of tenants at Park Mall are small independents and whilst they were able to take advantage of government support as well as rent concessions from the council a number of tenants have had to endure long periods of closure leading to a significant loss in income. This has inevitably led to rent and service charge arrears growing.
27. The council has and is working proactively with tenants in an effort to support them however it is not clear at this time whether all our tenants will be able to continue trading in the short to medium term.

### **Commercial Quarter**

28. In 2016 the council reached agreement with Quinn Estates to lease approximately 18,000 square feet of office space across two floors in the new Connect 38 office development on Dover Place. The lease of the two floors helped improve the viability of the scheme and helped ensure the delivery of the first phase of the council's ambitious plans to develop a commercial quarter near to the International Station, one of the council's big 8 projects.

29. By the end of 2020-2021 we had successfully let approximately 14,200 square feet leaving just 3,800 square feet left available to let. However during the pandemic we have had only a few enquires none of which have moved forward at this time.

## **Garages**

30. The Council's garage holding of approximately 1500 garages makes a significant contribution towards the Council's income each year. The garage commercialisation strategy has been developed and is now being implemented. Several garage blocks have been auctioned off with more to follow. The capital receipts from these sales will be invested in remaining garage block areas and will see improvement works such as refurbishment, demolition and rebuild where appropriate. Decisions as to which options will be implemented have been derived from previous condition surveys.
31. As part of the digitalisation agenda the service has also introduced the online 'estate agents' which customers wishing to rent a garage can use to express their interest thus reducing time consuming record keeping. As part of the garage commercialisation strategy the council has been undertaking structural and asbestos surveys to feed into the planned maintenance strategy that is being implemented.
32. As a result of this the council has been able to introduce more targeted maintenance interventions focused on extending the life of the better performing garage areas which should secure longer term revenue.

## **Carlton Business Park**

33. Carlton Business Park was completed and passed into council ownership towards the end of 2018. Lettings of the units had been slower than originally anticipated due to a mixture of concerns surrounding Brexit and the sites operating hours. However since the confirmation that the UK would be leaving the EU there has been a significant rise in market interest and resulting leases.
34. During the financial year 2020/2021 five new leases were completed to add to the units already occupied. Since then a further four leases have been completed and Heads of Terms have been agreed on a further two units and are currently going through the legal team for completion.
35. In addition to leasing activity the council has sold the freehold interest in two units and are in legal discussions for the sale of another with Heads of Terms almost agreed for the sale of a fourth unit.
36. Taking into account units sold and those let on commercial terms the occupancy rate at Carlton Business Park is now approximately 61%.

## Risk Assessment

37. The portfolio is risk assessed on a regular basis through internal monthly reviews and the quarterly budget monitoring cycle. However, as has been mentioned throughout the report, the council could still face pressures during the financial year due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on both the retail and office market sectors. Currently the industrial warehouse market has shown resilience in the face of the pandemic.
38. In order to support our tenants throughout the Council's Property Portfolio, the Economic, Regeneration and Investment Board ("ERIB") agreed that officers should consider how the council could support tenants facing financial difficulties due the pandemic. The council has received a number of request from tenants for support and these have been considered by ERIB alongside regular updates on the impact of the pandemic.

## Conclusion

39. The Council continues to achieve significant income from its commercial property portfolio that helps to support the council's budget and the services it provides. However, as has been noted in this report, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on council revenues from its commercial assets and will lead to companies reviewing their use of office space.

## Portfolio Holder's Views

40. *"I commend the hard work and efforts of officers in their management of the Council's corporate property portfolio through what has been an unprecedented year. The portfolio is varied and includes many complexities. Officers have done a sterling job managing the Council's assets and tenants throughout the last 12 months. The income the Council achieves through the portfolio is significant to supporting the Council's budget and services it provides to residents. The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on income from some the Council's commercial assets. Despite this, the Council continues to achieve significant income from the commercial property portfolio, although there has been a drop of approximately £500,000 in surplus during 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. Given the impact the pandemic has had on tenants, the decrease in income at some Council sites and an increase in costs at others, the Department and officers have worked hard to ensure the drop in surplus has been as limited as possible".*

Cllr Nathan Iliffe.

**Contact:** David Kemp Estates Manager  
**Email:** David.Kemp@ashford.gov.uk

## Appendix 1 - Corporate Property Income Schedule 2020/2021

2020/21 Corporate Property Income Schedule	Commercial Quarter	Court Wurtin	*Industrial Estates	*Garages	Carlton Road	Elwick Place	Stanhope Shops	Wilkinson 1 Park Mall	Park Mall	*Bockhanger Com Props & Centre	*Brookfield Com Prop	International House	Matalan	*Civic Centre	Tenterden Gateway	Sustainable Energy Project	Minor Land Holdings	Conningbrook Barn & Cottage	138 Beaver Road/140 Beaver Lane	*Minor Holdings	Total
Total income	452,074	24,620	465,331	631,275	47,202	77,275	97,034	314,000	434,111	34,916	49,730	1,640,304	365,000	115,066	49,470	58,081	19,837	38,286	5,093	63,216	4,918,704
Total expenditure	(415,582)	0	(22,176)	(179,772)	(188,577)	(197,723)	(1,840)	0	(591,338)	590	(730)	(761,286)	0	(576,621)	(74,565)	(262)	(38,512)	(1,119)	84	(39,547)	(3,049,428)
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>36,492</b>	<b>24,620</b>	<b>443,155</b>	<b>451,502</b>	<b>(141,375)</b>	<b>(120,447)</b>	<b>95,194</b>	<b>314,000</b>	<b>(157,226)</b>	<b>35,506</b>	<b>49,000</b>	<b>879,018</b>	<b>365,000</b>	<b>(461,555)</b>	<b>(25,095)</b>	<b>57,819</b>	<b>(18,675)</b>	<b>37,167</b>	<b>5,177</b>	<b>23,669</b>	<b>1,869,276</b>
Historical Cost	0	0	2,780,000	2,820,200	7,128,954	36,950,639	1,032,000	3,560,000	823,500	217,000	467,200	7,900,000	5,030,939	202,900	0	185,000	0	0	0	1,045,700	
Return	0.0%	0.0%	15.9%	16.0%	(2.0%)	(0.3%)	9.2%	8.8%	(19.1%)	16.4%	10.5%	11.1%	7.3%	(227.5%)	0.0%	31.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	
Less internal recharges	(982)	(46)	(115,493)	(16,944)	(3,366)	(2,960)	(163)	0	(62,660)	(7,547)	(26,927)	(66,836)	(12)	565,726	(8,756)	(332)	(10,978)	(16,184)	0	(27,162)	225,540
Rent income form GF	0	0	0	0	56,293**	0	0	0	24,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,293
<b>Net income after recharges</b>	<b>35,510</b>	<b>24,574</b>	<b>327,662</b>	<b>434,558</b>	<b>(88,449)</b>	<b>(123,408)</b>	<b>95,031</b>	<b>314,000</b>	<b>(195,886)</b>	<b>27,959</b>	<b>22,073</b>	<b>812,182</b>	<b>364,988</b>	<b>104,172</b>	<b>(33,851)</b>	<b>57,488</b>	<b>(29,653)</b>	<b>20,983</b>	<b>5,177</b>	<b>(3,493)</b>	<b>2,175,109</b>
Return on investment including recharges	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	15.4%	(1.2%)	(0.3%)	9.2%	8.8%	(23.8%)	12.9%	4.7%	10.3%	7.3%	51.3%	0.0%	31.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	(0.3%)	
* Based on 2007 Historical value																					
Civic Centre costs based on 15% of overall costs																					
** internal income from Aspire and ABC Electrical at Carlton Road																					

This page is intentionally left blank





**Agenda Item No:** 9

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 30 September 2021

**Report Title:** Queen's Platinum Jubilee & Albacore Event Programme 2022

**Report Author & Job Title:** Sarah Barber, Tourism and Heritage Manager and Donna Sowerby, Civic Engagement Officer

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Matthew Forest  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Culture, Tourism & Leisure

**Summary:**

Ashford Borough Council is proposing to mark a number of significant national and local anniversaries next year including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which will be nationally celebrated from Thursday 2 – Sunday 5 June, and Warship Week when towns across Britain raised funds for warships during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War –with Ashford raising funds for the building of HMS Albacore. This coincides with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ashford Sea Cadets.

This report sets out plans to celebrate these anniversaries with a local community participation project alongside the beacon lighting for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and themed planting in Memorial Gardens including a HMS Albacore carpet badge as well as other events to mark the Ashford Sea Cadet anniversary.

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Significantly Affected Wards:** All

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

- I. To agree the proposed programme of events and a budget of £55,000 from reserves to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets in 2022;**
- II. Delegate the Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure and the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer to put in place all arrangements, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure and the forthcoming Mayor for May 2022.**

<b>Policy Overview:</b>	The programme demonstrates the Council's commitment to celebrating its history and heritage as referenced in the Council's Heritage Strategy, October 2017. It also supports the aspirations of The Ashford Ambition, July 2020, the Council's Armed Forces Covenant and links to the work of the Council's Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	The total budget is estimated at £55,000 which includes £45,000 for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and £10,000 for the HMS Albacore celebrations – a small contingency amount is included to take account of rising event infrastructure costs. The costs of the Queen's (Platinum Jubilee) Green Canopy project is being funded separately.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	External contractors are to be engaged so appropriate contracts will be applied.
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	Attached.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment:</b>	A data impact assessment will be completed by the commissioned services for the community participation project and linked event.
<b>Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):</b>	A number of factors could have a potential impact on the event programme, including the possibility of the beacon failing a test lighting and subsequently being unable to find replacement parts, but this is being mitigated by using experienced contractors, familiar with the design of the beacon. Possible concerns over a last minute Covid resurgence and ensuing restrictions will be monitored. Also last minute changes to the National Platinum Jubilee programme may adjust the programme; and high costs and availability of event infrastructure is a concern so early commissioning is important.
<b>Sustainability Implications:</b>	Gas will be used to light the beacon, the amount of time it will be lit can be controlled, as opposed to the burning of solid fuel in a traditional beacon. The burning of the gas could potentially be offset by the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting project that forms part of the overall Jubilee celebrations and the community participation project will be mindful of environmentally responsible behaviour.
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	None
<b>Exempt from Publication:</b>	NO
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None

**Contact:**

Sarah.barber@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330345

Donna.sowerby@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330317

## Report Title: Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Albacore Event Programme 2022

### Introduction and Background

1. A number of anniversaries of both national and local significance are set to occur during 2022, namely her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both Warship Week (HMS Albacore) and the establishment of the Ashford Sea Cadets.
2. The Council has been successful in marking national anniversaries bringing together communities under a shared celebratory and commemorative banner. It is important that we provide new and innovative ways for people to engage in our heritage, especially for a wider and diverse audience, encouraging local partnership, educational and creative opportunities to strengthen and promote civic pride. The Mayor's Office is key to supporting a calendar of activity and the Civic and Ceremonial Board helps to plan and programme celebration events which shine a light on local heritage and events of national significance. There is much that can be celebrated but their local significance is also a key driver when considering support.
3. An outline business case, including initial proposals and cost estimates on how these two specific anniversaries might be marked, reflecting on the national programme, has been endorsed by the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board (C&CPB, 23 June and 29 Sept 2020) with the proposal that the Albacore celebrations should take place over the same long bank holiday weekend as the Platinum Jubilee celebrations i.e. Thursday 2- Sunday 5 June 2022.

### Proposal

4. The following events and activities are being proposed to celebrate both the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets.

**Thursday 2 June 2022** – Beacon lighting (part of the nationwide lighting of beacons) at 9.15pm in Civic Park supported by a live streaming event and recorded music as appropriate. The local community participation project could potentially support or link to this event.

**Friday 3 June 2022** – Thanksgiving civic church service for her Majesty the Queen at St Mary's the Virgin, Ashford;

**Saturday 4 June 2022** – Albacore Celebrations with the Ashford Sea Cadets in Memorial Gardens including the dedication of an Albacore flag and plaque and a commemorative event or service;

**Sunday 5 June 2022** - Residents and community groups encouraged to hold their own street parties.

5. To strengthen local participation it is proposed that an 'outstanding and unique' community project and linked event is commissioned that would begin with research and workshop activities in the spring of 2022. This is likely to involve an artist or creative company working with the community/community groups throughout the borough to create a 'display' outdoors. A brief has been produced that stresses the need to:
  - a) Provide programmed opportunities for community engagement and participation – working with schools and/or local community groups/the local community within the borough to 'co- produce' the creative proposal.
  - b) Provide clear, staged elements - so working with schools and community groups, the local community prior to the event to prepare the project; then the staging/delivery of the actual project; and depending on what the event is (such as an exhibition or trail), how its exposure can be maximised by being seen before and after the weekend of celebrations.
  - c) Creating something visual and exciting that can be displayed/take place outdoors. The Civic Park will stage the lighting of the beacon so consideration should be given to how the event can link and add value to this.
  - d) Both participation and spectators should be able to access activity free and must encourage and support inclusiveness.
  
6. The Civic Engagement Officer has been working closely with the Ashford Sea Cadets to prepare for their 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and that of HMS Albacore. A carpet badge and interpretation panels in Memorial Gardens will mark the anniversaries and provide information on the history and creation of both. Albacore Flags have been commissioned given the timing of production and will fly during the celebrations and then annually to mark Warship Week. A commemorative event /service in Memorial Gardens will include the dedication of a plaque. The Sea Cadets plan to produce a model of HMS Albacore for display during the weekend.
  
7. It is also being proposed that a Jubilee and Albacore 'events pack/guidance' be created that will be available on line for residents and community groups to use and to promote the various events. This would be similar to the online VE Day resources produced in 2020.

### **Financial Implications**

8. It is estimated that a total budget of £35,000 will be required to deliver the programme of events including £25,000 for the Platinum celebrations and £10,000 for the Albacore celebrations, which includes a small contingency to allow for rising event infrastructure costs and demand, as many events planned for 2020/21 are now being postponed until 2022.
  
9. For the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations it is proposed that £25,000 would cover the following costs:  
£5,000 - Planting and Banners - appropriate colour planting and displays plus bunting and banners behind the main mound with the Civic Crest in Memorial Gardens and behind the beacon in Civic Park.

£5,000 - Beacon Lighting - commissioning of a test lighting prior to the event, any subsequent maintenance and replacement items and lighting on the actual day with the associated costs (barriers, gas bottles, height platform). This would also include a replacement Platinum Jubilee shield on the beacon to replace the current Ashford Remembers shield.

£5,000 - Live Streaming of the Beacon Lighting, including taped music and audio and associated safety and stewarding costs and support services such as litter picking.

£10,000 - Commissioned community participation project and linked event.

10. For the HMS Albacore and Sea Cadets Celebrations it is proposed that £10,000, which includes a small contingency, would cover the following costs:  
£3,100- Albacore Carpet Badge and Interpretation Panels in Memorial Gardens and Albacore Flags to fly during the celebrations and then annually to mark Warship Week  
£5000 – Commemorative Event /Service in Memorial Gardens including the dedication of a plaque.  
£1000 - Model of the Albacore mine sweeper commissioned as part of a community project.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

11. The programme of events to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets will be open and accessible to all the community and for those unable to attend in person information and resources will be available on line.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

12. Discussions have already taken place with both the Ashford Sea Cadets and Ashford Borough Museum regarding the Albacore celebrations and Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Bruno D'Agostino RNR, Commanding Officer, Ashford Sea Cadets has attended two meetings of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board.
13. The Leader, the Portfolio Holder and Deputy for Culture, Tourism and Leisure have all been involved in the discussions and, like their colleagues on the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board, have inputted to and supported the approach of the programme of events and associated budget being proposed.
14. The Love Ashford Team is aware of the proposals and further discussions and work will take place with them to look at ways to ensure that the town centre benefits from the additional footfall that these events will generate.

## **Other Options Considered**

15. The two events (Jubilee and Albacore) could have taken place at different times – the Albacore celebrations could possibly have taken place in February 2022, as HMS Albacore was adopted by the people of Ashford after a successful Warship Week in February 1942. However, TS Albacore was subsequently created in June 1942 (which was affiliated to HMS Albacore) and was Ashford's first Sea Cadet Unit.

16. The Borough Council has established a reputation for marking significant local and national anniversaries in an appropriate manner - for instance previously with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW1 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee- and this approach appears to be very much appreciated by local residents, and so there was never, not a case for celebrating such an historic and unique occasion as the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, rather it was a question of how it could most appropriately and effectively be celebrated.

### **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

17. When it was known that there was going to be a four day bank holiday in June 2022 to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, it made sense to combine the two celebrations and create a long weekend programme of activities for the public to attend and enjoy. This also gives the added benefit of resources and staffing being focused on one overall programme and period of time.

### **Next Steps in Process**

18. Once Cabinet has endorsed the approach of the programme of events and agreed the associated budget, work can begin on further researching and planning the various events including commissioning and appointing a creative company to deliver the community participation project.
19. A full programme of events will then be worked up including liaising with companies such as the beacon lighting contractor and then carrying out detailed event planning, site logistics, risk assessments and associated Safety Advisory Group assessments leading on to the promotion and delivery of the events.

### **Portfolio Holder's Views**

"These plans will bring people together to celebrate our heritage and mark an occasion of collective significance that will cultivate a sense of community whilst adding fun and colour to encourage civic pride".

Cllr Matthew Forest, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure

### **Contact and Email**

Sarah Barber – [sarah.barber@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.barber@ashford.gov.uk)

Donna Sowerby – [donna.sowerby@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:donna.sowerby@ashford.gov.uk)

# Equality Impact Assessment

---

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

## Public sector equality duty

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

## Protected characteristics

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

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

## Due regard



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

### **Armed Forces Community**

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

### **Case law principles**

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

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

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

<b>Lead officer:</b>	Christina Fuller, Head of Culture, Tourism & Leisure Sarah Barber, Tourism & Heritage Manager
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, project, service, contract</li> <li>• Review, change, new, stop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project – Queen’s Platinum Jubilee &amp; Albacore Event Programme, 2022 (promoted through the Civic &amp; Ceremonial Programme Board)</li> <li>• New event /activity - to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee &amp; 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HMS Albacore &amp; Ashford Sea Cadets</li> </ul>
<b>Date of decision:</b> The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	30 September 2021
<b>Summary of the proposed decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims and objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To endorse the approach of the programme of events and agree the associated budget to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key actions</li> <li>• Expected outcomes</li> <li>• Who will be affected and how?</li> <li>• How many people will be affected?</li> </ul>	<p>HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets in 2022 and delegate officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure and the Deputy Mayor, to put in place all arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The events will be freely open to all residents and visitors to the borough. The community project will be promoted to and open to all within the Ashford borough to participate.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Information and research:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the information and research that has informed the decision.</li> <li>• Include sources and key findings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This programme of events will seek to follow a similar inclusive approach as previous events organised such as the Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace; Battle's Over, Illuminities and Carnival of the Baubles; which were freely accessible to the whole community</li> <li>• The brief for the commissioned community project, which will be delivered as part of the event programme, will require the successful bidder /contractor to have the required policies in place and practical consideration given to equality, diversity and inclusiveness.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Consultation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific consultation has occurred on this decision?</li> <li>• What were the results of the consultation?</li> <li>• Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics?</li> <li>• What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early discussions have already taken place with both the Ashford Sea Cadets and Ashford Borough Museum regarding the Albacore celebrations and Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Bruno D'Agostino RNR, Commanding Officer, Ashford Sea Cadets has attended two meetings of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board.</li> <li>• The Leader, the Portfolio Holder and Deputy for Culture, Tourism and Leisure have all been involved in the discussions and, like their member colleagues on the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board, have inputted to and supported the approach of the programme of events.</li> <li>• To be noted that this programme of events would support the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
<p><b>Protected characteristic</b></p>	<p><b>Relevance to Decision</b> High/Medium/Low/None</p>	<p><b>Impact of Decision</b> <b>Positive</b> (Major/Minor) <b>Negative</b> (Major/Minor) <b>Neutral</b></p>

<u>AGE</u> Elderly	None	Positive
Middle age	None	Positive
Young adult	None	Positive
Children	None	Positive
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Positive
Mental	None	Positive
Sensory	None	Positive
<u>GENDER RE- ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Positive
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Positive
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Positive
<u>RACE</u>	None	Positive
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Positive
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Positive
Women	None	Positive
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Positive
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Positive
Former service personnel	None	Positive
Service families	None	

<b>Mitigating negative impact:</b> Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	N/A
---	-----

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

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's [Essential Guide](#), alongside fuller [PSED Technical Guidance](#).

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

<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish.</li> <li>There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above ).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?</li> </ul>	<p>Due regard will be made to the equality duty through the development of the event programme and the community project</p> <p>There will be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision</p> <p>The proposal meets the aims of the equality duty as all sections of the community – visitors and residents – including those with protected characteristics will have access to and be able to benefit from the event programme and community project being proposed.</p>
<p><b>EIA completion date:</b></p>	<p>27 August 2021</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Trading and Enterprise Board**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held in Committee Room No.2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, on the **28<sup>th</sup> September 2021**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Bell (Chairman)

Cllrs. Buchanan, Forest, Shorter.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c) Councillors Buchanan and Forest attended as Substitute Members for Councillors Pickering and Feacey respectively.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Feacey, Pickering, Ovenden (Observer)

### **Also Present:**

Deputy Chief Executive, Commercial Development Manager (A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Member Services Manager.

## **113 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **114 Exclusion of the Public**

### **Resolved:**

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **115 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Property Management Recruitment**

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report which proposed the recruitment of a Property Manager to help manage the Property Company's growing private market residential property portfolio. The proposal had the 'in principle' support of the Company Board and the Deputy Chief Executive advised that it was a legal requirement for the Company to get approval from the Council to appoint staff.

### **Recommended:**

**That the proposal to appoint a Property Manager be endorsed.**

## **116 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Portfolio Update**

The report provided a portfolio update from the Company on its activities, income, void levels and arrears as they continued to emerge from the pandemic.

The Commercial Development Manager answered specific questions on the current performance of the Company in terms of its current rental portfolio and the development side of the Company.

In response to a question the Commercial Development Manager advised that he would bring an update report to the November meeting of this Board (or earlier if necessary) on the Home Plus site development.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

---

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services  
Telephone: (01233) 330349 E-mail [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk](http://www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk)



## **Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board**

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the **29<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)  
Cllr. Forest (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Ovenden, Webb.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Knowles, L Suddards, Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager.

### **In Attendance:**

Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Environment and Land Management, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Heritage Development Officer, Civic Officer, Member Services Manager.

## **1 Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 Councillor Webb made a Voluntary Announcement as she was the President of the Ashford Sea Cadets.

## **2 Notes of the Previous Meeting of the Board – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**

- 2.1 The notes of the Meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

## **3 Draft Queen's Platinum Jubilee Community Project Brief**

- 3.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager introduced the report which brought the Board up-to-date with plans to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of HMS Albacore and Warship Week in Ashford in 2022.
- 3.2 The Leader said he was fully behind the proposals in the report, particularly the Albacore aspects, but wondered if they went far enough in terms of the Queen's Jubilee and whether the current budget of £10,000 was enough. He considered more funding could be levered in through sponsorship and there was an opportunity to do something a little more spectacular. The Board agreed and considered the project could also continue throughout 2022 and

incorporate Remembrance Sunday and Christmas, rather than simply ending in July. The Platinum Jubilee was after all a one-off special occasion which was unlikely to ever be repeated. A Member said that they had started off with a modest budget to be realistic and reflect the uncertainty during Covid-19 and had perhaps been over-cautious, but the Council's budgetary position was now improving and she supported the investment of some more funding for this.

- 3.3 The Portfolio Holder said that in his view, apart from the main Council backed events, the focus should be on engaging with the community and encouraging them to deliver their own events, and for the Council to be a facilitator. However, he said he would be happy to take another look at the proposals with a view to extending the budget and the scope and to see what more could be achieved.
- 3.4 It was agreed to start a running events diary for the 2022 celebrations. The Council should write out to all Parish Councils and community organisations, find out what they were doing to mark the Platinum Jubilee, and publicise that all in one place.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and the report to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be deferred for the timebeing to examine the scope of the proposals.**

## **4 Update on the Ashford Borough Virtual Heritage Plaque Scheme**

- 4.1 The Heritage Development Officer introduced the report which gave an update on the above scheme. He explained that since the previous meeting he had received a nomination for a further plaque and he had undertaken some research on that individual. The Board agreed that they were a suitable candidate.
- 4.2 The Leader said that as they emerged from the pandemic he hoped the Council could again consider issuing physical plaques. A total of 20 virtual plaques had now been agreed and whilst he understood not all of these would be able to be installed physically, he hoped that where they could, they would - perhaps starting with two or three a year.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the update be received and noted.**
- (ii) the latest candidate be supported.**

## **5 Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 and Association of Jewish Refugees – 80 Trees for 80 Years Project**

- 5.1 The Heritage Development Officer gave a verbal update on this project. He explained that July 2021 had marked the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association of Jewish Refugees. To commemorate this anniversary the Association had launched an 80 Trees for 80 Years Project which would see 80 English Oak Trees planted around Britain to honour those refugees who had escaped Nazi occupied Europe. As ABC participated in Holocaust Memorial Day each year, they had been one of the areas invited to participate in this project and provide a location for one of the trees. The Association would supply a 2m tall English Oak sapling, a plaque and an educational time capsule to be planted in the roots. Various potential locations had been explored including the Memorial Gardens, Civic Park or Victoria Park, but these had not been deemed appropriate. Following research it had been discovered that a number of Jewish refugee children had been evacuated to the village of Woodchurch and it was proposed that, working with the Parish Council, it may be a nice idea to plant the tree on common land at Woodchurch, as part of a wider memorial. The Board strongly supported this idea. It was suggested that if possible, the tree could be planted as part of a ceremony on Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 – Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

### **Resolved:**

**That the Board supports the Council's involvement in the 80 Trees for 80 Years Project and the possibility of planting the tree in Woodchurch be investigated.**

## **6 Civic Update (Including Remembrance Sunday)**

- 6.1 The Civic Officer introduced her report which gave an update of Civic Events since June 2021 including; Armed Forces Day; NHS, Social Care and Front Line Workers Day; and Merchant Navy Day. She also gave an update on plans for Remembrance Sunday on the 14<sup>th</sup> November which were well underway. Whilst they had been given the go ahead to return to the pre-pandemic situation, they would proceed with caution and were looking to continue with a live-streaming option so people could still participate from home and there was a back-up plan in case of further local lockdowns or restrictions. The Mayor's Cadets, Honorary Aldermen and Mayor Emeritus Group would also all participate.
- 6.2 The Leader thanked the Civic Officer for her update and for the hard work her and others had put in to such initiatives.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **7 Mayor's Cadets Proposal**

- 7.1 The report sought to formalise the annual appointment of Mayor's Cadets, following the success of the Ashford Sea Cadets serving in this role for Councillor Jenny Webb as the Mayor in 2019-20. The proposal was now to allow the Mayor to invite the four military services to each nominate a Mayor's Cadet for the year on an annual basis.
- 7.2 The Leader said he fully supported this initiative and was grateful to Councillor Webb for instigating it in 2019. The report stated that this would also be the case "if the Mayor wishes", but he considered that all Mayors should take up this opportunity. He also wondered if the role should be widened to be a "Mayor's Civic Sentinel" which may give more Civic prestige to the role. A Sentinel was literally "a soldier or guard, a lookout, or someone keeping watch". Furthermore, if one of the four services failed to make a nomination, the Mayor should have the option of nominating a second person from one of the other services so they always had four. The Leader also considered that for continuity there should be a standard badge of office that the individuals get to keep and a standard certificate in recognition of this role, rather than each Mayor designing their own each year.
- 7.3 The Board were supportive of these suggestions as they did seem a more professional and permanent way forward. A report had already been submitted to the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee the following week, and plans were underway to appoint the Cadets at the 21<sup>st</sup> October Full Council meeting, so there may have to be some further consideration of the finer details.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and the points raised be considered further at the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

## **8 Anniversary, Celebratory and Commemorative Events Calendar**

- 8.1 The report of the Heritage Development Officer set out the above for 2021 - 2026. He advised this was a live document and it would be updated as they became aware of new anniversaries and events. Members were encouraged to input with any events that they were aware of for addition to the calendar.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **9 Date of Next Meeting**

9.1 Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021, 2.30pm.

Councillor Clarkson  
Chairman – Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

---

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services  
Telephone: (01233) 330349 Email: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk](http://www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

**Agenda Item No:** 12

**Report To:** CABINET

**Date:** 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021

**Report Title:** SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN

**Report Author and Job Title:** Danny Sheppard, Member Services Manager

**Portfolio Holder:** Portfolio Holders are individually specified in the attached Schedule.



<b>Summary:</b>	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

**Contacts** danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 01233 330349

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

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

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Gerry Clarkson; Paul Bartlett; Neil Bell; Andrew Buchanan; Paul Clokie; Peter Feacey; Matthew Forest; Nathan Iliffe; 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>*

Page 70

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
<b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>					
Medium Term Financial Plan	<i>To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year's Budget process.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	21/10/20
The Creation of Meadows and Land Management Plans to Support Increased Biodiversity	<i>To seek agreement for Officers to develop areas of meadow in <u>carefully selected areas</u> to support carbon neutrality, the national pollinator strategy and the Kent biodiversity strategy.</i>	Cllr Buchanan	James Laidlaw	Open	23/6/21



<b>Decision Item</b>	<b>Report Summary</b>	<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Open or Exempt</b>	<b>Added to Schedule</b>
Corporate Commercial Property Strategy – Annual Report	<i>To advise of the revenue performance of the Council’s corporate property portfolio during the last financial period and to advise of proposals to increase profitability in the coming financial period.</i>	Cllr Iliffe	Paul McKenner	Open	28/9/20
Queen’s Platinum Jubilee & Albacore Event Programme	<i>To agree the full programme of events and associated budget to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and 80th anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets.</i>	Cllrs Clarkson/ Forest	Sarah Barber/ Donna Sowerby	Open	27/7/21
<b>25<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b>					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance ‘snapshot’.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Tom Swain	Open	27/11/20
Council Tax Base 2022/23	<i>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.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	27/11/20
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	27/11/20
Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024	<i>To seek approval of Plan following consultation</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Lorna Ford/ Jennifer Shaw	Open	2/7/21

<b>Decision Item</b>	<b>Report Summary</b>	<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Open or Exempt</b>	<b>Added to Schedule</b>
Vicarage Lane Development	<i>The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the current proposals including the design, financial position and the programme timetable.</i>	Cllr Iliffe	Jo Fox	Open (Exempt Appendix)	1/10/20
Kiln Field Local Nature Reserve		Cllr Forest	Terry Jones	Open	8/9/21
Solar Programme – Projects and Pipeline	<i>To request authority for spend to deliver a 0.5 megawatt solar array on Carlton Road and update on the wider solar delivery programme.</i>	Cllr Iliffe	Giles Holloway	Open	1/10/21
First Homes	<i>To seek Cabinet’s endorsement with regards the approach to facilitating ‘First Homes’ through the Council’s existing adopted policy framework set out in the Local Plan to 2030.</i>	Cllrs Bell/ Clokie	Daniel Carter/ Mark James	Open	1/10/21
Rough Sleeper Accommodation Project/Move On – Update Report		Cllr Clokie	Sharon Williams/ Mark James	Open	6/9/21
Kent Music – Supporting Relocation to Ashford	<i>To approve in principle a loan funding for KMS to purchase a new facility in Ashford and Delegate authority to finalise the terms loan agreement to relevant Officers in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Ben Lockwood	Open	7/10/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Planning Applications Validation Check List		Cllr Bell	Simon Cole	Open	7/10/21
<b>16<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>					
Draft Budget 2022/23	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&amp;S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	30/11/20
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2021-2051 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)		Cllr Clokie	Sharon Williams/Mark James	Open	21/10/20
Bockhanger Consultation – Outcomes	<i>To provide some background and context to the most recent consultation and detail the feedback from stakeholders about the principle of an integrated community space in the area and the delivery mechanism specified.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Mark James	Open	30/10/19

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Street Naming and Numbering - 21/0097/SNN Land west of Viaduct Terrace, Warehorne Road, Warehorne		Cllr Bell	Kenneth Beach	Open	1/10/21
<b>27<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	29/1/21
Carbon Neutral Action Plan - Adoption	<i>To adopt the plan following a period of consultation.</i>	Cllr Clarkson	Jennifer Shaw	Open	20/5/21
<b>24<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b>					
Revenue Budget 2021/22	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2021/22 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	28/2/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Tom Swain	Open	28/2/20
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</b>					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (including Review for 2022/23)	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance.</i>	Cllr Pickering	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	19/3/21
<b>28<sup>th</sup> April 2022</b>					
Street Lighting Project – Phase 2		Cllr Iliffe	Paul McKenner	Open	20/8/21
<b>26<sup>th</sup> May 2022</b>					
<b>30<sup>th</sup> June 2022</b>					
Recovery Plan Annual Report 2021/22	<i>To present the Annual Report 2021/22 highlighting performance against the Recovery Plan priorities.</i>	Cllr Clarkson/ Shorter	Tom Swain	Open	28/6/21
Final Outturn 2021/22	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	28/6/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
<b>28<sup>th</sup> July 2022</b>					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	30/7/21
<b>25<sup>th</sup> August 2022</b>					
<b>KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS</b>					
<b>29<sup>th</sup> September 2022</b>					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	1/10/21
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Tom Swain	Open	1/10/21
Corporate Commercial Property Strategy – Annual Report	<i>To advise of the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the last financial period and to advise of proposals to increase profitability in the coming financial period,</i>	Cllr Iliffe	Paul McKenner	Open	1/10/21

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

18/10/21

This page is intentionally left blank