



CABINET

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on
Thursday, 25th November, 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. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

1 - 2

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

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

See Agenda Item 2 for further details

3. **Minutes**

3 - 8

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28th October 2021.

4.	To Receive any Petitions	
5.	Leader's Announcements	
6.	Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Section 106 Processes	9 - 26
7.	Corporate Performance Report	27 - 50
8.	Draft Budget 2022/23	51 - 82
9.	Council Tax Base 2022/23	83 - 92
10.	Financial Monitoring Quarterly Report	93 - 112
11.	Corporate Plan 2022 - 2024	113 - 164
12.	Solar Programme - Projects and Pipeline	165 - 174
13.	First Homes	175 - 194
14.	Rough Sleeper Accommodation Project/Move On - Update Report	195 - 220
15.	Kent Music - Supporting relocation to Ashford	221 - 236
16.	Planning Applications Validation Check List	237 - 270
17.	Ashford Strategic Development Board - Notes of 15th October 2021	271 - 276
18.	Compliance and Enforcement Board - Notes of 26th October 2021	277 - 280
19.	IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee - Notes of 28th September 2021	281 - 284
20.	Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group - Notes of 21st October 2021	285 - 288
21.	Schedule of Key Decisions	289 - 296
22.	Items for Future Meetings	
23.	Economic Regeneration and Investment Board - Notes of 7th September 2021	297 - 300

18 November 2021

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Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency alone, such as:

- Membership of amenity societies, Town/Community/Parish Councils, residents' groups or other outside bodies that have expressed views or made representations, but the Member was not involved in compiling or making those views/representations, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: Where an item would be likely to affect the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc.; OR where an item is an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc., there is likely to be an OSI or in some cases a DPI. ALSO, holding a committee position/office within an amenity society or other outside body, or having any involvement in compiling/making views/representations by such a body, may give rise to a perception of bias and require the Member to take no part in any motion or vote.]

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution alongside the Council's Good Practice Protocol for Councillors dealing with Planning Matters. See <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/2098/z-word5-democratic-services-constitution-2019-constitution-of-abc-may-2019-part-5.pdf>
- (c) Where a Member declares a committee position or office within, or membership of, an outside body that has expressed views or made representations, this will be taken as a statement that the Member was not involved in compiling or making them and has retained an open mind on the item(s) in question. If this is not the case, the situation must be explained.

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

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **28th October 2021**.

Present:

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

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

Apologies:

Cllrs Chilton, Head of Corporate Property and Projects.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of Finance and IT, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Web and Communications Assistant, Member Services Manager.

165 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 30th September 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

166 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said he had a couple of important announcements to make evening. Firstly, he was pleased to advise that the Council had been successful in its application to the Government for Round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund. This related to an application for Ashford International Studios at Newtown Works and the Minister, Neil O'Brien MP, had written to the Leader advising that they would receive the full grant of £14,773,745. The Minister had praised the strength of the application, which had performed well against the Government's assessment criteria and he had appreciated the hard work that had gone in to the application. He was also as keen as the Council to get delivery and spend underway quickly. The letter had concluded by advising that officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities would be in contact shortly regarding the next steps for the application, including the completion of delivery, financial, monitoring and risk register templates ahead of an inception meeting to help get delivery underway. The Leader said this was great news for Ashford and he wanted to congratulate everyone involved with the bid.

Secondly he said he wanted to make mention of the discussion at Full Council the previous week about the safety of women and girls. He knew it was a national issue but he thought it was disgraceful that women and girls felt intimidated and unsafe on our streets and that there was a sentiment that they should just learn to live with it as “that is the way things are”. He thought there was an obligation on everyone, particularly males, to alter their behaviour and ensure that this did not continue. He had outlined a long list of measures that they were engaged with in this area at the Council meeting, and he said they would continue to push ahead in every way possible, including working with other agencies where necessary, including with KCC on street lighting. Ashford was striving to be a caring Borough for everyone, including the disabled and the vulnerable, and work against this sort of intimidation and violence would go hand in hand with that. Caring Ashford was not a mere slogan, he wanted to continue to see action.

167 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), a budget forecast including underlying assumptions, covering a five year period from 2022 to 2027 for the General Fund. The Draft Budget would be built using the assumptions in the MTFP and would be reported to Cabinet the following month. He also pointed out a minor typographical error in recommendation (iii) of the report.

The Leader drew attention to the table of earmarked reserves on page 20 of the report.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the forecast be noted and the underlying assumptions accepted.**
 - (ii) it be noted 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) the Reserves Strategy at Paragraphs 35 to 44 of the report be endorsed.**
 - (iv) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to agree the Council’s continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool.**

168 The Creation of Meadows and Enhanced Land Management Plans to Support Increased Biodiversity, Reduce Impacts of Climate Change and Connect People

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Council was acting boldly and decisively to increase biodiversity within green spaces owned by the Council. This was in response to the Government agenda to improve the natural environment, the Council's own Corporate Plan objective to be a Green Pioneer and its commitment to tackling climate change.

The Deputy Leader commended the report which he said was a good step forward and he was particularly pleased to see the references to plans for Queen Mother's Park.

A Member asked if lessons learned from this work could be shared more widely with other areas and Parish Councils as she knew they would have pieces of land in their own areas where they would like to create similar environments. The Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager for Aspire said he would be happy to do so.

Resolved:

That the development of enhanced land management plans be supported in order to further support increased biodiversity and connect people with the environment to support health and wellbeing.

169 Corporate Property Performance - Annual Report

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the revenue generated by the Council's Corporate Property portfolio contributed significantly to the Council's income. The income generated for the financial year ending March 2021 was shown in the Corporate Property Income Schedule at Appendix 1 to the report. The report also provided a summary of how the Council's main commercial assets were performing and the work the Council was undertaking to improve or maintain such performance. He wanted to praise the Officers involved for the sterling job they had done in continuing to manage the portfolio during the pandemic and in maintaining performance at a relatively high level. He drew particular attention to: - International House; Carlton Road Business Park; Elwick Place and the Council's garage stock.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the revenue performance of the Council's Corporate Property Portfolio during the financial year 2020/21, as provided for in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.**
 - (ii) the current position with the major commercial assets be noted, particularly in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.**

170 Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Albacore Event Programme 2022

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that Ashford Borough Council was proposing to mark a number of significant national and local anniversaries in 2022, including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which would be celebrated nationally from 2nd – 5th June, as well as Warship Week, HMS Albacore and the 80th Anniversary of the Ashford Sea Cadets. The report set out plans to celebrate those anniversaries. He stressed that whilst it was right that the Council took the lead, they wanted to focus on local community participation. The Portfolio Holder advised that there were some errors with the figures in the body of the report, but those in the recommendations were the correct ones.

Resolved:

- That (i) the proposed programme of events be agreed and a budget of £55,000 be agreed from reserves to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the 80th Anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets in 2022.**
- (ii) authority be delegated to 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 2022.**

171 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 28th September 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 28th September 2021 be approved and adopted.

172 Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board – Notes of 29th September 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the 29th September 2021 be received and noted.

173 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 25th November 2021

Report Title: Final Report of the Section 106 Task Group

**Report Author &
Job Title:** Abi Moffatt
Policy and Scrutiny Officer

**Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder for:** Cllr. Neil Bell
Planning and Development

Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the council's Section 106 process.

The report provides a summary of the Task Group meetings during the review and outlines the key findings. There are a total of eight recommendations that aim to improve various parts of the Section 106 process.

The Committee are asked to approve the recommendations to be submitted to the next Cabinet.

Key Decision: NO

**Significantly
Affected Wards:** All Wards

Recommendations: **The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group recommends to the Cabinet that:-**

- I. A process mapping exercise is undertaken to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process. Once completed, the process map will inform recommendations II to VIII.**
- II. Guidance and training is provided for Officers involved in the Section 106 process to clarify roles and responsibilities of all Officers. Additionally, a 'handbook' is created for both Members and Parish Councillors, to explain the basic concepts of Section 106.**
- III. Communication over Section 106 is improved between the Planning Service and Parish Councils including key contact(s) for accessing advice.**
- IV. Training on Section 106 should be provided to Members and Parish Councils on an annual basis.**

The initial programme for the training should be reviewed by the Member Training Panel in consultation with the Chair of the Section 106 Task Group.

- V. The new Planning IT software is expected to provide information on the council's website about what Section 106 monies are available to individual parishes.
- VI. Delivery of the Infrastructure Contributions SPD should be prioritised. The SPD should provide an up to date list of what is expected of developers within a single document. This will provide clarity for all parties involved in the Section 106 process.
- VII. There is a standardising of Section 106 Agreements and use of templates where appropriate.
- VIII. Legal Services are trained to use the new IT system adopted by the Planning Department, to enable them access to relevant Planning documentation and therefore streamline the process.

Policy Overview:	The scrutiny review of the Section 106 process has formed following an initial report provided to the Committee in March 2021.
Financial Implications:	Resource implications are indicated in the Management Team Advice Sheet in Appendix B.
Legal Implications:	Two of the recommendations require some Legal resource to deliver, but this is within existing resources.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required because equalities impact assessment would be carried out at the point of the implementation for each of the recommendations as necessary.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	N/A
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	The recommendations from the Task Group are within the council's risk appetite. The report is intended to improve the Section 106 process and reduce any current risks associated with how the process currently operates.
Sustainability Implications:	N/A
Other Material Implications:	N/A

**Exempt from
Publication:**

NO

**Background
Papers:**

Report on Section 106 Process, March 2021

Contact:

Abi.moffatt@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330394)

Report Title: Final Report of the Section 106 Task Group

Foreword from the Task Group Chairman

1. In this report, the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group presents its findings and recommendations from the Section 106 Review. The Task Group has examined the various stages of the Section 106 process in detail.
2. The review has highlighted that there is a need for additional guidance and education around Section 106 for Members, Officers and Parish Councils. The Witness Sessions allowed for discussion over how Members and Officers could be more informed and ultimately how Members could have greater input. The survey to Parish Councils also highlighted a number of key issues around knowledge of the process, communication and transparency. I believe that the recommendations will simplify parts of the process, increase understanding and enable Member and public access to contribution information.
3. I would like to thank the Members of the Task Group and Officers who have contributed their knowledge and experience to this review. Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to all Parish Councils who responded to the Section 106 Questionnaire, and to those Parishes who participated in the Witness Sessions.

Introduction and Background

4. During April 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the Section 106 process. Members raised particular concern over not being involved or consulted on proposed Section 106 contributions, prior to a report being submitted to the Planning Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group has conducted an in depth review to ascertain the various stages of the process and understand where Members and Parish Councils could have greater input.

Review Scope

5. The Task Group assembled 6 Members; Cllr Ovenden (Chair), Cllr. Chilton, Cllr. Ledger, Cllr. Blanford, Cllr. Mulholland and Cllr. Campkin to examine the Section 106 Process and, if required, make some recommendations to the full Committee.
6. The group met initially to scope the review and establish where scrutiny could be beneficial. A scoping document was agreed which outlined 4 key aims for the review:
 - a. To consider how Section 106 is used to deliver the councils priorities and how centralising this process will ensure this.

- b. Identify how Members and Parish Councils are consulted on Section 106 and find ways to formalise this communication.
 - c. Look at how the implementation of the new digital planning system will improve the Section 106 process.
 - d. To review the Section 106 monitoring process and consider how this can be improved.
7. The group discussed the ways that they could capture the Section 106 process wholly. To understand all parts of the process, Members requested that they speak to Officers in all departments relevant to Section 106; Planning and Development, Housing, Culture and Legal and Democracy.
 8. The Task Group agreed that the review should not include discussions with external infrastructure providers. This would broaden the scope of the work significantly, and so this would not be looked at in detail to keep the review timely. Additionally, it was felt that the infrastructure providers were not one of the main concerns of Members.
 9. Additionally, Members proposed that a questionnaire was compiled and sent to Parish Councils. The questionnaire would help to understand what the challenges of Section 106 were from a Parish perspective, and equally what parts of the process worked well. Analysis of the completed questionnaire would be undertaken once received and Members would aim to have a discussion with several Parish Councils at a future Task Group meeting.

Witness Sessions for Officers

10. The group agreed that a series of virtual 'Witness Sessions' would be held where Officers would be invited to attend a meeting and participate in a 'question and answer' style discussion. In advance of the meetings, Officers were provided with a set of standard questions put together by the Task Group. The following questions were asked to guide the discussions:
 - a. Please describe your role in the process
 - b. What do you think works well about the Section 106 process?
 - c. Are there any parts of the process you feel could be improved?
 - d. What is your relationship like with Parish Council's regarding Section 106?
 - e. Are there any examples of best practice by other council's you think we should look at?

Review Findings

Witness Session 1 – Planning and Development

11. The first meeting of the Task Group was to understand the Section 106 process from Planning Officer's perspectives. Members received statements from Officers in the Planning Policy and Development Management teams.

12. Members were informed that there was an Annual Report published on Section 106 monies collected and spent. A request was made that it be produced more frequently to aid Members in keeping projects fresh in their minds.
13. Officers raised issues around the complexity of the process internally in the council. It was important to keep the process as simple as possible for the benefit of Officers and Parish Councillors involved. Officers suggested that they would like to explore the idea of simplifying the process with colleagues in the Legal Service. It was also agreed that use of standard wording or templates would help streamline some parts of Section 106 agreements. It was noted that bespoke agreements often took considerable time to negotiate. **(Recommendation VII)**
14. Planning Officers felt that overall they kept good relationships with Parish Councils. Officers supported the idea that proposals for local projects which could justifiably be funded through Section 106 Agreements were created. At times, it was difficult to engage with some Parish Councils at the right time over projects in their local areas. It was noted by Planning Officers and later by Parish Councils, that it was not always clear what Parish Councils needed to do with their project lists and when the best time to create one was.

Witness Session 2 – Housing and Culture

15. Officers from teams within Culture and Housing attended this meeting to speak about their involvement with the Section 106 process. Some Officers who worked with Parish Councils felt that it was difficult to understand Section 106 and provide guidance to Parish Councils accordingly. One suggestion was that more information and training on Section 106 should be provided to all Officers involved in the process, for example, via a handbook or training session.
16. In regards to improvements to the process, it was felt that more guidance was needed for Officers to be able to advise Parish Council's accordingly. A level playing field was required in terms of what the parameters and structures are behind the Section 106 process. This could also include some clarity of the roles and responsibilities of various Officers in the process.
17. It was also mentioned that the Open Space SPD was due to be updated. It could be useful if the wording within the SPD could include all cultural provision, for example, arts, community buildings and facilities. Members were advised that a new Infrastructure Contributions SPD was being developed and that this will update the list of what is expected of developers within a single document. The Task Group welcomed this change and agreed that this will provide clarity to all parties involved. **(Recommendation VI)**

Witness Session 3 – Legal and Democracy

18. During this meeting, Officers from the Legal Service ran through the stages of the Section 106 process from a legal perspective. Four stages were identified – policy making and identifying the need, requesting the money, collection of the money and the spending of the money. Overall, it was felt that the council has a well-developed Local Plan which includes comprehensive policies regarding the delivery of infrastructure. It was also explained that Officers have a good level of experience and expertise with negotiating Section 106 agreements.

19. Members were advised that the current Supplementary Planning Document on the provision of Affordable Housing through Section 106 agreements, and on contributions to Public Green Infrastructure, are 12 and 9 years old respectively. In order to better support requests for such infrastructure, both in negotiations and at Appeal, it was felt these needed to be updated.
20. It was also suggested to the Task Group that earlier input from Parish Councils in identifying potential projects in their areas would be very beneficial to the process. Similarly, ensuring the Legal Service were involved at early stages of Section 106 would also make the process easier.
21. Members were concerned with the difficulty with recruiting to some vacant posts within the Legal Service. However, it was advised that consultants are going to be looking at the recruitment package and improve what was being offered for some of the senior legal posts.
22. Members raised other queries around the new Planning IT system and whether Legal Services could be part of this. Although it was advised that this could not be possible with the nature of some confidential records held by Legal, it was suggested that if Legal Officers had better access to planning documents, then some parts of the process could be progressed more quickly. **(Recommendation VIII)**

Parish Councils and Section 106

Section 106 Questionnaire

23. Prior to the witness session, Parish Councils were asked to complete a survey regarding their experience with Section 106. A copy of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendix A. In total, 23 Parish Councils and 1 community forum responded to the questionnaire online and the responses were varied in terms of detail. Five of the responses were selected for the Task Groups consideration.

Parish Council Questionnaire Responses – Summary and Analysis

24. Responses showed that there was a mixed level of understanding of the process amongst Parish Councillors but mainly this was little or none. Suggestions from Parish Councils included the creation of Section 106 guidance documents and/or annual training events. Some Parish Councils advised that they can have a frequent turnover of Councillors and therefore it would be useful to have a guidance booklet on Section 106 specifically. This turnover meant that training materials needed to be readily available so that new Parish Councillors understand the process. **(Recommendation II)**
25. Parish Councils felt that more transparency was required during various stages of the process. In particular, Parishes felt that they did not have enough involvement during the early stages.
26. Areas particularly highlighted through the questionnaire as needing improvement were
 - a. Education and training: 58%

- b. Transparency: 42%
- c. Greater communication: 42%
- d. More involvement: 46%

27. A high number of the responding Parish Councils advised that they had a list of priority projects in place and many of these were reviewed against a set process and involved consultation with local residents.

28. The following tables A to C demonstrate some of the responses to specific questions asked within the Parish Council survey:

Table A

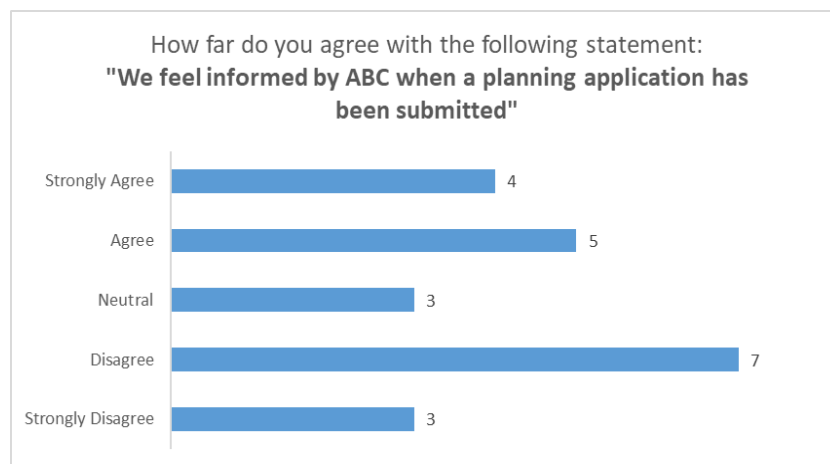


Table B

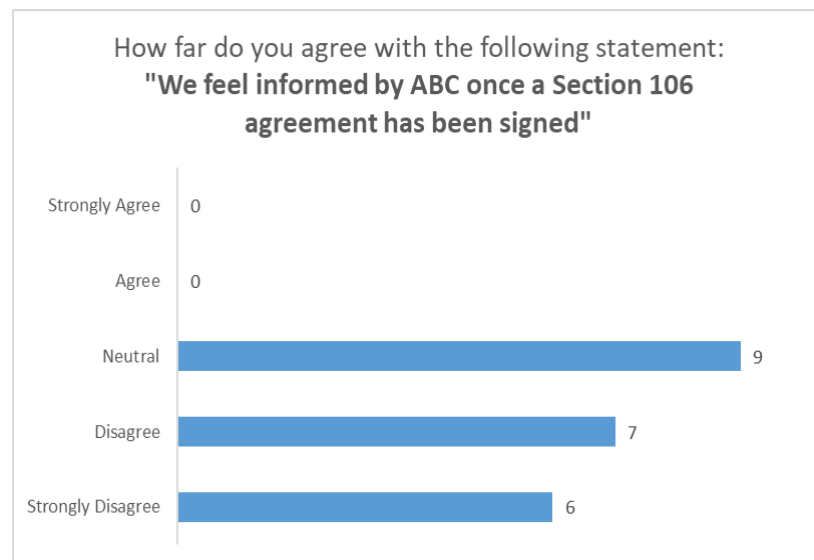
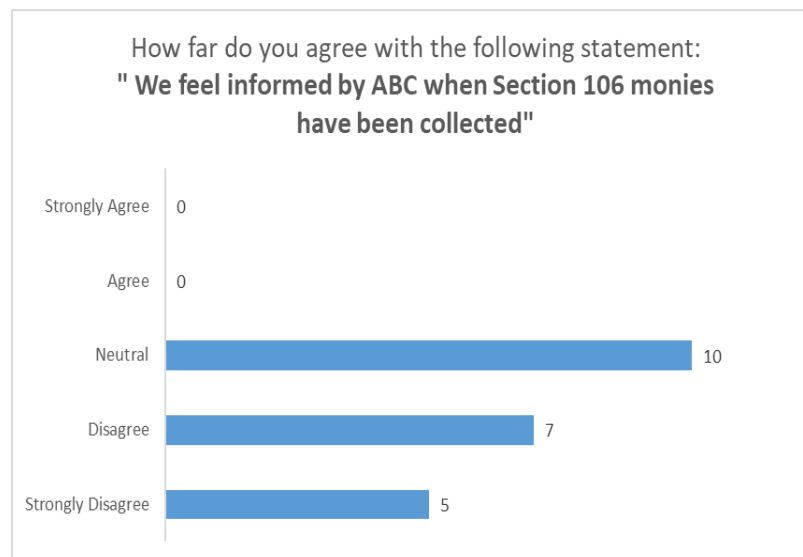


Table C



29. Table A shows that the majority of Parish Councils partaking in the survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This indicates that there are Parish Councils who had previously felt informed by the council to some extent when a planning application was submitted. However, nearly 60% of responses were either neutral or disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore, this suggested that there was not enough accessible information for Parish Councils regarding their planning applications.
30. Similarly in Tables B and C, there were no respondents who agreed that they were well informed by the council once a Section 106 agreement had been signed. These results suggested that more could be done to improve the communications between the Planning Department and Parish Councillors and ensure updates to Section 106 agreements are easily accessible.
31. Some Parish Councils felt informed when a planning application had been submitted. There was some indication that this part of the process worked well in principle. Comments were also made indicating that it was felt the Section 106 helped local Parishes plan for the future. In particular, one Parish advised they had a good experience when drawing down money to use on playgrounds and added that in this instance, Officers were both helpful and flexible.
32. Overall, many responses indicated that their Parish Council did not feel informed by Ashford Borough Council during the development of the Local Plan, when a planning application is submitted, when an Section 106 agreement has been signed or when Section 106 monies have been collected. To improve on this, the Task Group suggested that the council issue more frequent communication and updates regarding these processes. It was felt that the new planning IT system could support the provision of this information on the website.
- (Recommendation V)**

Witness Session 3

33. After reviewing the survey responses, Members were presented with the findings. It was then agreed that three Parish Councils would be asked to attend a future Witness Session with the Task Group. Members agreed it was important to select both rural and urban Parishes and Parishes of different sizes, to understand if there was a difference in perspectives. The following Parish Councils were selected:

- a. Wittersham Parish Council
- b. Kingsnorth Parish Council
- c. Tenterden Town Council

34. In preparation for the Witness Session, questions were compiled for the attending Parish Councils to guide the discussion. The questions were based on their responses to the questionnaire:

- a. Please outline how local priorities are identified in your Parish.
- b. How can ABC help your Parish understand the Section 106 process better?
- c. How can communications be improved from ABC regarding future planning applications and Section 106 agreements?
- d. How can communications from ABC be improved during the development of the Local Plan?
- e. Do you have any specific positive or negative experiences working with the Section 106 process?
- f. Do you have any other ideas on how the Section 106 process could be improved?

35. In response to these questions, Parish Councillors made some key comments and suggestions:

- a. Comments were made that it would be useful to have more information regarding Section 106 and what is available to the Parish. Parish Councillors agreed that more engagement with the council regarding Section 106 would be useful regarding how much money could be requested. A Parish Councillor highlighted that South Oxfordshire use their website to provide up to date information on what Section 106 monies are available.
- b. The Task Group were advised that it was difficult to get hold of Officers and it felt like there were some resource issues in the Planning Service. It was also a struggle to get hold of Section 106 contribution information. The Parish Council suggested that a dedicated Section 106 officer would help improve communications. **(Recommendation III)**
- c. Members queried the communication issues raised during the meeting and asked if there was capacity in Planning to respond to regular questions from Parishes, if recommended by the Task Group.

- d. It was explained that there was some confusion over when Section 106 project ideas should be submitted.
- e. It was felt that there was some imbalance in knowledge between Officers and Members of the Parish Council.
- f. Parish Councillors had difficulty with understanding complex Section 106 agreements and what was being offered. They recommended that more education on this topic for Parish Councils was required. Members agreed that training needed to be led by Ashford Borough Council and this should be incorporated in to the recommendations. **(Recommendation IV)**

36. Overall, the Task Group agreed that understanding the views of Parish Councils was an important part of the review. The Witness Sessions were extremely informative and were consistent with themes identified in the questionnaire. Comments made within the Witness Session were used to inform many of the recommendations.

Wrap Up

37. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group finalised their conclusions in a final Wrap Up meeting. The recommendations reflect discussions had over the last six months in the series of Witness Sessions. Both oral and written evidence was provided by Officers and Parish Councils to help the Task Group understand the Section 106 process.

38. Following Member discussions, the Task Group insisted that a process mapping exercise of the Section 106 process is undertaken prior to progression of the later recommendations. It was agreed that once all the stages of the Section 106 process had been mapped out, this information would inform the details necessary to implement recommendations II to VIII. **(Recommendation I)**

Consultation

39. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were consulted on the recommendations and support them. The council's Management Team have also been consulted and were fully supportive of the recommendations and their advice to Cabinet is set out in Appendix B.

Recommendations

40. The Task Group would like to endorse the following recommendations to the Cabinet:

- I. **A process mapping exercise is undertaken to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process. Once completed, the process map will inform recommendations II to VIII.**

- II. **Guidance and training is provided for Officers involved in the Section 106 process to clarify roles and responsibilities of all Officers. Additionally, a 'handbook' is created for both Members and Parish Councillors, to explain the basic concepts of Section 106.**
- III. **Communication over Section 106 is improved between the Planning Service and Parish Councils including key contact(s) for accessing advice.**
- IV. **Training on Section 106 should be provided to Members and Parish Councils on an annual basis. The initial programme for the training should be reviewed by the Member Training Panel in consultation with the Chair of the Section 106 Task Group.**
- V. **The new Planning IT software is expected to provide information on the council's website about what Section 106 monies are available to individual parishes.**
- VI. **Delivery of the Infrastructure Contributions SPD should be prioritised. The SPD should provide an up to date list of what is expected of developers within a single document. This will provide clarity for all parties involved in the Section 106 process.**
- VII. **There is a standardising of Section 106 Agreements and use of templates where appropriate.**
- VIII. **Legal Services are trained to use the new IT system adopted by the Planning Department, to enable them access to relevant Planning documentation and therefore streamline the process.**

Contact and Email

41. *Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer*
Tel: 01233 330394

S106 Questionnaire to Parish Councils

No	Question
1	Name of Parish Council/Community Council
2	Main contact (we may wish to follow you up on the questionnaire)
3	As a Parish Council, how well do you feel you understand the S106 process?
4	Do you have a process for identifying local priorities within your Parish? If yes, please explain in this box. <i>E.g. do you have a S106 Committee or dedicated person who coordinates this?</i>
5	Do you consult with residents on the local priorities for the area? If so, please explain how.
6	Do you have a current list of projects you have identified that could be eligible for S106?

7	<p>If yes, please list the projects</p>
8	<p>How regularly do you review your list of local priority projects?</p>
9	<p>Is the list publicly available?</p>
10	<p>Thinking about the S106 process, to what extent do you agree with the following statement:</p> <p>I feel well informed by Ashford Borough Council (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree):</p> <p>a. During the development of the Local Plan b. When a planning application is submitted c. Once a S106 agreement has been signed d. Once S106 monies have been collected</p>
11	<p>To what extent do you agree with the following statement:</p> <p>It is easy to communicate with Ashford Borough Council over S106 matters?</p> <p>Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree</p>
12	<p>How could communications over S106 be improved between Ashford Borough Council and Parish Councils?</p>

13	<p>What communications over S106 from Ashford Borough Council do you find useful?</p>
14	<p>Please use this box to explain what you think works well about the S106 process <i>Please include any examples.</i></p>
15	<p>Please use this box to explain what the council could do to improve the S106 process?</p>

O&S Review of the Section 106 Process – Management Team Advice for Cabinet

Recommendation	Resource Implications	Management Team Advice
<p>I. A process mapping exercise is undertaken to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process. Once completed, the process map will inform recommendations II to VIII.</p>	<p>Some additional resources required to deliver the process mapping exercise.</p>	<p>Accept: A time period of 6 months has been recommended for delivery of the process maps. To help ensure these timescales are met it is recommended that additional resources are allocated to enable the exercise to be led by either an internal or external specialist team. The Head of Planning would oversee the implementation of this.</p> <p>Timescales for the rest of the recommendations will be determined following completion of the process mapping.</p>
<p>II. Guidance and training is provided for Officers involved in the Section 106 process to clarify roles and responsibilities of all Officers. Additionally, a 'handbook' is created for both Members and Parish Councillors, to explain the basic concepts of Section 106.</p>	<p>Some resource will be required to create the 'handbook'.</p>	<p>Accept: Provision of additional training for Officers will increase overall understanding of the Section 106 process. This will ensure queries from Members and the public are dealt with correctly. A handbook will be beneficial for new Members/Parish Councillors to ensure they have a good level of understanding.</p>
<p>III. Communication over Section 106 is improved between the Planning</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	<p>Accept: The Planning Service will provide a list of key contacts for Members and Parish Councils to</p>

Service and Parish Councils including key contact(s) for accessing advice.		<p>speaking to regarding Section 107 monies. This will ensure queries are directed to the most appropriate Officers.</p>
<p>IV. Training on Section 106 should be provided to Members and Parish Councils on an annual basis. The initial programme for the training should be reviewed by the Member Training Panel in consultation with the Chair of the Section 106 Task Group.</p>	Within existing resources.	<p>Accept: Annual training sessions will ensure Members are kept well informed over Section 106 matters. The Member Training Panel will be able to review the programme and ensure it considers the main queries raised by Members and Parish Councils.</p>
<p>V. The new Planning IT software is expected to provide information on the council's website about what Section 106 monies are available to individual parishes.</p>	Within existing resources.	<p>Accept: Members, Parish Councils and the public will have greater access to Section 106 information online.</p> <p>The Planning Service will liaise with Arcus Global to implement this.</p>
<p>VI. Delivery of the Infrastructure Contributions SPD should be prioritised. The SPD should provide an up to date list of what is expected of developers within a single document. This will provide clarity for all parties involved in the Section 106 process.</p>	Significant resource needed to achieve this including necessary time for discussion with Councillors and the public.	<p>Accept: The work will need to be balanced with other significant priorities, including the Policy Framework for Stodmarsh and implementing the new planning system.</p>

VII. There is a standardising of Section 106 Agreements and use of templates where appropriate.	Within existing resources.	Accept: The use of standard templates will streamline this part of the process.
VIII. Legal Services are trained to use the new IT system adopted by the Planning Department, to enable them access to relevant Planning documentation and therefore streamline the process.	Within existing resources.	Accept: Following implementation of the new Planning System, colleagues in the Legal Service will be provided with access to some planning documentation.



Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Cabinet: Thursday 25th November

Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 2 2021/22

Report Author & Job Title: Tom Swain
Governance and Data Protection Officer

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Neil Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Finance and IT

Summary: Following the presentation to Cabinet in July 2020 of the Recovery Plan which set out the council's approach to making a timely and successful recovery from the impact of the coronavirus, this periodic report summarises performance against the performance indicators introduced in that Recovery Plan.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **Cabinet, is asked to:-**

I. Consider the performance data for Quarter 2 2021/22

Policy Overview: The Recovery Plan as a key strategic document set out how we embrace the 'new normal' to build: a stronger local economy, increased community resilience and public participation.

The Plan covers a 2 year period reflecting economic forecasting for the return of economic stability during the period.

This quarterly Performance Report acts as an opportunity to monitor this Recovery Plan.

Financial Implications: N/A

Legal Implications:	N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required as the report presents information on past council performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	N/A
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	N/A
Sustainability Implications:	N/A
Other Material Implications:	N/A
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	The Recovery Plan 2020
Contact:	Tom.Swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330432

Portfolio Holder's Views:

This report provides a good overview of the council's performance and demonstrates some of the progress and constraints that are influencing our short and medium term performance.

I would advocate that both officers and members have a brief review of the material included in this report so that we are all familiar with the issues that are affecting the general public and where we need to focus our attention going forward.

Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 2 2021/22

Introduction and Background

1. This report seeks to provide an overview of performance against the council's key performance indicators for Quarter 2 2021/22. The council's performance framework captures key performance data from across council services as it relates to the themes of the Recovery Plan 2020, that of Economic Recovery, Community Recovery, Place Making, Regeneration, and Infrastructure and Organisational Change and Workforce Development.
2. The Recovery Plan was developed to put in place a framework to enable a timely and structured recovery from the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The plan sets out to deliver a number of actions that will allow the council to re-configure how it works and can most effectively deliver services to residents and how, in collaboration with others, help mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the local economy, communities and residents.
3. This quarterly performance report monitors the key performance measures set out in the Recovery Plan and by doing so forms part of a comprehensive and regular review of the plan ensuring our recovery remains focused and on track to deliver a timely recovery, that is inclusive, and ensures those hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic are not disadvantaged.

Areas of Note

4. **Vacancy rates in our Corporate Property (RPKPI-51).** Occupancy rates have started to show a slight down turn in a number of areas which reflects the current market demand and signs of the impact the pandemic has had on our tenants. This will be especially true for the office sector as companies evaluate their working practices in light of the pandemic. Please note the sqft figures used to calculate our vacancy percentages have been reviewed this quarter resulting in the current figure not being directly comparable to figures from previous quarters.
5. **Food Hygiene Rating (RPKPI-31).** This indicator measures the percentage of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*; this has consistently remained above target throughout the pandemic. The measure had, however, for the previous quarters, been flagged as an area of concern with this figure covering all inspections, including those which were overdue for their next inspection. With the aid of additional resources, efforts continue to be directed into getting the inspection program up to date following Covid related delays. In the order of 400 inspections have now been completed in the first six months of this inspecting period which is close to the number usually scheduled for a whole year. A significant backlog remains, but this indicator is now becoming increasingly reliable allowing the indicator to return to a green status.

6. **Planning measures**, the Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough, continues to be constrained with the potential impact new residential accommodation could have on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites. A Nutrient Mitigation Strategy for the Stour Catchment in Ashford Borough is being pursued as a matter of urgency. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications and this is starting to be reflected in the related performance measures.
7. **Refuse Collection Success Rate (RPKPI-41)**. The success rate for August (making up part of this reporting period) is showing an outlying underperformance. Driver shortages due to the HGV driver crisis and new inexperienced crews meant this aspect of service delivery had been impacted. The following month (September) saw significant improvement. The average missed bins across the borough per week for August was 91 bins per week out of 56,410 properties per week receiving waste or recycle collection service, and 19,302 properties per fortnight receiving garden service.
8. **Covid related measures**. With this performance report reflecting the performance measure identified as part of the Recovery Plan, many of these measures are linked directly to coronavirus related matters. With the ending of shielding advice, related data sharing agreements with the NHS and DEFRA, the ending of covid related business support and other support schemes, reportable data will begin to come to an end and related measures where no further data is being collected will be removed from this report. Measures reflecting VERA funded foodbanks and emergency assistant grants removed as of this report.

Next Steps

9. The focus of the council in 2020 was to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. This paused the bringing together of the next Corporate Plan whilst the impacts of the pandemic were realised and the immediate priorities to aid a timely recovery were agreed and the Recovery Plan adopted.
10. The Recovery Plan did not lose sight of the long-term ambition agreed by stakeholders to form the cornerstone of the Corporate Plan. The Ashford Ambition carries forward, together with the three themes of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, into the Corporate Plan 2022-2024 which is currently nearing completion.
11. Going forward, this period performance report will reflect the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2024 with a suite of performance measures in keeping with the themes of the Corporate Plan 2022-2024.



Our Recovery Plan 2020 - 22

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

Recovery Plan Themes



Our Objectives

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

Our Service Design Principles

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

- Efficient • Consistent • Inclusive
- Improve the customer experience

Green principles



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



Equalities Objectives

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



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



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






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




Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

Recovery Plan, Quarterly Performance Indicators, Q2 2021/22

PI Status	
	Alert
	Warning
	OK

Economic Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI30 Parking usage	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	73,602			187,472			251,662			Parking usage last 12 months September 2021 result  76,241 Last 12 months

September 2021 Report - Overview

Seasonal drop occurred earlier than expected with user numbers down, and decrease could also be due to end of summer holidays, severe weather and some fuel supply issues experienced also later in month.

Dover Place Car Park is a long stay car park for commuters and had a slight increase this month which would suggest a slow trickle of workers returning to normal work patterns.

Expect no revenue from Victoria Road Car Park as will still be used solely as COVID testing site until Christmas.

Elwick Rd Car Park will continue to provide free parking for MITIE staff who support Victoria Rd test centre. There are over 100 staff on rotation. - Civic Centre provides ABC staff with free parking.

Elwick Place Car Park provides free parking after 1500 and again last month, of all users, only 35% were paid for due to the parking charge and times. Cinema users here receive free parking up to 3 hours

NCP Park Mall has closed and we will see some of this users start to filter into Edinburgh Rd and Elwick Place car park until such time as we reopen under our operation in the New Year.

Figures

- Income decreased in September 2021 to £200,087 from August's £214,761. 2019, pre COVID, stats in Sept 2019 £215,944.91 and Oct 2019 £231,387.86
- Our grand total income is **£993,651.80**. Our projected annual forecast income is £2,125,210
- We have exceeded our projected monthly target of £177k per month

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 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. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Notes taken from the Corporate Property Performance Annual Report:

Elwick Place

Leases on all the units at Elwick place have now been agreed.

Units 1 to 5, 7c and 8 are currently open and trading whilst fit-out work continues with units 7a and 7b.

International House

International House continues to perform well and is currently operating with an occupancy level of approximately 95%, a very similar level to previous years.

Park Mall

Purchased 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. Occupancy rate for Park Mall is currently approximately 80%.

Commercial Quarter

Successfully let approximately 14,200 square feet leaving just 3,800 square feet left available to let.

Carlton Business Park

Taking into account units sold and those let on commercial terms, the occupancy rate at Carlton Business Park is now approximately 61%.

RPKPI80	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records	8.4%	8.2%	8%	01/10/2021 - Number of properties 5175, exemptions 254 and empty reliefs 165.
Business survival - current vacancy rates					

Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records, comparing the total number of rated premises against those which have an empty property exemption or relief applied to their accounts

Q3 Dec 2020, 5148 rated properties in the borough with 271 exemptions and 164 with empty reliefs

Q4 March 2021, 5161 rated properties in the borough with 266 exemptions and 165 empty reliefs.

Q1 July 2021, 5168 rated properties in the borough with 241 exemptions and 168 reliefs empty reliefs

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI81 Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic - Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic -	Summary of support provided to businesses									
		Schemes from March 2020 – September 2020:									
		Small Business Grants			1,757 grants paid			£17,570,000			
		Retail Hospitality (RHL) Grants			560 grants paid			£10,205,000			
		Discretionary Grants			175 grants paid			£1,351,000			
		Schemes from November 2020 onwards:									
		Local Restrictions Support Grants									
		November			1,043 grants paid			£1,767,458			
		Tier 3			430 grants paid			£466,618.47			
		Tier 4			1,053 grants paid			£1,015,866.47			
		Wet-led pub			46 grants paid			£46,000			
		January			1,066 grants paid			£2,715,696			
		One-off			1,066 grants paid			£5,430,000			
		February			1,068 grants paid			£2,837,996			
		Restart									
		Restart (non-essential retail)			302 grants paid			£1,144,717			
		Restart (other)			731 grants paid			£6,898,000			
		Total LRSG/Restart			6,605 grants paid			£22,323,371.71			
		Additional Restrictions Grants			2,687 grants paid			£4,823,350.54			


Page 35

Information on the support provided and that which was available to businesses is available on our [webpages](#).


More information on the prosperity of our local businesses is available within the Kent and Medway COVID-19 Economic Recovery Dashboard. [The Economic Recovery Dashboard](#) (XLSX, 1.3 MB). This dashboard has been developed to help support the economic recovery from COVID-19 in Kent and Medway. It draws from a range of economic indicators and uses modelled data to help identify the possible impact on local economies and those areas which may be more economically vulnerable.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Town Centre Support Grant recently launched - A new grants scheme to support businesses to improve the visual appearance of Ashford Town Centre and to support businesses/landlords to improve their premises or attract investment into empty units. Made up of two grant streams - Shop Improvement Grant and an Empty Premises Grant. More information is available on the [business support webpages](#).

RPKPI82 Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	5.9%			5%			4.6% (latest available data up to Aug 2021)			August 2021 result  Last 12 months
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The unemployment rate in Ashford is 4.6%. This is below the rate for Kent & Medway (4.9%)
 360 people were claiming unemployment benefits in Ashford in August. A fall on the previous month.
 More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#)

RPKPI83 Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data.	10.9%			9%			7.7%			Q2 2021/22 result  Last 4 quarters
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The 18-24 year old unemployment rate in Ashford is 7.7%. This accounts for 18.6% of all unemployment. More information available within Kent [County Councils Economy and employment data](#).







Latest available data on Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is available from [here](#).

Presentation on youth unemployment recently given to the Overview and Scrutiny committee, presentation is available to view at: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 8th June, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Community Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI01 Rent arrears/loss		312,078.81			376,024.12			542,151.59			Collected 98.78% of rents year 20/21, with arrears brought forward reduced to £312,078.81. Trend continues to be monitored to understand if this alters as the economic hardships of Covid measures work through as support schemes such as furlough come to an end
RPKPI04 Homelessness presentations	No. of homelessness presentations	365			323			403			Throughout month. Much busier month and more complex cases coming through. S21 notices following ending of Covid protections.
RPKPI05 Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	29			29			26			
RPKPI06 Number of new complaints cases opened	No. of complaints regarding poor conditions and/or ASB in the private rented sector.	1			6			14			Electrical safety standards in the private rented sector have been implemented during the period notices have been issued on properties found to be in breach of this regulation.


The latest data tables on local government housing including Ashford Borough Council, covering social housing sales, homelessness, and affordable housing supply are available at the following links: [Social housing sales](#) [Homelessness](#) [Housing statistics](#) [Affordable housing supply](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI07 Gas Safety Certificates	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.93%	100%		99.98%	100%		99.84%	100%		Due to our move towards an MOT style servicing programme where we can attend the majority of our servicing during the summer months has seen several of these months with larger volumes of required appointments. But with higher volumes of appointments, we'll see higher numbers of hard to access properties on certain months. It is not necessarily an indication that there is an issue with compliance, just that we are seeing the hard to access properties bunched into smaller timeframes rather than across the year. All overdue properties are being managed within current guidelines.
RPKPI08 Disabled Facilities Grants Completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	20			17			21			Overall a good period for completed works. £518k for the year to date spent, with a steady flow of grants being completed and with around a further £500K on site ready to hopefully be completed by April 2022.
RPKPI31 Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	99.1%	98.5%		98.6%	98.5%		98.5%	98.5%		Efforts continue to be directed into getting the inspection program up to date following Covid related delays. In the order of 400 inspections have now been completed in the first six months of this inspecting period which is close to the number usually scheduled for a whole year. A significant backlog remains, but this indicator will become increasingly reliable as the backlog recedes.




This figure covers all inspections including for those inspections which are now overdue for their next inspection. The backlog continues to decrease.

Lockdown meant that our food inspection programme was suspended for most of 20/21. However, the team have made contact with most of the premises due an inspection to provide advice and gather key information to help prioritise and speed up the physical inspection process.

The figures are based on inspection data which is no longer current. Many inspections could not be completed during the last year because of restrictions on visits during the pandemic. The Food and Health & Safety team have contacted almost all the premises that were due an inspection in this period to establish what they are doing and to support them where they have changed their business offer. Many new businesses have been registered which have not yet been inspected.







Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI84 Number of positive covid 19 cases	Number of positive covid 19 cases source https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/	3,173			352			4,110			<p>September 2021 result</p>  <p>Number of people with at least one positive COVID-19 test result, either lab-reported or rapid lateral flow test (England only), by specimen date. Cumulative cases as of the 30/09/21 14,185</p>
RPKPI85 Website visits to covid 19 pages	Website visits to covid 19 pages	44,890			14,526			13,167			<p>September unique page views: 3,496 (15.5% decrease on August)</p> <p>Top 5 pages: Covid Testing Site News Article (1,094), Coronavirus Posters (524), Covid Homepage (433), Test and Trace Support Payment (423), Food Banks and Other Essential Supplies (136).</p>
RPKPI86 Number of referrals to voluntary sector	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	62			17						<p>NHS Digital has now begun a managed closure of the shielded patient list with updates of clinically vulnerable individuals no longer shared with the council.</p> <p>Non-Shielding Vulnerable priority supermarket delivery slot scheme closed for referrals in June 2021 and subsequently the data sharing agreement with Defra terminated.</p> <p>This measure will stop being reported upon going forward.</p>










Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI02 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	0			65			29			In this quarter the Council completed on 28 th September on its new build scheme at East Stour Court, where it has delivered 29 homes - 24 x 1-bed and 5 x 2-bed flats for older people in which they can live independently.
RPKPI03 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	6			10			4			4 properties were purchased in this period, none of the homes bought in this quarter were buy backs. The numbers are lower for this period as a pause has been put on these acquisitions due to the position with available 1-4-1 monies. The success of the scheme in preceding quarters has meant that the amount of 1-4-1 money is running out.
RPKPI10 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	83%	90%		84%	90%		86%	90%		

The Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough is constrained at present by the potential impact of new residential accommodation on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites, which lie east of Canterbury. Without necessary mitigation of additional nitrates caused by new residential development, the granting of planning permission may be regarded as unlawful. A strategic mitigation plan may enable permissions to be granted to the Stour catchment area when secured. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications. Advice has been given by Natural England on Nutrient Neutrality for new developments in the Stour catchment and more information is available on the planning pages of our [website](#).

A Nutrient Mitigation Strategy for the Stour Catchment in Ashford Borough, the first steps to mitigating the issue of water quality degradation at Stodmarsh Lakes, which has impacted new housing development in the Ashford borough, is set to start with Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet agreeing that land acquisition options for new wetland areas should now be explored and pursued as a matter of urgency. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 29th July, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI11 Speed of Major Planning Application Decisions	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority)	91%	65%		94%	65%		45.45	65%		<p>The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions are available at the following link: Live tables on planning application statistics</p> <p>Performance has significantly improved across the year and remains good in respect of major application determinations, although it is recognised that the impact of the Stodmarsh Lakes habitats issue on the ability to determine applications is starting to result in a delay to determination timescales in the short term for residential proposals in the Stour catchment area. Officers will continue to work closely with applicants to ensure that potential solutions can be identified and revised timescales for determination agreed where possible.</p> <p>The below target Q2 measure is acknowledged and is being closely monitored by the planning team. Given the relatively small number of major applications, a small number of applications delayed beyond the 13 week window can have a significant impact on the reported figure.</p>
RPKPI11A % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	72%	75%		78%	75%		85%	75%		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI12 Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions	% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks (or within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the council).	88%	75%		96%	75%		90%	75%		<p>The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions are available at the following link: Live tables on planning application statistics</p> <p>Performance in non-major schemes remains strong and above target. Enhanced use of officer delegations is helping to maintain performance levels.</p>
RPKPI12A % of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	86%	80%		88%	80%		89%	80%		
RPKPI14 Number of live planning casework reducing backlog	Number includes all conditions applications, pre-app cases, as well as applications for outline, full or reserved matters consent. Reducing backlog with a capacity set at 550 open cases	681	550		797	550		760	550		<p>Gross planning application caseload 794 Stodmarsh applications not able to be worked upon 34 Applications monitored for performance 504 Other applications excluded from statutory returns 256</p> <p>Application numbers have continued to increase across 2021 and a combination of Stodmarsh plus a high number of vacant posts in the team from Spring onwards has contributed. Consultant support has partially filled the gap but not wholly.</p>

The Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough is constrained at present by the potential impact of new residential accommodation on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites, which lie east of Canterbury. Without necessary mitigation of additional nitrates caused by new residential development, the granting of planning permission

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

may be regarded as unlawful. A strategic mitigation plan is under consideration and this may enable permissions to be granted to the Stour catchment area when secured. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications. Advice has been given by Natural England on Nutrient Neutrality for new developments in the Stour catchment and more information is available on the planning pages of our [website](#). Alongside this, there is evidence of a rise in planning application numbers which is driving up overall caseload in the Service coupled with remaining resource gaps associated with the final stages of the restructure of the Planning & Development Service. A programme of recruitment is well under way and this should assist in bringing overall case numbers down in the months ahead.

RPKPI21 % of working population cycling to work (at least once per week)	% of working population cycling to work based on the national walking and cycling data statistics (data is from the National Travel Survey and Active Lives Survey)	Cycling for travel - (the data set we're using for cycling to work as our closest cross reference stat) – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for travel has increased from 9.1% in 2019 to 12.4% in 2020. However the relative number of journeys across the sample has reduced by 31%. We believe this reduction in number of journeys is due to the impact of Covid and the numbers of people staying home to work from March 2020 to December 2020. An increase in the number of people using a bike to travel in the Borough during the pandemic is encouraging and, with further engagement and promotion of walking and cycling, we expect the number of journeys to improve over 2021 as society opens back up. Cycling for leisure – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for leisure has increased from 26% in 2019 to 35.4% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 95%. Any cycling for any reason - the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled has increased from 33.5% in 2019 to 43.8% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 50%.									
	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	The specification for the active travel commissioning is being finalised with a contractor lined up to deliver the first phase of the pilot scheme. It is intended that a large local employer and Ashford Borough Council will be the first organisations to benefit from the formalising of Active Travel Plans to support the move to other ways of traveling around the town and borough. The scheme is planned to commence in September.									

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI40 Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	48%	50%	✓	51.67%	50%	✓	54%	50%	✓	Figures based on July/August, with September figures awaiting. Collection patterns are returning to pre-covid trends with improved recycling. A contamination campaign has been running for three months which aims to promote recycling and reduce contamination levels.

Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2% for the previous year) places us 48th in the country, 16th in the South East and top in Kent. These statistics form part of [DEFRA's nationwide recycling league tables](#).

Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links.

[WasteDataFlow](#)

[Waste and recycling statistics](#)

RPKPI41 Refuse Collection Success Rate	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.	99.97 %	99.97%	✓	99.96%	99.97%	✓	99.93%	99.96%	✓	The success rate for August is an exceptional circumstance. Driver shortages due to the HGV driver crisis and new inexperienced crews meant this aspect of service delivery has been impacted. The following month (September) saw significant improvement. The average missed bins across the borough for August was 91 bins out of 56,410 properties per week receiving waste or recycle collection and 19,302 properties per fortnight receiving garden service.
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Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links.

[WasteDataFlow](#)

[Waste and recycling statistics](#)

Organisational Change and Workforce Development

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI50 Contribution to budget from commercial investments	Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the councils budget books.	82%			70%			65%			65% - Quarter 2 has seen a number of tenants downsize their business needs for space and also a number of tenants have not renewed their leases as part of the shift to hybrid working. We will continue to keep this under review and this will have an impact on the budget.







Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos.

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 this 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. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

We have seen a decrease in vacancies due to a number of new leases being signed. However, we have seen a percentage decrease in expected income due to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

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)
Surplus/Deficit	36,492	24,620	443,155	451,502	(141,375)	(120,447)	95,194	314,000	(157,226)	35,506	49,000	879,018	365,000	(461,555)	(25,095)	57,819	(18,675)	37,167	5,177	23,669	1,869,276
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
Net income after recharges	35,510	24,574	327,662	434,558	(88,449)	(123,408)	95,031	314,000	(195,886)	27,959	22,073	812,182	364,988	104,172	(33,851)	57,488	(29,653)	20,983	5,177	(3,493)	2,175,109
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																					

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI60 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	94.25 %	99%		23.46%	24.75%		51.52%	49.5%		Government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates are available here
RPKPI61 Council Tax Collection Rate	Council Tax Collection Rate	96.7%	98.25%		29.72%	24.57%		57.48%	49.14%		
RPKPI70 Number of days sickness per full time equivalent	Number of days sickness per full time equivalent	6.72 days			6.45 days			Based on the total FTE as at 30 th September 2021 average absence due to sickness and coronavirus is 6.45 days (annualised), slightly down from 6.72 days (annualised) in the previous period. A total of 1,447.05 days were lost due to 'normal' sickness. A total of 137 days were lost due to Coronavirus, less than the 260 days in the previous period and less than the 872 days in the period before that. Average absence due to sickness only in this period was 5.89 days per FTE (annualised) Average absence per FTE due to coronavirus only in this period was 0.55 per FTE (annualised)			

Sickness absence per employee 2020/21

2020/21 was an exceptional year as the majority of our staff worked remotely as per the government's mandate to work from home, and much of the year was impacted by restrictions on social contact. This meant that the transmission of normal seasonal illness was reduced and remote working meant that people were able to continue to work with a minor illness. As a result, our overall sickness absence levels for 2020/21 were low.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

A total of 2,079 days were lost due to sickness absence across the 12-month period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. Based on the average number of 441 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees across the 12-month period, the total amount of working days lost due to sickness in 2020/21 is **4.7** days per FTE. This is an improvement on the previous year, which was 9.1 days per FTE.

Annual Sickness Report 2020/21 taken to [Septembers O&S committee](#)

RPKPI90 number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings	number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	79			89			100			Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.
	RPKPI90A number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	0			0			0			Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.
RPKPI91 number of new 106 files opened	number of new 106 files opened	5			4			3			
	RPKPI91A number of draft 106 agreements sent out	0			4			2			

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI91B	number of 106 cases completed	4			0					1	
number of 106 cases completed											
RPKPICOM1	Increased income attributable to commercialisation projects – income and cashable efficiency savings Target 20/21 £300k.	163,015			<p>We are unable to report any significant changes to the Commercialisation Strategy for Q1 onwards.</p> <p>We are in the process of resetting the programme, setting new milestones and fresh KPIs; working with MT on benefits of a cultural shift In line with the formation of the Corporate Plan 2022-24.</p> <p>In the meantime, however, one of our projects Garden Waste, is nearing completion and we have just heard that the project, as part of our wider commercialisation strategy has been shortlisted as a finalist in the national APSE Awards, in the Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative Category. Winners to be announced in September, although a great achievement in itself and indication of a very positive direction of travel to date.</p> <p>Garden Waste Development project, aims to increase customer base through new online payment systems and ability to sign up for annual contract at any time of year are proving successful. Further marketing and route analysis is planned.</p>						
RPKPICOM2	Projects completed target Projects complete 80% planned 20/21 tasks.	68			<p>Other projects that will contribute to overall target require a longer lead in time before financial returns found, e.g. efficiency savings anticipated through the Category Management project which aims to streamline council contracts.</p> <p>Much of the work undertaken this past year will realise revenue and efficiencies in the coming years and is not reflected in the quarterly return.</p>						
RPKPICOM3	Increase staff awareness of commercialisation and a positive response towards it. 50% staff feeling confident and positive towards commercial approach.	32			Commercial Services Strategy taken to July's Cabinet .						

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
	50% of staff trained in commercial approach 30 Nos of projects coming forward (pro rota 20/21 – 15)										



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 25 November 2021

Report Title: Draft Budget 2022/23

**Report Author &
Job Title:** Lee Foreman
Accountancy Manager

**Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder for:** Cllr. Neil Shorter
Finance & IT

Summary:

This paper presents the draft budget for 2022/23 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

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

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

This budget is set during the recovery phase of the global pandemic, ongoing implications from the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, and a high inflation economy. These factors have influenced the MTFP and this budget.

In relation to significant changes in service budgets, Corporate Property income has increased significantly in addition to growing the team, Housing Options (including Homelessness) have increased resources, and Leisure centre subsidies have reduced.

In relation to non-service spend, Capital Charges and Net Interest has reduced (usually a net income), there is an increase in the Minimum Revenue Provision (the amount set aside to repay debt) and the grant received for New Homes Bonus has been removed from the budget (now only a one year allocation) and is being set aside for corporate projects within the Corporate Plan. There are also increases in Business Rates and Council Tax receipts, partly due to 2021/22 performing better than budgeted.

The 2022/23 draft budget has a saving requirement of £827,800 which was identified in 2021/22 as part of the £3m annual target. £639,260 of these savings are still to be fully identified. These have been built into the budget and Heads of Service will report to members early next year on the progress of saving plans.

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

The report also includes the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) draft budget which incorporates the assumptions used in the 30 year Business Plan which will be presented to Cabinet in December.
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Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: None

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

- I. Approve the draft budget for 2022/23
- II. Note the savings still to be identified and approve the approach adopted to deliver these savings
- III. Request that Heads of Service provide updates on progress made towards achieving savings targets through the corporate Budget Monitoring report.
- IV. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2022/23 Section 2 of the report.
- V. Agree that this report will be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, parish councils and staff.
- VI. Agree the draft budget as set out in the report should now be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.

Policy Overview: The Council's Revenue Budget is intended to support the priorities set out within the new Corporate Plan 2022-24 and flows through from the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Financial Implications: The Council has a requirement to produce a MTFP and a balanced budget. This report is based on a further one year funding extension as government have deferred the spending review until 2023/24. This delay prolongs uncertainty over future funding streams, and with increasing levels of national debt further pressure may be placed upon Local Councils.

The HRA budget has been prepared and informs an affordable 30 year Business Plan that will be presented at the next Cabinet meeting.

Equalities Impact Assessment A full assessment will be undertaken and forms part of the Final Budget report.

**Other Material
Implications:**

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

**Exempt from
Publication:**

N/a

**Background
Papers:**

None

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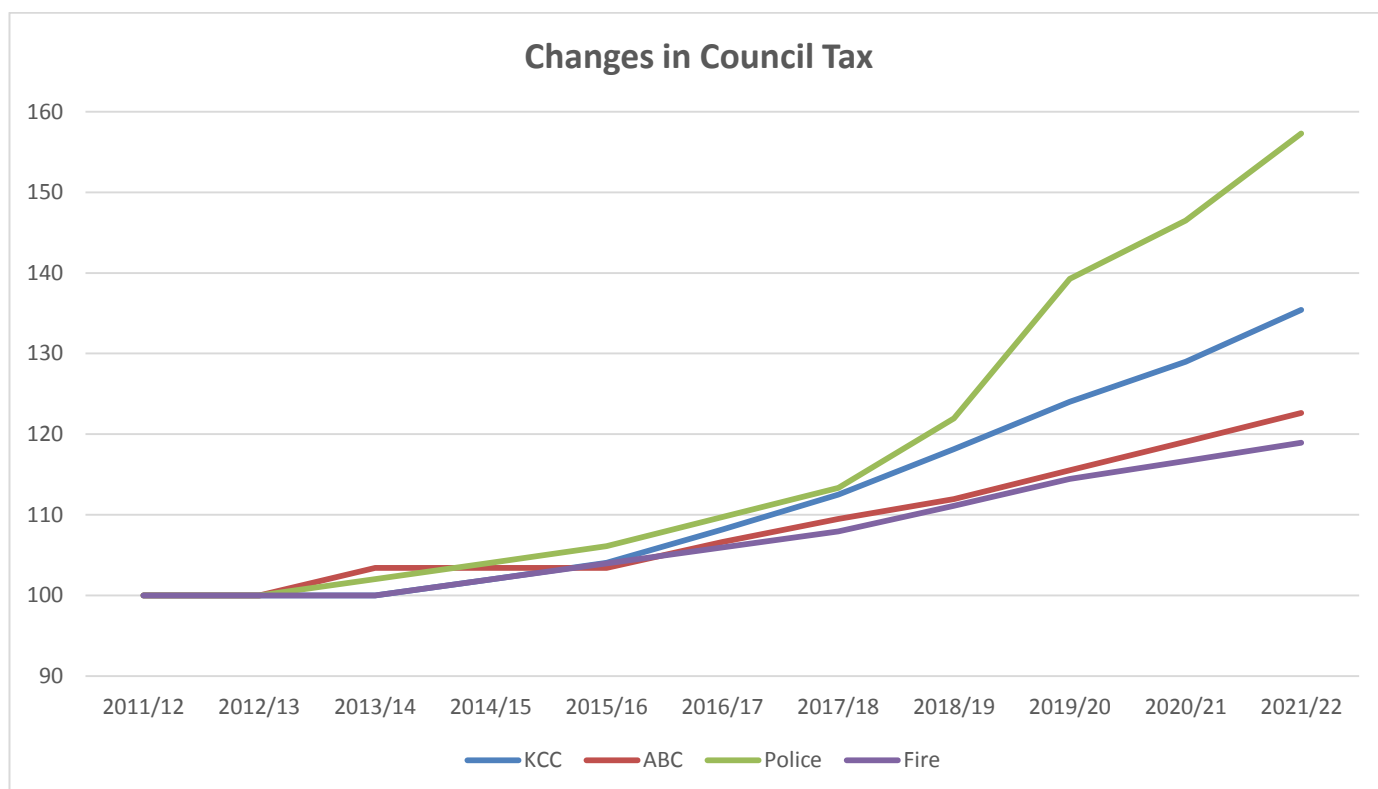
Report Title: Draft Budget 2022/23

Introduction and Background

1. This report sets the scene for Cabinet to consider the draft budget for 2022/23 and is based broadly in line with the assumption outlined within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which was presented to Cabinet in October 2021. The MTFP report provided important background and contextual information which has been considered in building the 2022/23 budget as presented within this report.
2. The 2022/23 budget is built on the assumption of a further one year funding agreement with government spending reviews delayed again with a revised implementation date of 2023/24, although this could be extended to match the provisional settlement announced by Government that covers a three year period. Some commentators feel that this may be further delayed due to out of date information and Government prioritising the need for stability over reform and a multi-year settlement would support this approach. If multi-year funding is not provided then the Council will continue to have uncertainty around funding moving beyond 2022/23 as highlighted in the MTFP report.
3. Despite delays to the fair funding review, the 2021 provisional settlement which sets out how local government will be funded for the next three years indicated a slight rise in district Council core spending power (CSP) although still below the average does potentially mean more funding. This provisional settlement could be positive for local authorities and increases the possibility of continued lower tier grant funding and the removal of negative revenue support grant (RSG) that has been muted but not actioned for a number of years. However, this provisional settlement could look to significantly change or phase out new homes bonus altogether following delays in reporting the outcome of its previous consultation. This could possibly be used to fund the 'levelling up' agenda that will look to redistribute funding around the Country although the delivery of this policy is more complicated than previous scheme allocations. The current budget makes assumptions on the provisional settlement information and any adjustments arising from the settlement allocations which are released in December will be reported within the final budget.
4. It should be noted by Members that in year 2 and 3 of the settlement the majority of increases in Core Spending Power come from Council Tax increases, in line with policies set by Government, with an assumption Councils' will increase to the maximum. Therefore, if the Council decides to freeze or increase Council Tax at lower levels than the maximum permitted, services will need to be cut to fund the reduction in revenue. This would also cause a deviation between the actual spending power of the Council and that forecast by Government which could affect future grant funding levels. One area of clarification will be funding for the new Health and Social Care Levy (salary pressure), this has been included within the draft budget for 2022/23 however, there is a strong indication that this may be funded centrally. The final budget will include an adjustment to the draft budget if there are any changes.
5. It is anticipated that Ashford will still receive a Lower Tier Services Grant in 2022/23, this is particularly important to compensate district Councils from the reduction in central funding over the last few years.
6. One possible benefit to the delay in the fair funding review is that the business rates baseline reset will be delayed. This delay means that the Council will

retain more of its business rates growth which sits outside of the Council's Core Spending Power. However, the new business rates reform which was muted back in 2015 as being a 100% retention scheme (current scheme is 50%), then reduced to 75% in 2017 has now been reversed as it conflicts with the Governments 'levelling up' agenda. This leaves the future of business rates reform and funding uncertain, with reportedly an appetite in Whitehall to address excessive growth, before a formal baseline reset that is not likely to be any earlier than 2025/26.

7. The detailed budget for 2022/23 has now been drafted and is broadly in line with the targets established within the MTFP. The budget is based upon a £5.00 (2.9%) increase in Council Tax for Band D properties which will continue to see the Council maintaining its position as the lowest in Kent.
8. This cap on council tax rises has now been in place for a number of years and Ashford has been able to increase by £5 per annum as a lower taxing authority without triggering the need for a local referendum.
9. To put our increase in the share of the Council Tax into perspective, in recent years the cap for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has been well above the cap on local authorities. Looking at the four years including the caps in place for 2022/23, the Council will look to have increased the average Band D council tax bill by £20, compared to £61 for the PCC, while this is beyond our control, it is an indication of how District Councils are seeing their spending power reduced as other areas of the public sector are being supported. This is demonstrated in the graph below with preceptors all re-based to 100 as at 2011/12.



10. Section 2 of this report covers the HRA draft budget which is the basis for the 30 year business plan that will be presented at the December Cabinet.

11. The forecast for the Council's capital and repairs & renewal reserves (Section 3 - Capital Resources) is included and shows that these resources remain under pressure and as a consequence borrowing will need to be used to fund the majority of capital investments which carries a higher revenue budget cost than using internal resources.
12. This report seeks Cabinet's approval to the draft budget that will then form the basis of the budget scrutiny and consultation processes with the final budget due to be reported to the February Cabinet for approval and recommendation to Full Council.

Structure of the report

13. For ease of consideration this report is split into sections;
 - i. Draft Budget 2022/23 (for the General Fund)
 - ii. Housing Revenue Account
 - iii. Capital resource forecast and capital programme implications
 - iv. Next steps

Section 1 - Draft Budget 2022/2023

14. The Services' draft budgets have been built broadly in line with the parameters set out within the MTFP report which was reported to the October Cabinet. As a reminder the setting of the MTFP involved making adjustments to reflect emerging pressures, which would have been identified through the budget monitoring process, discussions at Management Team, and with individual Heads of Service and Budget Managers. This process considered the continuing pressures from the Covid19 pandemic and what future income streams will look like and the ambitions within the new Corporate Plan.
15. 2022/23 represents the second year of the three year £3m saving plan that was introduced in 2021/22 and identified savings of £827,800 to be included within the 2022/23 draft budget. At the time of writing this report £188,540 of that savings target had been fully incorporated into the budget as originally planned. It is recognised that there has been some challenges over the past year and with the adoption of the new Corporate Plan some of the savings may no longer be deliverable in their current form, or may take some further time to be fully realised.
16. To recognise the commitment of the Council to deliver these saving to support the MTFP and financial resilience and stability of the Council, and allow it to divert resources to project delivery, the savings not yet fully realised have been included within service budgets as savings to be identified.
17. Some of the savings may no longer be delivered as originally intended, so Heads of Service will consider new options to deliver on their commitments and report progress to Cabinet through the Financial Monitoring process.
18. A full list of the savings included within the MTFP are shown at **Appendix C**, and indicates which savings still need to be delivered, Members are asked to note the savings still to be delivered and support the approach being taken to deliver them, and request that progress is reported back to Cabinet through the corporate financial monitoring report.
19. Individual service budgets are then built by the budget managers in conjunction with the Accountancy Team, monitoring the overall position against the MTFP. Where service budgets materially differ from the MTFP assumptions, these movements are reviewed and challenged accordingly.
20. The draft budget presented below includes a £5.00 (2.9%) increase in council tax, with this Council's element of the charge now being £177.50 (2021/22 was £172.50) for a band D property.
21. The draft high level budget is summarised below.

Table 2: Draft General Fund Budget 2022/23

Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Directorate	Budget 2022/23 £
19,144,216	16,303,390	17,216,215	Service Expenditure	15,611,360
15,083,169	(1,562,950)	(2,580,120)	Non service specific	(372,510)
34,227,385	14,740,440	14,636,095	ABC Budget Requirement	15,238,850
(34,395,482)	(14,740,440)	(15,057,440)	Financing	(15,238,850)
(168,097)	0	(421,345)		0

22. The details of service expenditure are attached at **Appendix A**. Subject to Cabinet's approval this budget will then be scrutinised and form the basis of the budget consultation process that will be completed in time for a final budget report to be presented to Cabinet in February and Council in March.
23. This is the first annual budget to fully incorporate the Ashford Port Health (APH) Service and has ensured that appropriate resourcing and recharges have been applied across the organisation. On the face of the budget summary APH will show a balanced budget as this is fully self-funding service. The Council's budget book that will be published late in the year will provide further details on the composition of the budget.
24. Where APH have engaged support staff directly, such as ICT and HR Officers, these costs are captured within the individual services and then fully recharged to the APH service thus having a nil impact on the overall general fund budget. Overall though the introduction of the APH allowed for a greater sharing of central costs that have provided savings within the general fund.
25. There have been some significant movements between 2021/22 and 2022/23 service budgets reported at **Appendix A**, narrative to support the most significant movements at a service summary level are detailed below.
26. Corporate property has an overall increase in income of £780,070 between years, this is largely attributable to an increase in commercial property income of circa £548,000 across the portfolio, especially occupancy of the Carlton Road Depot which only has a few units remaining to let.
27. General fund Housing Services is responsible for Housing Options which includes the Homelessness function. This area has regularly appeared in financial monitoring reports in the last few years with increased demand and responsibilities placing pressure on the service.
28. Following a comprehensive review of the service and budgets within, the draft budget has identified the need to increase resources by circa £334,000. This increase is due to a number of factors including more funding for the prevention of homelessness and realigning the balance between temporary accommodation costs and benefits claimable. It is envisaged that as new temporary accommodation facilities becomes available, such as the Council's Henwood Development then costs will be reduced. The Housing Options budget also has provision for the new Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme which will provide 20 units for those most in need of support.
29. Culture has seen a reduction in costs of circa £695,000 due to reduction in leisure facility subsidies and transitional cost to the new Stour Centre operator.

30. Environment and Land Management is reporting growth of £400,000 in budgets between years. £241,000 of this increase relates to the (nearly £4m) Refuse Collection and Recycling contract which is forecasting increases of 6.4%, this is circa 5% rise for future year and 1.4% for higher than expected costs last year. This rise represents contractual inflation plus the new property growth which is added to the contract.
31. There is also growth in Aspire salaries of £183,000, this makes provision for statutory annual increases and ongoing recognition that they are contracted, to work a 40 hour week, additional staffing to support the Victoria Park works which is grant funded, and Tree Officer to deliver the Queens Green Canopy (Ashford Living Legacy) project.
32. The Capital charges and net interest line has increased by £241,420, this represent an increase in Minimum Revenue Provision (amount set aside for the repayment of debt) of £485,000 and a net interest receipt of £244,000.

Risks

33. The risks to the 2022/23 draft budget are shown at **Appendix B** and represent the risks to the budget at the time of writing this report. These risks will be reviewed throughout the budget setting cycle and be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task Group.
34. These risks will be amended as risks are identified and will form the basis of the Chief Financial Officers report over the robustness of the budget which will be included in the Final Budget report for February Cabinet.
35. These risks should be read alongside the more strategic risks that were reported within the MTFP report which was presented to Cabinet on 28 October 2021.

Section 2 Housing Revenue Account

Draft HRA Budget 2022/23

37. The HRA is a ring fenced account within the Council, this means that it has to be fully self-financing which is achieved through rental income charged to tenants. Therefore tenants have a vested interest in the rental charge in that it is recycled into the Housing Stock, the ring fence arrangement also stops any proceeds being used to support the general fund although appropriate recharges between the general fund and HRA are permitted.
38. The HRA Budget has been built to enable the council to maintain Decent Homes Standards, service the debt incurred for the housing buyout, fund new development opportunities, and support the Council's Carbon Neutral agenda by investing in retrofitting Council Dwellings.
39. Rental income has been forecast to increase at the annual September CPI figure +1% as per the Government formula which is forecast to be 4.1% for 2022/23.

HRA Business Plan

40. The HRA Business Plan has been built using many of the same assumptions included in this budget.
41. The HRA Business Plan will include a number of ambitious projects to increase the Social and Affordable Housing in the Ashford Borough and improve independent living accommodation and retrofitting of existing stock.
42. The business plan includes the financing for all of these projects and annual revenue spend for a 30-year period and will be presented to the December Cabinet.
43. It is proposed that the draft HRA revenue budget should be scrutinised alongside the general fund draft budget as part of the budget scrutiny process.

Table 3 – Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23

Revenue Budget				
Housing Revenue Account				
Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Detail	Budget 2022/23 £
(25,594,576)	(27,186,640)	(27,186,640)	Income	(28,775,130)
2,014,100	4,468,830	4,593,870	Supervision and Management	6,731,860
3,408,012	4,024,420	4,064,420	Repairs and Maintenance	4,347,100
293,373	221,700	191,150	New Builds	200,610
19,879,091	21,121,320	21,121,320	Other	15,959,600
0	2,649,630	2,784,120	Service Expenditure	(1,535,960)

44. Members are asked to approve the draft HRA budget for 2022/23 for scrutiny purposes and to formulate the 30 year business plan that will be presented to the December meeting of this Cabinet.

Section 3 - Capital Resources

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

Internal Resources

46. This funding stream includes capital receipts and reserves, however where possible the Council will look to utilise capital receipts initially as these can only be used for capital purposes, where general reserves are more flexible.
47. Capital receipts are generated through asset rationalisation, and each year a small amount is anticipated from the sale of small land parcels which are used to fund the Council's contribution to Disabled Facility Grant, and Community Grants Scheme. Where larger capital receipts are received, any outstanding finance is settled before with the balance transferred to the capital receipts reserves to support capital projects. General Fund capital receipts were £260,000 as at 31 March 2021 and are expected to be around £150,000 as at 31 March 2022.
48. Reserves are allocated for specific purposes including support for corporate projects. In recent years project reserves have been topped up from a proportion of the NHB (New Homes Bonus) funding, this year the full allocation (only one year received) has been made to the Improvement Delivery Fund (a project reserve to fund the Corporate Plan projects).
49. The Council has re-profiled reserves to support the new corporate plan but also ensure that the Council has sufficient funds to manage future budget gaps in the MTFP and weather any further economic shocks.
50. Following this repurposing of reserves, it is forecast that £263,000 will be remaining from the recovery project reserve, £2m has been earmarked as the Climate Change Delivery Fund, and £3.9m for the improvement delivery fund.
51. Where general fund reserves are used directly to fund non-income generating projects, the Council needs to be mindful that in addition to diminishing reserves, those reserves can no longer be invested and generate an income, therefore adding an ongoing pressure to the revenue budget.

The Housing Revenue Account – Capital Receipts

52. The HRA has two kinds of capital receipts, general capital receipts that can be used for any capital purpose, and one-for-one receipts that can only be used for the provision of new affordable housing.
53. One-for-one receipts need to be spent within three years of receipt or they need to be repaid to Government with interest. To ensure that this does not happen, the one-for-one receipts are monitored routinely to ensure that they are spent well in advance of need, the Council has been so successful in using these receipts the street purchasing programme has had to be slowed.

External Borrowing

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

Third party grants and contributions

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

Section 106 developer contributions

61. Section 106 developer contributions are part of the planning process and represent an agreement between the developer and the Council which is used to mitigate the impact of new developments on the local community and infrastructure.
62. These agreements can be both for capital and revenue projects and the use is often outlined in the section 106 agreement. As at 31 March 2021 contributions amounting to £5.6m (capital & revenue) were held in reserves.
63. The Council prepares a capital programme annually based on the Corporate Priorities which is included in the final budget report. The capital programme includes those strategic projects that are linked to the recovery plan. New projects are assessed through PID's (Project initiation documents) which are used to assess the merits of each projects, so that the Council can deploy its limited resources to deliver the best outcomes for the Council.

65. The table below demonstrates the capital resources available to the Council, and the annual forecast for amounts received from the sale of small land parcels and allocated from borrowing, The capital receipts are used primarily to fund the Council's contribution to Disabled Facility Grant and Community Grants Scheme and the borrowing allocation is it fund major property works, such as a replace roof.

Table 4 – Capital resource forecast (General Fund)

Resources available for capital expenditure (General Fund)	2022/23
Resources brought forward	
Capital Receipts	150
Borrowing for Property major repairs	0
Budget Resources receivable/allocated in year	
Capital Receipts	300
Borrowing for Property major repairs	500
Budgetted spend on capital expenditure	
Capital Receipts	400
Borrowing for Property major repairs	500
Uncommitted resources carried forward	
Capital Receipts	50
Borrowing for Property major repairs	0

Section 4 - Next Steps

67. Once approved by Cabinet the draft budget will be submitted for formal scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Budget Scrutiny Task Group. This will include an examination of the base budget, assumptions on inflation, growth items and budget reduction proposals. The scrutiny process will be conducted in December 2021 and likely concluded in January 2022 with conclusions reported to the Cabinet in February.
68. The final budget report will also be presented to Cabinet in February and then will go onto Council in March. This will include any additional proposals for the budget, and recommend to Cabinet the measures necessary to bridge any budget gap arising.

Implications and Risk Assessment

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

Equalities Impact Assessment

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

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

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

Conclusion

73. Members are asked to consider the contextual information against which the MTFP and draft budget have been developed.
74. To approve the draft budget for 2022/23 for the purpose of public consultation, consultation with the parish councils, and form the basis of budget scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holder's Views

75. The impact of the Covid19 Pandemic has extended beyond 2020/21, with a significant impact on the current year financial position, and still having an impact on the 2022/23 budget, where parking budgets have been further reduced.
76. It is good to see the Draft Budget is in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan however, there are significant movements explained in this report.
77. I would like colleagues to support the proposal on the planned savings and invite Management Team to develop plans to meet the saving targets placed on their service.
78. It is some comfort that the Government have delivered a three year settlement however, it is noted that after the first year, Council Tax increases are the only method for increasing Core Spending Power for District Councils. With additional controls being placed on Local Authorities the Council's ability to

generate additional income is being reduced. This will see Councils' relying on increasing taxes rather than thinking commercially and generating its own incomes streams.

79. This Council will still aim to maximise our investment opportunities alongside regeneration of the town, invest in digitalisation and transformation to ensure high quality services are maintained at a lower cost and continue to work with Arlingclose in delivering on its Treasury Management Strategy.

Contact and Email

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

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
DIRECTORATE SUMMARY				
Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Directorate	Budget 2022/23 £
4,501,612	3,273,660	3,564,850	Chief Executive	3,292,670
14,642,604	13,029,730	13,651,365	Deputy Chief Executive	12,318,690
19,144,216	16,303,390	17,216,215	Service Expenditure	15,611,360
15,083,169	(1,562,950)	(2,580,120)	Non service specific	(372,510)
34,227,385	14,740,440	14,636,095	ABC Budget Requirement	15,238,850
(34,395,482)	(14,740,440)	(15,057,440)	Financing	(15,238,850)
(168,097)	0	(421,345)		0

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET				
SERVICE SUMMARY				
Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Service	Budget 2022/23 £
1,292,207	1,173,200	1,191,700	Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	1,135,300
(1,728,850)	(1,269,350)	(1,424,211)	Corporate Property & Projects	(2,049,420)
2,754,547	3,269,790	3,153,840	Finance & IT	3,153,830
1,376,827	914,200	1,009,280	Housing General Fund Services	1,255,610
(50,256)	0	0	Ashford Port Health	0
2,005,036	711,520	909,290	Community Safety and Wellbeing	701,880
74,602	155,350	147,810	HR & Customer Services	143,810
1,180,023	1,233,590	1,316,050	Legal & Democratic Services	1,311,680
4,562,713	3,208,300	3,604,050	Culture	2,514,000
5,176,317	4,738,700	4,839,306	Environmental & Land Management	5,138,670
2,501,050	2,168,090	2,469,100	Planning	2,306,000
19,144,216	16,303,390	17,216,215	Service Expenditure	15,611,360
(4,246,502)	(2,187,810)	(2,703,060)	Capital Charges & Net Interest	(1,946,570)
949,854	0	0	Revenue Funding of Capital Expenditure	0
270,466	276,000	276,000	Levies	282,000
18,109,351	348,860	(153,060)	Contribution to/(from) Balances	1,292,060
34,227,385	14,740,440	14,636,095	ABC Budget Requirement	15,238,850
(5,282,885)	(946,480)	(1,263,480)	Income Government Grant	(779,000)
(18,046,940)	(4,093,390)	(4,093,390)	Retained Business Rates	(4,685,000)
(3,053,420)	(1,908,220)	(1,908,220)	New Homes Bonus	(737,000)
0	0	0	Council Tax 2020/21 Surplus	(400,000)
(8,012,237)	(7,792,350)	(7,792,350)	Council Tax	(8,637,850)
(168,097)	0	(421,345)		0

General Fund Draft Budget 2022/23				
Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Department	Budget 2022/23 £
			Corporate Policy, Economic Development & Communications	
252,306	276,120	270,720	Policy and Performance	234,360
574,411	451,800	475,700	Economic Development	458,450
465,490	445,280	445,280	Communications & Marketing	442,490
1,292,207	1,173,200	1,191,700		1,135,300
			Corporate Property & Projects	
(145,535)	17,600	1,150	Project Delivery Team	(34,870)
(107,174)	(10)	(125,990)	Facilities Management	(60,980)
(1,476,141)	(1,286,940)	(1,299,371)	Corporate Property	(1,953,570)
(1,728,850)	(1,269,350)	(1,424,211)		(2,049,420)
			Finance & IT	
(34,004)	26,610	10,180	Accountancy	63,660
501	(20)	(20)	Audit Partnership	70
762,566	778,920	722,650	Benefits Administration	827,320
508,970	367,610	517,380	Council Tax Collection	313,930
(16,979)	30	6,220	Debtors/Debt Recovery	0
388,782	35,130	35,130	Miscellaneous Expenditure	29,380
78,798	57,540	37,920	Exchequer	74,960
(848,598)	(280,000)	(280,000)	Housing Benefits Payments	(275,000)
(239,736)	(52,920)	(103,970)	NNDR Collection	(78,940)
1,181,647	1,419,400	1,089,400	Non-Distributed Costs	1,221,100
(44,425)	11,080	92,750	ICT	(700)
30,472	30	30	Telephony	50
803,985	690,750	801,490	Strategic Corporate Costs	814,960
182,568	215,630	224,680	Corporate Management	163,040
2,754,547	3,269,790	3,153,840		3,153,830
			Housing General Fund Services	
186,341	207,030	208,550	Private Sector Housing	179,940
108,047	114,600	115,300	Housing Strategy and Enabling	119,430
948,672	605,150	665,250	Housing Options	939,150
157,062	0	0	Refugee Project	0
(23,295)	(12,580)	20,180	Gypsy Site - Chilmington	17,090
1,376,827	914,200	1,009,280		1,255,610
			Ashford Port Health	
(50,256)	0	0	Ashford Port Health	0
(50,256)	0	0		0

General Fund Draft Budget 2022/23				
Actuals 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £	Projected Outturn 2021/22 £	Department	Budget 2022/23 £
746,017	675,220	682,540	Community Safety and Wellbeing	770,510
465,700	579,590	509,930	Community Safety,AMC,Licencing	520,610
793,318	(543,290)	(283,180)	Environmental Health	(589,240)
			Parking & Engineering	
2,005,036	711,520	909,290		701,880
108,655	143,730	140,470	HR & Customer Services	143,810
(34,053)	11,620	7,340	Human Resources	0
			Visitor & Call Centre	
74,602	155,350	147,810		143,810
831,736	791,980	755,580	Legal & Democratic Services	783,170
432,357	378,070	392,230	Democratic Representation	411,310
(134,001)	0	15,640	Electoral Services	(31,740)
49,931	63,540	60,890	Legal	64,020
0	0	91,710	Mayor	84,920
			Office of the Leader	
1,180,023	1,233,590	1,316,050		1,311,680
348,015	317,820	318,920	Culture	283,070
2,782,321	1,691,040	2,059,680	Cultural Services Management	1,022,660
295,965	301,120	305,920	Leisure Centres	312,360
320,839	315,860	336,000	Open Spaces and Conservation	345,860
191,991	182,910	184,170	Single Grants Gateway	159,140
623,582	399,550	399,360	Tourism & Heritage	390,910
			Cultural Projects	
4,562,713	3,208,300	3,604,050		2,514,000
243,038	261,410	246,460	Environmental & Land Management	162,550
3,304,015	2,986,900	3,102,190	Street Scene	3,153,620
1,629,265	1,490,390	1,490,656	Refuse,Recycling,Street Clean	1,822,500
			Grounds Maintenance	
5,176,317	4,738,700	4,839,306		5,138,670
82,681	88,310	88,310	Planning	114,890
1,457,599	1,030,830	1,310,750	Building Control	996,750
(32,085)	(70)	6,000	Development Manager	3,060
64,126	(10)	22,570	Land Charges	(10)
928,727	1,049,030	1,041,470	Planning Administration	1,191,310
			Strategic Planning	
2,501,049	2,168,090	2,469,100		2,306,000
19,144,216	16,303,390	17,216,215	NET EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES	15,611,360

2022/23 Draft Budget Report

The following table represents risks to the 2022/23 draft budget at both a service and economic level. These risks will be monitored throughout the Budget setting cycle and be updates accordingly before being presented to Cabinet in February as part of the final budget setting report.

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
1. Covid19 Pandemic	<p>The Covid19 pandemic has delivered an unprecedented economic shock across the Globe that will be felt for many years to come.</p> <p>We are now entering the recovery phase of the pandemic and starting to understand what long term changes in habits might mean for Ashford both from an economic, societal and employer perspective.</p> <p>From an economic perspective the Council made significant budget revisions in 2021/22 for areas impacted by the pandemic, notably Parking and Corporate property income streams. The reductions in these income budgets were necessary and the Council is now starting to see stability and slow increases in parking income, and strong interest in commercial properties which have supported the 2022/23 draft budget.</p> <p>There is still a risk of further Covid measure being implemented by government which could slow the recovery.</p> <p>To deal with pressures arising from Covid19, and cuts in government funding, the Council identified savings of £3m in 2021/22 to be delivered over a 3 year period.</p> <p>Having delivered year 1, year 2 savings of £762,800 were identified to be incorporated into the 2022/23 budget. A significant proportion of these savings are still to be delivered and in some instances new proposals and strategies will be necessary.</p> <p>Having identified the savings and factored them into the draft 2022/23 budget and MTFP, it is now imperative that we closely monitor the delivery of these savings.</p> <p>Failure not to deliver the required savings will result in further draws on reserves and undermine the MTFP and financial sustainability of the Council.</p>
2. Ashford Port Health Authority	<p>The Council has recruited a substantial number of Officers to deliver the Ashford Port Health Facility at Sevington.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 it need to be accrue over the first years of operation as a safety net. If DEFRA do not support this then any costs could fall upon the Councils other earmarked reserves to manage.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
3. Exit from the European Union	<p>The UK exited the European Union (EU) just before the Covid19 Pandemic started to have wider implication for the world.</p> <p>The Council was well prepared for exiting the EU and had significant contingency plans in place and was supported by government funding.</p> <p>Originally it was envisaged that disruption would be to controls at the ports etc. that would bring transportation issues to Ashford, this was indeed the case but more as a result of Covid that exiting the EU.</p> <p>Things have moved on since at it is now becoming apparent that changes to legislation have created employment issues most notably a shortage of HGV drivers that is creating supply chain issues.</p> <p>These issues have driven up costs of services and materials that could have an impact on the revenue budgets but more notably the Capital Plans for the Council.</p> <p>These prices will need to be monitored and decisions taken as to how the Council can balance resources, and perceived market fluctuations against the need to deliver the works/projects.</p>
4. Government Spending Review	<p>Although the Council has received a three year settlement the fair funding review continues to be delayed with potential changes in direction to meet new Government policies, such as levelling up.</p> <p>The delays and single year reviews have been positive in funding terms for the Council, however there is concern that funding of local government could be reduced as Government looks to recover some of the costs of the Covid19 Pandemic, and support pledges to other Government Departments and the electorate.</p>

<p>5. Pressure on the 2021/22 Budget and impact going forward.</p>	<p>2021/22 is still experiencing additional costs arising from Covid19 directly, but also through supporting other parties. The risks below will try to look through the one off pressures arising from Covid19 and focus on risks going forward.</p> <p>Homelessness – This area has been under pressure for a number of years which worsened due to the pandemic and is still continuing to experience pressure on its budget.</p> <p>To address the long term issues in this area a specialist consultant was engaged during 2021/22 to fully review and makes recommendation on how the service could be strengthened and what resources were necessary.</p> <p>The 2022/23 budget has been developed using the findings of this report and it is felt that this budget is more robust to support the challenges posed from homelessness. This change did result in a net increase in the budget which has allowed more money to be earmarked for prevention of homelessness and more accurately reflect the cost differential between benefits claimable and temporary accommodation costs.</p> <p>Going forward it is anticipated that some of the increased costs will be recovered as the Council is developing bespoke homeless accommodation such as Christchurch Lodge which is already operational, and Henwood Modular units which will be applying for planning permission in the near future. This development will save money by taking people out of expensive nightly and B&B accommodation.</p> <p>There is still some risk to the budget due to covid and the end of the furlough scheme, removal of the universal credit top up, and rising prices due to the current economic climate that could put pressure on tenants ability to pay accommodation costs, and therefore could be evicted and present as homeless.</p> <p>Parking Income</p> <p>The 2021/22 budget was impacted by further nation lockdown measures that placed significant pressure on the parking income budget for the first quarter of 2021/22. Parking income has since started to pick up although the increase in usage is slower than early trends predicted.</p> <p>To recognise the slowdown in usage the parking budget has been kept broadly in line with the 2021/22 budget which was reduced by 15% to recognise the impact of covid on usage.</p> <p>This budget will continue to be a risk in 2022/23 though if any new covid restrictions are put in place. Equally, if usage and returns to pre pandemic levels quicker than expected then additional revenues may be recognised.</p> <p>Planning</p> <p>Planning continues to have some pressure around staffing levels and the need for consultants to support the service, although this</p>
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Budget Component	Financial standing and management
	<p>position is improving and new incentives have been developed to attract and retain staff.</p> <p>The other pressures arising in planning is the cost of planning appeals, despite some allowance being available for counsel fees within the budget, any increase in Planning Enforcement activity or the need to defend against major planning appeals will need to be funded from general reserves.</p> <p>The Stodmarsh issues and current economic climate will continue to pose a risk to the planning budget in 2022/23.</p> <p>Cultural service</p> <p>This budget area is reporting a pressure within 2021/22 as the Council has supported an extension to the Leisure facilities contract in Tenterden for 2021/22. We are still awaiting confirmation of the plans for 2022/23 as a new operator will be in place before the start of the financial year.</p> <p>The risk to the budget is if the Council needs to further intervene to ensure the facility retains a service operator.</p> <p>Environmental Services</p> <p>The environmental services budget has provision for the Waste refuse and recycling contract which is budgeted to be nearly £4m in 2022/23, this is an increase 4.5% since previous years and represents contractual inflation and an element of new property growth. Although the contractual increase is compiled from a number of weighted indices there is a risk that the contractual inflation costs could be higher than forecast resulting in a potential budgetary pressure.</p> <p>The service has had really strong growth in the garden collection waste service in recent years, however if the economic conditions start to impact household income then renewals maybe be under pressure and new customers may delay taking up the service.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
6. Commercialisation	<p>The Council's commercialisation agenda is progressing and has a number of successes with Garden waste and the Electrical Services Division, it is now reviewing its inaugural year to see what lessons can be learnt and how the process can be strengthened.</p> <p>This is seen as an area to promote continued improvement in what we do going into 2022/23 and a budget of £60,000, funded from the additional income achieved is available to support existing and new ideas.</p> <p>In terms of the wider context, the Council continues to have good reserves which have recently been re-purposed as part of the MTFP report to provide greater flexibility to protect budgets from economic shocks and uncertainty.</p>
7. Transformation and digitalisation	<p>Digitalisation continues to be a key priority for the organisation to ensure systems work effectively and efficiently to deliver excellent services for our external stakeholders. The digitalisation programme is targeting systems to ensure efficiencies through digitalisation can be maximised to create staffing capacity to manage business growth within existing resources.</p> <p>One of the most significant areas under review will be the implementation of a new planning system which is in progress.</p>
8. Assumptions about increases in service income.	<p>For budget setting purposes income has been increased by an average of 3.0%, for legislative reasons or demand some charges will be lower or higher than this.</p> <p>The proposed fees and charges are presented in detail as part of the budget report. Any amendments to the proposals may involve a slight risk to the budget.</p>
9. Housing Revenue Account	<p>The HRA has an ambition development plan and this plan is built into the HRA's 30 year business plan and will also include a retrofit programme to reduce the carbon footprint of the stock, the 30 year business plan be fully presented at December Cabinet.</p> <p>The business plan is currently affordable although the inclusion of the retrofit programme limits its debt repayments over the long term, the model will be kept under review to ensure that new opportunities are properly assessed for viability as to not place pressure on the HRA model.</p> <p>Regular updating of the HRA business plan to include new projects and financial monitoring will occur during 2022/23.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
<p>10. Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts.</p>	<p>Capital receipts are now low in the General Fund, the budgets and financing of the capital plan reflects this.</p> <p>The Housing Revenue Account capital receipts have reduced over the last couple of years as right to buy sales have reduced due to Covid and the current economic conditions, although 2021/22 is on track to increase on 2020/21.</p> <p>The majority of RTB receipts need to be held to fund affordable housing (funds 30% of the total cost) within the Borough, and this Council took the opportunity to retain these receipts for this purpose, these receipts are called 1-4-1 capital receipts.</p> <p>The receipts and capital plans are being closely monitored and ensure these receipts are used to avoid repayment which would attract interest of 4% above base. These funds are currently being spent well in advance of need as the on street purchasing programme was really strong, this scheme is now being reviewed to determine best used of resources moving forward.</p>
<p>11. Major Capital Projects</p>	<p>The Council has just published a new corporate plan that will be used to guide capital investment within the borough.</p> <p>However, there is a risk to projects of a capital nature at present as supply chain and economic conditions are significantly increasing tender prices that can challenge the affordability of self-funding schemes, or reduce that amount of work that can be undertaken for asset repairs and maintenance as we only have limited amount of capital resource.</p> <p>To maintain financial stability Members and Officers need to thoroughly assess new projects to ensure that they will not increase annual revenue costs to the Council, by way of additional unfunded borrowing costs or maintenance liabilities.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that some capital projects are delivered for more wider social and economic reasons, and that these schemes will need to be judged on their individual merits and the cost implications to the Council fully understood.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
12. Business Rates	<p>Risks to the council's business rates yield is a major risk to the budget as the revaluation of rates and the level of appeals against new valuations are likely to affect the overall level of rateable value within the borough.</p> <p>However, commentators are suggesting that a business rates baseline reset is now not likely until 2025/26. The delay to the baseline reset is actually favourable to Ashford as we have good growth since the previous baseline was determined. However, there is a risk that government may look to design a mechanism to target Councils with strong growth to redistribute.</p> <p>The future of business rate retention is now also uncertain as the review which commenced in 2016 has all but been ceased as the proposal for 100% retention, then 75% retention are inconsistent with Governments levelling up agenda. The current level of retention is 50%.</p> <p>As the economy recover from the impact of Covid19 Business rates will be monitored regularly and any movement against budget will be flagged as part of the budget monitoring process.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
13. Inflation, Interest Rate and Pay Award	<p>Inflation is a factor that needs to be managed carefully within any financial planning regime. Inflation has been gradually climbing over the last few years and is now well above the Bank of England's (BOE) 2% target as spikes in energy prices and supply chain issues have driven up costs. Inflation is expected to continue to rise and will spike in April 2022 at circa 5% before dropping back to target over the medium term.</p> <p>The BOE is looking through much of the inflationary pressure as transitional as the global economy and impact of Brexit work through however, this had led to commentators and the BOE themselves indicating that rate rises will be necessary to curb high inflation becoming sustained.</p> <p>Interest rates have been forecast in line with the Arlingclose (Treasury Management Advisors) forecasts although given the current market uncertainty these are not without risk. As a net borrower the Council is exposed to interest rate risk on its borrowing portfolio, which is in line with its strategy. The MTFP is assuming rate rises but if they rise more quickly than anticipated then this budget could be subject to interest rate pressures.</p> <p>To mitigate some of this pressure the Council in took some fixed rate 20 year borrowing from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLb).</p> <p>Inflation is also a major driver in capital works and many of the council contracts are inflation linked, or inflationary rises will be applied. Some allowance has been built into the MTFP and bespoke increases have been applied to the largest contracts and utility costs.</p> <p>Pay – the draft budget has made an overall allowance of 4.4% for pay, this is 3% cost of living, 0.7% for increments and 0.7% for increased costs relating to the new Health and Social Care Levy. At the time of writing this report, a pay award has not been agreed and therefore any movement away from this expectation will have a positive or negative influence on the budget.</p>

Budget Component	Financial standing and management
<p>14. Regulatory risk, revisions to the prudential code.</p>	<p>As covered previously business rates reform looks like it will be reviewed which will likely lead to a revised consultation. The Council will monitor appropriate channels to determine what future proposals look like and how they will possibly impact on the Council. This is not necessarily an immediate risk but certainly will be a factor for significant consideration over the medium term.</p> <p>Currently CIPFA are consulting on a new Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code to strengthen changes already made by the PWLB that restricts Council's from borrowing from what are perceived to be risky 'debt for yield' investments.</p> <p>The new proposed changes to the code looks to clarify certain areas of the code and notably clarification in commercial and treasury investment.</p> <p>The guidance is suggesting that where a Council is a 'net borrower' then it should have a 'net book' management strategy and therefore not have any strategic investments but instead reduce its borrowing need, and therefore strongly recommends that strategic investments should be exited from where possible.</p> <p>Ashford is a net borrower but also has had strategic investment for a number of years that have provided stable revenue returns to the council which are forecast to be Circa £900,000 for 2022/23.</p> <p>If the Council had to sell from these positions, subject to capital market fluctuations the Council could reduce its borrowing requirement by circa £30m, thus saving debt expenses of circa £150,000 at an average rate of 0.5%.</p> <p>While this trade off would reduce the overall level of risk to the Council, it would also represent the need to raise taxes or cut services to fund the £750,000 reduction in income.</p> <p>Ashford will respond to the consultation and monitor the outcomes to determine what action is necessary as guidance is formulated, the guidance was originally due for 2022/23 but this is now deemed a soft launch before the expectation to follow any new guidance in 2023/24.</p> <p>This will be monitored through appropriate channels and reported accordingly.</p>

Savings included within the 2022/23 draft budget.

		2022/23	2022/23 Not Delivered	Delivered
Planning and Development				
Development Control	Generate income from Pre Planning Agreement advice	(50,000)	(50,000)	Not delivered
Development Control	Increase income from Planning Performance agreements	(10,000)	(10,000)	Still developing process
Development Control	Savings through Increased efficiency from implementation of new IT System	(100,000)	(100,000)	Not delivered - System not yet implemented
Total		(160,000)	(160,000)	
Corporate Property and Projects		2022/23	2022/23	
Corporate Property		(17,500)	0	Delivered
Project Delivery Team	Operational savings to be identified	(56,000)	(56,000)	Not delivered
Facilities Management	Additional letting of Civic Centre excess space	(50,000)	(50,000)	Not delivered
Total		(123,500)	(106,000)	
Corporate Policy, ED and Comms		2022/23	2022/23	
Communications & Marketing	Operational savings to be identified	(12,500)	(12,500)	Not delivered, saving still to be identified
Economic Development	Operational savings to be identified	(10,000)	(10,000)	Not delivered - saving still to be identified
Policy And Performance	Explore option of bringing management of the Love Ashford Website in house	(12,000)	(12,000)	Not delivered
Total		(34,500)	(34,500)	
Community Safety & Wellbeing		2022/23	2022/23	
Parking & Engineering	Reduce cash collection contract costs and maintenance	(75,000)	(75,000)	Not delivered
Environmental Health	Operational savings to be identified	(34,830)	(34,830)	Not delivered
Total		(109,830)	(109,830)	
Environment & Land Management		2022/23	2022/23	
Street Scene	Close public conveniences at New Rents	(20,720)	(20,720)	Not delivered - currently being reviewed
Street Scene	Close public conveniences at Victoria Park	(31,480)	(31,480)	Not delivered - Subject to Park redevelopment
Total		(52,200)	(52,200)	

Finance and IT (Includes Corporate)		2022/23	2022/23	
Strategic Corporate Costs	Operational savings to be identified	(18,750)	0	Delivered
Investigations	Operational savings to be identified	(50,000)	(15,000)	Delivered £35,000 - £15,000 TBC
ICT	Multi-Functional Device costs (printers)	(20,000)	(10,000)	Delivered £10,000 - £10,000 TBC
Total		(88,750)	(25,000)	
General Fund Housing Services		2022/23	2022/23	
Housing Options	Saving in TA costs as Christchurch House and Lodge are fully occupied	(57,070)	(11,280)	£45,790 delivered, additional savings need to be identified.
Housing Options	Saving in TA costs from Henwood Modular Housing scheme	(99,450)	(99,450)	Scheme Delayed
Housing Options	Operational savings to be identified	(32,000)	0	Delivered prior to service review
Total		(188,520)	(110,730)	
HR & Customer Services		2022/23	2022/23	
Visitor & Call Centre	Operational savings to be identified	(10,500)	0	Delivered
Visitor & Call Centre	Reduce face to face services in Tenterden	(6,500)	0	Delivered
Tenterden Gateway	Lease terminates at Tenterden Gateway	(11,000)	(11,000)	Not delivered
Total		(28,000)	(11,000)	
Legal and Democratic		2022/23	2022/23	
Legal	Legal services income	(30,000)	(30,000)	Not delivered
Electoral Services	Saving from cross service working	(12,500)	0	Delivered but not through cross working, reduced budgets
Total		(42,500)	(30,000)	
Savings total from Services		(827,800)	(639,260)	

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Agenda Item No:**Report To:** Cabinet**Date of Meeting:** 25 November 2021**Report Title:** Council Tax Base 2022/23**Report Author &
Job Title:** Jo Stocks - Senior Accountant
Will Mackay - Accountant**Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder for:** Cllr Neil Shorter
Finance & IT

Summary: This Council is required to approve the tax base used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2022/23. It is calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast of new properties), which are then converted to Band D equivalents.

The tax base has been calculated at 48,664 band D properties, an increase of 3,490 (or 7.3%) on the current year.

Key Decision: YES**Significantly
Affected Wards:** All**Recommendations:** The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Agree the 2022/23 'Net' tax base of 48,664 Band D equivalent properties
- II. Note the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required, before the end of January, should any material change in the tax base be required, as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from government.

Policy Overview: The Council Tax base is required to be set in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculations of Tax Base) Regulations 2012**Financial
Implications:** The tax base will be used to calculate the level of Council Tax requirement, which will be recommended to the Council on 3 March 2022.

Legal Implications	The Council is required to set a Council Tax Base.
Equalities Impact Assessment	A full assessment is part of the final budget reported to Cabinet in February.
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Contact:	jo.stocks@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330548

Report Title: Council Tax Base 2022/23

Introduction and Background

1. The Council Tax Base for 2022/23 and its distribution across parished and un-parished areas needs to be agreed.
2. By 31 January 2022, the Council as the 'billing authority' is required to notify its major precepting bodies (Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority and Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority) and the parishes of the relevant council tax base for the 2022/23 financial year.

Parish Grants

3. The 2021/22 budget was built on the assumption that the Concurrent Functions Grant would be completely removed and a one-off transitional Council Tax Support Grant would be introduced, for one year only.
4. For the 2022/23 draft budget it has been assumed that both grants will be removed. Parish Council's were informed of this change, on 5 March 2021, after a consultation period, and approval by Full Council on 4 March 2021.

The Tax Base (adjusted for various allowances)

5. The Council has already submitted a tax base return to central government, this figure is 51,683 (2021/22 50,768), it is based on the number of properties on the valuation list as at 11 October 2021 and excludes provisions for new properties, Council Tax Reduction discounts, and allowances for non-collection.
6. The calculation of the tax base includes assumptions for future Council Tax Reduction claims. The 2021/22 calculation assumed that Council Tax Support discounts would increase by 31%, because of the economic pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase in Council Tax Support has not materialised; as such, the assumptions around Council Tax Support have been reduced to be more in-line with the actual position, which has resulted in an increase in the overall tax base.
7. The tax base calculation made in this report allows for new properties anticipated to be coming on to the Valuation List. It is forecast that 812 properties will be added to the valuation list in line with the assumption in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
8. In calculating the tax base the authority must also have regard to discounts, exemptions, premiums, non-collection, and appeals. For the purposes of this calculation 1% has been estimated for losses on collections and appeals, this was 1.5% in 2021/22, increased from 1%, in previous years, to take into account any economic effects of the pandemic on arrears levels. However, collection rates have been broadly maintained, hence the reason for reducing this assumption to the previous level.

9. For 2022/23 the tax base has been calculated at 48,664 (2021/22 was 45,173) as detailed at **Appendices A, B & C.**

Implications and Risk Assessment

10. The Council Tax base is an important element of the budget setting process, estimating the number of properties upon which council tax will be levied.

Next Steps in Process

11. Once agreed by the Council the tax base will be notified to the County Council, Kent Police, Kent and Medway Fire Authority and the Parish Councils.

Conclusion

12. The 2022/23 tax base is in line with the assumptions in the Financial Strategy and the Recovery Plan, the calculation results in a tax base of 48,664 band D equivalent properties. This will be used in the detailed budget and council tax setting calculations.

Portfolio Holder's Views

13. Last year the Council Tax Base decreased after a conservative estimate was implemented, due to uncertainty within the economy, the Council Tax Base has seen an increase this year of 7.73%. This reflects a better forecast for the year based upon more accurate data, of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants, and including a slight upturn in the economy.
14. I recommend the tax base be set at 48,664 Band D equivalent properties.

Contact and Email

15. Jo Stocks
16. jo.stocks@ashford.gov.uk

**TAX BASE 2022/2023
BAND D EQUIVALENTS**

BAND		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL
PARISH										
Aldington and Bonnington	0	20	28	109	86	84	159	159	3	648
Appledore	0	4	11	51	78	56	71	96	2	369
Bethersden	0	30	49	54	107	149	131	236	17	773
Biddenden	0	92	31	194	117	181	221	361	21	1,218
Bilsington	0	7	4	12	21	22	36	53	0	155
Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	0	11	67	98	232	266	280	127	8	1,089
Brabourne	0	8	18	51	127	172	146	95	10	627
Brook	0	2	1	2	18	56	36	39	0	154
Challock	0	10	8	25	77	90	162	168	14	554
Charing	0	75	95	202	218	223	279	315	10	1,417
Chilham	0	13	35	107	146	185	125	150	22	783
Crundale (PM)	0	1	2	6	14	15	18	38	2	96
Egerton	0	9	23	34	90	107	132	138	4	537
Godmersham	0	1	5	18	35	55	31	36	4	185
Great Chart with Singleton	0	95	372	699	862	422	227	120	6	2,803
Hastingleigh	0	4	2	5	25	14	31	33	4	118
High Halden	0	57	70	163	68	112	172	194	6	842
Hothfield	0	6	67	68	28	26	27	53	2	277
Kennington	0	96	576	995	851	518	696	62	4	3,798
Kenardington	0	2	1	23	9	20	19	35	4	113
Kingsnorth	0	13	283	886	1,178	1,117	1,081	110	3	4,671
Little Chart	0	4	3	11	21	20	20	54	6	139
Mersham	0	10	40	79	94	130	173	126	8	660
Molash	0	3	4	9	19	18	21	42	4	120
Newenden	0	1	1	12	16	16	26	35	2	109
Orlestone	0	4	21	195	131	67	164	44	4	630
Pluckley	0	8	13	68	74	65	99	175	4	506
Rolvenden	0	10	16	138	105	125	127	175	29	725
Ruckinge	0	10	9	20	28	98	109	74	2	350
Sevington	0	2	32	100	167	115	136	18	0	570
Shadoxhurst	0	23	16	65	63	161	182	74	0	584
Smarden	0	18	28	60	82	96	133	272	22	711
Smeeth	0	6	12	72	61	96	64	61	6	378
Sth Willesborough and Newtown	0	67	607	309	210	54	3	0	0	1,250
Stanhope	0	117	557	121	2	2	0	0	2	801
Stone	0	4	6	31	29	30	34	78	4	216
Tenterden (TC)	0	28	138	572	766	858	845	641	56	3,904
Warehorne	0	4	7	20	31	40	24	38	2	166
Westwell	0	9	9	32	86	149	91	134	8	518
Wittersham	0	14	20	96	54	123	100	137	19	563
Woodchurch	0	100	21	109	146	112	179	210	6	883
Wye with Hinxhill	0	35	90	164	223	176	233	160	22	1,103
Unparished Area	1	771	4,154	3,844	1,956	1,158	951	169	4	13,008
	1	1,804	7,552	9,929	8,751	7,599	7,794	5,335	356	49,121
Contributions in Lieu	0	0	0	0	35	0	0	0	0	35
Less 1% Provision	0	(18)	(76)	(99)	(88)	(76)	(78)	(53)	(4)	(492)
	1	1,786	7,476	9,830	8,698	7,523	7,716	5,282	352	48,664

Appendix B

ANALYSIS OF PROPERTIES FOR WHOLE AUTHORITY 2022/23

		A No.	B No.	C No.	D No.	E No.	F No.	G No.	H No.	TOTAL No.
Total Chargeable Dwellings	3	4,091	13,432	13,176	9,536	6,766	5,687	3,339	184	56,214
Of which:										
Full Charge	1	1,775	7,464	8,655	6,908	5,157	4,746	2,808	149	37,663
Single Persons Discount	0	2,084	5,342	4,017	2,273	1,397	791	402	21	16,327
Discount (Disregard Disc)	1	27	156	142	127	69	46	30	0	598
Discount (Disregard 2 Disc)	1	6	7	7	9	7	13	14	2	66
Class C	0	114	191	137	115	73	50	57	6	743
Full Charge on LT Empties	0	56	233	200	88	56	37	24	2	696
Premium on LT Empties @ 100%	0	27	34	13	7	6	3	2	4	96
Premium on LT Empties @ 200%	0	1	5	3	5	1	1	1	0	17
Premium on LT Empties @ 300%	0	1	0	2	4	0	0	1	0	8
Total number of Properties	3	4,091	13,432	13,176	9,536	6,766	5,687	3,339	184	56,214
Total Equivalent Number - CTB1	1	2,363	9,326	10,764	8,925	7,806	7,894	5,377	356	52,812
Adjust for Council Tax Support	0	(624)	(1,799)	(1,163)	(488)	(207)	(100)	(42)	0	(4,423)
New Properties	0	65	25	328	314	0	0	0	0	732
Adjusted Band D equivalents	1	1,804	7,552	9,929	8,751	7,599	7,794	5,335	356	49,121
Contributions in Lieu	0	0	0	0	35	0	0	0	0	35
Losses In Collection	0	(18)	(76)	(99)	(88)	(76)	(78)	(53)	(4)	(492)
Tax base	1	1,786	7,476	9,830	8,698	7,523	7,716	5,282	352	48,664

TAX BASE 2022/23
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)

LOCAL TAX BASE	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.5% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2022/23
2021/22		50,434	400	(688)	(4,973)	45,173
	PARISH					
621	Aldington & Bonnington	699	1	(6)	(51)	643
337	Appledore	409	4	(4)	(45)	364
713	Bethersden	830	3	(8)	(60)	765
1,100	Biddenden	1,293	7	(12)	(80)	1,208
148	Bilsington	161	1	(2)	(6)	154
1,046	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,142	2	(11)	(55)	1,078
594	Brabourne	649	1	(6)	(24)	620
153	Brook	159	0	(2)	(4)	153
491	Challock	556	8	(6)	(10)	548
1,283	Charing	1,484	71	(14)	(137)	1,404
731	Chilham	844	4	(8)	(67)	773
89	Crundale (PM)	95	0	(1)	(1)	93
509	Egerton	557	2	(5)	(22)	532
167	Godmersham	187	1	(2)	(4)	182
2,437	Great Chart with Singleton	2,888	121	(28)	(207)	2,774
109	Hastingleigh	122	0	(1)	(4)	117
755	High Halden	876	18	(8)	(52)	834
253	Hothfield	339	1	(3)	(63)	274
108	Kenardington	121	0	(1)	(9)	111
3,531	Kennington	4,150	27	(38)	(378)	3,761
4,285	Kingsnorth	4,645	215	(47)	(190)	4,623
138	Little Chart	141	0	(1)	(3)	137
588	Mersham	676	12	(7)	(30)	651
106	Molash	126	0	(1)	(5)	120
100	Newenden	114	0	(1)	(4)	109
589	Orlestone	686	0	(6)	(55)	625
464	Pluckley	527	10	(5)	(33)	499
689	Rolvenden	784	1	(7)	(60)	718
342	Ruckinge	369	0	(4)	(19)	346
579	Sevington	598	0	(6)	(28)	564
558	Shadoxhurst	618	3	(6)	(36)	579
627	Smarden	741	11	(7)	(41)	704
354	Smeeth	406	2	(4)	(30)	374
1,187	Sth Willesborough & Newtown	1,485	1	(12)	(236)	1,238
752	Stanhope	1,044	0	(8)	(243)	793
206	Stone	230	0	(2)	(14)	214
3,577	Tenterden (TC)	4,179	60	(39)	(335)	3,865
150	Warehome	169	5	(2)	(7)	165
493	Westwell	533	0	(5)	(14)	514
530	Wittersham	602	1	(6)	(40)	557
821	Woodchurch	955	3	(9)	(75)	874
1,009	Wye with Hinxhill	1,192	7	(11)	(96)	1,092
11,854	Unparished Area	14,464	131	(130)	(1,550)	12,915
45,173		52,845	734	(492)	(4,423)	48,664

Agenda Item No:**Report To:** Cabinet**Date of Meeting:** 25 November 2021**Report Title:** Quarter 2 - Financial Monitoring**Report Author &
Job Title:** Lee Foreman
Accountancy Manager**Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder for:** Cllr. Neil Shorter
Finance & IT**Summary:**

This report presents the quarter two budget monitoring position for 2021/22, based on data available up to 30 September 2021.

The overall position has improved by £381,000 since the first monitoring report and the Council is now forecasting an overall surplus of £421,000 at year end.

Parking services has reduced parking income forecasts by £277,000, this is due to early parking usage trends not continuing to recover as strongly as anticipated following the Covid19 pandemic.

Finance and IT is reporting an overall surplus of £182,000, this is a pressure of £175,000 from court costs as access to courts is still limited and the team is catching up on recovery action following the pandemic. The service has also benefited from a transfer of £330,000 of pension back funding costs to Ashford Port Health (APH) creating a saving in the General Fund.

Corporate Property reports additional rental income for quarter two with £165,000 of rental income coming from APH's occupancy of the Civic Centre.

To offset some of the losses incurred in income, the Council has claimed £317,000 from the Government's sales fees and charges compensation scheme (SFC), this scheme was only active from April through to June so future losses will have to be fully met by the Council.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is forecasting an increase in spend since the previous monitoring report of £128,000, this is largely due to Council Tax liabilities at Oakleigh House. There has also been a £400,000 increase in the disabled adaptations forecast which will be funded from the Major Repairs Reserve.

<p>This report also provides an update on the Collection Fund, Capital expenditure, Treasury Management and Reserve movements.</p>
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Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None

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

- I. Note the forecast outturn position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.**
- II. Note the Collection fund Position**
- III. Note the contribution from reserves in Table 5.**
- IV. Note the Treasury Management position**

Policy Overview: The Budget is a key element supporting the delivery of the Council's wider policy objectives.

Financial Implications: The General Fund is reporting an overall surplus of £421,000 which is an increase of £381,000 from the previous forecast. The HRA is forecasting an overall overspend of £134,000 in revenue expenditure and is forecasting a reduction in capital spend of £2.075m.

Legal Implications N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment As part of 2021/22 Final Budget Report a full assessment was undertaken.

Exempt from Publication: N/a.

Contact: Lee.Foreman@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330509

Report Title: Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring

Introduction and Background

1. This report presents the forecast outturn position for 2021/22 based on information available as at 30 September 2021.
2. The 2021/22 budget was set during the Covid19 pandemic and a number of budgets were revised to allow for changes in consumer habits. Although these revised budgets were susceptible to scrutiny, it is only now that we are starting the recovery phase of the pandemic that the accuracy of those assumptions will be measurable and future trends/habits will start to be understood.
3. This report considers each of the following areas of the Council in more detail including the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Collection Fund (Council Tax and Business Rates), Capital Expenditure, Treasury Management and reserves movements.

Summary of General Fund Position

4. The current General Fund position is forecasting a surplus of £421,000 for the year which comprises of a deficit in service expenditure of £913,000, supported by government grant, savings on borrowing costs, and reserves totalling £1.334m. This current forecast represents a positive position that will enable the Council to limit the use of reserves at year end to fund pressures within service expenditure, or to support any unexpected economic shocks as we have move through the winter months with the Covid19 Pandemic still being prevalent.
5. It should be noted that the pressure in Services of £913,000 needs to be closely managed as grants and other positive movements in the Treasury activity will not cover costs if they continue to move in an adverse direction.
6. Where services are seeing pressures on budgets, then management need to fully understand what is driving those pressures and consider what action can be taken 'where possible' to minimise or reduce pressures before within year.
7. To provide some context around the ongoing impact of Covid19 on services expenditure, the summary below identifies the key areas being impacted and how it is being funded:-

Covid Pressures in Service Expenditure	Covid Pressure £	SFC Grant £	ABC Funded £
Pressure on Parking Income	270,000	(231,000)	(39,000)
Support for Leisure facilities	300,000	0	(300,000)
Reduction in court costs awarded	175,000	(80,000)	(95,000)
Support for commercial properties	70,000	0	(70,000)
Other smaller SFC Losses	35,000	(6,000)	(29,000)
Total	850,000	(317,000)	(533,000)

8. As can be seen from above, without Covid related pressures there would be circa £63,000 of pressure in services. It is also worth remembering that parking was already reduced by circa 15% in building the 2021/22 budget.
9. **Table 1** shows the movement between budget and projected outturn at a Head of Service Level, narrative providing supporting information on material movements then follows.

Table 1 - General Fund Quarter 2 Outturn Forecast as at 30 September 2021

Service and General Fund Summary	2021/22 Current Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast Outturn at Q2 £'000	2021/22 Forecast Variance £'000	Q1 - Q2 Movement £'000
Ashford Port Health	0	0	0	0
Corporate Core	729	801	72	0
Corporate Policy, Economic Development, Communications and CMO	1,168	1,192	24	0
Community Safety and Wellbeing	709	909	201	277
Hr & Customer Services	144	148	4	4
Legal & Democratic Services	1,271	1,316	45	48
Corporate Property & Projects	(1,292)	(1,430)	(138)	(156)
Finance & Ict	2,579	2,352	(227)	(182)
Housing Services	914	1,009	95	5
Culture	3,208	3,604	396	(6)
Environmental & Land Management	4,727	4,845	118	0
Planning	2,146	2,469	323	(33)
Net Service Expenditure	16,303	17,216	913	(43)
Capital Charges and net interest	(2,188)	(2,703)	(515)	0
Government Grant (Covid19 related)	(859)	(1,176)	(317)	(317)
Levies, Grants and Precepts	276	276	0	0
Contribution (from)/to reserves	349	(153)	(502)	(21)
Budget Requirement	13,881	13,460	(421)	(381)
Financing:				
Retained Business Rates	(4,093)	(4,093)	0	0
Council Tax	(7,792)	(7,792)	0	0
New Homes Bonus	(1,908)	(1,908)	0	0
Rural Service Delivery Grant	(87)	(87)	0	0
Total movement	0	(421)	(421)	(381)

Summary of General Fund Movements

Community Safety and Wellbeing

10. Community Safety and Wellbeing has seen an additional pressure of £277,000 since the first reporting period. This increased pressure is as a result of parking income being reduced to reflect revised forecasts on usage.
11. At the first reporting period car parking usage was increasing month on month and if that trend continued we could have seen the annual budget being delivered. However, since July parking usage has started to level out and forecasts have now been adjusted to reflect a slower recovery than previously anticipated. There is still upside and downside risks to the parking budget as new habits are formed and the risks of Covid19 start to dissipate. Car parking usage and income will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis to establish new levels of demand.
12. The government's sales fees and compensation scheme (SFC) was still active for the period April to June 2021 and the Council has made an application for circa £230,000 of compensation to support parking losses

during this period. The scheme has not been extended and therefore ongoing losses will have to be covered by the Council.

Legal and Democratic Services

13. Legal and Democratic Services is reporting a pressure on £48,000 this quarter. This Service has a number of pressures including a £30,000 additional income target that is unlikely to be delivered, £10,000 grant for Electoral Services that is now no longer going to be received.

Corporate Property and Projects

14. Corporate Property and Projects is reporting a net saving of £156,000 since the last reporting period. This saving represents rental income of £135,000 from Park Mall car park before the lease was ended, and £165,000 of rental income from letting part of the Civic Centre to Ashford Port Health, this is a temporary recharge as they will be based at the Sevington Inland Border Facility permanently in the new year.
15. There is a pressure of £50,000 for employee costs off setting in surplus highlighted above (reversing part of the savings previously identified) to support the service which has a large number of vacancies. There is also further rent concessions that have been awarded to the Council commercial tenants totalling £70,000 to support recovery following the Covid19 Pandemic.

Finance and IT

16. Finance and IT is reporting a net movement of £182,000 since the last reporting period.
17. There is a forecast pressure of £175,000 from Court Costs with access to courts still limited as they catch up with being closed during the Covid19 pandemic. The Team can only take a limited number of cases to court which again restricts costs awarded. £60,000 has been claimed through the SFC Scheme to offset some of these losses.
18. Offsetting the pressure is a reduction in pension back funding costs which are apportioned across the organisation on a per capita basis. This has resulted in a charge to the Ashford Port Health which allows for a saving in the General Fund to be recognised.

Planning

19. Planning is forecasting a reduction in agency staff costs of £33,000 since the last reporting period, however there is still an overall pressure within the Service of £323,000.

Financing and Other General Fund Movements

20. This area is reporting a positive movement of £338,000 since the first reporting period. £317,000 of this income relates to an application to the Government for compensation for lost income in the first quarter of this financial year (April to June). This is an extension to the scheme that ran throughout 2020/21 but, was only extended for the first quarter of 2021/22, therefore any irrecoverable losses to fees and charges will now need to be fully met by the Council from June 2021.
21. The £21,000 contribution from reserves relates to a grant to Charlton Athletic Community Trust to support a number of initiatives for young people within

the borough. This contribution has been included within the reserves section of this report.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

22. The Housing Revenue Account is showing an increase in spending since the first reporting period of £128,000. This largely relates to a council tax liability for Oakleigh House totalling £92,000.
23. Following a significant reduction in capital spend in the first reporting period, an additional £400,000 of spend has now been added for additional disabled adaptation work, subject to availability of contractors. The reserve contribution to fund capital works has been updated accordingly.
24. Overall there is additional spend the Revenue spend of £134,000 for the year and this is reflected in the table below. It should also be noted that there is an overall reduction of £2.075m in capital spend and this is offset in the table by reserves.
25. A breakdown of this variance is shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2 – 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Forecast Outturn Position

Housing Revenue Account	2021/22 Current Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast Outturn at Q2 £'000	2021/22 Forecast Variance £'000	Q1 - Q2 Movement £'000
Income	(27,187)	(27,187)	0	0
Supervision and Management	4,469	4,594	125	119
Repairs and Maintenance	4,024	4,064	40	40
Other	21,343	21,312	(31)	(31)
Net Revenue Expenditure	2,650	2,784	134	128
Capital Works - Decent Homes	5,914	3,839	(2,075)	400
Financed By:				
Contribution To/(From) Major Repairs Reserve	(5,914)	(3,839)	2,075	(400)
Net Capital Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Total Net Expenditure	2,650	2,784	134	128

Collection fund Monitoring

Business Rates

26. Collection rates for NNDR are continuing to be regularly monitored to gauge the potential impact of the Covid19 Pandemic within the Borough. At the end of October 59.42% (£26.033m) of rates billed for the year had been collected, this compares to 60.45% in 2020/21 and 64.85% in 2019/20. This clearly shows the continued pressures on businesses impacting their ability to pay, this pressure is likely to worsen with high inflation and rising energy prices, and the end of the furlough scheme.
27. Since the previous reporting period the amount of business rates billed has further reduced primarily as a result of further funded reliefs which will be fully compensated for by way of additional S31 Grants from Government, leaving £nil net effect on the collection fund. However, as S31 grants are not accounted for in the collection fund this will create a significant deficit at year end although this will be funded from the S31 grant which will need to be held in reserves as the accounts are closed.
28. Including a prior year deficit of £2.601m, the overall deficit on the collection fund for business rates is forecast at £15.58m with Ashford's share being circa £6.23m, although as mentioned this will be funded from S31 Grant.

Table 3 – Business Rate Summary

	Original Budget	Outturn (net)	Variance - Adverse/ (Favourable)
	2021/22	2021/22	2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Opening (Surplus)/Deficit	31,313	31,911	598
(Deficit) contributed by/Surplus distributed to Major Preceptors	(29,310)	(29,310)	0
Remaining Deficit/(Surplus) to be Contributed/(Distributed)	2,003	2,601	598
2021/22			
Amount of Business Rates to be paid to Major Preceptors	52,458	52,458	0
Amount of Business Rates Billed	(54,974)	(42,759)	12,215
Transitional Relief (Recovered)/Payable	(62)	273	335
Other Items Charged to the Collection Fund:			
Appeals and Rateable Value Reductions	1,483	1,930	447
Bad and Doubtful Debts	800	787	(13)
Renewable Energy	99	92	(7)
Cost of Collection	196	196	0
In year (Surplus)/Deficit	0	12,977	12,977
Overall (Surplus)/Deficit on Collection Fund	2,003	15,578	13,575

Council Tax

29. The value of Council Tax receipts collected at the end of October was 66.63% (62.083m), this compares to previous rates of 66.91% in 2020/21 and 67.65% in 2019/20. There is a very slight reduction in the amount collected between current and previous years.
30. The current economic climate could be impacting collection rates with high inflation, significant increases in energy and fuel prices, the end of the universal credit £20 a week top up, and more recently the end of furlough, could all impact on households' ability to pay Council Tax through the remainder of the year.
31. Although collection rates in year are showing a slight reduction, the total amount of historical debt has reduced and therefore the bad debt provision has reduced by 47,000 from £909,000 to £862,000.
32. Since the last reporting period there has also been an increase in billing within the current year of £126,000.
33. Overall the collection fund for Council Tax is reporting a year end surplus of £3.709m of which Ashford's share of the Council Tax surplus would be £426,000 based on current forecasts. This will form part of the 2022/23 budget.

Table 4 Council Tax Summary

	Outturn (net) to 31/03/22 £'000	Previous Outturn £'000
Opening Deficit/(Surplus)	501	501
Deficit contributed by Major Preceptors	(319)	(319)
2021/22		
Amount of Council Tax to be paid to Major Preceptors	87,670	87,670
Amount of Council Tax billed	(92,423)	(92,297)
In Year Write Off's and Bad Debt Provision increase	862	909
In year (Surplus)/Deficit	(3,891)	(3,718)
Overall (Surplus)/Deficit	(3,709)	(3,536)

Reserves

34. Contribution to and from reserves that were not identified as part of the budget setting process are required to be reported as part of the budget monitoring process.
35. **Table 5** below identifies the reserve movements that have been approved by Management Team since the last monitoring report and this report asks cabinet to note the decision.

Table 5 – Breakdown of Reserve Movements

Purpose	Suggested Reserve	Amount £
Make a grant payment to Charlton Athletic Community Trust to support youth activities within the Borough.	Recovery Project Reserve	21,000
Total		21,000

Recommendation – Cabinet is asked to note the reserve movements in Table 5 above.

Capital Monitoring

General Fund Capital Monitoring

36. This section of the report provides an update on the significant capital programmes being undertaken by the Council for the general fund and the housing revenue account.
37. **Solar PV (various sites)** - Various environmental site surveys are underway to support the planning application which is currently being developed. Progress is being made at Carlton Road Depot with a tender expected to go out within 3 months.
38. **Victoria Park Rejuvenation** - This project is now due for completion in Summer 2024. There has been no revision of the current expenditure plans.
39. **Amenity Lighting Replacement** - Phase 1 has been completed and handed over to Kent County Council. Phase 2 is currently ongoing. Both phases will generate ongoing saving in electricity and maintenance costs.
40. **Stour Centre & Julie Rose Renovations** - These renovations are ongoing and expected to cost £7.5m, plus the additional £1.4m in decarbonisation works funded from external grant. £41,948 of this had to be funded by the Council due to works not being complete by 31st March 2021.
41. **Tenterden Leisure Centre** – Works have begun on re-roofing the Leisure Centre.
42. **Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP)** – the first property of the scheme was completed in August 2021.
43. **Henwood Temporary Accommodation** - Pre-planning application advice has been sought. Some design changes are being made before a formal planning application is made.

HRA Projects

44. **Street Purchases** - 19 properties have been purchased to date, at a cost of £3.6m.
45. **East Stour Court** - Completion on site is now expected this month, the development consists of 29 units of older person accommodation (24 one bed and 5 two bed apartments). This project is forecasting an underspend of around £780,000 and also benefited from £1.1m of Homes England grant funding.
46. **Halstow Way** – Works are still ongoing and expected to be completed February 2022.
47. **Piper Joinery** - Demolition and clearance of contamination on the site has been completed. A design is being considered which will mitigate the Stodmarsh nutrients issue. The site is expected to accommodate 20 units and is now in the planning system.
48. **Poplars** – Works are still ongoing and expected to be completed January 2022.
49. **Oakleigh House Redevelopment** - This project has had significant delays in the consultation process due to COVID and the effects of lockdown however, the Planning application went to committee in July 2021 and the scheme was approved. This project is expected to cost around £15m and

will be zero carbon in operation when completed in accordance with the LETI (The London Energy Transformation Initiative) guidelines for accreditation. LETI is a network of built environment professionals who are working together to put London on a path to a zero carbon future (this is currently the only accredited scheme).

50. **Tile Kiln Road** - This project has not progressed to final costing stage. There are currently ecology matters on site, in the form of bats and reptiles, which will need to be addressed. The pre-application design has been completed and planning advice is now being considered, which includes a mix of houses and bungalows for the site, and will include around 14 units in total.
51. **New Build Programme Phase 6** - This brings together a number of infill and brown field sites and the team are currently conducting surveys, commissioning initial designs and seeking pre-planning application advice.
52. **New Quarter** – The purchase of the remaining 65 units (Stour Heights) is now complete, costing £10.5m, once the Homes England grant of £975,000 has been taken into account, the total cost of the New Quarter was in line with the approved budget.

Treasury Management

53. The breakdown of the Capital Charges and Net Interest line is shown below at **Table 6**. This table shows the borrowing and investment budget, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and depreciation. The MRP is a statutory payment the Council has to make to offset the costs of capital borrowing over the life of the associated asset.

Table 6 – Net Interest Summary

	2021/22 Current Budget	2021/22 Forecast Outturn at Q2	2021/22 Forecast Outturn at Q1	2021/22 Forecast Variance	Q1 - Q2 Movement
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Interest payable	548	548	548	0	0
Interest receivable	(1,975)	(2,491)	(2,491)	(515)	0
Minimum revenue provision	1,179	1,179	1,179	0	0
Depreciation	(1,939)	(1,939)	(1,939)	0	0
Total Net Interest	(2,188)	(2,703)	(2,703)	(515)	0

Interest payable / Interest receivable

54. There has been no revision to the forecasted outturns for interest receivable and payable. Markets and the Bank of England monetary policy committee are being monitored closely though with markets factoring in a number of anticipated bank rate rises over the next year to control rising inflation.
55. Any rate rise will have an immediate impact on variable short term borrowing costs to the Council although, this will not likely have an impact until the next year's budgets where rate rises have been factored in.
56. Income from investments continues to recover and no change between reporting periods has been made.
57. **Investment Capital Values** – the capital values on investments significantly increased again since the last reporting with the value of the portfolio at the end of September being £31.04m (Excluding the Property Co.) against original costs of £30m.
58. This net capital gain is driven by the increased value of the Council's long standing investment in the CCLA (Churches Charities and Local Authorities) Property Fund. All the investment funds values (both capital and yield) and strategies will continue to be monitored with the support of the Council's Treasury Management Advisors Arlingclose to ensure they remain a good fit with the Council strategy and risk appetite.
59. Current investment balances, and borrowing portfolios are shown at **Appendix A**.

Portfolio Holder's Views

60. Overall it is positive that we are forecasting a reasonable year end surplus however, I need to draw you to the Service pressure of almost £1m and I ask Officers to ensure that this is not an increasing picture as we move through the year, although it is noted that £850,000 is Covid related pressure.
61. Government support for lost sales, fees and charges has now ended, but as identified in the report we are still seeing significant losses, especially in parking income where future consumer habits are still to be determined. This results in the Council funding future losses in this area.
62. To summarise this is a positive position, thanks to Treasury returns and grant funding however, let's not forget that we are still in the recovery phase of the pandemic and there are still plenty of risks and challenges ahead that need to be fully understood and managed by all member and officer colleagues.

Contact and Email

63. Lee Foreman - Lee.Foreman@ashford.gov.uk

Treasury Management Positions as at 30 September 2021

Counter Party	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Fair Value £
Investment Accounts				
Goldman Sachs	Various	0.53%	50,000	52,391
ICD Portal - Blackrock	Various	0.01%	6,686,000	6,686,000
ICD Portal - BNP	Various	0.01%	6,750,000	6,750,000
ICD Portal - CCLA	Various	0.02%	6,935,000	6,935,000
ICD - Invesco	Various	0.01%	6,750,000	6,750,000
Payden Global MMF	Various	0.91%	3,000,000	3,006,685
Total Investment Accounts			30,171,000	30,180,076
Long Term Investments				
Property Investment				
A Better Choice of Property Ltd.***	Various		605,001	1,142,785
CCLA Local Authority Property Fund	Various	4.85%	11,000,000	12,799,983
Equity Funds**				
CCLA Diversified Income Fund	Various	3.51%	3,000,000	3,084,720
Investec Diversified Income Fund	28/03/2019	3.74%	2,500,000	2,420,205
Kames Diversified Income Fund	13/05/2019	4.19%	5,500,000	5,450,450
Schroder Income Maximiser	Various	3.06%	3,500,000	3,031,464
UBS Multi Asset Income Fund	Various	4.81%	3,000,000	2,866,775
UBS Global Income Equity Fund	29/07/2019	4.30%	1,500,000	1,387,424
Total Long Term Investments			30,605,001	32,183,806
Total Investment Portfolio			60,776,001	62,363,882
* Money Market Fund (MMF) are AAA rated deposit facilities which have variable rates of interest but have constant net asset values. Interest rates are shown at the time of producing this report.				
** Equity funds and the Property fund have variable rates of interest and also have fluctuating capital values, the amount stated is the current fair value.				
*** A Better Choice Of Property Ltd. is a solely owned subsidiary of ABC				

Counter Party	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Maturity Date
Temporary Borrowing				
Mid Devon District Council	25/02/2021	0.08%	2,000,000	25/11/2021
West Midlands Combined Authority	19/04/2021	0.06%	5,000,000	19/10/2021
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	21/04/2021	0.05%	5,000,000	21/10/2021
West Midlands Combined Authority	22/04/2021	0.06%	5,000,000	22/10/2021
West of England Combined Authority	17/05/2021	0.04%	6,000,000	17/11/2021
Uttlesford District Council	21/05/2021	0.04%	3,000,000	22/11/2021
Hampshire County Council	24/05/2021	0.06%	3,000,000	24/11/2021
North Hertfordshire District Council	24/05/2021	0.04%	3,000,000	24/11/2021
Wokingham Borough Council	21/06/2021	0.05%	10,000,000	21/01/2022
London Borough of Sutton	22/06/2021	0.05%	3,000,000	24/01/2022
Vale of Glamorgan Council	19/07/2021	0.08%	2,500,000	13/05/2022
Lichfield District Council	19/07/2021	0.07%	2,000,000	19/04/2022
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	20/07/2021	0.05%	5,000,000	20/01/2022
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	20/07/2021	0.04%	5,000,000	20/01/2022
Middlesbrough Council	21/07/2021	0.04%	5,000,000	21/01/2022
Tendering District Council	22/07/2021	0.04%	4,000,000	24/01/2022
Cambridge City Council	22/07/2021	0.04%	5,000,000	05/01/2022
Warwickshire County Council	05/08/2021	0.06%	10,000,000	05/04/2022
Middlesbrough Teeside PF	19/08/2021	0.07%	7,000,000	19/04/2022
Bridgend County Borough Council	24/08/2021	0.04%	5,000,000	24/02/2022
Mersyside Fire & Rescue	24/08/2021	0.06%	2,000,000	25/04/2022
North Somerset Council	25/08/2021	0.06%	2,000,000	25/04/2022
Total Temporary Borrowing			99,500,000	
Long Term Borrowing				
Public Works Loan Board - HRA	various	various	121,664,150	various
Public Works Loan Board - GF	13/07/2021	1.56%	17,000,000	13/07/2041
Total Long Term Borrowing			138,664,150	
Grand Total Borrowing			238,164,150	

Detail of PWLB Loans outstanding

Date of Advance	Loan Ref Number	Date of Repayment	Amount Outstanding £	Rate %
28/03/2012	*499500	28/03/2022	7,000,000	0.90%
28/03/2012	499516	28/03/2022	2,000,000	2.40%
28/03/2012	499514	28/03/2023	2,000,000	2.56%
28/03/2012	499507	28/03/2024	3,000,000	2.70%
28/03/2012	499503	28/03/2025	3,000,000	2.82%
28/03/2012	499505	28/03/2026	1,000,000	2.92%
28/03/2012	499496	28/03/2027	1,000,000	3.01%
28/03/2012	499509	28/03/2028	2,000,000	3.08%
28/03/2012	499497	28/03/2029	2,000,000	3.15%
28/03/2012	499510	28/03/2030	2,000,000	3.21%
28/03/2012	499498	28/03/2031	8,000,000	3.26%
28/03/2012	499511	28/03/2032	9,000,000	3.30%
28/03/2012	499499	28/03/2033	10,000,000	3.34%
28/03/2012	499512	28/03/2034	11,000,000	3.37%
28/03/2012	499506	28/03/2035	12,000,000	3.40%
28/03/2012	499513	28/03/2036	9,000,000	3.42%
28/03/2012	499515	28/02/2037	16,713,000	3.44%
29/03/2011	498502	29/03/2061	5,951,150	5.26%
13/07/2021	374159	13/07/2041	15,000,000	1.56%
Total HRA Borrowing			121,664,150	
13/07/2021	374161	13/07/2041	17,000,000	1.56%
Total GF Borrowing			17,000,000	

A Better Choice for Property Loans as at 30 September 2021

Loans	Deal Date	Rate %	Amount £	Principal Repaid £	Balance Outstanding £
Loan 3	12/02/2015	2.83%	400,000	79,465	320,535
Loan 9	22/07/2017	3.04%	1,445,000	53,417	1,391,583
Loan 12	25/03/2018	3.06%	240,000	7,657	232,343
Loan 13	04/05/2018	3.13%	2,490,000	66,335	2,423,665
Loan 14	05/06/2018	3.06%	1,196,311	32,440	1,163,871
Loan 15	05/07/2018	3.10%	113,000	3,032	109,968
Loan 16	25/09/2018	3.19%	823,000	21,512	801,488
Loan 17*	17/10/2018	3.45%	659,000	13,220	645,780
Loan 18	02/11/2018	3.31%	820,000	17,144	802,856
Loan 19	09/11/2018	3.29%	6,517,425	136,855	6,380,570
Loan 20*	01/02/2019	3.10%	93,890	2,083	91,807
Loan 21*	04/02/2019	3.10%	7,103,180	157,699	6,945,481
Loan 22	22/02/2019	3.03%	809,240	18,324	790,916
Loan 23*	04/03/2019	3.10%	941,360	20,921	920,439
Loan 24	17/06/2019	2.80%	160,000	3,075	156,925
Loan 25	01/07/2019	2.81%	91,776	1,758	90,018
Loan 26	06/09/2019	2.24%	568,400	12,904	555,496
Loan 27	08/09/2019	2.24%	3,821,595	54,957	3,766,638
Loan 28*	16/04/2020	3.57%	1,208,000	9,108	1,198,892
Loan 29*	16/10/2020	3.84%	1,029,820	3,543	1,026,277
Loan 30	20/11/2020	3.61%	2,175,000	12,171	2,162,829
Total loans to A Better Choice For Property Ltd			32,705,997	727,621	31,978,376
* These loans have been subsequently loaned to the companies subsidiary A Better Choice for Property Development Ltd.					

**Agenda Item No:****Report To:** Cabinet**Date of Meeting:** 25th November 2021**Report Title:** Corporate Plan 2022-2024**Report Author & Job Title:** Lorna Ford, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications
Jennifer Shaw, Strategy and Policy Manager**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Clarkson
Portfolio Holder for: Leader of the Council

Summary: This report presents the findings of the draft Corporate Plan consultation. The draft Plan was approved for consultation at Cabinet on 29th July 2021. The consultation ran from 18th August to 1st October. Eleven responses were received, which have informed the final draft of the Corporate Plan 2022-2024, appended to this report and recommended for adoption.

Key Decision: YES**Significantly Affected Wards:** ALL**Recommendations:** The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. **Note the findings of the draft Corporate Plan Consultation**
- II. **Approve the final draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024 for adoption**

Policy Overview: In March 2021 the government published Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth. The key areas are:

- Tackling long-term problems to deliver growth that creates high-quality jobs
- Focus on achieving the people's priorities
- Levelling up the whole of the UK,
- Supporting the transition to net zero
- Supporting our vision for Global Britain

With a commitment on delivery.

The above key areas are reflected at a local level in the Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications: The Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction of travel and is closely aligned to the MTFP which sets out the strategy to deliver the agreed objectives. The Action Plan indicates

which actions/activities are already have funding agreed and those where funding will be sought.

Legal Implications: None

Equalities Impact Assessment: No adverse impacts identified

Data Protection Impact Assessment: Where necessary individual actions will be assessed for any data protection implications.

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement): The Corporate Plan includes an updated Risk Appetite Statement.

Sustainability Implications: The Corporate Plan has a positive impact on the council's commitment to achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2030. The Kent Resilience Forums Principles for a Green Recovery, embedded in the Recovery Plan, are carried over in to the Corporate Plan to guide decision making. The theme Green Pioneer and its objectives correlate to the delivery of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan (to be approved early 2022). Throughout the themes of Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, social, economic and environmental sustainability are key considerations.

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: NO

Background Papers: Recovery Plan: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-strategies/recovery-plan/>

Ashford Ambition Report: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-strategies/research-and-data/>

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Report Title: Corporate Plan 2022-2024

Introduction and Background

1. The Corporate Plan is the main strategic document of the council. The Plan is used to guide decision making to ensure the objectives of the Plan are being realised, to pursue external funding and ensure best use of its own resources. The Plan sets how the council intends to achieve its objectives through the delivery plan.
2. This Corporate Plan is ambitious. Success in delivering the Big 8 projects, set out in the previous Corporate Plan, shows that the council can bring forward large scale projects to benefit the borough, through working collaboratively with others. Some of the projects within this plan will span a longer period than the plan itself but are integral to achieving the longer term Ashford Ambition. Inclusion within this plan signals readiness to seize opportunities as they develop and begin work to deliver projects over the longer term.
3. The development of the Corporate Plan was paused in 2020 to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequently an interim Recovery Plan was adopted. The new Corporate Plan 2022-2024 (final draft is found at appendix 1) now brings forward the extensive consultation undertaken in 2019/20 with local stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities and develop a long term ambition for the borough, the Ashford Ambition. The final draft has been informed by a 'light-touch' consultation undertaken from August to October 2021. The report of the consultation is found at appendix 2.
4. The Ashford Ambition was embedded in the Recovery Plan and forms the overarching aim in the Corporate Plan *'To be a thriving, productive and inclusive borough in 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Kent and the South East where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector provide collective leadership to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing'*.
5. This is supported by three themes: Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth each of which has its own objectives and outcomes, all geared towards achieving the Ashford Ambition.
6. The objectives and outcomes are summarised below:

Theme	Objectives	Outcome
<p>Green Pioneer Our long term aim: Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected</p>	<p>GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets</p> <p>GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles</p> <p>GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business</p>	<p>Homes are energy efficient and cheaper to heat. Renewable energy generation and consumption increases. Fewer local car journeys are made, air quality improves and residents are more active and healthy.</p> <p>Communities urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases</p> <p>A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce</p>
<p>Caring Ashford Our long term aim: Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected.</p>	<p>CA1 – Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely</p> <p>CA2 – local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment</p> <p>CA3 – Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people</p> <p>CA4 – Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility</p>	<p>Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs</p> <p>Local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability</p> <p>The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved</p> <p>Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding</p>
<p>Targeted Growth Our long term aim: A thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.</p>	<p>TG1 – Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough</p> <p>TG2 – Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents</p> <p>TG3 – Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy</p> <p>TG4 – Support growth in the visitor economy</p> <p>TG5 – Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business</p>	<p>The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes</p> <p>Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business Local business survival rates improve</p> <p>Ashford is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences</p> <p>Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities</p>

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7. Each objective is supported by a number of proposed actions which will be delivered by project work and activity commenced over the next 2 years.
8. The delivery plan is a 'live' document and should not be seen as a definitive project list. This means that the delivery plan may need to be adapted to respond to the resources available and any new opportunities not currently identified in the plan. As each project or activity comes forward a robust business case will be required to ensure strategic fit with the objectives in the Corporate Plan and its deliverability in terms of the overall programme. A number of the projects and activities have funding agreed. Others will be delivered dependent on resources being available and will be approved through due process.
9. The Corporate Plan also sets out the principles that support the work of the council
We will be supporting our staff to be ambitious, creative and trustworthy in all that they do to fulfil the council's ambition to be an effective and well-resourced organisation that will:
 1. Treat everyone fairly and with respect
 2. Understand and respond to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged
 3. Put the customer at the heart of everything we do and ensure our services are accessible
 4. Make the most of our assets and invest wisely to ensure we live within our means
 5. All work towards achieving the objectives of being a Green Pioneer and Caring Ashford

As an organisation we will embrace modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality, compliant services. We will be transparent and open in our decision making, listen to our residents and encourage participation in the democratic process.
10. A suite of performance measures have been agreed to monitor progress and are included in section 7 of the Corporate Plan.
11. Performance will be monitored and reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee through quarterly and annual reports.

Proposal

12. Members are asked to note the report of the consultation.
13. Members are asked to approve the final draft of the Corporate Plan 2022-2024 for adoption.

Equalities Impact Assessment

14. There have been no significant changes that affect the status of the Equalities Impact Assessment that was presented with the draft Corporate Plan in July, when no adverse impacts were identified.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

15. As noted in the report to Cabinet in July 2021, consultation to date had included:
 - Extensive consultation with members, staff and local stakeholders to develop the long term ambition for the borough as part of the Ashford Futures study.
 - The Ashford Residents Survey in 2020 asked questions relating to priorities for the Corporate Plan and achieving Carbon Neutrality.
 - A forward planning day with Cabinet members in June 2020.
16. Following Cabinet agreement in July 2021 a press release was issued and 'light-touch' consultation commenced.
The draft Corporate Plan was live on the website from 18th August and comments were invited.
Members, Local Councils, Stakeholders (from the visioning event and workshops) and staff were emailed directly inviting comments.
The consultation was due to close on the 17th September. At the request of local councils this was extended to 1st October.
17. Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the draft Corporate Plan and comments were welcomed.
18. The report of the consultation notes there were eleven responses received, summarises the responses and how these have been considered.
19. A summary of the amendments to the draft Corporate Plan is given below:
 - Clarity made in using 'Ashford' with regard to town or borough
 - Role of council in lobbying for change is emphasised in the foreword
 - Inclusion of challenges in the 'Plan on a Page'
 - Amendment to clarify the role and responsibilities of the council in relation to the Border Control Post
 - Added the need to resist over development in rural areas
 - Included specific reference to importance of Tenterden
 - Included performance measures and monitoring arrangements
 - Updated the delivery plan
 - Updated the risk appetite statement

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

20. The Corporate Plan is the main strategic document for the council. The Ashford Ambition and the three themes were shaped by local stakeholders through extensive engagement, this together with the recent consultation has informed the final draft.
21. An adopted Corporate Plan is vital to ensure the council has a coordinated planned approach to achieving its long term ambition.

22. The Corporate Plan supports funding bids by articulating the council's priorities.

Next Steps in Process

23. Seek adoption of the Corporate Plan 2022 - 2024 at Full Council to be held on 9th December 2021.
24. Communicate the adoption of the Corporate Plan to residents and stakeholders.
25. Provide a summary for publishing on the ABC website, alongside the full Corporate Plan and the report of the consultation
26. Embed the Themes and Objectives into Service Planning to ensure work streams are contributing to achieving the outcomes and the Ashford Ambition.
27. Ensure all decisions are in accordance with achieving the Ashford Ambition and the three themes of the Corporate Plan.

Conclusion

28. The Recovery Plan enabled the council to continue to deliver key actions whilst responding to and reconciling the impact of the pandemic. Now, the Corporate Plan will continue the journey of setting the strategic direction of the council to work across the borough to achieve the Ashford Ambition, resulting a greener, more caring and prosperous borough.

Portfolio Holder's Views

29. As we move towards 2022 we now have a robust plan in place to actively deliver on our priorities for the borough and work towards achieving the Ashford Ambition.
30. This plan demonstrates that the council remains ambitious and innovative in its outlook and is committed to delivering projects and services that improve opportunities for local people to flourish and live healthy, happy, lifestyles that protect and care for the environment we live and work in.
31. As elected members we have a responsibility to ensure our decisions are consistent in achieving the goals and aspirations of our Corporate Plan. We must not deviate from our task, remain resolute and work together to ensure a more sustainable future for all who live, work and visit the borough, here in the heart of the garden of England.

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Ashford Borough Council

Corporate Plan

2022-2024



Contents

Foreword	3	wellbeing of local people	13
1. Introduction	4	Objective CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility	14
2. Our Borough	7	4.3 Targeted Growth	14
3. Strategic context	8	Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough	15
4. Our Corporate Priorities and Objectives	9	Objective TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents	16
4.1 Green Pioneer	9	Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy	16
Objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets	9	Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy	16
Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles	10	Objective TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business	17
Objective GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business	11	4.4 Strategic Projects	17
4.2 Caring Ashford	12	5. Our Principles	19
Objective CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely	12	6. Financial Position	20
Objective CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment	13	7. Governance, Reporting and Monitoring	20
Objective CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the		8. Appendices	25
		8.1 Appendix 1 - Detailed delivery plan	25
		8.2 Appendix 2 – Kent Resilience Forum Principles for a Green Recovery	33
		8.3 Appendix 3 - Risk Appetite Statement	33

Foreword by Cllr Clarkson, Leader



I am delighted that we are now in a position to present our Corporate Plan for 2022. This sets out our priorities to achieve the ambition for the borough that we developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders in 2019/20. Although we had to pause the immediate progression of this work, to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, we didn't lose sight of our long term objectives to be a greener, more caring and prosperous borough for everyone. I am truly grateful to all who helped and continue to help, those affected by the pandemic. The response was exemplary and showed how we can all work together in times of utmost need. We have learnt many lessons from this experience and will be using the positive outcomes to continue to improve how we work with our communities. Together we must now step up to the challenge of climate change and with our best endeavours strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our borough, in the heart of the Garden of England, needs us to continue to be bold, innovative and decisive and lead the way to a more sustainable future for all who live, work and visit here.

We will use our influence to lobby, at all levels, for policy and legislation that ensures we can continue to deliver the best services possible to our residents, now and in the future.

Finally, moving forward we should also reflect and remember the tragic loss that so many have suffered during the pandemic.

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Cllr Clarkson.

1. Introduction

In 2019 we embarked on a comprehensive study to inform our next Corporate Plan, envisaging that this would be developed and adopted during 2020. As our work with stakeholders was coming to a conclusion the coronavirus pandemic forced the country into lockdown in March 2020. Our Recovery Plan was developed to focus our work towards enabling a timely recovery from the pandemic, supporting residents, communities and local business. Some of the key outcomes are:

- Securing a £1.45m grant to replace the power plant at the Stour Leisure Centre to reduce running costs and cut carbon emissions. Also a new provider for the Stour Centre, Freedom Leisure, were appointed who are investing in a major refurbishment and works programme
- Successfully secured funding of over £1m to build 17 affordable homes in South Ashford and opened a further 8 units of short stay accommodation for homeless families, reducing the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation
- Maintained our excellent recycling rates, above the national average and best in the county
- Agreed to continue the refugee resettlement programme under the UK resettlement scheme. In the 2020 Local Government Chronicle awards the council won the Diversity and Inclusion category
- New tenants have signed leases in the multi million pound Elwick Place development and the plans for the Town Centre reset, to revitalise Bank Street and Elwick Road, were approved
- Completed the purchase of Somerset Heights and Stour Heights providing 109 homes for key workers in the town centre with the support of a £2m grant from Homes England

This new Corporate Plan continues this journey and looks ahead, with renewed vigour, to realise the Ashford Ambition that was developed with a wide range of local stakeholders for a vibrant, caring and sustainable borough.

The Ashford Ambition is supported by three priority themes:

- **Green Pioneer** – Where businesses, communities and the public and third sector have come together to become carbon neutral, respect the local environment and ecology, and embrace a more sustainable way of living.
- **Caring Ashford** – A caring and supportive place to live, with rich heritage; thriving towns, villages and rural communities; great schools; high-quality housing; a plethora of cultural activities and events; and a strong sense of civic pride.
- **Targeted Growth** – A place where productive, innovative, responsible town and rural business communities offer good quality work to an agile and skilled local workforce who have embraced a culture of lifelong learning.

The Ashford Ambition Report details the process and engagement undertaken in developing the Ambition and themes.

In realising this ambition we need to continue to work in partnership with others, inspire innovation and creativity and challenge our decisions to ensure we are building a sustainable, carbon neutral future and upholding our values (section 5: Our Principles).

Our objectives and outcomes for this Corporate Plan are summarised in the table opposite:

The Ashford Ambition:

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

Ashford Ambition:

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

Theme

Challenges

Objectives

Outcomes

Green Pioneer

Our long term aim: Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected and enhanced.

Tackling climate change by achieving carbon neutrality

Enabling development whilst protecting the environment

Ensuring no one is disadvantaged as we reduce the carbon footprint of our services and operations

GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets

GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business

- Homes are energy efficient and cheaper to heat. Renewable energy generation and consumption increases. Fewer local car journeys are made, air quality improves and residents are more active and healthy.
- Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases
- A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce

Caring Ashford

Our long term aim: Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected.

Enabling homes that are affordable to local people on low incomes

Improving wellbeing and opportunities for people living in the most disadvantage areas

Raising educational attainment and skills level of local population

CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely

CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment

CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people

CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility

- Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs
- Local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability
- The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved
- Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding

Targeted Growth

Our long term aim: A thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.

Ensuring our towns remain vibrant places and adapt to changing consumer habits

Matching local skills with the needs of employers

Attracting new industries to establish in borough and retain and grow existing business

TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough

TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents

TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy

TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy

TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business

- The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes
- Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business
- Local business survival rates improve
- The borough is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences
- Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities

Our Delivery Plan is found at appendix 1

Central to this Corporate Plan is to consider how every decision made and action implemented is contributing to achieving our carbon neutral aims as set out in our Carbon Neutral Action Plan 'Ashford to Zero'. We will continue to use the Kent Resilience Forum's Principles for a Green Recovery to act as a 'checklist' for decision making.

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

A full explanation can be found in appendix 2.

As the Brexit transition phase came to its conclusion Ashford was informed by the Government that a site at Sevington would be a Border Control Post. The council is now responsible for the setting up and operation of one of the largest inland border posts in the UK in regards of products of animal origin and high risk food not of animal origin. This is of strategic importance not only to Ashford but to the whole country, ensuring animal and public health is safeguarded and compliance with UK rules and international trading standards is maintained.

2. Our Borough

Population estimate in 2020

is **132,420** (6th largest population in Kent exc. Medway)



Ethnicity

In Ashford **6.3%** of the population are black and ethnic minority, the same percentage as the Kent average. (Census 2011). **91%** of residents were born in the UK.

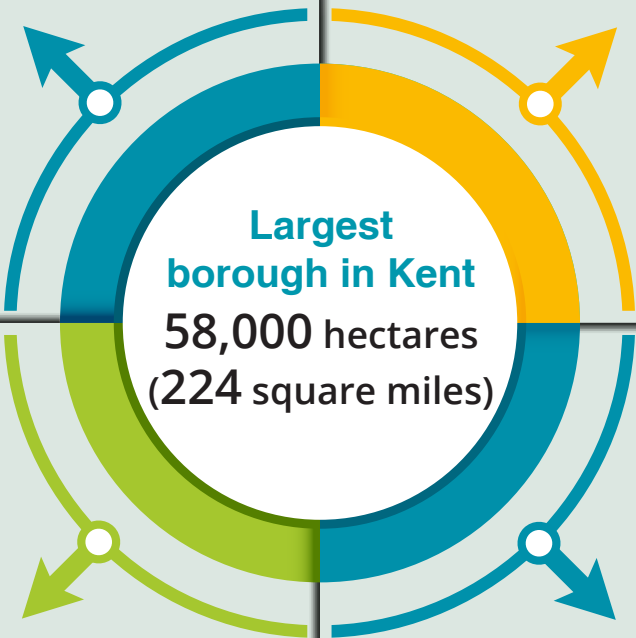
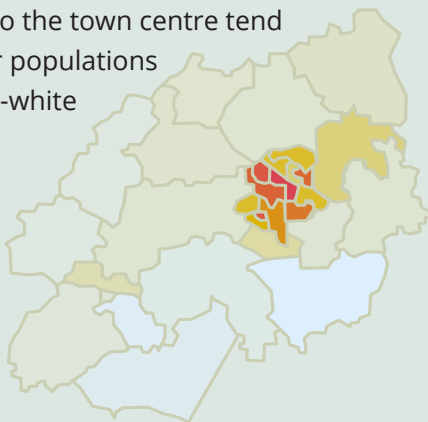


Population age range

Under 5 (pre-school age)	6.1 %
5 to 19 (school/college age)	18.9%
20 to 64 (working age)	55.5%
65 and over (retirement age)	19.4%

Ethnicity

Wards closer to the town centre tend to have higher populations of BME or non-white UK residents, compared to rural wards



3. Strategic context

The Corporate Plan sets the broad priorities of the council and directs the allocation of resources to achieving those priorities. Each priority is supported by a series of objectives. All projects, strategies and policies of the council will in turn support the delivery of the Corporate Objectives.

Sitting directly beneath the Corporate Plan are the Carbon Neutral Strategy and Action Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the Local Plan all of which are key drivers in delivering the Ashford Ambition.

In achieving our strategic objectives we will carry out a wide variety of activities. Each activity will have a different level of risk to assess and manage. We have recognised the need for a number of potentially differing appetites for risk depending on what the activity is. Defining our risk appetite helps us to clearly set out what the risk levels are in our decision making and operational activities which in turn helps decision makers take a consistent approach and is explained fully in the Risk Appetite Statement at appendix 3.

We will continue to invest where it is appropriate to do so and will be guided by our risk appetite. To date we have a successful investment portfolio through being judicious in what we have decided to invest in and reducing our exposure to unnecessary risk.

4. Our Corporate Priorities and Objectives

Our three priority themes are each supported by a number of objectives to achieve an outcome that collectively will realise the overarching Ashford Ambition. Each objective has a series of actions that will be monitored to ensure they are delivering the objective.

4.1 Green Pioneer

The need to live more sustainably and tread lightly on the planet is becoming increasingly urgent as the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation become more apparent. The per capita CO₂ emissions (2018) for Ashford are 4.6 tCO₂, comparable to the Kent and Medway average of 4.7 tCO₂. Through our residents survey we know that local people would like to do more to help reduce negative impacts on the environment with sustainability ranking highly as a priority area.

Our objectives encompass; energy, buildings and infrastructure, transport, the natural environment and waste to achieve our long term aim that:
Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected and enhanced.

Objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets

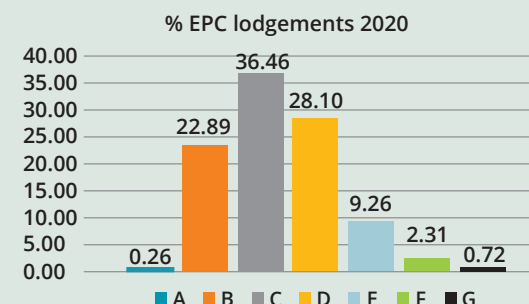
Our aim is for homes and buildings to be as energy efficient as possible and cheaper to heat, for more energy to come from renewable sources and fewer local car journeys are made as opportunities to cycle, walk and use public transport increase.

This contributes to reducing fuel poverty, improving air quality and residents enabled to be more active with the associated health benefits.

Key facts:

The total carbon dioxide equivalent emissions for the borough are 681 ktCO₂e the 7th highest level of emissions in Kent and Medway and the 5th highest for gross emissions per head of population at 5.79 tCO₂e. (Kent and Medway Emissions Pathway report).

Energy Performance certificates for all dwellings lodged in 2020 show Band C as the highest.



Analysis by Kent County Council of EPCs between 2010 and 2019 were collated to provide a proportional value for each letter rating per local authority. Ashford borough is above the Kent and National (England and Wales) average for bands ABC and below the averages for bands EFG.

42% of adults in the borough walk for any purpose (leisure or travel) 3 times a week but only 3.4% cycle 3 times a week. (DfT walking and cycling statistics 2018/19).

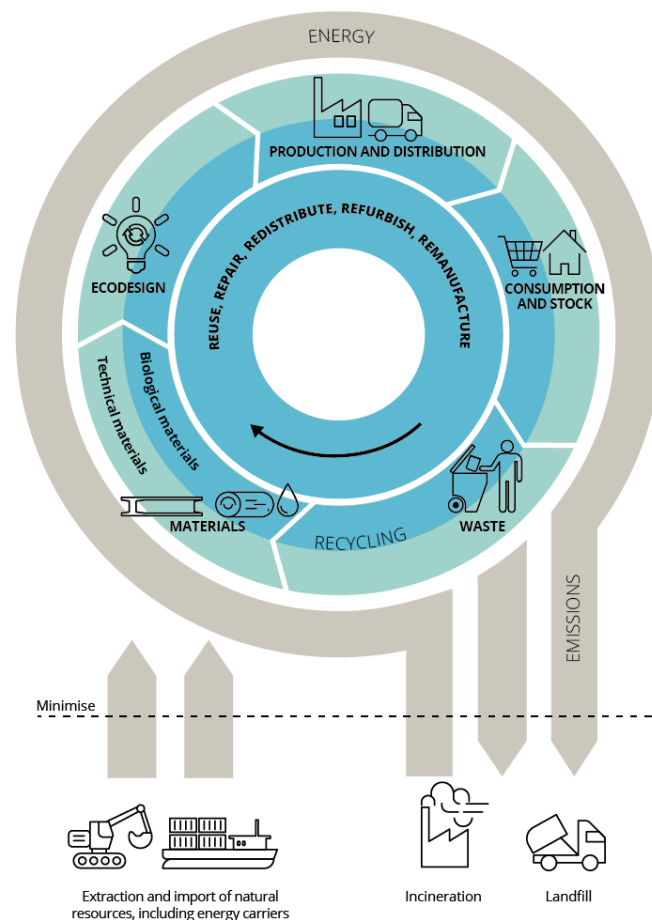
We will:

- Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes
- Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same
- Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with the council's operations and staff use
- Reduce car usage by implementing local active travel initiatives and uptake of public transport together with cleaner travel options
- Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings through retrofitting programmes

Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

Our aim is that all communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment. The decline in species is well documented so we should consider many and varied ways to increase and improve our open spaces for wildlife. This could be green roofs and walls, managing our parks sympathetically for nature or planting more trees, complimenting the work at our strategic parks - Discovery, Victoria and Conningbrook. We will champion the creation of wetland parks to reduce nitrate and phosphate pollution, increase natural drainage, provide habitats for wildlife and attractive outdoor spaces for leisure and recreation. The benefits to our health, particularly our mental health, of spending time outside and enjoying nature are widely recognised. Additionally how we use

resources impacts on the natural world. Reducing demand on finite resources by making careful choices about what we buy, increasing the longevity of products and recycling help to keep products and materials in use and regenerate natural environments, embracing the concepts of the circular economy.



Circular economy diagram source European Environment Agency

Key facts:

The borough has 1701.04 hectares of public open space across urban and rural (including Tenterden) areas, 376.37ha and 1324.67 ha respectively. (Ashford open space strategy 2017)

In the 2020 residents' survey 66% of respondents said they were satisfied with parks.

We will:

- Ensure the biodiversity net gain value through the planning process as set out in the Environment Bill is met or exceeded where possible
- Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife
- Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.
- Conserve water through reduced usage

Objective GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business

We continue to improve our recycling rates and are consistently the best council for recycling in the county. Our waste service strives to educate and inform residents and business on how to reduce the amount of waste they produce. As part of this the council signed up to the Courtauld Commitment 2025, an ambitious voluntary agreement bringing together organisations across the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. Litter and fly-tipping is unsightly, unhealthy and potentially dangerous to people and wildlife. We will work with others to strengthen messages about the illegal dumping of rubbish and take enforcement action against fly-tipping and littering. We want to be a borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce.

Key facts:

Ashford borough has the best recycling rate in the county at 54.2%, above the national target of 50%.

An overwhelming majority of respondents to the 2020 residents' survey were satisfied with bin collection service in 2020, with 83% reporting they were satisfied with this service.

Our water bottle refill scheme in partnership with local businesses reduces the amount of plastic bottles used.

Our garden waste service ensures green waste is composted and used as a soil improver, with an increase of 9.22% of tonnes of green waste collected in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

We will:

- Ensure our waste collection service drives the improvement of waste reduction and recycling
- Work with business to implement government introduced schemes to encourage reuse and waste reduction
- Promote responsible behaviour to protect the environment from harmful waste

4.2 Caring Ashford

As we developed the Ashford Ambition the importance of wellbeing resonated with stakeholders. Health and happiness were considered essential to making the borough a good place to live where communities support each other. Young people have the best start in life and everyone feels safe and secure. The ability of people and communities to pull together was demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic. People supported each other through individual action or voluntary and charitable organisations providing much needed on the ground assistance to statutory agencies. Deprived areas were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirming the importance of good quality, suitable accommodation, healthy lifestyles and access to open space.

Our objectives are to improve educational attainment, reduce health inequalities, celebrate the diversity of our communities and empower local people to work together for the benefit of their local area so that our *Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected.*

Objective CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely

With a growing population our homes and neighbourhoods must be designed to meet the needs of all our residents, ensuring existing and new communities come together to create strong communities where people look after each other. Good homes and neighbourhoods are the foundations to helping people reach their goals through all stages of life, from childhood to older age. Every community needs a range of homes, affordable to local people and offering suitable accommodation for single people, couples and families. This, together with well-planned local services, from shops and schools to health and leisure facilities, community spaces, parks and green areas that are easy and safe to access are vital to everyone's health and wellbeing. We want to work with local communities to identify what is important to them so they feel safe and secure with access to locally designed and led services.

Key facts:

Our Housing Delivery Test score is 90%, which is 5% below the government target of 95%.

In 2019/20 there were 746 net housing completions down on the previous year of 880 completions, including 84 affordable housing completions, 4 of which were rural local needs homes.

The average house price in 2019 was £327,238. Median workplace based earnings in 2020 (weekly) were £515.90 equating to £26,826.80 per annum. Therefore average house prices are 12 times average earnings.

Significant work has been undertaken as part of moving homeless people into accommodation because of Covid 19 and in Autumn 2020 it was estimated there were no rough sleepers in the borough, down from 25 the previous year.

In 2019/20 there were 91.5 crimes per 1000 people with over half being from theft offences and violence against a person. This is lower than the recorded rate for Kent of 99.4

There were 459 road traffic casualties in 2019, with 48 child casualties.

In our 2020 Residents Survey, overall, 79% of residents were very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

We will:

- Enable housing development that meets local needs, supports independence and creates sustainable communities while resisting over development of housing in rural areas
- Work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas
- Improve engagement with local communities and enable them to increase their resilience to adverse events and emergencies
- Ensure Housing Revenue Account (HRA) buildings are safe to live in and meet compliance standards
- Work with communities to design develop and manage facilities that support community cohesion

Objective CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment

It is important that we continue to recognise and respond to the hardship caused by the coronavirus pandemic including the loss of employment. We will work with other partners to make sure that local people are equipped with the skills and knowledge to take up new opportunities as existing businesses adapt and new businesses establish in the borough. Education and training is a key component of enabling young people to be able to realise their potential. The local college and education providers will be instrumental in improving educational attainment for young people. Learning doesn't stop when people leave formal education and we recognise the role that employers, the voluntary sector and social enterprises play in helping people gain and develop skills in many different ways, assisting people to stay in or return to work. Access to a range of initiatives to increase life-long learning will help local people seek positive change for themselves improving social inclusion and employability.

Key facts:

In the working age population (16-64) 11% have no educational qualification. 31% are educated to degree level or above.

In January 2012 there were 99 (3.2%) year 12 and year 13 children not in education employment or training (NEET), similar to the Kent average.

2654 school children (13.6%) have a special educational need (SEN).

We will:

- Create opportunities for young people to take-up education and training
- Work with existing and potential employers to identify the skills and knowledge they require
- Work with voluntary sector to increase informal learning opportunities as route in to work

Objective CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people

The pioneering One You shop has engaged many local people through education and information, alongside personal support to improve their

health. A range of programmes have supported people to stop smoking, achieve a healthy weight, increase activity and lower stress and other health improvement initiatives. Working with partners in health and social care in the statutory and voluntary sectors we will work with communities to identify what are the main health issues in their area and what can be put in place to enable local people to lead healthier, happier lives. We will use our assets to the maximum effect so everyone can benefit, whether these are formally organised, such as sports activities or informal like spending time outside in parks and open spaces. Engaging with other initiatives such as the Kent Reconnects for young people strengthens our ability to achieve positive outcomes. We want to ensure everyone's health and wellbeing benefits and in particular the lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes improves.

Key facts:

Ashford is the 8th most deprived district in Kent and Medway. (Or 6th least deprived)

Life expectancy at birth is slightly higher than both the Kent and England averages at 80.8 years and 84.5 years for males and females respectively. In the most deprived areas, life expectancy for men is 6.8 years lower.

The percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese is 64.9%, worse than the England average (62.8%) The prevalence of overweight children in reception and year 6 are both above the average for England and the South East.

Smoking is significantly worse than the England average during pregnancy and for those in routine and manual occupations.

The percentage of physically active adults is slightly lower than the regional average at 66.9% compared to 69.5%.

Our assisted bin collection service supports over 1,000 households.

There are 5 registered changing places toilets where additional equipment allows disabled people to use the toilets safely and comfortably in addition to other disabled facilities in the borough. Our lifeline service is installed in 1,273 homes in the borough (896 council tenants and 377 private householders) supporting people to retain their independence.

We will:

- Work with communities to identify local issues and implement solutions
- Work in partnership to increase participation in sports and wellbeing activities
- Actively engage with partners to give children and young people the best start in life
- Tackle Homelessness

Objective CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility

The borough has a rich and varied heritage, the history of the railways and the Hubert Fountain in Victoria Park are just two examples. The borough is home to the internationally acclaimed Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company and the award winning Revelation St Marys runs a mixed arts programme. Our rural areas, nestled in the heart of the Garden of England, play host to local and nationally renowned events such as the Tenterden Folk Festival. The ability to come together to enjoy events has been curtailed in the last year as a necessary step to reduce the spread of coronavirus and protect lives. We must not lose sight of how previous events have been hugely successful, such as the snowdogs trail and the carnival of the baubles. Cultural events and local activities can act as a catalyst to galvanise community spirit, having a long lasting impact that brings communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding in a friendly and fun environment.

Key facts:

The snowdogs event attracted over 36k visitors from all over Kent, UK and Europe and it generated an estimated economic impact of £649k for the town. There were also 19 small snow dogs, (snow pups) designed and painted by local schools.

All people in 95% of households in the borough have English as their main language. There are 2.6% of households where no one has English as their main language (Census 2011.)

Residents who stated their religion, 63% were Christian and other religions were 1% or less.

Events during 2019 in the town centre were positively received by respondents to the residents' survey who attended them.

We will:

- Encourage communities to protect and celebrate their heritage
- Empower local communities to identify and deliver local events that support community wellbeing
- Ensure arts, entertainment and local heritage are accessible to all

4.3 Targeted Growth

The borough has strong retail and service sectors but is under represented in manufacturing and pharmaceuticals with a relatively weak presence of industries positioned to access international markets apart from two chemicals industries. Increasing productivity by attracting creative and innovative industries to establish themselves in the borough alongside growing and strengthening the visitor economy are key drivers to good employment and increasing the skills and knowledge base of local people.

Throughout the Ashford Ambition consultation there was a greater preference for a targeted growth approach which stakeholders felt enabled a more socially responsible and sustainable focus. The COVID-19 pandemic and need to achieve carbon neutrality focusses attention on enabling a resilient and sustainable economic sector in the borough. Our objectives to achieve this are focused on increasing productivity, improving digital infrastructure, strengthen the resilience of the local economy and becoming a renowned visitor destination to ensure we have ***a thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.***

Ashford Port Health is a new service to check certain imports from the EU. This is to ensure only products that are safe to eat enter the food chain and to safeguard animal and public health. The council has implemented a plan which will see a phased opening of the port, as directed by Defra, with it fully operational by 2022. This new service will help drive economic resilience in the borough through recruitment and training of over 120 staff and opportunities for other supporting business to establish alongside the port.

Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough

The business base has grown across the borough by attracting inward investment. The 8 major projects that featured in the last Corporate Plan are now completed or nearing completion. This has made Ashford a prime location for business. Building on this success we will support existing and new business to thrive in the borough with a focus on green, sustainable businesses. This will increase local employment and raise local incomes. There are several exciting new projects already in the pipeline including Newtown Works and Project Green.

Key facts:

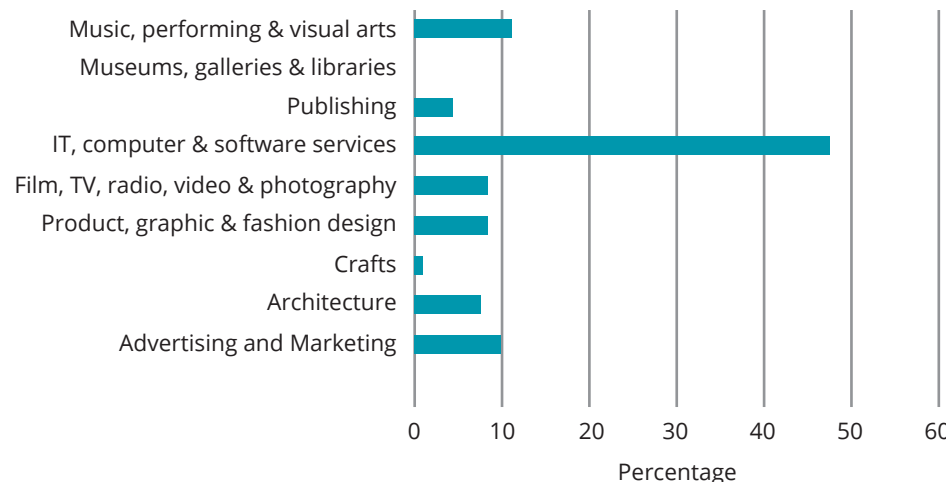
In May 2021 the unemployment rate was 5.5%, slightly below the Kent and UK averages (5.6% and 6.0% respectively). Unemployment in 18 – 24 year olds is higher at 10.1% above both the Kent and UK averages (8.7% and 8.2% respectively).

Creative industries account for 9% of business in Ashford in 2020, lower than the Kent and South East averages of 10.3% and 13.5% respectively. The largest sector is IT, software and computer services.

Over 95% of creative business are micro business with between 0 and 9 employees.

The borough has a slightly higher percentage of enterprises in the knowledge economy 33.2% than Kent (31.5%) but lower than the south east (37%). However there were only 10.3% of jobs in the knowledge economy, below the Kent and regional averages.

Creative industries 2020



We will:

- Support existing dynamic businesses to expand and grow
- Work to attract inward investment to the borough
- Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes
- Strengthen support for creative industries

Objective TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents

Fast, reliable digital connectivity across the whole borough is critical for businesses and residents to trade and access services. Some areas of the borough are disadvantaged because of poor digital connectivity. A lack of digital connectivity can stifle innovation and business growth.

Key facts:

The number of premises with Superfast broadband (>30Mbps) is 52,613 (90%) below the UK average of 94%. There are only 8% of premises with full fibre, below the UK average of 18%. 1% of premises have less than 10Mbps which is below the Universal Service Obligation.

The majority of premises (98.9%) are covered with 4G indoors by at least one Mobile Network Operator (MNO): 98.9%

(Source: Ofcom Connected Nations Report Spring 2021)

We will:

Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure with gigabit capable broadband and improved mobile coverage and reliability

Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy

Major businesses in the borough can support smaller and establishing business by purchasing their goods and services. Other business can provide services and goods to their employees. This keeps the local economy buoyant and more resilient to fluctuations in global markets, improving business survival rates.

Key facts:

In 2019 there were 6,675 active enterprises in the borough, a growth of 310 on the previous year. Figures for 2020 are awaited to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business in the borough.

In 2019 the 3 year business survival rate was 55.4%, slightly below the Kent and regional averages. The 2019 survival rate is lower than that across the previous

10 years.

There is more fluctuation in 5 year business survival rates across the previous 10 years, with the 2019 rate for Ashford at 45.7% slightly higher than both the Kent and regional average.

There were 20 enterprises in the borough classed as a high growth enterprises (a business with ten or more employees which has seen at least 20% employee growth each year for the previous three-year period). Equivalent to 4.3% slightly below the Kent and national averages.

We will:

- Develop business networks and partnerships
- Establish and deliver the Port Health Service
- Support opportunities for business to develop and increase local employment in rural areas

Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy

The borough has stunning countryside with charming villages and the town of Tenterden known as the Jewel in the Weald. The borough is also ideally placed to be the location of choice from which to explore further afield in the county, London or nearby continent. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy but is often seasonal. The growing wine industry (with over 1 million vines planted) and associated tourist attractions are part of an ongoing European regional development fund (Interreg) initiative to develop a more resilient and sustainable visitor economy attracting increased visitors numbers and spend to the area, making the borough known as a 'year round' visitor destination with quality visitor experiences. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many tourism and related enterprises being required to close to reduce transmission of the virus. As national restrictions are relaxed, but international travel is still uncertain, attracting 'staycation' holiday makers will be important for the viability of many businesses.

Key facts:

In 2019 there were 4.7million visitors to the borough, 4.3 million were day visitors with only 395,000 being overnight visitors.

Tourism contributes £311 million to the local economy and supports over 6,000 jobs (4,500 full time equivalents), 11% of total employment.

We will:

- Increase overall visitor numbers, duration of stays and out of season visits, especially in growing markets such as wine tourism, leisure and green tourism.

Objective TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business

Town centres around the country are having to adapt to changing consumer habits and the impact of coronavirus on some retail and hospitality sectors. In Ashford town centre there are flourishing businesses offering quality services to customers, such as the cinema and food and drink outlets in Elwick Place. However, in some parts, recent store closures have left empty units which detract from the overall experience of visiting the town centre. Working with business and residents we need to understand what is commercially viable and what attracts people into the town to ensure it is a lively, safe place where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities.

The rural town of Tenterden is a vitally important hub in the west of the borough providing a range of services that are important to retain and enhance.

Key facts:

In the 2020 residents survey many respondents felt the town centre was unsatisfactory: due to perceptions that it was not safe, that the shopping provision was poor and too many shops were vacant and that it is too difficult to access and has issues with littering.

We will:

- Progress the Ashford Town centre reset programme
- Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall
- Progress the Vicarage Lane redevelopment

4.4 Strategic Projects

The council, working in partnership with other organisations, has a strong record of delivering successful projects to drive economic growth and the wellbeing of residents. This continues to be a focus for this Corporate Plan.

Each of the strategic projects supports the one or more of our strategic objectives, thus helping to achieve the Ashford Ambition. The Ashford Strategic Delivery Board (ASDB) will monitor progress and work to unlock any barriers to delivery.

The strategic projects are:



In addition the ASDB will have a watching brief over the following projects where the council is taking the lead on delivery.



Page 139

Ashford Priority Projects:	Objectives supported:
Strategic Parks (Victoria, Conningbrook and Discovery parks)	GP2, CA3, CA4
Town Centre reset	CA4, TG5
Park Mall redevelopment	CA4, TG5
Active Travel (Cycling and Walking Strategy)	GP1, GP2, CA3

Key facts

There has been a 48% increase in footfall in the town centre since beginning of March 2021.

The town centre vacancy rates are higher than the national average at 17.5% (Ashford - July 2021) compared to 11.5% (nationally - April 2021).

Anticipated that Elwick Place will have all units fully occupied in 2021.

5. Our Principles

We will be supporting our staff to be ambitious, creative and trustworthy in all that they do to fulfil the council's ambition to be an effective and well-resourced organisation that will:

1. Treat everyone fairly and with respect
2. Understand and respond to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged
3. Put the customer at the heart of everything we do and ensure our services are accessible
4. Make the most of our assets and invest wisely to ensure we live within our means
5. All work towards achieving the objectives of being a Green Pioneer and Caring Ashford

The table below shows examples of the policies and procedures we currently use to ensure we are upholding our principles and what we intend to do to improve and strengthen our adherence to our principles.

As an organisation we will embrace modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality, compliant services. We will be transparent and open in our decision making, listen to our residents and encourage participation in the democratic process.

Current policies and procedures	Future action
1. Treat everyone fairly and with respect	
Equality Objectives Staff training programme	Setting up a staff health and wellbeing champions group Develop an Equalities Action Plan
2. Understand and respond to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged	
Borough Profile Residents' Surveys Local Plan	Continue to build upon and improve our understanding and use of data to better respond to the needs of our communities Adopt a Community Asset Transfer and Management Policy
3. Put the customer at the heart of everything we do and ensure our services are accessible	
Digital Strategy Equality Objectives Complaints process	Review our systems for handling complaints Develop a new digital and customer services strategy Deliver the digital programme Improve engagement with local councils through a regular forum
4. Make the most of our assets and invest wisely to ensure we live within our means	
Risk Management Strategy/Framework Commercial Strategy Asset Management Strategy Medium Term Financial Plan Annual Governance Statement	Continue to develop our commercial programme
5. All work towards achieving the objectives of being a Green Pioneer and Caring Ashford	
Kent Resilience Forum Principles for a Green Recovery Community Safety Priorities Plan Air Quality Strategy Cycling and Walking Strategy Housing and Homelessness Strategies	Adopt Carbon Reduction Action Plan Review Project Management Toolkit Review Committee Template Develop a Social Value Policy and review Contract Management toolkit Embed through staff induction and appraisals Review Sustainability Champions group Reviewing our parks and open spaces land management strategies and policies for improved biodiversity

6. Financial Position

The Corporate Plan will be delivered through a number of funding streams. Projects and resourcing which form part of the current establishment will be funded from the existing revenue budget. Projects outside of the existing budget can be funded in a number of ways:

1. For commercial or “invest to save” projects, at least costs recovered – these can be funded from borrowing (the council could choose to fund from a reserve fund).
2. For corporate projects that do not generate savings or an income can be funded from one of the following funds:
 - a. Climate Change Delivery Fund - £2m available – the project will need to contribute to the reduction of carbon in the Ashford Borough
 - b. Improvement Delivery Fund - £3m available – for other projects that will have a focus on delivering projects in the more deprived areas as well as further afield in the borough.

7. Governance, Reporting and Monitoring

Delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives will be monitored at both Member and officer level.

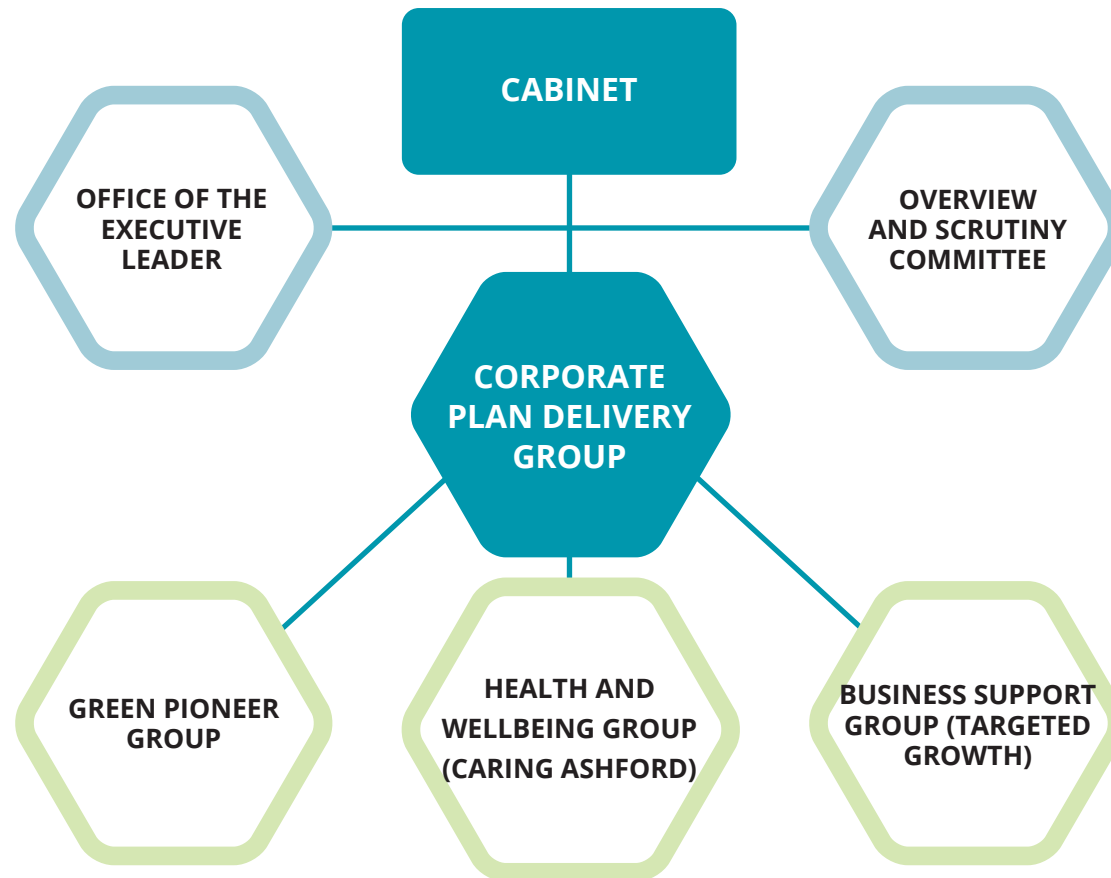
Cabinet will receive Quarterly Performance Reports. An Annual Report to Cabinet in June will provide an update on progress and will detail any proposed changes to the Action Plan and seek approval to instigate such amendments.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also receive the Quarterly Performance Reports and the Annual Report.

The Annual Report and Quarterly Performance reports are compiled by the Corporate Policy Team.

Each theme of the Corporate Plan will have an officer group responsible for monitoring delivery of the actions.

These groups will report to the Corporate Plan Delivery Group. Any significant challenges to the delivery of the action plan identified by the Corporate Plan Delivery Group will be reported by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Leader of the Council. The CEO and the Leader will agree if an exceptional report is required to Cabinet.



Performance Measure	Relevant Objective(s)	Expected Trend	Comment	Reporting Frequency
Councils carbon footprint (tCO ₂ e)	GP1	Decreasing	Net Zero by 2030	Annual
Total potential capacity of council owned renewable energy provision (kWh)	GP1	Increasing	Taking into consideration current solar and future projects.	Annual
Number of EV charging points on council property	GP1	Increasing		Annual
Air Quality – average level of NO ₂ µg/m ³	GP1 (CA3)	Decreasing	Below 40µg/m ³	Annual
Area of land (Km ²) managed for nature conservation	GP2	Increasing	Annual Comment – include any Stodmarsh mitigation sites.	Annual
Number of organisations committed to active travel plans	GP1 GP2 (CA3)	Increasing	As set out in LCWIP	Quarterly

Number of trees planted (net gain) supported through ABC projects	GP2	Increasing	135,500 by 2024 (Queens Canopy Target)	Annual
Level of biodiversity in defined project areas	GP2	Increasing	20% increase using biodiversity metric – data returned on a project by project basis.	Annual
Recycling rate (% of waste collected to be recyclates)	GP3	Increasing	50%	Quarterly
Refuse collection success rate	GP3 (CA3)	Increasing	99.96%	Quarterly
Contamination rate in recycling loads	GP3	Decreasing	20% reduction in rejected loads	Annual
Reported incidences of flytipping	GP3	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures.	Annual
% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	CA1	Increasing	98.5%	Quarterly
Number of all recorded crime figures (annual) PLUS the reported Anti-Social Behaviour number	CA1	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures – reflect ongoing work, town centre action plan, success securing the safer streets funding.	Annual
Number killed or seriously injured on the roads	CA1	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures.	Annual
Number of play areas revamped/refreshed/replaced	CA1, CA3	Increasing		Annual
Number of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	CA1	Increasing	No target with fluctuations experienced across quarters.	Quarterly
Number of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	CA1	Increasing	No target with fluctuations experienced across quarters.	Quarterly
Number of homelessness presentations	CA3	-	Interventions measure included within note. Noted that Homelessness presentations to some extent out of our direct control. Monitored to reflect case load on service	Quarterly
Disabled facilities grants completed	CA1	-	Note to reflect the budget spend figure annually.	Quarterly
Unemployment rate	CA2, TG1	Decreasing	-	Monthly
Unemployment rate 18-24 years & Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) figure	CA2, TG1	Decreasing	-	Monthly
Indices of multiple deprivation score	CA3	Improving	From current baseline figures.	Annual
Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity	CA3	Improving	Reflects work with the OneYou shop. Information taken from local authority health profiles. Note to include outcomes from health and wellbeing action plan. Benchmarked against regional authorities.	Annual

Annual footfall to key leisure sites	CA3	Increasing	Benchmarked against historic footfall figures	Annual
Benefits change of circumstances processing time	CA3	Decreasing	Under 10 days	Quarterly
Benefits new claim processing time	CA3	Decreasing	Under 28 days	Quarterly
Exceptional Circumstance Payments spend (%) compared to budget available.	CA3	-	100% budgeted figure	Annual
Value of grants awarded via community groups	CA4	-	Reinstate where we were before Covid	Quarterly
Value of local lottery scheme awards (new project)	CA4	-	New projects	
Baseline of current position	Quarterly			
Number of voluntary groups in the borough	CA2	-	Benchmarking with other regional areas.	Annual
Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	CA3	-	Monitored through contracts	Quarterly
Business vacancy rate	TG1, TG3, TG5	Decreasing	Benchmark against national average	Quarterly
Ashford town centre vacancy rate	TG1, TG3, TG5	Decreasing	Benchmark against national average	Quarterly
Contribution to budget from commercial investments	UP	Increasing	Against budgeted figure	Quarterly
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	TG1, TG3	Decreasing	-	Quarterly
Numbers of creative industries in the borough	TG1	Increasing	-	Annual
Digital uptake - % of total council /% Increase transactions completed electronically.	TG2	Increasing	80%	Quarterly
Social media engagement	TG2	Increasing	Increasing against baseline figure.	Quarterly
Percentage of tourism related jobs in the borough	TG4	Increasing	-	Annual
Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden	TG5	-	Against budgeted figure	Quarterly
% FOI responses responded to within 20 working days	UP	Above 95%	95%	Quarterly
Business rates collection rate	UP	-	99% (full year)	Quarterly
Council tax collection rate	UP	-	98.25% (full year)	Quarterly
Percentage of invoices paid on time	UP	-	98%	Quarterly
% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	UP CA1	-	100%	Quarterly
Number of days sickness per FTE	UP	-	Industry benchmarks comparison long and short term context taken from sickness reports	Quarterly
Average speed of customer service calls answer	UP	Average wait time for customer service calls - to be benchmarked with results across Kent	1.38	Quarterly

Complaints resolved at stage 1	UP	% of complaints resolved as stage 1	Benchmarked from historic figures.	Six Monthly
Mean gender pay gap	UP	Mean (average) gender pay gap in hourly pay and Median (mid-point) gender pay gap in hourly pay recorded	Benchmarked figure.	Annual
Ongoing litigation	UP	% of cases on which formal proceedings are issued	-	Quarterly
% of s106 completed within agreed timeframe	UP	% of s106 completed within agreed timeframe	-	Quarterly
% of Planning applications approved	UP CA1		90%	Quarterly
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority)	UP CA1	-	65%	Quarterly
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	UP CA1	-	65%	Quarterly
% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks (or within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the council)	UP CA1	-	75%	Quarterly
% of non-major planning applications determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	UP CA1	-	75%	Quarterly
Number of live planning applications (open cases)	UP	-	550 (maximum)	Quarterly

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Detailed delivery plan

Actions in **bold** are key corporate priorities.

Time frame Key:

Start date	Due date
Short = commenced or before end of 2021	Short = before end of 2022
Medium = before end of 2022	Medium = before end of 2024
Long = Before end of 2024	Long = after 2024 or an ongoing project

Theme: Green Pioneer - Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected and enhanced.

Objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets					
Outcome: Homes are energy efficient and cheaper to heat. Renewable energy generation and consumption increases. Fewer local car journeys are made, air quality improves and residents are more active and healthy.					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP1.1 Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes		Identify and allocate sites for renewable energy projects	Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
		Implement the Future Homes standard as a minimum criteria for achieving Zero Carbon homes	Lead (Planning and Development)	Medium	Long
GP1.2 Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same	Investigate feasibility of developing a Solar Farm		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
	Investigate feasibility of developing Solar car ports in council owned car parks		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
	Seek opportunities for solar panels to be installed to commercial / industrial buildings		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
	Explore viability of new ways of generating renewable energy (GSH / wind turbines)		Lead (Corporate Property)	Medium	Long
	Explore possibility of street lighting project phase 2		Enable (Corporate Property)	Medium	Medium
GP1.3 Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with the council's operations and staff use		Review where staff work/commute/travel for work and implement a staff travel plan	Lead (Human Resources)	Medium	Medium
	Consideration of hybrid and electric fleet options in new Waste & Recycle Collections and Street Cleansing Contract		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Short
		Introduce a Port Health Shuttle Bus	Lead (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium

GP1.4 Reduce car usage by implementing local active travel initiatives and uptake of public transport together with cleaner travel options	Deliver the Cycling and Walking Action Plan		Lead (Culture)	Short	Long
	Install electric vehicle charging points in named council owned car parks and facilitate extension to HRA controlled parking areas		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Work the local bus partnership to increase patronage and introduce cleaner vehicles in line with government's Bus Back Better Strategy		Lobby (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Promote/Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app for increased cycling and walking activity		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
GP1.5 Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings through retrofitting programmes	Review corporate buildings to prioritise investment		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
		Refurbishment / retrofitting of corporate buildings to be carbon neutral	Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
	Complete EPC's for all types of Council housing stock. Develop a plan for retrofitting HRA stock to be integrated into the HRA Asset Management Strategy		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
	Private rented sector - landlord education and enforcement, promotion of green homes grants / council funding and referrals		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium

Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

Outcome: Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases

Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP2.1 Ensure the biodiversity net gain value through the planning process as set out in the Environment Bill is met or exceeded, where possible	Work with land owners / developers to increase biodiversity		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Develop and implement a mitigation plan to reduce nitrate concentrations in the Stour Valley catchment area		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Medium
GP2.2 Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife		Undertake design and consult on options for Discovery Park	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Ensure delivery of Victoria Park refurbishment programme		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
		Work towards the Improvement and extension of the Kingsnorth Buffer Zone	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Progress the completion of Conningbrook Park (inc car park)		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Ensure open space management plans (e.g. QMP) include opportunities for increasing biodiversity		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Medium
		Reduce loss of bio diversity at BCP through appropriate land management in land adjacent to the facility.	Lobby (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium
	Conclude the work of Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission to map the future land use of the borough		Lead (Planning and Development))	Short	Short

GP2.3 Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.		Ensure community grants are assessed and awarded in line with the KRF Principles for Green Recovery	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Facilitate the Queen's Canopy tree planting initiative to plant 135,000 trees across the borough		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Medium
GP2.4 Conserve water through reduced usage.		Reduce water use in corporate buildings / operations	Lead (Corporate Property)	Medium	Medium
		Educate and change behaviours associated with water use and water consumption including growing plants and vegetables	Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Medium	Medium
Objective GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business					
Outcome: A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP3.1 Ensure our waste collection service drives the improvement of waste reduction and recycling	Continued public engagement and education		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long
GP3.2 Work with business to implement government introduced schemes to encourage reuse and waste reduction		Work in partnership to achieve Courtauld commitment targets to promote and increase the circular economy	Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Medium	Medium
	Strengthen enforcement message and action on fly tipping		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long
	Improve engagement of parish councillors and volunteers in addressing litter and fly tipping		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long

Theme: Caring Ashford - Our Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected

Objective CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely					
Outcome: Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA1.1 Enable housing development that meets local needs, supports independence and creates sustainable communities	Support the delivery of the South Ashford Garden Community		Enable (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Support the growth and delivery of a wide range of affordable housing solutions for general needs, independent living and temporary accommodation, homes of the right type and in the right place, contributing to meeting the Carbon Neutral target of the borough		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
		Work with Parish Councils to identify rural housing needs by increasing local housing needs surveys	Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
	Deliver carbon reduction measures to be integrated into HRA new build and acquisition schemes		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
	Place-making - ensure planning policies support delivery of adequate community infrastructure (Inc. play pitches etc.)		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Develop the lifeline service to enable residents to live independently and support personal health and wellbeing		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Improve and enhance digital solutions for improved customer experiences amongst HRA Tenants		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
	Develop the Dahlia brand for independent living for older people. Providing range of services enabling different levels of independence		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
CA1.2 Work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas	Support parishes, town and community councils that wish to introduce and would benefit from 20mph speed restriction and make recommendation to Highways Authority		Lobby (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
CA1.3 Improve engagement with local communities and enable them to increase their resilience to adverse events and emergencies	Increase engagement with local councils including regular local council forum		Lead (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Short	Long
	Conduct a Residents' Survey in 2022 and 2024 to inform our future engagement plan		Lead (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Short	Short

CA1.4 Implement recommendations of White Paper around safe and compliant HRA buildings	Strengthen our governance framework		Lead (Housing)	Short	Short
CA1.5 Work with communities to design develop and manage facilities that support community cohesion		Enable community ownership and management of local assets	Enable (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Medium	Medium
	Facilitate the development of Finberry community facility and subsequent management arrangement		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
Objective CA2: local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment					
Outcome: local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA2.1 Create opportunities for young people to take-up education and training	Work with Ashford College to ensure local skills needs are met		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Provide opportunities at ABC for youth employment through Kickstart, apprentices, graduate roles etc		Lead (Human Resources)	Short	Medium
CA2.2 Work with existing and potential employers to identify the skills and knowledge they require		Work in partnership to utilise any government funding to implement and promote new employment support programmes	Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
CA2.3 Work with voluntary sector to increase informal learning opportunities as route in to work	Provision of funding for voluntary and community sector. E.g Ashford Volunteer Centre and Revelation		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
Objective CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people					
Outcome: The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA3.1 Work with communities to identify local issues and implement solutions	Progress the Community Health Engagement Survey Solutions (CHESS) project		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Short
		Ensure Community Grants & Support Package contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Corporate Plan	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Implement the improvements at the prioritised play areas		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium

CA3.2 Work in partnership to increase participation in sports and wellbeing activities.	Work with leisure operators to maximise use of assets		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
	Work with voluntary sector to deliver community led health and wellbeing programmes		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Encourage the expansion of services provided by the One You Shop		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
		Progress the procurement of an operator for the Tenterden Leisure Centre	Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
		Promote and facilitate the local Lottery	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
CA3.3 Actively engage with partners to give children and young people the best start in life	Champion the Reconnect programme (KCC)		Enable (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Continue to work with and support providers of services for young people across the borough including ensuring there is prominent provision for young people within the Ashford town centre re-set proposals		Lead (Culture)	Short	Short
	Promote the Charlton Athletic Community Trust programme		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
CA3.4 Tackle Homelessness	Review and improve the homelessness offer		Lead (Housing)	Short	Short
	Develop move on accommodation for rough sleepers		Lead (Housing)	Medium	Medium
	Grow the Social Lettings Agency		Lead (Housing)	Medium	Medium
Objective CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility					
Outcome: Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA4.1 Encourage communities to protect and celebrate their heritage	Promote and regularly update the heritage plaque scheme		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
CA4.2 Empower local communities to identify and deliver local events that support community wellbeing	Deliver the Events and Festival Framework		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	In line with White paper recommendations - Empower HRA Tenants to get involved in service delivery and to have a voice and be heard. - Tenancy Engagement Strategy		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
CA4.3 Ensure arts, entertainment and local heritage are accessible to all	Work with community organisations to enhance the local heritage offer and arts provision		Enable (Culture)	Short	Long
	Agree next steps for Tank Conservation works		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
		Seek to relocate and expand the Ashford Museum	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Long

Theme: Targeted Growth - A thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.

Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough					
Outcome: The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG1.1 Progress the development of Newtown Works		Implement the planning permission for Newtown Works	Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
TG1.2 Establish Project Green in the borough		Enable high tech manufacturer to locate in the borough to support green agenda (project green)	Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
TG1.3 Progress the commercial projects at Conningbrook Park	Work with Developer to bring forward and deliver the commercial obligations within the agreements.		Enable (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
TG1.4 Support existing dynamic businesses to expand and grow	Provide advice and support to existing businesses including specialist support		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Long
TG1.5 Work to attract inward investment to the borough	Focus the AshfordFor programme to attract Inward Investment and new Business		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough		Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
	Lobby for return of Eurostar services at Ashford International station to pre December 2016 timetable		Lobby (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
TG1.6 Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes	Encourage take up of programmes such as LOCASE run by KCC		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Develop a community of Green Businesses		Enable (Economic Development)	Long	Long
TG1.7 Strengthen support for creative industries		Review Arts and Creative Industries Strategy and merge the Public Art Strategy within it	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Long
	Creation of Artists Network and sustaining group		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
Objective TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents					
Outcome: Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG2.1 Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure with gigabit capable broadband and improved mobile coverage and reliability	Increase activity in lobbying and attracting commercial investment from providers		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
		Take a leading role in coordinating programmes such as the voucher schemes and community fibre partnerships	Lead (Economic Development)	Medium	Medium
	Provide an increased presence at broadband and digital related events or meetings, raising profile of Ashford for investors		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium

Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy					
Outcome: Local business survival rates improve					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG3.1 Develop business networks and partnerships	Strengthen engagement with the largest local employers		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Long
	Articulate benefits of Ashford through Business ambassadors		Lead (Economic Development)	Medium	Medium
TG3.2 Establish and deliver the Port Health Service		Develop Sevington as a centre of excellence for importers and attract cargo agents and act as Primary Authority in imports exports advice etc.	Enable (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium
TG3.3 Support opportunities for business to develop and increase local employment in rural areas	Promote and facilitate take up of Scale Up initiative		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy					
Outcome: Ashford is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG4.1 Increase overall visitor numbers, duration of stays and out of season visits, especially in growing markets such as wine tourism, leisure and green tourism	Encourage participation from local business in the INTEREGG project		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	In collaboration (Visit Kent & Kent Downs AONB), develop a Food & Drink Experience including visitor experience around the wine industry		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	Update Visitor Destination Website/plus out and about scheme		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Progress the Ashford Borough Destination Management Plan		Lead (Culture)	Long	Medium
Objective TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents, visitors and business					
Outcome: Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG5.1 Progress the Ashford Town centre reset programme including regeneration of Bank Street	Ashford and Tenterden Welcome Back Fund Programme		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Short
TG5.2 Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall	Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall and develop model for delivery		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Long
TG5.3 Progress the Vicarage Lane development	Masterplan and redevelop Vicarage Lane land and the former Odeon building		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Long

8.2 Appendix 2 – Kent Resilience Forum Principles for a Green Recovery

1. **All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain.** This means new infrastructure, developments, processes and businesses should be looking to minimise the use of energy and water, reduce waste, promote the circular economy and use renewable energy and sustainable materials where possible. It also means that investment doesn't lock in carbon emissions in the future.
2. **Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature.** This means benefiting from the health and wellbeing advantages associated with: warmer, more energy efficient homes; better air quality inside and outside; increased access to public green space; and a high quality natural environment thriving with wildlife.
3. **Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycleways and public transport.** This means active travel; public transport and low carbon vehicles are not only the best way to get around in our personal lives but the default for business travel and communications; virtual working is supported and encouraged; and homeworking is enabled to become the norm.
4. **Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events.** This means adaptations are in place to cope with, and build resilience against, increased drought, flooding and heatwaves, and new designs account for these from the beginning.
5. **Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity.** This means species are protected and, where threatened, are recovered; existing habitats and green spaces are enhanced to regain and retain good health; communities are inspired by, and engaged with, their local environment and are realising the mental and physical health benefits of such a connection; and natural options to tackle climate change impacts such as flooding, temperature change and water management are considered before other options.
6. **Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand.** This means ensuring new green spaces are planned in areas where everyone will see benefits and not just new development; and the delivery of clean growth does not affect some people disproportionately.
7. **Greater partnership working and collaboration.** This means engaging all parts of the community to contribute to and realise environmental, economic and social benefits.

8.3 Appendix 3 - Risk Appetite Statement

1. Introduction

The council's risk appetite statement is set at a strategic level by the Cabinet and reviewed formally with the adoption of a new Corporate Plan. Once approved, the appetite will be incorporated into the council's Risk Management Framework and shared throughout the organisation to ensure that all strategic and operational decisions are aligned with the organisational risk appetite. The council's current risk appetite was adopted by the Cabinet in 2018 and reflected the strategic aims set out in the Corporate Plan up to 2020. To coincide with the new Corporate Plan 2022-24 being adopted our risk appetite has been reviewed and is presented together with the new Plan.

Risk is unavoidable if we are to succeed in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities and objectives but these risks need to be carefully assessed before being taken to ensure they are within our risk appetite and that they are tolerable.

Our risk appetite statement helps us to understand the amount of risk we are willing to take in pursuit of achieving our priorities and objectives.

2. Risk appetite definition

A 'risk appetite' expresses the nature and extent of risk we prepared to take to realise the benefits of the **opportunities**, essentially comparing the value (financial or otherwise) of potential benefits with the losses that might be incurred. When considering **threats**, risk appetite involves assessing the level of exposure that can be justified and tolerated by comparing the value (financial or otherwise) of potential benefits with the losses that might be incurred.

3. How we use our risk appetite

As a local authority we carry out a wide variety of activities and have an equally wide variety of different risks that we manage daily. We have therefore recognised the need for a number of potentially differing appetites depending on what the activity is. Defining our risk appetite helps us to clearly set out what the risk levels are in our decision making and operational activities which in turn helps decision makers take a consistent approach. We give detailed consideration to all potential investment opportunities to decide those to take forward and those to decline. All risks that fall outside our risks appetite are reported to the council's Management Team and Audit Committee.

4. Risk appetite statement

The risk appetite is guided by our strategic objectives and our principles set out in our Corporate Plan. Our strategic objectives are ambitious for the borough. Our principles define the way we operate when delivering our objectives.

Out of a range of very low to very high, the council will take risks within the very low to moderate range. It will not take risks which are likely and where the impact is major or catastrophic. More specifically:

ABC's Risk Appetite Statement

The council, working in partnership with other organisations, has a strong record of delivering successful projects to drive economic growth and the wellbeing of residents. In order to support the delivery of our corporate objectives we have chosen to take **Moderate** amounts of measured risk to deliver our **Strategic** aims.

As an organisation we will take **Moderate** amounts of measured risks in the **Delivery** of modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality, compliant services.

As our **Financial** risk appetite is **low**, we will ensure we make the most of our assets and invest wisely to maintain long term financial stability and independence.

Understanding and responding to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged and treating everyone fairly and with respect is of utmost importance to us. We will be transparent and open in our decision making, listen to our residents and encourage participation in the democratic process. Our risk appetite towards regulatory, legal and **Compliance** matters is **Very Low**.

5. Aligning our risk appetite to our Heat Map

The matrix below shows how we assess whether a risk is within our risk appetite. The risk that fall outside of the council’s risk appetite are reported to the council’s Management Team and Audit Committee.

Strategic (external factors, reputation, strategy) and Delivery (Project/service delivery, resources, IT infrastructure)

Financial (revenues, benefits, treasury management, accountancy, costs)

Compliance (constitution, Planning Inspectorate, ethical, health and safety, legal)

Likelihood	> 90%				5) = Very high tolerance	
	> 65%			4) = High tolerance		
	> 40%		3) = Moderate tolerance			
	> 40%		2) = Low tolerance			
	> 10%	1) = Very low				
		1) Minimal	2) Minor	3) Moderate	4) Major	5) Catastraophic
Impact						

6. Reviewing our risk appetite

We will formally review our risk appetite each time we develop a new Corporate Plan or every four years. The environment within which we operate may mean we need to make changes to our appetite within this time period with any change reported to the Cabinet.





Draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024

Report of consultation - June to October 2021

Introduction

The draft Corporate Plan is the culmination of the work undertaken in 2019/20 with a wide range of stakeholders to form a long term ambition for the borough that would be the cornerstone of all key strategic plans going forward. The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent 'lockdowns' resulted in a change to the original timetable to introduce a new Corporate Plan during 2020. In the short term a Recovery Plan was adopted (July 2020) to set the priorities for a timely recovery whilst recognising many resources were directed to supporting the emergency response to the pandemic.

The Recovery Plan embedded the long term ambition and the three themes that emerged from the stakeholder workshops: Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford, Targeted Growth and these are now carried forward in the draft Corporate Plan.

The Ashford Ambition:

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

The draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024 was approved for consultation by Cabinet on 29th July 2021.

Consultation

Recognising the in-depth consultation undertaken to shape the long term ambition and themes that have shaped the draft Corporate Plan, together with a reflection on the last 18 months, it was agreed that a 'light touch' approach was appropriate.

The draft Corporate Plan was published on the council's website on 18th August with a request for comments to be emailed to the Policy Team. All members, staff, local councils and stakeholders from the workshops were emailed directly on 20th August to advise of the consultation.

The deadline for responses was initially 17th September, this was extended to 1st October at the request of local councils.

Consultation responses

11 responses were received:

- 2 borough councillors
- 3 local councils (South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council , Tenterden Town Council, Wittersham PC)
- Comments from Ashford Kent Association of Local Councils meeting
- 3 individuals

- 1 organisation (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary of comments:

- Confusion over use of Ashford, Ashford Town and Ashford Borough.
- Scant reference to Tenterden or recognition of work going on in the town or any strategic projects outside of Ashford town.
- Need to address issue of job vacancies and how to attract staff, relationship between where people live and work to enable take up of jobs particularly in retail and hospitality sectors.
- Cycling and walking strategy must not be limited to Ashford Town.
- Focus in the document on housing and homes, including numbers, tenure, quality and energy efficiency was welcomed.
- More priority should be given to working with and supporting SME's
- Detailed suggestions relating to lobbying for retention of A&E services locally, enhancing local policing, safety and addressing ASB, planning, land acquisition for tree planting, bus services, speed restrictions, town centre play provision.
- The plan is ambitious, constructive and at the same time cautious, supportive of its implementation.
- Insufficient reference to parishes and engagement with them. Unable to determine benefit to parishes from the actions/projects.
- Plan is aspirational but can it be delivered?
- Need better understanding and relationship with existing manufacturers to retain operations in the borough.
- Support new and existing business to access international markets.
- Important to be able to measure and monitor progress.
- Plan needs go move away from a culture of supporting everyone towards enabling people to address their own problems.
- No reference to outcomes and lessons learnt in previous Corporate Plan.
- No connection in three themes to problems, opportunities or legislative adherence.
- The Ashford Ambition doesn't differentiate Ashford from any other borough.
- Clarity required on how the borough will respond to: possible future pandemics, climate change and the environment bill.
- Review language and terms used.
- How will the plan be funded?

Next stage

The draft Corporate Plan will be reviewed taking account of the above comments and amended where necessary.

A table indicating the council's response to the above comments is found in Appendix 1

The proposed amendments to be agreed, by Cabinet, prior to adoption.

A summary document will be produced to compliment the final Corporate Plan.

Appendix 1

Respondent's comments	ABC response
Confusion over use of Ashford, Ashford Town and Ashford Borough.	The plan will be reviewed to provide clarity in use of 'Ashford'
Scant reference to Tenterden or recognition of work going on in the town or any strategic projects outside of Ashford town.	The plan recognises the importance of Tenterden but will strengthen references to the town. Strategic projects are aligned to where there is the highest need and greatest benefit can be derived.
Need to address issue of job vacancies and how to attract staff, relationship between where people live and work to enable take up of jobs particularly in retail and hospitality sectors.	This is a national issue. The council works with communities through its master planning and placemaking initiatives with regard to homes and employment. The council works Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism sector and the local college to ensure employees have appropriate skills for local employers.
Cycling and walking strategy must not be limited to Ashford Town.	Cycling and Walking Strategy has reference to Tenterden and parishes: Audit and assess priority routes, networks in smaller settlements and key routes linking them using DfT's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and Living Streets School Route and Community Street Audits: <i>Tenterden – provision of a network of pedestrian/cycle routes building on existing routes and providing routes as part of new development – TENT1A and B</i>
Focus in the document on housing and homes, including numbers, tenure, quality and energy efficiency was welcomed.	Providing homes that meet local housing need is a key priority for the council together with reducing carbon emissions from the built environment
More priority should be given to working with and supporting SME's.	The council recognises that current procurement frameworks can exclude SME's and will look at how these frameworks can become more inclusive. Also to take greater account of social value in procurement. We continue to

	promote the 'Scale-Up' programme through the Chamber of Commerce.
Detailed suggestions relating to lobbying for retention of A&E services locally, enhancing local policing, public safety and addressing ASB, planning, land acquisition for tree planting, bus services, speed restrictions, town centre play provision.	The action plan details the role of the council; lobby, enable or lead. Where lobbying is required will be decided on a case by case basis. The Corporate Plan action plan provides an overarching framework. Service plans contain detailed actions and milestones.
The plan is ambitious, constructive and at the same time cautious, supportive of its implementation.	We welcome this comment.
Insufficient reference to parishes and engagement with them. Unable to determine benefit to parishes from the actions/projects.	Communities are referenced throughout the plan, this is for both urban and rural areas. Increasing engagement with local councils is an action
Plan is aspirational but can it be delivered?	The plan will be revised to show which actions are agreed/ approved and those which are to be approved subject to resources.
Need better understanding and relationship with existing manufacturers to retain operations in the borough.	The council works closely with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and there is an action to develop business networks and partnerships.
Support new and existing business to access international markets.	The council works closely with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.
Important to be able to measure and monitor progress.	A suite of performance indicators are being developed to include in the final plan.
Plan needs go move away from a culture of supporting everyone towards enabling people to address their own problems.	The plan emphasises working to enable people to find solutions for themselves and /or their communities.
No reference to outcomes and lessons learnt in previous Corporate Plan.	Key outcomes from the Recovery Plan are included in the introduction.
No connection in three themes to problems, opportunities or legislative adherence.	Each objective has a narrative highlighting opportunities and challenges
The Ashford Ambition doesn't differentiate Ashford from any other borough.	The Ambition was developed and agreed with local stakeholders.
Clarity required on how the borough will respond to: possible future pandemics, climate change and the environment bill.	The council is part of the Kent Resilience Forum and has its own emergency response plans in place. A Carbon Neutral Action plan is in development. The Environment Bill and potential implications are being monitored as is case with all emerging legislation.

Review language and terms used.	A summary document will be produced to provide an overview.
How will the plan be funded?	The action plan will be funded through internal and external sources and borrowing. The Delivery Plan now shows projects agreed/funded and those that will seek funding as opportunities arise through the lifetime of the plan. Projects/activities not currently funded will go through the appropriate due process to ensure resources are available. Details are made available in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 25th November 2021

Report Title: Solar Projects and programme

Report Author & Job Title: Giles Holloway
Development and Regeneration Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Nathan Iliffe
Portfolio Holder for: Corporate Property and Projects

Summary:

This report is to present and seek approval for proceeding with a significant half megawatt roof mounted solar array on industrial units at Carlton Road, Ashford at a cost of £401k including professional fees.

The solar array at Carlton Road will supply the Aspire depot with both free and carbon neutral electricity. The installation of the solar array will reduce imported electricity, and will also provide facilities to supply electricity for electric vehicles and plant.

The amount of carbon dioxide offset is estimated to be 301,322 kg per year; a significant sum which will not only offset the Council's footprint, but also help to deliver the Council's zero carbon ambitions.

Further array installations are being investigated and are varying stages of feasibility.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: Victoria Ward

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

- I. Approve the contents of the report
- II. Authorise spending of £401,000 to design and build a solar installation at the Carlton Road industrial park
- III. Note further renewable schemes are at feasibility stage.

Policy Overview: In May 2021 Cabinet reaffirmed the pledge made in 2019 to achieve zero carbon in the council's own estate and operations by 2030.

The proposed scheme contributes significantly to achieving objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets, in the draft Corporate Plan (under the

theme Green Pioneer) and the associated actions:
Action GP1.2: Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same.

Similarly, the proposed scheme directly contributes to Priority 3 of the draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption. Whereby the actions under Objective 3.2 Increase local renewable energy generation.

Financial Implications:	The capital cost is estimated and will be paid back through the saving of electricity in approximately 7-8 years.
Legal Implications:	Where units have been sold, agreements need will need to be in place to allow continued use and maintenance of solar arrays.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	The assessment is not required. No adverse impacts.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	No personal data needs to be collected or retained for the purpose of the project.
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Viability has been calculated on a lower end income scenario whereby the Aspire depot consumes the energy generated and remaining energy is sold to the National Grid for a basic import rate.
Sustainability Implications:	Green Pioneer objective 1 of the draft Corporate Plan.
Other Material Implications:	Connection to the National Grid is based upon the capacity of the local infrastructure. The amount of energy generated may be affected by a curtailment factor determined by the District Network Operator.
Exempt from Publication:	No.
Background Papers:	
Contact:	Giles.holloway@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330427

Appendix 1 Plan

Appendix 2 Financial Table

Report Title:

Introduction and Background

1. In May 2021, Cabinet reaffirmed the pledge made in 2019 to achieve zero carbon in the council's own estate and operations by 2030. To take measures to reduce reliance on fossil fuels by increasing the renewable energy generated and consumed.
2. Decarbonisation to slow, stop and reverse climate change is vital for the World, Britain and for our Borough. This project forms part of the Green Pioneer objectives contained within the Corporate Plan.
3. Ashford Borough Council already has 114 photovoltaic systems in operation, on domestic properties within the Housing Service and within the Corporate Property and Projects portfolio.
4. The Council's experience of renewables had its genesis with the Housing Service's Affordable Homes Programme, when it was subject to the 'Code for Sustainable Homes'. This involved the installation of photovoltaic panels and other methods of using free energy. The initial installations gave officers knowledge about the systems and the benefits to both a property owner/landlord and occupant.
5. The initial solar arrays installed were part-funded by 'Feed-in Tariff' grants and they did help us to explore and better understand specifications and performance. The purpose of the grants was to help ignite the industry and to realise an increase in performance of the panels; which has happened. With the removal of the grant funding, the payback of the capital expenditure of installation as a property owner, (an occupant can achieve a quicker payback), is between 7 and 8 years. Most business models have historically been taken over a 20 year period, which matched the Feed in Tariff grants energy contracts and now tend to show payback 2.5 times over the 20 year period.
6. All council-owned assets will continue to be assessed for potential to support solar (photovoltaic or PV) panels, which will be installed where financially viable. This report proposes that the Council makes immediate progress with a rooftop solar installation at Carlton Road.

Proposal

7. This proposal is for a roof-mounted system on the Council's industrial estate at Carlton Road. This type of system is relatively straightforward and is applied directly to the roof structure. A system of 28 PV arrays (Appendix 1), including a total of 1381 panels, will provide a total output of 566kWp estimated peak annual production of electricity.

8. Photovoltaic array is an established form of energy collection, using the sun's energy to generate electricity without the burning of fossil fuels. The conversion of this free energy to electricity can be used to help reduce the importation of electricity into the Council's portfolio, or offset the use of imported electricity used.
9. The estimated cost of this system's installation will be £401k including construction and fees. The financial summary in Appendix 2 portrays income from a private wire scenario and the worst case scenario where a proportion of generated energy is exported at the basic rate. The financial modelling is over a 25 year period, at that point the plant will still perform but there will be an opportunity to replace or improve the system.
10. The Carlton Road site can accommodate a half megawatt system. When compared to the Civic Centre, these arrays will generate 500 Kwh electricity per annum. Carbon dioxide offset is estimated to be 301,322 kg per year; a significant sum which not only offsets the Council's footprint but reduces the amount of electricity to be imported from the grid.
11. There are several options for the use of the carbon free electricity produced:
 - a. Export electricity to the grid. The compensation for exporting electricity to the grid is low and does not provide a viable option at 4p per unit. This may change as energy prices rise but it is hard to see this option becoming more attractive.
 - b. Use a sleeving agreement to sell the green energy to an energy company. Sleeving agreements appeared to be an attractive option, in anticipation that carbon-free electricity would be attractive for energy companies to sell on to customers as an ethical product. Despite us now seeing a change in the market, the exchange rate is not significantly greater than selling to the grid; however this does need to be monitored.
 - c. Use the electricity on site or sell to adjacent user/s. The units at Carlton Road are in the majority owned by the Council. The first two sold may need to be excluded from the project but, if more are sold, they will have reservations to allow for PV arrays. Selling electricity to the units is possible but the types of companies, (i.e. storage and small commercial) occupying the units are not high consumers of electricity. Adjacent to Carlton Road is the Aspire depot; which consumes a larger proportion if batteries and vehicle charging points are considered. Supplying one consumer simplifies the plant required and is the preferred system.

Risks

12. This roof-mounted system will be specified and installed within permitted development criteria, thus negating the need for Planning permission. This reduces the timeframe for delivery. There is a marginal reduction in efficiency due to the angle of the array.

13. There is a need to apply to the Distribution Network Operator (DNO), with a possibility that the infrastructure is not robust enough or capacity in the local system has been reached and production could be curtailed.
14. Further consideration will need to be given to energy storage and the baseline consumption of the building using the power. This is to maximise the income and offsetting of imported energy consumption.
15. Material and product shortages, which are affecting procurement. A Lesson learnt when the 'Feed in tariffs' significantly changed, was that the hardware was ordered and bought in advance or when available.
16. Material, labour and product prices increasing significantly due to shortages or cost of production rising globally. Depending on the significance of the price increases, the business model is referenced to ensure viability.
17. Two industrial units already sold do not have agreements, which allow for the installation of PV panels. The tenants on these 2 units may not want solar arrays on their roofs.
18. Possible objections due to concerns about light reflected from the panels. This historically has been a complaint about larger systems. This risk should be low considering the setting is an industrial estate, on industrial buildings and at a time where reducing carbon footprints is high on the agenda.
19. Currently Low Carbon Exchange monitors our systems and this has been a hugely successful arrangement. The arrangement will now need to be reviewed periodically due to the in-house electricians' service which we have access to and which has the skills to maintain and install solar arrays; subject to re-joining the microgeneration certification scheme (MCS) and being adequately resourced.

Equalities Impact Assessment

20. Members are referred to the attached Assessment.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

21. The Carlton Road proposal has been designed to satisfy the requirements specified by permitted development and therefore the system will not require planning permission. Consultation is not anticipated.

Other Options Considered

22. Other sites have been considered, but have fallen away due to issues accessing the National Grid, curtailment by the DNO or being financially unviable.
23. Other sites are being drawn together for a continuing programme. Some sites considered have more challenges:
 - a. Stour Centre car park – Council property which, in order to deliver a system on, requires design work and a planning application.

- b. Ellingham industrial estate – Council property which in part will involve structural considerations and planned maintenance prior to delivery.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

24. The income realised from the installation. This option enables the fastest payback of the capital cost of the system and then reduces the energy costs of the property the system is supplying.
25. Carbon reduction of the Council's portfolio. The system is of a size to save significant amounts of carbon per annum for the life of the system.

Next Steps in Process

26. Start the procurement process of the photovoltaic system for the units at Carlton Road.
27. Manage the construction contract and work with construction professionals to deliver the optimal solar array.

Conclusion

28. Delivering the photovoltaic system at Carlton road, enables the Council to realise Green Pioneer objective 1 of the Corporate Plan: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets.
29. The photovoltaic system will pay back the capital cost of the system and continue to reduce running costs of Council owned property.

Portfolio Holder's Views

30. In 2019 Cabinet made a pledge to achieve zero carbon across the Council's estate and operations by 2030, this pledge was re-affirmed in May 2021. The proposed scheme outlined in this report will progress the Council to achieving this pledge. Decarbonisation efforts to slow, stop and reverse climate change is vital for present and future generations of Ashford, the Country and indeed the World. The installation of solar array at Carlton Road will reduce our reliance on imported electricity, at a time electricity prices are increasing, will provide the Aspire Depot with clean, carbon neutral electricity and will not only off-set the Council's carbon footprint, but also help deliver the organisation's zero carbon emissions. This proposed scheme contributes significantly to achieving our objective of Green Pioneer, as outlined in the Draft Corporate Plan.
31. It is my hope that continued and increased renewable energy generation at Council owned property, will encourage local residents and businesses to do the same. This is yet another example of Ashford Borough Council not just talking the talk, but walking the walk. I commend this report to Cabinet and the three recommendations outlined in the document.

Contact and Email

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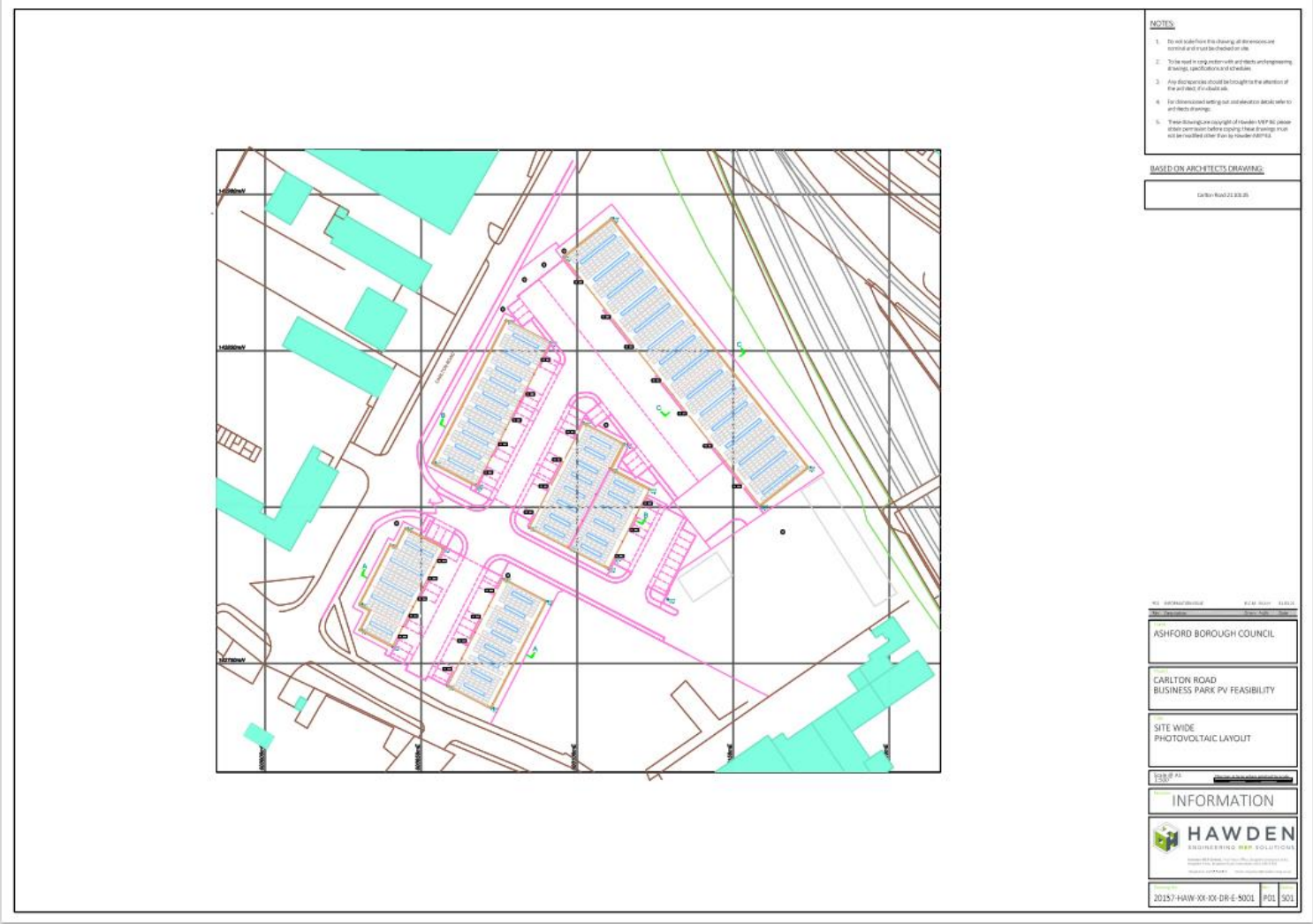


Figure 1: Proposed Plan of solar arrays on the Carlton Road development

Table 1 below shows a summary derived from inputs in an excel workbook to calculate and demonstrate project viability. Inputs required can be characterised into:

- This summary shows viability over a 25 year period. Income is dependent on who receives the electricity and how much is charged or received for each Kwh produced by the solar arrays.

Owner of Solar Photovoltaic Power Plant		
Name	566KWp Roof Mounted Project	
Export type	Private Wire	
Address	Carlton Road	

Project Summary		
Business Model:	Export Electricity	
Type of Installation	Roof Mounted	
Average Plant Size	566.00	kWh
Electricity Generated	577,150.20	kWh/p.a
Irradiation Per kWp	1030	kWh/kWp
Radiation Database	Classic PVGIS	

Revenue Streams		
None	0	£/kWh
PPA	0	£/kWh

Table 2 uses the same process and workbook, but this tests viability with the current electricity use of the depot and income at the most basic rate for the remaining electricity produced. The most basic rate is the current export rate to the grid; this is shown as an income of almost £29k per year.

Owner of Solar Photovoltaic Power Plant			
Name	566KWp Roof Mounted Project		
Export type	Grid connection		
Address	Carlton Road		

Project Summary			
Business Model:	Export Electricity		
Type of Installation	Roof Mounted		
Average Plant Size	566.00	kWh	
Electricity Generated	577,150.20	kWh/p.a	
Irradiation Per kWp	1030	kWh/kWp	
Radiation Database	Classic PVGIS		

Revenue Streams			
None	0	£/kWh	
PPA	0.05	£/kWh	

Capital Structure			
Costs	£	417,900.00	
Development costs	£	22,640.00	
Total Costs	£	440,540.00	

Leveraging Options			
Equity (Investment)	0%	£	0.44
Debt	100%	£	440,539.56
Nominal Debt Interest Rate		£	0.03

Financials			
		1st 12 months	25 Years Total
Electricity Generated	kWhrs	577,150.20	13,756,954.37
Incentive	£	-	£ -
PPA	£	28,857.51	£ 1,300,154.49
Offset Electricity Saving/Private wire benefit	£	30,473.53	£ 1,454,413.20
Insurance	£	1,698.00	£ 55,087.45
(CBT) Per MW	£	-	£ -
Gross Income	£	59,331.04	£ 2,748,774.60

Table 2: Financial summary for supplying Aspire depot and export to grid scenario



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To:

Date of Meeting: 25th November 2021

Report Title: **Agreement to produce a First Homes Position Statement**

Report Author & Job Title: Mark James, Development Partnership Manager
Daniel Carter Spatial Planning Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Paul Clokie, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Portfolio Holder for: Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

Summary:

First Homes is the latest Government affordable housing product aimed at allowing people to progress towards home ownership. It follows on, and adapts, the 'Starter Home' initiative which was first introduced around six years ago.

In May 2021 the Minister of State for Housing, Christopher Pincher MP, issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) setting out how Local Planning Authorities should progress First Homes and what weight should be applied to their application through the planning system.

This paper sets out how Ashford Borough Council will respond to the WMS, bearing in mind that the Council has a recently adopted Local Plan (adopted 2019) that sets out how affordable housing should be delivered in the Borough.

The intention is for the Council to produce a Position Statement that will show developers and land agents how First Homes shall be applied moving forward, in a flexible and considered way.

This Paper establishes the broad parameters of what will be included in a future Position Statement and delegates the final decision as to its contents.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: No Wards are identified as significantly affected

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

- I. **Agree that the Council adopt a flexible position on First Homes to take into account the nature of the WMS and the Council's adopted policy on affordable housing delivery,**
- II. **Agree the broad scope of a Position Statement,**

detailed in this report, which will demonstrate how First Homes should be applied until such time as a Local Plan Review is engaged or and supplementary planning document (SPD) prepared, and

- III. Delegate responsibility for the final contents of the Position Statement to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, Head of Housing and Portfolio Holder for Housing**
- IV. That, when agreed, the Position Statement is treated by the Council as a Material Consideration for the purpose of planning decisions**

Policy Overview:

Policy HOU1 'Affordable Housing' of the Council's adopted Local Plan to 2030 (adopted 2019) sets out how affordable housing shall be delivered in the Borough. This policy pre-dates the publication of the First Homes WMS by the Government.

However, Policy HOU1 has recently gone through the rigours of a Public Examination and found to be 'sound' in planning terms. It is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and has taken account of issue such as whole plan viability, housing need and the need to take into account local circumstances.

Policy HOU1 currently carries full planning weight in terms of decision making, as it is the most up-to-date part of the development plan in regards to affordable housing.

Financial Implications:

None

Legal Implications:

There is the potential that a Position Statement could be challenged by developer/landowner interests, or by others interested in the provision of affordable housing, either in respect of the Statement not being entirely consistent with the published WMS (which is a recognised material consideration) or that the Statement departs too much from adopted Council policy (which carries significant weight). It could also be challenged on the grounds of not having followed a formal consultative process.

Either scenario could happen until such time as a Local Plan Review is engaged where the issue of First Homes can be properly debated, taking into account the wider issues and inter-dependencies between the various policy objectives set by Government (normally expressed through the NPPF and supporting Guidance).

However, it is felt that as a result of adopting a flexible, non-prescriptive approach to the issue (see below), the risk of

challenge is minimal. Moreover, even if no Position Statement were adopted, the Council's approach to First Homes, in current and future Section 106 Agreement negotiations, may also be challenged. Therefore, preparing and, when agreed, publishing a Position Statement is the most effective and transparent way for the Council to proceed.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

This is attached at Appendix A

Data Protection Impact Assessment:

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

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):

The only potential risk is one of challenge, as outlined above but, as stated, offering a flexible position on First Homes should mitigate any risk.

Sustainability Implications:

This report concerns tenures, marketing and purchasers of affordable homes, rather than design, construction, materials or other 'physical' attributes of homes. However, the possibility of adopting some eligibility criteria relating to proximity to family, work, etc., may help to promote strong communities and reduce travel for work and leisure purposes.

Other Material Implications:

The WMS does not and should not replace the adopted Local Plan policy and that is why a flexible approach has been proposed here.

As First Homes do not involve Registered Providers (RPs), the Council as LPA would need to do all of the monitoring and overseeing work to ensure the First Homes are created, marketed and sold, both initially and subsequently, in line with the principles of First Homes. The resource implications of this for the Council are not clear but could, as the number of First Homes grows in year to come, be significant.

Exempt from Publication:

NO

Background Papers:

None

Contact:

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Report Title: Agreement to produce a First Homes Position Statement

Introduction and Background

1. First Homes is consistent with a long established Government desire for everyone to own their own home. It follows on, and adapts, the 'Starter Home' initiative which was first introduced around six years ago.
2. First Homes are a specific kind of discounted market sale housing product which count as 'affordable housing' (as Starter Homes were). Properties are sold initially at a minimum 30% discount against the open market value of the home. This percentage discount is then applied in perpetuity, unlike Starter Homes whereby the discount only applied in the first purchase of the property. In essence, the First Homes housing stock will always be marketed at 70% of market value. These requirements are expected to be secured through Section 106 Agreements, however the Government has not published the draft Section 106 wordings that it suggests should be considered for this, nor is it clear.
3. The power for a local authority to set a higher discount of either 40% or 50% exists but, importantly, this can only be achieved via a housing need assessment through a local plan process. Accordingly, until a Local Plan Review is triggered by the Council, it cannot seek more than a 30% discount for First Homes.
4. Also, the First Homes discount can only be applied as a blanket discount across the whole of the borough and cannot be altered for the town of Ashford versus the rural parts of the Borough – although such differentiation is something which the Council's existing affordable policy achieves.
5. The first sale of a First Homes property is subject to a price cap to a maximum of £250,000. Accordingly, wherever the national default 30% discount applies, the full market value of the property cannot be above £357,142. This is not likely to be a problem for generally smaller properties in the Ashford market which would be attractive to first-time buyers.
6. According to the published WMS, First Homes are the government's preferred discounted market tenure product and is intended to be a 'top-slice' of each site's affordable housing delivery.
7. The WMS states that First Homes should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered as part of each residential development proposal that is delivering any affordable homes (subject to exclusions – notably Build to Rent, specialist accommodation for older persons or students, self-build and 100% affordable housing proposals). The remaining 75% is expected to comprise a mix of rented tenure and intermediate housing in the form of shared ownership homes.
8. There is national eligibility criteria for First Homes. Applicants have to:

- i. be a first time buyer
 - ii. have a maximum household income of £80,000
 - iii. have a mortgage that must cover at least 50% of the discounted price
- 9. Local authorities can also apply their own local eligibility criteria subject to a clearly evidenced rationale which is explored in more detail below.
- 10. Should First Homes not be sold to an eligible applicant, they are converted to open market sale homes (i.e. sold by the developer for full market value), with the 30% share of value (which would have represented the discount) being paid to the LPA towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere. However, it is unclear how that might work in practice in terms of making sure the cost provided caters for the land purchase, scheme development, planning costs and other overheads of creating replacement affordable housing elsewhere.
- 11. At the very least, this results in the loss of the original home for affordable housing purposes, and a number of further steps and time would be needed before an alternative affordable home became available elsewhere. Hence it is important to seek to ensure that the number of First Homes created does not exceed demand for them, and thus requesting evidence of demand to support proposals for First Homes.

Proposal

- 12. While the principle of affordable home ownership is one that the Council supports, the implications for existing Council policy which has only recently been assessed and adopted (2019) needs to be explored.

Existing Policy

- 13. The Council's existing affordable housing policy is contained within Policy HOU1 of the Local Plan 2030. It requires an overall percentage of affordable housing, depending on the location of the site when compared to identified viability areas and a site size threshold (HOU1 applies for schemes of 10 or more units, or sites over 0.5ha in size).
- 14. The policy then identifies the split for affordable homes, setting a 'minimum target' for 'Affordable/Social rented' and 'Affordable home ownership products' (see table 1 below). 'Starter Homes' were assumed to form part of this home ownership requirement as a 'flexible' element, along with the specific minimum percent requirement set out for Shared Ownership. Rent to buy, were also assumed to form part of the home ownership requirement as a 'flexible' element.

Table 1 – Extract from Policy HOU1

Area*	Affordable/Social Rented requirements (% of total dwellings)	Affordable Home Ownership Products (% of total dwellings)	Total affordable housing requirements (% of total dwellings)
Ashford Town (Zone A)	0%	20% (including a minimum of 10% shared ownership)	20%
Ashford Hinterlands (Zone B)	10%	20% (including a minimum of 10% shared ownership)	30%
Rest of Borough (Zone C)	10%	30% (including a minimum of 20% shared ownership)	40%

15. The Local Plan policy was viability tested and assessed at Examination to ensure the products detailed within the policy could be delivered and did not place an undue burden on developers. Discounted market housing was (to a degree) assessed under this viability test as a minimum of 10% Starter Homes were assumed, in the round, as part of the package which would come forward. The Local Plan also refers to starter homes as a qualifying affordable home ownership product. While it does not refer to First Homes, it is reasonable to regard this as a qualifying affordable home ownership product.

First Homes within the context of Policy HOU1

16. In terms of Policy HOU1, First Homes are an ‘affordable home ownership product’. The below scenarios show how First Homes may be accommodated within the umbrella of Policy HOU1.

Scenario 1: Site within Ashford Urban area (Hinterlands Zone B) for 50 homes.

- Current policy would require a total of 30% affordable housing products (15 dwellings total) made up of:
 - 10% rented: 5 dwellings
 - 10% Shared ownership: 5 dwellings
 - 10% other ownership (in practice this is currently shared ownership): 5 dwellings
- Introducing ‘First Homes’ at 25% of the affordable housing requirement, could therefore make the same site look like this:
 - 10% rented: 5 dwellings
 - 10% Shared ownership: 5 dwellings
 - First home requirement: 4 dwellings
 - Other ownership (in practice shared ownership): 1 dwelling

Scenario 2: Site within Rural Area (zone C) for 40 homes

- Current policy would require a total of 40% AH products (16 homes total) made up of:
 - 10% rented: 4 dwellings
 - 10% Shared Ownership: 4 dwellings
 - 20% other ownership (in practice this is currently shared ownership): 8 dwellings
- Introducing ‘First Homes’ at 25% of the AH requirement could look like this:
 - 10% rents: 4 dwellings
 - 10% Shared Ownership: 4 dwellings

- *First Homes requirement: 4 dwellings*
- *Other ownership (in practice shared ownership): 4 dwellings*

Scenario 3: Site within Ashford Town centre (Zone A) for 100 homes (not flats)

- *Current policy would require a total of 20% AH (20 homes) made up of:*
 - *10% Shared ownership: 10 dwellings*
 - *10% other ownership (in practice this is currently shared ownership): 10 dwellings*
- *Introducing 'First Homes' at 25% of the AH requirement could look like this:*
 - *10% Shared ownership: 10 dwellings*
 - *First Homes requirement: 5 dwellings*
 - *Other ownership (in practice shared ownership): 5 dwellings*

17. As can be seen in all scenarios, progressing First Homes could be achieved in a way that does not erode any of the **minimum targets** set out in Policy HOU1 for shared ownership and, importantly, affordable rented products.

18. However, adopting this approach, as a requirement in all circumstances, would remove the flexibility from the 'home ownership' approach currently outlined in Policy HOU1. In most circumstances it would be the shared ownership product which would be reduced in order to provide First Homes, and this product is the most popular currently.

19. Therefore, a First Home should not affect developer viability on a site and importantly it will not reduce the affordable rented provision that we ask for in the section 106 agreement.

What is being proposed?

20. Officers are proposing that a Position Statement should be produced by the Council that sets out how a flexible approach to the delivery of First Homes will be applied, in the short to medium term. In the longer term, the future Local Plan should set out the favoured approach.

21. A flexible approach is deemed necessary, for a number of sound planning reasons even though on the face of it the approach is not entirely consistent with the recently published WMS.

22. The existing affordable housing products within Policy HOU1 clearly meet a local need and this has been determined by evidence. The approach has also been rigorously assessed through the Local Plan Examination and is consistent with the NPPF. Accordingly, if a planning application is promoted that is consistent with Policy HOU1, yet does not promote First Homes, then there should be scope for that scheme to still be determined favourably.

23. After all, while the scenarios above show that First Homes do not directly risk the delivery of shared ownership products in the borough to the minimum targets established in Policy HOU1, it does show that they will result in fewer shared ownership products coming forward overall. This may not be appropriate in all circumstances.

24. Shared ownership products provide a more flexible route over the longer term into home ownership, with purchasers able to start at the minimum 25% equity entry level (rather than 70% with a First Home). There is also a strong

track-record of shared ownership products being delivered in the borough, and they continue to be delivered successfully. No evidence locally has been produced that indicate shared ownership products are now no longer needed and their continued delivery is a key Council objective as inferred in Policy HOU1 of the Local Plan.

25. By comparison, there is no local evidence to suggest the need for First Homes in the borough and there is no evidence about how receptive the market might be to deliver these products (the take up for 'Starter Homes' [a similar product] was minimal).
26. However, it is clear that First Homes are a flagship Government objective and the WMS is very clear that they should be prioritised. It is also clear (at a national level) that First Homes meet a need within the housing sector.
27. Officers suggest that First Homes delivery in the borough will probably cater for the needs of those people who are considered to be 'young professionals' and 'key workers'. These types of individuals would appear to benefit most from the proposal and could potentially afford to buy a home at 70% of its value on day one.
28. In this context, First Homes clearly meet a need, it is the extent to which they fetter the ability for another type of affordable housing product to be delivered that is the main issue.
29. Accordingly, if a planning application is promoted that is consistent with the WMS in terms of First Homes delivery, and remains consistent with the broad parameters of Policy HOU1, then these schemes should also be able to be determined favourably in planning terms where appropriate.
30. Officers are therefore recommending that a Position Statement is produced by the Council to set out how both scenarios (applications which are delivering a 'traditional' HOU1 compliant scheme, and those which are delivering a WMS compliant scheme) can be accommodated through the planning system in a balanced way.
31. In essence, this flexible approach is consistent with the spirit of the WMS, but provides some interpretation as to its applicability in certain scenarios, to take into account local circumstances, most notably that an up-to-date and 'sound' affordable housing policy already exists and that the current approach is consistent with the NPPF.

Issues to be addressed within the Position Statement

32. The Position Statement will be a material consideration when making planning decisions from the point at which it is agreed and published.
33. The following are areas of guidance that should form part of the Position Statement.
34. Firstly, the Position Statement will need to clarify that Policy HOU1 of the Local Plan 2030 is part of the up-to-date Local Plan, and retains significant weight. It will also need to acknowledge that the recently published WMS

carries some planning weight, but as a material consideration in line with case law and the NPPF.

35. Secondly, the Position Statement will need to make clear that where an applicant wants to, or it is desirable in planning terms to do so, that they can carry on delivering affordable housing in a way that is consistent with Policy HOU1 'Affordable Housing' – i.e. there is not a requirement, in every qualifying application, to deliver First Homes despite the contents of the WMS.
36. Thirdly, the Position Statement should also make it clear that First Homes are supported by the Council, as a point of principle. Within this context, the following planning considerations should be set out and guidance provided.
 - **A) The amount of First Homes to be provided:** The Position Statement should set out that the maximum amount of First Homes that can be delivered is 25% of the total affordable housing provision prescribed through Policy HOU1.
 - Less than 25% can be acceptable, provided the overall amount of affordable home ownership products delivered meets the overall percent required as prescribed through Policy HOU1.
 - More than 25% can be accommodated, but only if those First Homes are in addition to the overall percentage of affordable housing which is prescribed through Local Plan Policy HOU1 – i.e. they replace general market housing.
 - **B) Evidence to be provided to support individual applications:** The Position Statement should set out what level of evidence should be provided by the applicant to support proposals which promote First Homes. For example, evidence of local need or market research on how First Homes would be beneficial.
 - **C) Development Viability:** The Position Statement should set out that a reduction of the overall percentage of affordable housing prescribed through Policy HOU1 would not be acceptable because of the delivery of First Homes. This expectation is expressed through the WMS which infers that the delivery of First Homes should not generate more of a cost to developers than the costs already assumed through the delivery of Policy HOU1.
 - **D) Marketing:** The Position Statement should provide guidance to applicants on the level, type and breadth of marketing for any First Homes products. It is accepted that the WMS already provides some guidance on this matter, but officers consider further clarity is needed in terms of when such marketing can begin, that the marketing is done in an appropriate way (and is phased on large sites) and for how long any marketing should be undertaken (three months seems far too short for any meaningful marketing exercise).
 - **E) Local Criteria:** Should the Council wish to, the Position Statement could set out local eligibility criteria for the First Home products. An example of what might be set out is appended to this paper at Appendix

B, for consideration. We need to assess whether the local eligibility criteria can be applied outside of a Local Plan review. However, given that Ashford is the most rural borough in the county, it would seem fair to have some criteria that are specific to rural areas where possible.

- ***F) Other planning considerations:*** The Position Statement should also make it clear that delivering First Homes does not mean that there is a deterioration in build quality of the First Homes (i.e. they are not discounted by virtue of materials used) and that they are not visually distinguishable from the market housing on site in terms of build quality, materials, detail, levels of amenity space/parking etc.

37. The intention is that the Position Statement is worked on quickly and will be produced before the end of the current financial year.

Equalities Impact Assessment

38. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. The impacts will be positive on those who can afford a First Home but potentially negative on those who could only afford a shared ownership home, as fewer will likely be available as a result of the proposals.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

39. The approach outlined in this paper was explained briefly to the Council's RP partners at a recent Development Forum meeting. It was commented in response that the Government-funded First Homes pilot has only recently closed and the Government will assess the outcomes in due course and seek to apply them to the developer-funded scenario envisaged in the WMS. Therefore, letting the market for First Homes develop over time was felt to be a sensible option.

40. However, because First Homes will reduce the number of shared ownership units coming forward on development sites, it was felt that this may have an adverse impact on the values which RPs are able to offer to developers for packages of shared ownership and rented homes, thus inhibiting housing delivery and potentially raising viability issues on some sites, especially lower-value sites in Ashford town.

41. No specific consultation is planned for the Position Statement on account of it providing a flexible approach to the market in terms of how First Homes might be delivered.

42. In due course, the Council may wish to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) relating to this issue. This may depend on whether further Government announcements are made and/or the market is pushing in a particular direction. An SPD will be subject to the public consultation in line with the national requirements.

43. It is also highly likely that the issue of First Homes will need to be addressed through any Review of the Local Plan 2030 and as such any future policy will

be subject to extensive public consultation – such as the element of flexibility on discount levels across the borough.

Other Options Considered

44. There are limited options available to the Council. The main alternative option would be to apply the contents of the WMS completely, as a requirement, and in all circumstances regardless of need. This approach is not felt appropriate in the circumstances, given the issues raised in this paper.
45. It seems far more sensible to adopt a flexible, balanced approach, one which can cater for sustainable development in the borough. This may mean a scheme that is Policy HOU1 compliant, but does not deliver First Homes for sound planning reasons. Or a scheme that does deliver an element of First Homes to meet needs, while still remaining consistent with the wider requirements of Policy HOU1.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

46. There are a number of reasons for supporting the option recommended, as set out in the Paper. This would seem to represent the most flexible approach, offering developers the opportunity, where there is demand, to harness this new product about which the Government is enthusiastic, while at the same time ensuring that we are true to our existing HOU1 Local Plan policy, which is tried and tested and remains at the core of our decision making.

Next Steps in Process

47. The Position Statement should be produced before the end of the current financial year, and then published as a material consideration to be applied to planning decisions.

Conclusion

48. First Homes is a product that Ashford Borough Council will broadly support, given our ambition to deliver a mix of affordable homes – for affordable home ownership as well as affordable rent. While it is untested in our borough as a product, and while there will inevitably be questions around its affordability in comparison to affordable rent and shared ownership, and thus as to the extent of demand for it, it provides another route to home ownership and therefore must be embraced in a measured and flexible way.
49. The paper sets out the most feasible way that the Council can do this in the short term, without triggering a Local Plan review, and while adhering to the principles of its creation.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Cllr. Paul Clokie, Portfolio Holder for Housing

50. First Homes is another important way that people can access the housing ladder. The fact that it is an affordable housing product in perpetuity is to be welcomed and the fact that at the appropriate point the Council will be able to

set some local elements that afford the borough some flexibility in how the scheme is to be operated is important.

51. I am particularly grateful to officers in housing, planning, legal and other services who have contributed towards the position that this report sets out. It is a sensible approach both for now, and a pathway that can be followed as we proceed towards a review of our Local Plan in due course.

Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

52. I fully support the proposal here to offer flexibility now and then cement our position when the Local Plan review is undertaken in time. Home ownership is an important aspect of our affordable housing delivery and it is key to balancing our rural communities in particular. It is right that we seek to implement First Homes when it is forming a key strand of the Government's plan to ensure everyone can access the housing ladder.

Contact and Email

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54. Dan Carter: daniel.carter@ashford.gov.uk

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

Public sector equality duty

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

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

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

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

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
 - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate

in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
 - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
 - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

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

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

Lead officer:	Mark James
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, project, service, contract Review, change, new, stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree that the Council adopt a flexible position on the application of the First Homes to take into account the nature of the WMS and the Council's adopted policy on affordable housing delivery, Agree the broad scope of a Position Statement, which will demonstrate how First Homes should be applied until such time as a Local Plan Review is engaged, and Delegate responsibility for the final contents of the Position Statement to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, Head of Housing and Portfolio Holder for Housing, and That, when agreed, the Position Statement is treated by the Council as a Material Consideration for the purpose of planning decisions.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	25 th November 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives Key actions Expected outcomes Who will be affected and how? How many people will be affected? 	<p>Agree that the Council adopt a flexible position on the application of the First Homes to take into account the nature of the WMS and the Council's adopted policy on affordable housing delivery</p> <p>Agree the broad scope of a Position Statement, which will demonstrate how First Homes should be applied until such time as a Local Plan Review is engaged</p> <p>Delegate responsibility for the final contents of the Position Statement to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, Head of Housing and Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>That, when agreed, the Position Statement is treated by the Council as a Material Consideration for the purpose of planning decisions</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. 	<p>Policy HOU1 'Affordable Housing' of the Council's adopted Local Plan to 2030 (adopted 2019) sets out how affordable housing shall be delivered in the Borough. This policy pre-dates the publication of the First Homes WMS by the Government.</p> <p>However, Policy HOU1 has recently gone through the rigours of a Public Examination and found to be 'sound' in planning terms. It is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and has taken account of issue such as whole plan viability, housing need and the need to take into account local circumstances.</p>

	Policy HOU1 currently carries full planning weight in terms of decision making, as it is the most up to date part of the development plan in regards to affordable housing.	
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">What specific consultation has occurred on this decision?What were the results of the consultation?Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics?What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?	<p>No specific consultation is planned for the Position Statement on account of it providing a flexible approach to the market in terms of how First Homes might be delivered.</p> <p>In due course, the Council may wish to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) relating to this issue. This may depend on whether further Government announcements are made and/or the market is pushing in a particular direction. An SPD will be subject to the public consultation in line with the national requirements.</p> <p>It is also highly likely that the issue of First Homes will need to be addressed through any Review of the Local Plan 2030 and as such any future policy will be subject to extensive public consultation – such as the element of flexibility on discount levels across the borough.</p>	
Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics. <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	None	Neutral
Middle age	Medium	Positive for those who can afford to purchase a First Home; negative for those who cannot but can afford an equity share in a shared ownership home
Young adult	High	Positive for those who can afford to purchase a First Home; negative for those who cannot but can afford an equity share in a shared ownership home
Children	None	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	None	Neutral

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

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the new homes being for first-time buyers. This will primarily be of benefit to young adults, though not exclusively. It will be of major benefit to those people able to access the homes and though not everyone will be able to do so, other forms of housing are supplied by the Council and through section 106 agreements and so those people will still be provided for in the delivery of homes of other tenures. The need for promoters of First Homes to demonstrate evidence of demand will help to balance provision of First Homes and provision of shared ownership homes, in order to match needs and provision and seek to meet the needs of the widest number of people and groups.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
Conclusion:	Page 191

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.</p> <p>No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.</p> <p>The effect on the community will be positive due to the balance of tenures being provided where such homes are brought forward alongside evidence of demand.</p> <p>The delivery of such homes will be monitored by housing and planning services. Both housing and planning Portfolio Holders will be kept informed of work surrounding the position statement.</p>
EIA completion date:	15 th November 2021

Local Connection Criteria for First Homes

Working draft as at 15th November 2021

You have your only or main home within the boundaries of the district covered by Ashford Borough Council and have lived here for a continuous period of at least one year OR

You (not a member of your household) are in permanent paid work in the Ashford Borough (full or part-time employment of at least 16 hours per week) and that employment has been for a continuous period of one year OR

If you live outside of the borough at present, you have lived in the Ashford Borough for at least five out of the past ten years

Local Connection Criteria for First Homes – Rural

If the property is within the parishes listed below, the following criteria should be applied.

You have your only or main home within the boundaries of the parish, or an adjoining parish, and have lived there for a continuous period of at least five years OR

You have lived in the parish, or an adjoining parish, for any period totaling at least 7 years within the previous 10 years OR

You (not a member of your household) are in permanent paid work in the parish or an adjoining parish (full or part-time employment of at least 16 hours per week) and that employment has been for a continuous period of two years OR

You need to move into the parish or an adjoining parish to take up full-time employment where the role is pertinent to the local community

Aldington & Bonnington	Appledore	Bethersden	Biddenden	Bilsington
Boughton Aluph & Eastwell (Goat Lees)	Brabourne	Brook	Challock	Charing & Charing Heath
Chilham and Old Wives Lees	Crundale	Egerton	Godmersham	Hastingleigh
High Halden	Hothfield	Kenardington	Little Chart	Mersham & Sevington
Molash	Newenden	Orlestone/ Hamstreet	Pluckley	Rolvenden
Ruckinge	Shadoxhurst	Smarden	Smeeth	Stone-cum-Ebony
Warehorne	Westwell	Wittersham	Woodchurch	Wye with Hinxhill



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 25th November

Report Title: Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme

Report Author & Job Title: Mark James – Development Partnership Manager

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Summary:

Homelessness costs are increasing, in part due to the Council successfully partaking in the Government's "Everyone In" initiative in March 2020. Therefore, the Council needs to address the cost (£290,000 since March 2020) while providing real support to those it has taken responsibility for.

The Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) has the benefit of offering an opportunity to select self-contained homes in the right location with good proximity to support services for individuals – to ensure the best outcomes for highly complex cases. It provides intermediate supported accommodation that aims to tackle levels of single homelessness that increased during the pandemic.

Members have already approved a capital spend of £1.7m (including a capital grant award of £764,235). While the capital grant helps to acquire the properties the revenue grant (of £35,000 per annum up to March 2024) helps to fund the intensive housing support that those placed in the homes will require to ultimately move into more secure, permanent placements. Members also agreed that a subsequent bid should be made for further funding to the programme.

This paper reports the success of that bid and seeks approval for the capital spend now required to double the number of move-on homes the Council will be able to provide through this project. These will be homes bought through the process that currently secure street purchase properties in the Housing Revenue Account.

Key Decision: YES (due to expenditure)

Significantly Affected Wards: None specifically, though the accommodation is more likely to be sourced in central Ashford locations, closer to local amenities and easier to manage closely.

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Note that work has already begun to secure the move-on homes and the intensive housing support officer after the first successful bid
- II. Note that the council has been successful in securing capital grant of £530,000 and revenue grant of £87,500 through its second bid to the RSAP programme
- III. Agree the capital spend of £1,246,000 to supplement the capital grant
- IV. Agree that the General Fund owned property at 240 Beaver Road not be sold but instead converted to be part of the RSAP programme
- V. Agree that the programme be reviewed towards the end of the three-year cycle

Policy Overview: Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Policy, including the Rough Sleeper Pathway Plan.

Financial Implications: The capital spend for the second bid will be £1,776,000, which will be partially offset by £530,000 capital grant funding secured through the RSAP bid. The homes sit in the General Fund and considerations are in that context.

Legal Implications: The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will govern the work undertaken on this project

Equalities Impact Assessment: See Attached at Appendix A

Data Protection Impact Assessment: The impact on Data Protection will be undertaken for each individual project at the appropriate time.

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement): Risk assessments have been undertaken on each of the properties being taken forward and are appropriately assessed by officers within the relevant teams involved in the projects. Further risk assessments will be undertaken on each individual property at the correct time.

Sustainability Implications: The properties will be sought mindful of the Council's ambition for carbon neutrality and the programme of 'de-carbonisation' within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) stock, though these homes will sit in the General Fund. Each acquisition, particularly so with the proposed conversions, will be individually assessed to include the potential costs and benefits of carbon neutrality.

Other Material Implications: Design and construction standards will comply with Ashford spatial standards (complying with Residential Space and Layout SPD), Lifetime Homes (a standard the Council has set out for Registered Social Landlords) and Code for

Sustainable Homes level 3 (which has been committed to for Page 17 Homes England purposes), and level 4 on energy. Emphasis on the building envelope will deliver the greatest benefits for landlord and tenant

**Exempt from
Publication:**

No

Contact:

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Report Title: Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme

Introduction and Background

1. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a directive to accommodate all rough sleepers (or those threatened by rough sleeping) under the Government's "Everyone In" initiative. This was achieved and full engagement from the Council's partners in the last year has proved invaluable in bringing rough sleepers indoors and sustaining their current accommodation.
2. Levels of single homeless placements in temporary accommodation, though, increased as a consequence and there is a real need to look at 'move-on' accommodation for this client group. Move-on accommodation denotes homes that rough sleepers can live in on a short-term basis before they literally move on to more secure tenancies having stabilised their situation. These 'move-on' homes therefore remain as move-on accommodation, helping the next rough sleepers on their own pathways to stability.
3. Earlier this year, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) agreed to allocate capital and revenue grant funding under the Rough Sleeper Accommodation programme (RSAP). This was to form part of the broader aim of eliminating rough sleeping by 2027 and providing suitable supported housing solutions for rough sleepers with complex needs.

Advantages to the Council and individuals

4. The RSAP programme has the benefit of offering an opportunity to select self-contained homes in the right location with good proximity to support services for individuals – to ensure the best outcomes for highly complex cases. It provides the intermediate supported accommodation within an existing rough sleeper framework to tackle levels of single homelessness that obviously increased during the pandemic.
5. The programme effects real change in the lives of individual rough sleepers with a variety of complex needs (including mental and physical health, those with addiction issues and others who could have offending histories). The revenue, which supports the capital grant received, funds the close management of these individuals. It is part of a defined pathway linked to each individual's personal housing plan and underlying support needs.
6. There is also a cost saving for the Council. For example, at an average cost of £38 per room per night (though the cost can be as high as £60 per night for emergency placements), a weekly cost of £266, and a net income from housing benefit of £116.88, there is a net cost to the borough council of £149.12 per client per week in one of the paid-for nightly accommodation premises the Council uses. Therefore, for 10 clients based on these current costs, the weekly cost to the council would be £1,491.20 and the annual cost would be £77,542.

Ashford's bids to the RSAP fund

7. The Council has submitted two bids to the RSAP programme – both of which have been successful in cycles one (June 2021) and three (September 2021). This will enable the Council to acquire a total of 12 x 1-bed homes and 4 x 3-bed homes that can be converted to make 8 x 1-bed homes, meaning 20 x 1-bed homes will be provided in total.
8. As part of September's Financial Monitoring Quarterly Report, members approved the capital spend of £1.7m in the first cycle (including the grant award of £764,235) and agreed that a subsequent bid should be made for further funding to the programme. This report, in addition to detailing the outcome of that bid seeks approval for the capital spend to double the number of move-on homes the Council will have available for rough sleepers in the borough from 10 to 20 as outlined in the above paragraph.
9. Given where the Council was when the first bid had to be made quickly, there was no time to push forward a site that could accommodate modular construction. The Government were seeking certainty over delivery as a key element in order to award the funding, so any major sites not yet in the Council's ownership or that required extensive planning permission were likely to be unsuccessful. Therefore, the Council's programme is primarily aimed at street purchases, on which it has a proven track record having acquired over 100 homes since the beginning of the 2019-20 financial year.

RSAP bid one – in figures

10. As indicated above, the first part of the project will therefore use the capital grant receipt of £764,235 to purchase 10 General Fund properties (with £1,011,765 borrowed as agreed) to deliver:
 - A total of 10 self-contained bespoke units drawn from a mix of selected or acquired properties (when the bid was submitted we stated that we have 10 completions by June 2022)
 - There will be 6 x 1-bed and 2 x 3-bed units (the latter will be renovated [requiring planning permission] to become 4 x 1-bed units)
 - A staffed, supported framework to ensure rough sleepers can access all relevant services – this is to be achieved through a revenue grant funding award of £35,000 p.a. for three years for the first bid that will provide enhanced support for those given housing. The Council will then be funding this specialist intensive housing officer for rough sleepers in its entirety after the end of the 2023-24 financial year

Specialist support

11. Of course, it is not the case that a rough sleeper's situation is resolved once a roof is over their head. The recruitment of the intensive housing officers is vitally important to this project and the process is already underway. Specialist officers creating pathways that enable the placed individuals to move on will create resilience in the 20 homes we are buying and converting.
12. The specialist support is fundamental to the success of the scheme. Each placement will have a tailored plan of wrap-around support and intensive

housing management to ensure that any issues are addressed quickly and dealt with professionally. Central to this is the Council continuing to foster the successful partnership working arrangement it has built up with colleagues in health and police agencies, for example, to tackle rough sleeping.

13. Although the revenue costs supporting the recruitment are for a three-year period, with no funding currently available after 2024, and though the posts will be funded by the borough council after that point, this is still viable as the scheme will provide a saving overall, compared to the current cost of homelessness which are £290,000 since March 2020. This is largely as the Council has been supporting the “everyone in” scheme, but homelessness costs have been increasing year on year since 2016-17.

Ashford’s second bid for RSAP funding

14. The search for properties began in late July 2021. The Council stated to Homes England that it would aim to have some starts on site around September 2021 (we currently have three) and would aim to complete on all properties to be acquired by June 2022.
15. Again, given the timeframe and the need for certainty over delivery, the Council put forward an identical programme concentrating on street purchases to ultimately secure a further 10 homes.
16. This final bidding round saw Ashford secure:
 - Capital grant funding of £530,000 to part-fund the acquisition of a further eight units (6 x 1-bed and 2 x 3-bed homes that can be converted to become 4 x 1-bed homes) in order to provide a further 10 units of supported housing. The capital expenditure therefore is £1.776,000 and the cost to the council is therefore £1.246,000 – the feasibility for this was built on a 40-year annuity with payback within that period
 - £87,500 revenue funding, which was also granted to fund another officer who will work alongside the rough sleepers and support them along the pathway into more secure accommodation in the HRA or the private rented sector where appropriate, thus freeing up a move-on placement for subsequent rough sleepers. Whereas the revenue grant funding was £35,000 for each of the three financial years up to the end of 2023-24, the breakdown for this funding is £17,500 for the current financial year and £35,000 for the two subsequent years
17. This will again help the council to tackle the increased levels of homelessness experienced during the pandemic. It will also help the council make significant savings as outlined in paragraph 6.
18. Members should be advised that when the Council made its second bid to Homes England it was advised that the grant awards would not be as generous as for the first round, given the funds remaining. However, pleasingly the sums above are meaningful and exceeded expectations.

19. The project to secure more homes has already begun in earnest and we have stated to Homes England that we would have starts on site throughout 2022, with completions in October 2022.

Additional considerations

20. To be clear, the programme is for Ashford's rough sleepers. It will not import rough sleepers from other areas. Although there is a clear thought process at the current time on the size of accommodation required, should this not be required in the future then there is a simple exit strategy in transferring the homes to the HR, or it could sell the homes.
21. The viability and surveys for each acquisition, particularly so with the proposed conversions, will be individually assessed to include the potential costs and benefits of carbon neutrality. The homes will be maintained and repaired by our relevant in-house teams and contractors and conversations have already begun between internal departments to ensure that for the conversions these will be undertaken in a way that is easily maintainable.
22. The properties need to be in fairly central locations so that the rough sleepers placed within the homes have access to amenities. This means that rural locations are not suitable and that the locations selected will focus on central Ashford locations. It is important from a management perspective that these are not all in one cluster and every effort will be made to ensure these are sensitively chosen locations and that the homes blend in and balance with the local community.
23. One such property, a three-bedroom semi-detached house at 240 Beaver Road, is already in the Council's ownership, and was about to be sold due to it no longer being required to assist in the delivery of Adler's Yard. However, there is now an opportunity to convert the property into two one-bed homes.
24. The owner of the adjoining property has just accepted an offer on its sale and although the council has enquired we will not be able to acquire that home too. In any case, converting both semi-detached properties to create four one-bed homes in the same location would not be ideal from a management perspective, and so was unlikely to be considered. Members are asked to agree that the use of this general fund property be agreed for the RSAP programme instead of being sold.

Risks to the General Fund

25. The Financial Monitoring Quarterly Report was clear in its reporting to members that "it is important to note that due to the high level of grant funding and transfer of tenants from expensive temporary accommodation, the RSAP will not add any financial burden to the General Fund over a 40 year model."

Other options considered

26. The Council could choose not to seek to acquire this accommodation and carry on its current path. However, aside from the significant financial savings there is a real opportunity to positively affect the lives of those rough sleepers whom we place in these homes. The Council has a proven track record in

acquiring homes through its street purchase programme so the expertise to do so is already in-house. The only additional expertise required will be the work that the intensive housing officers for rough sleepers will provide on an ongoing basis.

Equalities Impact Assessment

27. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. There are no negative impacts identified within the assessment.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

28. The individual properties bought will follow the process for street purchase acquisitions. However, where a three-bed property is purchased with a view to conversion we will contact the relevant ward member and notify them of our intention prior to the planning application being made. As with any planning application, where a property is to be converted, this will be subject to the planning application process and stakeholders will be invited to comment.

Next Steps in Process

29. Work to secure the homes has begun and subject to members agreeing the additional capital spend, 20 such homes can be provided. Those homes requiring conversion will be submitted to planning as soon as is possible to meet the deadlines required by Homes England.

Conclusion

30. There are many benefits to the Council, but more importantly the individual. This programme provides a significant amount of both capital and revenue grant (around £1.5m) across its two allocations to Ashford and will be another example of the Council's commitment to reducing homelessness and providing meaningful support for any rough sleepers in our borough.

Portfolio Holder's Views

31. The Council's success in securing funding through the rough sleeper accommodation programme extends the Government's continued recognition of our successful housing delivery. Here, we have an opportunity to create real housing pathways, literally supporting some of our most vulnerable people from the street to a secure housing tenancy, getting them back on their feet at what is undoubtedly a traumatic time.
32. In agreeing to this capital spend, which will help to alleviate the ever-increasing costs of homelessness to the authority, we can be proud that we are not only providing shelter but, furthermore, are wrapping support around these individuals to help them rebuild their lives.

Contact and Email

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Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix A to Rough Sleeper Accommodation programmer Cabinet report

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

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

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

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

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.

- encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
8. In terms of timing:
- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
 - A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
 - The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

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

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

Lead officer:	Mark James
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, project, service, contract Review, change, new, stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that work has already begun to secure the move-on homes and the intensive housing support officer after the first successful bid Note that the council has been successful in securing capital grant of £530,000 and revenue grant of £87,500 through its second bid to the RSAP programme Agree the capital spend of £1,246,000 to supplement the capital grant Agree that the General Fund owned property at 240 Beaver Road not be sold but instead converted to be part of the RSAP programme Agree that the programme be reviewed towards the end of the three-year cycle
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	25 th November 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives Key actions Expected outcomes Who will be affected and how? How many people will be affected? 	<p>Note that work has already begun to secure the move-on homes and the intensive housing support officer after the first successful bid</p> <p>Note that the council has been successful in securing capital grant of £530,000 and revenue grant of £87,500 through its second bid to the RSAP programme</p> <p>Agree the capital spend of £1,246,000 to supplement the capital grant</p> <p>Agree that the General Fund owned property at 240 Beaver Road not be sold but instead converted to be part of the RSAP programme</p> <p>Agree that the programme be reviewed towards the end of the three-year cycle</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. Include sources and key findings. 	Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Policy, including the Rough Sleeper Pathway Plan.
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? 	<p>Consultation has taken place with colleagues in Finance and ICT, the Housing Development Team, Housing Options and Corporate Property Services.</p> <p>Consultation will take place with Ward members for those wards with conversions proposed to take place in their ward.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Planning applications for converting the proposed 3-bed homes will see other residents also consulted on the proposals as part of the planning process</p> <p>No issues should be identified with regards applicants with protected characteristics.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

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

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	None	Neutral
Middle age	Medium	Positive (major)
Young adult	High	Positive (major)
Children	None	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Neutral
Mental	High	Positive (major)
Sensory	None	Neutral
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	None	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Neutral

Women	None	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	Where the assessment has been carried out above it is on the basis of the fact that it is anticipated that the majority of those whom the Council will house will be younger adults requiring the placements and intensive housing support to sustain their tenancies. Whoever is housed will be find this service of major benefit to them.	
Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty? Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .		
Aim		Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation		N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it		Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it		N/A

Conclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Due regard has been considered throughout this proposal to each protected group.</p> <p>No unlawful discrimination has arisen from the decision.</p> <p>The effect on those placed in these homes will be positive due to the aims of the programme delivery. No adjustments required.</p> <p>The programme will be monitored through monthly meetings with Homes England, through regular contact with finance colleagues by housing , and through regular updates to our Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.</p>
EIA completion date:	15 th November 2021



Rough Sleeper Pathway

Procedures 2020

**Sylvia Roberts
Housing Options Manager**

Procedures for the Rough Sleepers Pathway for Ashford Borough Council

Contents

1. Context
2. Introduction
3. Staffing
4. Pathway and timeline
5. Personal Budgets
6. Housing Led Model
7. Social Lettings Agency

Appendix A Starter Packs flowchart

Appendix B Pathway flowchart



1. Context

The implementation of HRACKT in April 2018 has seen a rise in approaches from single persons threatened with homelessness who are owed either a prevention or relief duty [or occasionally both]. In light of individual housing needs and circumstances, this client group will often require more intensive casework. They often present with complex health needs such as financial constraints, economic inactivity and other identifiable barriers to accessing available housing options.

The Prime Minister put tackling homelessness and rough sleeping firmly at the heart of the government's agenda and initially awarded a total of over £260 million for local homelessness services. The Government published a strategy on 13 August 2018 to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. This government has committed to ending rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament in 2024 – 3 years earlier than the previous commitment.

Ashford has seen a steady increase in rough sleeping in the Borough and in November 2019, the official figure reported to Government was 25. This is an increase from 20 the previous year. We have seen an increase in migration of rough sleepers from neighbouring boroughs with 7 of the 25 being from other areas in Kent.

Due to the rise in this client group, it was evident that we had to take a different approach and do things differently. Previously Ashford Borough Council funded Porchlight to operate an outreach service in the borough. This was only a part time position and was unable to offer the “blue light” reactive service that is required for this client group. We therefore appointed a new position within the team for a Housing Options Officer specialising in Rough Sleepers and Single Homelessness. In addition, we applied for additional funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG] and were successful in securing funding of £257,000. This money was ring fenced for additional staffing resources and training, personalised budgets for clients and the refurbishment of a building to make it an assessment hub and emergency bed space.

During 2020, a global pandemic broke out and the world was forced into a “lockdown” situation. This caused significant delays in our project and again, made us rethink how we could do things differently.

On March 26th 2020, The Government launched an “Everyone Campaign” instructing all local authorities to provide temporary accommodation for all those sleeping on the streets and Dame Louise Casey was drafted in to lead the Government's task force to support rough sleepers during the pandemic. Additional funding had been provided by the Treasury to help rough sleepers secure their own tenancies as well as provide short-term housing while delivery of long-term homes continue at pace.

2. Introduction

When the “Everyone in” campaign was launched in March 2020, Ashford accommodated 10 rough sleepers in one day, with an additional 14 being brought in over the subsequent days. Being forced into this situation meant that the emergency bed space that we had acquired funding for [as part of the £257,000 funding] was no longer needed and this money was repurposed to help pay for the temporary accommodation provided.



Additional staff were recruited, as per funding criteria. A Rough Sleeper Coordinator, 2 Tenancy Sustainment Officers and 2 Community Navigators. We had already identified the absence of fully formed pathways tailored for rough sleepers with other forms of intermediate housing and assistance. This funding will allow us to fully develop direct and seamless “real time” delivery of statutory HRACT assessments and Personalised Housing Plans with ready access to accommodation solutions. With the additional dedicated resources, we will also be able to bridge the gaps that we currently have in other specialist services e.g. mental health, addiction services etc. to ensure they are readily accessible for rough sleepers.

3. **Staffing**

Rough Sleeper Coordinator

In order to achieve our goals the coordinator will pull all strands of the rough sleeper project together. This is a more strategic role and will coordinate rough sleeper and homelessness services for single people in the area, working closely with key partners and stakeholders to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, rough sleeping in Ashford.

This post is employed by Ashford Borough Council and the officer is seconded from the Housing Options rough sleeper specialist position. This means they will participate in some outreach work with rough sleepers and enable the other Housing Options staff to directly deliver HRACT assessments and Personal Housing Plans [PHP] working flexibly to ensure a greater outreach service where needed.

The officer will work closely with the Housing Options Manager. They will actively access further grant funding for the delivery and development of rough sleeper outreach services.

2x Tenancy Sustainment Officers

Currently, Ashford has low level or intermediate floating support provided for homeless households which is delivered by Riverside as part of a Kent wide regional Homeless Connect service. This service has been limited to people who are vulnerable and at risk of eviction. We are keen to extend this coverage to address identified gaps in service delivery.

The key purpose of the tenancy sustainment role is to provide a high standard of housing advice in order to keep customers within their homes and prevent them from becoming street homeless. The role is required to deal with more complex tenancy sustainment cases by conducting in-depth casework on a range of areas. In addition, the officers will also support those rough sleepers through their transition into longer term, secure tenancies.

We will utilise one of these officers for the private rented sector, including our own Social Lettings Agency, and one for social housing.

These roles are employed by Ashford Borough Council and both officers are seconded from other posts.

2x Community Navigators

These roles are employed by a proven identified support provider in Kent [Riverside].

The two navigators will assist clients in accessing all the services and advocate on their behalf, where appropriate, regarding their welfare rights, health needs and other issues affecting their health and wellbeing.

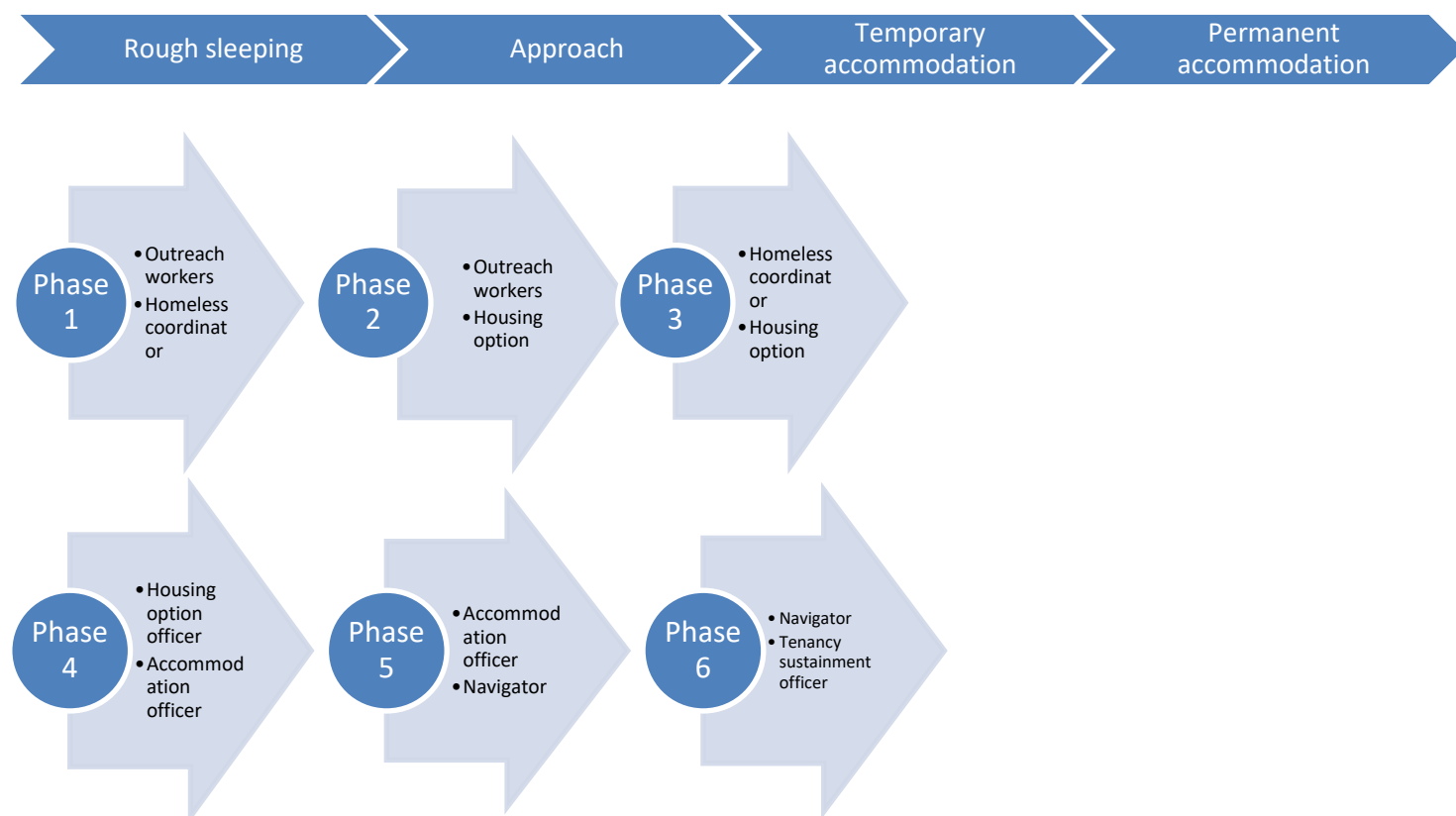
Rough sleepers may on occasion be unable to claim mainstream social security benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and require immediate assistance to remedy this.

Rough sleepers, particularly those with high support needs, will face challenges in gaining employment or identifying opportunities to enter training/education. It is known that clients will want to consider securing employment/training in the longer term and we would wish to support vulnerable homeless people towards work. Links to our partners and effective signposting with homelessness organisations, and hostels would assist in providing employment advice, training and other opportunities for homeless people.

There is a £5000 budget allocated within the funding for training for all five of these posts.

4. Pathway

Rough sleeper into accommodation timeline



These two timelines work parallel to one and another, having two Main Rough sleeper supported services working together in each phase with handover period to the new phase. With other agencies (probation, mental health, social services, drug and alcohol agencies) being brought in if and when necessary.

Appendix B shows the flowchart of a client's pathway.

In summary:-

- Phase 1 - outreach workers [Riverside] to complete regular walkabouts and to investigate any reports of rough sleepers. They will also work in conjunction with the homeless coordinator and the church groups to engage with rough sleepers. This is to start and build a working relationship with the aim to foster a good understanding of the client's situation and build trust with them. The homeless coordinator will then feed information back to relevant bodies and organisations.
- Phase 2 - outreach worker to encourage the rough sleeper to start working with the relevant organisations, depending on support needs, and working with housing options officers. Once the application has been made the housing option officer will assess all housing and support needs and produce a PHP (personal housing plan)
- Phase 3 - housing option officer to look at the most appropriate accommodation during this period and whether there is appropriate temporary accommodation. The homeless coordinator to track all current organisations involved with the client.
- Phase 4 - accommodation officer to look at appropriate permanent solutions in conjunction with housing option officer and homeless coordinator.
- Phase 5 - clients move into permanent accommodation with assistance from accommodation officer and homeless navigator, which could be a room in a shared house, one-bedroom social housing flat or supported accommodation. This may involve sourcing furniture and/or cooking utensils and anything else that would be appropriate for the accommodation they will be moving into.
- Phase 6 - navigator to check that all relevant supported agencies are in place at the beginning of the new tenancy and keeping track that the client is engaging. The navigator will then start to withdraw their support when appropriate. If things start to break down for client at any point of the tenancy we can put in place a sustainment officer.

5. **Personal Budgets**

A proportion of our funding is allocated for personal budgets for rough sleepers and can be used to set a person up in their home. This can be anything from rent in advance and deposit to furniture, white goods and food. This is flexible and could, for example, be used to purchase a birth certificate for a client to enable them to set up a bank account or rent account. It is worth exploring other options first before using this one.

Food Assistance

Open Arms, Ashford Together and other voluntary organisations provide food assistance to those in need and this can readily be accessed by rough sleepers. Assistance takes the form of hot meals, food packages, and access/referral to 'food banks' on a twice weekly basis. This is reliant on donations and sometimes stock supplies are low and need to be topped up.

Starter packs and furniture project

We are setting up a project to be able to provide ready prepared boxed starter packs for rough sleepers who secure or are provided accommodation [crockery, toiletries, towels etc.] as well as certain items of furniture. This has been solely reliant on donations and often there is no stock to be able to provide items. Our funding allows us to purchase items in preparation for donating when needed. Information on how this process works can be found at Appendix A.

Rent in Advance and/or deposits

When accommodation is secured the landlord will require either rent in advance and/or a deposit. People often do not have the means to finance this and as a result, lose that accommodation.

6. Housing Led Project

We are keen to broaden the provision for rough sleepers and are looking to start a housing led project in the borough. We see this as being part of a pathway from temporary accommodation into more stable long term accommodation. We are in talks with Riverside to support us in the project and would be able to utilise both the Tenancy Sustainment officers and the navigators.

Ashford is a stock holding authority and it has already been agreed that we can use a unit within our own stock for this project.

We also have the agreement from partner agencies to support the project and ensure the correct support is in place for each individual.

We have a number of entrenched rough sleepers that are suitable for this scheme. We are currently trying to identify the correct property to enable to move this forward. Careful consideration is needed to ensure people have accommodation which provides stability, affordability, quality and can be integrated into the local community.

7. Social Lettings Agency

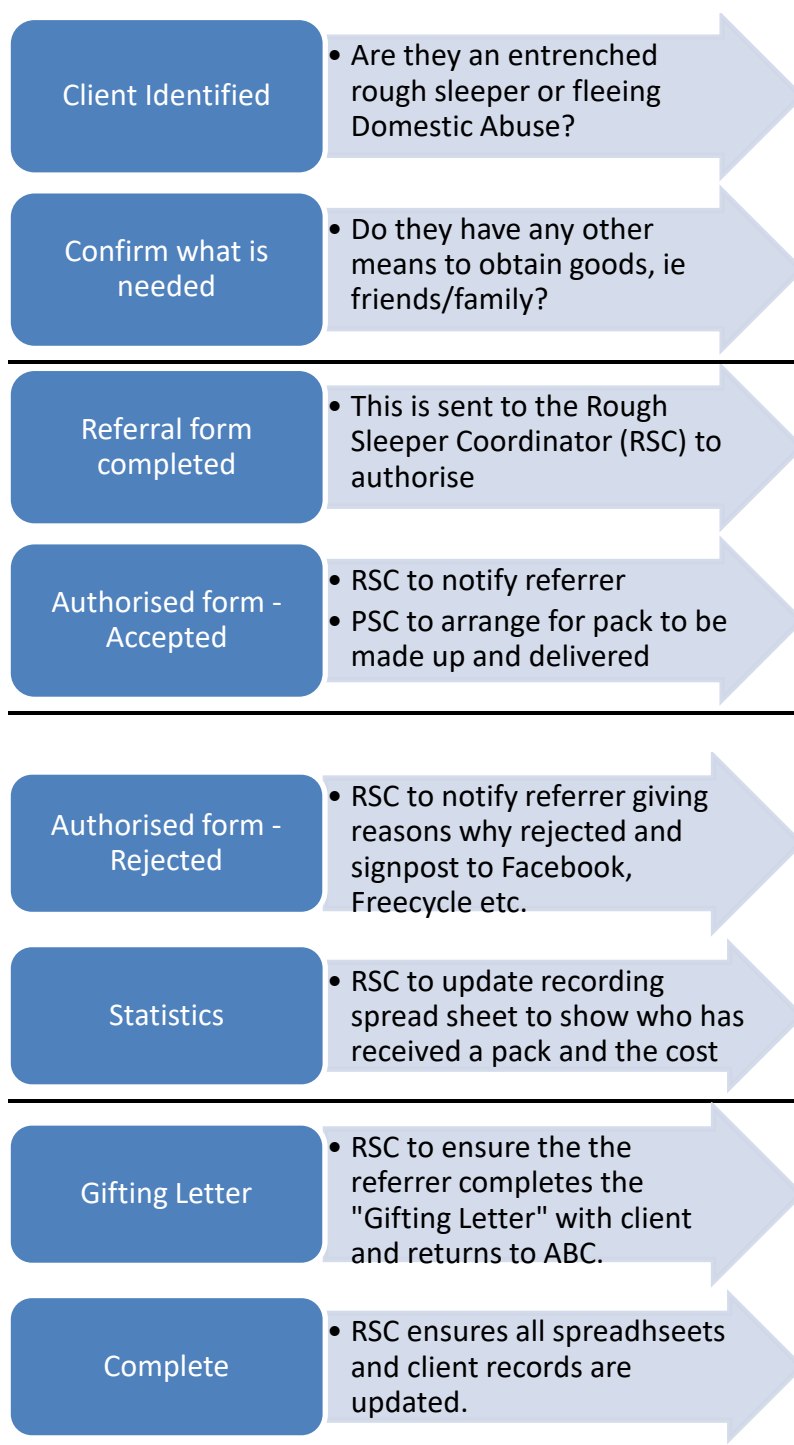
Ashford Borough Council have a dedicated Social Lettings Agency (ABC Lettings) which have previously been able to successfully provide housing solutions for homeless families.

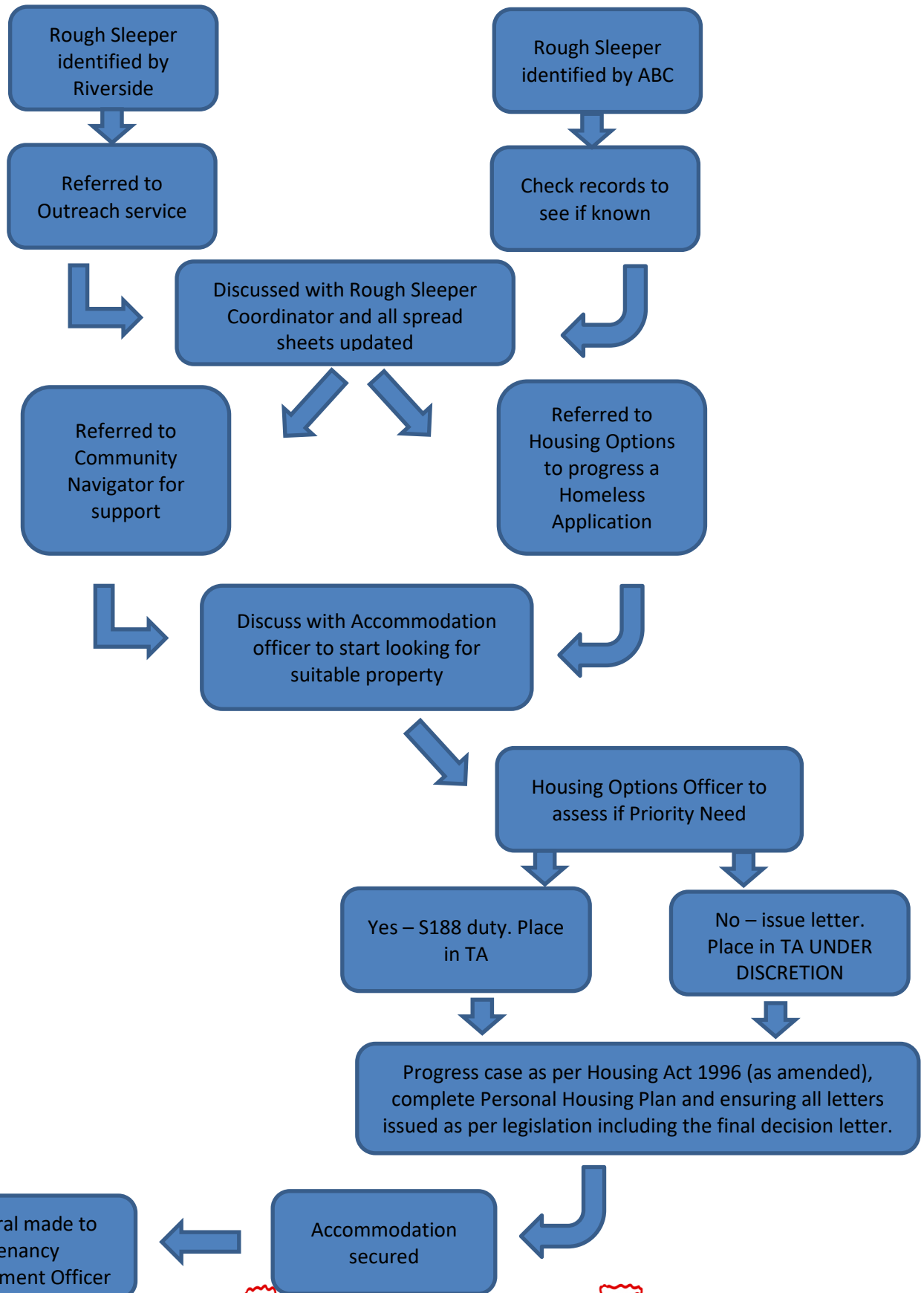
ABC Lettings have developed an excellent reputation locally with landlords, having recently been commended at a Private Sector Landlord Forum in June 2019 for their work with vulnerable households. They perform a full management function for landlords and are fully appreciative of the need to ensure that lettings are handled sensitively to maintain the good relationships they have built up with over 100 landlords.

The tenancy sustainment officers are able to assist this team for single households, to prevent those becoming street homeless. This will include the development of independent living skills for clients together with managing tenancy conduct and rent payments, budgeting skills and access for pathways into employment and/or training.



Starter Packs Procedure



Pathway

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ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: November 2021

Report Title: Kent Music– Supporting relocation to Ashford

Report Author & Job Title: Ben Lockwood
Deputy Chief Executive

Portfolio Holder Cllr. N Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Finance and IT

Summary: Kent Music (KM) is looking to consolidate its property assets and reduce its property costs through a proposed relocation to a new custom built facility on the new Javelin Way estate.

The KM board has approved the decision to move and they are seeking a loan from the council for the cost of the building. They propose to secure the loan on the building with a floating charge on the other assets of the charity.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All wards in Ashford

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Approve in principle loan funding for Kent Music to purchase a new facility in Ashford up to a value of £1.4m
- II. Delegate authority to finalise the terms loan agreement to (Officers) in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Policy Overview:

Financial Implications: The proposal would see the council advance a loan of up to £1,400,000 pounds to Kent Music the interest rate charged would be linked to the appropriate Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) interest rate (40 year) plus 1%. This would return approximately £14,000 in the first year on a reducing balance covering Council's funding risks.

Legal Implications: The council has loaned money to a number of bodies operating within the power before and has the legal power to do so.

Subject to member approval the council's legal team will need to work to draft the appropriate legal documents and agree them with the representatives from Kent Music.

Equalities Impact Assessment: Not applicable at this stage, the report deals with a financial transaction and not the creation of a new policy

Data Protection Impact Not required

**Assessment:
Risk Assessment
(Risk Appetite
Statement):** The risks of this proposal are summarised in the report.

Sustainability Implications: Not applicable

Contact: Ben Lockwood
Ben.lockwood@ashford.gov.uk

Agenda Item No.

Report Title: Kent Music – Supporting relocation to Ashford

Introduction and Background

1. Kent Music was founded in 1948 and has been the leading provider of music education services in Kent ever since. Traditionally its work has focussed on three areas:
 - a. Teaching children, young people and adults to play musical instruments and to sing
 - b. Ensembles and choirs locally and at county level, working with top level professionals as teachers, tutors and music directors
 - c. An annual three-week summer school held at Benenden School.
2. Kent Music is a limited company with charitable status, teaching 4,000 students each week. Their main income streams are from parents, Arts Council England and Kent County Council.
3. They run out-of-school activities through a network of music centres across the county. At the centres, students have instrumental and vocal lessons, playing in groups of all sorts and sing in choirs.
4. The Kent County Youth Orchestra was founded in 1963. Since then KM has formed the Kent Youth Wind Orchestra and the county choirs and has plans to broaden provision for advanced level students over the coming years.
5. KM employs 80 instrumental and vocal teachers and engages approximately 50 tutors and pastoral staff on residential courses. This is supported by a core admin and management team of 30 full and part-time staff based at their existing headquarters in Maidstone and the musical instrument store in Aylesham. All the administration and management staff will work from Javelin Way. The staff have been consulted about the move and there is a good deal of optimism in the team about the benefits of this move to Kent Music and the possibilities it opens up for music education across the borough and county.
6. Kent Music own a stock of approximately 16,000 musical instruments as well as a library and technical, percussion and staging equipment.
7. As well as providing these services, Kent Music has a wider strategic role as the lead partner for the music education hub for Kent. This work is funded by the Department for Education via Arts Council England and supports children and young people aged between 5 and 18 across Kent.
8. Kent Music has a long history of working in Ashford:
 - a. Kent County Youth Orchestra and Kent Youth Choirs have held residential courses at Ashford School for many years
 - b. Kent Youth Choirs have given Christmas concerts at St. Mary's church on numerous occasions

- c. delivering or funding the delivery of whole class instrumental teaching in 80% of primary schools in the district
 - d. having good relations with the secondary schools in the district, particularly Highworth Grammar School where we have run out-of-school activities for many years.
 - e. bringing together a network of classroom teachers across the district for regular meetings and professional development sessions
- 9. Kent Music is planning to move to the new development at Javelin Way and will be located adjacent to the new Jasmin Vardimon Company's Creation Centre. Kent Music has a strong relationship with JVC.
- 10. The move will
 - a. mean that all staff and equipment will be located on one site for the first time in over 30 years.
 - b. enable Kent Music to reduce its premises costs, making an important contribution to their long-term financial security, settling the organisation and enabling them to plan for a long-term future.
 - c. enable Kent Music to reduce its carbon footprint. The plan is for the building to be run on solar energy and Kent Music is applying for grants to add electric vehicle charging points, to have wi-fi throughout the building to eliminate the need for an air conditioned server room and to purchase an electric van for its instrument delivery service.
- 11. The move is seen as more than a move of premises; it is the opening of a new chapter in the history of Kent Music, with an opportunity to be part of the exciting cultural developments that are taking place in Ashford.

Proposal

- 12. Kent Music is seeking to purchase the freehold of a building in Javelin way for a fully fitted price in the region of £1.4m and is seeking a loan from the borough council of £1.4m payable over a period of 40 years.
- 13. The Loan will be on an annuity basis matching any repayment of capital with the Council's statutory requirement to provide for the repayment of debt (Minimum Revenue Provision - MRP).
- 14. The Loan will include an option for early repayment or capital bullet repayment, to give KM the ability to take advantage of any opportunities to reduce their level of debt.
- 15. In line with the Councils loans to the property Company the loan will be offered at the equivalent of the Public Works Loans Board rate plus a margin of 1%.
- 16. The Loan will be secured on the assets of Kent Music .
- 17. A copy of the proposed heads of terms for the loan are attached at **Appendix A. It is recommended that Cabinet delegate authority to the S151 officer and in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT to make minor amendments to the proposed HoT's.**

Financial Position of Kent Music

18. Kent Music is a registered Company and registered charity. A copy of the most recent filed accounts can be accessed at Companies House searching under company number 0546855.
19. They have funding from a number of sources; primarily this funding comes from three main sources parents/students, Arts Council England and KCC. Kent Music has a strong track record of securing funding from KCC and Arts Council England and is seen as a good partner for delivering education services.
20. KM has net current assets in the region of £3m and it has a variety of assets against which the council could seek further security in terms of a floating charge against them. A copy of most recent Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account is attached at **appendix B**

The proposed site

21. A plan of the proposed location of KM is attached to this report at **Appendix C**. The proposal is to purchase 2 units and create a single unit next to the proposed location of the Jasmin Vardamon Company.
22. Any loan will need to be subject to the completion of a suitable title check and site valuation report.

PWLB reforms

23. There has been considerable speculation over how government would respond to the increased level of borrowing by Local Authorities for investments, as they seek to purchase income generating investments to bridge funding gaps. The PWLB has subsequently published some guidance to Authorities about the categories of Lending that are appropriate for authorities to undertake to access borrowing from them.
24. The main features of the new lending terms are:
 - a. As a condition of accessing the PWLB, Local Authorities (LA) will be asked to submit a high-level description of their capital spending and financing plans for the following three years
 - b. As part of this, the PWLB will ask the finance director of the LA to confirm that there is no intention to buy investment assets primarily for yield at any point in the next three years. This assessment is based on the finance director's professional interpretation of guidance issued alongside these lending terms.
 - c. the PWLB will not lend to a LA that plans to buy investment assets primarily for yield anywhere in their capital plans

- d. When applying for a new loan, the local authority will be required to confirm that the plans they have submitted remain current
25. Guidance is high level, rather than a set of strict definitions, due to the diversity and complexity of local government finance. It deliberately avoids providing precise answers, leaving the onus on Section 151 officers to categorise borrowing activity and certify the authority is not planning to “purchase investment assets primarily for yield” (PIAPY) over the next three years.
26. The primary purpose of Kent Music is to provide education services for the people of Kent. This project would sit within the definition of Service expenditure and the S151 Officer is comfortable that this project conforms with the guidance and is not a PIAPY.

Risk assessment

27. There are six key risks that need to be highlighted for this agreement;
- a. The purchase stalls - this is not in the Council's control but if the land deal does not progress, then the mortgage agreement falls away as it is conditional on the land being purchased.
 - b. The land owner requests a higher price – Kent Music would need to firstly consider this additional impact and find the additional funds. Ashford Borough Council's exposure would be capped at the level of the Council's valuation of land value.
 - c. Repayments are not forthcoming – this risk would primarily be triggered by KM not securing adequate revenue funding to support its operation and ultimately this would be as a result of the failure of its 3 main income streams. Ultimately, there is a risk here Kent Music is funded through KCC and grants from Arts Council England and so there is a level of uncertainty over whether or not grant funding will be renewed at the end of each funding cycle. The Council can only look at the track record of Kent Music in securing funding and the longevity of the organisation shows that they have a strong record of bid for and securing funding. Ultimately, the Council would then seek to recover the balance on any loan outstanding through the charge on the property. The property was originally designed to be 2 separate units and so if needed they could be separated and sold.
 - d. Reputation – Should the Council seek to enforce its loan covenants it would be taking action against a well know local charity and this could have reputational impacts for the Council.
 - e. Governance failure leads to events that effect the continuation of the Kent Music – This transaction would be a long term relationship with Kent Music and during this period they will understandably change and evolve with the times. There is a risk that these changes bring about a change in key personnel and this could ultimately affect the strength of the governance of the organisation that could either place the security of the loan at risk or the reputation of the council could be harmed. To mitigate

this Kent Music are investigating whether its constitution would allow the council to nominate a member to observe on their board.

- f. Change of legislation and regulation. There is a consultation underway concerning the regulations that manage the activities of the PWLB. This has the potential to impact upon the council's ability to use this form of funding for the loan. In addition to this any loan to Kent Music will need to comply with state aid regulations, the terms proposed have been tested for compliance with state aid in relation to the loans made to the property company and are on commercial terms.

Equalities Impact Assessment

28. Not applicable this is stage as the report relates to a loan and not a policy.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

29. None

Other Options Considered

30. Do nothing and risk that the charity does not relocate to Ashford.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

31. This is an opportunity for the council to promote the arts within the borough through its support of Kent Music. This will help deliver upon the council's long held ambition to improve the cultural offer of the borough.
32. The proposal has adequate security for the loan and will generate a small revenue return to the council to cover its risk and support the general fund budget.

Next Steps in Process

33. If this proposal was supported by cabinet the loan would need to be built into the council's budget framework, and any decision would be subject to full council approval.
34. Whilst the report has proposed heads of terms appended to it. It is necessary to agree the final heads of terms with Kent Music. Any material variation of these terms would need to be reported back to cabinet for approval.
35. A full valuation would need to be completed of the proposed site and the council would need to get comfort that the value of the site is proportionate to the loan secured upon it.
36. The actual loan agreement would need to be drafted and agreed with Kent Music.

Conclusion

37. Kent Music is a body of long standing operating in Kent since 1948. The charity has a strong financial standing relying on income streams from parents Kent County Council and Arts Council England
38. The proposal is not without risks, which are summarised above, but the relocation of Kent Music to the proposed site at Javelin Way is an exciting opportunity for the council to promote arts and culture within the Borough.
39. The proposal presents an opportunity for the council to support this organisation whilst making a modest revenue return.

Portfolio Holder's Views

I acknowledge that this report covers a broad number of portfolios – particularly Culture and Tourism and other Cabinet Members may wish to contribute to the debate on this item.

This represents a significant step in strengthening the cultural industries that reside in the Borough delivering a long held ambition of the Council whilst managing the Councils risk through securing the loan against the property.

Contact and Email

Ben Lockwood

Ben.lockwood@ashford.gov.uk

Heads of Terms	
Date	November.2021
Borrower	Kent Music
Lender	Ashford Borough Council (Council).
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Term loan facility on mortgage of up to £1,400,000 (or the purchase price of the site if less)
Fees	Each party bears own
Purpose	To fund the acquisition of a building at Javelin Way, Ashford
Availability Period	The period beginning with the date of the mortgage agreement for a period of one year
Maximum number of loans and advances	KMS may draw the loan in no more than [Two] advance.
Interest	1% above the relevant 40 year PWLB rate (at the date of Cabinet)
Interest Period and repayment	<p>Loan will be on a fixed rate fixed term annuity over 40 years and includes capital repayment and interest or such other interest rate to ensure no illegal State Aid is being provided. Commencement date of repayments to be on the [FIRST] anniversary of the loan.</p> <p>Interest will commence from date of Occupation</p>
Voluntary early repayment and cancellation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early repayment permitted with 25 business days' notice, in whole multiples of £10,000 Cancellation permitted with 25 business days' notice, upon repayment in full of the loan balance outstanding subject to KM paying the Council's costs
Mandatory repayment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unacceptable Change of objects Unacceptable change of use of the site for purposes other than the KM facility without the Council's consent Proceeds of insurance.
Repayments: general	<p>Any amount of the term loan facility repaid may not be redrawn.</p> <p>Early repayments are to be made with accrued interest and breakage costs but otherwise without premium or penalty.</p>

Application of repayments of term loan facility	Repayments will be applied against repayment instalments in chronological order
Security	<p>First-ranking security over Javelin Way, Ashford registered at the Land Registry under title number []</p> <p>In addition the Council will seek a floating charge over KM other assets.</p>
Conditions precedent	<p>Standard conditions precedent for a transaction of this nature, in a form and substance satisfactory to the Council, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of the mortgage agreement. • Execution of the security documents and delivery of all notices and title documents required to be delivered under the security documents. • Payment of fees, costs and expenses.(if required by the Council's Head of Finance) • Certified copies of constitutional documents for KMS. • Certified copies of board resolutions of KMS. • Certificate in relation to borrowing and granting security for KMS. • Certified copies of all material insurance policies. • Due diligence reports. • The latest available audited financial statements and unaudited financial statements for the most recent trading period • Satisfactory title to the Site • Satisfactory valuation of the Site • A satisfactory business plan to include a funding statement to demonstrate how the whole capital costs of the project (including the building and the highway works) will be funded and to include key milestones for the project. • A copy of any other document, authorisation, opinion or assurance reasonably specified by the Council.
Representations and warranties	<p>Standard representations and warranties for a transaction of this nature, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due incorporation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power and authority. • Non-conflict with other documents and obligations. • Authorisations. • Binding obligations. • Registration, filing and stamp taxes. • Choice of law. • No withholding tax. • No default. • No misleading information. • Financial statements. • No material adverse change. • No litigation. • No breach of law. • Ownership of assets. • <i>Pari passu</i> ranking. • Material contracts.
Covenants	<p>To use reasonable endeavours to deliver the project in line with key milestones set out in the approved business plan or any amended business plan which may be approved from time to time (milestones to include to commence and complete construction of the KM facility within periods to be agreed).</p> <p>Standard covenants for a transaction of this nature, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorisations. • Negative pledge. • Restrictions on other borrowings and guarantees. • Restrictions on disposals, acquisitions, joint ventures and mergers. • Restrictions on loans and credit.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restriction on Site not to be used for purposes other than the KMS facility without the Lenders consent. • Compliance with laws. • <i>Pari passu</i> ranking. • Insurance. • Access to books of accounts and records of the business.
Information covenants	<p>Standard information covenants for a transaction of this nature, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited financial statements within [10 months – to coincide with Charities Commission Deadlines] after the end of each financial year. • Compliance certificate to be delivered with audited and unaudited financial statements used for the purposes of testing the financial covenants, signed by two directors and, in the case of each compliance certificate to be delivered with the audited financial statements, by KMS auditors. • Details of disposals, claims under material contracts and insurance claims. • Such other information as the Council may reasonably request.
Financial covenants	<p>The facility agreement will contain the financial covenants below at levels (and with inclusions and exclusions) to be agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mortgage is restricted to costs incurred for the purchase of the Site only.
Events of default.	<p>Standard events of default for a transaction of this nature, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-payment. • Breach of covenant. • Misrepresentation. • Cross-default. • Insolvency, insolvency proceedings and creditors' process. • Unlawfulness and invalidity. • Cessation of business.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material adverse change.
Costs	Each party to bear own costs
Taxes	All payments to be made by KM must be made free of withholding and any other taxes.
Governing law	Laws of England and Wales.
Jurisdiction	Courts of England.
Other	All other terms and conditions standard for a transaction of this nature shall be included in the finance documents.
Expiry	The terms of this offer will be valid until [one] year after the Council's Full Council on 9th December 2021

The above terms do not constitute or imply a commitment to provide funding by the Council, nor a representation that such funding will be made available. Any such commitment is subject to contract, formal Council approval and satisfactory due diligence and documentation.

Appendix B – Kent Music School Accounts

A couple of points to note:

- The annual grant from Arts Council England was awarded for the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 but because the funding was guaranteed in the second year the auditors accounted for it all in the first year which means that our grant income in 2019 looks very high. This will even out in the 2020 accounts.
- Kent Music left the LGPS in 2010 but have potential liabilities on the scheme depending on its performance. LGPS liabilities are not all realised at the same time.

KENT MUSIC						
(A company limited by guarantee)						
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2020						
	Note	Unrestricted funds 2020 £	Restricted funds 2020 £	Endowment funds 2020 £	Total funds 2020 £	Total funds 2019 £
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	2	259	1,214	-	1,473	8,397
Charitable activities	4	746,721	2,138,658	-	2,885,379	1,079,927
Investments	3	635	4,496	-	5,131	4,719
Total income and endowments		747,615	2,144,368	-	2,891,983	1,093,043
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities	5	666,508	2,310,266	-	2,976,774	3,270,185
Total expenditure		666,508	2,310,266	-	2,976,774	3,270,185
Net income / (expenditure) before other recognised gains and losses						
		81,107	(165,898)	-	(84,791)	(2,177,142)
Actuarial losses on defined benefit pension schemes	21	(53,000)	-	-	(53,000)	(130,000)
Net movement in funds		28,107	(165,898)	-	(137,791)	(2,307,142)
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		510,569	1,534,112	333,694	2,378,375	4,685,517
Total funds carried forward		538,676	1,368,214	333,694	2,240,584	2,378,375

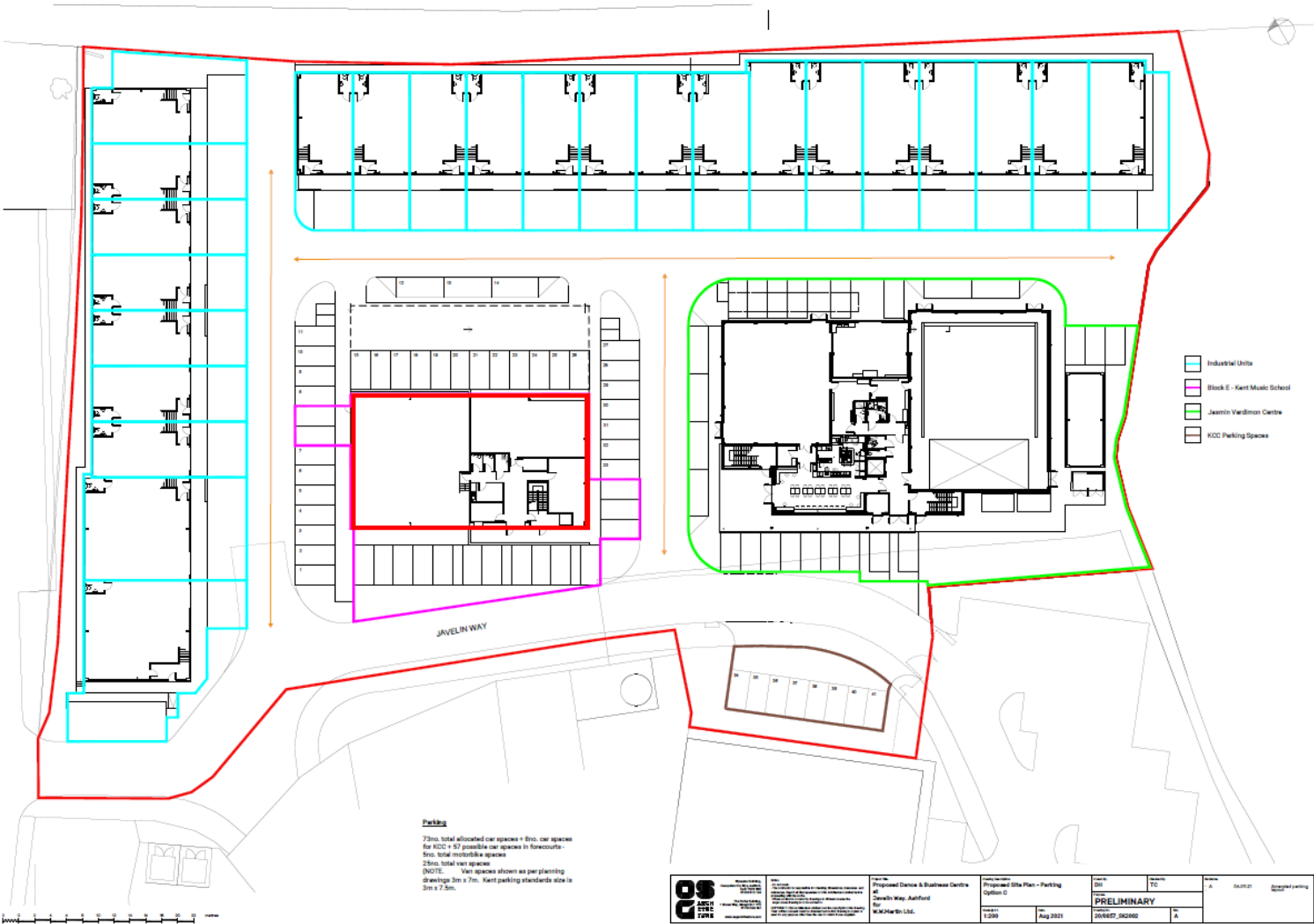
The notes on pages 16 to 34 form part of these financial statements.

KENT MUSIC
(A company limited by guarantee)
REGISTERED NUMBER: 05464855

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2020

	Note	£	2020 £	£	2019 £
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	10		-		16
Tangible assets	11		154,380		169,030
			<u>154,380</u>		<u>169,046</u>
Current assets					
Stocks	12	2,964		13,581	
Debtors	13	1,129,297		1,333,984	
Investments	14	333,694		333,694	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,533,988		1,609,617	
		<u>2,999,943</u>		<u>3,290,876</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	(174,739)		(395,547)	
Net current assets			<u>2,825,204</u>		<u>2,895,329</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>2,979,584</u>		<u>3,064,375</u>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	21		(739,000)		(686,000)
Net assets including pension scheme liabilities			<u><u>2,240,584</u></u>		<u><u>2,378,375</u></u>
Charity Funds					
Endowment funds	17		333,694		333,694
Restricted funds	17		1,368,214		1,534,112
Unrestricted funds:					
Unrestricted funds excluding pension liability		1,277,676		1,196,569	
Pension reserve		(739,000)		(686,000)	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>538,676</u>		<u>510,569</u>
Total funds			<u><u>2,240,584</u></u>		<u><u>2,378,375</u></u>

Appendix C – Proposed Location





ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To:

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:

25th November 2021

Report Title:

Adoption of a Local Validation Checklist

Report Author & Job Title:

Simon Cole, Head of Planning & Development

Portfolio Holder

Cllr. Bell

Portfolio Holder for:

Planning & Development

Summary:

Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to prepare and maintain a Local Validation Checklist (LVC) for planning applications in accordance with paragraph 44 of the National Planning Policy Framework (as amended).

The LVC should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question.

Ashford Borough Council does not currently have an LVC which will provide details of all documents that are required to be submitted with a planning application in the borough additional to those required under the national validation list, the policy drivers for the requirements, together with guidance on the circumstances when the requirement is applicable.

Key Decision:

YES

Significantly Affected Wards:

All wards

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Recommend that Full Council endorse and adopt the proposed local validation checklist;**
- II. Agree that the local validation checklist be reviewed in full before the end of 2023;**
- III. Delegate to the Head of Planning & Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development, to make any minor**

amendments to the local validation checklist.

Policy Overview:	None
Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	None
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Not Required
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Not Applicable
Sustainability Implications:	Not Applicable
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Local Validation Checklist Local Validation checklist Matrix Summary of Consultation Responses
Contact:	Simon.Cole@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330 642)

Report Title: Adoption of a Local Validation Checklist

Introduction and Background

1. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to prepare and maintain a Local Validation Checklist (LVC) for planning applications in accordance with paragraph 44 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. Paragraph 44 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should 'publish a list of their information requirements for applications for planning permission. These requirements should be kept to the minimum needed to make decisions. Local planning authorities should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question.'
3. Once adopted, the NPPF indicates that the LVC should be updated every two years. Currently, Ashford Borough Council does not have such a local checklist.

Proposal

4. In line with the requirement set out within the NPPF, an Local Validation Checklist document has been prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance and the NPPF (Appendix 1)
5. The LVC provides users of Ashford Borough Council's Development Management Service with clear details of all forms, supporting assessments and plans/drawings required at the time of submitting a planning application (made under the Town and Country Planning Acts) in addition to those required by the national checklist to make it valid. Once an application has the correct level of supporting information then it is considered to be "valid" and it can be formally progressed towards a decision.
6. For 'householder' planning applications where relatively minor development is proposed, the large majority of matters covered within the LVC will not be applicable. However, in order to assist potential applicants, it is proposed that officers will prepare a 'layman's guide' to the checklist for publication on the Council's website to indicate when additional information may be required and what the scope of that information would need to be as this may vary depending on the precise nature and scale of a proposed scheme. Assistance in these matters would also be part of the Council's response where a potential applicant has sought pre-application advice.
7. In addition, it is intended that an event for developers / agents will be held to publicise the introduction of the local checklist.

Equalities Impact Assessment

8. Not required as no policy changes proposed.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

9. Online public consultation on the draft validation checklist took place between the 28th June 2021 and the 9th August 2021. Responses received are summarised within the attached background papers to this report (Appendix 2). All responses have been fully considered and where appropriate the LVC amended accordingly.

Other Options Considered

10. Production of an up-to-date LVC is encouraged in the NPPF, and therefore it is strongly recommended as this will also allow particular local circumstances to be accounted for in the preparation of material needed to support an application in the borough. Not having a LVC means there is likely to be more occasions when applicants will need to be asked for additional material during the course of processing an application leading to greater delays and need for further consultation when the material is received.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

11. Ashford Borough Council does not currently have a LVC. The LVC has been prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Guidance and the NPPF.
12. Public consultation of the LVC has been undertaken and responses have been taken into account in the drafting of the final LVC document.
13. The introduction of the proposed LVC should enable sufficient information to enable the Council to determine applications is provided prior to validation of applications, thus giving more details to consultees from the start and reducing the need for further information to be requested during the statutory timescale for determination of the application.

Next Steps in Process

14. If the Cabinet agree the recommendation, the LVC will need to be formally adopted by the Council and the document will then be published on the website. The LVC will be formally reviewed and updated every two years. It is also suggested that minor amendments to the checklist such the addition to or the deletion of an item is delegated to the Head of Service, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to ensure the checklist remains fit for purpose and can adapt readily to new requirements.

Conclusion

15. The adoption of a LVC is encouraged to meet the guidance set out in the NPPF and will provide a useful tool for both users of Ashford Borough Council's Development Management Service when submitting a planning application and

officers in ensuring there is adequate information submitted with planning applications to enable local residents and other stakeholders to consider the proposal's impact upon them. It should also allow officers the potential to be able to more swiftly process schemes without referring back to the applicant for further information with positive outcomes for both customers of the service and the Council's performance against the indicators for speed of determination of planning applications.

16. In addition, the forthcoming introduction of the Planning Service's new applications processing system provides an opportunity to build the new validation checklist requirements into it from the start, thus enabling the potential for greater automation and efficiency at the application validation stage for a great majority of the planning applications the Council receives.

Portfolio Holder's Views (Cllr Bell)

17. I support the introduction of a Local Validation checklist so that officers and consultees can have all necessary information submitted with a planning application at the start of the process. This should improve both processing times for applications and allow an optimum time for the scrutiny of proposals.

Contact and Email

18. Simon Cole (Head of Planning and Development) -
simon.cole@ashford.gov.uk / 01233 330642

Validation checklist

Requirements for planning applications submitted to Ashford Borough Council

November 2021



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

Section 1: Introduction and Background	4
Introduction	4
Personal Information and Data protection	5
The Planning Application process	5
Can we require this level of information?	6
Common reasons why applications are invalid	7
Pre-application Discussions	8
Online and electronic submissions	8
Making Payment on Applications.....	9
‘Householder’ Applications	9
Section 2: Validation Criteria.....	10
Table 1 – National Validation Checklist.....	11
Requirement.....	11
Application Form	11
Application Fee	11
Notices.....	11
Agricultural Land Declaration	12
Block Plan	13
And the following unless these would not influence or be affected by the proposed development:	13
Other Plans	14
Existing and proposed elevations:	14
Existing and proposed floor plans:.....	14
Existing and proposed site sections and finished floor and site levels:	14
Roof Plan	14
Proposed Landscaping or Restoration Plans.....	14
Table 2: Local Validation Requirements	15
Heritage Strategy/ Archaeology Assessment.....	15
External Lighting Scheme.....	16

Flood Risk Assessment.....	16
Sustainable Drainage Strategy.....	17
Renewable Energy Statement.....	17
Employment/ Local Services Statement	17
Fibre to the Premises Statement	17
Vehicle Parking, Cycle Storage Plan and Electrical Charging Points.....	18
Transport Statement/ Assessment and/or Travel Plan.....	18
Stodmarsh Mitigation Strategy	18
Ecological Surveys.....	19
Affordable Housing Statement.....	19
Self and Custom Build Plans/ Design Brief.....	20
Residential Space Standards Compliance Checklist	20
Air Quality Assessment	21
Minerals Assessment	21
Tree survey and/or associated Arboricultural Impact Assessment.....	21
Structural Survey.....	22
Refuse Storage Facilities.....	22
Viability Assessment	23
Specialist Housing Evidence	23
Planning Statement including Statement of Community Involvement	23
Landscape Character Assessment.....	23
Sustainability Assessment.....	24
Town Centre/ Retail/ Leisure Uses Impact Assessment	24
Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment	24
Environmental Statement (EIA Development)	24
Fire Statement.....	25

Section 1: Introduction and Background

Introduction

Ashford Borough Council has produced this Application Validation Checklist in accordance with [Planning Practice Guidance](#) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 44 states that local planning authorities should 'publish a list of their information requirements for applications for planning permission. These requirements should be kept to the minimum needed to make decisions, and should be reviewed at least every two years. Local planning authorities should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question'.

This document provides users of Ashford Borough Council's Development Management Service with clear details of all forms, supporting assessments and plans/drawings required at the time of submitting a planning application (made under the Town and Country Planning Acts) to make it valid. Once an application has the correct level of supporting information then it is considered to be "valid" and it can progress towards a decision.

The checklist is set out into two main requirements – set out in 2 tables:

Table One – sets out the national list of requirements which are mandatory for all planning applications.

Table Two – sets out Ashford Borough Council's local list

The checklist aims to:

- assist in ensuring that your application is valid when submitted;
- ensure that all applications can be dealt with effectively and efficiently;
- respond positively to best practice advice issued by government; and,
- ensure that Ashford Borough Council complies with legislation in relation to planning applications.

The checklist is designed to help ensure that your planning application is valid when we receive it from you. The checklist highlights the relevant local policies and guidance and provides links to where you can read and download these.

The content and detail of the supporting information we require should be proportionate to the scale of the development. For householder applications (any works to an existing house such as an extension, outbuilding etc) these requests are minimal (see page 8). For major schemes (e.g. any application that involves the provision of 10+ dwellings, a floorspace of over 1,000sqm, site area of more than 1 hectare etc.), it is recommended that the content of technical documents supporting your application be informed by pre-application discussions with us and by reference to our planning policies and guidance, particularly Supplementary Planning Documents.

If you are in any doubt about the requirements after reading this document, please contact us through planning.help@ashford.gov.uk before preparing and submitting your application. If the information required is not submitted with your application then the application will not be valid and it will not be assigned to a case officer or start to be progressed towards a decision.

Please remember also that planning permission, listed building and advertisement consents may not be the only permissions or consents you need from Ashford Borough Council. Other consents include building regulations, licensing and food safety. More information on these and other consents and services of the Council are available on our website www.ashford.gov.uk.

Personal Information and Data protection

All information you provide on the application form and in any accompanying documents will normally be published on the council's website. Only the applicant's personal details, such as telephone and email contact details, and signatures, will be routinely blanked out.

If you wish to provide information in support of the application which you regard as sensitive or confidential, and which you do not wish to be published as set out above, this must be submitted as a separate document and clearly marked as such. Such information should not be embedded within larger documents where it will be more difficult to identify. You should include with any such separate document an explanation as to why you do not wish the document to be published. The council will consider the request and may need to contact you further regarding the request.

Given this, if you supply personal information belonging to a third party, please ensure you have their permission to do so. More information about the planning privacy notice and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 can be [viewed here](#).

The Planning Application process

There are different types of applications and some types require more detailed information than others. All information needs to be accurate and some information can be complex and technical. It is required so that all people with an interest in the outcome of your application can accurately assess what the impacts of your planned development will be. We want to make the planning process as clear as possible and the Checklist below confirms what information is required for different types of applications.

You may need to appoint a planner, an architect, surveyor or specialist consultant to prepare information to support your application and in order to make it valid; for example, to undertake an ecology survey and prepare a report.

Upon receipt of your application, we will crosscheck the information submitted against national planning application requirements, together with Ashford Borough Council's local requirements, as set out in this document. If all of the required information is included, your application will be classed as "valid" and it will then progress towards a decision.

If when we receive your application, we consider that it is lacking information, it will be held as 'invalid' and it will not start to progress towards a decision until the necessary information is received.

In the event that your application is invalid (because you have submitted insufficient information or an incorrect application fee), we will write to you to tell you what you need to do to make it valid. You must then submit the required information in a timely manner to ensure that your application can progress to a decision. If, within 21 days, you do not provide us with the information we require, we will not be able to deal with your application and it will be treated as closed. Thereafter, in the event that you wish to progress with your plans you will need to submit your application to us again as we do not keep any documents relating to closed applications.

Can we require this level of information?

The application fee and some of the information we require when an application is submitted are national requirements set by Government and apply to all applications – these are set out in Table 1. In addition, as set out in Paragraph 44 of the NPPF, we can require applicants to provide additional information in the interests of good and efficient decision making and having regard to local circumstances, this is known as a local list and can be found in Table 2.

Common reasons why applications are invalid

Reason	How to fix
An absence of the Supporting Documents necessary.	Check the national and local validation requirements within this document to see what supporting information is needed with your application.
Supporting Documents that omit information specified in the guidance.	Within the local validation requirements set out in this document, there is a section called, 'what information is required'. This will provide you with useful references about the level of information required with reference to policy and guidance.
Drawings with insufficient detail as specified in the guidance notes or containing inconsistencies.	Refer to the local validation requirements below to make sure that the right level of information is submitted and cross-reference your drawings before submitting to ensure consistency in the submission.
One or more plans are missing.	If submitting plans through the Planning Portal you should be able to view a list of all plans/ documents you are about to submit. At this time, your list of plans can be checked against your records before you submit. If providing paper copies, you may find it useful to provide a covering letter with a schedule of plans to assist you in identifying any omissions prior to submission.
An incorrect description of the development.	Check that the description that you detail on the application form covers <i>all</i> elements of the proposal.
An incorrect Certificate of Ownership	Certificate A should be submitted where the applicant/s is the sole owner of land to which an application relates. Certificate B should be submitted where the applicant/s is not the sole owner of the land or where any part of the development goes outside the land in the applicant's ownership. "Notice 1" is also required to be served on each owner. Certificate C should be submitted where some but not all of the land owners are known. Again "Notice 1" should be served on each known owner. In respect of unknown owners then the applicant must also advertise the application in the local newspaper and "Notice 2" can be used for that purpose. Certificate D should be submitted if none of the owners can be traced and "Notice 2" used to advertise in the local newspaper.
Inconsistencies between elevations and floor plans.	Ensure that you cross-reference elevations and floor plans before submission. Amended plans will be required if there are inconsistencies between elevations and floor plans because it needs to be clear what is being applied for so that the impacts can be properly assessed.
Incorrect fees enclosed	Fees for the processing of applications are set nationally. You will find a link to them here .

Validation Dispute

We want to avoid disputes with you about whether your application is, or is not, valid; this is why we have prepared the clear advice provided here. [National legislation](#) provides us with the power to decide whether an application is valid. We consider that the information and evidence we require satisfies legislation because it is:

- reasonable having regard, in particular, to the nature and scale of the proposed development; and,
- about a matter which it is reasonable to think will be a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Nevertheless, if you disagree with what we are asking you to do (to make your application valid) you should always in the first instance talk to us. If you are unable to achieve agreement with us you have the right to seek a resolution by following national procedures, which can be read [here](#). In these circumstances, you must send a notice to us which:-

- (i) specifies which particulars or evidence you consider do not meet the requirements;
- (ii) sets out the reasons why you hold that view; and,
- (iii) requests that we waive the requirement to include those particulars in the application.

We will then send a validation notice or non-validation notice to you.

Pre-application Discussions

We strongly encourage you to discuss your plans with us before submitting a formal application. This can save you both time and money and ensure that your application has the best chance of success because we can agree with you the issues relevant to the consideration of your application and that the information required to make it valid at the outset, thereby avoiding delays in a decision. It is useful to include details of any pre-application advice you have had with us within the application form within the relevant section.

Different charges apply to different types of schemes (Householder proposals are not charged). Full details of our pre-planning application advice service can be [found here](#).

Online and electronic submissions

We would prefer to receive your application electronically via the Planning Portal (<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>). The following notes should assist you when submitting your application in this way. Following the guidelines will enable us to process your application and publish it more quickly. Please structure your electronic submission in the following way:

- No individual file should be greater than 5MB;
- Large documents should be broken down into manageable files e.g. in chapters and sections;

- It is important that the naming structure explains the document and chapter (if applicable) in plain English;
- All major dimensions must be specified on drawings. This is necessary for the assessment of drawings. Drawings should include a scale and calibration scale; and,
- Drawings should be orientated so they appear correctly when viewed on screen (i.e. North at the top of the screen).

The Council will process applications submitted on paper. All forms and plans can be posted to Development Management, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL.

Making Payment on Applications

A planning application fee calculator can be [found here](#) on the planning portal, where you can make your payment if you are submitting your application through the planning portal.

If you make the application direct to the Council, you can pay your [fee here](#).

‘Householder’ Applications

‘Householder’ applications are typically alterations and extensions to peoples' houses or about buildings in their garden. More information on common householder projects can be [found here](#). If you are submitting a Householder application, the validation requirements are largely set out with the National Validation Requirements, contained immediately below in table 1.

Exceptions to this are if your application relates to a property, which is:

- a nationally listed building, or located in a conservation area / area of archaeological potential;
- it would involve works to protected trees or trees in a conservation area.
- It is within a Flood Zone.
- Is within an ecological designation.

In these instances, additional information will be required to support the application under the Local Validation requirements, which are set out in Table 2.

For ease, the typical requirements for Householder applications are set out in our [‘Get it right first time’ guidance document](#). Email us at planning.help@ashford.gov.uk if you have any questions relating to these requirements.

Section 2: Validation Criteria

National Requirements for submission

Applicants are encouraged to supply documentation which has been produced electronically in that format. This applies whether the application is made on-line or whether a paper application is made. This facilitates the transfer of information to consultees and for the public to view planning proposals on-line with the greatest efficiency. It would be appreciated if the scale of the plans and paper size is no larger than is required to illustrate the proposals.

The national standards for on-line submission of electronic planning documents are as follows:

- Maximum single file size is 5 Mbytes;
- Maximum 25 Mbytes file size (the sum of all document file sizes). Where these maxima are exceeded the information should be submitted off-line using a file sharing transfer link via email to planninghelp@ashford.gov.uk;
- Portable Document Format (PDF) is the recommended file format to ensure that they are accessible to consultees;
- All drawings shall specify the printing page size for which the scale applies;
- All drawings shall be correctly orientated for on-screen display
- All drawings shall include a scale bar and key dimensions;
- All documents and drawings shall be given a meaningful title and dated with drawings given a unique plan reference. For example: Block Plan drawing v1A.pdf or Design and Access Statement.pdf.
- Scanned documents must be a minimum of 200 dots per inch (dpi) resolution for black and white and 100 dpi for colour;
- All photographs in PDF file format and no larger than 15 cm x 10 cm.

In addition:

- Updated or revised versions of plans or documents should be clearly named to show a change so that the new documents can be easily identified when uploaded. For example Block Plan drawing v1B.pdf or Design and Access Statement.pdf.
- Plans should not contain the phrase 'Do not scale.'

Unless the application is made on-line through the Planning Portal, this authority only wishes to receive **one paper copy** of the following documents but reserves the right to request additional paper copies for consultation. For larger proposals and EIA development one paper copy and a file sharing transfer link via email to planninghelp@ashford.gov.uk is requested.

Table 1 – National Validation Checklist

Code	Requirement	Details
NV1	Application Form	<p>The Council's relevant application form(s) are required and these must be signed and dated with all relevant sections completed. When submitting via the planning portal, Ashford's application form will be automatically uploaded. Should you be submitting paper copies then the planning portal has Ashford Borough Council forms that can be downloaded, please use the link here.</p> <p>All the relevant questions should be answered and if not relevant to the application, then the words "not applicable" should be inserted for clarity.</p>
NV2	Application Fee	<p>Planning applications and other submissions cannot be processed without payment of the correct fee. The correct fee, as determined in The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) Regulations 2012, where one is necessary. As fees are subject to change, the latest version of these regulations should be checked or the Planning Portal's fee calculator can be used.</p>
NV3	Ownership Certificates	<p>A completed, signed and dated Ownership Certificate A, B, C or D shall be submitted as set out under Section 65(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and Section 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). The ownership certificate states the ownership of the whole of the application site, including land which gives access to the site from the public highway or where development abuts, crosses or simply overhangs the boundary with the adjoining land or property. For this purpose an owner is <i>"anyone with a freehold interest or leasehold interest, the unexpired term of which is not less than 7 years"</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate A must be completed when the applicant is the sole owner of the site. • Certificate B must be completed when the owner of the site is known to the applicant • Certificate C and D must be completed when some or none of the owners of the site are known. <p>If Certificates B or C are relevant, the applicant must complete and serve notice of the proposals on the owners and /or agricultural tenants of the application site in accordance with Article 13 of the DMPO.</p>
NV4	Notices	<p>Where the applicant is not the sole owner of the land, certificates B, C or D are completed and notice(s) need to be served in accordance with Article 13 of the DMPO, on every owner of any part of the land to which the application site relates giving 21 days notice of the application before it is submitted. The names and addresses on which notice has been served should be provided with the application. Where some or all of the owners of land to which the application relates are unknown, the applicant will need to specify the steps undertaken to find owners, such as Land Registry enquiries and the date of an advertisement in a newspaper published at least 14 days prior to the submission of the application. A copy of the certificate can be found here</p>

NV5	Agricultural Land Declaration	A completed, signed and dated agricultural holdings certificate shall be submitted whether or not the site includes an agricultural holding. All agricultural tenants must be notified prior to the submission of the application. The agricultural holding certificate is incorporated into the standard application form for all except applications for approval of reserved matters, renewal of temporary consent, discharge or variation of conditions, listed building consent and lawful development certificate.
NV6	Design and Access Statement	<p>Design and Access Statements (DAS) must accompany an application to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications for major development, as defined in article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015; • Applications for development in a designated area (Conservation Area), where the proposed development consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ one or more dwellings; or ◦ a building or buildings with a floor space of 100 square metres or more. ◦ Applications for listed building consent. <p>The statutory requirements for DAS are set out in Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.</p> <p>A DAS is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal and to explain the proposal in a structured way. The level of detail required in a DAS depends on the level of complexity of the application and the length of the statement should vary accordingly but need not be long. Further advice is contained in MHCLG Guidance on making an application which can be found here and also from the Design Council.</p> <p>If crime prevention measures for major development are not addressed in a DAS then these should be addressed in a separate document. The DCLG “Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention” provides guidance on how good planning can reduce crime by ‘designing out’ opportunities for crime and ‘designing in’ community safety. A link to this document can be found here:</p> <p>Applicants may be required to make provision for access, parking and sanitary conveniences for people with disabilities in applications concerning buildings accessible to the public. Your attention is drawn to legislation to provide access for the disabled. Further guidance by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) (2006) can be found on the Design Council’s website.</p>

NV7	Location Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be based on an up-to-date map. • The scale should typically be 1:1250 or 1:2500, but wherever possible the plan should be scaled to fit onto A4 or A3 size paper. • Plans should be clearly titled, given a unique reference number and dated • The plans should wherever possible show at least two named roads and surrounding buildings and the properties shown should be numbered or named to ensure that the exact location of the application site is clear. • The application site should be edged clearly with a solid red line. • It should include all land necessary to carry out the proposed development (e.g. land required for access to the site from a public highway, visibility splays, landscaping, car parking and open areas around buildings). Where a new private access is proposed to abut with the Public Highway involving the carrying out of operations that will require planning permission all land providing this access should be included. The size of the application site can in some cases determine the fee payable for the application and should be carefully drawn. • A blue line must be drawn around any other land owned by the applicant, close to or adjoining the application site. <p><i>*The red line land should not include the publicly adopted highway unless the application proposal includes changes to the highway and in which case the applicant should seek advice from the local planning authority and the highways authority prior to the submission of the application to ascertain if it should be included within the red line boundary.</i></p>
NV8	Block Plan	<p>The block plan should be submitted, at an appropriate scale of 1:500 or 1:200. Plans will not be accepted unless the following is accurately shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The direction of North; • Scale bar on the plan; • The scale and specified page size at which the original plan was produced (e.g. 1:1000 at A3). <p>And the following unless these would not influence or be affected by the proposed development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the buildings, roads and footpaths on land adjoining the site including access arrangements. • All public rights of way crossing or adjoining the site; • The position of all trees on the site and those on adjacent land; • The extent and type of any hard surfacing; and • Boundary treatment including walls or fencing.

NV9	Other Plans	<p>In addition to the location plan and block/layout plan, other plans should be submitted (dependent on the type of application and development proposed) to explain the proposal in detail. The drawings submitted should show details of the existing building(s) as well as those for the proposed development. Where existing buildings and or walls are to be demolished these should also be clearly shown.</p> <p>Existing and proposed elevations:</p> <p>All elevations should be submitted drawn to a scale of 1:50, or 1:100 and should show clearly the proposed works in relation to what is already there. All sides of the proposal must be shown and orientations labelled. It will not be sufficient to state front, side and rear elevation.</p> <p>Elevations should indicate the proposed building materials and the style, materials and finish of windows and doors. Blank elevations must also be included; if only to show that this is in fact the case.</p> <p>Where a proposed elevation adjoins another building or is in close proximity, the drawings should clearly show the relationship between the buildings, and detail the positions of the openings on each property.</p> <p>Existing and proposed floor plans:</p> <p>These should be shown at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100 and be labelled to show the existing and proposed usage. Where buildings or walls are to be demolished these should be clearly shown. New buildings should be shown in relation to adjacent buildings.</p> <p>Existing and proposed site sections and finished floor and site levels:</p> <p>In cases where a proposal involves a change in ground levels or is on a sloping site, drawings at a 1:50, 1:100 or 1:200 scale should be submitted showing a cross section through the proposed building or site. Illustrative drawings should be submitted to show both existing and finished levels. The drawings may take the form of contours, spot levels or cross or long sections as appropriate.</p> <p>Roof Plan</p> <p>A roof plan is used to show the shape of the roof and is typically drawn at a scale smaller than the scale used for floor plans. Details such as roofing materials, vents and their location are typically specified on a roof plan.</p> <p>Proposed Landscaping or Restoration Plans</p> <p>Where a development involves changes to land contours, soils, substrates, waterbodies, vegetation and/or landscape features then a proposed landscaping and restoration concept is expected to be depicted on one or more plans.</p>
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Table 2: Local Validation Requirements

Code	Local Validation Requirement	When is this required? Development type/Location	What information is required?	National / Local Policy
LV1	Heritage Strategy/ Archaeology Assessment <i>These may be combined into one Heritage Strategy where both heritage and Archaeological designations apply</i>	Heritage Strategy: Applies to all development proposals which will/may impact designated Heritage Assets and/or their settings (including conservation areas and locally listed buildings) Archaeology: Applications for major development. Applications for development known to be on or adjacent to a heritage asset of archaeological interest. Applications for development on sites of Archaeological potential.	Heritage Strategy It should include a schedule of works to the heritage asset(s); an analysis of the significance of the archaeology, history and character of the building/structure, the principles of and justification for the proposed works and their impact on the special character of the heritage asset, its setting and the setting of adjacent heritage assets may be required*. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage Assets are shown on the Local Plan policies map here Full listing descriptions can be obtained from Historic England here Historic England have a wide range of useful documents available here Archaeology Assessment An appropriate desk-based assessment and, where appropriate, a suitable field evaluation to include the assessment of the character, condition and extent of any archaeological remains*. Where remains are identified and considered to be of specific importance, it should be demonstrated how the development has been designed to enable the preservation in situ, or if appropriate arrange for excavation, recording, analysis and reporting of the remains. As a minimum the Council recommends that the Historic Environmental Record is consulted full details	ENV13 – Conservation & Enhancement of Heritage Assets ENV14 – Conservation Areas ENV15 – Archaeology National Planning Policy Framework 2021

			<p>of Kent Archaeology can be found here</p> <p>Areas of Archaeological potential are shown on the Local Plan policies map here</p> <p><i>* The scope and degree of detail required will vary according to particular scale and circumstances of each application</i></p>	
LV2	External Lighting Scheme	<p>All development proposals where external lighting is proposed</p>	<p>Full lighting scheme – Requirements as set out in policy ENV4 and Dark Skies SPD</p> <p>The Ashford Borough's Dark Sky Zone Area Designations can be viewed on the Local Plan policies map here</p> <p>Further information can be found via the Institute of Lighting Professionals.</p>	<p>Policy ENV4 – Light Pollution and Dark Skies</p>
LV3	Flood Risk Assessment	<p>All Major Developments</p> <p>All developments in Floodzone 1 when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The site is 1 hectare or greater; - The site is less than 1 hectare but has critical drainage problems; - The site is less than 1 hectare and includes the change of use of development type to a more vulnerable class where they can be affected by sources of flooding other than rivers and sea (e.g. surface water, drains) <p>All new built development within Flood Zones 2 and 3</p>	<p>Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) - where one is required under the National Planning Policy Framework. Advice from national government is provided here.</p> <p>The Assessment will include supporting evidence including, but not necessarily limited to, plans, drawings and calculations.</p> <p>For Flood Zones 2 & 3 applicant must address requirement for Flood Risk sequential test/exception test as set out in NPPF & PPG.</p> <p>Flood Zone maps of Ashford Borough are available here</p> <p>Technical Guidance</p> <p>Planning Practice Guidance Flood Risk</p>	<p>ENV6 – Flood Risk</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework 2021</p>

LV4	Sustainable Drainage Strategy	All development proposals (set out in SPD)	<p>This will include your overall approach and your rational in terms of preferable alternatives to surface water management having regard to sustainable drainage hierarchy as set out in the SPD</p> <p>All Major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would not be appropriate. Where possible, SuDS features should provide multifunctional benefits and have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation is achieved throughout the lifetime of the development.</p>	Policy ENV9 - SuDS
LV5	Renewable Energy Statement	Major applications and all applications for renewable energy production.	<p>Supporting statement addressing policy ENV10 criteria</p> <p>In the case of all new renewable energy production facilities, information regarding how the local environment will be protected.</p>	Policy ENV10 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
LV6	Employment/ Local Services Statement	Proposals for loss of existing employment premises or loss of shops/services in a village or local centre & where seeking to justify proposals in relation to viability of current use.	Supporting statement including evidence of marketing to justify loss of employment premises or local services, as set out in Policy EMP2 or EMP10.	EMP2 – Loss of Employment EMP10 – Villages and Local Centres
LV7	Fibre to the Premises Statement	<p><u>All</u> residential and employment schemes in or adjoining Ashford urban area</p> <p>For the rest of borough – applies to schemes of 10 or more dwellings</p>	Fibre to the Premises Statement as set out in the Fibre to Premises SPD and Policy EMP6.	EMP6 – Fibre to the Premises

		or employment promoting 10 or more jobs		
LV8	Vehicle Parking, Cycle Storage Plan and Electrical Charging Points	Proposals for new dwellings, alterations to existing dwellings and/or new or changes to employment premises.	<p>Information should include all existing and proposed commercial and/or residential vehicular parking spaces and cycle storage areas in new developments. Information should also be provided, where possible, of electric vehicle charging points.</p> <p>Loading areas and arrangements for manoeuvring, servicing and parking of vehicles should also be clearly identified.</p> <p>This should be included on a scaled plan.</p> <p>Further guidance for residential parking requirements can be found in Residential Parking SPD</p>	Policy TRA3 - Parking Standards & TRA6 - Cycling Provision
LV9	Transport Statement/ Assessment and/or Travel Plan	Major development proposals	<p>Transport Statements should be used where development has a limited transport impact. Transport Assessments should be used where more impact is likely and mitigation measures are probably needed. Travel plans are required when long term management strategies are required to deal with significant transport impacts.</p> <p>Where appropriate the Council will liaise with relevant transport authorities in order to establish which evidence is required.</p>	TRA8 – Travel Plans, Assessment and Statements National Planning Policy Framework 2021
LV10	Stodmarsh Mitigation Strategy	All applications for new housing and overnight accommodation within the Stour Catchment Area or that will discharge into identified Wastewater Treatment Works. (Bybrook, Lenham, Wye, Sellindge or Chartham WwTW)	<p>The Stour Catchment area is mapped here.</p> <p>Submission of Mitigation Strategy / Appropriate Assessment must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantify the nutrient loading associated with the proposed development in line with the latest Natural England methodology. Identify suitable mitigation to achieve nutrient neutrality. <p>More information on requirements are located here:</p>	ENV1 – Biodiversity National Planning Policy Framework 2021

LV11	Ecological Surveys	Any development on or adjacent to designated nature conservation sites (including Local Wildlife Sites) or developments which will result in the disturbance of wildlife habitats including semi- natural open space and buildings with bat roost potential.	<p>All designations can be found on the Local Plan policies map here.</p> <p>A free online tool for householders and small to medium-scale developers who want to undertake a development project to check whether they will need expert ecological advice before submitting a planning application is available here.</p> <p>Ecological survey reports should include a description of the proposal; desk study and field survey (extended Phase 1 habitat survey and detailed species surveys as necessary relating to the site and adjacent area likely to be affected by the proposals). Evaluation of features and assessment of the likely impacts of the proposal; discussion of mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures should be included within the report (with reference to the NPPF where appropriate). The mitigation and enhancement strategy should be proportionate to the perceived impacts and should include clear, site-specific prescriptions, rather than general or indicative possibilities, and they should be feasible and deliverable.</p> <p>Surveys should be completed at an appropriate time of the year by suitably qualified and experienced ecological consultants and should comply with published guidance and best practice.</p> <p>Applicants should seek further advice from standing advice here and a map based search can be carried out using Natural England's Magic Map here</p> <p>Further details on Pre-submission screening service for European Protected Species can be found here.</p>	<p>ENV1 – Biodiversity</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework 2021</p>
LV12	Affordable Housing Statement	Major applications 10 or more dwellings.	Demonstration Compliance with HOU1. Any variation of this should include an evidence based justification. The statement should include the number and mix of units	Policy HOU1 - Affordable

			<p>and floor space of habitable areas of residential units. Scaled Plans showing the location, type, floor space of units and number of bedrooms should also be submitted.</p> <p>A proportion of wheelchair accessible homes will also be required complying with building regulations part M4 (3b). These shall be provided within the affordable rented element of the scheme, capped at a maximum of 7.5%. (See policy HOU14)</p> <p>Where Vacant Building Credit is being claimed, details of period of vacancy and the last known date of use of the building should be included within the application. <i>*Please note that this can form part of the Design and Access Statement</i></p> <p>Commutated sums in lieu of onsite provision will only be accepted in exceptional, justified circumstances as set out in policy HOU1. <i>*See Viability Assessment below if applicable.</i></p>	Housing
LV13	Self and Custom Build Plans/ Design Brief	Residential development 40 or more units - Ashford and Tenterden 20 or more units - Villages and Rural areas	<p>Locations of proposed self-build plots to meet policy requirements must be shown on a scaled plan.</p> <p>Where 5 or more self/custom build are proposed a design brief is also required, which should include a marketing plan.</p>	Policy HOU6 – Self and Custom Build
LV14	Residential Space Standards Compliance Checklist	<p>Dwelling mix - Major residential schemes of 10 or more dwellings</p> <p>External open space – All new dwellings</p>	<p>A detailed list and block plan must be provided to show the amount and location of dwelling types and sizes in accordance with Policy HOU18.</p> <p>Scaled plans must be provided to show compliance with external open space standards in accordance with Policy HOU15.</p>	<p>Policy HOU18 - Dwelling Mix</p> <p>Policy HOU15 - External Space Standards</p>

		Residential space standard – All new dwellings	Details of floorspace and scaled floorplans must be provided for all new dwellings to show compliance with residential space standards in accordance with Policy HOU12.	Policy HOU12 - Internal Space Standards
		Accessibility Standards - Schemes of 5 or more new build dwellings	A proportion of wheelchair accessible homes will be required complying with building regulations part M4 (2). The location of these must be shown on a scaled plan.	Policy HOU14 - Accessibility Standards
LV15	Air Quality Assessment	All Major developments. .	Where proposals might lead to a significant deterioration in air quality or national air quality objectives will be exceeded and Air Quality Assessment must be provided as set out in policy ENV12. Further information can be found at: Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnerships Technical Planning Guide and National Planning Practice Guidance	Policy ENV12 - Air Quality
LV16	Minerals Assessment	New development within MSAs or MCAs or within 250m of safeguarded Minerals and waste facilities (Not householder applications)	Kent County Council recommends that all Kent district and borough councils include Minerals Assessments and Minerals and Waste Infrastructure Assessments in the local list of validation information requirements for planning applications within Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral CAs and within 250m of safeguarded minerals and waste facilities. All relevant minerals designations can be found on the Local Plan policies map here .	KCC Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Early Partial Review
LV17	Tree survey and/or associated Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Where works are required to a protected tree (TPO or tree in Conservation Area), and where works are	A Tree Survey should include Give a detailed description of the proposed works, e.g. crown thinning, reduction/topping, lifting, felling or the removal of dead or dying trees, and the reasons for it. Digital photographs of	Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (Section 197-

		proposed to any trees as part of the proposals.	<p>the existing tree(s) should be provided.</p> <p>A structural engineer's or surveyor's report if the work required relates to subsidence damage and arboriculturist's report if the work required relates to the condition of the tree.</p> <p>The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) considers how a proposed development and the associated/ adjacent trees will co-exist and interact in the present and the future. It should demonstrate how factors such as root protection, changes in levels, installation of services, material storage etc. have been given consideration through the design process and that there will be no significant adverse impacts for important trees. It should also demonstrate consideration for future issues e.g. the long term effect of changing surfacing or levels or the future pressure to prune or remove trees due to shadowing or encroachment.</p> <p>Tree root protection zones should be clearly marked on a scale plan.</p>	198).
LV18	Structural Survey	<p>Required for: The demolition, or partial demolition of a Listed building(s), or The conversion of a Listed building. Conversion of Agricultural Buildings</p>	This should demonstrate that they are capable of conversion without major alterations or rebuilding of the property, for example for barn conversion applications.	<p>Policy ENV13 - Conservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets</p> <p>Policy EMP4 - Conversions of rural buildings to non-residential uses</p>
LV19	Refuse Storage Facilities	New dwellings including apartments schemes	<p>Details of the proposed facilities for refuse bin storage and collection in new residential dwellings – See informal design guidance</p> <p>Refuse vehicle tracking shall also be provided.</p> <p>Details should be included within the block plan.</p>	Informal Design Guidance

LV20	Viability Assessment	Where schemes are not proposing to meet all policy requirements, such as affordable housing (HOU1), as meeting such requirements would render the proposal not economically viable.	<p>A Viability Assessment (VA) which contains sufficient evidence to enable the Council to properly assess a scheme in accordance with the recommended practice set out in the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p><i>*notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is advised that the scope of any VA should be discussed at pre-application stage</i> • <i>An independent review of the VA may be undertaken at the cost to the applicant</i> 	<u>IMP2 – Flexibility, Viability and Deferred Contributions</u>
LV21	Specialist Housing Evidence	Standalone proposals for older persons housing (including C2) / Local Needs Housing	Statement of evidence of need for other types of specialist housing such as older persons housing or Local Needs Housing. This should include reference to any up to date Local Needs Surveys.	<u>Policy HOU2 - Local Needs/Specialist Housing</u>
LV22	Planning Statement including Statement of Community Involvement	All major applications (including change of use).	<p>The statement should identify the context and need for a proposed development and should include an assessment of how the proposed development accords with relevant national and local planning policies, and how consultation has taken place with the local community prior to application submission.</p> <p><i>*The planning statement can incorporate details of other validation requirements such as specialist housing or marketing evidence.</i></p>	<u>National Planning Policy Framework 2021</u>
LV23	Landscape Character Assessment	<p>All development proposals within the AONB</p> <p>All Major development proposals elsewhere</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people.</p> <p>More information can be found in the <u>Ashford Landscape Character SPD</u></p>	<u>ENV3a/3b – Landscape Character and Design/ AONBs</u> <u>National Planning Policy Framework 2021</u>

			<p>All landscape designations can be found on the Local Plan policies map here.</p> <p>More guidance can be found here – Planning Practice Guidance</p>	
LV24	Sustainability Assessment	Major non-residential development.	Must include evidence of BREEAM standard as set out in Policy ENV11.	ENV11 – Sustainable Design and Construction – non-residential
LV25	Town Centre/ Retail/ Leisure Uses Impact Assessment	Any retail located outside of Ashford and Tenterden Primary Shopping frontages and proposal is 500+ sq.m or other main town centre uses in accordance with NPPF.	<p>This assessment should include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sequential test • the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and • the impact of the proposal on the vitality and viability of adjacent centres, including local consumer choice and trade, and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme). 	EMP9 – Sequential and Impact Tests
LV26	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment	Instances where the development would generate significant levels of noise or vibration in relation to residential and commercial properties, or it proposes a noise-sensitive use in proximity to a known noise source	<p>An assessment of the source and the impact together with any necessary mitigation measures to reduce disturbance due to noise or vibration to acceptable levels.</p> <p>The noise assessment should be prepared by a suitably qualified acoustician and demonstrate that there is sufficient sound insulation (or other mitigation) to avoid any harm to the adjacent residents.</p>	National Planning Policy Framework 2021
LV27	Environmental Statement (EIA Development)	<p>All EIA development</p> <p>Developments falling within a description in</p>	<p>Environmental Statement to be submitted.</p> <p>(All applications over 0.5ha in size will be screened by the Local Planning Authority to determine whether an</p>	National Planning Policy Framework 2021

		<p>Schedule 1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 require EIA.</p> <p>Development of a type listed in Schedule 2 to the 2017 EIA Regulations may require EIA</p>	<p>Environmental Statement is required.</p> <p>This screening can be requested prior to an application being submitted)</p>	Environmental Impact Assessment (England and Wales) Regulations 2017
LV28	Fire Statement	<p>All applications for planning permission for development which involves the provision of one or more relevant buildings, or development of an existing relevant building or development within the curtilage of a relevant building.</p> <p>A relevant building is one which contains two or more dwellings or educational accommodation and meets the height condition: 18 metres or more in height, or seven or more storeys.</p>	<p>A fire statement to be submitted unless an exemption applies.</p> <p>The fire statement must be submitted on a form published by the Secretary of State for planning permissions made on or after 1 August 2021. It should set out the fire safety design principles, concepts and standards that have been applied to the development.</p>	Guidance: Fire Safety and High Rise Residential Buildings (August 2021)

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Rep	Respondent	Comment	ABC Response
1	ABC Building Control	From 1/8/21 - Fire statement should be submitted from a suitably qualified professional to support an application with in scope buildings over 18m residential / 7 storeys	The comments are accepted and the checklist will be amended accordingly
2	Chilham Parish Council	Members felt that there should be advice to householders on how to produce drawings to the maximum size required: frequently, when you try to upload a drawing only to find it is not accepted because it exceeds the maximum specified. Certain apps. can be used to help on reducing the size of uploads. Frequently drawings are not scaled. The scale should be clearly marked on a drawing. Not enough emphasis is placed on renewable energy or reduction in carbon emissions.	Information is contained within the validation checklist which specifies the scales that are required. Furthermore at paragraphs 27 & 29, links are given to specific householder applications which include a "Get It Right First Time" document which helps for householder applications. Paragraph 23 also explains the limit on file size (5MB) which can be accepted via the planning portal
3	Tenterden Town Council	First response (13.7.2021) was not completed. Second response (29.7.2021) stated: With the growing popularity of Hybrid applications, clarity needs to be brought to bear on two particular documents. NV6 Design and Access and LV22 Planning Statement. It is important that the explanation of outline permission and full permission text is not comingled, but separated so a consultee can easily agree or object to both, or in fact agree to one and object to the other.	As far as the Design & Access Statement is concerned, as explained in the checklist a Design & Access Statement is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal and to explain the proposal in a structured way. The level of detail required in a DAS depends on the level of complexity of the application and the length of the statement should vary accordingly but need not be long. Likewise a Planning Statement (LV22) should identify the context and need for a proposed development and should include an assessment of how the proposed development accords with relevant national and local planning policies, and how consultation has taken place with the local community prior to application submission. When it comes to hybrid applications, whilst a Design & Access Statement and Planning Statement (if required) should make reference to the hybrid nature of the application, it is also part of the validation process to ensure that the "hybrid" nature of the development is clearly

Rep	Respondent	Comment	ABC Response
			outlined in the description which is routinely carried out. It is perfectly plausible for consultees to comment as they see fit.

**Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the
Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on Microsoft Teams on
Friday 15th October 2021 at 10.00am**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chairman) – Leader, ABC
Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Cllr Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Housing, ABC
Cllr Neil Shorter – Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, ABC
Mr David Brazier – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, KCC
Simon Jones – Corporate Director - Growth, Environment and Transport, KCC
Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive, ABC
Michael Cloughton, Chairman, Ashford Access Group
Graham Razey, CEO, East Kent College

Non Board Members

Cllr Peter Feacey, ABC
David Smith, KCC
Rebecca Anderson, KCC
Shona Johnson, Homes England
Ben Lockwood, ABC
Paul McKenner, ABC
Lorna Ford, ABC
Andrew Osborne, ABC
Christina Fuller, ABC
Dean Spurrell, ABC
Len Mayatt, ABC
Simon Cole, ABC
SallyAnne Logan, ABC
Dan Daley, ABC
Danny Sheppard, ABC.

Apologies

Paul Harwood, Tim Read, Paul Sayers, Rebecca Spore, Matt Hogben.

Item	Notes	Action
1.	Welcome The Chairman welcomed all those present to the Virtual meeting being held on Microsoft Teams. He advised that there was a lot going on in Ashford at the moment including	

	the formation of the Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission and the bid going in to the Government for the Levelling Up Fund. He reminded all present that the meeting was expressly confidential.	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting – 30th April 2021 Noted.	
3.	<p>Ashford College – Update on Capital Project and Developing Skills Provision in the Borough</p> <p>Graham Razey (GR), the CEO of Ashford College, gave a presentation updating on the development of the College itself and the longer term goal of developing skills levels in the Borough.</p> <p>The presentation included updates on: - numbers – showing a significant growth in student/apprentice enrolments; improvements to the wider course provision, retention and achievement rates; the new employability centre working with Jobcentre Plus; the new Local College Board including prominent local figures; the specialisation agenda and delivering relevant skills aligned with the local economic need; the Phase 2 development (now split into phases 2a and 2b) and capital plans for the site; involvement with the Newtown Works programme; and wider funding and costs.</p> <p>Michael Claughton (MC) asked about provision for those with disabilities. The presentation had been very impressive, but there was no mention of disability and this was something that he had spoken with GR about previously. GR assured that everything the College did was driven towards supporting the needs of the local community full stop, and that included everyone. East Kent College Group was the highest provider of Special Education Needs of any organisation in England, so it was fair to say that they were meeting needs and were fully inclusive in their approach to education. Indeed, the building itself was a modern and inclusive one. He would expect everyone involved at the College, including its Board Members, to be “living and breathing” their Inclusion Strategy. This may not have been mentioned in this particular presentation, but he had not intended to focus too much on any particular area.</p> <p>Tracey Kerly (TK) said she was extremely encouraged by the presentation and also wanted to thank GR for the support the College had recently provided for the Afghan refugees from the bridging hotel.</p>	

	<p>Cllr Shorter (NS) asked if bids for funding for the capital programme were not successful, that this could come back to the Board for discussion on a way forward for the College and examine how everyone involved could assist before 'pinch-points' were reached. This was agreed.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Graham Razey for the presentation.</p>	
4.	<p>South of Ashford Garden Community</p> <p>Simon Cole (SC), Dan Daley (DD) and SallyAnne Logan (SAL) gave a presentation updating on the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) Project which had evolved from the original Chilmington Green Project to also incorporate the new developments at Court Lodge Farm and Kingsnorth Green. The presentation focussed on the five year vision and strategy for the SAGC to 2025.</p> <p>SC updated on: - the branding and identity; the vision statement; the model of community led governance; match funding and 'early wins'; and priority projects (including Discovery Park and sustainability). In terms of what was on the horizon, this included the opening of the new Primary School on the 1st November which was a major milestone, a planning application due for the carbon neutral Secondary School (hopefully to open in September 2023) and housing occupations which were now nearing 200.</p> <p>DD gave more detail on the sustainability agenda which included a number of actions to reduce emissions and carbon, but also to increase biodiversity. The Garden Community had an opportunity to be a leader in the Borough's overall aims for carbon neutrality and this included a sustainable transport strategy and early improvements on the ground for walking and cycling, working with KCC. He concluded by drawing attention to the upcoming publication which would promote and celebrate the vision and strategy for the SAGC and what was being done there. This would be produced in both a printed and online format.</p> <p>SAL also updated further on: - the five year vision; community development; governance and stewardship in Chilmington Green and the extension of this to the two newer developments; health and wellbeing; and education and skills.</p> <p>Damian Green (DG) said the presentation had shown what an exciting vision there was for the SAGC, but the realities for those already living on site did have to be born in mind.</p>	

	<p>Those people were experiencing some build quality and infrastructure issues and in his view some of these would have to be dealt with before there was too much publicity of the vision and its success. He considered that getting the CMO up and running properly and in the hands of residents, and even getting the Community Cabin occupied and operational, would be clear visual signs to the people that lived there that the vision was becoming a reality.</p> <p>The Chairman said that he wanted the Council to start to take formal action against developers who flaunted planning rules and what was agreed as part of their applications. Enforcement was key. He considered it would be important to stand very firm and resolute.</p> <p>NS wanted to stress that all were frustrated with the snagging issues and delays. He was part of the CMO Board and he knew that all involved were intent on delivering a quality model, but the response had to be structured and methodical and based on solid evidence.</p> <p>Ben Lockwood (BL) advised that they had held a community meeting earlier that week and launched the recruitment of a Resident Board Member (of which they were eventually aiming to have two). So resident engagement was underway and the next step was to formalise the handover of more community assets. The focus was on positive community engagement regardless of the barriers.</p>	
5.	<p>Stodmarsh Update</p> <p>SC gave a presentation updating on the current position with Stodmarsh and nutrient neutrality. Board Members would already be well aware of the issues this had caused ABC as the Local Planning Authority and SC focussed his presentation on what was being done in terms of the preparation of a mitigation strategy for the Borough and making appropriate assessments.</p> <p>In July 2021 the Cabinet had agreed the principle of acquiring land in the Borough to create future strategic wetlands, and potentially rewilding agricultural land, as part of a mitigation strategy. It had also agreed to approach Government for a grant and/or loan to fund the delivery of the solutions and to potentially forward fund those as a fall back option. SC's presentation also outlined: - the benefits of a strategic wetland solution; timescales for the Borough strategy; the catchment wide strategy (covering multiple Districts across East Kent as well as other agencies); keeping developers informed; and urgent next steps</p>	

	<p>including a discussion with the Environment Agency on abstraction licensing in the Stour catchment.</p> <p>The Chairman said that in his view water authorities had failed to keep up with the national demand for growth through under investment. He had attended meetings with the new management at Southern Water and they were now focussing on bringing their sewerage treatments plants up to standard, but this was one of the wider issues to consider. Government support would be needed because ABC, and indeed none of the affected Local Authorities, could solve this on their own.</p> <p>DG said he would be happy to be included in any lobbying efforts from the Districts or KCC. At the moment this appeared to be an issue that was stuck between Government departments, but it was clear that a sensible way forward needed to be found quite urgently.</p> <p>Shona Johnstone (SJ) advised that there was a Working Group between DEFRA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which was working on a solution, but as had been said, this was now a national problem that needed an urgent resolution.</p>	
6.	<p>Project Updates</p> <p>The report enclosed with the agenda set out the latest position on progress in respect of the Priority Projects and the Watching Brief projects, for noting.</p>	
7.	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Friday 11th February 2022 at 10.00am Friday 22nd April 2022 at 10.00am</p>	

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Compliance and Enforcement Board

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **26th October 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman);

Cllrs. Buchanan, Feacey, Shorter, Spain.

Apologies:

Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager
Team Leader Planning Enforcement
Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer

Also in attendance:

Cllrs. Ledger, Ovenden.

Team Leader Environmental Enforcement, Head of Environment and Land Management, Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader, Strategic Development and Delivery Manager, Deputy Team Leader - Planning Enforcement, Investigation and Enforcement Support Manager, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1. Notes of the Meeting of 27th July 2021

1.1 The Board agreed the notes as an accurate record.

2. Environmental Crime Enforcement in Ashford

2.1 The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement introduced the report, which identified environmental crime enforcement activities, and highlighted the key points in the report.

2.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following comments were made:

- Several Members expressed their satisfaction that the team was now in place and that progress was being made. They considered that this was a valuable service.
- A Member noted the fixed penalty fine that had been given to a houseowner, and asked what checks and balances were in place to ensure that infringements were not a result of ignorance or vulnerability. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement said that interviews under caution were part of the process, and questions would be asked about any checks and research done as part of duty of care and personal responsibility.

- In response to a question about communications and publicity, the Head of Environment and Land Management advised that a communications plan was underway to ensure that the duty of care was highlighted to the public. She confirmed that the statistics showed a deterrent effect since the team had set up fully. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement added that information had been provided to Parish Councils for inclusion in their magazines, and the corporate media campaign was designed to encourage members of the public to come forward with information regarding fly-tipping. He advised that a double spread item would also be included in the Ashford for You magazine both to provide information on the duty of care, and to act as a deterrent.
- A Member noted the success of Operation Assist and asked how it worked in practice and whether it was intelligence-led. The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement advised that the police identified vehicles which were believed to be carrying waste. Drivers would be stopped and asked for relevant documentation. The Head of Environment and Land Management added that an intelligence officer was employed through the Kent Partnership and information was shared between neighbouring areas.
- The Team Leader Environmental Enforcement advised that an e-learning package was available to business owners to educate them on their responsibility to dispose of waste through the proper channels.
- A Member requested that any communications should include advice on how to get licences for gas heater disposal.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

3. Anti-Social Behaviour in Ashford - Update

- 3.1 The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points and data within the report, which provided the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) performance update.
- 3.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points were raised:
 - A Member raised the issue of perception and said that although good work was being done by the team in Stanhope, there was still a perception that if residents made a report nothing would happen. He considered that there was a need to reassure Stanhope Parish Council and residents that they should continue to report issues, and explain why every report was important. The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader explained that the new Community Safety Officer was increasing visibility in the area. She offered to attend a

Parish Council meeting to discuss the activity taking place and would welcome an invitation. She added that there would also be some focus work to raise confidence in the area.

- A Member noted the various initiatives going on at the moment and said he hoped to see ASB numbers going down in future as a result.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

4. Planning Enforcement Update

- 4.1 The Strategic Development and Delivery Manager introduced this item, which provided Members with an overview of the work of the Planning Enforcement Team. He highlighted and expanded on the key points within the report. He also introduced the Deputy Team Leader - Planning Enforcement.
- 4.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points were raised:
- A Member asked for updates on various areas within his ward, and the Deputy Team Leader - Planning Enforcement agreed to provide him with further details outside the meeting.
 - A question was asked about delays in the system, and whether there was a log-jam in any particular area. The Deputy Team Leader - Planning Enforcement explained that injunctions delayed all other work and there was a need to balance priorities, so other work would often have to take a back seat for a while.

Recommendations/Actions:

That the update report be received and noted.

5. Date of Next Meetings

- 5.1 25th January 2022 at 10am
26th April 2022 at 10am
26th July 2022 at 10am
25th October 2022 at 10am

Councillor Bell (Chairman)
Compliance and Enforcement Board

CEB
261021

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Information Technology & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 28th September 2021.

Present:

Cllr. Forest

Cllrs. Krause, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter.

Also Present:

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

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th March 2021

- 1.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 16th March 2021 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

2 Update on the Broadband improvements in the Ashford Borough

- 2.1 The Senior Economic Development Officer introduced this item and gave a presentation to the Committee, which highlighted that there was no specific Officer responsible solely for this project, but time had been dedicated to the task and the team had worked together. The Presentation outlined the following subjects:

- Headline figures
- Gigabit Voucher Scheme and Performance
- Community Fibre Partnerships
- Providers Updates Highlights and Maps
- Next steps

- 2.2 The item was then opened up to the Task Group and the following points/questions were raised:

- USO was an acronym for Universal Service Obligation, and this referred to residential properties only.
- A Member that lived in a rural area explained that there was no 4G signal in his village, and it was not part of the 90% mentioned under the headline figures within Ashford. He questioned whether that figure was inflated. The

Economic Development Manager explained that the figures contained within the report were national figures and based within premises. The information for rural areas as a whole had not yet been made available. He agreed that the final 10% would likely be a big challenge as implementation of infrastructure was necessary.

- The Senior Economic Development Officer confirmed that Openreach deemed Tenterden a rural area, and this classification was not determined by ABC.
- The Chairman asked where Members could signpost problems to and it was advised that KCC were the lead for the Project. The Committee agreed that a Member Briefing on this topic would be useful.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

3 Digital Processes Update

3.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager introduced the Update and made a presentation to the Committee, which outlined the following themes:

- Position before the Pandemic
- Responding to the Pandemic
- Technology
- Changing the way we work
- Lessons learnt and way forward
- Consultation

3.2 The Chairman asked for the slides to be circulated and for Members to feedback to the Customer Service & Digital Project Manager regarding the Consultation questions. He raised a concern about multiple logins for different systems and suggested exploring whether a universal login could be developed.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted, and Members provide feedback on the Consultation questions.

4 Cyber Security Update

4.1 The IT Manager gave the Committee a progress update on cyber security. He spoke about the Endpoint Symantec Shield, which was being phased out and replaced by Endpoint Protect Response; this was a more sophisticated system that observed and learnt users typical behaviour, and was therefore able to detect any abnormal activities. The laptop rollout had resulted in a security incident, which was shown to be a false positive, but demonstrated

that the added protection they included was working effectively. The Code of Compliance Audit had started that day at 10am, but no queries had yet been raised from the Auditors, which was a positive sign. Finally, the Council had been volunteered to take part in a project, which included the KPSN circuit being installed at International House, which would potentially increase the coverage area. This would be extremely helpful to be included in SMART communications on issues such as motorways and gritting lorries.

- 4.2 In response to questions from Members the IT Manager confirmed that a 2-factor authentication was still being developed by the IT Team. Approximately 400 new laptops were being rolled out to staff. Councillors were not currently able to change their own passwords unless connected to the main server, so the PC in the Members room could be used to do this. When the Council moved to the Azure network, then Members would be able to change their passwords. Additionally, if Members felt their account had been compromised in any way, then they were advised to contact the IT Team immediately.

5 Future Agenda Items and Report Tracker

- 5.1 The Chairman requested the Tracker be circulated to Members for their review and suggestions could be emailed directly to the Chairman and Customer Service & Digital Project Manager.

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Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **21st October 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bartlett (Chairman)

Cllrs. N. Bell, Blanford, Clokie, Harman, B. Heyes, Ledger, Spain, Walder.

Apologies:

Cllr. Mrs Bell.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Michael, Ovenden, C. Suddards.

In attendance:

Spatial Planning Manager; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Team Leader - Placemaking; Deputy Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development; Senior Planning & Development Solicitor; Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer.

1 Notes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The Notes of the meeting of the Task Group held on 5th August 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2 National Model Design Codes

- 2.1 The Team Leader – Placemaking introduced this item and gave a presentation which covered:

- Background and origins
- Consultation draft response
- Definition of key aims
- Key objectives
- Scope and coverage
- 7 step process to producing a design code
- What the design code might start to look like
- The Office for Place
- New Homes Ombudsman
- Opportunities and challenges ahead.

2.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following comments were made:

- A Member advised that community engagement had been part of developing the Tenterden draft Neighbourhood Plan and this had been a complex process. She agreed to pass a copy of the draft Plan to the Team Leader - Placemaking. She asked about stand alone design codes and said that she believed rural areas would appreciate input from Council officers. She said it would be helpful to continue to have guidance on how to undertake Neighbourhood Planning and local design code work.
- Another Member noted the challenges involved in ensuring community engagement in development of village plans. She commented on the delays in receiving feedback from Council officers and questioned the resources in the Planning team to undertake the work involved in developing design codes. She considered that design codes were a fine idea in theory but would be resource intensive. She also commented that design codes were still overly urban and that something more appropriate would be required for rural areas. She agreed to provide the Team Leader – Placemaking with a copy of the draft design guide developed for Aldington village. The Team Leader – Placemaking replied that this was a national idea, and although it may appear to be overwhelming initially, work would commence with partners to develop a more streamlined approach to the key objectives.
- A Member noted that a number of different design codes would be produced for the Borough, and he questioned how they would differ from each other. He believed that common themes were needed, including a basic overall design code for the Borough. Another Member added that a clear table was required setting out which design code applied to different parts of the Borough and how all those parts fit together. A Member commented on the complexity of having different codes and guides, and said that community involvement would lead to a set of ideas specific to each individual area.
- A Member asked for a copy of the presentation that had just been given. He noted the different layers of design codes and questioned the impact of national changes on the various design codes cascading down. He also asked about design codes for non-residential buildings. The Team Leader – Placemaking said that village design codes should be agreed through robust consultation resulting in an SPD and Council approval. This would carry significant weight in considering planning applications and village design codes should retain significant value for a number of years. He confirmed that all buildings, including non-residential, would be covered by design codes.
- There was a question about the future role of the Ashford Design Review Panel. The Team Leader – Placemaking advised that the Panel would continue to operate as it had done in the past and that there was a strong commitment to retaining this part of the planning process.

- A Member noted the important role of the Planning Committee in controlling design in the Borough.
- A Member commented that there were potential complications regarding design codes in wards that were both urban and rural. He also questioned whether design codes would influence housing numbers. The Team Leader – Placemaking replied that where sites came forward separate from those allocated in the Local Plan, a key part of understanding the context of the site would be to study existing densities and current patterns of development, and design codes would help to influence this debate. The Member considered that where development proposals came forward in future, reference to the design codes would be necessary to ensure that plans were realistic and appropriate.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group notes the contents of the presentation, and anticipates further reports in due course, detailing the implications of the NPPF, National Model Design Code and associated initiatives to promote beauty, good placemaking and build quality.

3 Local Plan Pathfinder

3.1 The Team Leader – Planmaking and Infrastructure introduced this item and reminded the meeting that the information provided in this item was sensitive and confidential. He highlighted the key points within the report and gave a presentation which covered:

- Testing digital tools in the planning process
- Govt White Paper – interactive web based maps and design guides and codes
- Expectations
- Current thinking
- Interactive maps and prototype for Ashford
- Zoning – New land categorization, permitted development rights and general permitted development order
- Unintentional consequences
- The future.

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

- A Member asked about zoning on mixed use land and location of local employment spaces in villages and suburban areas. The Team Leader – Planmaking and Infrastructure said that this kind of development would be considered under ‘managed change’. He said that further clarification was needed on this, but design codes and guides would be important in conveying intentions and controlling development on such sites.

- A Member considered that permitted development rights diluted the ability of a local authority to manage via design codes. She was also concerned about the issue of inclusion in the drive towards technology. She was skeptical of the digital approach leading to greater community engagement, although she said the standardization of mapping tools and language was welcomed. The Team Leader – Planmaking and Infrastructure said that there was a debate at present about the degree of control which should be exerted by local planning authorities. A question was asked about how the zonal proposals would affect housing delivery and the 5 year housing land supply. The Team Leader – Planmaking and Infrastructure advised that further clarity was needed on this issue and the whole question of the degree of future control by local planning authorities.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group notes the contents of the presentation, and anticipates further reports in due course, detailing the implications of the Planning Bill when published and once it begins its path through parliamentary procedures.

4 Tracker

- 4.1 The Chairman noted that two more items were to be added to the tracker on National Design Codes and the Government's future approach to zoning.

Resolved

That the report Tracker be received and noted.

5 Date of next meeting

- 5.1 2nd December, 10am

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date: 25TH NOVEMBER 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.



Summary:	To set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet of Ashford Borough Council.
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Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Where appropriate, individual Wards are indicated.

Recommendations **That the Cabinet receive and note the latest Schedule of Key Decisions.**

Policy Overview: Under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no longer a legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, however there is still a requirement to publish details of Key Decisions 28 clear days before the meeting they are to be considered at. The Council maintains a live, up to date rolling list of decision items on the Council's website, and that list will be presented to the Cabinet each month, in its current state, for Members' information.

Financial Implications: Nil

Legal Implications: n/a

Equalities Impact Assessment n/a

Other Material Implications: Nil

Exempt from publication: No

Background Papers: None

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>

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
25th November 2021					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr 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
Draft Budget 2022/23	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Shorter	Maria Stevens	Open	30/11/20

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
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
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 Shorter	Ben Lockwood	Open	7/10/21
Planning Applications Validation Check List		Cllr Bell	Simon Cole	Open	7/10/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
16 th December 2021					
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2021-2051 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)	<i>To detail the financial position in the HRA and ask Members to agree Housing's priorities for the next year.</i>	Cllr Clokie	Sharon Williams/Mark James	Open (Exempt Appendix)	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
Street Naming and Numbering - 21/0097/SNN Land west of Viaduct Terrace, Warehorne Road, Warehorne	<i>To seek agreement for the naming the access road.</i>	Cllr Bell	Kenneth Beach	Open	1/10/21
Vehicle Speeds and Vision Zero		Cllr Feacey	Sheila Davison	Open	21/10/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Festival and Events Framework		Cllr Forest	Chris Dixon	Open	8/11/21
27 th January 2022					
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
Newtown Works		Cllrs Clarkson/Iliffe	Andrew Osborne	Open	10/11/21
24 th February 2022					
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
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

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
31 st March 2022					
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
28 th April 2022					
Street Lighting Project – Phase 2		Cllr Iliffe	Paul McKenner	Open	20/8/21
26 th May 2022					
30 th June 2022					
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
28 th July 2022					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Shorter	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	30/7/21

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
25 th August 2022					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					
29 th September 2022					
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
27 th October 2022					
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	29/10/21

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

12/11/21

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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