



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in Committee Room Nos. 1 and 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on Tuesday, 13th July, 2021 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)
Councillor Chilton (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Blanford, Burgess, Farrell, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland, Hayward, Howard and Conservative Vacancy.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT THIS MEETING

Subject to Coronavirus risk assessments and procedures, a very small number of members of the Press and public can register to attend and observe the Meeting in person (without speaking at it), on a first-come, first served basis. To register to attend and observe the Meeting on this basis, please email membersservices@ashford.gov.uk. You will be sent details of the procedures established by the Council in order to manage the risk of COVID-19 at the Meeting, which may include requirements such as to wear face coverings, and to not attend the Meeting if you are affected by any relevant circumstances relating to COVID-19. You will be expected to confirm your agreement to these requirements prior to attendance. However, instead of attending and observing in person, the Council encourages everyone to take advantage of the opportunity to watch and listen to the proceedings at the Meeting via a weblink, which will be publicised on the Council's website at www.ashford.gov.uk about 24 hours before the Meeting.

Summary of Public Participation for Committee Meetings after 6 May 2021

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

- A small number of members of the Press and public can register to attend and observe the meeting in person;
- In addition, seats in the meeting room are provided for those who register to speak on each item1 , by following the procedure below:-
 1. Written notice of a wish to speak at the meeting (by means of the procedure below) must be given, either to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk or on the Council's website at <https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/committeesystem/haveyoursay.aspx> by 10:00 hours on the last working day before the meeting.
 2. Registering to speak at the meeting confers the right to submit (and, if desired, make in person) a speech
 3. All those registered to speak must submit to membersservices@ashford.gov.uk by 10:00 hours on the day of the meeting, a copy of their speech in written, legible English. Speeches must be no longer than 400 words, printed in 12-point non-italic sans-serif font (e.g. Arial); any text above 400 words will not be read out. No speech should contain personal data about individuals, other than the speaker's name and (if relevant) postal

address. Any registered speakers who do not submit their speeches as above are not permitted to speak at the meeting (even if present in person).

4. At the meeting:- (i) Speakers who are present in person may read their previously submitted speeches when called to do so, but may not read any other material; (ii) If speakers are not present in person, their previously-submitted speeches will be read to the meeting by a competent Officer for and on behalf of the speakers, at the normal times and in the normal order (subject to the Chairman's normal discretion).

IMPORTANT: An Officer reading any speech on behalf of any speaker shall have discretion to omit/edit out any inappropriate language, information or statements. If any defamation, insult, personal or confidential information, etc. is contained in any speech received from any speaker, and/or is read to the meeting by an Officer, each speaker accepts by submitting the speech to be fully responsible for all consequences thereof and to indemnify the Officer and the Council accordingly.

Agenda

	Page Nos..
1. Apologies/Substitutes	
To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)	
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 of the last Meeting	3 - 6
To approve the Minutes of the last Meeting held on the 8 th June 2021.	
4. Presentation on Young People's Mental Health	
5. Support given to the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector	7 - 16
6. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/2021	17 - 26
7. Future Reports Tracker	27 - 28

5 July 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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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **8th June 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Blanford, Chilton, Farrell.

Also Present:

Allan Baillie, Skills and Employability Manager, KCC
Mike Rayner, Principal Lead – Post 16 Education, KCC
Trudi Short, Partnership Manager for Ashford & Folkestone

Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

42 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of this Committee held on the 13th April 2021 be approved and confirmed as an accurate record.

43 Youth Unemployment in Ashford

Allan Baillie, the Skills and Employability Manager from KCC introduced the first presentation, which gave details on the following themes:

- Ashford Unemployment
- Youth Unemployment in the South East
- Ashford Wards (figures)
- Adult Skills Levels
- Ashford Employment (figures)

The presentation was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- A Member asked about young unaccompanied asylum seekers in various wards around the Borough and in particular whether the figures would include those people. Allan said that the figures in the presentation gave a broad

summary and young refugees could be contributory.

- The Chairman asked how skills were measured within the presentation figures, and it was confirmed that a sample of data from the Office of National Statistics recorded in October 2020 was used.

Mike Rayner, Principal Lead – Post 16 Education at KCC delivered the next presentation, which provided data and information about NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) analysis, training providers by area and the reasons for the decline in training provision.

The presentation was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- Members queried the impact of the pandemic upon 16-18 year olds, including the transition to virtual learning during the lockdown periods. Mike explained that in one way, because GCSE'S in 2020 and 2021 were teacher assessed grades, this worked in their favour since they were marginally higher than if exams had been sat. Schools and Colleges had also tried to encourage the pupils to stay in further education. The downside was that there had been little face-to-face interaction, not just in terms of education, but also apprenticeships and work placements, since the staff were not in the office to provide on the job training. In addition, this group may struggle in further studies, since they had not experienced the traditional GCSE learning experience.
- The Committee went onto discuss the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, including retail, engineering and construction. Retail was the biggest employment sector for young people, and it was important to bear in mind that the detrimental effects of the lockdown and temporary closing of shops would continue far into the future as retail owners struggled to keep their business afloat. Mike Rayner spoke about a report recently published that outlined the growing demand for construction workers, particularly in the South East where large housing developments and projects were planned. He added that up to 50 % of construction workers in London had been lost because of Brexit. A further difficulty when trying to recruit to construction apprenticeships was that many building contracts were specialist and/or short-term.

Trudi Short, the Partnership Manager for Ashford & Folkestone then spoke to the Committee about the work the DWP had undertaken. She explained that their team of 11 Youth Unemployment Coaches offered claimants face to face and telephone appointments, and were currently trialling a video call appointment service. They liaised with local businesses and companies about the government's Kickstart Scheme, which provided funding to employers to create jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit. She outlined the various agencies they worked with including the National Citizens Service and the Princes Trust.

The Committee then discussed and the following questions and points were raised:

- The Chairman asked for a better understanding of the barriers preventing young people from taking up jobs. Trudi explained that some young people were not willing to travel further for work, and that certain roles were not appealing to them. The need to re-skill and retrain was highlighted, particularly for young adults. Many NEET individuals came from disadvantaged backgrounds; data showed 53% were eligible for free school meals. This could sometimes lead to disengagement and apathy regarding training for employment.
- The Committee went onto consider what the Council could do to help fill the gaps between education and employment for young people. A Member pointed out that several charities in Ashford ran mentoring and buddy schemes, and these could be encouraged. Ashford continued to be an area that attracted businesses, and one silver lining from Covid was that Local Authorities had formed better relationships with local businesses. Therefore the need to continue to engage with local businesses and strengthen working partnerships would in turn help to provide more opportunities for young people.

The Head of Corporate Policy, ED & Communications then gave a final presentation on ABC support for educations, skills and training in Ashford. This illustrated the following subjects:

- ABC's role and local projects and initiatives
- Our Corporate Plan 2022-24 objectives
- Community Renewal Fund Bid
- Reconnect Programme
- Our role in local projects and initiatives

The presentation was then opened up to the Committee and the following questions and points were raised: -

- Mike Rayner spoke about the issue of bridging young people to their first job. He considered a young people's recruitment scheme in line with the academic year would be beneficial. This would involve local businesses preparing and organising vacancies for entry at key times of the year. Schools would be able to work in line with the annual cycle.
- The Chairman asked whether a work stream within Aspire had been developed and it was confirmed that certain roles had been recognised. Work experience placements had been declining but were defined as a vital introduction for young people into the world of work. The Chairman explained that work experience needed to be reinvigorated again.

Resolved

That the presentation be received and noted by the Committee.

44 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced this item. In response to a query asking whether hybrid style meetings would be implemented, the Chairman confirmed that a trial hybrid meeting was scheduled to take place next week. The main obstacle was the restricted IT provision within the Council Chamber itself and a number of solutions were being explored.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

Support for Ashford Voluntary & Community Sector

Update to Recovery Plan Monitoring Advisory Group

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY COMMUNITY FUND (APRIL-JUNE 2020)

PROJECT GRANT

Total grants paid

£2987

Organisations supported **14**

SUPPORT GRANT

Total grants paid

£53300

Organisations supported **34**

TOTAL GRANTS PAID £56287

Total organisations supported **48**

PROJECTS/SERVICES SUPPORTED:

- ♥ Community Volunteering
- ♥ Promoting wellbeing through the arts and sports
- ♥ Support for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, clinically vulnerable and those with mental health issues
- ♥ Provision of emergency food and other essential goods
- ♥ Village and community halls
- ♥ Community sports clubs
- ♥ Advice, mediation and counselling services
- ♥ Supporting vulnerable people back into work

VERA FUNDING

- ♥ In Summer 2020 we launched a Crowdfunder to raise £10k
- ♥ We hit our target thanks to Seventy donations, with contributions from residents, councillors, ABC staff and local companies such as Givaudan and Countryside Properties.
- ♥ In September we distributed this equally 3 ways, to top up food for their existing foodbanks:



VERA FUNDING

♥ The £3.3k to each organisation contributed to other streams of income, meaning:

HELPED CONTRIBUTE TO OVER 1,000 HRS OF OPERATING TIME

SUPPORTED AN AVERAGE OF 270 PEOPLE A WEEK

LIKELY TO BE HAVING AN IMPACT ON WIDER FAMILY MEMBERS OF 675 PEOPLE A WEEK

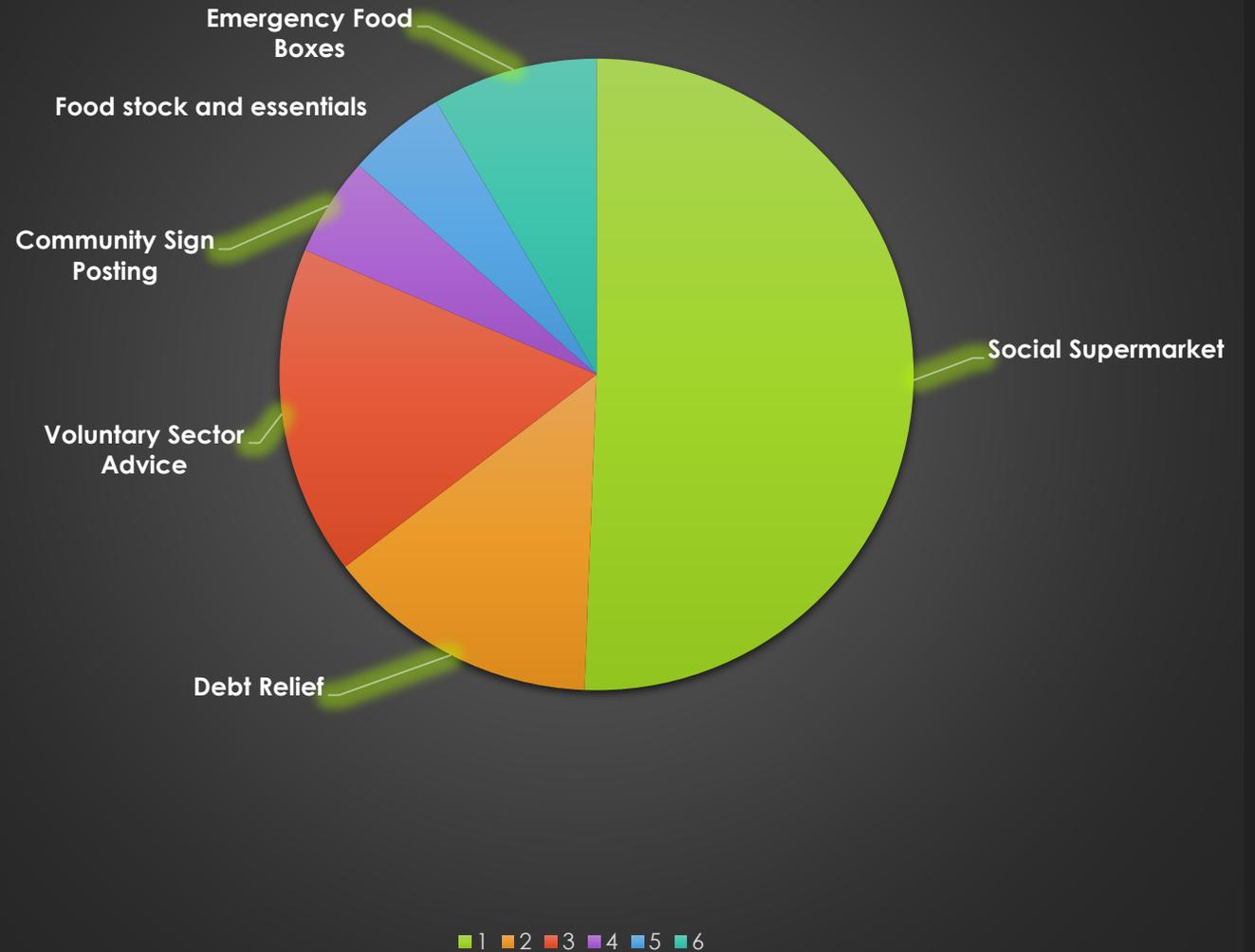
ESTIMATED VALUE OF GOODS SUPPLIED BY THESE 3 ORGANISATIONS SINCE OUR FUNDING WAS DISTRIBUTED IS APPROX. £60K TO LOCAL PEOPLE



EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT

♥ We received £59k at the beginning of September 2020. We were conscious not to double fund what KCC and KCF were funding from their top slice. Our allocation was distributed to support:

Proportion of allocation



EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT

♥ Since funding was distributed in September & October 2020, the fund has so far supported:

- Approximately 700 residents with assistance or help
- Supplied an estimated £22k worth of food or supplies to local residents
- Purchased 1743 emergency food boxes for Fareshare to distribute across the borough including working with all our key foodbanks and 26 primary schools
- Employment of 4 Ashford residents to deliver emergency assistance in the community
- Relieved an estimated £100k worth of debt for local residents
- Ashford Volunteers Centre so far hosted 4 “virtual cuppas”, chaired by their new ‘Community Connector’ post, with over 100 Community Groups across the borough

HOST NEW ASHFORD FOODBANK & ESSENTIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

♥ Since distributing funding, we have brought all recipients and other key services to a monthly network meeting to check how everyone is getting on, support them with any issues, and facilitate groups to work closer together.



2021

LATEST GOVERNMENT SUPPORT GRANTS

♥ Since the start of the year, ABC have drawn down and have started to distribute the following:

- **WINTER GRANT FUND**
- **CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE FUND**
- **CONTAINMENT OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND**

Contributing towards:

- A “topping up” of our community food banks to support the rise in demand after Christmas
- A fuel bank initiative to help our most vulnerable residents with some utility costs
- A central social prescribing facility in Tenterden and helping to bolster a new Community Development post
- Developing a Town Centre community space that provides essential amenities, support and training for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping
- Purchase of items such as white goods, duvets etc for homeless families moving into ‘move on’ accommodation
- An extension to the Ashford Volunteer Centre Community Connector role
- A new targeted social media campaign, highlighting the range of support available in Ashford, hoping to break down barriers of stigmas attached to receiving help, with a key message “we are here for you”

COVID 19 GRANT FUNDING

FUNDING SOURCE	Date of Offer	Organisation	Amount Awarded £	Project Description	
ABC Coronavirus Emergency Community Fund Project Grant	16/04/20	Rolvenden Parish Council	200.00	leaflet printing, volunteer expenses	
	16/04/20	Caronavirus Community Care (Ashford)	200.00	Expenses to deliver food and essentials	
	16/04/20	High Halden "Covid 19" Community Group	200.00	Logistical support, admin, expenses, purchase community items	
	16/04/20	The Hygiene Bank Ashford Kent	200.00	Essentials supply, drop off collection points, promo	
	22/04/20	Ashford & District Neighbourhood Watch	200.00	Support for vols using own transport to collect goods and prescriptions	
	30/04/20	Craftship Enterprise CIC	200.00	Purchase of patterns so more volunteers can be involved in making scrubs for WHH	
	30/04/20	Ryan Macpherson	187.00	Leaflet offering help - Printing Costs	
	30/04/20	Roman Ward Volunteers	200.00	Volunteer fuel costs for delivering/collecting food and perscriptions	
	30/04/20	Craftship Enterprise CIC	200.00	Increasing on-line workshops - pay for members to deliver workshops	
	05/07/20	Craftship Enterprise CIC	200.00	Printing costs for VE Pack	
	14/05/20	Ashford Churches Together Winter Night Shelter (Foodbank)	200.00	Purchase of food, food packaging and household items	
	28/05/20	Bethersden Community Neighbourhood Scheme & BCC	200.00	Volunteer expenses for delivering food boxes, collecting prescriptions and doing shopping.	
	06/11/20	Ashford Delivers	200.00	Web designer, Marketing & PR, Admin	
	18/06/20	L2D Creative CIC	200.00	Free online dance classes.	
	18/06/20	The Hygiene Bank	200.00	Purchase of feminine hygiene supplies	
	07/02/20	Funder Films CIC	200.00	Participatory film about the history of Ashford as seen in the built environment. Available online to entertain and support cultural awareness during lockdown	
	07/02/20	Rolvenden Parish Council	200.00	food and essential household goods for distribution by Rolvenden Response	
	ABC Coronavirus Emergency Community Fund Support Grant	16/04/20	Ashford Volunteer Centre	3000.00	Staffing & core activities
		16/04/20	KATFM	1000.00	Investment, training, core costs
		16/04/20	Beaver Community Trust	3000.00	Loss of income, overheads, utilities
16/04/20		Tenterden Social Hub (previously day centre)	2500.00	Loss of income, continuing to run services	
16/04/20		Kent Association for the Blind	1500.00	Telephone expenses, additional training, loan scheme	
16/04/20		Pilgrims Hospices	3000.00	Overheads, loss of donations, additional beds in Ashford	
22/04/20		Biddenden Lawn Tennis Club	1200.00	fixed costs inc. rent, utilities/service charges, affiliation to LTA	
22/04/20		Biddenden Squash Club	1200.00	Rent, staff, cleaner, booking systems, utilities and licences	
22/04/20		Jasmin Vardimon Education Charity	1500.00	Shifting kids and community workshops to online	
22/04/20		ASD Ashford Autism Support Group	2050.00	Loss of income, fundraising, rent and utilities	
22/04/20		Ashford Borough CAB	1500.00	Reimbursing Volunteers, covering fixed rent and utilities	
30/04/20		PSBreastfeeding CIC	2000.00	Provision of online support & purchase of breast pumps	
30/04/20		Primal Roots CIC	3000.00	Support towards wellbeing coaches and coordinators for 6 weeks	
30/04/20		Tenterden Folk Day Trust	1500.00	To cover reduced and cut funding, loss of fundraising, cancelled trade pitch fees and camp site income	
30/04/20		Hypno Hounds	2500.00	Rent and Utility Bills	
07/05/20		Family Food Bank	3000.00	Purchase of food & food boxes	
14/05/20		Centre for Independent Living (CILK)	2000.00	Project Officer Costs and volunteer training & expenses to support isolated disabled residents	
14/05/20		Branch & Brush CIC	1500.00	Continuation of art classes on line during lockdown	
14/05/20		Ashford & Tenterden Samaritans	3000.00	electricity, phone bills and general running costs	
14/05/20		Ashford BME Association	2000.00	To help the move to online support for the BAME Community	
21/05/20		Lilys Social Kitchen CIC	2000.00	Overheads, volunteer expenses, food for food parcels, salaries	
21/05/20		Kent Food Hubs	2000.00	volunter expenses & PPE. Purchase of chiller equipment for food storage and cool boxes for deliveries	
28/05/20		Kent Search and Rescue	2500.00	Purchase of COVID related equipment & cost to deliver COVID medicines.	
28/05/20		Ashford Counselling Service	1000.00	To cover shortfall in income, and support increased offer for subsidised sessions.	
28/05/20		Biddenden Juniors FC	1000.00	To cover changing rooms and football pitch rent, insurance, FA affiliation and to carry out essential drainage work on pitches while they lay dormant.	
11/06/20		RSPCA Cattery Ashford	750.00	Keep area running with food, bedding and water for animals.	
11/06/20		Wye Community Farm	3000.00	Animal Feed and supplies , hay, tools and materials, tractor and van, insurance, veterinary services	
06/06/20		Ashford Rail Bowls Club	750.00	Green maintenance- mowing and Scarify	
02/07/20		The Hope Tree Counselling & Consultancy C.I.C	750.00	Apprentice & Therapist Salary	
02/07/20		St Francis Church - Ashford Town Parish	1000.00	Food parcels, upgrade kitchen to improve Make Lunch project and winter night shelter	
16/07/20		Ashford Mediation Service	1000.00	Online & Virtual Youth mediation training sessions & training sessions for schools	
16/07/20		South Ashford Baptist Church	1000.00	Salary costs of the Minister, utility bills and insurance	
16/07/20	Ashford Muslim Association	1000.00	Utility Bills - Gas, Water and Electric		
Emergency Assistance Grant	31/08/20	Ashford Vineyard "Renew"	30000.00	Social Supermarket	
	03/09/20	Ashford Borough Citizens Advice	8280.00	Debt Relief Orders	
	07/09/20	Ashford Volunteer Centre	10000.00	VCS Advice	
	02/09/20	Ashford Together	3000.00	Covid Signposting Crisis Clinic	
	23/10/20	Children & Families Stanhope Pantry	3000.00	Family essentials membership scheme	
	18/01/20	Children & Families Emergency Food Boxes	5000.00	Emergency food box supplies	
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Fund	02/11/20	Ashford Vineyard	10000.00	Cost of food and essential supplies to residents over the winter period	
	02/11/20	Bright City Church	30000.00	Cost of supplies to the foodbank over the winter period	
Contain Outbreak Management Fund 1	02/11/20	Repton Pantry	10000.00	Cost of food and essential supplies to residents over the winter period	
	04/01/21	Ashford Vineyard	15000.00	Continuation and growth of the Renew Social Supermarket programme	
Contain Outbreak Management Fund 1	04/01/21	Ashford Together	15000.00	To support capital works to the community centre at Bright City Church to progress the community transformation project in partnership with Housing Dept to support homelessness and those at risk of homelessness.	
	04/01/21	Repton Pantry	15000.00	Improvements to the People's Pantry and support towards the Ashford Holiday Kitchen including Support Worker role	
	04/01/21	Fareshare	16250.00	The supply of free food parcels to food banks in Ashford Borough over winter/spring 2021 alongside all 26 primary schools in the Ashford area	
Contain Outbreak Management Fund 2	18/01/21	Ashford Volunteer Centre	15000.00	Continuation of the Community Connector programme and other associated Covid impact projects	
	18/01/21	Tenterden Social Hub	15000.00	Development of a central social prescribing facility in Tenterden, helping to secure a new Community Development post and provision of food stock for Tenterden food bank	
Vera Fund	16/04/20	Repton Connect	3400.00	Foodbank provisions	
	16/04/20	Bright City Church	3400.00	Foodbank provisions	
	16/04/20	Ashford Vineyard	3400.00	Foodbank provisions	
Contain Outbreak Management Fund 3	11/06/21	BOUGHTON ALUPH & EASTWELL PC	800.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	CHALLOCK PC	1200.97	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	CHARING PC	908.50	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	HOTHFIELD PC	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	KINGSNORTH PC	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	MDLASH PC	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	SA BAPTIST CHURCH	265.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	REPTON COMMUNITY TRUST	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	STANHOPE PC	1235.48	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	TENTERDEN TC	225.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	11/06/21	WYE PC	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	TENTERDEN TC	503.75	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	BETHERSDEN PC	105.25	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	WAREHORNE PC	343.90	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	BROOK PC	800.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	MERSHAM & SEVINGTON PC	454.02	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	GREAT CHART WITH SINGLETON PC	1500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	STANHOPE PC	176.96	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	SHADDOXHURST PC	500.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	
	23/06/21	SWAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL	514.00	Additional costs of reopening community facilities	

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2020/21

Annual Report

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AT
ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLlr Noel Ovenden
Chairman

Report Author:
Abi Moffatt
Policy & Scrutiny Officer

Chairman's Report

Councillor Ovenden

The last year has been a huge challenge for all local authorities, and both Members and Officers have worked pragmatically to reduce the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the day to day operations of council services. The council has also had to fundamentally change the way residents are engaged in decision making, and I am pleased with how well virtual meetings have worked for all the council's public committees over the last year. From this, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was able to focus resources on areas where a positive impact could be made.

Despite the pressures on the authority relating to the Coronavirus pandemic, scrutiny at Ashford has continued and has been able to reach a wider audience than ever before. The implementation of virtual public meetings was a significant change resulting from the pandemic. Overall, this was hugely positive for the quality of debate and discussion at meetings. Holding virtual meetings allowed for more Members to attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings which has been welcomed by the Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group has been able to deliver some quality reviews, one of which is still ongoing. The review of Digital Transformation resulted in some progressive recommendations and also ensured that the lessons learnt from remote working were carried forward in to a post Covid world.

Although the past year has been unusual in many respects, I feel Members have risen to the challenges and have tackled issues in a democratic and cooperative way. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for their commitment and overall contribution to enabling effective scrutiny during a difficult year.

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**SCRUTINY REPORTS
& PRESENTATIONS**

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COMMITTEE MEETINGS

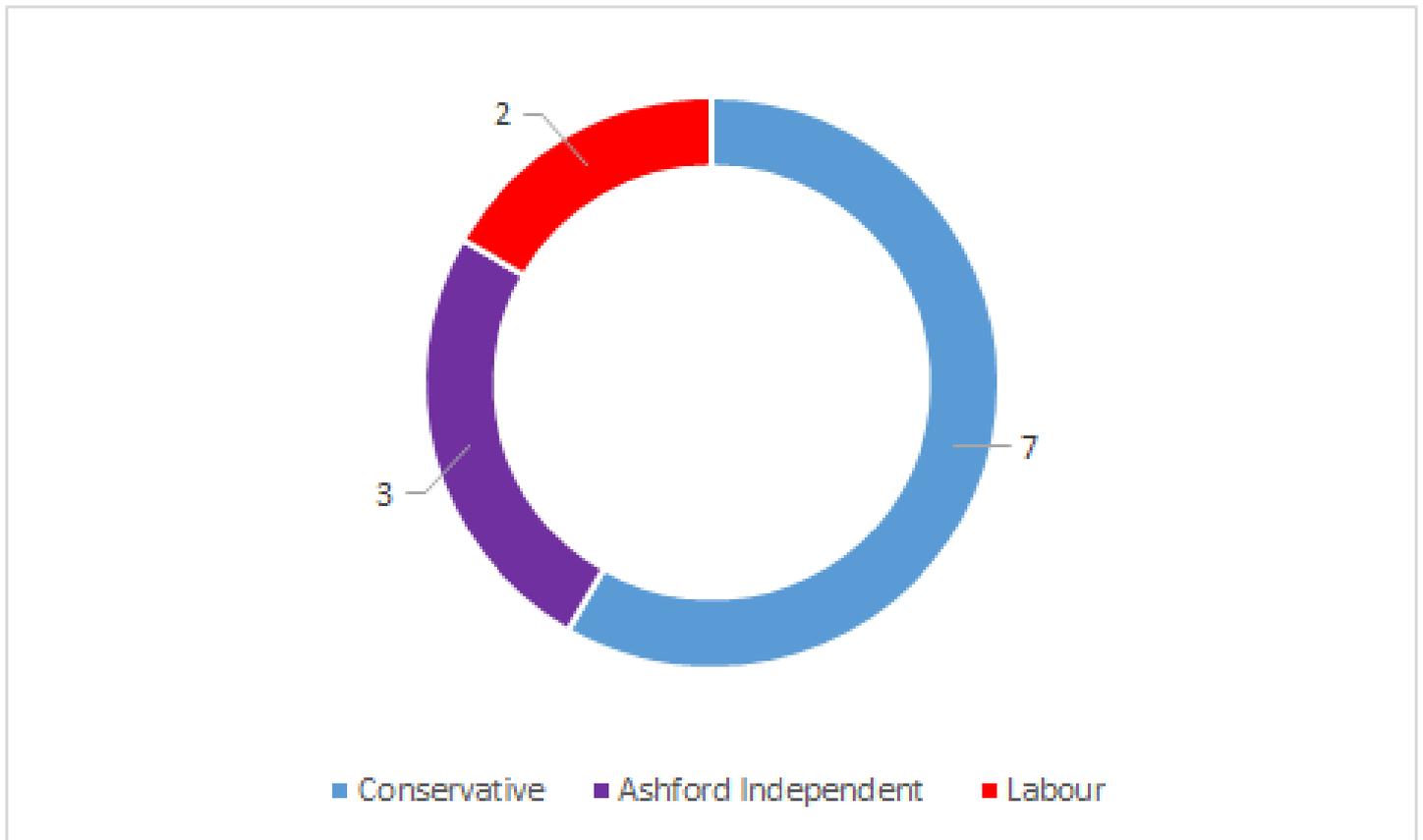
2

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Year Overview



Committee Membership



Budget Scrutiny Task Group

In accordance with the council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the council's draft Capital and Revenue Budgets. The Committee constituted a Task Group made up of five Members to undertake this work, and presents its findings of the draft Budget for 2021/22 within this report.

The draft budget for 2021/22 was presented to the Task Group at its first meeting; this included all service budgets and financial risks. The purpose of this session was to assist Members in determining which areas to dedicate additional scrutiny time, these included the following:

- a. The Planning service including the budget risk regarding issues at Stodmarsh.
- b. Savings proposals relating to vacant posts, staff changes and the impact on service delivery.
- c. The risk to commercial income in light of Covid implications
- d. The impact of proposed operational savings on the delivery of council services and specifically the Legal department.
- e. Details of funding for council projects.
- f. Parish Council grants savings proposal

RECOMMENDATION 1

The council's draft budget is sound and deliverable as can be at this time, recognising that the economic impact of Covid-19 is yet to be fully determined.

RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recognised that there is sufficient reserves to manage the economic risks to the 2021/22 budget. It is recommended that these reserves are maintained particularly given the current uncertainties in the economy.

RECOMMENDATION 3

To continue to monitor the performance of the council's commercial income units through regular budget monitoring reports whilst businesses recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Additional funding should be allocated towards the emerging Carbon Neutrality action plan, to ensure that the council is able to deliver its pledge to become carbon neutral.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Cabinet should consider a one-off grant to the disproportionately affected parishes from the removal of Council Tax Support grant to help smooth the transition to full removal of the Council Tax Support Grant.

Digital Transformation Task Group

During scrutiny of the Budget for 2020/21, the Task Group recommended to the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee that digital transformation should be included as a scrutiny review on the work programme. At the time, concerns were raised regarding the resourcing of the digital programme. An in-depth review was conducted to ascertain how far digital transformation has progressed during recent years and what the challenges and success have been throughout this process.

The Task Group felt that investigating the progress of digital transformation would benefit all staff and Members by assessing ways of improving the digital aspects to remote working and virtual meetings. Also, the group saw the benefit of reviewing the digital programme prior to Full Council's adoption of the Recovery Plan in October 2020. The Task Group assembled 4 Members; Cllr Ovenden (Chair), Cllr. Iliffe, Cllr. Ledger and Cllr. Spain to examine the progression of the digital transformation so far, over the course of several evidence sessions. The Task Group's recommendations are listed below:

RECOMMENDATION 1

Note the implementation of the digital strategy to date and endorse the emerging digital programme to be delivered up until 2025.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That a digital survey regarding homeworking and virtual meetings is conducted for Members, to find out what lessons have been learnt since new arrangements were introduced in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19 and what Page 55 can be improved for the future.

RECOMMENDATION 3

To continue to support homeworking, virtual meetings and hybrid meetings as valid ways of running council services and meetings in the future and ensure that there are adequate IT systems in place to deliver these efficiently.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Create a Corporate Etiquette protocol for Microsoft Teams that covers making calls, leaving messages and showing availability.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That the online calendar function on Mod.gov is updated regularly to inform Members of future meetings for at least the next six months.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Proceed with creating an online central database for local and national data that residents are able to access and view statistics regarding Ashford Borough.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That a fact sheet is produced for all Members and staff with advice on broadband and how to check your connectivity whilst working remotely.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Prioritise completion of an IT asset register to ensure that all council owned equipment is logged and returned to the Civic Centre when appropriate.

Priority Topics

HOMELESSNESS

The Committee were provided with a comprehensive summary of progress since the impact of Covid 19 in 2020/21 and progress made since the Homelessness Reduction Act was implemented in 2018.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Some of these highlighted how the Council were going to manage the predicted increase in cases owing to the pandemic, the monitoring of cases and the costs associated with increase demand for resources in this area.

THE RECOVERY PLAN

Before adoption by Cabinet planned for September 2020, O&S requested that details of the plan were presented to its Members.

Over August and September 2020, several presentations were given to the Committee.

The first part would cover the report 'The Council's Emergency Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic' that went to Cabinet on 25th June. The second part would talk about lessons learnt from the Covid-19 Pandemic and the final part would be the actual Recovery Plan.

Discussion was opened up to Members and some questions were asked as to how contact was being made with the public regarding the pandemic and the accuracy of data being received at the time. Other discussion points raised were in regards to how the council were supporting officers with home working arrangements.

Overall, the Committee were satisfied with the information provided and noted the plan.

Priority Topics

VICARAGE LANE

The Committee requested an update on the Vicarage Lane Project in March 2021 in light of the roadmap out of the pandemic outlined by the Government.

The Commercial Development and Regeneration Manager explained that the project had been considered by the Design Review Panel and had received positive feedback. There will be a public consultation on the proposals before consideration by Cabinet later in 2021. Members were happy to note the verbal update provided to the Committee.

EXTERNAL PROCUREMENT

Members expressed interest in scrutinising the council's external procurement process. A summary presentation was provided to the Committee in November 2020 and Members were able to query any aspects of the process.

Following the presentation, it was requested that a written paper be shared on the procurement process, specifically in regards to some questions raised after presentation to O&S in November 2020.

In response, Officers from the Corporate Property and Projects service produced a follow up paper covering the following:

- a. Member involvement in relation to high value in procurement
- b. Detail centralised procurement
- c. Detail procurement procedures, and the ability to negotiate on price.

Members were confident with information provided regarding procurement.

FUNDING VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Members asked for a report to be presented to the Committee regarding the grants given given to voluntary organisations during the pandemic. Members requested reassurance on the processes for monitoring grants provided to our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, particularly over the pandemic period.

Additional information will be made available to the Committee at a later meeting in 2021.

Annual Reports

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Quarterly reports are presented to the Committee to demonstrate the council's performance across all services and highlight any areas of concern.

ANNUAL SICKNESS REPORT AND CORPORATE HEALTH

This report provided annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2019/20 and wider data that provided a picture of general corporate health in the council.

SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL UPDATE

This update provided the Committee with the council's annual safeguarding update. The report paid particular regard to the council's obligation to work in partnership to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development. It provided information on the safeguarding activity that has been undertaken and raises awareness of emerging issues. It also supported the delivery of the priorities set by the Kent Safeguarding Children's Multi-agency Partnership and the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL UPDATE

This update provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the community safety annual update. The report paid particular regard to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP). It provided information on current community safety priorities, actions that have been taken to meet the priorities and raises awareness of emerging issues. It also supported the delivery of the priorities set by the Police and Crime Commissioner through his Safer in Kent plan.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Tracker – July 2021

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
S106 Process	<i>Ongoing</i>	Planning and Development	Members felt that there was scope for further scrutiny of this topic and asked this to be examined by a topic specific Task and Finish group. The scope of this review is to be determined shortly.
Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and Strategy	September 2021	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	A review of the council's Carbon Neutral Strategy and action plan.
Corporate Plan 2022 to 24	September 2021	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	To review the council's draft Corporate Plan for 2022 to 2024
Annual Sickness Report	September 2021	HR and Customer Services	A report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.
Budget Scrutiny Review	September/October 2021	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications Finance and IT	A review of the budget scrutiny process.
Consultation and Engagement	Later 2021	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	Set up of a Task and Finish group to examine the council's involvement and engagement of the public and look at the consultation process for corporate issues.
Safeguarding	Early 2022	Community Safety and Wellbeing	This report provides the Committee with the council's annual safeguarding update.
Community Safety Partnership	Early 2022	Community Safety and Wellbeing	This report provides the Committee with the community safety annual update.

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