



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on Tuesday, 12th October, 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, Hayward, Howard, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland, 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 memberservices@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 memberservices@ashford.gov.uk or on the Council's website at <https://secure.ashford.gov.uk/committeesystem/haveyoursay.aspx> by 10:00 hours on the working day before the meeting.
 2. Registering to speak at the meeting confers the right to submit (and, if desired, make in person) a speech
 3. All those registered to speak must submit to memberservices@ashford.gov.uk by 10:00 hours on the day of the meeting, a copy of their speech in written, legible English. Speeches must be no longer than 400 words, printed in 12-point non-italic sans-serif font (e.g. Arial); any text above 400 words will not be read out. No speech should contain

personal data about individuals, other than the speaker's name and (if relevant) postal address. Any registered speakers who do not submit their speeches as above are not permitted to speak at the meeting (even if present in person).

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

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

Agenda

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To declare any interests, which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document:	
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Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact: telephone: 01233 330491
email: [memberservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees

Agenda Item 2

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 & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **14th September 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);
Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Hayward, Krause, Ledger, Suddards.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. Suddards attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Farrell.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Blanford, Farrell, Howard-Smith.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks.

In attendance:

Jane O'Rourke – Associate Director of Children and Maternity Commissioning Team, NHS

Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of HR and Customer Services, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Strategy and Policy Development Manager, Governance & Data Protection Officer, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Manager, Member Services Officer.

102 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Hayward made a 'Voluntary Announcement' since her children had previously accessed NHS Young Peoples Mental Health Services.

103 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 13th July 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

104 Presentation on Young People's Mental Health

Jane O'Rourke gave a presentation to the Committee that covered the following areas:

Spotlight: Impact of Covid
System Response

Continuing Challenges
Services in Ashford

Ashford children and young people's mental health and neurodevelopment services
KOOTH online counselling

Mind and Body early-intervention self-harm support

NELFT locality (MH) waiting times

NELFT ND assessment waiting times

Local Transformation Plan

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

- A Member asked about the relationship between the NHS CCG and Local Authorities, in particular when relaying information to the public. Jane explained that the relationship had improved over the last year and the CCG worked in collaboration with Local Authorities, Social Services and the Education Service and had formed joint projects and working groups to ensure the communication between the partners and families was consistent across the board. The Kent Information Hub had been created and incorporated relevant information.
- With regards to the 18-week wait time, a Member expressed concern that this was a long time for a young person with mental health issues to be waiting for help. She asked whether there was an intermediate service that could be offered whilst children were awaiting full access. Jane acknowledged that this was a huge challenge and advised that there was a 4-hour response target for children in crisis attending acute hospitals. Investment had been made into the home treatment services to tackle the long waiting times, and to divert children in crisis away from A&E units. The aim and emphasis was on preventative services also.
- In response to a question regarding funding and resources to assist with refugees, Jane confirmed that support within Kent for unaccompanied asylum seeking children was in place and a national programme had been set up to accommodate increased capacity, including additional mental health services, specialising in trauma that that cohort of refugees may have experienced.

105 Corporate Plan 2022 to 2024 and the Annual Report

The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications together with the Strategy and Policy Development Manager introduced the Draft Corporate Plan, which outlined and highlighted the following priorities and objectives:

Corporate Plan to 2024

The Ashford Ambition

Green Pioneer

Caring Ashford

Targeted Growth

Our Principles

Consultation

Consultation to date

Next Steps

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

- A Member asked why carbon offsetting was not included within the report and wondered whether investment opportunities could be incorporated at no additional cost to the Council. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications explained that high-level actions from the Carbon Reduction Action Plan had been duplicated within the Corporate Plan. Consultation was underway regarding the Carbon Reduction Plan and work was ongoing on the Carbon Descent Plan. Actions around tree planting and solar generation were included, with the focus on carbon reduction foremost. The Strategy and Policy Development Manager added that the Council had endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy & Low Emissions Strategy.
- Concerning tourism, a Member asked whether the Railway Project was still expected to be established, but it was not currently included within the Action Plan.
- A Member asked when the measures within the Plan were expected to be agreed. It was hoped that they would be agreed and come into effect from April 2022, but it was challenging to measure service performance and change within the Borough. The performance framework would be presented as an appendix of the Plan. Potentially, one measure could be relevant to more than one action, so it could indicate performance relating to two or three actions. The final plan was due to go to Cabinet in November. The Chairman highlighted that the means of measurements within the Plan were essential to know if the Council were performing successfully. Members agreed and highlighted the need for open discussion about what those measures should be.
- A Member queried whether some of the report should highlight the need to increase the level of manufacturing output from Ashford. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications responded by saying that the wording may need to be reviewed, because research from the Ashford Ambition report had shown that manufacturing within Ashford was lower value than elsewhere in the country, and that some manufacturing was at risk of automation. Therefore, the priority was to focus on knowledge based and creative industry. A Member commented that she felt that some manufacturing industries within the Borough were being overlooked and they should be encouraged to continue their operation within Ashford. The Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications agreed that these areas should be encouraged, but acknowledged that Ashford was falling behind on education and wage levels.
- A further question probed how productivity could be increased when it was already 'maxed out' since the pandemic had resulted in less or zero commute time with more people working from home. The Head of HR and Customer Service said there was a balance to be sought. Productivity had improved but equally there were some people that struggled with working from home.

- In relation to international markets, a Member spoke about focus on emerging and established business in Ashford, particularly now it was a border town with major international links. The Council was working with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure it supported businesses in the right way to access those international markets.

Resolved:

That the information be received and noted.

106 Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 1)

The Governance & Data Protection Officer introduced the report, which gave an overview of performance between April to June 2021. The report monitored the Key Performance Indicator's set out in the Recovery Plan 2020. The KPI suites were currently being reviewed, and Members were invited to mention any that they felt should be considered.

The Chairman spoke about adding new KPI's and noted the difficulty with the base line. The Governance & Data Protection Officer explained that there were foundation KPI's around core functions of the council, but the ones adapted to themes or projects were the ones that would not have a baseline, in which case historical data could then be examined.

A Member queried how the Council could address the issues in the Planning Department around retention of staff. The Chairman advised that a representative from the Planning Dept. would be best placed to respond to the query, but that Stodmarsh had played a part in the backlog of Planning applications. The Governance & Data Protection Officer added that the Stodmarsh Mitigation Strategy had gone to Cabinet and was progressing.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

107 Annual Sickness Report

The Head of HR and Customer Services introduced the report, which provided annual information on sickness and absenteeism for 2020/2021. She advised that it had been an unusual year in that the Covid pandemic affected it, working from home had been implemented, and some staff were shielding or self-isolating. Covid related absences had been recorded separately to avoid distortion of the annual figures. The overall percentage of sickness had reduced, attributed to people not physically being in the office or out in public places, and home working being available to those that were mildly unwell. Mental ill health was the largest reason for absence, although the actual number had reduced since the previous year.

The Chairman noted that he could not observe anything in the report to indicate that being in the workplace throughout the pandemic would have improved the figures; the reverse could be true instead. The Head of HR & Customer Services explained

that the Office had been open to certain members of staff that were struggling with working from home.

In response to a question regarding monitoring of safe workstations for staff, The Head of HR & Customer Services explained that initially the government relaxed the duties on employers regarding Display Screen Equipment assessments. The Council then decided to undertake remote assessments, and provided refresher training and an online DSE form for staff to complete, a couple of times throughout the lockdown period. She stated that although this was not ideal, it has ensured that staff were made aware of their own duties and were able to communicate any problems they may be having. The Member added that it was important to be mindful of discouraging too much screen time and that some quite serious symptoms could sometimes be masked by other minor symptoms.

Resolved:

That the Annual Sickness Report be received and noted.

108 Future Reports Tracker

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Tracker and spoke about the issue of air quality that had been raised at the last meeting. This had been scored via the Matrix and resulted in a mid-range score. A new KPI for air quality had been created in line with the Corporate Plan, and the Committee would receive a presentation in October regarding Carbon Neutrality, so the Chairman had agreed that this topic could be revisited in the future.

A Member briefing about the Port Health Service had been arranged as a virtual briefing for Thursday 23rd September.

A Member suggested that Heritage within the Borough could be reviewed and championed by the Committee in the future.

Resolved:

That the Future Reports Tracker be received and noted.

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Ashford to Zero Plan

Our route to net zero carbon emissions



Consultation draft 2021

Contents

DRAFT

Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

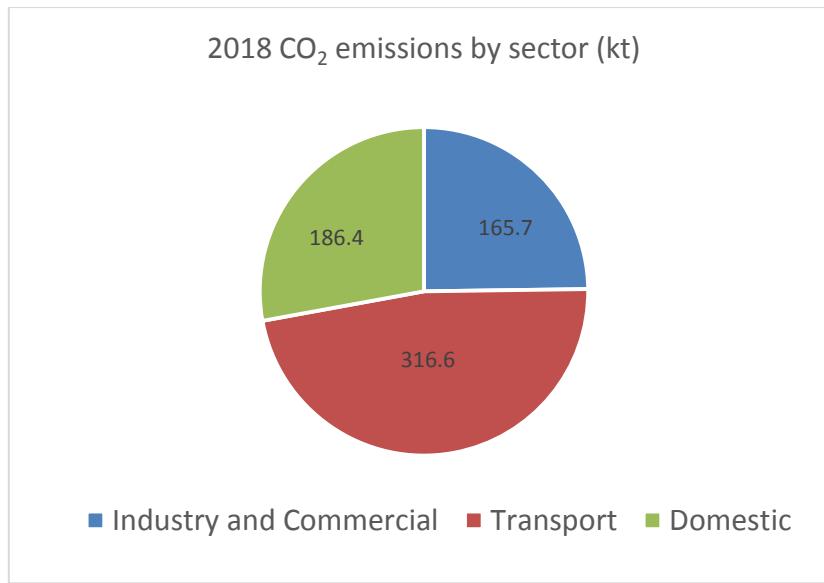
Cllr Clarkson

1. Introduction

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

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

In 2018 the borough's total carbon emissions was 598.6 ktCO₂ (*BEIS Data*). The pie chart below shows how different sectors make up this total. 70.2 ktCO₂ is absorbed by land use such as forests, cropland and grassland,



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

(Summary from Laser report to be included when available)

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

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

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

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

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

This action plan has eight priorities:

Priority 1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and increase understanding and knowledge

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

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

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

Priority 5: Enable sustainable business growth in the borough

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

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

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

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

2. Our consultation

We are keen to understand how we can best work with residents, business and local organisations to reduce carbon emissions across the borough. Everyone can play a part in tackling climate change be that by making personal changes in the way we live or looking at how we work or as a business or organisation thinking about our products, services and processes and how to reduce their environmental footprint.

We are interested to know your views and what you are already doing or would like to do to reduce your carbon emissions. This will help us to understand where what are the highest priorities and how we can enable everyone to contribute to tackling climate change.

For each of the 8 priorities we are asking:

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

The consultation will run from June to October 2021, during this time an online questionnaire will be available

We will also be running a residents Facebook group for discussion and questions and answers.

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

3. Action Plan

3.1 Priority 1 - Raise awareness of Climate Change and increase understanding and knowledge

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

Priority 1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and increase understanding and knowledge			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
1.1 Maintain ongoing internal and external 'carbon neutral' communications	<p>Identify monthly themes and create plan</p> <p>Create new website page and content, making sure to use KCC and other local authorities' content</p>	Staff and residents are well informed about climate change and actions they need to take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are motivated to make lifestyle changes and influence others	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Number of views / hits / shares from ABC media2. Number of local community media platforms with information on climate change

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

	Use residents survey results and other internal data such as active travel monitoring to inform comms plan. Explore research by other partners to gain insight to influence behavioural change, such as Keep Britain Tidy.		3. Percentage of residents survey returned with positive action to tackle climate change responses
1.2 Increase staff skills and knowledge	Continue roll out of Sustainability Friends training and investigate other training opportunities to increase knowledge and skills	Increased staff confidence to implement carbon neutral actions and challenge where decisions are not contributing to tackling climate change	1. Percentage of staff completing sustainability friends training
1.3 Encourage others to promote a low carbon, environmentally sustainable ethos	Highlight opportunities for schools and business to gain eco-certification, such as green flag status for schools	Increased awareness of climate change in young people Business community strives to be carbon neutral Local events have low carbon footprint and promote environmentally responsible behaviour	1. Number of schools and business with an eco-certification / award 2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions
	Encourage event organisers to run sustainable events that minimise environmental impact		

What we've been doing:

Our website and social media channels are regularly updated with environmental information. We have run features on our dedicated web page, Facebook and Instagram covering issues such as food waste, saving water, recycling, including specific campaigns for Christmas and Easter, alongside linking to other wider campaigns such as Plant Britain and Kent Plan Bee.

A Green Agenda Facebook group has been opened up to residents to encourage them to have their say through lively debate on the things that really matter to them and help to make the borough a better place for all. This focus group will be about sustainability, carbon neutrality and environmental topics.

Our own staff training programme, 'Sustainability Friends' has been completed by 75% of staff and will resume once we are able to return safely to the civic centre.

Engaging young people is very important and we are working with schools on a gardening and recycling project

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

Decisive leadership is critical to achieve our ambition to have the councils own estate and operations net zero carbon by 2030. Every decision, whether by the elected members or staff, will be carefully considered to ensure the outcome is positively contributing to reducing carbon emissions.

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

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

<p>2.1 Review council policies to ensure alignment with carbon neutrality</p>	<p>Embed Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) Green Principles (adopted in Recovery Plan) into Cabinet reports and Project Planning Processes to ensure decision making process supports the carbon neutral ambition.</p>	<p>All decisions are made taking account of how the project /policy contributes to achieving carbon neutrality. Goods and services purchased by the council have low or zero carbon footprint. Staff travel is reduced Office space is rationalised resulting in lower energy input to Civic Centre Council funding supports lower carbon initiatives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of approved projects / policies making positive contribution to carbon neutrality. 2. Percentage of suppliers with low carbon accreditation. 3. Tonnes of carbon saved from reduced commuting/ business travel. 4. Energy requirements of Civic Centre. 5. Percentage of community grants awarded where project meets KRF green principles
	<p>Introduce new procurement policies to include carbon neutral criteria to maximise carbon reduction through purchased services, materials and provision of low emissions fleets by contractors.</p>		
	<p>Regularise homeworking arrangements; update policies and procedures to support a longer term home working strategy</p>		
	<p>Include the Kent Resilience Forum 'Principles for a Green Recovery' as criteria for consideration when assessing applications for community grants</p>		

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

2.2 Take a design led approach to delivering sustainable communities	<p>Adopt and deliver the South of Ashford Garden Community vision and strategy - including 'low carbon communities'</p> <p>Develop a Carbon Statement of Intent for Chilmington, to underpin decision making delivering current and future projects to exemplar environmental standards</p>	<p>The South of Ashford Garden Community is recognised as an exemplar of low carbon living and a show case for good practice</p>	<p>1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Energy requirement per m₂ of new build 3. m₂ of open space per home</p>
2.3 Develop evidence based planning policy and guidance	<p>Develop a scoping document to inform the direction of travel in the next Local Plan. To identify issues and discuss options for 'green' standards for Ashford</p> <p>Create good practice guidance to encourage development of carbon neutral buildings (residential and commercial) in private and public sector.</p>	<p>Polices are developed to ensure future development meets high standards of environmental sustainability</p>	<p>1. EPC rating on new homes 2. Carbon footprint of each new development</p>
2.4 Introduce offsetting and adaptation measures	<p>Align with Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy action to develop and promote Kent and Medway offset scheme</p> <p>Set a budget provision to enable carbon offsetting</p>	<p>Council has ability to offset any remaining carbon emissions to achieve zero carbon after all reduction measures have been implemented. Local communities have plans in place to deal with flooding incidents and reduce loss to life and property</p>	<p>1. Tonnes of CO₂ offset 2. Number of high risk parishes with emergency plans 3. Number of high risk parishes undertaking KRF training</p>

	Increase number of parishes with high risk of flooding with emergency plans		
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What we've been doing:

Home working is now established following its inception in response to the coronavirus pandemic 'work from home' requirement. Virtual meetings both internal and with external partners and the public have become accepted and are increasing participation and engagement. It is estimated that the CO₂ saving from members attending meetings virtually rather than traveling to the Civic Centre saves approximately 7.3tCO₂ per year.

The Council endorsed the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy in December 2020, strengthening opportunities for collaborative working.

The Chilmington Management Organisation has identified the following projects; a carbon neutral secondary school, planting 6660 trees is underway through the successful urban tree challenge, a cycleway linking to Victoria Park is being scoped , EV charging points to be integral to development.

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

Decarbonisation of energy production is necessary to meet our carbon neutral ambitions. The demand for energy from renewable and low carbon sources will increase as we use more electricity to heat our homes and power vehicles, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) suggests that low-carbon electricity generation will need to quadruple (to 645 TWh in 2050) to replace existing fossil fuel generation and to meet the expected increased demand from transport and heating (CCC (2019), *Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming*). The majority of the energy we use is supplied from outside the borough, we can increase demand and therefore supply by purchasing energy from suppliers using renewable sources. In addition local renewable energy production reduces reliance on major energy suppliers and creates local income which can benefit local communities.

Priority 3: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation by increasing renewable energy generation and consumption			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
3.1 Increase number of sites suitable for renewable energy generation	Include renewable energy in the call for sites in the next local plan	Local landowners put forward sites suitable for renewable energy generation	1. Number of suitable sites identified 2. Potential renewable energy capacity (MWh)
3.2 Increase local renewable energy generation	Encourage community groups to develop small scale renewable energy projects by signposting to information and advice	Overall energy consumption for the borough is supplied from renewable energy sources.	1. Number of small scale community energy projects
	Continue assessing all council owned assets for potential to host solar PV panels and install where financially viable.	Local renewable energy generation increases and creates income for the council and local communities The council uses 100% green energy in its operations	2. MWh of renewable energy generated from council assets 3. Number of homes powered by renewable energy 4. Percentage of councils energy tariff attributed to green energy
	Explore feasibility and if viable invest in solar batteries (small scale and large scale storage site)		
	Complete feasibility study to determine viability of building a solar farm		
	If viable build solar farm		
	Consider and invest in wind power		
	Switch Civic Centre and other assets to green tariff		

The council has been proactive in installing solar panels on properties since the introduction of the Feed in Tariff scheme. The first Solar PV system was installed in 2011, with the Civic Centre system following in 2012. All the solar PV panels installed by the council generate an estimated average of 357,000kWh per year. If an equivalent amount of electricity was purchased through the grid it would emit 82,481kg of CO₂.

Further studies are underway to increase the supply of electricity through solar PV.

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

In 2018 transport within the borough accounted for 316 KtCO₂, 53% of total emissions (*BEIS data*). In the 2020 Residents Survey 70% of respondents said they typically use a car to travel to work or school. When asked what mode of transport they would prefer to use this decreased to 47% indicating a desire to reduce car use if there are suitable alternatives.

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

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

4.1 Reduce transport emissions associated with council business and operations	<p>Develop a green travel plan for staff and members for travel to and from work and work related journeys, informed by improved understanding of travel patterns</p>	<p>Greenhouse gas emissions from council related travel and operations reduces significantly through reduction in miles travelled and switching to cleaner forms of transport/vehicles. Air quality in the borough improves.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. % of electric vehicles in council owned fleet 2. CO₂ reduction per year from council owned vehicles 3. Reduction in mileage claimed for staff travel 4. Number of staff purchasing EV through lease car scheme 5. Reduction in travel to /from home/work by car
	<p>Enable increased use of public transport and active travel by provision of incentives and improved facilities such as cycle storage and changing facilities</p>		
	<p>Further explore use of electric bikes /scooters and potential for electric pool cars for use on council business</p>		
	<p>Investigate how to encourage / incentivise the take up of electric vehicles through the lease car scheme to coincide with next lease car contract</p>		
	<p>When vehicles within the grounds maintenance (Aspire) fleet are due for renewal / replacement, opportunities to minimise carbon emissions through route optimisation and vehicle specifications will be considered.</p>		
	<p>Within the review of the waste contract consider minimising carbon emissions</p>		

	through route optimisation and contractors vehicle specifications		
4.2 Encourage active travel in the borough	Implement the agreed action plan for cycling and walking to include active travel plans for business, infrastructure improvements and community based initiatives	Increased confidence in local population to cycle/ walk to local destinations, improved health and wellbeing and local air quality	1. Number of businesses with active travel plans 2. Km of cycleway 3. Number of residents regularly walking and/or cycling
4.3 Enable and facilitate a borough wide reduction in transport related emissions	Develop a parking strategy to encourage an overall reduction in car usage and facilitate electric vehicle patronage	Overall reduction in car dependency, improved local air quality, fewer road traffic accidents, increased patronage of local bus services, all residents can access public transport options to travel to key services.	1. Car park usage / revenue 2. Demand for EV charging points 3. % of 'clean' buses 4. Number of bus passengers 5. Number of residents served by community bus schemes 6. % of residents using community bus schemes 7. Number of cars owned per household 8. Number of residents regularly car sharing
	Identify areas that would benefit from 20mph speed restriction and make recommendation to Highways Authority		
	Review community bus scheme and assess demand for future programme		
	Promote existing rural transport services e.g. Kent Connects and Wealden Wheels		
	Work with the Quality Bus Partnership to improve services and patronage of buses including introducing cleaner buses		
	Strengthen anti-idling message promoted in schools through CEO road safety programme and other agencies		

	<p>Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app.</p> <p>Improve understanding of future demand for EV charging points, infrastructure capacity and location. Implement a corporate approach to installation and maintenance of EV charging points</p>		
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What we've been doing:

The Cycling and Walking Strategy and Implementation Plan have been adopted. We are working with Sustrans to investigate where improvements are needed to link the South Ashford Garden Community to South Ashford.

Our Community Enforcements Officers use electric bikes and have a hybrid vehicle. The Housing Service has operated an electric pool car for several years.

There are 14 public Electric Vehicle charging points in the borough. A study is underway to assess where there are suitable locations for further EV charging points, it is now estimated that 10% of recent car sales are electric vehicles.

Our services are looking at ways to reduce travel, an example of this is where we have enabled new customers to our lifeline service to install the equipment themselves reducing the need for a contractor to travel to their property. Over a six month period this has saved 240 miles of travelling.

Currently two local taxis are low emission vehicles. The green taxi scheme incentivises the uptake of low emission vehicles offering three years 'free' licensing for low emission vehicles.

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

The 'greening' of industrial and commercial businesses in the borough are crucial to reducing borough wide carbon emissions. Sharing good practice and maximising the uptake of government incentives will assist in this aim. Attracting environmentally sustainable industries and social enterprises to locate in the borough will create employment and increase productivity and local incomes.

Priority 5: Enable business growth while maximising opportunities to reduce carbon emissions			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
5.1 Encourage businesses to utilise schemes and advice to transition to lower carbon economy	Promote local low carbon schemes for business such as LoCase and STEM	Carbon footprint of businesses lowers and more 'green' industries locate in the borough and a low carbon circular economy develops. Workforce is skilled in green technology	1. Number of businesses receiving LoCase and STEM grants 2. Number of businesses disclosing carbon emissions 3. Number of tourism businesses engaged in Interreg Experience project
	Work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote low Carbon business opportunities		
	Collaborate with partners to encourage and develop sustainable tourism opportunities for urban and rural business		
5.2 Provide information and advice to business	Develop a package of green business support/information materials for top employers	Employers are knowledgeable and able to implement sustainable business practice	1. Number of green business ambassadors 2. % of employees working in low carbon businesses

	Identify best practice and create local green business ambassadors to inspire other businesses		
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What we've been doing:

Promoting the LoCase scheme enabled the UK Electric Bike Centre, based in Biddenden, to gain funding to purchase new equipment such as a bike trailers and e-bikes and also associated equipment such as helmets, locks etc. They were also able to optimise their website and commence a Google Adwords campaign in order to drive more business to the company. This resulted in the creation of seven new jobs, the promotion of green travel, an increase in GVA and the opportunity to explore a relationship with CyclePods, bike storage company.

An Interreg project is supporting sustainable tourism, increasing the off-season offer and linking with more sustainable visits and experiences. 15 local businesses have been successful in joining the programme and are working to develop their offers

A cycle friendly initiative is being promoted to businesses in the borough.

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

Across the UK only 5% of the energy used to heat our homes today is from low carbon sources (*Ofgem decarbonisation action plan Feb 2020*). There are many different types of buildings across the borough, however the approach should be to first reduce energy consumption as much as possible through the fabric and design of the building and the behaviour of its occupants. The remaining energy requirement can then be fulfilled from a renewable or low carbon source.

Priority 6: Reduce the environmental footprint of buildings through retrofitting existing buildings and new build developments			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
6.1 Council led housing development to be built to highest environmental standards achievable	New build HRA homes to be built to attain EPC rating A or B	lower carbon footprint of new homes, lower running costs for tenants, showcasing environmentally sustainable building techniques	1. % of EPC ratings at A or B 2. Average energy usage per m ²
6.2 Undertake retrofitting programme for council owned homes	Undertake stock condition survey	Overall carbon footprint of HRA is lowered, tenants benefit from increased thermal comfort and lower energy bills. Health and wellbeing of tenants improves	1. Number of homes retrofitted each year 2. % of home with EPC ratings at C or above 3. Level of satisfaction of tenants with their home
	Explore efficiencies of scale through joint working with other stock holding local authorities/ Registered Providers through Kent Housing Group		
	Develop a delivery plan for decarbonisation of homes to include types of properties, works required and timescales		
	Identify retrofitting pilot projects to test, assess and learn methods		
	Commence phased retrofitting programme		

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

6.3 Reduce water consumption across council owned assets	<p>Install water saving measures in council owned commercial and residential properties</p> <p>Encourage less water usage through behavioural change initiatives</p>	<p>Residents actively use less water resulting in a reduction in overall water usage. Resilience to future water shortages improves</p>	1. Per capita water use
6.4 Retrofit councils own corporate property assets	<p>Complete condition survey and undertake study to fully understand cost of retrofitting Civic Centre and likely carbon savings aligned with rationalising floor space and more flexible working arrangements for staff. Utilise this information to determine options for future use.</p> <p>Maintain daily energy reporting to evaluate energy usage and potential reduction / savings</p> <p>Continue ongoing asset management to ensure opportunities to reduce carbon emissions are identified and reflected in future reviews of Asset Management Strategy</p>	<p>Council assets contribute zero or minimal carbon emissions, assets are less expensive to run, improved conditions for staff and tenants</p>	1. EPC rating of buildings 2. energy usage per m ₂ 3. Area (m ₂) of buildings retrofitted 4. financial saving against cost of measures (ROI) 5. Satisfaction of tenants

	<p>Develop a planned approach to retrofitting corporate assets as identified by condition surveys and prioritise in Asset Management Strategy to maximise opportunities to reduce carbon emissions</p> <p>Undertake post occupancy evaluations for corporate assets following completion of retrofitting works</p>		
6.5 Improve the energy efficiency of homes in the private sector	<p>Work with the Greater South East Energy Hub to deliver the allocated funding available through the Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Phase 2.</p> <p>Continue energy efficiency grants under the Landlord Accreditation scheme.</p> <p>Identify properties in PRS below band E requiring improvement under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and take enforcement action where necessary</p> <p>Actively contribute to Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership to address fuel poverty</p> <p>Promote energy efficiency schemes available to homeowners and private landlords.</p>	<p>Increase energy efficiency of homes Reduction in CO2 emissions from private sector housing Reduction in fuel poverty</p>	<p>1) Amount of funding allocated / spent 2) Number of properties with improved EPC rating 3) Number of PRS properties improved from F and G to band E or above 4) Number of Accredited private rented properties 5) Number of households in fuel poverty</p>

From the late 1980's there has been an ongoing programme to improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings through insulation upgrades, more energy efficient windows and doors and heating systems. This improves the energy rating of the home and reduces the cost of space and water heating for the tenant. More recently renewable technology has been installed with properties benefiting from solar PV and air source heat pumps replacing oil-fired central heating systems (or inefficient Night Store Heaters) in off-gas areas and where a heating system has reached its replacement interval in our cyclic maintenance and improvement programme or where the existing heating system cannot be economically repaired.

The refurbishment of Christchurch Lodge, renovated to provide accommodation for homeless people, has achieved EPC rating of B, through using a fabric first approach with an innovative insulation solution in the 19th century building.

The council's own new build programme has put sustainability as a high priority. The 2015/16 programme achieved the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, well exceeding the building regulations in force at that time. This including taking a fabric first approach, installing water saving measures, high efficiency heating systems and renewables.

We are looking at other assets and recently undertook a condition survey of the Civic Centre to understand how its energy efficiency can be improved and inform options for its refurbishment / future use.

A successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will enable the replacement of the gas fired boilers at the Stour leisure centre with air source heat pumps. This will reduce the leisure centre's annual carbon emission total by 657 tonnes – (the equivalent to the CO₂ emissions from the annual heating of 243 average UK homes), a reduction of 45% with an energy saving of 40%.

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

Ashford is a largely rural borough but we must not be complacent and forget the importance of our open spaces, in rural and urban areas, for our own wellbeing and that of the natural environment. Good habitat management can help store carbon and poor habitat management can result in carbon being released.

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people and wildlife			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
7.1 Improve biodiversity on council owned land	Develop and implement land management plans for council owned land which provide specific vision, aims and objectives for the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of parcels of land in a given locality.	Enhanced biodiversity of open spaces in the borough increasing key species. Land management plans will support the balance of appropriate wildlife habitat and biodiversity within amenity spaces and urban areas ensuring that maintenance regimes are appropriate to the character of the land and ensure ecological, social and economic benefits are realised holistically	1. Tree numbers and species information 2. % increase in area (m^2) managed for wildlife / biodiversity 3. Number of trees planted 4. Number of trees felled 5. Total CO ₂ sequestered
	Proactively manage ABC tree stock, which will inform future tree management and maintenance programmes	Understanding of tree numbers, species and maturity of tree stock and location Informed tree planting plans Tree warden scheme that will engage local people while supporting the overarching aim	

Appendix 1_CN Action Plan for consultation_V3_ 2021

7.2 Support land based community projects	Publish community - based gardens guidance	Local people grow their own food and community cohesion improves. Health and wellbeing improves, through healthier eating. Awareness of food production encourages local food production and purchase with a reduction in food miles	1. Downloads of community gardens guidance 2. Number of Community Gardens created
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What we've been doing:

The management plan for Queen Mothers Park is in progress together with putting together guidance for community gardens. A successful bid to the Urban Tree Challenge will result in 6660 trees being planted at Chilmington, with planting work underway and due to be completed by Spring 2021.

3.8 Priority 8 - Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling

The council has a good record of recycling rates and continues to be have the highest recycling rate on the county at 54.2% for 2019/20. It is important to maintain this excellent recycling rate but also to reduce the amount of waste produced.

Priority 8: Reduce waste and continue high levels of recycling			
Objective	Actions	Outcomes	Measures
8.1 Work with local businesses to reduce waste	Support reduction in plastic bag usage through reuse / 'use your own' initiatives	Residents are empowered to reduce the amount of waste they produce to reduce tonnage of non-recyclable material collected. Local businesses actively support waste reduction initiatives.	1. Tonnes of non-recyclable waste collected (residential and commercial) 2. Recycling and contamination rates 3. National and regional litter ranking 4. Number of refill points 5. Volume of water refilled (litres)
	Develop work stream as part of Town Centre reset to encourage upcycling and facilitate establishment of social enterprises with waste reduction objectives		
	Increase number of water refill points in local outlets		
8.2 Ensure council processes reduce waste and maximise recycling	Continue to move to electronic services and digital processes for staff and residents	Residents are confident to use digital services, reducing paper based processes. The council no longer uses single use plastic within its offices and non-recyclable waste is reduced	1. Number (%) of residents signed up for digital services 2. Number of staff undertaking recycling training 3. Volume of paper used in council

	<p>Recycle all the council's technological assets using WEEE and ADISA directives</p> <p>Eliminate single-use plastic within the council office including rolling out consistent bin system removing plastic and paper cups from vending machines</p>		<p>publications / correspondence</p> <p>4. Tonnes of non-recyclable plastic waste collected from council offices</p>
8.3 Encourage residents to reduce waste	<p>Continue to promote waste reduction including through home composting and garden waste service</p>	<p>Residents are proactive in reducing waste</p>	<p>1. Tonnes of waste collected per household</p> <p>2. Recycling rates</p> <p>3. Garden waste services take up</p>

What we've been doing:

Consistently improved recycling rates through informative ongoing campaigns to residents and local businesses.

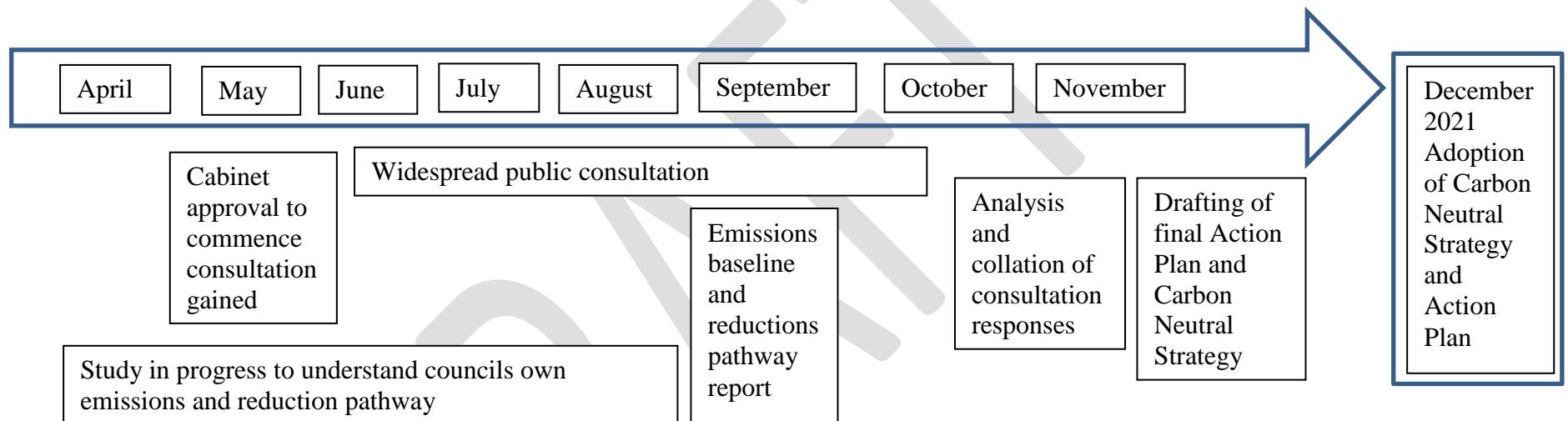
The green garden waste service has been reviewed to increase the use of this service therefore reducing journeys by householders to the tip. Working with our waste contractor collection routes have been optimised. The garden waste vehicles now travel 153 miles less over a two week period which will make an annual saving of 11984 kg carbon.

The council has rationalised the printers within its offices, reducing their usage, together with introducing virtual collaboration tools for effective joint working online.

4. Next steps

All the responses received will be used to finalise the action plan. The final action plan will also be informed by the outcome of a simultaneous study to understand how the council can reach net zero in its own estate and the associated financial costs. This will

help us to prioritise the actions that will be most effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whilst using our resources most efficiently.



Through working with local business, organisations and statutory partners we will enable and encourage others to reduce their emissions to achieve our borough wide targets.

Appendix 1: Kent Resilience Forum - Principles for a Green Recovery

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

7. Greater partnership working and collaboration. This means engaging all parts of the community to contribute to and realise environmental, economic and social benefits.

Appendix 2: Glossary

ADISA	The Asset Disposal and Information Security Alliance (ADISA) underwrites best practices for data security for asset recovery and disposal companies. ADISA certification reflects the highest standards of safety, environmental responsibility and confidentiality in the industry.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity refers to the variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi. While Earth's biodiversity is so rich that many species have yet to be discovered, many species are being threatened with extinction due to human activities.
Carbon Footprint	A carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organisation, event or product.
Carbon Neutrality	Carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. Removing carbon oxide from the atmosphere and then storing it is known as carbon sequestration. In order to achieve net zero emissions, all worldwide greenhouse gas emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration
Carbon Offsetting	The balancing of the emissions of carbon dioxide (CO ₂) or other greenhouse gases (measured in carbon dioxide equivalents [CO ₂ e]) from an activity by providing for or investing in an emission reduction elsewhere. If carbon reductions are equivalent to the total carbon footprint of an activity, then the activity is said to be "carbon neutral."
Climate Change	Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases.
CO ₂ e	Carbon dioxide equivalent. Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.

Greenhouse gases	Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere absorb heat energy and prevent it all escaping into space. This keeps the Earth warmer than it would be without these gases. The increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is magnifying the greenhouse effect and increasing global temperatures. There are many greenhouse gases but these are some of the most important: water vapour H ₂ O, carbon dioxide CO ₂ , methane CH ₄ , nitrous oxide N ₂ O, CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons).
EPC	Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a building is and give it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient).
EV charging points	An electric vehicle charging point is equipment that connects an electric vehicle (EV) to a source of electricity to recharge electric cars.
Food miles	The distance between the place where food is grown or made and the place where it is eaten.
HRA	Housing Revenue Account a ring-fenced account of certain defined transactions, relating to local authority housing. It records expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities.
Interreg	Interreg Europe will co-finance a proportion of a project that is carried out in partnership with other policy organisations based in different countries in Europe.
KCC	Kent County Council
KRF	The Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) is a partnership of organisations and agencies who work together to improve the resilience of Kent and Medway, and to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities. The KRF is one of 42 of local resilience forums (LRFs) across England set up in response to the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.
LoCase	The Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund to provide a free business support programme in the South East. Its aim is to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions.
Renewable Energy	The International Energy Agency (IEA) defines renewable energy resources as those derived from natural processes and replenished at a faster rate than they are consumed.
Rewilding	The process of protecting an environment and returning it to its natural state, for example by bringing back wild animals that used to live there.

STEM	Steps to Environmental Management Scheme. The scheme helps businesses to improve their environmental performance through a series of assessments and certificates (blue, silver and gold).
Sustrans	A national charity whose mission is to make it easier for people to walk and cycle.
WEEE	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment recycling; a specialist part of the waste and recycling industry

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Agenda Item 5

Agenda Item No:



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report To:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 October 2021
Report Title:	The Ashford Borough Council Annual Performance Report 2020/21
Report Author & Job Title:	Tom Swain Governance and Data Protection Officer

Summary:	The presenting of an Annual Performance Report is an important pillar of the council's transparency agenda. The Annual Performance Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looks at the achievements and milestones the council has realised over the year in the context of the Recovery Plan.• Provides Summarised performance against the council's suite of key performance indicators (KPI's) for the year 2020-2021.
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Key Decision:	NO
Significantly Affected Wards:	None
Recommendations:	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:- <ol style="list-style-type: none">Note the contents of the Annual Performance Report
Policy Overview:	The Annual Performance Report offers another means by which the council can embrace the transparency agenda and provide a reflection on the performance and achievements of the previous financial year
Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	None
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required as the Annual Performance Report is a record of past performance and does not propose new action for the council.

Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Not required
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Not required
Sustainability Implications:	None
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	The Recovery Plan
Contact:	Tom.swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330432

DRAFT

Ashford Borough Council
Annual
Performance
Report

2020-2021

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Our borough in 2020-21 Key Facts and Figures

Size



130,000
Population estimate¹



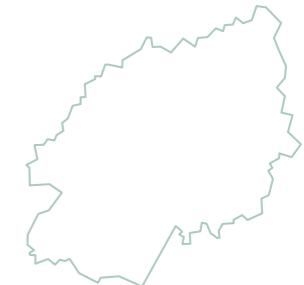
153,200
Population estimate
by 2030²



2.24
People per
hectare

39
Ward areas

49
Parish areas



58,062
Hectares largest
geographical area in Kent
(approximately 220 sq miles)

Health



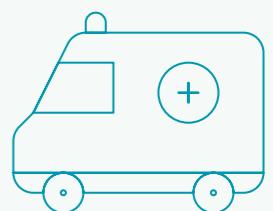
80.6

Life expectancy
at birth – male³



84.2

Life expectancy at
birth – female⁴



Economy



£570.30

median resident
based weekly
full-time
earnings 2020

28.9%
NVQ4+ level qualification
or above placing Ashford
in the bottom 20% of
authorities in England.



Diversity

40.7yrs

Mean age⁷

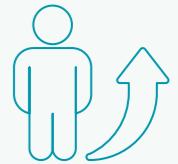


25.1%

Proportion of
population 19
and under



19.4%
Proportion of
population aged
65 and over



Transport



4,020,566
trips Ashford International
Station⁸ 2019/2020 representing
a 2% fall from 2018/19

History

More than
3000
listed buildings.

¹ Office for National Statistics Mid Year 2019

² KCC Housing Led forecast (Nov 2020), Strategic Commissioning - Analytics, Kent County Council

³ Office for National Statistics

⁴ Office for National Statistics

⁵ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

⁶ Annual Population Survey

⁷ 2019 Mid Year Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

⁸ Office of Rail and Road 2019/20

Responding to the Pandemic

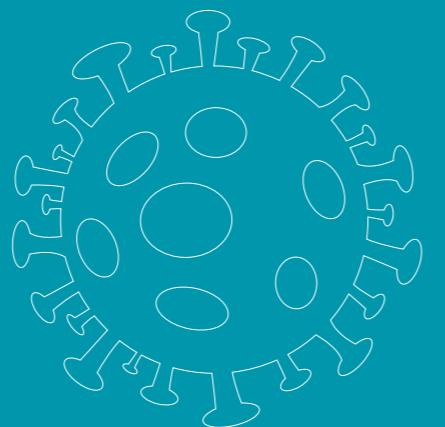
The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on every aspect of all of our lives nationally as well as our local communities and immediate friends and families. The impact is likely to be felt for many years and there is no doubt that it will shape the future course of the council as we move forward with recovery.

At the start of the pandemic, like that of the Government, our clear objective was to save lives. To that end the council focused on a response that protected life whilst minimises the impact upon the essential services we offer and the local economy.

Overall command and control of the council's response to the outbreak was led by the Ashford Critical Emergency Resilience (ACER) Committee, which met for the first time just ahead of Public Health England (PHE) confirming the first case of COVID-19 in Kent on the 2 March 2020.

ACER, which consists of elected members and senior officers, ensured that our response to the emergency was coordinated and that we remained in the strongest position to protect our residents, businesses and staff. ACER has regularly met throughout the outbreak and has been instrumental in guiding and supporting the council's response.

Day to day operational control was provided by the council's Business Continuity Incident Management Team (BCIMT) which, in the case of this emergency, involved the whole Management Team.



In order to maintain our statutory and essential services throughout the pandemic, the council drew on its well-established and tested business continuity and emergency planning arrangements. All services have business continuity plans which have been supplemented by additional arrangements specific to COVID-19. This has necessitated services working in very different ways, including greater remote working and rapid deployment of digital services.

In the first weeks of the emergency, local authorities were asked by the Government to provide a 'stopgap' for food deliveries and essential provisions for those in need of immediate support. As the pandemic has unfolded our customer contact staff have continued to contact those placed on the Governments/NHS shielded list (whilst shielding advice was in place) and other vulnerable groups to offering support where it may be needed.

From the start of the outbreak, information regarding the council's COVID-19 response has been extensively promoted on the council's website, through regular social media messages, press releases, a special edition of our Ashford For You magazine, and mail outs to our most vulnerable. A spotlight was shone on our voluntary and community champions who have gone the extra mile in the crisis, and residents were signposted to further information, support and advice.

In early May the council's Stour Centre car park was used as a mobile testing centre. The centre managed by the army, allowed for hundreds of people who were showing symptoms to be tested. As of the 15 June a drive-through Regional Testing Centre was set up from our new car park at Victoria Road.

The council has also support Public Health England's track and trace programme. As well as administrating the Test and Trace support payment scheme.

Supporting business has been, and remains, a strategic priority for the council. During early April, letters were sent to nearly 3,000 local businesses inviting them to apply for rate relief and business grants announced by the government. Since the start of the pandemic through various business support schemes in excess of 8,000 grants have been administered to our businesses.

Our homelessness communities through the everyone in scheme were and continue to be provided with a safe place to stay and our welfare intervention officers have reached out to support those financially affected.

In short every corner of the council was and continues to be mobilised to serve the best we can the local community.



Adoption of the Recovery Plan

The Recovery Plan 2020 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. This plan set out to deliver a number of actions allowing the council to re-configure how it works in order to most effectively deliver services to residents and in collaboration with others, help mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the local economy, communities and residents.

The underlying principles of the plan were to build back to a greener, more prosperous, resilient and caring borough.

The council's immediate priority turned to responding to the Covid-19 pandemic; supporting communities, residents and business. This meant that the public consultation for the Corporate Plan, planned to take place during June and July 2020, were suspended and this Recovery Plan put in place as the key strategic document spelling out the councils priorities.

This Annual Report acts as an opportunity to monitor the Recovery Plans performance and highlight any achievements made against it.

page
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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

- Economic Recovery
- Community Recovery
- Place Making, Regeneration, and Infrastructure
- Organisational Change and Workforce Development

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

- Efficient
- Consistent
- Inclusive
- Improve the customer experience

Green principles

- 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, cycleways 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.

Equalities Objectives

- 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

Economic Recovery

Business grants support

During the last year more than 8,000 business support grants have been paid out to businesses within Ashford borough. Ashford Borough Council has been supporting local businesses, processing and administering the many government grant schemes since the first national lockdown in March 2020.

The work of the Revenues and Benefits and Economic Development teams, assisted by colleagues from across the council, has helped hundreds of businesses stay afloat during these unprecedented times.

Ashford town centre reset approved

Plans for the future development of Ashford town centre were approved at November's Cabinet meeting as part of the Recovery Plan.

The Ashford Town Centre Reset, which focuses on the Bank Street and Elwick Road area, are designed to reset the town centre in light of the decline in retail which has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic.

The council is working to ensure that the town centre remains relevant following new developments within the town, making Ashford a place to live, work, visit and invest in, enhancing and embracing the areas which give Ashford its character.

The report focused on several projects which will help revitalise the area. Following the same themes as the council's Recovery Plan.

Ashford prepares to run a Border Control Post

Preparations for the opening of a Border Control Post located at Sevington are continuing ahead of the start date for official controls which is set for the 1st January 2022.

Ashford Borough Council is recruiting circa 130 people to enable it to staff the port health service which is located on the site of the Inland Border Facility (IBF) at Junction 10A of the M20. The IBF site will also be occupied by other Government Agencies such as Border Force and HMRC, who the port health team will work closely with.

The checks that will be undertaken on the site are required as a result of BREXIT due to the UK leaving the single market. At a size of 93 hectares the IBF is one of the biggest in the UK. The Council are set to play a vital role in delivering the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU and will be responsible for undertaking official controls as follows:

- Imports of Products of Animal Origin (POAO)
- Imports of High-Risk Food not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO)
- Organic food imports (COI's)
- Illegal Unregistered and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)
- Control of Plastics used in products used with food from China





Elwick Place lettings update

The flagship Elwick Place cinema, hotel and leisure development in the heart of the town centre is almost fully let, with contracts signed for more units during the latest lockdown.

The first phase of the council-owned 100,000 sq ft development was launched in December 2018, with a six-screen Picturehouse cinema and a 58-bedroom Travelodge hotel as its anchor tenants. The scheme – built on the site of a former cattle market in partnership with UK developer Stanhope PLC – also has a 282-space car park and is a stone's throw from Ashford International station.

During later phases, efforts to attract restaurant and leisure businesses to fill the remaining eight units have continued against a backdrop of business uncertainty caused by Brexit, an accelerating decline in high street retail and the pandemic.

New tenants have now been secured for all but one unit at the multi-million pound centre. Restaurant operators dominate, providing the people of Ashford with a wealth of new leisure choices just as we emerge from lockdown.

New additions to the site include; family-friendly Italian restaurant Unita 4, and Matches Sports Bar.

Meanwhile food hall and restaurant operator Macknade Fine Foods has recently expanded into an adjoining unit, after a successful first 18 months trading at Elwick Place. And Snap Fitness gym will reopen in line with the Government's Coronavirus roadmap.

Ashford Borough Council has a large portfolio of corporate property assets which generate significant income, even though there has been an adverse impact caused by the pandemic. The portfolio includes Elwick Place, Park Mall shopping centre, International House and the Commercial Quarter, Carlton Road Business Park, Ellingham Road Industrial Estate and many others.



ANPR arrives in Ashford

Whilst our car parking income has taken a significant hit during the pandemic with visitor numbers down and our car parks used for testing facilities resulting in an income fall from £2,591,786 to £819,698.

As part of the council's on-going programme of investment in our car parks we are starting to introduce automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology. The Elwick Place Car Park in Ashford Town Centre was the first car park to go live with ANPR which started operating in November.

ANPR will improve the quality and convenience of using our car park. It is widely used in both public and private car parks up and down the UK.

Elwick Place P

ANPR CAR PARK

Charges apply	9am to 3pm
Based on	£1.20 per hour
Minimum fee	£2.40 (2 hours)
Over 5 hours	£12.00

Paying for the time you stay
Pay by contactless, card or cash.
Apple and Google.

Blue Badge holders
Can park for three hours for free
with an online account only.
You must display a valid Blue
Badge in disabled bays.

Free parking
Free parking in
allocated bays only.

ashford.gov.uk/parking
Out of hours phone 01233 331111

Ashford
Borough Council



Community Recovery

VERA supports three worthy organisations

Shortly after the start of the pandemic Ashford Borough Council launched our Voluntary Emergency Response Appeal (VERA). Seventy donations were made to the fund, with contributions from residents, councillors, ABC staff and local companies such as Givaudan and Countryside Properties.

During the pandemic many local voluntary organisations have helped supply food and essentials to those most in need. VERA funding was made available to - Ashford Vineyard Foodbank, Bright City Church Foodbank and Repton People's Pantry.

As our Corporate Recovery Plan highlights, we will continue to look at ways to strengthen the voluntary sector such as networking valuable groups so they can help each other and share resources in the future.



Ashford's Syrian resettlement programme wins top award

Ashford's proud record of welcoming vulnerable refugee families has earned national recognition, with the Syrian Resettlement Programme winning the Diversity and Inclusion category of the prestigious LGC Awards 2020.

Earlier in 2020 the council voted to continue to welcome refugee families displaced by Syria's long and bloody civil war, despite the fact that the government-organised Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was coming to an end. The government was amalgamating all its refugee resettlement programmes into one, called the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), to continue beyond 2020.

It was agreed to extend the planned resettlement of refugees in Ashford to offer a new beginning for up to 50 people (around 10 families) each year under UKRS, subject to the availability of suitable private rented property. Councillors also agreed to continue the development of projects and infrastructure to enable successful integration and promote community cohesion to benefit the wider Ashford community.

The resettlement scheme is fully funded by the Home Office so there is no major financial burden on participating councils. Ashford decided from the outset not to use any social housing – easing any fears that refugees would jump the queue of those on the housing waiting list. Refugee families are in private sector accommodation and continue to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they have found new homes.

Jasmin Vardimon secures funding for creative laboratory in Ashford

Work on building the Jasmin Vardimon Creative Laboratory and 29 light industrial units on a Kent County Council owned site in Javelin Way, is scheduled to get underway.

The Creative Laboratory, due to open in Spring 2022, will be a major new arts facility for the county, providing a long-term base for internationally renowned dance company Jasmin Vardimon Company who have been resident in Kent, and a key partner in the county's cultural infrastructure, since 2012.

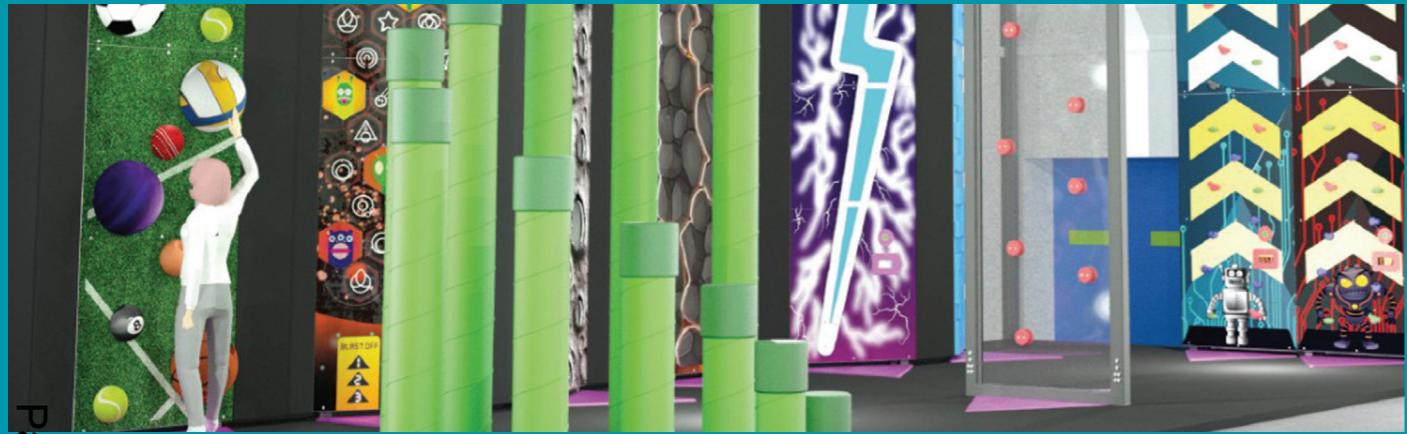
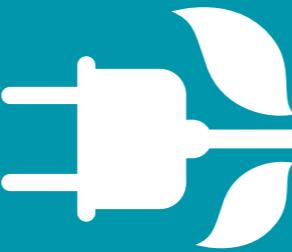
The new facility has been made possible by success in securing £3.069m of capital investment from Arts Council England, alongside £750,000 from Ashford Borough Council (ABC) from the Business Rates Retention Pilot and investment of £578,724 secured by KCC from the Getting Building Fund administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

As well as the construction of a creative laboratory production space, with an area of 13,530sq ft, the development will also provide 29 light industrial units with an area of 47,163 sq ft for sale and/or lease, suitable for additional creative businesses as well as the general market.

The light industrial units are an enabling development with the income from the sales making a contribution to the cost of the creative laboratory. They will also seek to support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in the post-pandemic world by providing opportunities for business development in the creative sector, as well as income from business rates.



Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure



Stour Centre closed ahead of major refurbishment

The redevelopment plans for the Stour Centre Leisure Centre in Ashford were altered following the pandemic, keeping the site closed following the first lockdown to allow a major refurbishment and works programme to progress at pace, which will significantly improve the leisure offer of the centre from mid-2021.

The council in partnership with Freedom Leisure, will be investing £6.5m for the Stour Centre, transforming tired features and providing new spaces to boost participation and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The changes include an extended gym with new equipment, a new soft play and clip and climb and dedicated café area, improved reception and access to the existing seating area, new leisure pool features targeted at younger children and major redecoration throughout including the dry and wet changing areas.

Stour power boost for refurbished leisure centre

Ashford Borough Council has secured a £1.45m Government grant to replace the ageing power plant at the Stour leisure centre with a state-of-the-art system which will slash running costs, cut carbon emissions by 45% and provide a boost to bold ambitions to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

The council submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), which provides grants for public sector bodies to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures.

Benefits of the scheme include:

- Reduction of the Stour Centre's annual carbon emission total by 657 tonnes or 45% (the equivalent to the co2 emissions from the annual heating of 243 homes).
- Energy savings of 40%, contributing to lower running costs at the centre.
- A significant contribution to the council's goal of making the borough 100% carbon neutral by 2030.
- Frees up vital council funds to be spent on other priority projects.



Ashford Borough Council acquired the New Quarter

Ashford Borough Council complete a deal with developers Dukelease to buy the New Quarter – with an east and west wing (Stour and Somerset Heights) adjacent to the Panorama building in the heart of Ashford town centre – comprising 109 units of one and two bedroomed flats.

The deal is an £18.5m investment by the council and represents the largest ever handover of general needs accommodation to be managed on one site by the council.

This is to provide affordable rented accommodation to key workers that have an identified housing need. In addition it will also free up existing homes through transfers of keyworkers and, where possible, will provide vacant units in which to house those in temporary accommodation, or from the housing waiting list.

The council was successful in securing grant funding from Homes England of £2.265m.

Ashford Borough Council secured Government funding to build more affordable housing

Ashford Borough Council has secured more than £1 million of Government funding that will enable it to build 17 homes for affordable housing at Halstow Way in south Ashford, on the site of a former run down play area.

The council will receive £1,020,000 to help build the homes, which will be available to tenants on a social rent basis – that's 60% of the level of open market rent.

The funding has been secured from Homes England, with £765,000 paid up front to the council and the remainder handed over on completion of the scheme. The new apartment block is a mix of one, two and three-bed homes.

The play area will be re-provided through the section 106 agreement as the money secured (£61,520) will be put towards informal play, sport, ecological and open space improvements in the area. This will help meet the needs generated by the development. A small number of additional parking spaces are also provided.

Opening of £1m homeless project by Ashford Borough Council

An innovative project that's set to benefit homeless households and save local taxpayers money has opened in Ashford.

Ashford Borough Council bought the large disused home in Beaver Road for £430,000 and has invested around £500,000 to convert it into eight homes, capable of accommodating up to 25 people. An extensive refurbishment programme has been completed, adding facilities like a communal kitchen, dining room and laundry room.

Christchurch Lodge, as the building has been renamed, follows the same blueprint adopted by the council when it created Christchurch House, a rundown property bought at auction for £278,000 in 2013.

Statement on Habitat Regulation issues affecting development in Ashford borough

In mid-July 2020 Ashford Borough Council, received formal statutory advice from Natural England (NE) regarding development proposals in the Stour Valley catchment area with the potential to increase harmful nutrient impacts (principally nitrogen and phosphorus) at designated protected lakes at Stodmarsh in Canterbury. This covers large parts of the borough including the urban area in and around Ashford itself.

In summary, NE's advice is that a significant adverse effect is possible from some types of new development in the catchment area. This applies mainly to housing development but also other schemes involving overnight accommodation. The council is legally obliged to give significant weight to the views of NE in relation to relevant planning applications.

The immediate practical effect of the NE advice is that planning applications for housing development (and some other types of development involving overnight accommodation) within the Stour catchment area cannot be determined until a process of formal assessment of the potential effects on the Stodmarsh Lakes has been undertaken, considered and approved by the council.

In parallel, the council will be working with its partners in central and local government and applicants to draw up a mitigation strategy to address any impacts from development and enable schemes to proceed.

Vision set out for the South of Ashford Garden Community

A Five Year Vision & Strategy setting out how three major combined developments in the south of Ashford will come together, has been adopted by Ashford Borough Council. The Strategy received major endorsements by partners including private developers and the Chilmington Management Organisation, ensuring a commitment to achieving the Vision for the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC).

This strategy represents the aspirations of local residents, local organisations and key partners who are looking to ensure that these developments come forward with quality in mind, where infrastructure is planned and delivered in tandem with new homes, as the community grows.

The importance of high quality design and placemaking, guided by Garden City principles but shaped to reflect 21st century living, is a key theme running through the strategy. Most importantly, it offers a vision of living and working in the wake of Covid-19 as we all seek to recover from the impact of the pandemic and come back stronger as a community.



Urban Tree Challenge branches out into Ashford

Chilmington Green part of the wider South of Ashford Garden Community, which also includes the site areas known as Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green developments will see the planting of 6,666 trees following a successful bid to the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge.

The trees are planned to be planted in an area currently referred to as Discovery Park, with residents invited to be involved in the tree planting project to encourage a greater sense of local ownership.

Recycling success continues

Ashford Borough Council's recycling service remains the best in Kent, according to the latest national recycling league tables. Ashford's position is certainly one to be proud of and demonstrates the excellent recycling our residents have been doing.

Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2%) 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

Organisational Change and Workforce Development

Ashford Borough Council has adopted an asset management strategy for its corporate property portfolio with the intention to ensure it invests prudently, achieves long term value for money, meets the needs of customers and supports the authority's carbon neutrality objectives.

The Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy (2020 -2024) replaces the previous Corporate Property Management Strategy and sets out the council's high-level strategic framework for managing its portfolio of nearly 2,000 corporate property assets for the next four years.

It will align corporate and property strategies, ensuring the optimisation of corporate property assets in a way which best supports key services, corporate objectives and to provide affordable levels of service within financial resource risk constraints.

It lays the foundation for the efficient use of all assets, providing a platform for structured and

rigorous forward thinking and decision-making about operational and property asset strategies. The strategy enables the council to be clear about the extent, value, condition and suitability of its corporate property portfolio and will form the basis for consultative strategy development and clear methodologies for measuring performance and supporting service delivery.

The strategy takes consideration of the council's objective to become 80% carbon neutral by 2025 and 100% carbon neutral by 2030.

The council's wide-ranging portfolio includes International House and other offices, Park Mall shopping centre, the Elwick Place cinema, hotel and leisure development in Ashford town centre, industrial estates and business parks, car parks, leisure facilities, community centres, public toilets, allotments and other land, plus more than 1,500 individual garages for rent across the borough.



New commercial approach by Ashford Borough Council

Ashford Borough Council has outlined how they are looking to take their approach to commercialisation onto the next level.

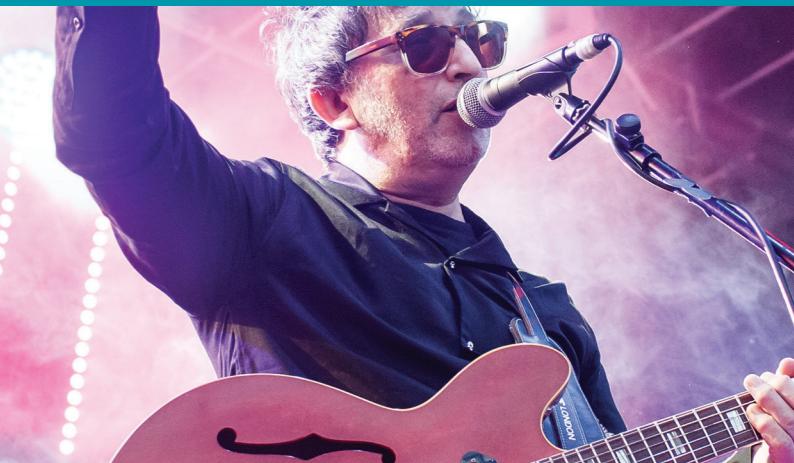
The council has been successful in the past on a fairly small scale, but with uncertainty over future Government funding, a considerable budget impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and a refocusing on future priorities, this work is now being accelerated after Cabinet endorsed a Commercialisation Strategy.

The council believes it has a great opportunity to fundamentally change how we do business and deliver services in the future, which not only supports our community and economy to recover locally, but also helps to bring in income to protect our front line services.

With the impact of COVID-19 on the community continuing to be felt, this work is even more relevant due to the additional financial pressures dealing with the crisis has caused.

Initially service areas like Lifeline, CCTV, parking, garden waste, category and contract management, Aspire Landscape Management and our in house electrical services team will be looked at first, and other areas will be explored over time.

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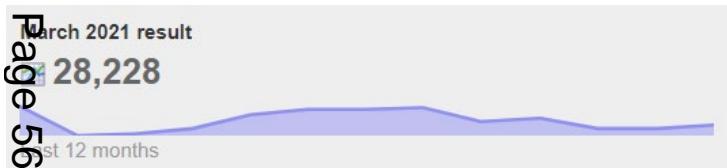
Ashford Borough Council is committed to being open and transparent and we follow the code of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency. As well as our performance reports we produce a number of monitoring reports which are made available on our webpages including:

- Annual Governance Statement
- Statement of accounts and Budget books
- Quarterly Financial monitoring report
- Medium term financial monitoring report
- Housing current delivery reports
- Planning updates and many more.

Recovery Plan, Annual Performance Indicators 2020/21

Economic Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
RPKPI30 Parking usage	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	269,625			44,422			169,865			140,180			73,602			Total Parking usage: 2019/2020: 1,164,161 2020/21: 428,069
Latest Note																	



Mar 2021 Update

In Ashford, using car parks is often preferable to parking on the street as many town centre roads are reserved for resident permit holders only. Our car parks provide access to the town and an availability of parking space, absorbs traffic and reduces congestion.

This has been a challenging year for us, the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, is unprecedented in our operation, and management has warranted greater attention.

During 2020, we reassessed our strategy given this and various other factors and approved a significantly tighter approach that looks to increase growth where we can, however given we may lose some of our car parks along the way as part of Town Regeneration.

The effect of COVID-19 continues and end of year takings decreased from £2,591,786 to £819,698.

- Therefore achieved around 32 % against forecast target
- We have given free parking for key workers per UK government advice has effected income
- Free parking for COVID testers working at Victoria Road Car Park provided in Elwick Rd Car Park
- Free parking throughout year in various car park in Tenterden
- Elwick Rd being used to give free parking to staff of testing centre = over 100 staff on rotation.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

- Losses to income were also made when Edinburgh Rd C/P was closed in this fiscal year for upgrade to the lighting, in view of car park becoming open 24/7 in the Summer of 2021 and some anti-social behaviour.
- Vicarage Rd Car Park top car park in Ashford town was also closed for ground testing, in view that this car park may be developed over the next few years.
- In Oct 2020 we installed ANPR into Elwick Place Car park with 2020 occupancy levels being at 17% and 2021 11%. Two thirds of visits made to this car park receive free parking.

Working with finance we look to set targets for our car park income for 2021/22, given loss of some of our car parks, 3 day working week for some businesses, on line shopping and effects on visit to town. We aim to look at all car park tariffs, payment charging times and amend accordingly where appropriate.

Removal of cash transactions (Car Parks) report available from [Sept 2020 Cabinet](#), which introduced the phased removal of cash from Council business in response to the wider changes we are seeing in society as a result of digitisation of services and COVID19. This will result in reduced costs including future replacement of machines as they reach end of life.

Edinburgh Road car park (ERCP) provides a large number of town centre parking bays, however it does not operate 24 hours a day and is closed in accordance with the operating hours. Due to the changing nature of Ashford town centre; namely the increase in residential premises being developed and the change in shopper behaviour linked to Covid-19 a review of this asset is necessary to ensure it is being utilised to meet these demands. [Dec 2020 Cabinet](#)

Page 57 RPKPI51 Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	25.1%	16.6%	15.4%		
							Latest Note	

Percentage Occupancy Rate

Ellingham	69,336 sf	69,336 sf	100.0%
Carlton Road	13,118 sf	50,046 sf	26.2%
Elwick Place	66,185 sf	66,185 sf	100.0%
International House	73,700 sf	77,328 sf	95.3%
Total	222,339 sf	262,895 sf	84.6%

Major sites that we acquired for commercial/investment purposes included. Please note Park Mall and the Commercial Quarter are not included as these were purchased for development and regeneration purposes.

Across the year 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 the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2019/20 and update to the Property Acquisition, Investment and Disposal Strategy available from [Sept 2020 Cabinet](#). This report provided a summary of how our main commercial assets are performing and the work the Council is undertaking to improve or maintain such performance. Whilst this report looks back to the financial year 2019-2020, due to the unparalleled events over the past 18 months such as the changes in the retail shopping market, the impact and uncertainty caused by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic, the report also considers what impacts these events may have on the council's property portfolio in the short term.

RPKPI80	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	8.64%		8.4%		8.4%		8.4%							
Business survival - current vacancy rates																
Latest Note																
 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  Sept 2020, 5059 rated properties in the borough with 256 exemptions and 169 empty reliefs  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.																
RPKPI81	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic - Following the final tranche of Covid-19 related support, a report will be produced summarising the support provided and to which businesses, these businesses will subsequently be surveyed at a future date to identify their survival.													
Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic																
Latest Note																

Information on the support provided and 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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

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.

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: (figures to date, as at 26.3.21)

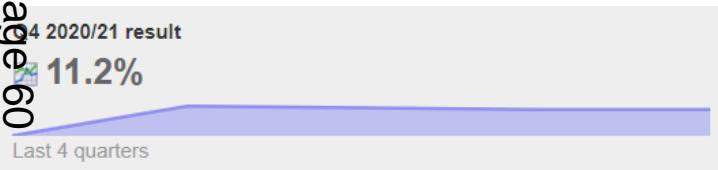
Local Restrictions Support Grants	5,472 grants paid	£13,407,171
Additional Restrictions Grants	2,227 grants paid	£3,517,973

RPKPI82 Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	2.9%	6%	6.2%	6%	6.1% (February figure)	
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Latest Note



COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on the number of claimants of unemployment benefits. Total unemployment: Ashford: 6.1% (4725) which compares to the Kent figure 6.1% and slightly under the national 6.5%. More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#).

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
Statistics on the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) measured down to borough level is available on the .gov website, Job retention and Self Employment Income support .																	
RPKPI83 Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data	5.4%			12.1%			11.7%			11.2%			11.2% (February Figure)			
Latest Note																	
Page 60		<p>4 2020/21 result</p>  <p>11.2%</p> <p>Last 4 quarters</p>															
Unemployment for 18-24: Ashford 11.2% (990) which compares to a Kent figure of 9.7% and a national figure of 9%. More information available within Kent County Councils Economy and employment data .																	

Community Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI01 Rent arrears/loss (Housing)	Snapshot figure of total rent arrears.	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	£531,232		£558,949.55			£638,245.91			£312,078.81						
Latest Note																	

Collected 98.78% of rents this year, we will see a decrease in the arrears brought forward from £526,878.41 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 coming to an end.

RPKPI04 Homelessness Presentations	No. of homelessness presentations	469	367	408	352	365	
RPKPI05 Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	41	28	30	44	29	
Latest Note							

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](#)

A report provides the current position on homelessness following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and the impact of Covid 19 in 2020/21 was taken to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October](#).

Officers continue to work from home and contact as much as possible is via telephone interviews or online. IT developments such as 'YOTI' digital signatures have been implemented to enable digital document signing.

ABC continues with the "Everyone in" campaign, launched by the Government back in March to bring all rough sleepers off the streets and into emergency accommodation. We have obtained funding to allow us to be able to do this. We are working on pathway plans for this group of people to move them on to long term secure accommodation and are hoping to start a Housing Led scheme in the near future.

The courts have been operating on a limited basis during the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has the potential for increased evictions once they reopen more fully which could in

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

turn lead to increased presentations and placements, increased General Fund spend particularly when the furlough scheme comes to an end. The Early Interventions Accommodation Officer is working with estate agents and landlords. There are also communications campaigns targeted at landlords and tenants to help mitigate this risk.

RPKPI06 Number of new complaints cases opened (Housing)	No. of complaints regarding poor conditions and/or ASB in the private rented sector resolved with formal action	3	1	3	2	1
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Latest Note

Q4 Most cases resolved via informal route. The one case that required action has been an ongoing case.

Across the year small increase in antisocial type complaint seen due to tenants remaining at home for longer periods of time due to movement restrictions.

RPKPI07 Gas Safety Certificates	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.93%	100%		96.29%	100%		98.37%	100%		99.43%	100%		99.93%	100%	
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Latest Note

March 2021 result



The downturn in the landlord gas safety record compliancy in Q1 was due to the CV-19 situation with residents shielding and reluctant to provide access. Our compliance consultant, heating service provider and Council staff in housing all worked pro-active to mitigate the dip in compliance working with residents to ensure access where possible and return compliance figures to target.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status										
RPKPI08	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	22			6			6			17			20			
Disabled Facilities Grants Completed														Total completions 2019/20: 70 2020/21: 49			
Latest Note																	

Reduced figures for Q1 and 2 as Covid lockdowns restricted access and ability to commence building works.

RPKPI24 Estimated total no. of people supported monthly at VERA funded foodbanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor monthly Completion Date: 1st February 2021 	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Ashford Borough Council launched its Voluntary Emergency Response Appeal (VERA) to help with the borough's response to and recovery from the pandemic. Thanks to contributions from residents and businesses £10,205.00 was raised and shared between three local organisations who have been supplying food and essentials to those most in need during the height of the crisis; Ashford Vineyard Foodbank, Bright City Church Foodbank and Repton People's Pantry.

"As the Covid-19 pandemic has evolved, so has Repton Community Trust's approach to supporting people through their community led foodbank 'The Peoples Pantry'. With support from VERA funding, the team developed online ordering and can now offer 24-hour access to food through a unique locker system placed outside Repton Connect Community Centre."

"Since March, Ashford Vineyard Compassion has given out over 2,000 frozen meals, food parcels, fresh food boxes, and art/activity packs for children to over 550 families across Ashford."

Bright City Church Foodbank, "We are so grateful for the generous funds given by VERA and other funders which have enabled us to support 154 households and families with weekly food parcels throughout the pandemic. This Christmas every household received a Christmas hamper and we gave out 70 individually packed home-cooked Christmas dinners and 50 family portions."

RPKPI 26 MEMBER GRANTS – 14 Covid related grants provided in Q2 totalling £17,994.53. No member grants specifically for covid related projects in Q3. This is because VCS responded quickly to source the funding and volunteers needed to tailor services in response to covid restrictions during the first lockdown, so were already well prepared by Q3. Local support networks are now established so the reliance on the council had reduced by Q3 as groups and individuals have adapted and found ways of helping themselves.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												
RPKPI25 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT	<p>ABC was allocated £59,297.47 from the Emergency Assistance Grant received in August 2020 via Kent County Council. The fund was to be used to support initiatives for 12 weeks starting August but with an understanding that pressures may extend past this point.</p> <p>We have strong connections with the voluntary sector and already assisted a number of Covid-19 community support projects, this allowed us to quickly identify where this funding would have the largest impact and this funding has helped with the below.</p>															

Ashford Vineyard, Renew Social Supermarket - This funding aided with increasing the hours of both Vineyard's compassion Support Worker and Projects Manager, providing help and support for people to tackle the root causes of food poverty and financial crisis. 307 people helped to date.

Ashford & Tenterden CAB - Providing support to cover the cost of debt relief orders for residents who are in need of serious financial relief, due to COVID impacts. Aiming to support 90 residents.

 Ashford Volunteer Centre - providing targeted support to the wider Voluntary and Community Sector, ensuring the wide-ranging cluster of Ashford based organisations are better networked, referring on appropriately, and are aware of latest COVID advice and funding opportunities. 508 organisations, including repeat orgs, contacted and supported.

 Ashford Together, Covid-19 Crisis Clinic - A new pilot signposting initiative set in a retail unit right in the heart of the Town Centre, helping link residents suffering from the impact of the pandemic to local community groups and support services available.

Kent Community Pantry, Stanhope - The service provides a food subscription service with a community collection point every Friday. 168 people subscribed to the scheme.

Fareshare Kent – Children & Families Ltd, Food Parcels – help with additional pressure of free food boxes. 588 free food parcels supplied to Ashford Foodbanks.

Report providing reassurance on the processes and contract monitoring of grants to our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, particularly over the pandemic period was taken to the [April meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#).

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
RPKPI31 Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	99%	98.5%	🟡	99.1%	98.5%	🟡	99.4%	98.5%	🟡	99.2%	98.5%	🟡	99.1%	98.5%	🟡	

Latest Note

This figure covers all inspections including for those inspections which are now overdue for their next inspection. Although the backlog was reducing, inspections ceased again with effect from 21st December.

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 for 2020/21 shown above 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. Fortunately, to date, not as many have closed as was expected.

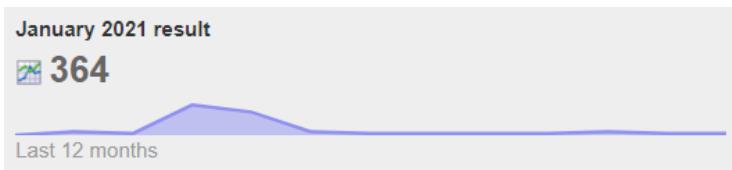
Anticipated visits will resume to some establishments in April 2021 and so this figure over the course of the year will start to become more robust again.

RPKPI62 Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	2.29	10	🟡	1.94	10	🟡	2.02	10	🟡	2.11	10	🟡	1.94	10	🟡	
RPKPI63 Benefit New Claim Processing Time	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	22.97	28	🟡	26.83	28	🟡	25.39	28	🟡	25.77	28	🟡	26.33	28	🟡	
Latest Note																	

Benefit change of circumstance and new claims processing time has remained on target throughout the year.

The latest data tables on local 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 is available from the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#).

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
RPKPI64	Universal credit Monthly new starts	961			5,338			1,101			1,247			364			
Universal credit new claims																	Latest available date up to Jan 21.
Latest Note																	



This looks at the number of starts to Universal Credit. The starts figures show the number of claims which have gone through the application process and been awarded Universal Credit. This data is available to Jobcentre Plus areas. The Jobcentre Plus office at which a claimant is recorded at, is based upon the postcode of where the claimant lives. There are thirteen Jobcentre Plus areas in Kent and Medway and this figure is associated to the Ashford office.

Source DWP Stat Xplore, Most recent figure likely to be revised.

RPKPI67	Welfare intervention new cases	462	406	434	256	435	
Welfare intervention new cases							
Latest Note							

Increase in Q4 due to pro-active calls. Officers have been calling people who haven't paid any council tax offering help and financial advice. Increase in cases expected when courts start to operate again properly.

Welfare Intervention Officers have taken on Test & Trace payments

RPKPI84	Number of positive covid 19 cases	45	1,217	152	5,235	3,173	
Number of positive covid 19 cases							
Latest Note							

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

March 2021 result

 172

Last 12 months

Number of people with at least one lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 test result source <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

RPKPI85 Website visits to covid 19 pages	Website visits to covid 19 pages	15,400 incomplete quarter only March 2020 collected	56,835	22,292	50,407	44,890	
Latest Note							

Unique page views in March: 8,746 (13.5% decrease on February)
Top 5 pages: [Coronavirus Business Grants](#) (1,481), [Additional Restrictions Grant](#) (1,169), [Coronavirus Homepage](#) (1,139), [Local Restrictions Support Grant](#) (967), [Coronavirus testing centre article](#) (730).

RPKPI86 Number of referrals to voluntary sector	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	345	117	201	62	
Latest Note							

QCovid population risk assessment tranche added to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list during Q4.

Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
RPKPI02 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	4			0			2			44			0			
Latest Note																	

Q2 Two chalet bungalows have been delivered in The Weavers, Biddenden

Q3 Currently on site with East Stour Court and The Poplars - The acquisition of New Quarter West block happened in this quarter.

The West Wing contains: 23 x 1-bed apartments and 21 x 2-bed apartments

East block at New Quarter completion nearing will be 65 flats when it does. 27 x 1-bed and 38 x 2-bed.

The acquisition of the New Quarter (Stour and Somerset Heights) represents the largest handover of general needs accommodation to be managed on one site by the council. In today's climate, such a transaction makes a major announcement about our commitment to affordable housing. The council was successful in securing grant funding from Homes England of £2.265m.

The Council has secured more than £1m of Government funding to enable it to build 17 homes for affordable housing at Halstow Way in south Ashford, on the site of a former run down play area, equating to £60,000 per unit.

RPKPI03 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	24			12			12			16			6			
Latest Note																	

Completions in Q4 sit at 6, with a further 16 in conveyancing. The revised target of 50 is within reach but the lag, is that solicitors (external) have been in high demand pushing through sales to beat the initial deadline for stamp duty. This has since been extended in the Chancellor's budget and things may settle during the next month or so.

Though we can now set affordable rents (60% in this instance) the stamp duty-free extension is having an impact on viability as prices have increased, given that vendors know purchasers will not have to pay for the stamp duty. Therefore prices are higher.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

Affordable housing – our delivery, aspiration and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was presented at [December's Cabinet](#).

RPKPI10 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	91%	90%		90%	90%		90%	90%		90%	90%		83%	90%	
		Latest Note														

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 is under consideration and this may enable permissions to be granted 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](#).

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)	71%	60%		94%	65%		100%	65%		100%	65%		91%	65%	
		Latest Note														
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	58%	75%		64%	75%		67%	75%		88%	75%		72%	75%	
		Latest Note														

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

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](#)

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 likely 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.

RPKPI12	% 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%	70%		93%	75%		95%	75%		96%	75%		88%	75%	
RPKPI12A	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	78%	80%		80%	80%		82%	80%		88%	80%		86%	80%	

Latest News

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](#)

Performance in non-major schemes remains strong and above target. Enhanced use of officer delegations is helping to maintain performance levels.

RPKPI14	Number of live planning applications reducing backlog with a capacity set at 550 open cases	613	550		619	550		643	550		665	550		681	550	
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21																		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status																
planning applications reducing backlog																																
Latest News																																
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 is under consideration and this may enable permissions to be granted 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 (atleast once per week)	% of working population cycling to work	Not measured for Quarters Latest data for Ashford (Local Authority area) from 2019 (published in August 2020) shows the following: 3.5% traveling by bike once a month 2.4% traveling once a week 1.6% traveling 3 times a week 1.6% traveling 5 times a week Based on the national walking and cycling data statistics, data is from the National Travel Survey and Active Lives Survey																														
RPKPI22 	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	Annual target that increases in each year based on our plans to fund the production of travel plans. In year 1 we're looking at a pilot of working with 10 organisations and are hoping that once we see more people returning to offices that this will become more of a priority.																														
Latest Note																																
The procurement of projects has been delayed due to the covid pandemic. Partner organisations are currently prioritising the return to the office and in the process are delaying input into other projects such as the setting up of active travel plans.																																

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
It is anticipated there will be more traction and interest for active travel projects once businesses have settled into new modes of working, with workers returning to offices under new working arrangements and hours split between the office and home.																	
Discussions continue with our business partners to understand the pace of change and when they will have the time and resources to engage in the project more directly. We are currently forecasting interest will pick up over the autumn once businesses have established their new working arrangements.																	
RPKPI40 Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	49.33%	50%		53.67%	50%		48.33%	50%		50%	50%		45%	50%		
Latest Note																	

The rate is distorted by there being three weeks of residual waste and two weeks of recycle for the period. Average recycle rate for period until end of January is 50%. Residents continue to present high tonnages in lockdown.

Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2%) 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%		99.97%	99.97%		99.97%	99.97%		99.97%	99.97%	
Latest Note																

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 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	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. Measure to start from Sept 20	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	74%				66%			82%						
Latest Note																	

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age 73

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

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2019/20 and update to the Property Acquisition, Investment and Disposal Strategy [Cabinet 24th Sept 2020](#)

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 the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

RPKPI60 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	99.1%	99%	✓	27.18%	24.75%	✓	51.61%	49.5%	✓	76.92%	74.25%	✓	94.25%	99%	⚠	
RPKPI61 Council Tax Collection Rate	Council Tax Collection Rate	98.1%	98.25%	✓	29.77%	24.57%	✓	57.6%	49.14%	✓	85.4%	74.25%	✓	96.7%	98.25%	⚠	
Latest Note																	

The collection rates are below target, with more council tax payers struggling to pay council tax, and more businesses struggling to pay business rates, additionally we have not been able to

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status												

take any recovery action in this financial year, due to the pandemic and the courts being closed. In a normal year, if somebody doesn't pay their council tax/business rates, then they get a formal reminder, and then if they still fail to pay, they get a summons to the magistrates court. At court a liability order is then obtained, which gives us a number of enforcement options to recover the debt (e.g. attachment to earnings, enforcement agents etc).

In 2020/21 none of this has been possible, as the courts have been closed. Which means no enforcement action is possible. So no formal reminders, no court summonses, no liability orders. We have been sending what we call 'soft' reminders asking for payment when they fall into arrears, but this of course has no legal standing.

Finally, for business rates, whilst the government has supported the retail/hospitality/leisure sector in 2020/21 with the 100% rates relief, other sectors (e.g. industrial/manufacturing etc) have not been supported at all...they have had no rates relief in the pandemic, and many are struggling to pay anything.

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](#)

Council Tax Base 2021/22 – report taken to [November Cabinet](#)

Page 74 RPKPI70 Number of days sickness per full time equivalent	Based on the total FTE	9.1 annualised days	9.1 annualised days	10.42 annualised days	7 annualised days	6.98 annualised days	
Latest Note							

Q4, Based on the total number of FTE – was 454.54 at 31.3.21 (including new PHA staff).

Total Average sickness absence (including absence due to CV19) 6.98 days per FTE annualised (793 days lost in Q4)

Total Average sickness absence (excluding absence due to CV19) 5.7 days per FTE annualised (648 days lost in Q4)

Total Average absence due to CV19 1.28 days per FTE annualised (145 days lost in Q4)

In this quarter we observed a small number of staff taking time off within the coronavirus category due to minor reactions to their vaccination.

RPKPI90 number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume)	number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	69	79	Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
measure)																	
RPKPI90A Litigation number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	0			0									
RPKPI91 number of new US106 files opened	number of new 106 files opened	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	6			5									
RPKPI91A number of draft S106 agreements sent out	number of draft 106 agreements sent out	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	7			0									
RPKPI91B number of S106 cases completed	number of 106 cases completed	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	2			4									
RPKPICOM1 Income Generation and Savings	Increased income attributable to commercialisation projects – income and cashable efficiency savings.	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	£73,162.5			£140,600			£163,015							

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													

Latest Note

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.

Other projects that will contribute to overall target require a longer lead in time before financial returns found, eg efficiency savings anticipated through the Category Management project which aims to streamline council contracts.

Much of the work undertaken this year will realise revenue and efficiencies in the coming years and is not reflected in the quarterly return. Whilst significant developments have been made in only 9 months of delivery, we are planning on resetting targets to reflect the longer term nature of income generation and will adjust targets to be more heavily loaded towards end of strategy. It is requested that focus is on the direction of travel, rather than individual quarters at this stage.

Commercial Services Strategy taken to [July's Cabinet](#).

 RPKPICOM2 Project Completion	Projects completed target Projects complete 80% planned 20/21 tasks.	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	28%		48.25%		68%	
	Latest Note								

Please note value is a %. All projects in commercialisation programme have a detailed project task plan, the % of complete tasks across all projects are combined to create this % score. Work is progressing well, we are adjusting our project plans for new financial year that will better reflect the unexpected scale of some of the project areas.

 RPKPICOM3 Improved Commercial Acumen	Increase staff awareness of commercialisation and a positive response towards it. Percentage of officers who have completed commercial awareness training.	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	8%		16.4%		32%	

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21			
		Value	Target	Status													
Latest Note																	

Supplemented with additional legal training on trading and charging powers, for info 47% have completed or started the training.

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Agenda Item 6

Agenda Item No: 6



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

[Budget Scrutiny Review 2021]

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Approve the Proposed Budget Scrutiny Schedule regarding the Draft Budget 2022/23.
 - ii. Appoint at least four members of the main Committee to form the Budget Scrutiny Task Group looking at the draft budget 2022/23.
 - iii. Agree to include a 'lessons learnt' section within future reports of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group to evaluate the process annually.
 - iv. Request additional narrative around the draft budget papers and provide separate details of the council's biggest income streams.
 - v. Agree to hold all budget scrutiny meetings virtually to enable flexible working for Members and to increase participation at meetings.
 - vi. Approve the ongoing provision of budget scrutiny training sessions when required and advise Members to sign up to external training offered when possible.
-

Date of O&S meeting: 12 October 2021

Chair of O&S Committee: Cllr Ovenden

Relevant Portfolio(s): Finance & IT
Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications

Summary: As the Committee approaches the start of next year's budget scrutiny, a short review was conducted. The purpose of the review was to look at the Committee's current budget scrutiny process, draw comparisons with other local authorities and recommend any changes that would improve the process.

Exempt from Publication: NO

Background Papers: **LGA: A Councillor's workbook on scrutiny of finance**
A councillor's workbook on scrutiny of finance (local.gov.uk)

CIPFA, CFGS: Financial Scrutiny Practice Guide (2020)
Financial-scrutiny-practice-guide_proof3.pdf (cfqs.org.uk)

Contact: Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
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Agenda Item No. 6

Report Title: Budget Scrutiny Review 2021

Introduction and Background

1. A key function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to scrutinise the draft budgets each year prior to adoption. A Task Group is formed to examine the draft budget papers and identify any areas that require further scrutiny. The Task Group is then able to make recommendations regarding the draft budget to Cabinet.
2. It was proposed that a short review would be undertaken to look at the budget scrutiny process and propose some recommendations for scrutiny of the 2022/23 draft budget. The Chairman of the Committee has been involved in discussions over the proposals. Some research has also been conducted to identify the different approaches taken by other local authorities.
3. One of the main findings from this review concludes that the council has a sound and in depth budget scrutiny process. It has been proposed that for the 2022/23 draft budget, Task Group meetings will start during December this year and will aim to conclude all findings in the coming January.

Research from other Local Authorities

4. Table 1

Authority	Committee/Task Group	Number of meetings	Training	Additional details
Folkestone & Hythe	Finance & Performance Sub Committee	1	Yes in line with 2019 new election term. Relevant courses are offered throughout term.	An additional meeting was held last year due to impact of Covid.
Thanet	Overview and Scrutiny Panel	2	The training is on how the Panel can review the council budget and conduct other scrutiny activities on the financial affairs of the council. The training is provided by LGA approved trainers and that includes getting the services of peer trainers. Refresher scrutiny training is also provided	October/November – OSP reviews Cabinet fees and charges proposals and make recommendations to cabinet January – OSP considers the cabinet budget proposals and makes recommendations back to Cabinet who make final

			on any subject of Members. For example, this month there is a refresher training on "Call-Ins."	recommendations to Full Council.
Dartford	Audit Board acts as scrutiny function for accounting matters	1	No specific training	Audit Board receives quarterly updates on all aspects of accounting.
Dover	Committee	1		A briefing is also given separately by the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
KCC	Scrutiny Committee	1	Unknown	The Committee meeting once per year to discuss the draft budget and make recommendations to the Executive.
Charnwood BC	Budget Scrutiny Panel	3	Unknown	Has a similar process to Ashford in terms of the number of meetings held and timings. Reviews the MTFP during September. In latest budget report, separate recommendations are made regarding future budget scrutiny.
Blaby DC	Scrutiny Commission	3	Unknown	All meetings held during January. Invites all other non-executive Members to

5. From Table 1, it is clear that there are many ways of conducting scrutiny of council budgets. The research indicates that scrutiny committees tend to break in to smaller task and finish groups/panels/sub-committees and have one or more dedicated meetings. This supports the Budget Scrutiny Task Group already installed at Ashford Borough Council, although we do tend to have more meetings than others.
6. In addition to making recommendations for the draft budget, Charnwood BC also made a number of recommendations in respect of their future budget scrutiny process. This approach ensures that the budget process itself is annually reviewed and gives the opportunity for the Task Group to reflect on any lessons learnt for future budgets.

7. At Ashford, scrutiny training is provided to Members following a new election term. Also, a short introduction session is normally provided to the Committee prior to the start of budget scrutiny. This is to refresh Members on the draft budget process and can also be useful for any new Members of the Committee. Members are also offered a place on training seminars/webinars provided by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CFGS). The CFGS website (www.cfgs.org.uk) also has research and publications on finance scrutiny as well as other scrutiny topics. It is recommended that Members of the Committee attend any external training offered if possible.

8. During September 2021, a few Members of the Committee attended a financial scrutiny webinar hosted by the CFGS. Members found the session very useful for understanding how other council's conduct budget scrutiny, and all in attendance were able to share advice on the common challenges that councils face.

Proposed Budget Scrutiny Schedule

9.

Key Dates	Details
Wednesday 1st December 2021 6pm	This will be an initial meeting of the Task Group to look at the draft budget papers, the MTFP, Quarter 2 performance report, Corporate risk report. The Task Group will review all the paperwork and raise areas for further scrutiny.
Wednesday 15th December 2021 6pm	This will be the second meeting of the Task Group and topics will be decided as per the initial meeting.
Monday 20th December 2021 6pm	This will be the third meeting of the Task Group and topics will be decided as per the initial meeting.
Tuesday 21st December 2021 6pm	If required, this will be the final meeting of the Task Group and topics will be decided as per the initial meeting. The wrap up will be included in this meeting. Any draft recommendations will be discussed.
January 2022 MT meeting	MT will review the draft recommendations and final report.
January 2022 O&S Committee Meeting	The final report of the Task Group will be reviewed by the main Committee and approved for Cabinet.
January 2022 Cabinet	Cabinet will receive the final report from the Task Group for approval.

	The draft budget will then go to Full Council for adoption.
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10. As a result of the global pandemic, the Task Group was required to hold budget scrutiny meetings virtually via Microsoft Teams. Hosting the meetings online gave Members and Officers greater flexibility by attending the meeting from home. Also, this resulted in wider Member participation in budget scrutiny than ever before and this contributed to the quality of discussion and recommendations.
11. For this years' budget scrutiny, it has been suggested that Members are provided with information regarding the top ten areas of income for the council. Additionally, Members could also be provided with more narrative within the draft budget papers. This has been recommended based on queries from previous years. The MTFP (Mid Term Financial Plan), the Corporate Risk Register and recent Corporate Performance Reports will also be put together in an agenda reports pack.

Conclusion

12. Scrutiny plays a vital role in ensuring the councils draft budget is sound and deliverable. The formation of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group demonstrates the in depth process adopted by the Committee. Over the course of 3 or 4 meetings, Members are given the opportunity to look at draft budget papers in detail and suggest areas for additional scrutiny. Overall, the changes recommended are to improve on the quality of information provided to Members and enhance the current structure in place.

Recommendations

13. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - i. Approve the Proposed Budget Scrutiny Schedule regarding the Draft Budget 2022/23.
 - ii. Appoint at least four members of the main Committee to form the Budget Scrutiny Task Group looking at the draft budget 2022/23.
 - iii. Agree to include a 'lessons learnt' section within future reports of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group to evaluate the process annually.
 - iv. Request additional narrative around the draft budget papers and provide separate details of the council's biggest income streams.

- v. Agree to hold all budget scrutiny meetings virtually to enable flexible working for Members and to increase participation at meetings.
- vi. Approve the ongoing provision of budget scrutiny training sessions when required and advise Members to sign up to external training offered when possible.

Contact and Email

14. Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
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Agenda Item 7

Agenda Item No: 7



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

[Progress Update on Recommendations from the O&S Digital Transformation Review]

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:

1. To note the progression of the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Digital Transformation Task Group in 2020.
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Date of O&S meeting: 12th October 2021

Chair of O&S Committee: Cllr Ovenden

Relevant Portfolio(s): HR and Customer Services
Finance and IT

Summary: In June 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group was formed to conduct a review on the progress of digital transformation across council services.

The review resulted in eight recommendations (Appendix A) and these were approved by Cabinet in October 2020.

This report looks at the progress made for each of the actions since they were approved last year.

Exempt from Publication: NO

Background Papers: Final Report of the Digital Transformation Task Group, October 2020

Contact: Abi Moffatt
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Report Title: Progress Update on Recommendations from the O&S Digital Transformation Review

Introduction and Background

1. In June 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review to investigate the progress of digital transformation across the council's services. The Task Group examined how far digital transformation had evolved at Ashford Borough Council as related to the scope of the review. The recommendations were made to assist further digital transformation of services and enhance the digital experience for Customers, Members and Officers.
2. A total of 8 recommendations were made to Cabinet in October 2020 and were all approved. This report looks at how the recommendations have progressed since they were approved last year.

Conclusion

3. Since Cabinet approved the digital recommendations last year, good progress has been made for each of the actions. Several actions have been completed so far and any outstanding are expected to be delivered by the end of 2021 or during 2022.

Contact and Email

4. Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
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Progress of Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Progress	Timescale/Delivery Status	Lead Service/Team
1	Note the implementation of the digital strategy to date and endorse the emerging digital programme to be delivered up until 2025	New strategy, 'IT, digital and Customer Services' in initial stages. Plans to go to Advisory Board later this year.	Strategy by July 2022	HR and Customer Services
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 can be improved for the future	A Member survey is being drafted currently by Member Services.	December 2021	Member Services
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	Hybrid meetings have been introduced to Audit and O&S, with plans to expand to other Committee meetings. Plans to look at IT equipment in the Committee Rooms and Chamber to be able to achieve hybrid meetings where possible.	Ongoing – as soon as possible.	IT Member Services
4	Create a Corporate Etiquette protocol for Microsoft Teams that covers making calls, leaving messages and showing availability.	Internal communications are due to be circulated to all staff regarding rules around the use of Outlook and voicemail. This is expected within the next few months.	December 2021	HR and Customer Services

		Work is being undertaken to create an office etiquette in a hybrid world. This is being developed using feedback from staff surveys.		
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	The online calendar function on Mod.Gov is updated with meeting dates every March when the dates are released.	Completed and is reviewed periodically.	Member Services
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	A draft Borough Profile is being developed. This brings indicators for all aspects of the Borough including demographics, education and travel, for example, including economic activity. The council will shortly be recruiting a Business Analyst to continue to build this data set before publishing on the intranet and ultimately the website.	Later 2022	Corporate Policy
Page 90	That a fact sheet is produced for all Members and staff with advice on broadband and how to check your connectivity whilst working remotely.	Advice and links have been shared with members as part of the response to calls logged to the IT Service Desk.	Completed - further queries will be responded to promptly when received.	IT
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.	The IT asset register has been completed as part of an internal audit on IT asset management.	Completed.	IT

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report Tracker – October 2021

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
S106 Task Group – Final Report	November	Planning and Development	The Task Group will bring forward a final report of its findings for discussion with the wider Committee.
Budget Scrutiny Meetings	December	Various	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2022/23 will take place over three or four meetings during December and a final report is expected
Consultation and Engagement	Early 2022	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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Agenda Item 8

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