



# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on Tuesday, 8th February, 2022 at 7.00 pm.

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The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

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

Cllrs. Blanford, Brooks, Burgess, Farrell, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Meaden, Mulholland.

## Agenda

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- |    |   |          |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | <b>Apologies/Substitutes</b>  |          |
|    | To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)                            |          |
| 2. | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>   | 1 - 2    |
|    | To declare any interests, which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: |          |
|    | a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)  |          |
|    | b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)  |          |
|    | c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests   |          |
|    | See Agenda Item 2 for further details   |          |
| 3. | <b>Minutes of the last Meeting</b>  | 3 - 4    |
|    | To approve the Minutes of the last Meeting  |          |
| 4. | <b>Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 2 &amp; 3)</b>   | 5 - 52   |
| 5. | <b>Annual Report on the Community Safety Partnership</b>  | 53 - 76  |
| 6. | <b>Annual Safeguarding Report</b>   | 77 - 86  |
| 7. | <b>Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group</b>   | 87 - 112 |

8. **O&S Work Programme 2022/23**

9. **Tracker**

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Queries concerning this agenda?

email: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk), Telephone: 01233 330491

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:**

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf](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 **9<sup>th</sup> November 2021**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Burgess, Farrell, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Mulholland.

### **Apology:**

Cllr. Meadon

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Blanford, Chilton, Feacey, Hayward, Harman, Wright (remotely).

### **In attendance:**

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

## **174 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **175 S106 Task Group Final Report**

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which provided a summary of the Task Group meetings and outlined the key findings. There were a total of eight recommendations that the Committee were asked to approve to be submitted to Cabinet.

The Chairman thanked all the Officers and Members involved in the Task Group for their efforts.

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

- It was confirmed that the deadline for Parish Councils to return the questionnaires had been extended on one occasion.
- Cllr. Farrell stated that although he was officially a Member of the S106 Task Group, he was unfortunately unable to attend any of the Meetings, therefore his name could be removed for completeness.

- A Member voiced his concern regarding the limited involvement from Ward Members and political leadership within the Council, and how at times Officers would determine priorities from the Corporate Plan, but these did not always marry up with the political strategy of the Council from its Members. He also asked about the Mapping Process, in particular the time frame and what it would seek to achieve. The Chairman responded that the actual S106 process was unclear for a lot of Members and Parish Council representatives, hence the decision was made to map the process. If approved by Cabinet, it was suggested that a six-month timeframe would be put in place to undertake the Process Mapping exercise.
- A Member spoke about Recommendation iii and improving communication between the Planning Service and Parish Councils. A handbook would be created to help explain and clarify the concepts of S106.
- The Spatial Planning Manager added that the starting point was to focus on the process, and communication was also a key area for improvement. He said that he'd been made aware that not all decisions made by Planning were supported by all parties, and the Task Group process had highlighted just how complicated the S106 process was.
- A final point was made about misdirection of S106 funding and the hope that after the Mapping Process, Ward Members and Parish Councillors would have a better understanding and be better prepared to get involved at an earlier stage to voice where S106 monies should be directed.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee approve the eight recommendations for submission to Cabinet.**

## **176 Future Reports Tracker**

**Resolved:**

**That the Future Reports Tracker be received and noted.**



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Agenda Item No:**

**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 8<sup>th</sup> February  
Cabinet: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February

**Report Title:** Performance Report, Quarter 3 2021/22

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

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

**Summary:** Following the presentation to Cabinet in July 2020 of the Recovery Plan which set out the council's approach to making a timely and successful recovery from the impact of the coronavirus, this periodic report summarises performance against the performance indicators introduced in that Recovery Plan. A new Corporate Plan 2022 to 2024 was adopted by the Cabinet in November 2021 which will inform this performance reports from Quarter 1 of 2022/23.

**Key Decision:** No

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None

**Recommendations:** **Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet, is asked to:-**

**I. Consider the performance data for Quarter 3 2021/22**

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

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

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

**Financial Implications:** N/A

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

## Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 3 2021/22

### Introduction and Background

1. This report seeks to provide an overview of performance against the council's key performance indicators for Quarter 3 2021/22. The council's performance framework captures key performance data from across council services as it relates to the themes of the Recovery Plan 2020, that of Economic Recovery, Community Recovery, Place Making, Regeneration, and Infrastructure and Organisational Change and Workforce Development.
2. The Recovery Plan was developed to put in place a framework to enable a timely and structured recovery from the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The plan sets out to deliver a number of actions that will allow the council to re-configure how it works and can most effectively deliver services to residents and how, in collaboration with others, help mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the local economy, communities and residents.
3. This quarterly performance report monitors the key performance measures set out in the Recovery Plan and by doing so forms part of a comprehensive and regular review of the plan ensuring our recovery remains focused and on track to deliver a timely recovery, that is inclusive, and ensures those hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic are not disadvantaged.
4. A new Corporate Plan 2022 to 2024 was adopted by the Cabinet in November 2021 which will inform the performance reports from Quarter 1 of 2022/23. Set out in the Corporate Plan are the indicators which will be measured in order to demonstrate how we are delivering against our objectives. The new measures will be a combination of existing measures that have been monitored since the adoption of the Recovery Plan and new ones to reflect the Corporate Plan themes.

### Areas of Note

5. **Covid Omicron variant.** During this reporting period Covid cases saw a significant increase due to the prevalence of the Omicron variant, as can be seen by the Covid related measures (RPKPI84 Number of positive Covid 19 cases & RPKPI85 Website visits to Covid 19 pages). This has had an impact across the council as our residents adapt once more to the changing Covid landscape. Additional support grants for our local hospitality and leisure businesses were made available and needed administrating by the council and test and trace support payment requests also saw a significant increase.
6. **Food Hygiene Rating (RPKPI-31).** This indicator measures the percentage of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3\*; this has consistently remained above target throughout the pandemic. The measure had, however, for some previous quarters, been flagged as an area of

concern with this figure covering all inspections, including those which were overdue for their next inspection. With the aid of additional resources, efforts continue to be directed into getting the inspection program up to date following Covid related delays. A recovery plan confirmed to the Food Standards Agency is now well underway which continues to direct resources to the highest priority premises first.

7. **Planning measures**, the Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough, continues to be constrained with the potential impact new residential accommodation could have on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites. A Nutrient Mitigation Strategy for the Stour Catchment in Ashford Borough is being pursued as a matter of urgency. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications and this is starting to be reflected in the related performance measures. The number of live planning caseworks now stands at 846 well above the 550 capacity figure for the service, evidencing the strain this service continues to experience.
8. **Covid related measures**. With this performance report reflecting the performance measure identified as part of the Recovery Plan, many of these measures are linked directly to coronavirus related matters. Whilst the period has seen a spike in cases due to the Omicron variant, with the ending of shielding advice, related data sharing agreements with the NHS and DEFRA, the ending of many of the Covid related business support and other support schemes, reportable data will begin to come to an end and related measures where no further data is being collected will be removed from this report. Measures reflecting VERA funded foodbanks and emergency assistant grants removed as of Q2 (RPKPI24, 25 & 26).

## Next Steps

9. The focus of the council in 2020 - 2021 was to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. This paused the bringing together of the next Corporate Plan whilst the impacts of the pandemic were realised and the immediate priorities to aid a timely recovery were agreed and the Recovery Plan adopted.
10. The Recovery Plan did not lose sight of the long-term ambition agreed by stakeholders to form the cornerstone of the Corporate Plan. The Ashford Ambition carries forward, together with the three themes of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, into the Corporate Plan 2022-2024 which has now been agreed.
11. Going forward, from Q1 2022/23 this performance report will reflect the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-2024 with a suite of performance measures in keeping with the themes of the Corporate Plan 2022-2024.



# Our Recovery Plan 2020 - 22

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

## Recovery Plan Themes



## Our Objectives

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

## Our Service Design Principles

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

- Efficient • Consistent • Inclusive
- Improve the customer experience

## Green principles



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



## Equalities Objectives

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



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



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



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

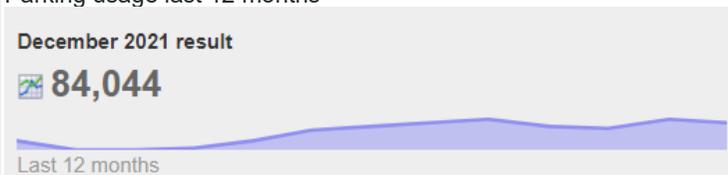


Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

## Recovery Plan, Quarterly Performance Indicators, Q3 2021/22

Key:	
	Alert
	Warning
	OK

### Economic Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI30 Parking usage	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	187,472			251,662			250,281			Parking usage last 12 months  <b>December 2021 result</b>  84,044 Last 12 months

#### Overview on Car Park and on Street Sales for December 2021

Slight decrease from last month which is seasonal trend as evidenced in 2019 and 2018 figures.

Civic Centre provides ABC staff with free parking.

Elwick Place Car Park provides free parking after 15.00pm and again last month of all users, Cinema users here receive free parking up to 3 hours. This car park is popular and a prime location.

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

Victoria Road Car Park is still being used solely as COVID testing site into 2022.

#### Top Performing Car Parks

- Recreation Ground in Tenterden moves into top position this month with average dwell times of 1.25 .Vicarage Lane moves to 2<sup>nd</sup> place, with average dwell times of 1.4hours, and in 3<sup>rd</sup> Elwick Place Car Park with 2 hours. These are all short stay car parks supporting High Street economy

#### Figures

Income decreased in December to £200,276 from £207,375.00 from November 2021

Pre COVID, stats in December 2019 = £216,054.99

Our grand total for sales income is £1,611,947.10 ,our projected annual forecast income is £2,125,210

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Our projected monthly target was set at beginning of financial year as £177k per month and figures show £179K average at this time.

#### Expectations

- Henwood and Flour Mills Car Park to be redeveloped, however there will be little impact on income
- New Country Car Park at Conningbrook. This will be wholly cashless, with EV chargers, with perhaps just 2 parking charges for up to 4 hours and then all day charge
- Victoria Park Car Park. Once back in Parking's, the site will provide long stay parking, with overflow parking for new Hilton Hotel and season tickets for residents who do not meet on street criteria.

#### News

1. Card and Cashless make up 69% of payments with coin 31%.
2. We have 3 x cabinet papers awaiting for approval which include;
  - Further Electric Vehicle charging point expansion and request for additional funding
  - Expand ANPR into both or either Edinburgh Rd Car Park and Park Mall
  - Reduce parking tariffs in above car parks
3. Park Mall now closed and will be having extensive works, expected this opening sometime new financial year.
4. Tenterden Leisure centre closed in mid-October due to roof damage and repairs and likely not to be open until 2022.
5. RingGo will be providing further marketing signs to drive and assist with our cashless agenda. These will cover some of the tired and discoloured signs around our car parks in Ashford and Tenterden.

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RPKPI51 Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	11.3%	4.3% *Please note Square ft figures have been reviewed this quarter so figures are not directly comparable	10.1%	<b>Percentage Occupancy Rate</b> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site</th> <th>Square foot let</th> <th>Total square foot</th> <th>Percentage let</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ellingham</td> <td>69,336 sf</td> <td>69,336 sf</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carlton Road</td> <td>42,325 sf</td> <td>50,046 sf</td> <td>84.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Elwick Place</td> <td>52,100 sf</td> <td>66,185 sf</td> <td>78.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>International House</td> <td>72,800 sf</td> <td>77,462 sf</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td>236,561 sf</td> <td>263,029 sf</td> <td>89.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Site	Square foot let	Total square foot	Percentage let	Ellingham	69,336 sf	69,336 sf	100.00%	Carlton Road	42,325 sf	50,046 sf	84.6%	Elwick Place	52,100 sf	66,185 sf	78.7%	International House	72,800 sf	77,462 sf	94%	<b>Total</b>	236,561 sf	263,029 sf	89.9%
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<p>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.</p>																																

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 reports on the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2020-2021. It also advises of the work undertaken to increase and maintain the profitability of the portfolio. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note			
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status				
RPKPI80  Business survival - current vacancy rates	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records	8.2%			8.46%			8.2%			Date	No of properties	Exemptions	Empty 'reliefs'
											1.10.21	5175	254	165
											1.11.21	5268	283	151
											1.12.21	5269	287	144

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

Q4 20/21, 5161 rated properties in the borough with 266 exemptions and 165 empty reliefs.

Q1 21/22, 5168 rated properties in the borough with 241 exemptions and 168 empty reliefs.

Q2 21/22, 5175 rated properties in the borough with 254 exemptions and 165 empty reliefs

Page 12	RPKPI81	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic -	<p>The Chancellor announced on 21 December 2021 that new Covid grant funding would be made available to help businesses in the leisure and hospitality sectors.</p> <p>This has been made up of: <a href="#">The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant 2021/22</a> - Businesses with a business rates account in the Hospitality, Leisure or Accommodation sectors &amp; <a href="#">The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) – December 2021</a> - Businesses impacted by the Omicron variant but not eligible for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG).</p> <p>As of the writing of this report these schemes are open for applicants and our Economic Development and Revs and Bens Teams are working at pace to deliver this funding.</p> <p><b>Summary of support provided to businesses March 2020 – September 2020:</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Small Business Grants</td> <td>1,757 grants paid</td> <td>£17,570,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retail Hospitality (RHL) Grants</td> <td>560 grants paid</td> <td>£10,205,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Discretionary Grants</td> <td>175 grants paid</td> <td>£1,351,000</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Schemes from November 2020 onwards:</b></p> <p><b>Local Restrictions Support Grants</b></p>	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
	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										
Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic												

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
	November										
	Tier 3										
	Tier 4										
	Wet-led pub										
	January										
	One-off										
	February										
	<b>Restart</b>										
	Restart (non-essential retail)										
	Restart (other)										
	<b>Total LRSG/Restart</b>										
	Additional Restrictions Grants										

Information on the support provided is available on our [webpages](#).

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

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI82</b> <b>Unemployment</b>	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	5%			4.4%			4.1% (latest available data Nov 2021)			<p>Source: ONS Claimant Count Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council</p>

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	November 2021	Number	% rate	Number change since October 2021	% change since October 2021	Number change since November 2020	% change since November 2020
<b>Ashford</b>		3,245	4.1%	-30	-0.9%	-1,370	-29.7%
<b>Kent &amp; Medway</b>		49,365	4.4%	-875	-1.7%	-18,685	-27.5%

More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#)

<b>RPKPI83</b> <b>Unemployment 18-24yr olds</b>	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data	9%			6.9%			6.5% (latest available data Nov 2021)	<p>Source: ONS Claimant Count Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council</p>
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

### Unemployment by age group in Ashford

November 2021	Number	% rate	Number change since October 2021	% change since October 2021	Number change since November 2020	% change since November 2020
18-24	565	6.5%	-10	-1.7%	-390	-40.8%
25-49	1,865	4.7%	-10	-0.5%	-585	-23.9%
50-64	805	3.0%	-10	-1.2%	-390	-32.6%

More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#)

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

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

## Community Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI01 Rent arrears/loss		376,024.12			542,151.59			430,313.92			We saw the collection rate of rents drop to 96.41% from 97.36% in Q3, this is as expected with the Xmas Period.  We have also been working hard with the Benefits team to utilise Covid related hardship funding targeted towards our most vulnerable tenants.
RPKPI04 Homelessness Presentations	No. of homelessness presentations	323			403			323			Numbers always low during December due to the Christmas period, with January being exceptionally busy
RPKPI05 Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	29			26			28			

With the cost of living soaring and the effects of the pandemic ongoing, [Ashford Borough Council has received £175,000 to help prevent homelessness](#). The government grant will help tackle rent arrears that have built up as a direct result of Covid-19.

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](#)

Report on the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, presented on the Novembers Cabinet agenda [Rough Sleeper Accommodation Project Move On - Update Report.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) along with [First Homes.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI06</b> Number of new complaints cases opened	No. of complaints regarding poor conditions and/or ASB in the private rented sector resolved with formal action	6			14			6			Electrical safety standards in the private rented sector had been implemented during the previous Q2 period with notices issued on properties found to be in breach of this regulation. Q3 saw complaint cases fall back.
<b>RPKPI07</b> Gas Safety Certificates	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.98%	100%		99.84%	100%		99.48%	100%		All overdue properties are being managed within current guidelines.
<b>RPKPI08</b> Disabled Facilities Grants Completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	17			21			18			Number of grants completed for the period is about average for this time of the year. Over the next couple of months this figure will start to increase as we approach the end of the financial year

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI31</b> <b>Food Hygiene Rating</b>	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	98.6%	98.5%		98.5%	98.5%		99%	98.5%		The team are making strides against the current inspection programme. The support of the Ashford Port Health Authority recommenced in November 2021 and we are collectively working together to achieve our FSA recovery plan.  Good progress is being made clearing the backlog for the 2021/2022 inspection programme. A recovery plan has been prepared and confirmed to the Food Standards Agency which continues to direct resources to highest priority premises first.

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

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

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

<b>ESQ 18</b>	<b>RPKPI62</b> <b>Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing</b>	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	1.75	10		1.94	10		2.02	10		Benefit change of circumstance and new claims processing time continues to remain on target.
	<b>RPKPI63</b> <b>Benefit New Claim Processing Time</b>	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	26.35	28		24.27	28		25.2	28		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI64</b> <b>Universal credit new claims</b>	Universal credit Monthly new starts	688			735			321			<b>October 2021 result</b> 

This looks at the number of starts to Universal Credit. The 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.

<b>RPKPI67</b> <b>Welfare intervention new cases</b>	Welfare intervention new cases	329			279			243			<p>Officers continue to make pro-active calls. Officers have been calling people who haven't paid any council tax offering help and financial advice. Increase in cases expected with courts starting to operate again properly.</p> <p>The welfare intervention officers are continuing to process test and trace support applications with number increasing across the period</p> <p>Oct-21 - 126 Nov-21 - 176 Dec-21 - 377</p>
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<b>RPKPI84</b> <b>Number of positive covid 19 cases</b>	Number of positive covid 19 cases source	352			4,110			11,216			<b>December 2021 result</b>  <p>Number of people with at least one positive COVID-19 test result, either lab-reported or rapid lateral flow test (England only), by specimen date. Cumulative cases as 31 December - 25412</p>
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI85</b> <b>Website visits to covid 19 pages</b>	Website visits to covid 19 pages	14,526			13,167			15,085			Decembers Unique page views: 7,631 (59.84% increase on November) Top 5 pages: <a href="#">Covid Testing Site News Article</a> (1,978), <a href="#">Test and Trace Support Payment</a> (1,385), <a href="#">Covid Homepage</a> (967), <a href="#">Coronavirus Posters</a> (738), <a href="#">Covid Business Grants</a> (307).
<b>RPKPI86</b> <b>Number of referrals to voluntary sector</b>	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	17			<p>NHS Digital has now begun a managed closure of the shielded patient list with updates of clinically vulnerable individuals no longer shared with the council.</p> <p>Non-Shielding Vulnerable priority supermarket delivery slot scheme closed for referrals in June 2021 and subsequently the data sharing agreement with Defra terminated.</p> <p>This measure will stop being reported upon going forward.</p>						

Whilst covid related shielding advice and support has previously stopped, during this period The Household Support Fund, a government grant that is aimed to support households in the most need over this winter period has launched. The fund is running between now and the end of March 2022.

Ashford Borough Council have been allocated a sum of this national funding pot and we are now accepting applications for this fund. Any vulnerable household in Ashford are now able to apply for support through this fund to help with essential household costs across the remainder of January, February and March 2022 whilst the country continues to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, Covid-19. More information available from our [webpages](#).

## Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI02 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	65			29			0			No completions in this period - still two sites on site - Berry Place will complete in February 2022 and Halstow Way has been pushed back to June 2022. But for this quarter no new completions.
RPKPI03 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	10			4			5			Street purchase – 5 'normal' (that is to say traditional acquisitions completed for HRA use, with a further 3 normal pending completion. Please note the vast majority of 1-4-1 monies has now been utilised as such, these acquisitions are more strategic now and are fewer in number, and going forward will be in line with the HRA Business Plan agreed by members in December 2021.  1 RSAP completion. (this relates to the rough sleeper accommodation programme but is temporary accommodation that will sit in the General Fund and is not acquired through the same mechanism).

During the period a [consultation was launched on plans for temporary accommodation for homeless people at Henwood Car Park](#), The council has appointed ZedPods, who build high-quality factory-produced modular units, to supply 23 homes for the site. They are highly-insulated, triple-glazed homes with heat recovery ventilation and featuring 175 solar panels integrated into the roof. The fabric of the building is designed to create net-zero carbon homes with very low running costs.

Ashford Borough Council re-opening £7.1m [East Stour Court](#) - provides 29 homes for affordable rent for older people, comprising 24 one bedroom and five two-bedroom apartments, built to a high quality that are care ready.

RPKPI10 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	84%	90%		86%	90%		88%	90%		
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

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

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

Page 22	<b>RPKPI11</b> 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)	94%	65%		45.45%	65%		91%	65%		<p>The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions are available at the following link: <a href="#">Live tables on planning application statistics</a></p> <p>Performance has significantly improved across the year and remains good in respect of major application determinations, although it is recognised that the impact of the Stodmarsh Lakes habitats issue on the ability to determine applications is starting to result in a delay to determination timescales in the short term for residential proposals in the Stour catchment area. Officers will continue to work closely with applicants to ensure that potential solutions can be identified and revised timescales for determination agreed where possible.</p>
	<b>RPKPI11A</b> % 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	78%	75%		85%	75%		87%	75%		<p>Given the below target Q2 measure which is acknowledged this measure is being closely monitored by the planning team. Given the relatively small number of major applications, a small number of applications delayed beyond the 13 week window can have a significant impact on the reported figure.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI12 Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions	% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks (or within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the council).	96%	75%		90%	75%		90%	75%		<p>The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions are available at the following link: <a href="#">Live tables on planning application statistics</a></p> <p>Performance in non-major schemes remains strong and above target. Enhanced use of officer delegations is helping to maintain performance levels.</p>
RPKPI12A % of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	88%	80%		89%	80%		91%	80%		
RPKPI14 Number of live planning casework reducing backlog	Number includes all conditions applications, pre-app cases, as well as applications for outline, full or reserved matters consent. Reducing backlog with a capacity set at 550 open cases	797	550		759	550		846	550		<p>Application numbers have continued to increase across 2021 and a combination of Stodmarsh plus a high number of vacant posts in the team from Spring onwards has contributed. Consultant support has partially filled the gap but not wholly.</p> <p>In order to ensure cases may be determined as swiftly as possible once a strategic mitigation solution for Stodmarsh is brought forward and consented, officers are taking cases to the point where proposals can be agreed in all other aspects pending the nutrient mitigation solution. This includes any applications where a Committee resolution may be required and/or a Section 106 Agreement to deal with other matters.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI21 % of working population cycling to work (at least once per week)	% of working population cycling to work based on the national walking and cycling data statistics (data is from the National Travel Survey and Active Lives Survey)	<p>Cycling for travel - (the data set we're using for cycling to work as our closest cross reference stat) – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for travel has increased from 9.1% in 2019 to 12.4% in 2020. However the relative number of journeys across the sample has reduced by 31%.</p> <p>We believe this reduction in number of journeys is due to the impact of Covid and the numbers of people staying home to work from March 2020 to December 2020. An increase in the number of people using a bike to travel in the Borough during the pandemic is encouraging and, with further engagement and promotion of walking and cycling, we expect the number of journeys to improve over 2021 as society opens back up.</p> <p>Cycling for leisure – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for leisure has increased from 26% in 2019 to 35.4% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 95%.</p> <p>Any cycling for any reason - the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled has increased from 33.5% in 2019 to 43.8% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 50%.</p>									
RPKPI22 Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	The specification for the active travel commissioning is being finalised with a contractor lined up to deliver the first phase of the pilot scheme. It is intended that a large local employer and Ashford Borough Council will be the first organisations to benefit from the formalising of Active Travel Plans to support the move to other ways of traveling around the town and borough.									

RPKPI40 Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	51.67%	50%		55.33%	50%		51%	50%		<p>Figures based on Oct/Nov with Decembers figures awaiting.</p> <p>Collection patterns are returning to pre-covid trends with improved recycling. A contamination campaign has been running promoting Christmas recycling.</p> <p>There is distortion in November's figures due to it being a five week period, three of which were waste collection.</p>
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Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2% for the previous year) places us 48th in the country, 16<sup>th</sup> 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](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI41</b> <b>Refuse Collection Success Rate</b>	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.	99.96%	99.97%		99.93%	99.96%		99.95%	99.96%		Service pressures continued in October. The missed rate per 100,000 bins 51 per 100,000. Whilst higher than normal, it is still a good achievement. 99% of bins continue to be serviced on time.  In December contractor achieved better than target (99.97%)

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	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI50 Contribution to budget from commercial investments	Contribution to budget from commercial investments	70%			65%			85%			Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the councils budget books.

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

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 this reports on the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2020-2021. It also advises of the work undertaken to increase and maintain the profitability of the portfolio. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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

### Corporate Property Income Schedule 2020/2021

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI60 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	23.46%	24.75%		51.52%	49.5%		79.36%	74.25		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 <a href="#">here</a>
RPKPI61 Council Tax Collection Rate	Council Tax Collection Rate	29.72%	24.57%		57.48%	49.14%		85.37%	73.71%		

Page 27 RPKPI70 Number of days sickness per full time equivalent	Number of days sickness per full time equivalent	6.45 days For the period 1st April to 30th September	Figures run bi-annually.	<p>Based on the total FTE as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 <b>average absence due to sickness and coronavirus is 6.45 days</b> (annualised), slightly down from <b>6.72 days</b> (annualised) in the previous period.</p> <p>A total of 1,447.05 days were lost due to 'normal' sickness.</p> <p>A total of 137 days were lost due to Coronavirus, less than the 260 days in the previous period and less than the 872 days in the period before that.</p> <p><b>Average absence due to sickness only</b> in this period was <b>5.89 days per FTE</b> (annualised)</p> <p><b>Average absence per FTE due to coronavirus</b> only in this period was <b>0.55 per FTE</b> (annualised)</p>
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Sickness absence per employee 2020/21

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

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

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

<b>RPKPI90</b> number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	89	100	114	Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.
<b>RPKPI90A</b> Litigation number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	0	0	0	Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.
<b>RPKPI91</b> number of new 106 files opened	4	3	2	
<b>RPKPI91A</b> number of draft 106 agreements sent out	4	2	3	

Code & Short Name	Description	Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Q3 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI91B	number of 106 cases completed	0			1			3			
number of 106 cases completed											

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the council's Section 106 process, recommendations available within the final report. [S106 Task Group - Final Report.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

RPKPICOM1 Income Generation and Savings	We are in the process of resetting the programme, setting new milestones and fresh KPIs; working with MT on benefits of a cultural shift In line with the formation of the Corporate Plan 2022-24.
RPKPICOM2 Project Completion	In the meantime, however, one of our projects Garden Waste, is nearing completion and we have just heard that the project, as part of our wider commercialisation strategy has been shortlisted as a finalist in the national APSE Awards, in the Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative Category. Winners to be announced in September, although a great achievement in itself and indication of a very positive direction of travel to date.
RPKPICOM3 Improved Commercial Acumen	<p>Garden Waste Development project, aims to increase customer base through new online payment systems and ability to sign up for annual contract at any time of year are proving successful. Further marketing and route analysis is planned.</p> <p>Other projects that will contribute to overall target require a longer lead in time before financial returns found, e.g. efficiency savings anticipated through the Category Management project which aims to streamline council contracts.</p> <p>Much of the work undertaken this past year will realise revenue and efficiencies in the coming years and is not reflected in the quarterly return.</p> <p>Commercial Services Strategy taken to <a href="#">July's Cabinet</a>.</p>

## Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 2 2021/22

### Introduction and Background

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

### Areas of Note

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

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

## Next Steps

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



# Our Recovery Plan 2020 - 22

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

## Recovery Plan Themes



### Our Objectives

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

### Our Service Design Principles

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

- Efficient • Consistent • Inclusive
- Improve the customer experience

## Green principles



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



## Equalities Objectives

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



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



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



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

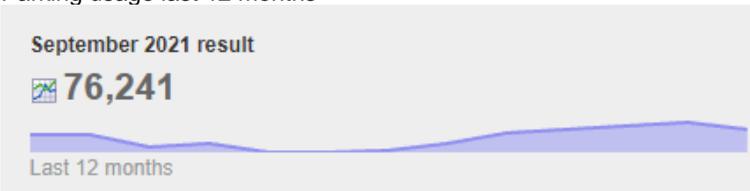


Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce

## Recovery Plan, Quarterly Performance Indicators, Q2 2021/22

PI Status	
	Alert
	Warning
	OK

## Economic Recovery

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

### September 2021 Report - Overview

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Figures

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

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

- Vicarage Lane remains biggest income car park, in 2<sup>nd</sup> place remains Recreation Ground in Tenterden and in 3<sup>rd</sup> Elwick Place Car Park. These are all short stay car parks supporting High Street economy - Income figures from Flow bird, RingGo and ANPR systems

#### Expectations

- Both Henwood and Flour Mills Car Park to be redeveloped, however there will be little impact on income
- Proposed New Car Park Adler's Yard Car Park – provide 22 spaces and no income and possibly Musgrove to be developed at same time.
- Victoria Park Car Park. Once back in Parking's hand after Christmas, the site will provide long stay parking, with overflow parking for new Hilton Hotel and season tickets for residents who do not meet on-street criteria.
- New Country Car Park at Conningbrook. This will be wholly cashless, with EV chargers, with perhaps just 2 parking charges for up to 4 hours and then all day charge

#### News

- Card and Cashless make up 61% of payments, with coin 39%.
- EV project live and hope to replace and install additional chargers by end of year.
- Edinburgh Rd Car Park parking order consultation will draw to an end and we can proceed to move to 24/7 to help parking requirements for those residents who do not meet the criteria for on-street parking permits.
- NCP Park Mall will be handed to Parking for us to operate in new year
- Funding from Police for Safer Car Parks has been approved

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RPKPI51	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	15.4%	11.3%	4.3% (*Please note Square ft figures have been reviewed this quarter so figures are not directly comparable)	Percentage Occupancy Rate			
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)					Site	Square foot let	Total square foot	Percentage let
					Ellingham	69,336 sf	69,336 sf	100.00%
					Carlton Road	26,542 sf	42,104 sf	63.04%
					Elwick Place	89,782 sf	87,457 sf	97.41%
					International House	76,960 sf	73,711 sf	95.78%
					<b>Total</b>	262,620 sf	251,336 sf	95.70%
					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.			

Occupancy rates have started to show a slight down turn in a number of areas which reflects the current market demand and signs of the impact of the pandemic has had on our tenants. This will be especially true for the office sector as companies evaluate their working practices in light of the pandemic.

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

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 reports on the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2020-2021. It also advises of the work undertaken to increase and maintain the profitability of the portfolio. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Notes taken from the Corporate Property Performance Annual Report:

#### Elwick Place

Leases on all the units at Elwick place have now been agreed. Units 1 to 5, 7c and 8 are currently open and trading whilst fit-out work continues with units 7a and 7b.

#### International House

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

#### Park Mall

Purchased to support the council's long term aspirations to develop and regenerate the town centre and, as such, was not made as a commercial investment. Occupancy rate for Park Mall is currently approximately 80%.

#### Commercial Quarter

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

#### Carlton Business Park

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

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

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

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

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

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

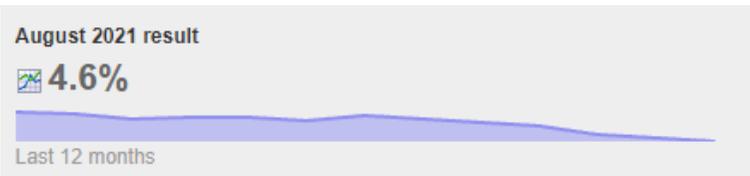
Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI81  Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic -  Percentage business survival of those who have received support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

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

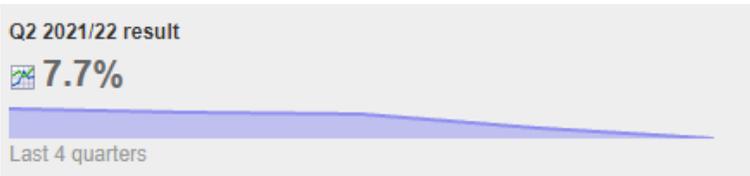
More information on the prosperity of our local businesses is available within the Kent and Medway COVID-19 Economic Recovery Dashboard. [The Economic Recovery Dashboard](#) (XLSX, 1.3 MB). This dashboard has been developed to help support the economic recovery from COVID-19 in Kent and Medway. It draws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

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

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

<b>RPKPI82</b> <b>Unemployment</b>	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	5.9%			5%			4.6% (latest available data up to Aug 2021)	<b>August 2021 result</b>  August 2021 result <b>4.6%</b> Last 12 months

The unemployment rate in Ashford is 4.6%. This is below the rate for Kent & Medway (4.9%) 3610 people were claiming unemployment benefits in Ashford in August. A fall on the previous month. More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#)

<b>RPKPI83</b> <b>Unemployment 18-24yr olds</b>	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data.	10.9%			9%			7.7%	<b>Q2 2021/22 result</b>  Q2 2021/22 result <b>7.7%</b> Last 4 quarters

The 18-24 year old unemployment rate in Ashford is 7.7%. This accounts for 18.6% of all unemployment. More information available within Kent [County Councils Economy and employment data](#).

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

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

## Community Recovery

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

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

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

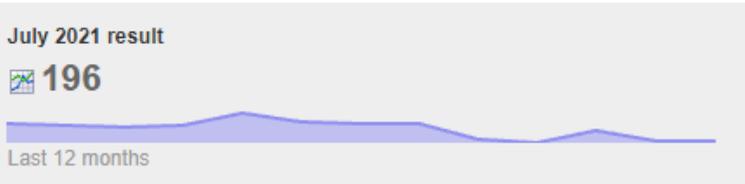
This figure covers all inspections including for those inspections which are now overdue for their next inspection. The backlog continues to decrease.

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

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>RPKPI62</b> <b>Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing</b>	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	1.94	10	✓	1.75	10	✓	1.94	10	✓	Benefit change of circumstance and new claims processing time continues to remain on target.
<b>RPKPI63</b> <b>Benefit New Claim Processing Time</b>	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	26.33	28	✓	26.35	28	✓	24.27	28	✓	

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<b>RPKPI64</b> <b>Universal credit new claims</b>	Universal credit Quarterly new starts	973			688			196 *July figures only			<p><b>July 2021 result</b></p> <p> <b>196</b></p> <p>Last 12 months</p> <p>Latest available figures run until April 2021</p>
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This looks at the number of starts to Universal Credit. The 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.

<b>RPKPI67</b> <b>Welfare intervention new cases</b>	Welfare intervention new cases	435			329			279			<p>Officers continue to make pro-active calls. Officers have been calling people who haven't paid any council tax offering help and financial advice. Increase in cases expected with courts starting to operate again properly.</p> <p>Welfare Intervention Officers have taken on Test &amp; Trace payments</p>
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI84 Number of positive covid 19 cases	Number of positive covid 19 cases source <a href="https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/">https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/</a>	3,173			352			4,110			<p>September 2021 result</p>  <p>September 2021 result 1,339</p> <p>Last 12 months</p> <p>Number of people with at least one positive COVID-19 test result, either lab-reported or rapid lateral flow test (England only), by specimen date. Cumulative cases as of the 30/09/21 14,185</p>
RPKPI85 Website visits to covid 19 pages	Website visits to covid 19 pages	44,890			14,526			13,167			<p>September unique page views: 3,496 (15.5% decrease on August)</p> <p>Top 5 pages: <a href="#">Covid Testing Site News Article</a> (1,094), <a href="#">Coronavirus Posters</a> (524), <a href="#">Covid Homepage</a> (433), <a href="#">Test and Trace Support Payment</a> (423), <a href="#">Food Banks and Other Essential Supplies</a> (136).</p>
RPKPI86 Number of referrals to voluntary sector	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	62			17						<p>NHS Digital has now begun a managed closure of the shielded patient list with updates of clinically vulnerable individuals no longer shared with the council.</p> <p>Non-Shielding Vulnerable priority supermarket delivery slot scheme closed for referrals in June 2021 and subsequently the data sharing agreement with Defra terminated.</p> <p>This measure will stop being reported upon going forward.</p>

## Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RPKPI21  % of working population cycling to work (at least once per week)	% of working population cycling to work based on the national walking and cycling data statistics (data is from the National Travel Survey and Active Lives Survey)	<p>Cycling for travel - (the data set we're using for cycling to work as our closest cross reference stat) – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for travel has increased from 9.1% in 2019 to 12.4% in 2020. However the relative number of journeys across the sample has reduced by 31%.</p> <p>We believe this reduction in number of journeys is due to the impact of Covid and the numbers of people staying home to work from March 2020 to December 2020. An increase in the number of people using a bike to travel in the Borough during the pandemic is encouraging and, with further engagement and promotion of walking and cycling, we expect the number of journeys to improve over 2021 as society opens back up.</p> <p>Cycling for leisure – the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled for leisure has increased from 26% in 2019 to 35.4% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 95%.</p> <p>Any cycling for any reason - the overall percentage of people surveyed that said they cycled has increased from 33.5% in 2019 to 43.8% in 2020. The relative number of journeys increased by 50%.</p>								
	RPKPI22  Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	<p>The specification for the active travel commissioning is being finalised with a contractor lined up to deliver the first phase of the pilot scheme. It is intended that a large local employer and Ashford Borough Council will be the first organisations to benefit from the formalising of Active Travel Plans to support the move to other ways of traveling around the town and borough. The scheme is planned to commence in September.</p>							

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

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

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

- [WasteDataFlow](#)
- [Waste and recycling statistics](#)

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

- [WasteDataFlow](#)
- [Waste and recycling statistics](#)

## Organisational Change and Workforce Development

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

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

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2020/21 this reports on the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year 2020-2021. It also advises of the work undertaken to increase and maintain the profitability of the portfolio. [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 28th October, 2021, 7.00 pm - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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

### Corporate Property Income Schedule 2020/2021

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

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

#### Sickness absence per employee 2020/21

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

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

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

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

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2020/21			Q1 2021/22			Q2 2021/22			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
RPKPI91B	number of 106 cases completed	4			0					1	
number of 106 cases completed											

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

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

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**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 8 February 2022

**Report Title:** Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an update on community safety activity in the borough 2021/2022

**Report Author & Job Title:** Eleanor Cosh, Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader  
Alison Oates, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Peter Feacey  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Community Safety and Wellbeing

**Summary:** This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the community safety annual update. The report pays particular regard to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The report details crime statistics for the borough and positioning against other districts within the county. Ashford is shown as being a safe borough as the level of recorded crime remains low and there has been a reduction in many crime types including serious violence offences. The report highlights an overall reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour with the exception of the town centre ward.

It gives information on current community safety priorities, actions that have been taken to meet the priorities and raises awareness of emerging issues. It also supports the delivery of the priorities set by the Police and Crime Commissioner through his Safer in Kent plan 2021/2022.

Two major CSP projects are spotlighted. The Safer Streets Project that aims to make our public spaces safer and help women and girls feel safe, and the Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) which empowers communities and changes lives by improving health, education and employment and reducing crime.

**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** All

**Recommendations:** The committee is recommended to note the information contained in this report and support the proposed

**priorities for 2022/23.**

- Policy Overview:** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is designated as the committee responsible for Crime and Disorder under the Police Justice Act 2006.
- Financial Implications:** Ashford Community Safety Partnership receives a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner and this is used to fund small community projects within the borough.
- Legal Implications:** Not applicable

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** Not Required

**Other Material Implications:** None

**Exempt from Publication:** No

**Background Papers:** None

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## Agenda Item No.

**Report Title: Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an update on the community safety activity in the borough 2021/2022**

### Introduction and Background

1. It remains a statutory requirement for local authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). We achieve this through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), where 'responsible partners', namely the local authority (district and county), Fire and Rescue Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, Probation and the local Police, work collaboratively to make the community safer, reduce crime and the fear of crime, reduce ASB and work with businesses and residents on the issues of most concern. The chair of the Head Teachers Forum, Ashford College, Victim Support and chairs of the CSP subgroups (e.g. Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum) also support the CSP.
2. In order to set the current priorities, the CSP used police, district and county data and the local crime profile. A stakeholder engagement event assisted in the development of priorities for 2021/22:
  - Tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour
  - Tackling domestic abuse and sexual offences
  - Tackling violence
  - Building community capacity and increasing public confidence

These are explored in detail in the next section of this report.

3. CSPs have a responsibility to convene a strategy group of all responsible authorities (although it can invite other organisations), prepare a strategic assessment of local crime and community safety priorities using information provided by partner agencies and the community, and produce an action plan to meet those priorities. Due to the nature of this requirement, the council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) takes responsibility for coordinating activities and events.
4. Under the Crime and Disorder Regulations 2007, district and borough CSPs are required to:
  - Produce an annual strategic assessment
  - Produce a rolling partnership plan setting out priorities, with actions to deliver these priorities
  - Have a dialogue with communities to inform these processes and explain outcomes
5. Our actions over the course of 2021/22 flow from the annual strategic assessment that is undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The actions are informed by the Kent Community Safety Partnership Plan and Safer Kent 2021 – 2022, the plan of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.
6. Overall, the CSP is responsible for ensuring that the identified priorities, actions and targets will be delivered through a multi-agency approach by having:

- Strong strategic management
- Tasking our joint resources through well-established partnership operational structures, including identifying, managing and reducing risk
- Strong performance management

7. CSP governance has three key levels of decision-making; these are, strategic, operational and performance.

### **Our approach**

8. The CSP has a whole system approach to tackling crime and ASB. Our experience tells us that investing in one type of intervention alone does not resolve the problem. For example, enforcement is most effective if it is supported by local communities and other activity is taking place to change behaviours.
9. A triangle of intervention is applied when looking at any type of crime or anti-social behaviour issue that requires the engagement of a range of services, voluntary and community groups to find long-term solutions.

### **Tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour – lead agency Ashford Borough Council**

10. All residents have the right to feel safe and secure where they live and the right to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes and communities. The CSP is committed to effectively tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour which can have a serious impact on wellbeing.
11. The ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 defines ASB as: “Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person’s occupation of residential premises, or conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person”.
12. A range of enforcement actions will be used against those responsible for ASB. Working closely with the Police and other enforcement bodies ensures enforcement action is appropriate, proportionate and can be escalated swiftly where the need arises. The approach is to intervene early and undertake positive interventions to change behaviours before matters lead to a criminal offence being committed.
13. The temporary full time Community Safety Officer position recruited to in 2020 has now been made permanent. The work of the Community Safety Officer has proved invaluable, ensuring cases of ASB are investigated swiftly and all relevant partners are coordinated in a multi-agency response. Site surveys, use of community protection warnings/notices, professionals meetings and regular evening joint partner patrols form just part of the proactive work the officer is undertaking.

### *ASB - Kent Police data*

14. The data provided by Kent Police indicates the number of incidents of ASB reported to Kent Police for the Borough of Ashford.

15. As can be seen in the table below there has been a decrease across Kent of 9,119 reported ASB incidents over the past 12 months. In Ashford the number has decreased by 304.
16. Appendix A provides the ASB figures for all districts, this can be used to benchmark Ashford against other Kent districts. It shows that we have the 7<sup>th</sup> lowest recorded ASB in the county.

Area	December 2019 to November 2020	December 2020 to November 2021	Increase/decrease in numbers	% increase/decrease
Ashford	3190	2886	-304 (decrease)	-9.5% (decrease)
Kent	50,303	41,184	-9119 (decrease)	-18.1% (decrease)

17. Data provided by Kent Police as shown below highlights the three wards within Ashford borough with the highest recorded ASB:

Ward	December 2019 to November 2020	December 2020 to November 2021	Difference (numbers)	Difference (percent)
Victoria	456	475	+19 (increase)	+4% (increase)
Aylesford and East Stour	189	148	-41 (decrease)	-22% (decrease)
Furley	116	111	-5 (decrease)	-4% (decrease)

18. This illustrates there has been an increase in the top ward, whereas there has been a decrease in the other two wards listed above. Victoria ward still has the highest levels of reported ASB within the borough. This is expected due to the nature of the ward (town centre and Victoria Park) but the data does show an increase compared to the other two wards which have decreased.

#### *ASB - Borough Council data*

19. In addition to the police data, the borough council recorded 389 incidents in the year to December 2021, a decrease of 1% compared to the previous year.

	Jan 2020 to Dec 2020	Jan 2021 to December 2021	Difference (numbers)	Difference (percent)
Ashford	392	389	3	-1%

20. Reports of ASB into Ashford Borough Council are received via several methods. The most common mechanism is via our website where there is an option to 'Report ASB'. This allows the reporter to complete an online form with details of issues they are experiencing. The online form is automatically sent to the relevant email inbox for the officer to investigate.

21. To encourage reporting and meet the needs of residents, the 'Report It' app has been widely promoted as another platform available to use and is managed in the same way as the web link.
22. The reports received cover a number of different types of ASB but the highest types were neighbour disputes and gathering of youths who were causing nuisance. Neighbour disputes presents as the third highest type of ASB reported as with the previous year.

*Use of ASB legislation (Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014)*

23. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are designed to reduce and address ASB being committed in a public place. All of the live orders within the borough are available on the council's website. If the order is breached then police and council officers have the ability to issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to the value of £100. There are currently seven PSPOs within the borough (three are gating orders and four are linked to specified locations and particular behaviours). In 2021, a total of four FPNs were issued by Kent Police, one was in relation to the Ashford Urban PSPO, another one was for nuisance vehicles in the Vicarage Lane car park and a further two for breach of Community Protection Notice.
24. All PSPOs must be reviewed on a three yearly basis and subject to public consultation. There were no PSPO's due for review in 2021, however an additional PSPO was implemented in June for Conningbrook Lakes. A condition of the Conningbrook Lakes PSPO is that all dogs must be kept on leads due to much of the park being designated for nature conservation and grazing. In addition, no public swimming or boating is allowed unless it is part of organised water sports activities/classes, and fishing is restricted to members of Mid Kent Fisheries and day tickets for fishing are not available.
25. Ashford Borough Council's CSU were successful in taking the Ashford MX (off road race track) organisers who were using the Cloverleaf roundabout to court in December 2021. This resulted in them being fined £100 and ordered to pay £200 in costs and a £34 court surcharge, making a total of £334. Between March and September 2021 the CSU received nearly 70 complaints from the public reporting that the noise was continuing throughout the day, mainly on weekends and public holidays. Concerns were raised regarding safety issues and in relation to access to the land as the participants were obstructing parts of the strategic road network, not designed for stopping. In April 2021, the council issued a Community Protection Warning (CPW) on the organiser of the motor events, requiring that he cease with immediate effect. Later that same month Kent Police officers attended the area and witnessed motorbike activity occurring on the site, in breach of the notice. A Community Protection Notice (CPN) was then issued and served on the organiser. A number of breaches of this notice were alleged including two months later in June 2021, when Kent Police witnessed a breach of the CPN, with the organiser continuing to allow motocross events on the land. The organiser was issued a Fixed Penalty Notice but at the time of the court hearing on 13 December this fine remained outstanding. Therefore the CSU moved to prosecute for the breach and the council, working closely with Kent Police, brought forward a court case against the organiser for the breach of the Community Protection Notice.

26. Community Protection Warnings (CPW) were issued to three other individuals in December 2021 who were brought to the attention of Ashford Borough Council CSU by Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC). These individuals were subject to PubWatch bans from licenced premises in the town centre for persistent aggressive/abusive behaviour towards staff and members of the public. All individuals were associates and involved in separate incidents between September and November 2021. One of the individuals had previously been issued a CPW by Ashford Bough Council in August 2020 but the conditions attached were not fit for the current ASB presented and as such was re-issued with the new conditions. Conditions of the CPW's include to cease abusive and threatening behaviour towards staff at Licensed Premises and members of the public in the borough of Ashford and attempting to gain entry to, licensed premises where they are excluded either under the terms of a Pubwatch Scheme or by the individual venue within the Borough of Ashford.
27. Our Community Safety Officer facilitated the issuing of a Community Protection Warning to a resident, whereby numerous neighbours had complained reference ASB occurring at the address. A multi-agency approach was taken including KCC Social Services due to complexities within the household and vulnerabilities presented and a professionals meeting was held. Early Help intervention referrals have been accepted to aid the family situation and to ensure a holistic approach to addressing the ASB has been taken.
28. In 2021, Housing Officers have not secured any closure orders for ASB. However, they obtained an eviction on the grounds of absolute possession following two Closure Orders issued in 2019 and 2020. Our Housing Service continue to work in close partnership with Kent Police and the council's CSU in order to reduce ASB and to safeguard vulnerable residents in our communities.
29. Housing sought one injunction in 2021, this was to remove a gas cylinder fire from an Independent Living Scheme as the tenant refused to remove this. This action was taken swiftly following the Mill View explosion. Housing have also used Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices to tackle anti-social behaviour in the community as well as traditional housing tools in relation to the tenancy. In total they have served 11 Community Protection Warnings, one Community Protection Notice and one Fixed Penalty Notice. These were issued for behaviour concerning catapult use, dogs, rubbish, bonfires, drugs and noise.

#### *ASB action plan*

30. The ASB working group with the support of the CSP have completed the following work:
  - There have been four ASB case reviews this year, colloquially known as a Community Trigger. All these case reviews have related to nuisance neighbours. An ASB case review takes place when an individual is not satisfied with how their ASB has been addressed. One of the cases in March 2021 met the threshold for a full Community Trigger; however due to there being an ongoing investigation with Environmental Health this could not be pursued. Subsequently the same individual made a further request for a Community Trigger in December 2021 with Environmental Health having closed their investigation earlier in the year. The nature of the complaints for

this are also related to nuisance neighbours specifically noise nuisance and the multi-agency Community Trigger meeting was held January 2022 to review agency intervention and necessary recommendations have been made.

- The Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader has resurrected the Stanhope Community Multi-Agency meetings following reports from Moat Housing of increased ASB, specifically drug dealing across the estate. Partners attending the meetings include Kent Police, KCC Wardens and Moat to ensure a holistic approach. Kent Police undertook a targeted operation in September 2021 where Hawkeye (mobile CCTV van) was deployed on the estate in the second weekend and throughout the following week with associated engagement taking place. Issues raised regarding pitchside problems with evening football sessions saw police establishing patrols each Monday. Alongside the Police activity, Ashford Borough Council supported Moat with a potential partial closure order on a suspected drug dealer in Stanhope Court. Following Moat's initial enforcement actions taken against the individual the closure order was not deemed necessary as the tenant was evicted through their own means. These activities have seen a reduction in reports of drug dealing and incidents around the Stanhope estate and as of 1st September the Police had received 124 calls for Stanhope – only 16 were ASB.
- CSU branded uniforms have been purchased to help raise the visibility and profile of the CSU. Branded wear is used when undertaking community visits including site surveys, when on evening patrols and joint partner initiatives. In December 2021 the Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader, Community Safety Officer and partners undertook an 'All Out' operation in the town centre throughout the evening whereby all town hot spots were visited including the Civic/Stour Centre car park, Sk8Side, County Square Shopping Centre and McDonalds. All licenced premises were also visited and issued personal safety equipment.
- Safer Streets Three Funding Success – Ashford town centre received almost £550,000 funding from the Home Office in October 2021 to deliver a range of initiatives focussed on improving the safety of women and girls. Ashford CSP led on the bid and activities shared out amongst partners for delivery. An official launch was held on 22nd November 2021 which was well attended by partners and town centre businesses. In response to some helpful feedback from partners, we have since set in motion a number of initiatives, as well as launching an advisory group formed by local agencies wishing to remain part of the narrative in implementing these.
- Initiatives include:
  - Personal safety equipment has been purchased including 2000 drinks stoppers to stop drinks being spiked, 1000 test your drinks strips, 1000 personal alarms with small LED torch lights, 500 secure shopper packs, 500 small torch keychains 120 space blankets and 120 flip flops. These items have been distributed at community events and at the Safer Streets launch event, to local businesses and licenced premises and the Ashford Street Pastors.

- CCTV cameras have been the main beneficiary of the funding with an additional 11 cameras being secured. Sites for the cameras have been identified by the Ashford Monitoring Centre and Kent Police using intelligence and historic reports of where ASB has occurred in the town centre. Locations include the underpass by Ashford train station, Victoria Park, Edinburgh Road multi-storey car park and the Memorial Gardens. Alongside the CCTV, the Memorial Gardens will also benefit from replacement timber fencing around its boundaries and a general uplift.
- Improvements throughout the town centre will include window wrapping, safety mirrors, litter picking equipment and an industrial pressure washer. All of this will enhance the feeling of safety in the town centre.
- Excelsior Safeguarding CIC have been recruited to deliver Stay Safe workshops across educational establishments (Schools/Colleges). The ambition is to deliver 20 workshops which will reach 600 young people across the borough.
- Active Bystander Training - Graham Goulden from Cultivating Minds UK, is providing Active Bystander Training to approximately 180 individuals which will encourage them to become part of a wider community of local individuals for whom identifying and ultimately being able to assist those most vulnerable in our society is a well informed and equipped practice. The two hour virtual training sessions will be run between 25th and 27th January 2022, with two sessions running per day. A number of local businesses and employees state their interest in attending this event and the response to invitations has been very positive. Those wishing to attend cover a vast spectrum of businesses and voluntary groups in the town centre, which we hope will provide maximum benefit to the community. At this time, we very much expect the training to take place in person in an Ashford venue, however should the Government guidance change, the event may resort to an online input.
- Safe Spaces - An Ashford Safe Space will be a location in the Town Centre, identified by a unique logo currently in the design process. Within this location, there will be visible staff trained as Active Bystanders, access to the APAC Town Net radio with direct links to Town Centre Police and ABC Monitoring Centre as well as some emergency trauma pack locations. At this time we have had numerous premises showing an interest in becoming a Safe Space, each of these operating at varying times, both day and night. It is anticipated that there will be more to add to our ever growing list of volunteer spaces, which is really encouraging and will provide those using the town centre somewhere easily identifiable to seek shelter and support in any given circumstance.
- Digital App - The design process for the digital app is well and truly underway, with us just having chosen 'Ashford Streetwise' as its name. The concept behind this app is to provide an informative digital platform accessible by an individual in the town centre focussed on supporting their conscious safety choices. The individual will be provided information on where they can locate a Safe Space, as well as being able to plot a route within the Town Centre based around those aspects that they state would make them feel most safe. These aspects incorporate vast CCTV coverage, adequate street lighting and high volume footfall, as well as later listing the location of Safe Spaces. By equipping the user with this information, we hope to empower them into making the most informed and responsible choices about their daily activities and walking/cycling routes around the town. As the app develops, we envisage including a number of

different layers in addition to this, in order to maximise the full potential of its use.

- Smart Tag - Smart Tag was launched to the local licenced premises from our night time economy over a series of two Pubwatch meetings. Members were able to receive virtual explanations of the product from the creators themselves and the positive response to this has seen a large investment in the Smart Tag training and equipment, with one Ashford premises already trained in the application of Smart Tag. Kent Police's Licencing Officer has also approached other independent security businesses to extend the opportunity for this product to others.
- We are currently in the process of designing a logo that will be recognisable by all age groups as a 'supporting safety' symbol. This will be unveiled in the new year and will be used to identify the app and in the windows of any designated Safe Space

### **Tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences – lead agencies Ashford Borough Council, Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum, Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) and Rising Sun.**

31. It is recognised that domestic abuse is a serious and life-threatening crime that affects victims and their families, and the priority is that victims and any children are safeguarded from further abuse.
32. The domestic abuse responsibility along with the domestic abuse coordinator post was transferred to the Housing department in May 2020 but remains a key part of our community safety work and requires the same level of multi-agency engagement alongside the other community safety priorities such as anti-social behaviour.
33. The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator resigned from her post in 2021 and this opportunity was taken to review the service as a whole. The main purpose of this role has been to manage and develop the Ashford One Stop Shop service and all domestic abuse programmes within the Borough of Ashford.
34. As part of this review, the implications of the new Domestic Abuse Act were considered, which will come into force on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021, creating a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.
35. Whilst Kent County Council are the lead Authority for the implementation of the Act, all districts and Boroughs are feeding into this by way of a Local Partnership Board. Monies have been allocated to Ashford Borough Council, a sum of £33,585 as a New Burdens Grant, to help with supporting those in accommodation who are suffering domestic abuse.
36. In addition to funding the domestic abuse coordinator post, the borough council assists by providing funds annually in support of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service for Ashford via the KCC commissioned Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service.
37. In Ashford, Clarion hold the contract for delivering this service and already operate the women's refuge in the town.

38. As part of the commissioning contract, Clarion are contracted “To facilitate and deliver co-ordinated, multi-agency access points in local communities across Kent to facilitate access to information and support“. This is known as the One Stop Shop, which ABC currently coordinate.
39. In addition, the contract also states that Clarion are responsible for “Working with local partnerships, delivery and facilitation of therapeutic and supportive activities to promote independence and future healthy relationships” ABC are currently delivering the group work sessions, such as the Freedom Programme and/or the Phoenix Programme

*Domestic Abuse Coordinator*

40. The post of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator was introduced to the Borough Council six years ago. Since this time, KCC have developed the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) which covers Kent and Medway and provides advice and information on services for victims, friends and family, and perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and domestic violence. All local authorities in the county contribute towards this cost.
41. In order to meet our new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act, and to take forward the Make a Stand campaign, we are recruiting a new Domestic Abuse Coordinator within the Housing Options Team. This post has a new job description and would be more customer focused. In essence, the key aspects of the role includes:-
- To provide leadership with regard to the provision of services for those experiencing or escaping domestic abuse within the Borough of Ashford.
  - To undertake any necessary client risk assessments and, where necessary, develop and implement safety plans as identified in the risk assessment.
  - To coordinate all referrals for the Sanctuary Scheme, which is designed to help support those at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and avoid the upheaval of homelessness.
  - To coordinate and manage the Safe House in Ashford and ensure clients are offered the full wrap around support.
  - To participate in and support the work of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
  - To initiate and maintain effective communication with partnership agencies across all sectors at regional and national levels, including participating in the newly formed Local Partnership Board.
  - To take the lead in the Make a Stand campaign.

*Domestic Abuse Services in Tenterden*

42. Since July 2021 there has been a new walk in service in Tenterden where victims of domestic abuse can liaise with support services in complete safety and anonymity at the community project known as EC30. Centre staff are on hand currently to facilitate telephone contacts with the relevant agencies on an ad hoc basis as demand is difficult to calculate due to Covid-19. The original working group will need to review whether a more structured approach is needed elsewhere, along the lines of the One Stop Shops, once the restrictions are lifted. The Centre Manager is a new member of the Forum.

### *Working with Male Perpetrators*

43. In October 2021 funds from the Police & 'Crime Commissioner made it available for men from Ashford to participate in the Community Domestic Abuse Programme. This is a 27 week 'roll on/roll off' programme for men who wish to amend their previously abusive behaviour and make more positive relationships.

### *Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop (OSS)*

44. The Ashford OSS is a drop-in service for anyone affected, in any way, by domestic abuse where support, help and advice is given.
45. It is a free and confidential service provided weekly and no appointment is necessary. It continues to be an area for professionals to work together to provide a coordinated response to domestic abuse.
46. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the OSS service was suspended and a telephone service was coordinated by the Housing Options Team with clients being referred to the relevant partner agencies if needed.
47. Figures have been significantly lower than in previous years due to the restricted service and in 2020, a total of 102 people contacted the OSS for assistance.
48. The figure so far for 2021, up to the end of October is 50.
49. We have resumed face-to-face service at the Willow Centre on 7th December 2021.

### *Domestic abuse and sexual offences action plan*

50. Domestic abuse and sexual offences remain a priority and the main areas of focus are detailed below:
  - The rural Domestic Abuse drop in centre has been launched in Tenterden.
  - Funding has been obtained to pay for facilitators to deliver the Phoenix programme.
  - Funding was obtained from the Police and Crime Commissioner to enable perpetrators of Domestic Abuse to attend the Kent Community Domestic Abuse programme.

## **Tackling Violence– Lead agency Kent Police**

### **Youth Related violence**

51. The fortnightly District Contextual Safeguarding Meetings continue to bring partners together to reduce risk associated with adolescents – as individuals, groups and places frequented.
52. There have also been three Complex Adolescent Harm Meeting processes where specific cases are raised to manage risk and identify interventions and diversionary options. This approach has been very successful in mitigating the risk of further harm resulting from the murder of Jayden MacFarlane and continuing to support the young people associated with the groups involved in this incident throughout the trial.

53. Ten referrals by Police have been submitted to the Charlton Athletic Mentoring Scheme and four young people are currently being supported by this project. Included in these referrals are young people who have been identified as carrying weapons and committing serious violent offences.
54. The Police Cadets programme is available to young people aged 13 to 17 who live in Kent, irrespective of background or financial circumstances including those vulnerable to crime or social exclusion. The Cadets undergo training and take part in voluntary work with the police in their local community. They develop key life skills and enhance opportunities for further education, training and employment – whether this is within the police service or another profession.
55. The Ashford Cadets has expanded significantly over the course of this year and been working in the community with CSU on a number of projects including weapon sweeps, County Square Pop-up shop and bike marking.
56. Working with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU); seven at risk young people have agreed to wearing a buddy tag. This is offered to young people to assist them in diverting away from criminality or reducing the risk of exploitation. It has been used effectively to reduce young people’s vulnerability to becoming involved in County Lines.

### **Violence against Women and Girls**

57. Kent Police held a public engagement meeting in October 2021 to provide information to residents on the work Kent Police is doing to tackle violence against women and girls and to listen to the concerns of the local community. Partners including Ashford Borough Council, Street Pastors, Neighbourhood Watch and Stagecoach providing free transport supported this event. It was a well-attended event and there are further engagement events planned for 2022.
58. The CSP has been successful in securing nearly £550,000 in the Safer Streets 3 Home Office Fund through the PCC’s office. This fund is specifically focused on tackling violence against women and girls and improve the feeling of safety in the town centre. The project has a number of deliverables including improved CCTV coverage, crime prevention equipment, active bystander training, educational inputs into schools, creation of safer spaces. APAC radio coverage has been increased, a new perpetrator focused Smartwater Spray (SmartTag) system issued to SIA staff. A digital app has been developed providing the user the locations of safer spaces and the capability to plan a route around the town centre based on the presence of features such as actively monitored CCTV, street lighting and high footfall/guardians, which make the user feel safer.
59. An advisory group has been formed from interested key stakeholders and members of the community to provide independent advice and support to the delivery and promotion of this project work.
60. The Borough Council’s Licensing Officer has been working with the Night-Time Economy businesses to promote the “Ask Angela”<sup>1</sup> campaign and there have been

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Ask for Angela’ campaign provided a secret code for women to find help if they were feeling unsafe on a night out. [‘ASK FOR ANGELA’ IF YOU ARE FEELING UNSAFE - National Pubwatch](#)

dedicated Police patrols working in conjunction with partners including the Street Pastors to increase visibility in the Night-Time Economy.

### **Reducing Violence in the Night-Time Economy**

61. Safer season operations have focused on supporting the re-opening of the nighttime economy from lockdown, through key events such as the World Cup 2020 and into peak periods such as Christmas and New Year. This has included dedicated officers on foot patrol conducting licensing visits and ensuring tools such as knife wands and APAC radios are being actively used by premises in promotion of the licensing objectives.
62. Close working with APAC has led to several exclusions being issued to perpetrators of violence within the nighttime economy; a powerful tool for businesses to send a message to those intent on violence that it is not acceptable and has consequences.
63. The Ashford Street Pastors provide additional visibility and assist Police and CCTV in identifying situations with the potential to escalate into violence. The number of Street Pastors has increased significantly this year and training has been provided to local officers to improve working relationships.

### **Reduction in Gang and Serious Crime related violence**

64. Working in conjunction with the Kent Police County Lines Team and Chief Constables Crime Squad a number of County Lines networks have been disrupted.
65. Intensification activity (Op Sceptre) has involved weapon sweeps, multi-agency visits to vulnerable residents identified as at risk of cuckooing and exploitation. There have also been a number of joint operations at Ashford International Station with British Transport Police and passive drugs dogs resulting in a number of arrests with drugs and weapons seized.

### **Building community capacity and increasing public confidence – Lead agency Ashford Borough Council**

66. We know that often communities are best placed to tackle their own issues and key to the work of the CSP is building sustainable community capacity to enable this.
67. It is also vital to the work of the partnership to ensure the services meet the needs of all communities, particularly the most vulnerable such as victims of hate crime.
68. There is also a need to ensure that the perception of crime within the borough reflects the reality of crime and it is known that this requires sustained community leadership and ongoing conversations and effective communications.

#### *Building community capacity action plan:*

69. The CSP has completed the following work in relation to this priority:
  - We funded Charlton Athletic Community Trust via the Police and Crime Commissioner Grant and match funding from Ashford Borough Council. See further details below.

- The re-energised Ashford Partnership against Crime (APAC) has increased membership of the “Pubwatch” and “Shopwatch” schemes. APAC supports the flow of information between premises and partners ensuring key individuals are refused entry and public safety is maintained.
- In January 2020 the CSP received £27,000 from the VRU to develop and deliver two community engagement projects within the borough to engage young people and reduce crime and ASB in these locations. The company (C3 Collaborating for Health) has delivered their first project in Bockhanger ward. The second project will take place in Beaver ward in March 2022.
- The CSP have worked closely with all partners during COVID-19 to support public safety and wider community safeguarding issues through sharing key messages, supporting domestic abuse awareness campaign on the side of refuse trucks, improving our ASB reporting mechanisms and providing financial support to charities such as foodbanks.

### Crime Data

70. The following tables show overall crime data for the Borough compared to other districts within Kent. It is worthy of note that crime data for the previous two years have been exceptional and distorted due to impacts linked to the pandemic. Ashford has had a slight increase in all crime. Kent Police is also ranked top in the country for crime recording integrity, this means that they record more crime than any other force and provide better confidence in the data. However, this also results in larger increases than perhaps expected.

### Total published all recorded crime

71. The table below shows that Ashford has seen a **slight increase** in all recorded crime.

	<b>November 2020 to October 2021</b>	<b>November 2019 to October 2020</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	10800	10783	0.2%	17
<b>Canterbury</b>	14587	14973	-2.6%	-386
<b>Dartford</b>	12187	12180	0.1%	7
<b>Dover</b>	10396	10720	-3.0%	-324
<b>Gravesham</b>	11059	12180	-9.2%	-1121
<b>Maidstone</b>	15454	15714	-1.7%	-260
<b>Medway</b>	30739	31517	-2.5%	-778
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	7956	8293	-4.1%	-337
<b>Folkestone and Hythe</b>	9589	10517	-8.8%	-928
<b>Swale</b>	14491	15491	-6.5%	-1000
<b>Thanet</b>	17063	18404	-7.3%	-1341
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	8208	9081	-9.6%	-873
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	7497	8097	-7.4%	-600
<b>Force</b>	<b>170026</b>	<b>177950</b>	<b>-4.5%</b>	<b>-7924</b>

*Most Serious Violence (e.g. actual bodily harm & grievous bodily harm)*

72. The table below demonstrates that Ashford has seen a **reduction** in the offences linked to the most serious violence. Ashford has the fifth lowest most serious violence volumes comparable with Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Folkestone and Hythe.

	<b>November 2020 to October 2021</b>	<b>November 2019 to October 2020</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	63	70	-10.0%	-7
<b>Canterbury</b>	117	111	5.4%	6
<b>Dartford</b>	72	88	-18.2%	-16
<b>Dover</b>	82	66	24.2%	16
<b>Gravesham</b>	77	90	-14.4%	-13
<b>Maidstone</b>	110	103	6.8%	7
<b>Medway</b>	226	279	-19.0%	-53
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	45	53	-15.1%	-8
<b>Folkestone and Hythe</b>	58	90	-35.6%	-32
<b>Swale</b>	149	147	1.4%	2
<b>Thanet</b>	142	160	-11.3%	-18
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	45	59	-23.7%	-14
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	44	59	-25.4%	-15
<b>Force</b>	<b>1230</b>	<b>1375</b>	<b>-10.5%</b>	<b>-145</b>

#### *Possession of Weapon Offences*

73. Possession of weapon offences have shown a **reduction** which can be attributed to the proactive approach that is being undertaken within the borough and the wider county initiatives led by the Violence Reduction Unit.

	<b>November 2020 to October 2021</b>	<b>November 2019 to October 2020</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	62	96	-35.4%	-34
<b>Canterbury</b>	96	102	-5.9%	-6
<b>Dartford</b>	79	97	-18.6%	-18
<b>Dover</b>	69	86	-19.8%	-17
<b>Gravesham</b>	87	104	-16.3%	-17
<b>Maidstone</b>	100	128	-21.9%	-28
<b>Medway</b>	236	260	-9.2%	-24
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	44	56	-21.4%	-12
<b>Folkestone and Hythe</b>	95	191	-50.3%	-96
<b>Swale</b>	86	125	-31.2%	-39
<b>Thanet</b>	136	168	-19.0%	-32
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	45	73	-38.4%	-28
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	37	57	-35.1%	-20
<b>Force</b>	<b>1172</b>	<b>1543</b>	<b>-24.0%</b>	<b>-371</b>

#### *Shoplifting*

74. Shoplifting has **decreased** within the borough which is brought about by the increase in dedicated town centre police resource and the re-invigoration of Ashford Partnership against Crime.

	<b>November 2020 to October 2021</b>	<b>November 2019 to October 2020</b>	<b>% change</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	630	729	-13.6%	-99
<b>Canterbury</b>	842	1085	-22.4%	-243
<b>Dartford</b>	1124	1104	1.8%	20
<b>Dover</b>	381	393	-3.1%	-12
<b>Gravesham</b>	447	552	-19.0%	-105
<b>Maidstone</b>	749	774	-3.2%	-25
<b>Medway</b>	1618	1972	-18.0%	-354
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	538	612	-12.1%	-74
<b>Folkestone and Hythe</b>	456	756	-39.7%	-300
<b>Swale</b>	938	1219	-23.1%	-281
<b>Thanet</b>	662	982	-32.6%	-320
<b>Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>	447	572	-21.9%	-125
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	438	604	-27.5%	-166
<b>Force</b>	<b>9270</b>	<b>11354</b>	<b>-18.4%</b>	<b>-2084</b>

75. Therefore, the data shows that Ashford is one of the safest boroughs in Kent to live, work and visit.

### **Police and Crime Commissioner grant to the CSP**

76. The 2021/2022 the PCC grant to Ashford CSP totalled £20,976. This was used to support a project that contribute to the PCC and CSP priorities. The funding was awarded to Charlton Athletic Community Trust to deliver “A sporting chance”, a new project which aims to use the power of sport and physical activity to create safer, stronger and more respectful communities by engaging with young people in some of our most high-need areas
77. Ashford Borough Council also match funded the project to enable Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) to provide additional elements to ensure a holistic approach. They are to run a range of activities including a 1 to 1 mentoring programme, weekly ball court/estate sessions, three crime reduction workshops, three ten-week peer enrichment programmes plus a residential trip for 30 young people to attend.
78. As well as this the ‘Joy of Movement’ programme will be made available to schools will encourage children to adopt a healthy, active lifestyle, combatting childhood obesity, where they will learn about the body and nutrition and take part in practical sessions.
79. The project aims to create safer, stronger, and more respectful communities through engaging young people in positive activities within the immediate communities that they live in. In addition, the 1 to 1 mentoring sessions can reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in serious youth violence and gang related crime.

### *Weekly ball court/estate sessions*

80. CACT staff who deliver these sessions become recognisable positive role models within these communities who are also able to ensure safe and controlled environments for the sessions, lowering barriers to participation and anxiety in young people and their parent/carers. A major strength of this model is that it can be targeted and moved to different venues and specific areas of need.

### *1 to 1 mentoring programme*

81. Support will be offered to young people who are struggling to engage in education or clashing with figures of authority such as teachers. Some young people may have difficulties within their home environments which could be contributing to them displaying challenging and negative behaviours.
82. CACT staff also work at a higher level by providing a more targeted mentoring programme that supports and challenges young people who have been identified of being at risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence (perpetrator or victim) and or are showing signs of being drawn into risky behaviours such as gang affiliation or county lines involvement.
83. The mentors work closely with the young person regardless of what stage they are at and provide support with a view to setting positive goals and future aspirations which they are further supported to achieve.

### *Group/peer enrichment and residential activity project*

84. CACT mentors lead the programme introducing young people to new experiences, challenging them to work positively as a team under their supervision and guidance. Delivered away from their local communities and any potential negative influences, and by introducing and providing new and unique and exciting activities the project aims to inspire young people to make positive and beneficial decisions moving forward in their lives.
85. Young people are referred onto the programme by social workers, youth offending teams, youth service staff and other agencies such as schools and police. One residential trip will also be delivered with places offered to those who have shown positive attendance within their programme of activity.

### *CACT Crime reduction workshops*

86. These are delivered in a number of settings by CACT staff and strategic partners with specific areas of interest and people with lived experience – including a former gang member convicted of running a large county lines operation, who is now employed by CACT as a full-time mentor.
87. By November 2021, CACT had delivered 36 evening sessions over a 12-week period from July to October 2021. Each session lasted two hours and were delivered on a Monday at Bromley Green FC, Wednesday at Stanhope, and Thursday at Victoria Park. Sessions have since been put on hold due to lighting issues through the winter months. Across the three venues, CACT engaged with at least 30 young people, with the majority of participants being male.

88. In addition, due to the success of the initial engagement in the borough and identifying the need for more opportunities, CACT managed to gain external funding to deliver a Premier League Kicks session at Towers School, which started Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
89. Regarding the 1-2-1 mentoring, they had received 18 referrals by November 2021, all of which are significant with these young people being involved in serious youth violence and at risk of gang affiliation and of county lines and exploitation. Of the referrals, they received seven from Kent Police and 11 from schools. All young people are being mentored on a weekly basis either at their school or at the home of the young person.

## **Other Community Safety Events**

### *Safety in Action*

90. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions it was not possible to run the annual Safety in Action event for Year 6 pupils face-to-face. An alternative delivery method was sought and an agreement was made with Salus as they have experience of delivering the project in other areas of the County. Working alongside the ABC CSU they delivered the event via a live link into each school classroom which allowed an interactive element to remain for the 900 children that took part. Booklets that re-iterated all the safety messages provided were delivered to each school prior to the event.
91. It is hoped that Safety in Action 2022 can take place in the normal live format and discussions are taking place with partners currently to explore options.

### *Multi-agency operations*

92. The first 'Safer Communities' event took place on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021. This event which was formally known as 'Op Cleansweep' took place in the Kennington area and covered Conningrook Lakes, Little Burton, The Ridge and Spearpoint locations. Officers from Ashford Borough Council were joined by KCC Wardens, Kent Police, KFRS Fire Risk and Inspection Team, Neighbourhood Watch amongst others to look at issues affecting these areas and engage with residents and visitors. The Borough Council's Environmental Services Team undertook a litter pick, looked at issues relating to litter in the area and carried out dog warden patrols. This all demonstrated that the partners represented can work together, to improve the environment, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, improve public safety, provide reassurance for the people of Ashford and improve their confidence in the ability of the partners represented to deal with problems that cause them concern.
93. A number of joint-agency visits and patrols have taken place with our Community Safety Officer and Kent Police. They continue to work very closely to tackle issues that are being reported. This included visits to specific properties where ASB had been highlighted and general patrols to areas known as hot-spots at particular times, mostly evenings and weekends.
94. The ABC CSU had a visible presence at a number of events. These included the Stanhope Community Fun Day, the Fresher's Fayre at Ashford College and the

Town Centre 'Pop-Up Shop'. This re-iterates to the public that partners work together and provides an opportunity to gather intelligence and offer safety advice where necessary.

### **CSP priority setting process and identified priority areas for 2022/23**

95. In February 2022 the CSP will come together to agree the approach to be taken for priority identification in this year. Building on feedback from this Overview & Scrutiny meeting, the intention is to agree formally the priorities for the CSP at its next meeting in March 2022.
96. The following have been identified as potential priorities:
  - Tackling violence with focus on violence against women and girls
  - Tackling domestic abuse and sexual offences
  - Tackling ASB and concerning behaviour
  - Tackling Gangs and county lines
97. Phase 2 will involve a deeper analysis of crime types relevant to these priorities in order to examine who is being affected or perpetrating the crimes, locational analysis at ward level and temporal analysis. This will enable the CSP to focus on the crime/problem having the most impact on the borough and have the data to drill down to exactly whom the crime/problem is affecting, when and where.
98. Phase 3 will feed all of this information into the rolling action plan process. Partnership interventions can then be designed based on this and will ensure its investments and activities will achieve the most positive impacts possible. Not only will the strategic assessment inform the rolling plan but it will also be the basis and rationale behind commissioning/grant making decisions moving forward.
99. A sub-group of the CSP will take responsibility for the delivery of each priority identified by the strategic assessment and rolling action plan. They will take the top-level action plan, build and develop it into a full, SMART action plan and ensure delivery against it.
100. The action plans created by the sub-groups are approved by the CSP and progress against them is assessed when it meets (which is three times a year). The Performance Group is responsible for monitoring progress against our key crime and fear of crime indicators, following on from sub-group intervention.

### **Conclusion**

101. Ashford's Community Safety Partnership only exists because of the significant support given by its individual partners and by those from a whole range of organisations who are dedicated every day and night to protecting our community. The work of the partnership continues to have a positive impact on crime reduction and also inspiring confidence within our communities to report crime or ASB.
102. There has been a number of changes in the community safety arena over recent years and this has shown a change of working for most partners involved in the CSP. This report hopes to recognise this work and thank everyone involved.

## Portfolio Holder's Views

103. We are committed to improving the quality of life for those living and working within our communities and in providing a safe and secure environment to enable people to live together and free from the negative impact of crime and ASB. This annual report demonstrates the work that can be achieved through agency collaboration and I would like to thank all those involved for their hard work and dedication.

Cllr Peter Feacey  
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing

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## Appendix A

### Kent wide ASB figures

Area	December 2019 to November 2020	December 2020 to November 2021	Difference (number)	Difference (percent)	Position in County (highest to lowest)
Ashford	3,190	2,886	-304	-9.5%	7
Canterbury	4,534	3,725	-809	-17.8%	4
Dartford	2,884	2,564	-320	-11%	8
Dover	2,926	2,124	-802	-27.4%	10
Folkestone and Hythe	3,282	2,456	-826	-25%	9
Gravesham	3,830	2,969	-861	-22.5%	6
Maidstone	4,779	3,765	-1014	-21.2%	3
Medway	8,396	7,151	-1245	-14.8%	1
Sevenoaks	2,274	2,050	-224	-9.8%	11
Swale	4,074	3,414	-660	-16.2%	5
Thanet	5,152	4,239	-913	-17.7%	2
Tonbridge and Malling	2,529	2,048	-481	-19%	12
Tunbridge Wells	2,297	1,636	-661	-28.8%	13
Kent	50,303	41,184	-9119	-18.1%	NA

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 8 February 2022

**Report Title:** Safeguarding Annual Report

**Report Author & Job Title:** Alison Oates  
Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. P Feacey  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Community Safety and Wellbeing

**Summary:** This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the council's annual safeguarding update. The report pays particular regard to the council's obligation to work in partnership to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development.

It gives information on the safeguarding activity that has been undertaken and raises awareness of emerging issues. It also supports the delivery of the priorities set by the Kent Safeguarding Children's Multi-agency Partnership and the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board.

**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** All wards

**Recommendations:** **The committee is recommended to note the information contained in this report.**

**Policy Overview:** The Safeguarding Policy was reviewed in September 2021 and is available on our website. The council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure that all children and adults at risk are protected and kept safe from harm. Safeguarding is relevant to the council's current corporate plan and draft Corporate Plan 2022-24 i.e. the Caring Ashford priority theme.

**Financial Implications:** There are no additional budget implications presented within this report.

**Legal Implications:** The Care Act 2014 codified the principles of wellbeing and placed safeguarding adults' duties on a statutory basis. The council's policies and procedures are governed by this Act, which provides the legal framework of how local authorities (Kent County Council – KCC) and other parts of the public

sector, including the borough council, should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. Production of an annual report forms part the council's measures to meet it safeguarding responsibilities.

<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	Not required for this update report.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):</b>	Not applicable
<b>Sustainability Implications:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	No additional staffing implications are presented however, additional support for the council's safeguarding leads is acknowledged as necessary.
<b>Exempt from Publication:</b>	No
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Contact:</b>	alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330225

## Report Title: Safeguarding – annual report

### Introduction and Background

1. This report covers the period April 2020 to January 2021 and includes:
  - An update on the council's safeguarding policy
  - Accountability and governance arrangements
  - Actions taken
  - Referral update
  - Training update
2. Safeguarding continues to have a high profile with significant political and media focus nationally as well as locally.
3. The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is of paramount importance and that every child has the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 10, 11 and 13 of the Children Act 2004 specifies what is required of local authorities.
4. The Care Act 2014 codified the principles of wellbeing and placed safeguarding adults' duties on a statutory basis. The council's policies and procedures are governed by this Act, which provides the legal framework of how local authorities (Kent County Council – KCC) and other parts of the public sector, including the borough council, should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
5. The Counter-Terrorism Act 2015 dictates that all local authorities are vital to the Prevent work, which exists to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism, while under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the council has a statutory duty to report and provide notification to the National Crime Agency about any potential victims of modern slavery or trafficking.
6. Together, these legislative provisions place stringent responsibilities on local authorities and their partners regarding the general safeguarding of both children and adults at risk.

### Ashford Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy

7. The council's safeguarding policy stipulates that an annual review will be undertaken each September by the Safeguarding Lead Officers Group. This was completed in September 2021.
8. The policy was brought up to date to align with recent changes in national policy, along with best practice from around the county. It also emphasised the collaborative work being undertaken across the council, reflected local working arrangements with the relevant statutory partners and refreshed the referral process flow chart.

9. The council's Management Team approved the revised version of the Safeguarding Policy in November 2021 with all associated documents being updated on the council's website and SmartHub.
10. The Safeguarding Policy is available in the Smart Hub ([available here](#)).
11. A People in Position of Trust Policy (PiPOT) has been produced in conjunction with the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board (KMASB) and was approved by Management Team in November 2021 and sent to Members via an Information Digest. This policy is available on the council's Smart Hub.

## **Accountability and Governance**

12. Ultimately, accountability for safeguarding under the work of Ashford Borough Council falls to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive and Management Team are responsible for ensuring that the council's responsibilities and procedures are implemented, monitored and consistently reviewed.
13. The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is responsible for dealing with reports and concerns about the protection of children, young people and adults at risk appropriately and in accordance with the authority's Safeguarding Policy. If the DSO is unavailable the Deputy DSO (DDSO) can respond, or one of the lead officers.
14. A Safeguarding Lead Officers Group was established in 2016 and continues to support the DSO. This is an operational group with representatives across the council with key skills and knowledge that can support the council's responsibilities. Lead officers area assigned to the following areas:
  - Adults at Risk
  - Children at Risk, including Child Sexual Exploitation
  - Domestic Abuse
  - Prevent (preventing extremism)
  - Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
  - Contracting
15. There is also a lead officer for training, to assist the DSO in ensuring relevant safeguarding training is provided to lead officers, staff and members.
16. All borough councillors, employees and volunteers are responsible for carrying out their duties in a way that actively safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. They must also act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible, bringing safeguarding concerns to the attention of the DSO or in their absence to the Deputy DSO.

## **Actions taken**

17. Safeguarding Lead Officers meet quarterly to deliver key improvements in the council's safeguarding governance, policymaking, procedures, working practices, training and monitoring arrangements.

18. The officers also review recent Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs), Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) to see if any of the lessons learnt or recommendations have an impact on the work of the council and its working procedures.
19. The Management Team receive quarterly safeguarding reports for strategic review, operational oversight and cascading information through the organisation.
20. In March 2021 the Modern Slavery Statement was refreshed. This statement sets out the steps that the borough council will undertake to ensure there is a collaborative approach across the organisation.
21. Section 11 (S11) of the Children Act 2004, places a statutory responsibility on key agencies and organisations to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. S11 compliance is a mandatory requirement.
22. An statutory assessment questionnaire comprising 52 questions is completed for each section 11 return. It is broken down in to the following 8 sections:
  - Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare
  - A clear statement of the agency’s responsibility towards children is available to all staff
  - A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
  - Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed by the views of children and families
  - Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or in contact with children & families
  - Recruitment, vetting procedures and allegations against staff
  - Interagency working
  - Information Sharing
23. The latest return was completed by the DSO in November 2021 and sent to the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership for peer review and analysis.
24. Each response to the 52 questions is RAG rated and after the peer review, we received the following score:

Category	Number
Red (Criteria not met)	1
Amber (Criteria partially met)	7
Green (criteria met)	36
Not applicable	11

25. Upon receipt of the peer review, an action plan was created to address the red and amber elements. The red element relates to the need to increase awareness of safeguarding issues and promoting the welfare of all children. This was discussed with the Corporate Policy Team and has been included in the service planning template for 2022.

26. The amber actions have all been completed and were linked to improving the wording linked to safeguarding on job descriptions and including information on our intranet linked to emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
27. The Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board Self-Assessment is a further return that is undertaken. This takes the form of a framework as developed by the by the Kent & Medway Safeguarding Adults Board (KMSAB) Quality Assurance Working Group (QAWG). The purpose is to provide a consistent method to assess, monitor and improve arrangements for safeguarding adults.

The assessment comprised of 30 questions, broken down in to the following four sections:

- Outcomes for, and the experiences of people who use services
- Leadership
- Service delivery and effective practise
- Performance and resource management

28. This return was completed by the DSO in April 2021 and sent to the KMSAB. The DSO attend a peer review meeting in June 2021 and presented the return to a panel who analysed the responses and finalised it's recommendations.
29. Each response to the 30 questions is RAG rated and after the panel review we received the following score:

Category	Number
Red (criteria not met)	3
Amber (criteria partially met)	10
Green (criteria met)	12
Not applicable	5

30. A report from the Board was received and an action plan was created to address any issues highlighted.
31. The red elements linked to the need for a People in Position of Trust (PiPoT) Policy. The panel noted that the borough council did not offer formal safeguarding support/supervision for safeguarding officers and questioned that the borough council does not have a dedicated safeguarding post therefore relying on officers taking on additional reasonability on top of their 'day job'. Since the submission of the self-assessment in April 2021 the PiPoT has been approved and the DSO is working with the HR team reference providing additional support for safeguarding leads.
32. A number of front line staff, such as Civil Enforcement Officers, have attended training delivered by the KCC Prevent Education Officer.
33. A bespoke training session was delivered to Ashford Port Health staff by the Prevent and Channel Strategic Manager from KCC.

34. There is continuing engagement with the County's Channel Panel to assess and support those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Channel uses existing collaboration between partners to support individuals and protect them from being radicalised.
35. Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum has continued to work closely with the council's Domestic Abuse coordinator to offer a service to all victims of domestic abuse during the year, despite the pandemic and the inability to run the weekly face-to-face One-Stop-Shop.
36. A housing officer attends the bi-weekly Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings to continue to safeguard adults and children from domestic abuse, which are now held virtually due to the pandemic.
37. The DSO attends the Local Children's Partnership Group and provides input and support for their priority areas.
38. District Safeguarding Lead Officers' identified that all districts were recording their referrals in different ways. Therefore, a proposal was submitted to KCC for a software solution and they will be funding the set-up of a Safeguarding Reporting System and the first year's annual fee. This is excellent news and means the cost to districts and boroughs will only be an ongoing annual fee which will be found within existing service budgets. This system is due to be implemented in March 2022.

The electronic safeguarding system will ensure:

- There is a robust process so that districts are able to effectively manage the record of a safeguarding concern.
- District councils in Kent have a standardised way to submit and review safeguarding referrals.
- There is a secure and efficient way to share safeguarding data amongst multi-agency partners.
- Actions are able to be clearly assigned and monitored.
- There is a clear view of the districts' reporting statistics, including the ability to monitor trends across each individual district, which will save time for designated safeguarding leads.

## **Referral update**

39. Between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2021 the council recorded 38 referrals from officers concerning an adult or child/children; this is an increase of 7 reports for the same period last year. The majority of referrals are linked to adults and are reviewed as part of the safeguarding leads meetings.
40. All referrals are recorded and monthly reviews are conducted by the relevant lead officer to ensure that the matters have been addressed.

Referral Group	1 Jan to 31 Mar 2021	1 Apr to 30 Jun 2021	1 Jul to 31 Sep 2021	1 Oct to 31 Dec 2021
Adult Social Care	16	1	4	3
Adult Vulnerability Panel	0	0	1	0
Children - Referral to Front Door	7	4	1	0
Domestic Abuse	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>
No of months	3	3	3	3
pro rata per month	8	1.7	2	1
per quarter	24	5	6	3

## Training

41. The authority is currently 92% compliant for Level 1 Safeguarding training (e-learning) and 74% compliant for Level 2 training (virtual face-to-face). The Level 2 compliance level is lower than last year due to changes that had to be made to switch from face-to-face to virtual. The council's Training Officer worked hard to ensure the Level 2 courses could continue and more are planned over the next few months to increase the level of compliance.
42. A virtual training session on Safeguarding for Borough Councillors was held on 6 October 2021, with 15 attending. It is hoped that more Borough Councillors will attend any further courses on this important subject.
43. The internal safeguarding training content has been reviewed and additional subjects have been added such as modern slavery, hoarding and cuckooing.
44. A process is in place to ensure managers and staff are reminded to book their training once it falls due. If an officer fails to complete their training, after three reminders have been issued, their manager is then notified to take appropriate action.
45. Officers are able to attend continuous development courses based on safeguarding subjects on a regular basis which are facilitated by the Kent Safeguarding Child Multi-agency Partnership. These also tend to be free of charge.

## Conclusion

46. Ashford Borough Council believes that safeguarding is 'everybody's business' and is committed to ensuring children, young people and adults at risk are protected from abuse and are provided with opportunities to thrive. Ashford Borough Council has shown their commitment through the delivery of the achievements listed above whilst facing the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

47. This year has brought unprecedented safeguarding challenges as a consequence of Covid-19. Our strength has come from working closely with our multi-agency partners supporting each other to ensure safeguarding and protecting the most vulnerable within our community is given the priority it both morally and legally deserves.

Cllr Peter Feacey  
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing  
Member Champion for Safeguarding

## **Contact and Email**

48. [alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk), Tel – (01233) 330225

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 8 February 2022

**Report Title:** Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group

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

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



<b>Summary:</b>	The Overview and Scrutiny Budget Scrutiny Task Group has scrutinised the council's draft 2022/23 budget over four meetings. The Task Group have a made number of recommendations to Cabinet to consider when making final budget proposals to recommend to Council.
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**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None specifically

**Recommendations:** **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet that:**

- I. The council's draft budget for 2022/23 is sound and that mitigation plans are in place for any increases to borrowing interest rates during 2022/23.
- II. The council's reserves position is sufficient to manage the economic risks to the 2022/23 budget.
- III. The Task Group support Cabinet's recent decision to have regular monitoring of delivery against Service savings targets, through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23.
- IV. It be noted that the Task Group have concerns over the ability to deliver the savings target in the Planning and Development Service for the next budget year
- V. It be noted that delivery of the Henwood project needs to be timely in order to meet the savings targets in the next financial year

- VI. It be noted that the Task Group supports the invest-to-save approach regarding homelessness prevention proposals following the service review in 2021/22.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task Group recommends to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:**

- VII. The Committee would review their position on the Senior Structure Proposal, once it had been submitted to Cabinet.

**Policy Overview:** Under the council's Constitution the O&S Committee has a duty to scrutinise the council's draft Revenue and Capital Budgets.

**Financial Implications:** As noted in the report

**Legal Implications** As Policy Overview above

**Equalities Impact Assessment** Not required as appended to main budget report

**Other Material Implications:** As noted in the report

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

**Background Papers:** **Draft 2022/23 budget**, report to Cabinet 25 November 2021  
**O&S Budget Scrutiny Task Group Minutes** for the following dates: 01/12/21, 20/12/21, 21/12/21, 11/01/22

**Contact:**  
Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
abi.moffatt@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330394

## **Report Title: Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. In accordance with the council's Constitution, it has a duty to scrutinise the council's draft Capital and Revenue Budgets. The Committee constituted a Task Group made up of five Members to undertake this work, and presents its findings of the draft Budget for 2022/23 within this report.

### **Report of the Chairman of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group**

2. The draft budget documents were considered by the Task Group and detailed how the council intends to fund its services and initiatives for the next municipal year. Although there may be some financial uncertainties during the next year, sufficient reserves were identified to mitigate the potential risks.
3. Members raised concern regarding the proposed savings targets, in particular for the Planning and Development Service. In light of this, savings targets should be looked at prudently when reviewed in the quarterly budget monitoring reports.
4. I would like to thank the Members of the Task Group and all of the Officers who were involved with scrutinising the proposed budget for 2022/23. The Group were grateful for the hard work and time that officers had taken to prepare various presentations and reports regarding their service. I would also like to thank the Portfolio Holders and other Members who attended the meetings.

### **Summary**

5. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to thank all the Officers, Portfolio Holders and Lead Members who attended the Task Group meetings. The sessions yielded much information on the financial and resource challenges facing the authority and the Task Group focused on a number of key risks relating to the achievability of next year's budget.
6. The draft budget for 2022/23 was presented to the Task Group at its first meeting; this included all service budgets and financial risks. The purpose of this session was to assist Members in determining which areas to dedicate additional scrutiny time, these included the following:
  - a. The Port Health Service
  - b. The council's reserves positions and forecast
  - c. Savings and recharges
  - d. Planning and Development Service and the achievability of their savings target.
  - e. Details on expected borrowing interest rate increases.

- f. Housing Service and delivery of savings target.
- g. The risks around the maintenance of assets.
- h. Risks linked to the commercial property portfolio.

**Consultation**

7. The council’s Management Team have since seen the recommendations made by the Task Group and a summary of their advice to the Cabinet has been tabled below:

No.	Recommendation	Summary	Management Team Advice
I	The council’s draft budget for 2022/23 is sound and mitigation plans are in place for any increases to borrowing interest rates during 2022/23.	The Task Group agreed that at this current time the council’s draft budget is sound. It was advised that increases to borrowing interest rates were expected next year and some increases were factored into the budget. Members were confident that increases above forecast could be mitigated by flexing the borrowing strategy.	MT support the recommendation.
II	The council’s reserves position is sufficient to manage the economic risks to the 2022/23 budget.	Members were informed that the council were in a good position with its reserves going forward but there was a need to be mindful. Sufficient reserves were in place to mitigate different risks including economic risk. Additionally, reserves will look to be increased over the 2022/23 year.	MT support the recommendation.
III	The Task Group support Cabinet’s decision to have regular monitoring of Service savings targets through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23.	<p>It was advised that most savings had been delivered up to now, however, some savings originally identified for 2022/23 may not be delivered as intended, although it is necessary to still deliver these savings to support the MTFP. Therefore, the Task Group agreed that the savings target does pose some risk to the budget.</p> <p>Members supported the recent Cabinet decision in the draft budget report to review progress of savings targets within the quarterly budget monitoring reports.</p> <p>Members were also advised that the economic resilience reserve will cover risks related to the delivery of savings, although this should be seen as the last resort.</p>	MT support the decision to monitor savings targets during the year.

IV	<p>It be noted that the Task Group have concerns over the ability to deliver the savings target in the Planning and Development Service for the next budget year.</p>	<p>Members were concerned over the ability of the Planning Service to deliver the savings target of £100,000 relating to the new system implementation included in the budget for 2022/23. The Task Group highlighted that there was a risk to the quality of service provided in light of the pressures around achieving savings targets this year.</p> <p>Members recognised an ongoing risk around recruitment of senior professional planners, with competition coming from the private sector.</p> <p>The use of consultants were a significant cost to the service for both 'specialist' and 'day to day' support although generally funded from existing budgets and salary savings.</p>	<p>MT note the concerns from the Task Group regarding savings targets. MT agreed that options for income growth will be explored.</p>
V	<p>It be noted that delivery of the Henwood project needs to be timely in order to meet the savings targets in the next financial year.</p>	<p>The Task Group identified some risk around delivering the Henwood project linked to ongoing issues at Stodmarsh. Members were informed that options were being considered regarding Stodmarsh, however, assurance was given that the scheme would be delivered within set timescales.</p>	<p>MT agreed that the delivery of the Henwood Project was a priority for the Housing Service.</p>
VI	<p>It be noted that the Task Group supports the invest-to-save approach regarding homelessness prevention proposals following the service review in 2021/22.</p>	<p>Members were advised of the Housing Service's intention to focus on homelessness prevention which will help achieve further savings.</p>	<p>MT endorse the council's approach toward homelessness prevention.</p>
VII	<p>The Committee would review their position on the Senior Structure Proposal, once it had been submitted to Cabinet.</p>	<p>It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee await the senior structure proposals that are planned to come forward over the coming months.</p>	<p>MT support the recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>

## Wrap Up

- To conclude the Budget Scrutiny sessions, the Chairman of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group gave the opportunity for Members to discuss any outstanding issues regarding the budget and a summary presentation was shown to Members to relay some of the key findings of the last few budget scrutiny meetings.

## Conclusion

9. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet that:
- I. **The council's draft budget for 2022/23 is sound and that mitigation plans are in place for any increases to borrowing interest rates during 2022/23.**
  - II. **The council's reserves position is sufficient to manage the economic risks to the 2022/23 budget.**
  - III. **The Task Group support Cabinet's recent decision to have regular monitoring of delivery against Service savings targets, through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23.**
  - IV. **It be noted that the Task Group have concerns over the ability to deliver the savings target in the Planning and Development Service for the next budget year**
  - V. **It be noted that delivery of the Henwood project needs to be timely in order to meet the savings targets in the next financial year**
  - VI. **It be noted that the Task Group supports the invest-to-save approach regarding homelessness prevention proposals following the service review in 2021/22.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task Group recommends to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:

- VII. **The Committee would review their position on the Senior Structure Proposal, once it had been submitted to Cabinet.**

## Contact and Email

10. Abi Moffatt, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
abi.moffatt@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330394

# Ashford Borough Council: Notes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 (Budget Scrutiny 1)

## Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Chilton, Harman, Ledger.

## Also in Attendance:

Cllrs. Clokie, Forest, Meaden, Shorter, Sparks,

## Also Present:

Head of Finance and IT, Head of Housing, Head of Service Port Health, Accountancy Manager, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 1 Election of Chairman

1.1 The Task Group elected Cllr. Ovenden as Chairman.

## 2 Co-opt of non O&S Committee Member

2.1 The Task Group agreed to co-opt Cllr. Harman onto the panel.

## 3 Notes of the previous meetings

3.1 The Task Group agreed that the notes of the meetings held on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 were an accurate record.

## 4 Draft 2021/2022 Budget report and risks

- 4.1 The Draft Budget report was introduced and Members were invited to identify any areas they felt required extra detail and/or clarification on for subsequent meetings:
- Members asked if further budgetary details could be provided about contingency reserves for the Port Health Authority, a breakdown of the schedule of savings, the Carbon Neutrality Plan and the risks around the Commercial Investment Portfolio.
  - The Policy Scrutiny Officer drew Members attention to Appendix F that highlighted the monitoring of commercial rents. A Member commented that investments were usually lower risk.
  - In regards to the Port Health Authority, a Member asked to what extent were ABC responsible or would the Government intervene and bailout. The

Chairman commented that the figures appeared too neat and the Head of Finance explained that it would always be neat and show zero as all fees and charges would be re-charged out. She added that although ABC could expect government assistance in any deficit in the early years, it currently was only guaranteed until 31.03.22. Grants had been agreed, but no contribution to the reserves had been approved yet. The Accountancy Manager added that the Port Health Authority would form part of ABC's statutory responsibility in the longer term.

- A Member suggested Planning also be looked at in more detail, with particular regards to recruitment, administration support/digitalization and the proposed government reforms. The Chairman agreed this area was one to examine further.
- Another query about the Port Health account was raised asking why it was not revenue generating. The Head of Finance and IT explained that it was a ring-fenced fund and if ABC received too much income, this would prompt a decrease in fees and charges to the freight operators.
- The Chairman requested that Homelessness and Housing Provision be reviewed, regarding the carbon neutrality agenda in particular. The Accountancy Manager and Housing Manager explained that the 30 year Business Plan from HRA would be sent to Cabinet in December, and that report would then be available for the Task Group and O&S Committee to look at.
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT clarified that the Planning IT Digital System was set to be implemented from March 2022. Concerning the Port Health Authority, a very good presentation had previously been given to the Audit Committee, and this would be a useful resource to present to the Task Group. He added that the income guarantee from Government had not been extended beyond March 2022, and this did pose a credible threat to the revenue account.
- The Chairman highlighted the overall financial position of the Council and also the non-controllable sections of the budget sheets as areas he felt more details would be valuable. The Head of Finance agreed and explained that accounting rules instructed LA's to take support costs and share those across the actual services delivered. The Accountancy Manager suggested tying the non-controllable costs in with the Port Health review section.
- A Member talked about a government review on borrowing and highlighted this as a topic for review since ABC were in a higher bracket for borrowing costs. The Accountancy Manager explained that the HRA buyout cost was included in those figures, but agreed that this was an area that would have risk around re-financing and interest. With regards to the Property Company, there was no risk to any investment since Housing was classified as a debt not for yield asset, and the majority of investment was for re-generation purposes.
- PWLB rates were discussed and the interest rate rise that the Treasury had implemented, to stop people borrowing for commercial investment. Different preventative measures had since been introduced.

## Recommendations

It was agreed that the Task Group would review the following areas:

- Port Health;
- Planning & Development;
- Finance;
- Housing;
- Corporate Property & Projects.

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)  
Overview & Scrutiny Task Group – Budget Scrutiny

Restricted

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# Ashford Borough Council: Notes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (Budget Scrutiny 2)

## Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Chilton, Harman, Ledger.

## Apology:

Cllr. Shorter

## Also Present:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Blanford, Burgess

Head of Finance and IT, Head of Service Port Health, Head of Planning, Port Health Manager, Accountancy Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 1 Declaration of Interest

1.1 Cllr Bartlett declared an Interest since he lived close to the Inland Border Facility.

## 2 Port Health Presentation

2.1 The Head of Service Port Health gave a presentation to the Task Group, which outlined the purpose of the Border Control Post (BCP) and provided detailed information on the types of products checked, fees set, calculation of charges and IT systems in place.

2.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments:

- The Chairman asked how long the Government subsidy funding was expected to be available for. The Head of Service Port Health confirmed that they were beholden to government, who were promising to underwrite all of the funds. The lease for the BCP building had been agreed with a peppercorn rent and a bid had been submitted for another funding round. The risks to budget were more probable in years 2 and 3 when the BCP would be fully operational. A reserve had been built into the budget.
- The Official Controls Regulation (OCR) provided the opportunity to set charges on a sliding scale between low tonnage up to 44 tonnes. The intention was to encourage hauliers to be more efficient and load to the full 44 tonnes. The timeframe for decanting the Lorries had been accounted for and had no cost implications, only breaking the freight could result in

extra costs. Extra time would be required for sampling but the goods would then be released away from Sevington under a Customs Bond, and the owner would be responsible for arranging the transport in that situation.

- In response to a query regarding an upcoming plastic tax on all imported goods, it was confirmed that the checks for this would come under HMRC Customs Control.

2.3 The Chairman thanked the Head of Service Port Health and Port Health Manager and said that he was confident that there was no current risk to this year's budget from the Service.

**Resolved:**

**That the points discussed above be considered further in formulating the Task Group's final report on its Scrutiny of the Council's Budget for 2022/23.**

### **3 Finance**

3.1 The Accountancy Manager introduced the three Finance Reports – Reserves Position & Forecasting, Savings Identified and Recharge Methodology. He gave a brief run through the papers and stated that the Reserves were in a good position and offered protection from different aspects of risk.

3.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments:

**Reserves Position & Forecasting**

- The Section 31 Grant showed a decreasing balance by the end of the financial year. A Member asked whether this should be increased in light of possible further Covid restrictions and it was confirmed that more contribution was expected into that reserve at year-end, as Government distribute relief and further Section 31 Grant. This was different to statutory relief that offered exempt business rates periods. The Accountancy Manager said that Reserves were sufficient and would be reviewed in March 2022, and it was helpful to remember that the Council shared responsibility with Government for collection rates.

**Savings Identified**

- The Accountancy Manager highlighted a possible concern within the savings report - £640,000 was still to be identified. The approach had been agreed that the Council would remain ambitious so inevitably this encompassed risk, and it was felt appropriate to leave it on the budget report as some savings may not necessarily be delivered as originally intended.
- In response to a query asking whether cuts may be necessary in light of the savings for 22/23 having not been met, it was explained that a large portion of the target savings had already been met in 2021/22. Some projects had been delayed owing to Covid and the Management Team had been asked

to look at ways in which they could make shorter-term savings, some of which may roll across different years. In addition Cabinet had made formal recommendations to monitor progress against the savings.

- A Member said that it was important for the Task Group to note that the saving target had not been met and that looking ahead it was inevitable that the Council would need to look at setting reasonable targets, and making additional savings. The Head of Finance added that within the MTFP, no Government grants had been included, so they were confident that from 2023/24 the Council would no longer be reliant on Government funding.
- The Chairman queried what impact not meeting the savings would have. The Economic Resilience Reserve held approx. £9 million set aside to fund the pressures within the MTFP. In addition, plans and ideas for making savings had already been considered by Heads of Service and would be put into action as and when necessary. It would form part of the quarterly budget monitoring reports.
- In response to a query regarding a change to the senior structure of the Council, the Chairman advised that a briefing could be arranged after Christmas for the Task Group.

**Resolved:**

**That the points discussed above be considered further in formulating the Task Group's final report on its Scrutiny of the Council's Budget for 2022/23.**

## **4 Planning and Development**

4.1 The Head of Planning gave a presentation to the Task Group which covered the four main issues they had highlighted for review, which were risks around recruitment & administration, cost of consultants, digitalisation & the new planning system and major appeals.

4.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments:

- A Member questioned if savings within the Planning budget were realistic, given the challenges that the service had, and still faced. He acknowledged that improvements to the department e.g. the new Planning IT system would take time to bed in before results could be measured.
- Planning application fees set by Central Government had recently risen. The Head of Planning was keen to focus on the fees that ABC could control for non-statutory parts of the application process, in terms of application and pre-application work, but was mindful that the service to customers also had to improve in line with the fee increase.
- The enhanced graduate scheme was agreed to be a good scheme for the Council. The aim being that within a couple of years, candidates would be ready to progress up into vacant posts as they became available.

- A Member asked whether the removal of consultants and their fees would enable a higher salary to be paid to permanent staff in the hope of retaining them at ABC. The Head of Planning explained that it was important to acquire the right balance between showing Ashford as a desirable place to live and work, in concurrence with a respectable salary. From a budget perspective, he said that removing Consultants from the equation too soon would only serve to put extra pressure onto the Service and exacerbate the problem of staff retention. He acknowledged that the salary scale did contain limitations, in particular with the ability for senior Officers to progress into higher roles. The Chairman highlighted this concern and identified that this was an ABC wide issue that could be reviewed by the wider O&S Committee in the coming year.
- The cost of training for the new Planning IT system had already been factored in to the whole cost, and training would be made available for all.
- A Member spoke about how the experience of quality of service stayed with the public, and she asked whether there were ways that the workload could be streamlined, to ensure better time management. Part of the approach to open up capacity had already been implemented and some functions had moved across to the Business Support Team; they now had responsibility for validating applications, which freed up time for Planning Officers.
- In response to a question about graduates, the Head of Planning agreed with Members that Officers already working within the Council often already held the local knowledge about the Borough that was so valuable, and he himself had worked his way up to Head of Service. Sourcing the right opportunities for Officers was vital, and retention was just as important as recruitment. The idea of a central pool of graduates across several LA's was suggested, which would increase opportunities and there would be more chance of someone being available for LAs when a position arose.
- Projects could sometimes place a strain on staff, and so it was important to choose involvement wisely. Officers were currently involved with the digital mapping project led by Central Government and had received funding to work on this. The capacity for staff to be involved in all projects was not available, and therefore ABC had to decipher what they would gain from each project before committing to it. Additionally though, it was beneficial to be on the 'inside' of projects to gain knowledge and insight.
- It was confirmed that legal costs, including situations where external legal advice was sought, were re-charged back to Planning.
- The Chairman asked whether there was a maximum number of cases that Officers could have open at any one time, in relation to utilising Consultants to support with everyday work. The Head of Planning advised that it was a delicate balancing act, but an average of fifty cases would be deemed manageable. The Chairman added that it was prudent to continue to use Consultants until the backlog had been cleared and Officers were handling a more manageable range.
- The Chairman highlighted the savings figure in the Planning budget and asked whether this was realistically deliverable. The Head of Planning confirmed that it would be difficult to deliver those savings in the short term. The Service needed to get back on its feet and that would necessitate time and funds, but once this

position was achieved then the opportunity would arise to make savings and grow income, hopefully beyond the budget expectations. The Chairman noted that the savings figure within the budget papers was £100k, and other savings (listed as income generating) totaled around £60k. He deduced that the savings were unlikely to be met and asked the Head of Planning whether he thought the budget (without the savings) was sufficient to get the Department back on track and maintain the service at the level it was currently being delivered at. The Head of Planning responded that a slower build was necessary, and he wanted to reach the point where the Service could be reviewed with the new structure in full operation, to be able to ascertain whether further work was required, and budget amendments were required. The Head of Accountancy added that service contingency was available, and it was to the Head of Planning's credit that he had considered alternative ways that savings could be delivered, in line with the current targets. Removal of those targets could run the risk of them being lost for the future, so he felt it better to keep them within the budget to keep them on the radar. The Chairman agreed with the points made, but said that it was important to recognize that there was not always scope to make savings.

**Resolved:**

**That the points discussed above be considered further in formulating the Task Group's final report on its Scrutiny of the Council's Budget for 2022/23.**

## **5. Final Meeting**

- 5.1 The Policy & Scrutiny Officer advised that she would compile a slide show for the final wrap up meeting. The Chairman suggested an extra short session would be beneficial, and this could also incorporate the senior staff restructure that had been mentioned earlier in the meeting.

**Post Meeting Note: This is now confirmed for Tuesday 11th January 2022 at 6pm.**

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)  
Overview & Scrutiny Task Group – Budget Scrutiny

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# Ashford Borough Council: Notes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021 (Budget Scrutiny 3)

## Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Chilton, Harman, Ledger.

## Also Present:

Cllrs. Blanford, Iliffe, Wright.

Head of Finance and IT, Head of Housing, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Accountancy Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Manager.

## 1 Finance

- 1.1 The Accountancy Manager introduced his papers which responded to Members questions about current borrowing levels and gave an update on the new Prudential Code and the changes to PWLB funding issued the previous day. The report on borrowing focused on both the Capital Financing Requirement and funding and how to best structure the Council's loan portfolio.
- 1.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -
  - Recent changes in interest rates and base lending rates would increase borrowing costs, but were not considered to be a significant risk to the budget. They were still within the anticipated envelope for 2022/23 and there were always options to switch some of the long term borrowing back in to short term borrowing, in-year, to cut costs and negate exposure.
  - “Unsupported borrowing” was a slightly old accounting term, but it basically meant that no other body (including Government) would be supporting that funding – it was purely borrowing from the market or internally, and repayments would not be supported by others.
  - It was confirmed that Officers were very mindful of restrictions and consequences moving forward if the Council was to consider ‘debt for yield’ opportunities.
- 1.3 If Members had any further questions on these papers they were encouraged to contact the Accountancy Manager separately.

## 2 Housing

2.1 The Head of Housing gave a presentation picking up on the areas of clarification that the Task Group had requested from her draft budget. The focus was on Housing Options and homelessness which were areas that were consistently a pressure on the budget year on year, and the presentation gave details of the wider background, the 2021 review of the Service and the Service Improvement Plan.

2.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- The majority of grant funding to fund the three new posts had been confirmed for three years so there was certainly no significant risk to this year's budget. It would be important to use that time to implement the actions identified in the review to drive down the costs of temporary accommodation. It would be a much more sensible long-term strategy to get those costs under control and then the monies could be reinvested into keeping costs at a stable level. Areas in question would be prevention and working with individuals more closely at the beginning of the homelessness process. If grant funding stopped at some stage in the future they would have to 'cut their cloth accordingly' and make decisions at that stage, but having this opportunity now provided a good base to get costs down and spend the money more wisely.
- The facility at Henwood, whilst important, was only one of the measures to help reduce temporary accommodation costs. Increasing prevention work, better procurement, as well as Christchurch House, Christchurch Lodge and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Project properties and better 'Move-On' arrangements, would all also help to save money. There was a risk with Henwood as it was subject to the planning process and the wider Stodmarsh issue. It was hoped that it would go through planning in early 2022 and, if approved, could be delivered relatively quickly because of its modular nature. Therefore Officers were optimistic that it could begin to deliver significant savings in the second half of the next financial year. There was concern from the Task Group though, as Henwood formed quite a large part of the overall savings for the next financial year.
- The bid for funding for a new post working with Probation Services had been a joint bid with Folkestone and Hythe District Council. Each Authority had its own dedicated worker, but it was a joint bid.
- Ashford had been particularly successful as a Borough at dealing with homelessness at source and placing individuals in to accommodation. It was important though to determine their circumstances and where they had come from. If individuals had come from other areas it may be necessary to relocate them back to their area because Ashford did not

have a duty to them. It was a complex area and a balance between welfare and potentially becoming an 'open door for Kent' and this approach was supported by homelessness legislation.

- Assumptions of homelessness levels for the coming year had been carefully assessed and a lot of work had been targeted around private landlords and tenants already in arrears. They were hoping to make some real headway with their prevention work and had tried not to be too pessimistic, which would massively increase budgets.

### **Resolved**

**That the points discussed above be considered further in formulating the Task Group's final report on its Scrutiny of the Council's Budget for 2022/23.**

## **3 Corporate Property and Projects**

3.1 The Head of Corporate Property and Projects gave a presentation picking up on the areas of clarification that the Task Group had requested from his draft budget. The presentation was split in to two parts: - the first focusing on Asset Management (Management and Maintenance of the Corporate Estate); and the second focusing on the Commercial Property Portfolio.

### **Asset Management**

3.2 The first part of the presentation introduced the Service, including the different teams within it, the general approach and gave further details of risk areas. This included: - regeneration; procurement and contracts; the recent Service Review and proposed additional resources; the carbon agenda and the large amount of work associated with that; the asset management budget itself; and planned works to 2024.

3.3 This part of the item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- In relation to the 'just in time' approach that had been adopted, planned maintenance was set yearly and potential projects reviewed on an annual basis and pushed back if unnecessary. They did however have to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations, particularly where tenants were paying rent. Requests were managed via a scoring mechanism in the agreed Asset Management Strategy.
- Carbon neutrality underpinned everything the Service did, from repairs and renewals, improvements, procurement, contract management etc.
- International House had a planned request for £1.25m for roof repairs in 2023/24. A review of this was part of the ongoing Stock Condition Survey work. There was however no impact for the coming financial year.

### **Commercial Property Portfolio**

- 3.4 The second part of the presentation addressed the specific points raised around risks to the Commercial Property Portfolio and performance information.
- 3.5 The Commercial Property presentation was then opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -
- Changing working practices (home/hybrid) and the future need for office space were big considerations. A number of companies were holding over on their leases as a result of this and once things had all become a bit clearer, there would be a need to consider options for longer term use of buildings and/or individual floors. It was an unknown at the moment but if a significant drop in demand did come to pass, there would have to be a wider options appraisal for assets such as International House.
  - In terms of the coming financial year, with the companies holding over, there was always a risk of withdrawals. Early indications were that most would like to retain some office space and there were also other companies still expressing an interest in taking on space if it became available. It was really however too early to have any certainty at this stage. Block B of International House (the DWP) was signed up to 2028 so that income was secure.
  - Debt collection/income from industrial units had remained fairly strong, despite the ongoing pandemic. However the Council was not afraid to intervene if necessary and there had been evictions due to non-payment of rent. It was after all a commercial portfolio.
  - Assets were marketed as widely as possible via local agents and as part of digital transformation work, the Service had created an on-line estate agency window to promote and advertise available space and allow people to express an interest. There was also an element of 'word of mouth' and a good reputation for tenancy management.

#### **Resolved**

**That the points discussed above be considered further in formulating the Task Group's final report on its Scrutiny of the Council's Budget for 2022/23.**

## **4 Wrap Up**

- 4.1 It was confirmed that an extra meeting was going to be arranged in the New Year to undertake the Wrap-Up.

**Post Meeting Note: This is now confirmed for Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 6pm.**

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)  
Overview & Scrutiny Task Group – Budget Scrutiny

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# Ashford Borough Council: Notes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Wrap Up meeting – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (Budget Scrutiny 4)

## Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllr. Ledger.

## Apologies:

Cllr. Chilton, Harman.

## Also Present:

Cllrs. Blanford, Burgess, Clokie, Shorter, Wright.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Finance and IT, Accountancy Manager, Development Partnership Manager, Compliance and Data Protection Manager, Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 1 HRA Business Plan

- 1.1 The Accountancy Manager introduced this item, following a request by the Task Group Members to review the plan.
- 1.2 In response to a query regarding Other Appropriations and Appropriated Out figures on Page 39, this related to repayment of borrowing and affected the revenue element, so observed repayment of debt.

### Recommendation:

**The Task Group noted the report.**

## 2 Wrap Up & Recommendations

- 2.1 The Policy and Scrutiny Officer gave a presentation that summarised the key points discussed at each Budget Scrutiny meeting, and listed six recommendations that the Task Group would recommend to Cabinet, and one recommendation for the O&S full Committee.
- 2.2 The item was opened up to the Task Group and the following responses were given to questions/comments:-

- The Deputy Chief Executive discussed the issue of Stodmarsh, and he

explained that ABC had identified the need to deliver approximately thirty hectares of wetland to allow the continuation of planning approvals. The Head of Corporate Property & Projects had been trying to identify sites in the Borough and negotiate with landowners, but had not yet been successful in acquiring any land. The Project Green scheme with an area of land near the Designer Outlet had been identified as a potential location. The problem with procurement of this type of land was that there was not an established market, and therefore prices for land for nutrient neutrality were an unknown, and prices could consequently fluctuate quite drastically. Another complication was that farmland could often be held in family or commercial trust, so the process was often long and drawn out. A number of Members met routinely to monitor the delivery of the mitigation land. The Development Partnership Manager added that the Minister for Housing had been made aware of the Stodmarsh situation and the topic was expected to feature on BBC South East today in the coming weeks.

- A Member highlighted the imminent commissioning of the Planning IT system and the prospect of potential mitigation to that risk. The Chairman agreed but explained that the Head of Planning had stated in his presentation that the new IT system would not deliver the £100k savings outlined in the report. He had gone on to say that some opportunities would arise to create revenue, which would go some way to provide savings, but there was still a shortfall of unidentified savings. This raised concerns that there was a hole in the Planning budget going forward. The Chairman's view was that Planning should have some leeway, although he understood that this could be deemed unfair on other Departments, therefore the recommendation was that the Task Group note the concerns, and note that it was a monitoring budget.
- The Chief Executive mentioned the Senior Staff restructure proposals that were currently out for consultation with staff. This looked at potentially making changes, only once feedback had been received from staff. The Consultation Paper would then have to go to Joint Consultative Committee, Cabinet and then Council, so it was still in the very early stages. It was intended that there would be only minimum pressure on any budgets, and particularly not on the 2022/23 budget resulting from the structure review. Further budget pressures could possibly be felt owing to incremental salary increases, which was often the case in other Local Authorities. The final report would be available for the O&S Committee to review.
- The settlement figure from Central Government had been received, and Ashford had not been awarded any additional funding, but in effect had received a real terms reduction. The Government confirmed that it would compensate for NI contributions, but by compensating for the £200k cost, they had then lowered the Lower Tier Grant, which cancelled out the £200k compensation. As a consequence, ABC now had a pressure on the budget of £500,000 which was proposed to be funded from reserves, since it was a one off pressure for this year only. Ashford

had received more New Homes Bonus (NHB), but this was still within the core spending power, so effectively had just been moved from grants into NHB. No NHB was placed into the budget, and the Leader of the Council agreed this funding be split between the Carbon Reduction Project, and Corporate Projects. ABC would respond to the Consultation to state that they, along with some other Kent Authorities, felt penalized and felt that a number of factors should be considered including the EU exit and introducing the Inland Border Facility, the Syrian Refugee Settlement Scheme and Stodmarsh.

- 2.3 The Policy and Scrutiny Officer confirmed the next step was to write the Final Report, which would be submitted to the next O&S Committee Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022, and then be submitted to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

### **Resolved**

**That the Recommendations be submitted to the next O&S Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022.**

Councillor Ovenden (Chairman)  
Overview & Scrutiny Task Group – Budget Scrutiny

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# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Report Tracker – February 2022

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23	March 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	A report to review suggested topics for scrutiny during the 2022/23. Topics will have been reviewed in the scrutiny matrix.
Section 106 Process Task Group – Recommendations Update	May 2022	Planning and Development	The Committee will receive an update on the progress of implementing recommendations, approved by Cabinet in November 2021.
Annual Performance Report	June 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	A report to outline the council's performance and achievements during the last year.
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	June 2022	Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining work carried out by the Committee in during the last year.
Annual Sickness Report	July 2022	HR & Customer Services	A report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.
Consultation and Engagement	During 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.
Budget Scrutiny Meetings	December to January 2022/23	Finance and IT	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2022/23 will take place over three or four meetings during December and a final report is expected

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