



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in Committee Room No. 2 (Bad Münstereifel Room), Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on **Tuesday, 13th September, 2022 at 7.00 pm.**

---

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

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

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

### Agenda

	<b>Page Nos.</b>
<b>1. Apologies/Substitutes</b>	
To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)	
<b>2. 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	
<b>3. Minutes - 14th June 2022</b>	3 - 6
To approve the Minutes of the last Meeting	
<b>4. Corporate Performance Report (Quarter 1 2022/23)</b>	7 - 40
<b>5. S106 Review – Process Mapping Update</b>	41 - 64
<b>6. Annual Sickness Report 2021/22</b>	65 - 78

---

7.	<b>Hybrid Working</b>	79 - 156
8.	<b>Tracker</b>	157 - 158

5 September 2022

---

Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Member Services  
Telephone:01233 330491 Email: [membersservices@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:membersservices@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

# Agenda Item 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **14<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman);

Cllrs. Barrett, Chilton (vice-chair), Hayward, Howard-Smith, Ledger, Meaden

### **Apologies:**

Cllr. Brooks, Burgess, Farrell, Mulholland

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Blanford, Harman (remotely)

Cllr. Wright

### **In attendance:**

Senior Governance & Data Protection Officer, Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer

Compliance and Data Protection Manager (remotely)

## **43 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **44 Scope for Consultation and Engagement Review**

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced this item and clarified the key aims of the review. She reiterated that the topic could be correlated to a broad range of services and therefore it was important to keep the review refined and focussed. Members were asked to approve the scope and further volunteers were needed for the Task Group to run effectively.

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

- A Member spoke about Parish Councils frustrations regarding communication between themselves and ABC, where emails and letters were not being responded to in a timely manner. Other Members agreed and added that they also sometimes became frustrated with the lack of response from some Departments and Officers. In addition, Unparished areas were highlighted as having little or no communication from the Council. The Policy & Scrutiny

Officer reiterated that the review was specifically about engagement as opposed to communication (or lack of). The Chairman said that at present the line was drawn under Parish Councils and highlighted the primary problem as getting people to converse and engage with the Council. He advised Councillors that if they had particular continual communication problems with individual Officers, then this should be raised with the Director in charge of that Service. It was suggested that a separate review of internal communication be undertaken. The Chairman asked the Policy & Scrutiny Officer to run the topic of general communication through the selection matrix.

- The methodology used for public consultation was raised as one of the biggest problems in terms of reduced public engagement. A Member suggested that new, unorthodox methods should be considered to obtain information.

**Resolved:**

**That the Scope be approved by the Committee and Cllrs Barrett and Chilton volunteered in addition to Cllrs Blanford, Ledger and Ovenden to form the Task Group**

## **45 Annual Performance Report 2021/22**

The Senior Governance & Data Protection Officer introduced the report, which looked at the achievements and milestones that the Council had realised over the year in the context of the Recovery Plan 2020-2022. The report also summarised performance against the council's suite of key performance indicators (KPI's) for the year 2021-2022.

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

- A Member drew attention to the section of the report regarding the backlog of planning applications. The Budget Scrutiny Task Group had requested that the Planning Department be given time to implement certain changes and then report back to the Committee. He wondered whether now was the time to invite them back, in order to update Members on the work still outstanding. The Chairman agreed that progression had been made by the Department, and he suggested that before Planning attend a Committee meeting, a secondary report be produced to show comparisons between where they stood at the time of Budget Scrutiny and where they were now. This would allow the Committee to see what measures had worked effectively, and if any trends were present.
- The issue of land acquisition for affordable housing was raised, specifically the financial implications and restrictions in regards to purchasing new sites for the next consignment of affordable and social housing, within the next couple of years. The Chairman added that social housing was a permanent addition to the Councils assets, and therefore borrowing was feasible, since the asset value had longevity. The problem was in regards to borrowing and

any government caps that may be introduced in the future, plus the tough competitive market for land acquisition. A Member added that it was thought that some of the larger housing developers had already put down payments on large sections of potential house building land around the country, and suggested garden towns could be an alternative option for local councils in the future.

- A Member highlighted the need for bigger houses (with more bedrooms) to be built, to accommodate larger families.
- It was noted that the Report did not comprise many projects or events from Tenterden.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee note the contents of the Annual Performance Report and approve its publication on the Council's website.**

## **46 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Tracker**

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced the report, which detailed the work carried out by the Committee over the year in line with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. This included a Task Group review of the Section 106 process and presentations from external bodies including KCC and NHS CCG, regarding youth unemployment and young people's mental health.

**Resolved:**

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

This page is intentionally left blank

**Agenda Item No:**

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



**Date of Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September  
Cabinet: Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September

**Report Title:** Performance Report, Quarter 1 2022/23

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

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Peter Feacey  
**Portfolio Holder for:**

**Summary:** This report summarises performance against the council's updated suite of KPIs reflecting the Corporate Plan 2022-24

Certain performance indicators from the previous council's framework have been retained and allow for historic data comparison, however a number of new performance indicators have been agreed upon, for which data is only available for this last quarter.

As this is the first of the performance reports reflecting the Corporate Plan 2022- 24 – all measures have been included both those which, going forward, will be reported upon annually and those reported upon quarterly.

**Key Decision:** No

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None

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

**I. Consider the performance data for Quarter 1 2022/23**

**Policy Overview:** Performance measures have been updated to reflect the objectives and priorities of The Corporate Plan 22-24.

This quarterly Performance Report acts as an opportunity to monitor the progress made by the council against the Corporate Plan.

**Financial Implications:**

N/A

**Legal Implications:**

N/A

**Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Not required as the report presents information on past council performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

**Data Protection Impact Assessment:**

N/A

**Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):**

N/A

**Sustainability Implications:**

N/A

**Other Material Implications:**

N/A

**Exempt from Publication:**

No

**Background Papers:**

The Corporate Plan 2022-24

**Contact:**

Tom.Swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330432

**Portfolio Holder's Views:**

In this first quarter performance report we welcome a number of new key performance measures that will assist us in monitoring progress towards delivery of our Corporate Plan 2022-24. These new measures are set out together with well-established ones, providing a holistic overview of our direction of travel. The traffic light system is an effective way of showing that positive progress has already been made against our ambitious Corporate Plan, whilst highlighting areas of focus for quarter 2. This first report includes the quarterly as well as annual targets, the latter of which we will return to at the end of the year

## Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 1 2022/23

### Introduction and Background

1. In 2019 we embarked on a comprehensive study to inform our next Corporate Plan, envisaging that this would be developed and adopted during 2020. As our work with stakeholders was coming to a conclusion the coronavirus pandemic forced the country into lockdown in March 2020. Our [Recovery Plan](#) was developed as an interim strategic document to focus our work towards enabling a timely recovery from the pandemic, supporting residents, communities and local business.
2. With the start of the 22/23 financial year the Recovery Plan has now been superseded by the [Corporate Plan 22-24](#). This new Corporate Plan continues this journey and looks ahead, with renewed vigour, to realise the [Ashford Ambition](#) that was developed with a wide range of local stakeholders for a vibrant, caring and sustainable borough.
3. The Ashford Ambition is supported by three priority themes:
  - Green Pioneer – Where businesses, communities and the public and third sector have come together to become carbon neutral, respect the local environment and ecology, and embrace a more sustainable way of living.
  - Caring Ashford – A caring and supportive place to live, with rich heritage; thriving towns, villages and rural communities; great schools; high-quality housing; a plethora of cultural activities and events; and a strong sense of civic pride.
  - Targeted Growth – A place where productive, innovative, responsible town and rural business communities offer good quality work to an agile and skilled local workforce who have embraced a culture of lifelong learning.

These along with our underlying principles provide a framework that focuses our efforts on working towards our strategic objectives.
4. This report seeks to provide an overview of performance against the council's key performance indicators for Quarter 1 2022/23. The council's performance framework captures key performance data from across the organisation as it relates to the council's Corporate Plan.

## **Areas of Note**

5. As this is the first performance report reflecting the performance indicators as identified in the Corporate Plan, there are a number of new measures where this quarters data is the first available. With time, trend data will become established, allowing for performance to be compared over time. Additionally, being the first report all measures have been included, providing a baseline for those measures which going forward will be reported upon annually.









## Ashford Ambition:




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






Theme	Challenges	Objectives	Outcomes
<p><b>Green Pioneer</b> Our long term aim: Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected and enhanced.</p>	<p>Tackling climate change by achieving carbon neutrality</p> <p>Enabling development whilst protecting the environment</p> <p>Ensuring no one is disadvantaged as we reduce the carbon footprint of our services and operations</p>	<p><b>GP1:</b> Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets</p> <p><b>GP2:</b> Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles</p> <p><b>GP3:</b> Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homes are energy efficient and cheaper to heat. Renewable energy generation and consumption increases. Fewer local car journeys are made, air quality improves and residents are more active and healthy.</li> <li>- Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases</li> <li>- A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce</li> </ul>
<p><b>Caring Ashford</b> Our long term aim: Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected.</p>	<p>Enabling homes that are affordable to local people on low incomes</p> <p>Improving wellbeing and opportunities for people living in the most disadvantage areas</p> <p>Raising educational attainment and skills level of local population</p>	<p><b>CA1:</b> Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely</p> <p><b>CA2:</b> Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment</p> <p><b>CA3:</b> Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people</p> <p><b>CA4:</b> Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs</li> <li>- Local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability</li> <li>- The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved</li> <li>- Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding</li> </ul>
<p><b>Targeted Growth</b> Our long term aim: A thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.</p>	<p>Ensuring our towns remain vibrant places and adapt to changing consumer habits</p> <p>Matching local skills with the needs of employers</p> <p>Attracting new industries to establish in borough and retain and grow existing business</p>	<p><b>TG1:</b> Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough</p> <p><b>TG2:</b> Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents</p> <p><b>TG3:</b> Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy</p> <p><b>TG4:</b> Support growth in the visitor economy</p> <p><b>TG5:</b> Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes</li> <li>- Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business</li> <li>- Local business survival rates improve</li> <li>- The borough is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences</li> <li>- Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities</li> </ul>

PI Status		Long Term Trends	
	Alert		Improving
	Warning		No Change
	OK		Getting Worse

## Green Pioneer Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
DCP_KPI_06 Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Officers are developing a proposal for a travel plan for Ashford Borough Council staff. Work continues to explore how we can work with a local business to pilot an active travel plan within the borough to inform further role out.									
CP_KPI_09 Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	48.67%	50%		49%	50%		55%	50%		Q1 figures based on data for April and May, June figure due shortly.
Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50% <a href="#">DEFRA's nationwide recycling league tables</a> .											
Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links. <a href="#">WasteDataFlow Waste and recycling statistics</a>											

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_10 Refuse Collection Success Rate	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made	99.95%	99.96%		99.97%	99.96%		99.96%	99.96%		Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links: <a href="#">WasteDataFlow</a> <a href="#">Waste and recycling statistics</a>

Green Pioneer  
Annual Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
<p><b>CP_KPI_01</b></p> <p><b>Council's carbon footprint (tCO2e) Annual</b></p>	Council's carbon footprint (tCO2e)	Annual measure – Baseline figure <b>3599 tCO2e</b> for Y2019/20			<p>In July 2019 Ashford Borough Council declared its aim to become carbon neutral in its own estate and operations by 2030.</p> <p>The Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC), driven by a lead Member leads on the commitment to act and achieve this agenda.</p> <p>In May 2021 officers initiated consultancy work with Laser Energy (our corporate estate energy provider) to establish the Council's own carbon baseline (on own assets and assist with the borough wide picture) with a view to modelling potential carbon descent plans for net zero for council owned assets. This returned a carbon baseline of 3599 tCO2e for Y2019/20</p> <p>Detailed information on Ashford Borough Council's framework for climate action is included within - <a href="#">Climate Change Action - A Systemic Approach.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)</a>.</p>
<p><b>CP_KPI_02</b></p> <p><b>Council owned renewable energy provision (kWh) Annual</b></p>	Total potential capacity of council owned renewable energy provision (kWh)	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 21-22 estimated average of <b>357,000kWh</b> per year.			<p>The council has been proactive in installing Solar PV on its buildings since 2011 and now generates an estimated average of 357,000kWh per year.</p> <p>The importance of maximising the use of solar photovoltaic (PV) on Council buildings is understood and projects including the installation at Carlton Road - Stour Centre Car Park - Ellingham Industrial Estate - Blindgrooms Lane are being explored.</p>
<p><b>CP_KPI_03</b></p> <p><b>Number of EV charging points on council property Annual</b></p>	Number of EV charging points on council property	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 21-22 <b>14</b> EV charging points on council property			<p>Current network of charging points in Ashford resulted in 24,633 kWh energy consumption from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. The council currently has 14 council managed charging points.</p> <p>The network of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) is planned to be expanded and its reliability improved in the following years. Ashford Borough Council has been successful in a funding bid to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) to help forge ahead with plans to increase the number of EVCPs in council-managed car parks. Cabinet has already approved the release of funds from its Climate Change Reserve Fund to install even more EVCPs in locations that are ineligible for funding through the OLEV scheme.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
					Further information is available within the <a href="https://www.ashford.gov.uk/2022-air-quality-annual-status-report">2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ashford.gov.uk)</a>
<b>CP_KPI_04</b> <b>Air Quality</b>	Number of Air Quality Management Areas	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 21-22 <b>0</b>  Air Quality Annual Status report produced each June			Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are declared when there is an exceedance or likely exceedance of an air quality objective. After declaration, the authority should prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) within 12 months setting out measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of compliance with the objectives. Ashford Borough Council currently does not have any declared AQMAs. For reference, a map of Ashford Borough Council's monitoring locations, as well as those undertaken by National Highways within Ashford, is available from <a href="https://www.ashford.gov.uk/2022-air-quality-annual-status-report">2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ashford.gov.uk)</a>
<b>CP_KPI_05</b> <b>Area of land (km2) managed for nature conservation Annual</b>	Area of land (km2) managed for nature conservation	<b>86,156M2</b> of meadows created			<p>Ashford Borough Council have set out how they will increase biodiversity within council owed green spaces by introducing a variety of habitats and varying maintenance regimes.</p> <p>The creation of more meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans across the borough, will benefit wildlife, improve the wellbeing of our residents by connecting them with nature as well as continuing to maintain our open spaces in a way that promotes a sense of place and space.</p> <p>The council's in-house landscape management service, Aspire, are proposing to make some changes to selected areas of land they manage including introducing areas of uncut grass for meadow creation.</p> <p><a href="https://www.moderngov.co.uk/the-creation-of-meadows-and-enhanced-land-management-plans-to-support-increased-biodiversity">The Creation of Meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans to support increased biodiversity: (moderngov.co.uk)</a></p>
<b>CP_KPI_07</b> <b>Number of trees planted (net gain) supported through ABC projects Annual</b>	Number of trees planted (net gain) supported through ABC projects	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 21-22 <b>40,000</b> trees have been planted across the borough so far			<p>To thank Her Majesty for her service and celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, Ashford Borough Council is aiming to plant one tree representing each resident who will be living in the borough in 2022. This will be almost 135,500 trees planted over the next three years.</p> <p>Trees will be planted in the winter/spring planting seasons from October 2021 through the Jubilee year in 2022 and beyond to 2024.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note																
		Value	Target	Status																	
CP_KPI_08  Level of biodiversity in defined project areas Annual	Level of biodiversity in defined project areas	New meadow areas have been created at Queen Mothers Park and Singleton to date.			<p>Ashford Borough Council have set out how they will increase biodiversity within council owned green spaces by introducing a variety of habitats and varying maintenance regimes.</p> <p>The creation of more meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans across the borough will benefit wildlife, improve the wellbeing of our residents by connecting them with nature as well as continuing to maintain our open spaces in a way that promotes a sense of place and space.</p> <p>The council's in-house landscape management service, Aspire, are proposing to make some changes to selected areas of land they manage including introducing areas of uncut grass for meadow creation.</p> <p><a href="http://modern.gov.co.uk">The Creation of Meadows and enhanced Land Management Plans to support increased biodiversity: (modern.gov.co.uk)</a></p>																
CP_KPI_11  Contamination rate in recycling loads Annual	Contamination rate in recycling loads	average total contamination rate for 21-22 was <b>13.72%</b>			<p>Recycling is currently collected commingled via an alternate weekly collection system using a 240-litre green wheeled bin, or clear sacks, with accepted materials including paper and card, cartons, plastic bottles and pots, tubs and trays, metal cans, and glass bottles and jars accepted at the kerbside. Residual waste is collected using 180-litre wheeled bins, and the council offers a weekly food waste and fortnightly garden waste service from many homes.</p> <p>Rejected contaminated loads, for example, contained black sacks, food waste, nappies and sanitary waste, as well as other non-recyclable items, are sent to the Allington Energy from Waste (EfW) facility, where due to their contamination loads are incinerated, rather than being recycled.</p> <p>Main contamination for 21-22 coming from Black sacks 3.51% , Food 3.11% and Wood at 4.79%</p>																
CP_KPI_12  Reported incidences of fly-tipping Annual	Reported incidences of fly-tipping	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 21-22 <b>1514</b> registered fly-tips.			<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2019 – 2020</th> <th>2020 – 2021</th> <th>2021 – 2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>No. of fly tips registered</b></td> <td>1538</td> <td>2027</td> <td>1514</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Fines Issued</b></td> <td>2</td> <td>7</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total £ paid in fines</b></td> <td>£4744.00</td> <td>£775.00</td> <td>£3595.77</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022	<b>No. of fly tips registered</b>	1538	2027	1514	<b>Fines Issued</b>	2	7	48	<b>Total £ paid in fines</b>	£4744.00	£775.00	£3595.77
	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022																		
<b>No. of fly tips registered</b>	1538	2027	1514																		
<b>Fines Issued</b>	2	7	48																		
<b>Total £ paid in fines</b>	£4744.00	£775.00	£3595.77																		

Caring Ashford  
Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_13 Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	99%	98.5%	✓	99.1%	98.5%	✓	99.2%	98.5%	✓	

With additional inspection capacity being made available by Ashford Port Health, the Food and Health & Safety team were able to complete the Food Inspection programme for 2021/22 and meet the commitments made to the Food Standards Agency in the recovery programme.

Ashford Borough Council's Annual Food Service Plan 2022/23, includes a review of performance in delivering official food controls during 2021/22 is available at: [Food Services Plan 2022/23.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Page 17

CP_KPI_17 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	0			31			17			Halstow Way completed in this quarter. 17 flats (4 x 3-bed duplex apartments, 7 x 2-bed flats and 6 x 1-bed homes)  <a href="#">Repton - Land Acquisition in the HRA.pdf (modern.gov.co.uk)</a>  Looking forward - At this time this is bound by Stodmarsh nutrient neutrality mitigation measures. With Stodmarsh mitigation measures necessary before we can deliver many of our current plans.  However in the pipeline for delivery we have 20 homes with approval in Mabledon Avenue that we would hope to begin on site as soon as possible and that in the planning process we currently have 3 x infill schemes totalling 12 homes, an independent living scheme totalling 69 dwellings and a temporary accommodation scheme totalling 23 dwellings.
---	---	---	--	--	----	--	--	----	--	--	--

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_18 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	5			3			3			This quarter saw 3 completions, with a further 3 in conveyancing.  Annual target of approximately 20 units. With a focus on strategic purchases, targeted at the type of properties needed.
CP_KPI_19 Homelessness Presentations	No. of homelessness presentations	323			404			391			
CP_KPI_19b Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	28			28			24			

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.

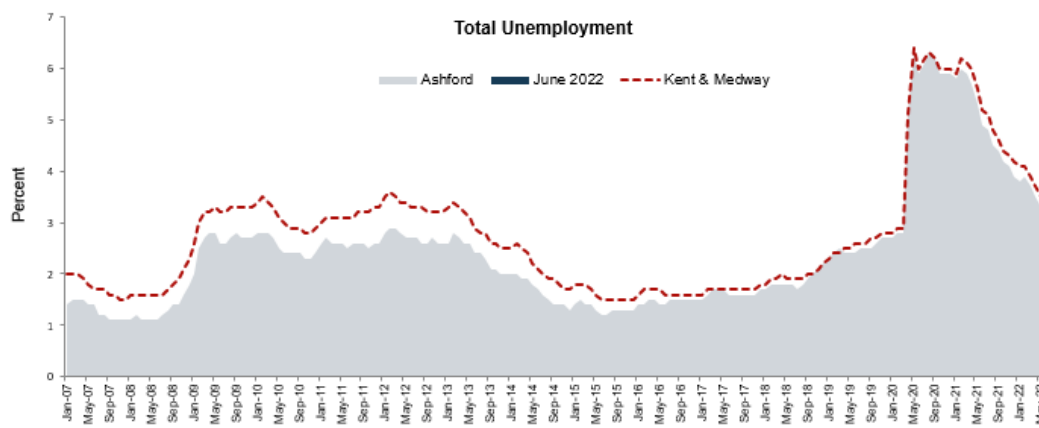
The latest data tables on local government housing including Ashford Borough Council, covering social housing sales, homelessness, and affordable housing supply are available at the following links: [Social housing sales](#) [Homelessness](#) [Affordable housing supply](#)

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



Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_20 Disabled Facilities Grants Completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	18			13			16			On target figure for the time of the year.
CP_KPI_20b Disabled Facilities Grant Spend	Actual spend per month for disabled facility grants	£203,740.90			£200,928.24			£196,521.61			Good figure for interim payments allowing cases to move forward prior to completion.

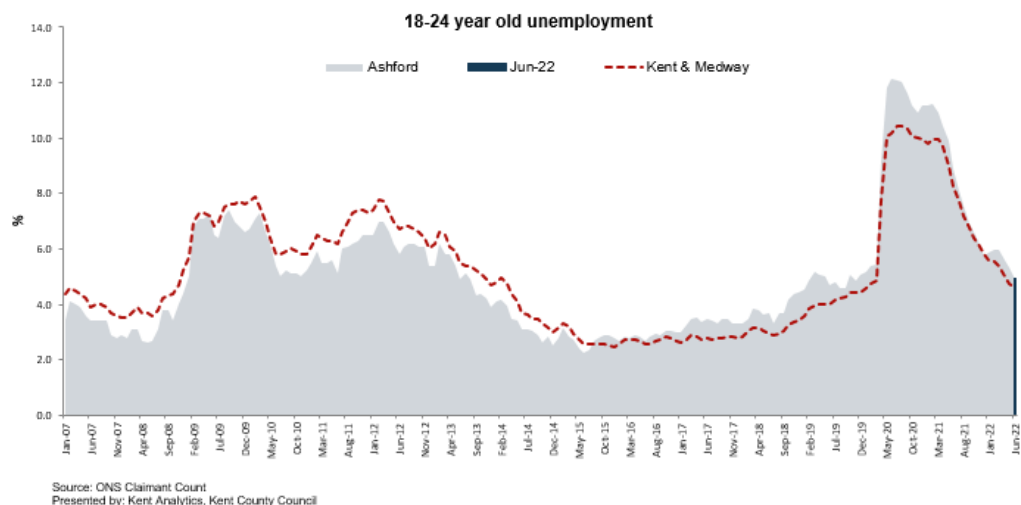
Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_21 Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data	3.9%			3.7%			3.2%		Improving trend	More information available within - <a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a>



Source: ONS Claimant Count  
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

June 2022	Number	% rate	Number change since May 2022	% change since May 2022	Number change since June 2021	% change since June 2021
Ashford	2,495	3.2%	-120	-4.6%	-1,340	-34.9%
Kent & Medway	38,575	3.4%	-1,170	-2.9%	-19,980	-34.1%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_22 Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data	5.8%			6%			4.9%		Improving trend	More information available within - <a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a>  Latest available data on Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is available from - <a href="#">Tracking Young People - KELS!</a>



### 18-24 Unemployment

June 2022	Number	% rate	Number change since May 2022	% change since May 2022	Number change since June 2021	% change since June 2021
Ashford	430	4.9%	-35	-7.5%	-345	-44.5%
Kent & Medway	6,495	4.6%	-210	-3.1%	-5,225	-44.6%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_26 Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	2.02	10		1.84	10		1.94	10		Benefit change of circumstance processing time continues to remain on target.
CP_KPI_27 Benefit New Claim Processing Time	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	25.2	28		25.96	28		28.78	28		Please note there has been a delay in the processing of a number of new claims in Exempt Supported Accommodation and Temporary Accommodation due to delays in obtaining clarification regarding subsidy implications from the DWP.
CP_KPI_30 Number of tickets sold local lottery scheme	Number of tickets sold local lottery scheme – generating x amount.	New Measure			New Measure			Since start of scheme 17 Feb 2022, <b>16,614 tickets</b>			<p>Lottery: Since lottery scheme started selling tickets on 17 Feb 2022, 16,614 tickets have been sold generating £9,968.40 for good causes.</p> <p>Information about the Ashford Community Lottery is available from <a href="#">Ashford Community Lottery: Easy online fundraising for good causes - Ashford Community Lottery</a></p>
CP_KPI_32 Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	<p>New measure</p> <p><b>Ongoing projects and activities:</b>  <b>Silent Sunday</b> (SEN); a weekly soft play session targeted towards children up to 12yrs with special educational needs.  <b>Learning Difficulties Group</b>, East Kent NHS Foundation; This is a 10-week course where supervised access to the gym and an exclusive Aqua Aerobics class is offered.  <b>75+ free swimming</b> was launched recently in Q2 and now has 9 members. Local link ups to Age UK are aiming to boost participation.</p> <p><b>New in the quarter:</b>  <b>GP Referral Re-launch;</b> newly re-launched scheme across both Stour and Julie Rose with a dedicated staff member, more pathways to referral, better monitoring and use of more facilities such as the Stour Bio-circuit</p>									

Caring Ashford  
Annual Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note															
		Value	Target	Status																
<p><b>CP_KPI_14</b></p> <p><b>Number of all recorded crime figures Annual</b></p>	Recorded Town Centre crime	<p>Baseline figure for 21-22</p> <p>Victoria ward which includes the town centre all crime <b>175</b> violence against the person 65</p>			<p>In Autumn 2021, following a successful bid to the Home Office, Ashford was awarded almost £550,000 to make the streets of its town centre safer, particularly for women and girls. The scheme includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of the Ashford Streetwise app (launching 29 April)</li> <li>• Active Bystander training has been delivered to over 180 front line staff from businesses operating in the town centre</li> <li>• A network of Safe Spaces - premises people can go to if they need help and support when out in the town centre (look out for the window sticker or find them on the app)</li> <li>• Additional Ashford Partnership Against Crime radios purchased to increase the number of guardians in the town centre (and support Safe Spaces)</li> <li>• 20 school presentations, emphasising key safety messages and the importance of respect and healthy relationships</li> <li>• CCTV cameras have been installed in Edinburgh Road Car park and at Elwick Place, eight public space cameras have been installed in the town centre as well as wall-mounted mirrors to improve sightlines</li> <li>• Improvements to the Memorial Gardens to remove undergrowth and replace the perimeter fence</li> <li>• Purchase and distribution of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smarttag to licensed premises</li> <li>• Personal safety equipment</li> <li>• Pressure washer and litter picking equipment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Additionally, Ashford Borough Council has joined forces with Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) on a year-long 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.</p>															
<p><b>CP_KPI_15</b></p> <p><b>Number killed or seriously injured on the roads Annual</b></p>	Number killed or seriously injured on Ashford's roads	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Collisions</th> <th>Casualties</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Fatal</b></td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Serious</b></td> <td>37</td> <td>44</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Slight</b></td> <td>198</td> <td>283</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>242</b></td> <td><b>334</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Calendar year 2021</p>		Collisions	Casualties	<b>Fatal</b>	7	7	<b>Serious</b>	37	44	<b>Slight</b>	198	283	<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>334</b>			<p>The number of personal injury collisions at any location in Kent is available at <a href="http://www.crashmap.co.uk">www.crashmap.co.uk</a>.</p> <p>The County is served by three Highway Authorities: Kent County Council (KCC), Highways England and Medway Council. Kent Police collects over 60 pieces of statistical data for each injury crash for the whole county. Crashes are categorised by severity:</p> <p><b>Fatal</b> - a crash resulting in a death  <b>Serious</b> - detention in hospital, includes paralysis, fractures and severe lacerations</p>
	Collisions	Casualties																		
<b>Fatal</b>	7	7																		
<b>Serious</b>	37	44																		
<b>Slight</b>	198	283																		
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>334</b>																		

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
					<p><b>Slight</b> - includes whiplash, sprains and minor lacerations</p> <p>Human error is a factor in 95% of road crashes. Based on the Department for Transport's (DfT) figures the cost to the community of a fatal crash is around £1.9 million, a serious crash costs in the region of £216,000 and a slight crash costs £23,000. For more information about crash and casualty figures please see <a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-safety/crash-and-casualty-data">www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-safety/crash-and-casualty-data</a>.</p>
<p><b>CP_KPI_16</b></p> <p><b>Number of play areas revamped/refreshed/replaced Annual</b></p> <p>Page 24</p>	<p>Number of play areas revamped/refreshed / replaced</p>	<p>This year, Brisely Farm and Goat Lees, completely refreshed the safety surfaces of both.</p>			<p>Ashford Borough Council is committed to providing local communities with high quality and accessible play spaces, and we continually seek to secure additional funding to maintain and strengthen the local play offer.</p> <p>Ashford Borough Council has allocated a budget of £1.1M for upgrading and improving access for three play areas in Ashford. We have developed new draft layout plans for Rylands Road Open Space, Spearpoint Recreation Ground and Central Park.</p> <p>Public consultation took place both in person and online with very positive feedback for all three schemes during May.</p> <p>In particular, the engagement led to further interaction with a group of disabled youngsters and their parents into the design of the Central Park scheme - the resulting comments have helped to refine the design further ensuring we meet the aim of providing more inclusive and accessible facilities for the whole local community.</p> <p>Contracts have been signed up with two play manufacturers to deliver the three schemes. Spearpoint requires planning permission, as a diversion of a Public Right of Way is required to accommodate the new scheme and this is planned to be before committee in October. It is anticipated that the play area installations will start at the following timescales: Central Park – early to mid September, Rylands Road - mid October, Spearpoint - end of October.</p> <p>In the meantime, outdoor gym equipment has been installed at Rylands Road and is now open for use. Local parents formed a community group and raised funding over the last three years of £24,000 to pay for the outdoor gym. Some of this funding came from Kennington Community Council (£5,000) and Ashford Leisure Trust (£10,000) with the rest from local events.</p> <p>Additionally, two play areas so far this year have been refreshed – Brisely Farm and Goat Lees, completely refreshed the safety surfaces of both.</p> <p>We have a number of others in the pipeline which will come through over the next 3/4 of the year as part of the refurbishment programme.</p> <p>As well as our work at Victoria Park and Conningbrook Lakes.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
<p>CP_KPI_23</p> <p>Indices of multiple deprivation score Annual</p>	Indices of multiple deprivation score	152			<p>IMD - Rank of average rank (National) - 1 being the most deprived National rank out of 317 local authorities.</p> <p>Deprivation is a multi-dimensional problem and, to reflect this, the Indices of Deprivation are based on a basket of indicators organised across seven distinct types of deprivation or 'domains'. These are: 1. Income Deprivation; 2. Employment Deprivation; 3. Education, Skills and Training Deprivation; 4. Health Deprivation and Disability; 5. Crime; 6. Barriers to Housing and Services; and 7. Living Environment Deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.</p> <p>The latest release is the <a href="#">English Indices of Deprivation 2019</a> (IoD2019) and is published by central government to help local authorities identify the most disadvantaged areas so that resources and funding can be allocated appropriately.</p>
<p>CP_KPI_24</p> <p>Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity Annual</p>	Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity	<p>Most recently available information source and trend data available at: <a href="#">Local Authority Health Profiles - OHID</a> (<a href="#">phe.org.uk</a>)</p>			<p>Smoking Prevalence in adults (18+), Source annual Population Survey <b>10,096 10.1%</b>.</p> <p>Percentage of physically active adults, Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (based on the Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England) <b>66.9%</b>.</p> <p>Percentage of adults (18+) classified as overweight or obese, Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (based on the Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England) <b>63.5%</b>.</p>
<p>CP_KPI_25</p> <p>Annual footfall to key leisure sites</p>	Annual footfall to key leisure sites	<p>Data from latest available quarter:</p> <p>Quarterly data Stour centre visitors <b>82,880</b> Julie Rose visitors <b>6,261</b></p>			<p>A continued focus on growth of participation is resulting in positive growth in the majority of areas. Positive net member movements meaning a good increase in overall membership numbers and swim learners.</p> <p>Major investment works of the track replacement at Julie Rose Stadium continue to take place with anticipated re-launch later in the year.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline Figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
<b>CP_KPI_28</b>  <b>Exceptional Circumstance Payments spend Annual</b>	Exceptional Circumstance Payments	Expenditure on ECP 2022 April to June <b>£20,980.00</b>  £32,109.76 ECP for April 2021 to June 2021			An Exceptional circumstances Policy has been created by Ashford Borough Council to assist persons who have applied for Council Tax Reduction and who are facing 'exceptional circumstances'. This is to provide further assistance where an applicant has made a claim for Council Tax Reduction but do not qualify for support or even with support are unable to meet their Council Tax liability.
<b>CP_KPI_29</b>  <b>Value of grants awarded via Community grant fund. Annual</b>	Value of grants awarded via community grant fund	£334,453.70 for 2021/22			Grants awarded via Community Grants fund for 2021/2022 year: Community Services Grants £162520 Capital Grants £55,243.00 Member Grants £116,690.70
<b>CP_KPI_31</b>  <b>Trends in volunteering Annual</b>	Trends in volunteering	New measure			Trends in Volunteering – Introduced in 2022-2023 so no report for 2021-2022.



## Targeted Growth Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>CP_KPI_33</b> <b>Business survival - current vacancy rates</b>	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records  Current vacancy rates	8.2%			8.4%			8.65%		Deteriorating trend	5,328 premises - 296 exemptions 165 reliefs
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.											
<b>CP_KPI_34</b> <b>Ashford town centre vacancy rate</b>	Ashford town centre vacancy rate	15.4%			14.8%			15.4%			<p>April 22 332 units 51 empty - 15.4%</p> <p>The area surveyed is the High Street, Middle Row, New Rents, North Street, Bank Street, Tufton Street, County Square, Park Mall and Elwick Place. This is surveyed manually quarterly.</p> <p>Vacancy rates peaked at 20% in September 2020, due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. They are now slowly declining, having reached 15% by April 2022, but remain significantly above the previous low of 8% in November 2017, and remain significantly above national benchmarks, which were 12% in January 2022. There remains significant churn as there are a number of new businesses starting around Elwick Place/Bank Street.</p>

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_35 Contribution to budget from commercial investments	Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the council's budget books.	85%			85%			92.2%			Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos.

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 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

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 continued impact from the coronavirus pandemic.

Page 28

CP_KPI_36 Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	10.1%	8%	8%	Percentage Occupancy Rate			
					Site	Square foot let	Lettable square foot	Percentage let
					Ellingham	64,397 sf	64,397 sf	100.0%
					Carlton Road	33,732 sf	44,496 sf	75.8%
					Elwick Place	92,026 sf	94,351 sf	97.5%
					International House	72,800 sf	82,462 sf	88.3%
					<b>Total</b>	<b>262,955 sf</b>	<b>285,706 sf</b>	<b>92.0%</b>

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.

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 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_38	Digital uptake - % of total council interactions /% Increase transactions completed electronically.	83%	80%		80%	80%		83%	80%		Our current digital uptake target is 80%



	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22
Digital Transactions	28814	28557	41561	36267	29458	33040	40621	45027	41839
Total Transactions	35515	36030	46663	43816	37003	42147	48597	53878	50379
Digital Uptake	81.13%	79.26%	89.07%	82.77%	79.61%	78.39%	83.59%	83.57%	83.05%

We have seen an increase in digital transactions for quarter 1 2022 (127,487) compared to quarter 1 2021 (110,477). In the last quarter we saw three consecutive months with each having more than 40,000 digital transactions for the first time. In April we had more than 4,000 residents apply for the Energy Rebate Scheme using our online form.

Online payments have stayed approximately the same compared to the same period last year – this is due to garden waste renewals.

The Customer Service, IT and Digital Strategy was adopted at the end of June 2022 with a key focus of keeping the customer at the centre of our services. [Customer Service IT Digital Strategy.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

CP_KPI_39	Social media engagement	New Measure	New Measure	<p><b>Impressions (Total number of times our posts have been shown on a person's screen)</b>            Facebook: 972.4k            Twitter: 84.4k            Nextdoor: 78,163k            IG: 3k</p> <p><b>Followers/Subscribers</b>            FB: 9.9k            Twitter: 9k</p>	<p>Ashford Borough Council's Communications team is responsible for managing the council's social media accounts. Our most active platforms that residents can engage with the council on, include Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor and Instagram.</p> <p>The data will allow the Council to better understand the needs of our residents and ensure that our social media strategy is shaped by the results of the data.</p> <p>With over 50,000 combined total followers across all ABC</p>
-----------	-------------------------	-------------	-------------	--	--

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
								Nextdoor: 22k IG:2.5K			social platforms, the Communications Team are also actively exploring methods to further grow each platform through various digital tools so that they can effectively reach more residents across the borough, including those in rural areas.
<b>CP_KPI_41</b> <b>Parking usage</b>	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	250,281			250,895			<b>243,026</b>  Q1 21-22 187,472			 <p>June 2022 result <b>70,370</b> Last 12 months</p>

#### Parking Report - Overview of Car Park and on Street Sales for June 2022

Moving into the recovery phase of the pandemic, parking usage is still expected to be down by around 15%, which has been budgeted for in 2022/23. In terms of mitigating the overarching risk, the base budget has now been factored in, including the 15% reduction, with no anticipated increase. Any increase will have a positive impact on the Council.

Innovations to provide improved services and access for all our customers are another way of ensuring we encourage people to visit our towns and come back again. Our cashless parking system is in every car park for those who wish to pay by mobile telephone. This has been a resounding success, with a large take-up from customers.

ABC income figures are taken from Flow bird, RingGo and ANPR systems.

Other relevant information of note - In June, for the Jubilee, we gave free parking for 4 days, which assumed a revenue loss of around £23,500.

#### Top Performing Car Parks this month

1. Vicarage Lane – £43,752    2. Recreation Ground – £37,480.50    3. Elwick Place – £22,349

June 2022 figures are £193,805 which reflects the loss in revenue for the free parking offered for the Jubilee.

In May, figures were at £217, 240, and in April at £211, 878

In June 2019, the monthly figure was £218,981.04.

#### Total Financial Year Figures










2019-2020 Income    £2,591,786

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
2020-2021	£ 819,698										
2021-22	£2,203,918										
<b>Forecast for 2022-23 - £2,491,692</b>											
Our income is built up of 68% income from Ashford and 32% from Tenterden.											

## Targeted Growth Annual Measures




Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_37 Percentage of creative industries in the borough	Percentage of creative industries in the borough	8.6%			<p>Creative industry enterprises Ashford 2021: 570 enterprises equating to 8.6% of all enterprises fall of 4.2% on the year (25), an 11.8% increase on 5 years.</p> <p>Kent average 9.9%.</p> <p><a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a></p>
Page 82 FD_KPI_40 Percentage of tourism related businesses in the borough	Percentage of tourism related jobs in the borough	6.2%			<p>Tourism enterprises in Ashford 2021: 410 enterprises representing 6.2% of enterprises. This is a 1.2% (5) fall on the previous year but a 12.3% increase from 5 years ago. Employing circa 5000 people.</p> <p>Kent average 8.6%.</p> <p><a href="#">Food &amp; Drink Production Industries in Kent 2022</a></p> <p><a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a></p>

Our Principles  
Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_42 FOI Response Rate	% of Freedom of Information requests responded to within 20 working days	99%	95%		99%	95%		98%	95%		221 requests received in the period - 5 requests responded to outside the 20 working day window.
CP_KPI_43 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	79.36%	74.25%		97.6%	99%		30.12%	24.75%		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>
CP_KPI_44 Council Tax Collection Rate	Percentage of council tax collected - cumulative figure per month	85.37%	73.71%		97.4%	98.25%		30.1%	24.57%		
CP_KPI_45 Percentage of invoices paid on time	Percentage of invoices paid on time	New Measure			New Measure			Due to system upgrades the information will be available from Q2			

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_46 Gas Safety Certificates	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.48%	100%		99.54%	100%		99.91%	100%		Focus continues on ensure access to hard to access properties is expedited maintaining gas safety compliance.
CP_KPI_47 Number of days sickness per full time equivalent		9.96 days per FTE			9.96 days per FTE			Statistics compiled 6 monthly			
<p>Period 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022</p> <p>Based on the total FTE as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 <b>average absence due to sickness and coronavirus is 9.96 days</b> (annualised), up from 6.45 days (annualised) in the previous period.</p> <p>A total of <b>515 days</b> were lost due to Coronavirus, more than the 137 days in the previous period but reflecting the larger number of employees who were unwell as a result of the virus around December to March. This category has now been merged back into sickness so future reports will not show this as a separate absence type (although it will still show as an individual absence reason).</p> <p><b>Average absence per FTE due to coronavirus</b> only in this period was <b>2.02 per FTE</b> (annualised).</p> <p>A total of <b>2,021.73 days</b> were lost due to 'normal' sickness.</p> <p><b>Average absence due to sickness only</b> in this period was <b>7.93 per FTE</b> (annualised) up from <b>5.89 days per FTE</b> (annualised) reported in the last six month period</p>											
CP_KPI_48 Average Speed of Customer Service Calls Answered	Average wait time for customer service calls	0h 01m 18s	0h 01m 38s		0h 01m 35s	0h 01m 38s		0h 01m 14s	0h 01m 38s		A/L 169 Hours - 12 CSA's Sick 51 Hours - 3 CSA's



Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note	
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status		
CP_KPI_51 Number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings	Number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings	114			140			Number of ongoing litigation matters = <b>92</b>  Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = <b>0</b>			A considerable number of cases on ASB matters, Fly-tipping and injunction/warrant matters have been successfully concluded/ settled this quarter and not one case has been lost  Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.	
CP_KPI_52 Number of new 106 files opened	number of new 106 files opened	Number of new 106 files opened – 2  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – 3  Number of 106 cases completed - 3			Number of new 106 files opened – 4  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – 5  Number of 106 cases completed – 3			Number of new 106 files opened - <b>10</b>  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – <b>4</b>  Number of 106 cases completed – <b>56</b>				In the Q1 period, one Appellant chose to complete 27 s.106 Deeds for each of his two appeals. This reflects the high number of completed cases for this period.  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. <a href="#">S106 Task Group - Final Report.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)</a> with a <a href="#">S106 Scrutiny Review</a> – Update provides to the committee in May 22
CP_KPI_53 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	88%	90%		85%	90%		85%	90%			







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 the council's [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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	










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 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#). & [Stodmarsh Mitigation Framework.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

<b>CP_KPI_54</b> <b>Speed of Major Planning Application Decisions</b>	% 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%		85%	65%		50%	65%		
<b>CP_KPI_54b</b> <b>% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month</b>	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	87%	75%		85%	75%		82%	75%		

The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions are available at the following link: [Live tables on planning application statistics](#)

Performance remains good across the broader period 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. Given the below target measure for this period which is acknowledged by the service this measure will continue to be 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.

In the most recent quarter the determination of a number of older schemes during the application 'clearance week' in May will have had a short term impact on performance during this quarter.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_55 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).	90%	75%		79%	75%		86%	75%		
CP_KPI_55b % 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	91%	80%		90%	80%		90%	80%		
<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>											
CP_KPI_56 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	846	550		839	550		817	550		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2021/22			Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
		<p>Application numbers have continued to increase and a combination of Stodmarsh, a high number of vacant posts in the team from Spring 21 onwards and the resources required to implement the new planning system has resulted in the number of live applications remaining stubbornly high. 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. The service conducted a successful applications clearance week designed to shift a lot of our older applications that have built up over the last 12 months. This freed planning officers for one week to focus purely on making planning decisions and was successful in enabling over 150 applications to be determined. Without this proactive activity the number of live applications would be higher and further consideration will be given to repeating the exercise in the future in order to reduce the overall number of live cases once the new planning software system has been fully embedded in the service.</p> <p>Staffing resources are now more stable in the Development Management Team with most posts now filled on a permanent basis and reducing consultancy support. This trend is expected to continue but will be managed against on-going caseload numbers.</p>									

Our Principles  
Annual Measure

Code & Short Name	Description	Baseline figure			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_49 Complaints resolved at Stage 1	% of complaints resolved as stage 1	85.62%			320 stage 1 complaints received Jan-Dec 2021, of which 46 escalated to stage 2. Slight increase on the number dealt with at first point (stage 1)
CP_KPI_50 Mean Gender Pay Gap	The difference in average pay between men and women in the council's workforce.	8.8%			8.8% - data is retrospective so relates to 31 March 2021  The difference in average pay between men and women in the council's workforce, expressed relative to men's earnings. A positive figure indicates that women are paid less than men on average. A negative figure indicates that the average pay for women in the organisation is higher than the average pay for men.  Further information and previous reports available at: <a href="#">Ashford Borough Council's statistics on the gender pay gap for 2021.</a>

This page is intentionally left blank

**Agenda Item No:**



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## **S106 Review – Process Mapping Update**

---

### **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:**

1. To note the progress made towards the processing mapping exercise of the current S106 process.
- 

**Date of O&S meeting:** 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Chair of O&S Committee:** Cllr Ovenden

**Relevant Portfolio(s):** Planning and Development

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the process mapping exercise of the current process for identifying, negotiating, implementing and monitoring S106 agreements in response to the first recommendation of the O&S S106 Task Group report to Cabinet in November 2021.

It also provides an update for the Committee in respect of the remaining seven recommendations (see Table 1), progress in respect of the Mid Kent Audit actions and other S106 related work streams current being led by the Plan Making and Infrastructure Team.

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

**Background Papers:** [O&S Committee (November 2021) Item 4 – S106 Task Group – Final Report; O&S Committee (March 2021) Item 4 – Report on the S106 Process; O&S Committee (May 2022) Item 4 S106 Task Group Recommendations Update Report]

**Contact:** Ian Bailey (Team Leader Plan Making and Infrastructure)  
ian.bailey@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330 328

## Report Title: S106 Review – Process Mapping Update

### Introduction and Background

1. The O&S S106 Task Group set out 8 recommendations, which were endorsed by Cabinet in November 2021. The first recommendation sought a process mapping exercise of the way S106 agreements are prepared from start to finish to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process. It was anticipated that this would then inform the remaining recommendations.
2. An update on progress was reported to the Committee in May, which concluded that a further update would be brought back to the Committee within 6 months, with the task of completing the process mapping exercise a priority.
3. This report updates the Committee in respect of the process mapping exercise, which is set out in Annexes 1-3 of this report and includes an update in respect of the remaining recommendations in Table 1 attached.
4. It also updates the Committee in respect of progress towards the Mid Kent Audit actions following the publication of their report into the S106 process in 2021 and other tasks being progressed by the Plan Making and Infrastructure Team that are relevant to the S016 review.

### The Process Mapping Approach

5. In simple terms a process map visually shows a flow of work, identifying each stage from start to finish. To fully capture the S106 process used by Ashford Borough Council from start to finish the process mapping exercise should cover the three distinct, but linked phases of the full process, which are:
  - The policy formulation stage or plan making phase;
  - The planning application phase; and
  - The monitoring and implementation phase.

#### The policy formulation stage or plan making phase

6. The policy formulation stage usually occurs during the preparation or review of a Local Plan every 5 years or so. This statutory process identifies and plans for future growth in the Borough, reflecting both national and local aspirations for guiding future development. Policies will set out requirements that future developers will be expected to meet in order to meet these aspirations.
7. Importantly it also identifies the new infrastructure necessary to accompany the planned growth. Before submission to the Government a viability



assessment is carried out to ensure that it is deliverable. The Plan is subjected to independent examination before it can be adopted.

8. The review of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 provides an early opportunity for Members, working with relevant Portfolio Holders, to steer and influence these formative building blocks for delivering future infrastructure through S106.
9. Once adopted the Local Plan sets the parameters for negotiating future developer contributions, so this is an important first stage in the process. Local Plans are subject to public consultations during their preparation so it is important that communities, Parish Councils, land owners and developers engage when invited to do so.
10. In addition to the Local Plan, the development plan for an area can also include made Neighbourhood Plans. These too can include policy requirements that have to be taken into account in the S106 process. As Neighbourhood Plans have to be in accordance with national planning policy and the adopted Local Plan, the policy requirements for S106 can be local or specific in nature.
11. This part of the S106 process map can be found in **Annex 1** attached to this report.

#### The planning application phase

12. While the development plan sets the framework for developer contributions, for a S106 agreement to be completed will require a qualifying proposal for development in the form of a planning application to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.
13. This part of the process can be found in **Annex 2**.
14. It is important to note that not all planning proposals will require a S106 agreement, which is normally required in order to make a planning application acceptable in planning terms.
15. For example, some development is permitted under what is known as permitted development rights, which are set out in national planning policy (the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO)) and is regularly reviewed.
16. Permitted development is considered to be acceptable in planning terms and therefore it is not normally necessary for a developer contribution to be considered. Exceptions to this may arise through a prior approval process that identifies a need for mitigation for highways impact or flood risk mitigation for example.
17. Permitted development rights are restricted in some sensitive areas such as Conservation Areas and they can in exceptional circumstances be removed by a Local Planning Authority under what is known as an Article 4 Direction.

### The monitoring and implementation phase

18. Once a S106 agreement has been signed, planning permission is granted and development should commence usually within 3 years.
19. The S106 agreement will set out trigger points for the payment of developer contributions, for example, based on the completion or occupation of a certain number of dwellings. The monitoring of progress on development sites and these triggers is currently the role of the S106 Monitoring Officer.
20. When funding has been received by the Local Planning Authority the Monitoring Officer alerts service and infrastructure providers and funds are either transferred to external providers such as Kent Education or the Clinical Commissioning Group or internal services commence discussions with relevant communities in order to identify projects to mitigate the impact of the development.
21. This final phase is set out in **Annex 3** to this report.

### **Progress against the remaining Task Group Recommendations**

22. Progress in respect of the Task Group recommendations, reported to the Committee in May, has also been updated and can be found in Table 1 attached.
23. Although currently in draft, it is anticipated that the guidance notes, handbook for parishes and training for officers, members and parish councillors will be subject to continuous update and improvement so that everyone is on the same page.

### **Update in respect of the MKA Actions**

24. Members will recall that the update report considered by the Committee in May also referred to the MKA audit report and the agreed actions to improve the current S106 process.
25. Since May officers have been working hard to respond to the MKA actions alongside progressing the Task Group recommendations, focusing on the process mapping exercise. These will complement the improvements to the S106 process that the O&S Task Group have identified.
26. Additional resilience in the S106 Monitoring function has been enhanced by the recent appointment of a new S106 Monitoring Assistant post to the Spatial Planning Team to assist the current S106 Monitoring Officer. The successful candidate's previous role in the Council's Land Charges Team means that

they have extensive experience of working at Ashford Borough Council, within the Planning Department, using the same IT systems and they are also familiar with the local area, council officers and Parish Councils. The new post will be in place during the month of September.

27. The new Arcus planning software replaced the former Acolaid system in July as planned. The new system has great potential to improve the way S106 agreements are accessed and presented to all involved in the S106 process.
28. Arcus will be a key component for improving the sharing of information on S106 agreements in due course, but this will require the transfer of significant amounts of historic data, which is still underway.
29. Progress has also been made in reviewing older S106 agreements to confirm that trigger points were met, funds collected and spent. The first tranche involved S106 agreements signed since 2010 and a second tranche will look back to the period between 2001 and 2010. This has proved to be very time consuming for the S106 Monitoring Officer who has had to review various sources of information. The new officer will enable this final tranche of review much more quickly.
30. The audit recommended that procedural notes are prepared for some aspects of the process, for example the process for returning unspent S106 funds and a protocol for taking enforcement action in the event of a breach of an agreement by the developer and introducing some safeguards, such as a traffic light system to warn of deadlines approaching. These actions have been progressed since May and MKA informed.
31. The S106 Project Group has been reformed and continues to meet regularly to review progress against the MKA actions and the Task Group recommendations, oversee the S106 process and review requests to spend.
32. Discussions with colleagues have also progressed in order to refresh the standard heads of terms for developer contributions that comprise 'Table 1', which accompanies planning Committee reports where a S106 agreement is required.
33. Officers have continued to liaise with Parishes to discuss general and more specific S106 matters since the meeting in May. Examples include providing advice on a request to spend requests and a meeting with Chilham Parish Council in July to review what can and cannot be secured in the form of developer contributions relating to recent and potential future developments in the Parish.
34. Conversations with external service providers such as KCC Education and the Clinical Commissioning Group/NHS Estates regarding developer contributions including the challenges of increasing costs and helping those providers to understand which are suitable projects have also continued in the period since May.

35. In addition to these S106 Review specific tasks, progress has also been made in respect of related work streams led by the Plan Making and Infrastructure Team. In no particular order these include:

#### Stodmarsh

36. Progressing the strategic wetland solution to the nutrient neutrality issue at Stodmarsh Lakes. This has been a key priority for the Team as much of the housing land supply allocated in the Ashford Local Plan 2030 is affected. This means that residential development in the Stour Catchment is effectively paused until mitigation to the satisfaction of Natural England can be secured.
37. This has implications for the Council's 5 year housing land supply and has resulted in a higher number of planning appeals in the areas of the borough outside of the catchment than would normally be expected given the age of the adopted Plan. This is another pressure on the capacity of the Team.
38. It also means that developer contributions attached to those paused developments and the infrastructure they could be providing is also on hold pending an appropriate solution.
39. When a solution is agreed and implemented, qualifying developments in the catchment that require nutrient neutrality credits to offset the impact of their developments will have to include these payments as part of a S106 agreement. The details of this will be set out in a new SPD.
40. The final figures will not be known until the wetlands solution is agreed, but it will have an impact on the viability of those developments and by implication reduce the potential for other developer contributions that are currently sought and any new contributions in the future (for example to offset the impacts of developments on climate change).
41. This is not critical for the current review of the S106 process, but it will be an important consideration when the Local Plan Review commences and the process for setting developer contributions explained in Annex 1 is revisited.

#### The Local Plan Review

42. The Government requires that a Local Plan Review has to commence within 5 years of adoption, which in the case of Ashford is February 2024. Despite the considerable uncertainties for plan making at the present time, for example the national planning reforms proposed by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and securing the aforementioned Stodmarsh solution, it is anticipated that the review will commence during 2023.
43. Preparatory work has already begun in the form of revisiting the evidence base to assess where there is a need for updating or introducing new evidence to respond to new national planning policy requirements, for example, the new policy for a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain

introduced by the Environment Act 2021, which is expected to come into force by November next year.

44. Some elements of the current evidence base that are important references for negotiating S106 agreements are out of date, for example the Open Space Strategy and Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD and these will need refreshing as a matter of priority.
45. These factors are also important for the S106 process as the review of the Local Plan will be an opportunity to revisit the parameters for developer contributions as described in Annex 1. The viability assessment will also have to take into account the rising costs of infrastructure that some providers are already flagging up.

#### Climate Change

46. Officers are preparing a Climate Change SPD to respond to the Council's objective to become carbon neutral by 2030. Members will decide on the level of mitigation over and above the minimums set nationally, supported by local evidence, but again this will put additional pressure on the viability of future development proposals and the quantum of developer contributions that can be negotiated.
47. This does not mean that locally agreed priorities cannot be included in the discussion, but it may require choices that ultimately result in some lower priority requests being removed.

#### National Planning Reforms

48. Officers are monitoring the progress of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill through Parliament and any consequential reviews, such as the expected publication of a prospectus for a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) this 'summer'. While this is not relevant for the current review of the S106 process as noted at the meeting in May, the former is widely expected to replace the current developer contributions regime with a new single Infrastructure Levy and the latter may include a new way of preparing Local Plans, so keeping on top of developments in this area is food for thought.

### **Conclusion**

49. This report sets out the process mapping of the S106 procedure used at Ashford Borough Council in the form of three simple flow diagrams at Annex 1-3 attached. Updates on progress made towards the MKA actions, the other Task Group recommendations and S106 related work streams is also presented in this report and Table 1. This information will facilitate progress towards the remaining O&S Task Group recommendations agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, which will be the subject of a further report to the O&S Committee at the November 2022 meeting.

## **Contact and Email**

Ian Bailey Team Leader Plan Making and Infrastructure

[ian.bailey@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:ian.bailey@ashford.gov.uk)

01233 330 328

**Table 1: Progress towards the O&S Task Group Recommendations (September 2022)**

Recommendation	Progress	Next Steps
<p>I. A process mapping exercise is undertaken to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process.</p> <p>Once completed, the process map will inform recommendations II to VIII.</p>	<p>The process mapping of the entire S106 process has been completed.</p>	<p>The process mapping exercise is due to be presented to O&amp;S Committee on 13.9.22.</p> <p>Any comments or refinements will be considered and subject to any further amendments the finished version will be used to inform the remaining recommendations.</p> <p>The process mapping exercise will be continuously updated to reflect any improvements to the current system.</p>
<p>II. Guidance and training is produced for Officers involved in the Section 106 process to clarify roles and responsibilities of all Officers.</p> <p>Additionally, a 'handbook' is created for both Members and Parish Councillors, to explain the basic concepts of Section 106.</p>	<p>The process mapping exercise has clarified the current roles and responsibilities of the officers involved in progressing S106 agreements, from plan making, through to the processing of planning applications and on to monitoring and implementation.</p> <p>The process map for the planning application and monitoring and implementation stages of the process can form the basis of an illustrative handbook for Parish Councils explaining the basic concepts of S106.</p>	<p>A guidance note utilising the final process mapping, together with the officer contacts has been drafted and will be made available to all officers involved in S106. This will also form the basis of an officer workshop to be arranged in the autumn.</p> <p>The handbook has been drafted incorporating the final process mapping, together with the list of key contacts and a refresh of the advisory notes for Parishes prepared by the Community Grants Officer.</p>
<p>III. Communication over Section 106 is improved between the Planning Service and Parish Councils including key contact(s) for accessing advice.</p>	<p>The S106 Officer Project Group has agreed that a Parish Training event specifically on the S106 process will be arranged for the autumn, ideally to coincide with the roll</p>	<p>Event to be arranged and publicised/promoted to all Parishes well in advance.</p>

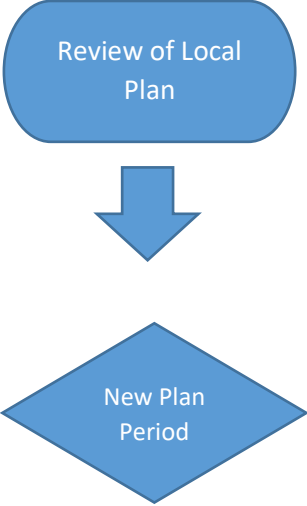

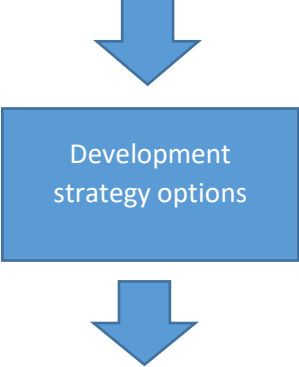
	<p>out of the Parish Handbook referred to in Recommendation II. This will be a session dedicated to the S106 process to complement the shorter introductory session forming part of the Parish training event held in March 2022.</p> <p>There be a similar training event explaining and clarifying the current S106 process for Borough Councillor Members.</p> <p>These training events will be recorded and provided to parishes and members for them to refer to for future use. It is anticipated this will improve the delivery of Member annual updates on the S106 process</p>	<p>An event pack will be provided to all Parish Clerks containing a copy of the handbook and any other presentation materials used at the event.</p> <p>If the event is held over Microsoft Teams this will be recorded and a copy made available to all Parishes.</p>
<p>IV. Training on Section 106 should be provided to Members and Parish Councils on an annual basis.</p> <p>The initial programme for the training should be reviewed by the Member Training Panel in consultation with the Chair of the Section 106 Task Group.</p>	<p>Inquiries have been made with Democratic Services to consider adding an item on Member Training to next year's running list for the Member Training Panel to include an item on S106.</p> <p>This will be included in the induction training for newly elected Members after the Borough Council Elections in May 2023.</p>	<p>Confirm arrangements in consultation with the Chair of the Section 106 Task Group and the Member Training Panel.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this training will take into account any improvements to the current S106 process that may be introduced as a result of the Mid Kent Audit Actions and the O&amp;S Task Group Recommendations.</p>
<p>V. The new Planning IT software is expected to provide information on the council's website about what Section 106 monies are available to individual parishes</p>	<p>The new Arcus software replaced the previous Acolaid software on 14<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>There have been some residual issues post transfer, which are being addressed as a matter of urgency but this has resulted in</p>	<p>Once the outstanding issues are resolved the full benefits of the new Arcus system for recording, monitoring and presenting S106 information can be realised.</p>


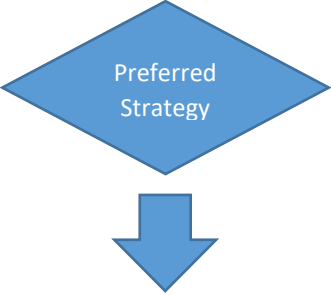





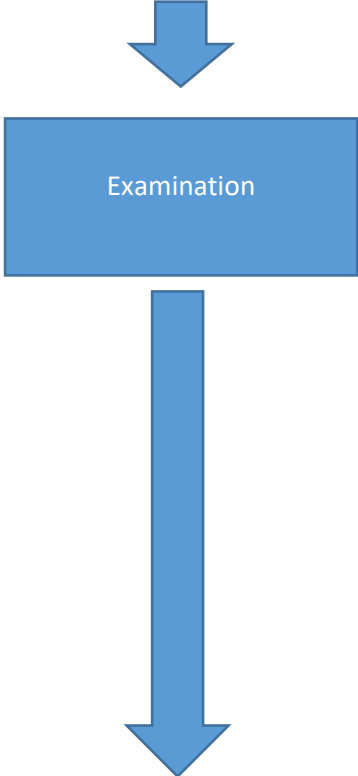

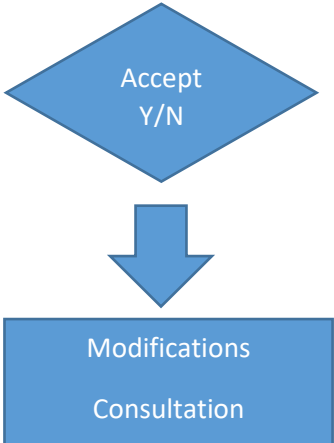
	<p>some delays in obtaining the full functionality of the system.</p> <p>Two examples, relating to S106 monitoring include the migration of data from Acolaid to Arcus, which has required some manual inputting and labelling and confirming a mechanism for recording projects, which is the subject of further discussions with the software providers.</p>	
<p>VI. Delivery of the Infrastructure Contributions SPD should be prioritised. The SPD should provide an up to date list of what is expected of developers within a single document. This will provide clarity for all parties involved in the Section 106 process.</p>	<p>The process mapping exercise has identified that some of the documents currently used to inform S106 agreements need updating (for example the Open Space Strategy).</p> <p>Officers are currently investigating which parts of the supporting evidence need revisiting – this will take some time to complete involving in some cases the commissioning of consultants.</p> <p>The Mid Kent Audit actions will also introduce some improvements to the way S106 agreements are currently monitored.</p> <p>To incorporate all of the updates and improvements to the process in a SPD, which in itself will require consultations before adoption, would have the effect of delaying the availability of this document into next year.</p>	<p>In order that an up to date list of what is expected of developers can be prepared as a matter of urgency, an interim guidance note setting out the standard heads of terms for S106 agreements (sometimes referred to as ‘Table 1’) together with an explanatory note is proposed in advance of a full SPD – the Interim Guidance Note can be prepared for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee in November.</p> <p>The S106 process mapping exercise, recognises the review of the Local Plan as an early opportunity to establish local priorities through plan policies and refresh the evidence base, which will be important considerations for setting S106 agreements in future. Members, working with relevant Portfolio Holders, will be able to steer and influence these building blocks for delivering future infrastructure through S106.</p>

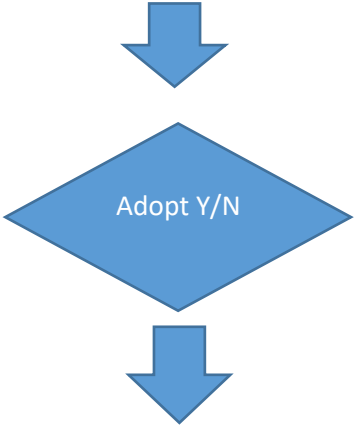

		In the meantime, planning have been working with external service providers such as KCC Education and the Clinical Commissioning Group/NHS Estates regarding developer contributions including the challenges of increasing costs and helping those providers to understand which are suitable projects. This dialogue will continue.
VII. There is a standardising of Section 106 Agreements and use of templates where appropriate	The Mid Kent Audit report made similar recommendations regarding standardised wording and templates.	The S106 Officer Project Group are reviewing recent examples of S106 agreements and preparing some standard wording for use in future S106 agreements for consistency.  Legal colleagues to be advised.
VIII. Legal Services are trained to use the new IT system adopted by the Planning Department, to enable them access to relevant Planning documentation and therefore streamline the process.	Training has not been provided to date while the new software is being refined..	Once Arcus is fully functioning it may not be necessary for all staff to have full access and training to fulfil their role in the S106 process.  It is envisaged that planning officers will instruct legal officers as to the input required on S106 on a case by case basis, using planning officer's professional judgement.

**S106 Process Map – Phase 1 – The Policy Formulation or Plan Making Stage**


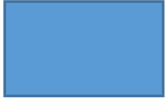
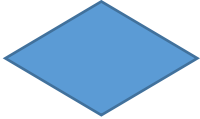


Process	Comments
	<p>Once adopted Local Plans should be reviewed with 5 years.</p> <p>The Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted in February 2019 so the review should commence by February 2024.</p> <p>The review will be an opportunity to rebase the plan and plan period, identify new site allocations if required, update the evidence base and amend or introduce new policies.</p> <p>The review presents an opportunity to revisit the parameters for setting developer contributions including priorities for new infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Assuming the plan period has been rolled forward then the evidence base should be updated to cover the extension.</p> <p>Some of the older parts of the evidence base may be out of date and require a refresh.</p> <p>And there maybe additional policy areas that require new evidence to be prepared.</p> <p>If additional site allocations are needed to meet future needs for housing and employment a Call for Sites exercise is carried out. This identifies potential future development sites that are available, suitable and deliverable.</p>
	<p>Different development strategy options to meet future needs, deliver local plan aims and objectives and that are in accordance with national planning policy are prepared and subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.</p> <p>These together with the overall aims and objectives of the Plan form the basis of a first round of public consultations to invite views on the direction of travel.</p>

 <p>Regulation 18 Consultation</p>	<p>Consultations are held for a minimum of 6 weeks and comments invited. These are considered and taken into consideration in preparing the next, more detailed iteration of the Plan.</p> <p>Parish Councils and communities have an opportunity to express their views on the distribution of future growth and the infrastructure to accompany it.</p>
 <p>Preferred Strategy</p>	<p>An appropriate development strategy is identified and the evidence base is completed. This includes the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the whole plan viability assessment.</p> <p>These documents start to set out the basis for establishing future developer contributions.</p> <p>Detailed Local Plan Policies are prepared to complete the draft Local Plan.</p>
 <p>Regulation 19 Consultation</p>	<p>Consultations are held for a minimum of 6 weeks and comments invited.</p> <p>Parish Councils and communities once again have an opportunity to comment on the draft Plan.</p> <p>The representations are considered and a response prepared, which then forms part of the submission documents.</p>
 <p>Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State</p>	<p>The Local Plan documents, evidence that these are based on and any other documents that are required to demonstrate that the Plan is legally compliant and sound are submitted to the Secretary of State responsible for Planning (Currently the Levelling Up and Regeneration Secretary).</p>
 <p>Inspector(s) appointed</p>	<p>The Secretary of State appoints a Planning Inspector (sometime two) to carry out an independent Examination of the Local Plan.</p>

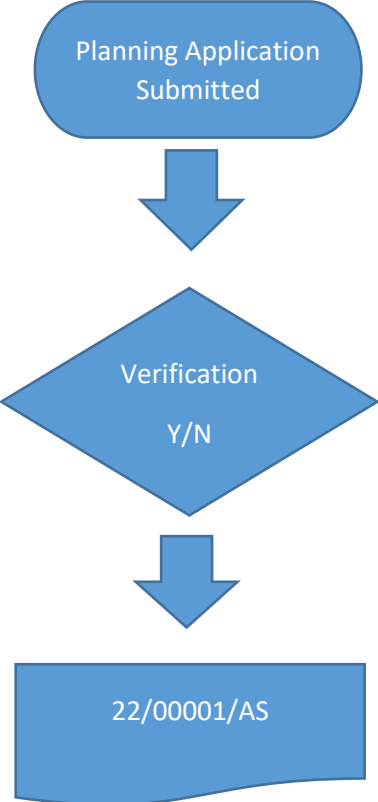
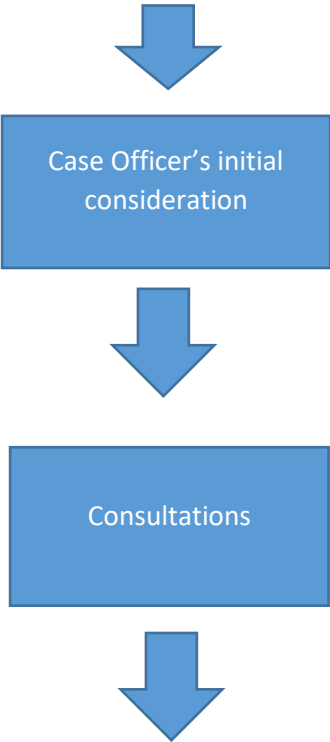
 <p style="text-align: center;">Examination</p>	<p>Once the Inspector has considered all of the submitted documents initial questions may be asked of the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>When the Inspector is satisfied, a programme for the examination hearings can be agreed and Matters, Issues and Questions to guide the hearings are published.</p> <p>The Local Planning Authority and any representors at the Regulation 19 consultation expressing a wish to attend the hearings prepare written statements to support their case.</p> <p>There are usually two stages to an Examination, the first to deal with matters of legal compliance and if passed the second to consider the detailed policies and proposals.</p> <p>Depending on the complexity of the issues and number of representations made, hearings can take between 4-6 weeks of sessions, sometimes with a break in proceedings.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Inspector's Report</p>	<p>After the close of the Examination the Inspector prepares a report and, if necessary, proposes modifications to make the Plan sound.</p> <p>This will include consideration of the deliverability of the plan proposals and the viability of any developer contributions set out.</p> <p>The report is returned to the Local Planning Authority to consider.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Accept Y/N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Modifications Consultation</p>	<p>If the Inspector's report and any modifications are accepted the Local Planning Authority then carries out further public consultations on the modifications proposed for a minimum of 6 weeks.</p> <p>The Local Planning Authority is not obliged to accept the report and modifications, but If challenged the Planning Inspectorate may find the Plan unsound.</p>

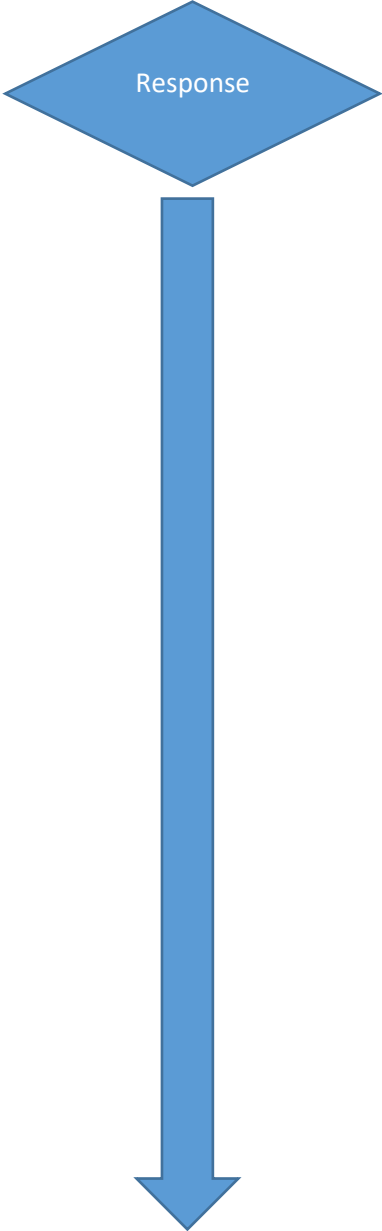

	<p>Once the consultation period is concluded and any further amendments agreed and made the Local Planning Authority can resolve to adopt the Local Plan.</p>
	<p>The new Local Plan replaces any former plans and evidence and carries maximum weight in determining planning applications, including the scope and quantum of any developer contributions necessary to make planning applications acceptable in planning terms.</p>

**Key to Process Map Symbols used**

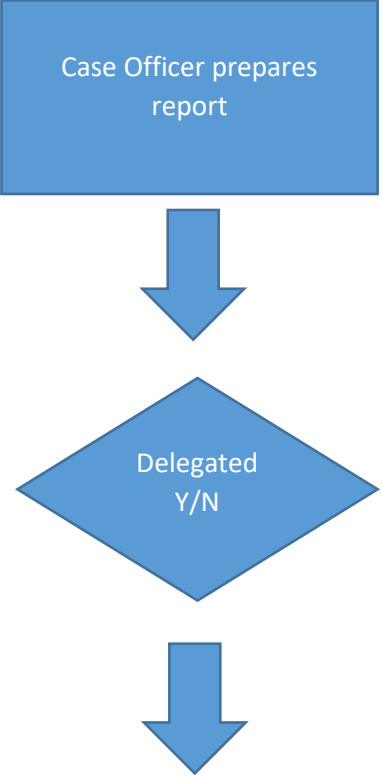
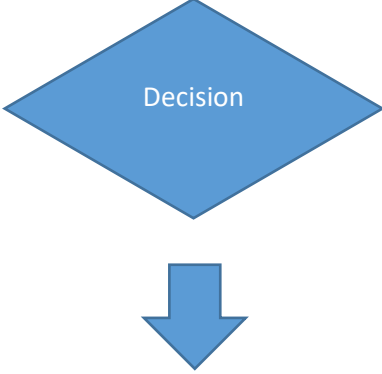
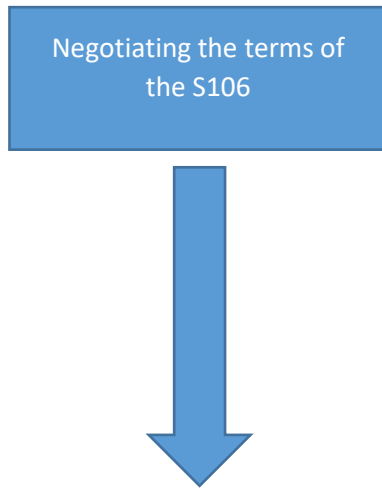
Symbol	Description
	<p>Terminator – used for the start and finish of a process map</p>
	<p>Activity or Process</p>
	<p>Decision</p>
	<p>Document</p>
	<p>Direction of Flow</p>


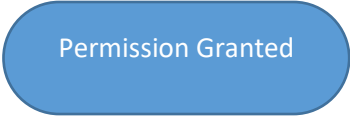
**S106 Process Map – Phase 2 – The Planning Application Stage**

Process	Comments
 <pre> graph TD     A([Planning Application Submitted]) --&gt; B{Verification Y/N}     B --&gt; C[22/00001/AS]             </pre>	<p>Pre-Application advice is an optional paid for service in advance of the submission of a planning application, where preliminary consideration of whether a developer contribution may be required, but as this advice is confidential, the process properly starts when an application is received.</p> <p>Once received applications and any supporting documents are verified and if satisfactory a reference number and case officer are allocated.</p> <p>New applications are uploaded to the Council’s website using planning software (Arcus since July 2022, previously Acolaid) and weekly lists published.</p>
 <pre> graph TD     D[Case Officer’s initial consideration] --&gt; E[Consultations]             </pre>	<p>The Case Officer will review the Planning application, referring to the adopted Local Plan, any made Neighbourhood Plans, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan and any other material planning considerations that may apply.</p> <p>The planning history of the site and any pre-application advice will also be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Once these matters have been considered consultations with other council departments, statutory undertakers, service providers, and Parish Councils or Urban Community Forums will be arranged.</p>



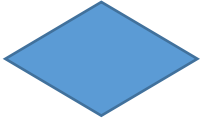


	<p>If the proposal is of a scale that requires developer contributions in order to mitigate impacts on local infrastructure, service providers are invited to include an estimate and identify any potential projects.</p> <p>An example of this sub-process, based on the Council’s former Cultural Services Team can be described as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation email received;</li> <li>2. initial calculations made by considering the quality and quantity of existing provision;</li> <li>3. Calculate capital request of on- and off-site provision based on a per-dwelling figure for open space, indoor and outdoor sport, voluntary sector contributions, public art and community facilities;</li> <li>4. Invite comments from colleagues regarding potential projects, referring to the Council’s open space strategy, playing pitch strategy and local plan policies;</li> <li>5. Inform the Funding and Partnerships Officer of the outcome who then liaises with the relevant Parish Council or UCF;</li> <li>6. Respond to planning case officer;</li> <li>7. Support the case officer and Legal colleagues in preparing the S106 agreement up to the point of signing;</li> <li>8. Save a copy of any correspondence, comments and calculations on the Team Drive.</li> </ol> <p>External service providers such as KCC Education and the CCG use their own formulas for generating a per-dwelling figure for developer contributions.</p>
	<p>Any consultation responses received by the case officer are uploaded to the Planning Applications section of the Council’s website under the ‘documents’ tab.</p> <p>These can include service provider’s comments on the developer contributions required by the proposal and if known any specific projects to mitigate the impact of development.</p> <p>This section also includes any comments from local residents, Parish Councils and UCFs as well as the applicant.</p>




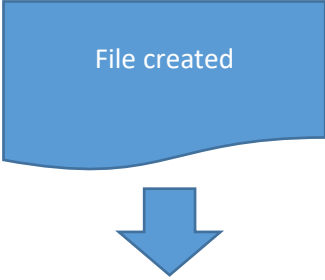
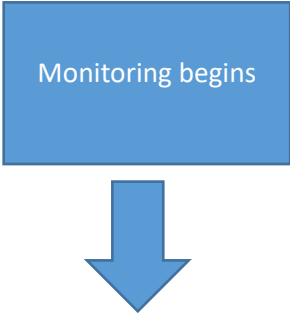
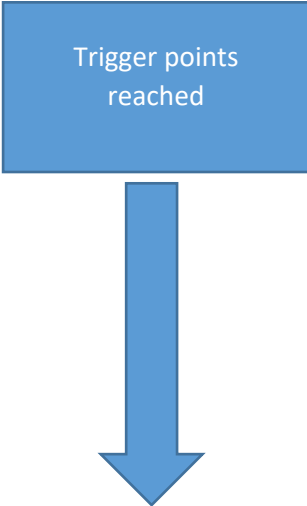
	<p>The Case officer considers the responses as part of preparing a report. Most applications are determined as part of a scheme of delegation, but major applications, those that are sensitive or subject to local Member call in are considered by the Planning Committee.</p> <p>The report to Committee will set out all of the relevant information and conclude with a recommendation to permit, permit subject to the signing of a S106 agreement or refuse.</p> <p>Members debate the merits of the case and take a vote whether to accept the recommendation, defer (for further information) or refuse (with reasons).</p> <p>If a S106 is considered necessary in order to make the application acceptable in Planning terms, the details of this will be set out in Table 1 of the report.</p>
	<p>If the decision is to permit subject to the signing of S106 agreement, the process moves to the negotiation phase.</p> <p>The starting point will be Table 1 in the report, but additional details will need to be considered and agreed as part of a legal agreement.</p>
	<p>The negotiations involve the setting out in detail what any contributions are for, when payments or mitigations need to be made (these are sometimes referred to as ‘trigger points’ and are usually set by completions or occupations for residential schemes), and any clawback clauses.</p> <p>These are timescales agreed in advance of when contributions have to be spent/implemented. Failure to do so may lead to contributions being repaid to the developer.</p> <p>These negotiations can take some time to conclude. Sometimes applicants/developers will challenge the justifications.</p>

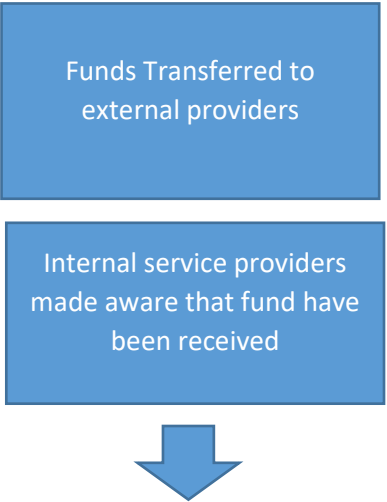
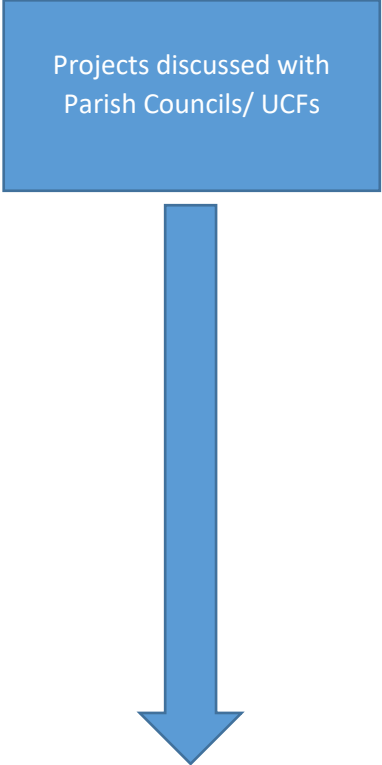
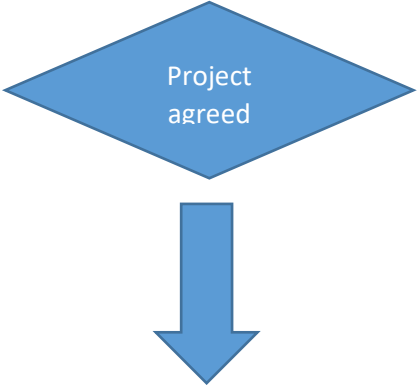
	<p>Once the S106 agreement is signed by both parties, the planning application is approved and the timescales for implementation begin.</p> <p>Development is usually expected to commence within 3 years of permission being granted, unless a shorter or longer timescales has been agreed with the Local planning Authority.</p>
	<p><b>Once development commences the Application phase comes to an end and the proposal moves to the monitoring and implementation phase.</b></p>

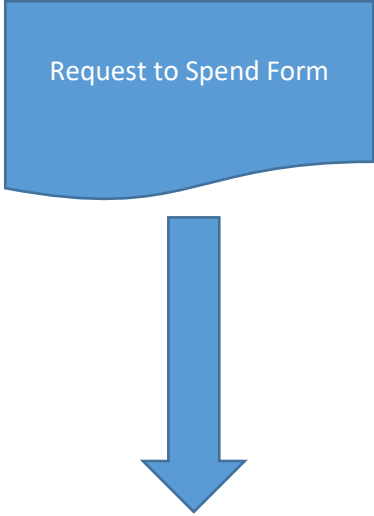
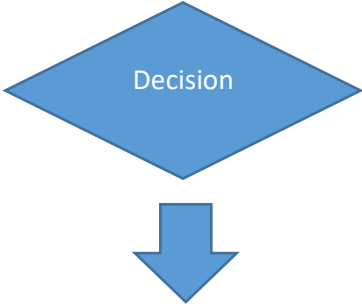

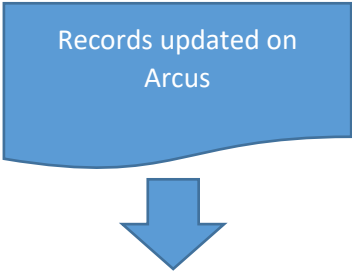
**Key to Process Map Symbols used**


Symbol	Description
	<p>Terminator – used for the start and finish of a process map</p>
	<p>Activity or Process</p>
	<p>Decision</p>
	<p>Document</p>
	<p>Direction of Flow</p>

**S106 Process Map – Phase 3 – The Monitoring and Implementation Stage**



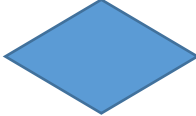


Process	Comments
 <p>S106 Agreement Signed</p>	<p>Once a S106 agreement is signed the new agreement is saved on the Planning Department system using Arcus (formerly Acolaid). Further copies are saved by Legal and Finance for their records.</p> <p>The S106 Monitoring Officer is also made aware and the monitoring process commences.</p>
 <p>File created</p>	<p>A file is created for the new Agreement and the Monitoring Officer makes a note of the trigger points.</p>
 <p>Monitoring begins</p>	<p>The S106 Monitoring Officer liaises with colleagues in the Plan Making and Infrastructure Team who carry out an annual assessment of housing completions in the Borough to ensure that information regarding the 5 year housing land supply and housing delivery test are accurate and up to date.</p> <p>For those schemes known to be under construction, the Monitoring Officer keeps in regular contact with the developer to ensure the trigger points are not missed.</p>
 <p>Trigger points reached</p>	<p>When a trigger point is reached, for residential schemes this is usually an agreed number of completions or in some cases occupations, the Monitoring Officer checks with Finance colleagues to see if the agreed funding has been received.</p> <p>If this is not the case the Monitoring officer contacts the developer to remind them.</p> <p>If payments are still not forthcoming the Council can consider enforcement procedures as the developer is in breach of the terms of the Planning permission by failing to pay contributions. This is the subject of a separate procedure note.</p>

 <p>Funds Transferred to external providers</p> <p>Internal service providers made aware that fund have been received</p>	<p>If the funding received is for external service providers such as KCC Education or the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide additional pupil capacity or enhance primary health care facilities this is transferred.</p> <p>If the funding is for internal service providers for example for public open space, indoor or outdoor sport, community buildings, voluntary sector or public art, the relevant contacts are alerted to fact that the funds have been received.</p>
 <p>Projects discussed with Parish Councils/ UCFs</p>	<p>The Community Partnerships Officer is advised that the funding has been received and the officer advises the relevant Parish Council or Urban Community Forum.</p> <p>If potential projects have previously been considered by colleagues, these can be revisited in consultation with the parish or UCF.</p> <p>If no proposed project is available the Parish or UCF is encouraged to liaise with relevant officers to explore options that meet the terms of the S106 agreement.</p> <p>This may be because the S106 agreement is more generic in nature.</p> <p>If a project identified at the time the S106 was prepared is no longer required or a different project is now the priority a deed of variation can be negotiated with the developer, but in the event the developer refuses the funding may have to returned.</p>
 <p>Project agreed</p>	<p>Once a project has been agreed by the Parish or UCF a Request to Spend Form can be completed.</p>

 <p>A blue rectangular box with the text "Request to Spend Form" inside. Below the box is a large blue downward-pointing arrow.</p>	<p>The request to spend form is used to assess the proposed project against the terms of the S106, which is a legal agreement between the Local Planning Authority and the developer.</p> <p>The form provides sections for the promoter to justify the spend on the proposed project using the S106 agreements specified (more than one S106 agreement can be used for a single project if the terms of the S106 match the purpose of the spend), ideally with quotes for the works.</p> <p>Guidance notes on what S106 funding can and cannot be spent on has been previously been provided to Parish Councils and UCFs by the Community Partnerships Officer.</p>
 <p>A blue diamond-shaped box with the text "Decision" inside. Below the diamond is a blue downward-pointing arrow.</p>	<p>If the funding requested exceeds £50K, this requires approval by Cabinet.</p> <p>If the proposed funding is below £50K the request can be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development.</p>
 <p>A blue rectangular box with the text "Funds released" inside. Below the box is a blue downward-pointing arrow.</p>	<p>Once the Request to Spend has been agreed the funding can be released. The S106 Monitoring Officer informs Finance to make the transfer</p>
 <p>A blue rectangular box with the text "Records updated on Arcus" inside. Below the box is a blue downward-pointing arrow.</p>	<p>The S106 Monitoring Officer updated the records in respect of the transfer of funds using the Arcus software.</p> <p>This process is repeated until the S106 has been fully spent.</p> <p>If funds are not spent by agreed timescales clawback clauses apply and money is returned to developer.</p>

	<p>The end of the process is when the S106 has been fully spent/implemented or any remaining funds have been returned to the developer.</p> <p>The S106 Monitoring Officer includes the information in the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement</p>
---	--

**Key to Process Map Symbols used**

Symbol	Description
	<p>Terminator – used for the start and finish of a process map</p>
	<p>Activity or Process</p>
	<p>Decision</p>
	<p>Document</p>
	<p>Direction of Flow</p>

**Agenda Item No:**



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## **Annual Sickness Report 2021/22**

---

**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to :**

Consider the information provided in this report and advise officers:

1. If the committee would wish to receive a further update in a year's time
  2. If any further information is required
- 

**Date of O&S meeting:** 13 September 2022

**Chair of O&S Committee:** Cllr Noel Ovenden

**Relevant Portfolio(s):** Cllr Alan Pickering – Portfolio Holder Human Resources and Customer Services

**Summary:** This report provides annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2021/22.

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

**Background Papers:** **none**

**Contact:** Joy Cross  
HR Manager  
Tel 01233 330 400  
Joy.cross@ashford.gov.uk

## Annual Sickness Report 2020/21

### Introduction

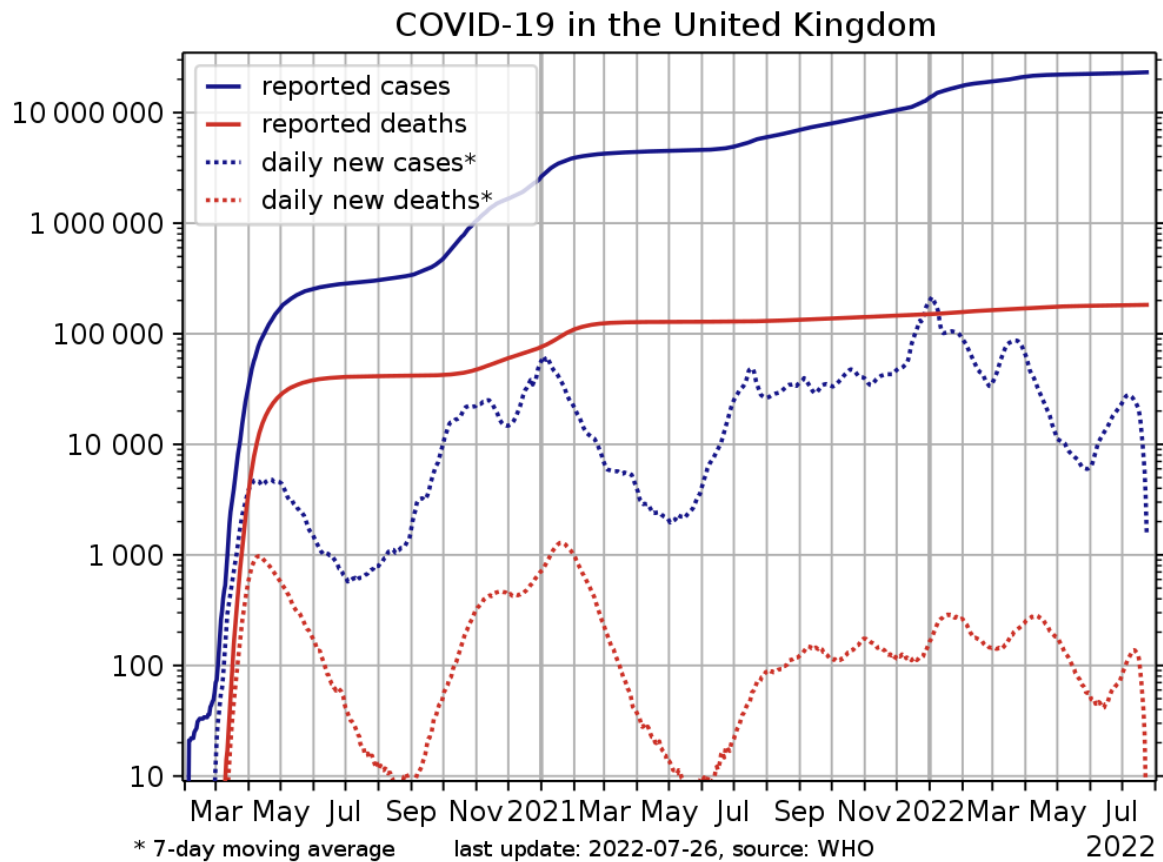
1. This report provides members with sickness absence figures for the financial year 2021/22 (01 April 21 to 31 March 22). Similar data is provided to Management Team on a six-monthly basis in order that the Council's senior management team have an up-to-date overview of key HR Metrics.
2. The reported figures for Ashford Borough Council employees are from sickness absences recorded on the iTrent Payroll and HR system. The figures are presented as the average number of working days lost due to sickness absence per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee during the year, starting 1 April 2021.
3. This year is unusual in that throughout this period (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022) we continued to be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, albeit not as significantly as in the previous year.
4. Broadly speaking the figures within the report demonstrate a return to pre-pandemic sickness levels as we return to the new normal.
5. However, it is clear that absences due to Covid 19 have had a proportionate impact on attendance levels.

### Covid 19

6. To provide some context to the report a short covid history for the period is detailed below:
  - April 2021 outdoor pubs, restaurants and non-essential shops are re-opened
  - July 2021 the Delta variant, a more transmissible strain, became the dominant strain in the UK and drove a third wave of infections.
  - July 2021 most restrictions were lifted in England including facemasks and social distancing measures.
  - August 2021 75% of adults were vaccinated and mass vaccination was rolled out to 16-17 year olds.
  - September 2021 vaccinations for 12-15 year olds were approved and booster vaccines for the over 50s, vulnerable and health workers were introduced.
  - November 2021 booster vaccinations were expanded to the over 40s. Omicron variant emerged.
  - December 2021 Covid 19 cases were at 100,000 per day for the first time in the pandemic. Plan B restrictions were announced (remote work recommendations and mandatory face masks in indoor public venues).
  - January 2022 Plan B restrictions were relaxed.
  - February 2022 the legal requirement in England to self isolate if testing positive ended.



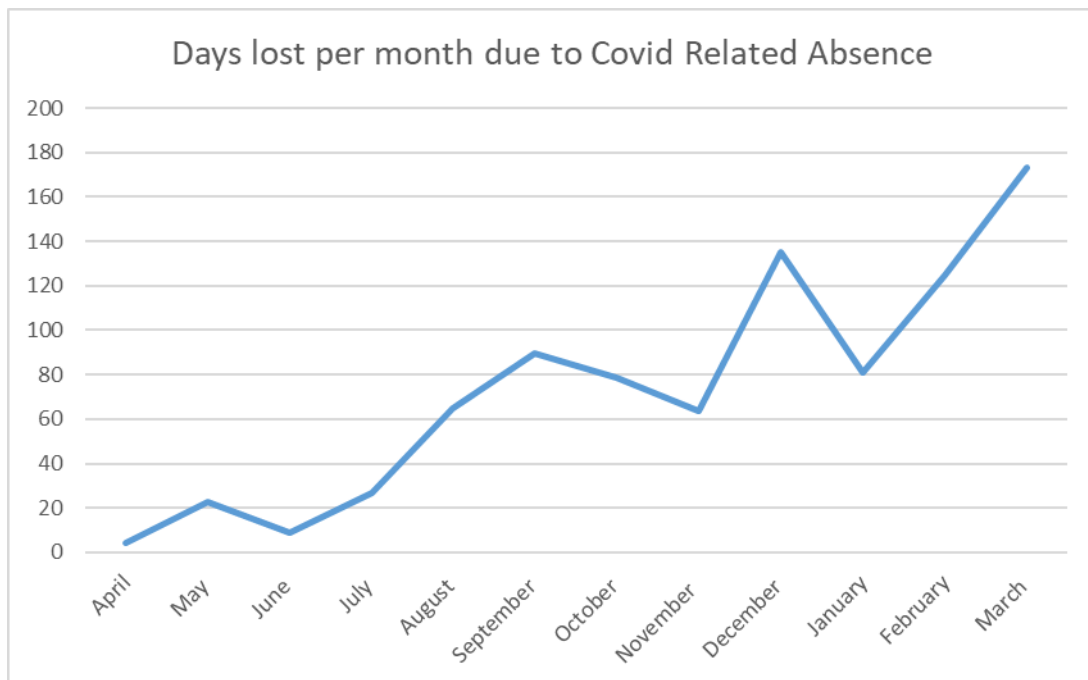
- The World Health Organisation reports the following data regarding Covid19 cases and deaths.



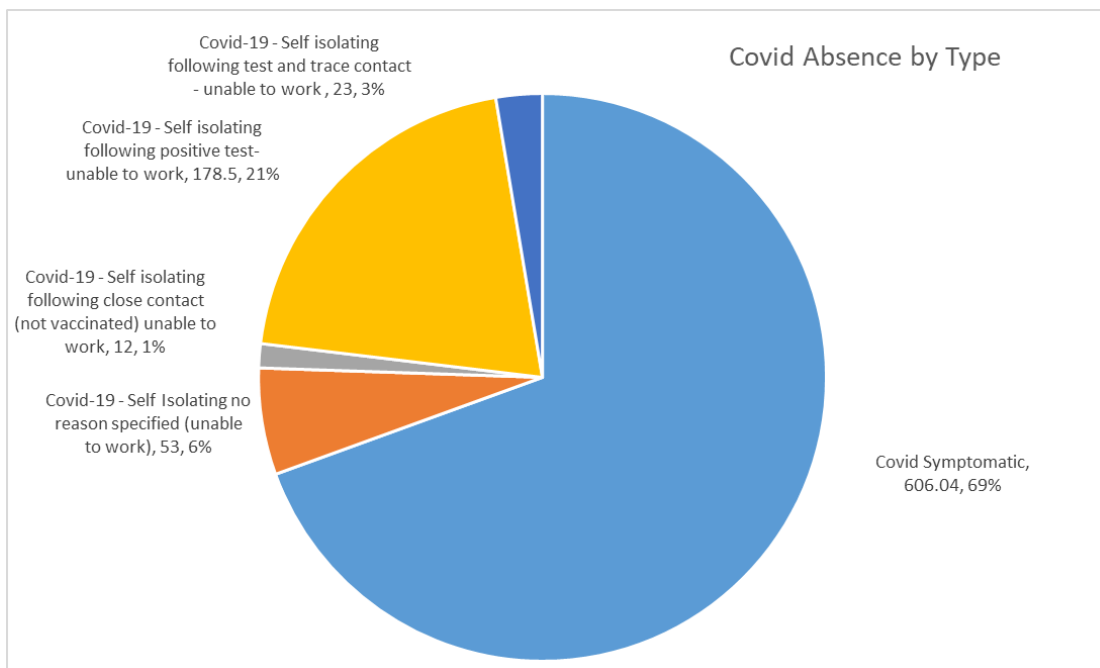
### Covid 19 related absences

- Early in the pandemic in 2020 as the various requirements came about to shield, work from home and to self-isolate whether you had symptoms or not, we made the decision that we would record all covid 19 related absence but would not treat it as sickness as it would disproportionately affect vulnerable staff or staff whose role could not be performed remotely. A summary of covid 19 related absences is included in the report but not included in overall sickness absence numbers.
- With effect from 1 April 2022 it was decided to incorporate covid 19 related absence within 'normal' sickness absence as we all 'learn to live' with covid 19. From the next O&S report, covid related absence will be shown within general sickness; as a sickness absence reason rather than a separate absence type.
- The next O&S report will also show a revised set of sickness absence reasons which were amended in April 2022 to bring them up to date (including categories related to gender transitioning and menopause) and also to provide more clarity which will make improve data analysis in this area. See Appendix 1.
- For the period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 we lost 872.54 days due to covid related absences down 13.9% from the 1,014 days the previous year.

12. Covid related absence at ABC peaked from December 21 to March 22. This is a similar trend to that shown above in the WHO table where new reported cases also peaked in the winter of 2022.

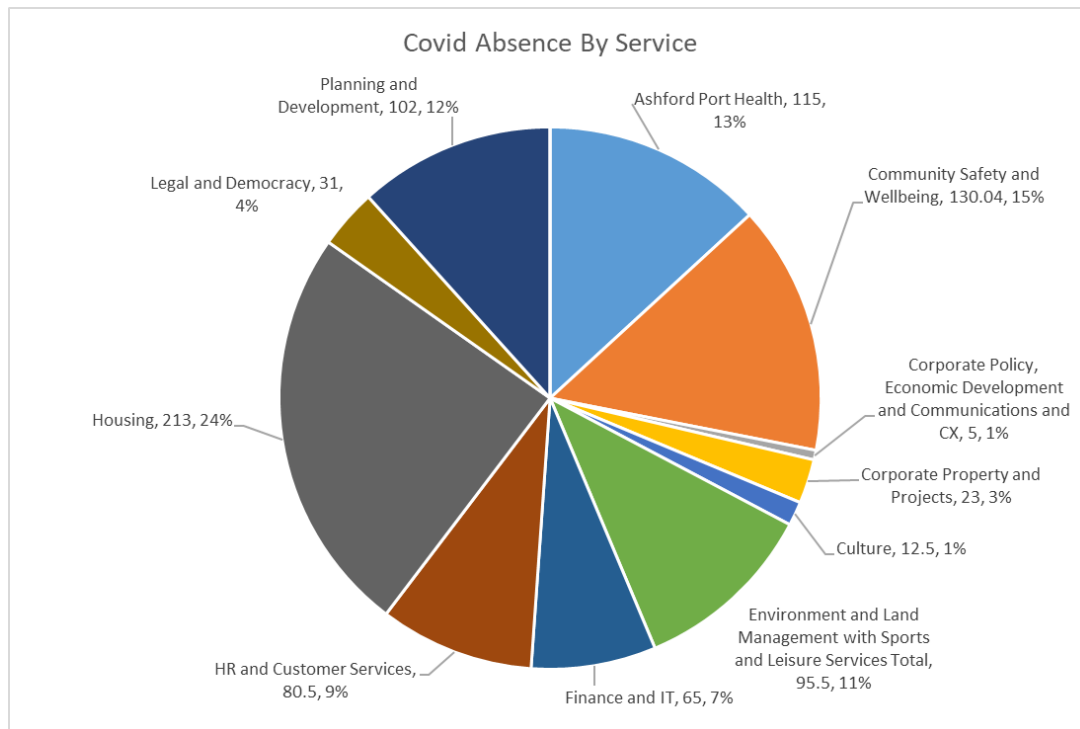


13. 69% of covid related absence was because people were symptomatic and unable to work whereas this figure was 29% in the previous period. Absence related to individuals actually having Covid and being unwell has overtaken absence related to self-isolation.



14. Covid related absence was proportionately distributed amongst services noting that some services have a higher proportion of employees whose work can not be

completed when self-isolating (e.g. Civil Enforcement Officers, Aspire Operatives and Electricians etc)



### Sickness absence per employee 2021/22

15. A total of **3,225 days** were lost due to sickness absence across the 12-month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Based on the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees at 31 March 2022, 509.29 FTE, **the total amount of working days lost due to sickness in 2021/22 is 6.33 days per FTE**. This is an increase from the previous year when the number of days was 4.7 days per FTE or 2,079 days
16. Had we included Covid related sickness absence in these figures (i.e. staff who were unable to work due to being symptomatic or self isolating and unable to work) the days lost would have been **8.04 days of absence per FTE** overall.
17. Our total headcount on 31 March 2022 was 549. **235 employees** incurred sickness absence periods during the period 2021/22. Therefore 314 employees or 57% of employees did not incur any periods of sickness absence during the 12-month period. This figure is an improvement compared to last year's figure of 49%. In previous years this figure has sat at around 30% and therefore continues to improve.
18. Of the 3,225 days lost due to sickness absence within the period, 1353 days (42%) of this absence is categorised as short-term absence lasting up to and including 19 days; down from 56% last year. Therefore 1872 days (58%) of absenteeism is categorised as long-term; up from 44% last year. The longest period of absence was 261 days.

19. The report separates long-term sickness absence and short-term sickness absences as the nature of these two types of sickness absence, and the way in which they are supported, differs. It is therefore useful to consider the average days lost in each category.
- Average days lost due to short-term sickness absence equals 2.65 days per FTE.
  - Average days lost due to long-term sickness absence equals 3.67 days per FTE.

## Chronological Comparison

20. The following chart shows the number of days' sickness absence per employee (FTE) for each financial year since 2017/2018.

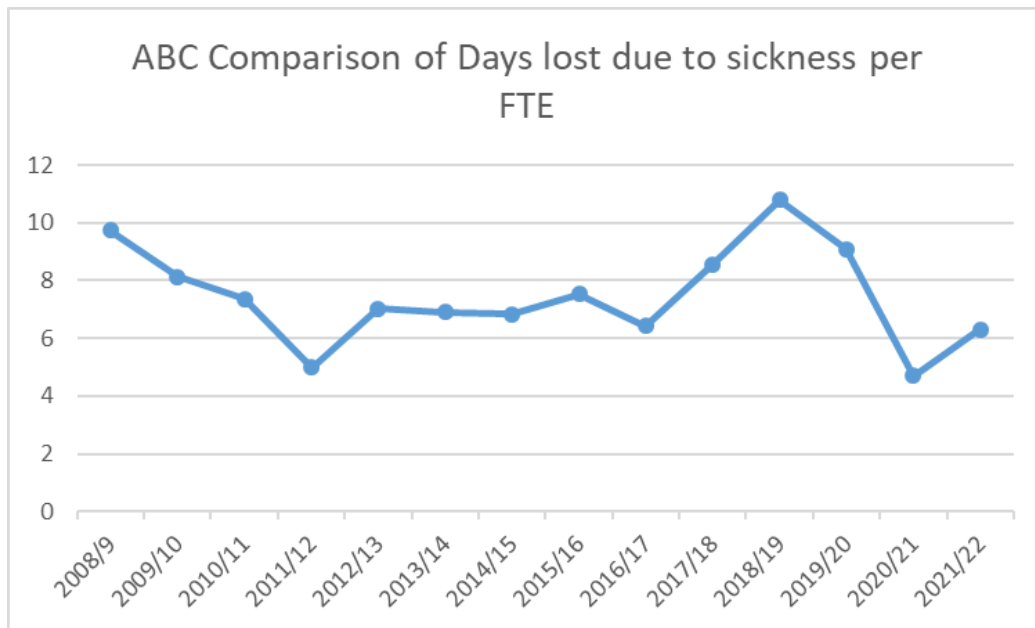
Description	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	<b>2021-2022</b>
Number of days lost due to sickness absence across the 12 month period from 1 <sup>st</sup> April to 31 <sup>st</sup> March	3,495	4,558	3,950	2,079	<b>3,225</b>
Total number of working days lost due to sickness within the year per FTE	8.56	10.8	9.1	4.7	<b>6.3</b>
% of employees taking no time off work due to sickness absence	29%	31%	30%	49%	<b>57%</b>
% of short term absence (under 20 days)	55%	44%	57%	56%	<b>42%</b>
% of long term absence (20 days or more)	45%	56%	43%	44%	<b>58%</b>
Number of cases of long term sickness absence	27	39	34	17	<b>39</b>

21. The period 2020-21, the year chiefly impacted by lockdowns, shows a notable dip in absenteeism. As reported in the previous year's O&S report, general sickness absence levels were reduced due to the unusual circumstances associated with that period; namely, reduced social interaction and spread of minor illnesses, reduced sporting activities, reduced planned surgeries, ability to work from home and accommodate minor ailments without absence etc. However, as this year was so unprecedented, data comparisons are difficult to make and perhaps it is more sensible to refer to the year before 2019/20.

22. Number of days lost due to sickness absence is down 18% from 3,950 in the period 2019-2020 to 3,225 in this period.

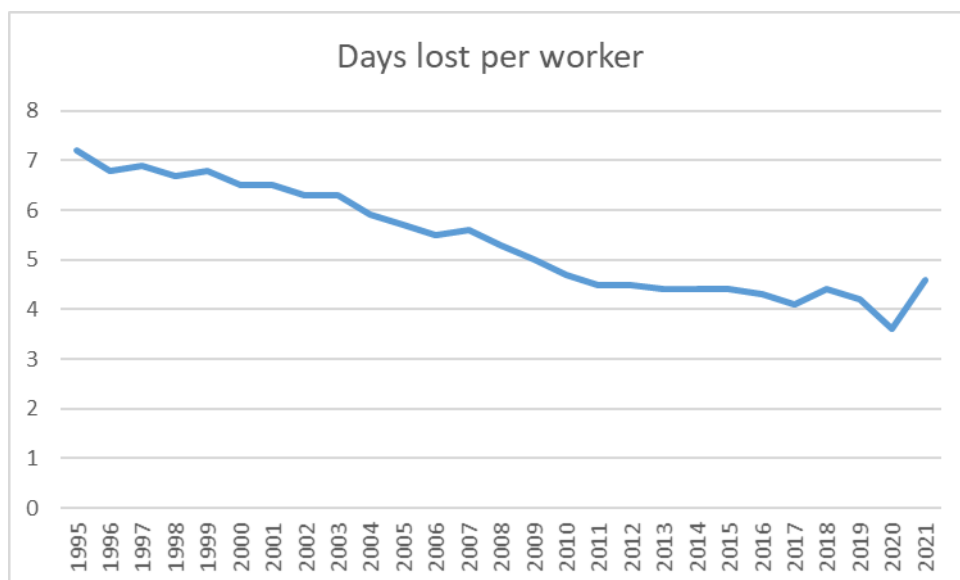
23. Total number of working days lost due to sickness per FTE is down 30.7% from 9.1 in the period 2019-20 to 6.33 in this period.

24. The number of long term sickness cases sits at 39% a figure more comparable with previous years and around 7% of overall headcount.

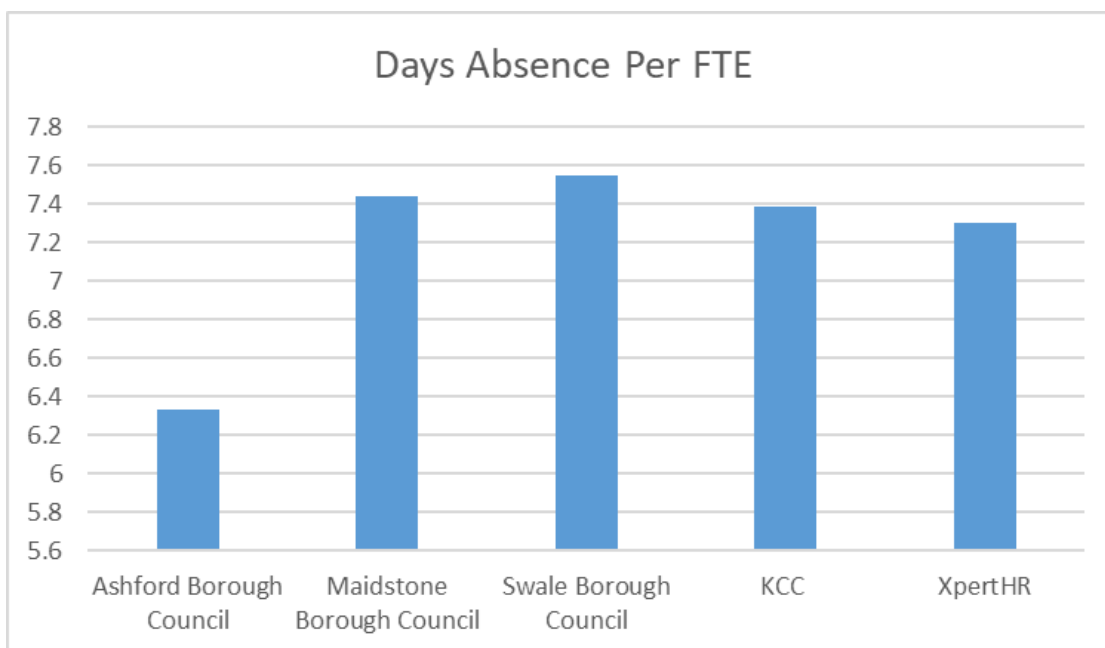


### National and sectoral comparison

25. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that sickness is still at a low level with the national level being 4.6 days per worker.



26. The chart below shows how the council compares with some of our neighboring authorities and also includes a national average for sickness absence as reported by professional resource and benchmarking organisation, XpertHR.



## Reasons for Sickness Absence

27. The table below compares the total days lost according to the reason for the sickness absence in 2021/22 with 2020/21 and also 2019/20. However, as the period 2020/21 was so unusual detailed comparisons have only been made with 2019/20 as this period is more comparable.

Absence Reason	2019/20 Total days lost	% of overall absence	2020/21 Total days lost	% of overall absence	2021/22 Total days lost	% of overall absence
Allergic reaction, skin condition			19.1	0.9%	6	0.19%
Back and neck problems (inc. Sciatica)	304.0	8%	107.1	5%	131	4.06%
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers			86.1	4%	68	2.11%
Chest, respiratory	209.6	5%	101.0	5%	105.5	3.27%
Cold, Influenza, Fever, Pneumonia	371.7	9%	46.7	2%	n/a	n/a
Eye, ear, nose, throat, tonsillitis, glandular, mouth/dental problems, sinusitis	173.0	4%	224.8	11%	347	10.76%
Fracture, injury, accident outside of work	8.0	0.2%	28.7	1%	11	0.34%
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	13.5	0.3%	17.5	0.8%	41.5	1.29%
Headache, Migraine, Vertigo	89.9	2%	248.1	12%	84.47	2.62%
Heart, blood pressure conditions, circulation	80.6	2%	26.9	1%	74	2.29%
Industrial Injury/Accident at work			7.2	0.3%	2.5	0.08%
Infections	48.5	1%	21.6	1%	32.5	1.01%

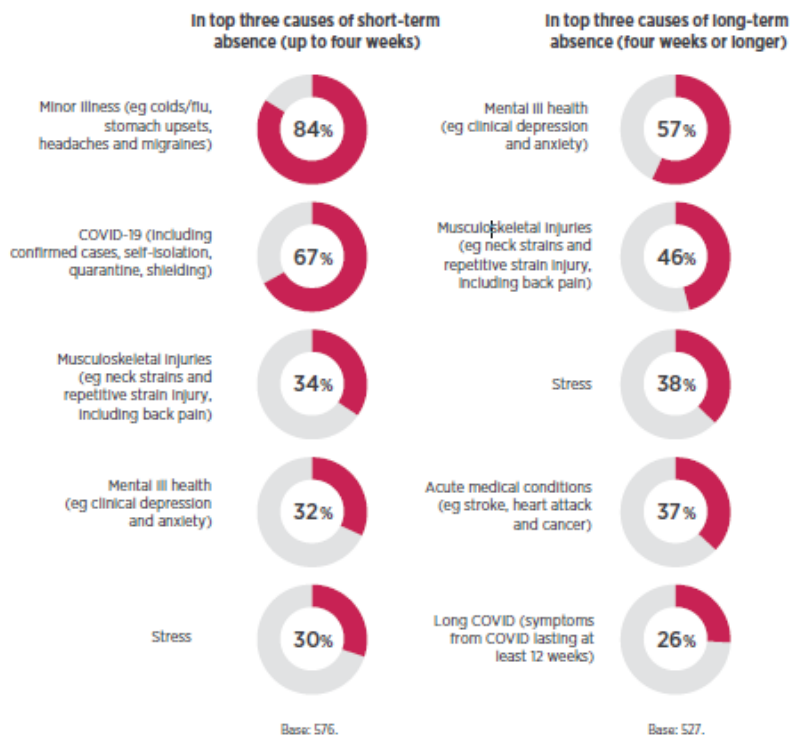
Other	276.0	7%	94.3	4%	212.54	6.59%
Other musculo-skeletal problems (inc. arthritis)	459.3	12%	50.7	2%	295.35	9.16%
Phased return	176.1	4%	39.9	2%	132.5	4.11%
Pregnancy related	39.0	1%	3.0	0.1%	25.5	0.79%
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	198.4	5%	107.8	5%	155.36	4.82%
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue	1068.3	27%	712.4	34%	1290.48	40%
Surgery, surgery recovery, hospital appointment/procedure	126.0	3%		3%	103.5	3.21%
Virus (inc. e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, food poisoning)	238.6	6%		4%	106.54	3.30%

28. Absence reasons that have resulted in more total days lost this period compared with 2019/20 are year on year are Benign and malignant tumours/cancers, Genito-urinary; menstrual problems Fracture/injury/ accident outside of work, Headache/Migraine/Vertigo, Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue

29. The CIPD Health and Well-being at Work Survey 2022 reported on the following most prevalent reasons for both long-term sickness absence and short-term sickness absence. The table below, taken from the report shows that mental ill health and stress feature amongst the most common causes of long term sickness.

Health and wellbeing at work 2022

Figure 26: The most common causes of absence (% of respondents who include in their top three causes)



30. The following tables detail the reasons for our long-term and short-term sickness absence.

<b>2021/22 Absence Reason 19 days or less ( short term absence)</b>	<b>Days lost</b>	<b>% of long term sickness</b>
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue	352.48	26.05
Other	164.54	12.16
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	128.36	9.49
Virus (inc. e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, food poisoning)	106.54	7.87
Phased return	91.5	6.76
Eye, ear, nose, throat, tonsillitis, glandular, mouth/dental problems, sinusitis	86	6.36
Headache, migraine, vertigo	84.47	6.24
Chest, respiratory, lung, asthma	80.5	5.95
Back and neck problems (inc. Sciatica)	58	4.29
Surgery, surgery recovery, hospital appointment/procedure	55.5	4.10
Musculo-skeletal problems (inc. arthritis)	49.35	3.65
Infections	32.5	2.40
Heart, blood pressure conditions, circulation	17	1.26
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	14.5	1.07
Fracture, injury, accident outside of work	11	0.81
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	9	0.67
Allergic reaction, skin condition	6	0.44
Pregnancy related	3.5	0.26
Industrial Injury/Accident at work	2.5	0.18

<b>2020/21 Absence Reason 20 days or more (long-term absence)</b>	<b>Days Lost</b>	<b>% of short term sickness</b>
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue	938	50.11
Eye, ear, nose, throat, tonsillitis, glandular, mouth/dental problems, sinusitis	261	13.94
Musculo-skeletal problems (inc. arthritis)	246	13.14
Back and neck problems (inc. Sciatica)	73	3.90
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	59	3.15
Heart, blood pressure conditions, circulation	57	3.04
Other	48	2.56
Surgery, surgery recovery, hospital appointment/procedure	48	2.56
Phased return	41	2.19
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	27	1.44
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	27	1.44
Chest, respiratory, lung, asthma	25	1.34
Pregnancy related	22	1.18

31. The current position in relation to the 39 employees who were long term absent in 2021/22 is as follows:-

- 28 employees have returned to work
- 9 employees no longer work at the council



- 2 are currently unable to work due to their long term condition and HR are working closely with them and their managers in line with the sickness absence policy.

## Mental Ill health

32. Mental ill health accounted for 40% of the council's total sickness absence, compared to 34% last year. Although high, this figure follows national trends as reported by the CIPD.

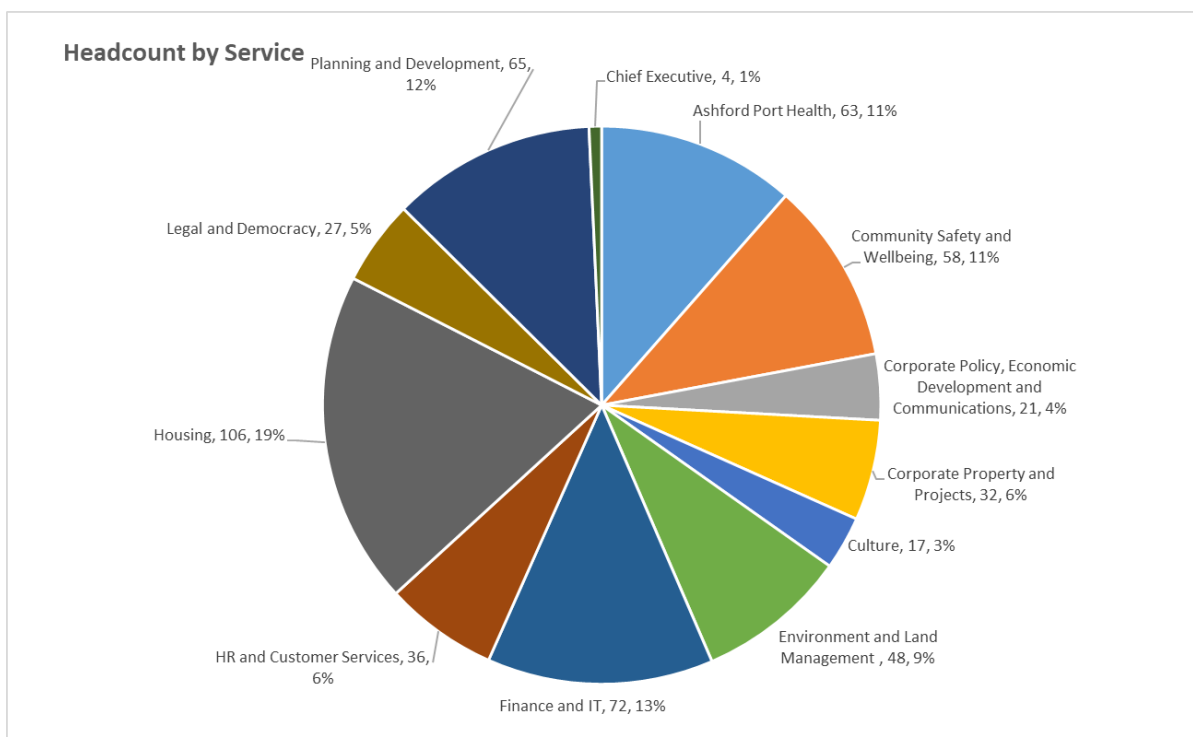
	CIPD national trend - % of respondents who report mental ill health in their top three causes	ABC - % of overall sickness absence (excluding covid) due to mental ill health
Long Term sickness absence	57%	26.05%
Short Term sickness absence	32%	50.11%

33. Mental ill health related absence remains a serious matter and one which the HR team are focused on.
- Mental ill health affected 49 employees in 2021/2022, approximately 9% of the workforce.
  - 18 instances of mental ill health related absence, affecting 16 employees, made up 72% of all mental ill health related absence and 29% of all absence overall.
  - Of these 16 employees 10 have now returned to work, 4 have left and 2 remain on long term sick leave being supported by their manager and the HR team.
34. Causes of mental ill health can vary and are often overlapping. There are many factors associated with the pandemic and the new normal that have the potential to impact mental wellbeing. Issues such as social anxiety, relationship breakdowns, bereavements, financial difficulties and family members' ill health have all affected the mental health of our employees over the review period.
35. Our wellbeing offering continues to be very strong for employees and we have continued to focus mental wellbeing together with physical, financial and cyber wellbeing. Our wellbeing communications are frequent as we continue to signpost employees to credible and accurate information. Our employee assistance programme is well publicised and well used, it is also open to partners and adult children who live at the same address.
36. This year we have introduced structured wellbeing sections in our one to one process which focus on mental health and self care routines. This monthly mental health check in from a manager ensures that employees have the opportunity to discuss any issues inside or outside of work and also focus on maintaining good mental health through positive activities.

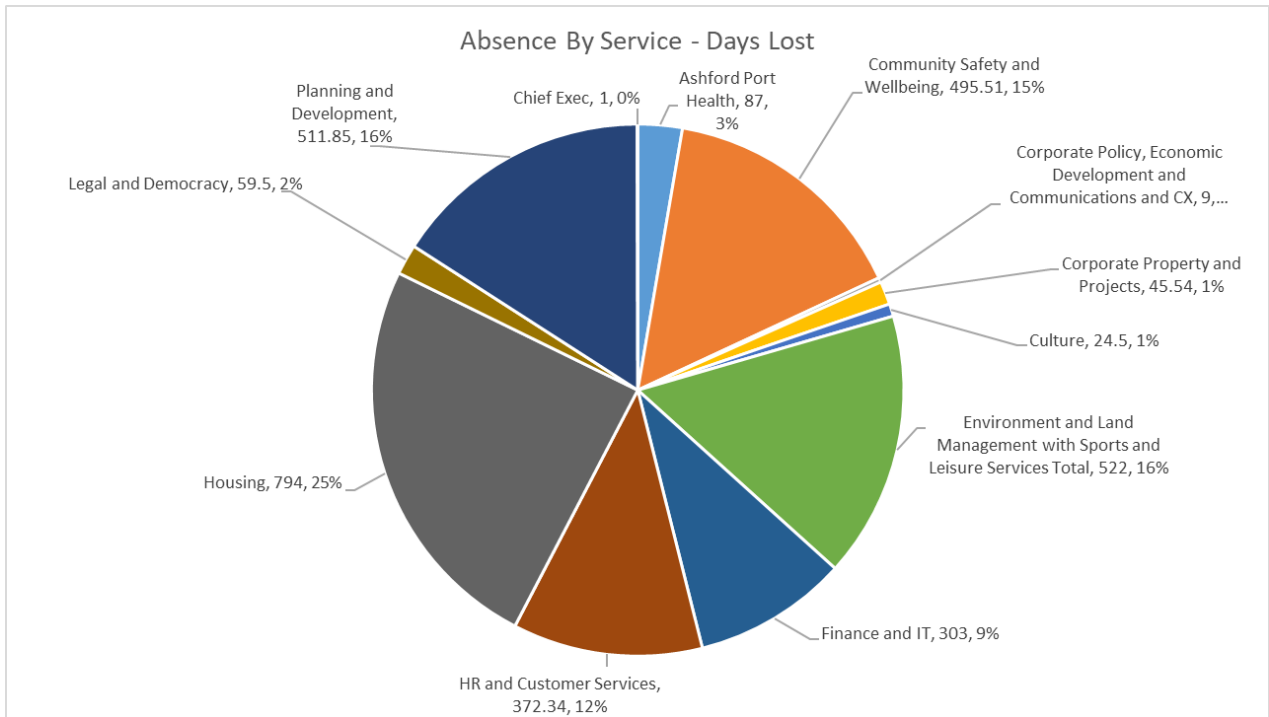
37. Throughout the year the HR team have supported staff and managers in managing sickness absence caused by poor mental health and a range of interventions and measures have been deployed such as referral to counselling, occupational health advice, making reasonable adjustments with the aim of supporting the individual in having regular attendance at work.
38. We are working with the Health and Safety team to introduce mental health first aiders as an additional layer of support for the organisation. The first Mental Health First Aiders have been trained and we hope to announce further Mental Health First Aiders in the autumn.
39. We also plan to work with the Able Futures group, an organisation similar to Access to Work, who focus on supporting employees who have mental ill health and helping them to remain in work.
40. We have recently renegotiated a plan with Benenden Healthcare where staff who join and pay their membership fees through a payroll deduction have a 6-month wait time waived. This year 78 employees joined Benenden, 152 in total with family/friends. We hope this will mean that staff can access diagnostics and treatment more quickly.

### Service Comparison

41. The following charts show how headcount is distributed across the services, and how sickness is distributed by service.



42. The chart below shows the percentage of overall sickness by service. Housing is the highest service with 19%. Followed by Environment and Land Management and Planning, both at 16%. Broadly speaking the distribution of absence is in line with the distribution of headcount.



## Conclusions

43. **The total amount of working days lost due to sickness in 2021/22 is 6.33 days per FTE.** If covid related absence was added to this figure, days lost would be 8.04 per FTE
44. Although sickness levels are returning to pre-pandemic norms they continue to be impacted by covid 19 and this is an area which need to continue to closely monitor. Numbers of employees directly affected by covid 19 have increased but this is in line with national trends.
45. Mental ill health is still our most common reason for sickness absence but this is comparable with national trends and affecting a relatively small group of employees who are well supported by our HR team.
46. We trained the first tranche of Mental Health First Aiders this year and intend to roll this out more widely to provide a further layer of support for staff experiencing poor mental health. Employees continue to benefit from the support of our well utilised employee assistance programme plus our new Benenden healthcare benefit.

Joy Cross  
 HR Manager  
 01233 330 400  
 joy.cross@ashford.gov.uk

05 September 2022

## Appendix 1

<b>2021/22 absence reasons</b>	<b>2022/23 absence reasons</b>
Allergic reaction, skin condition	Allergic reaction, skin condition
Back and neck problems (inc. Sciatica)	Back and neck problems (inc. Sciatica)
Benign and malignant tumours, cancers	Benign and malignant tumours, cancers
Chest, respiratory	Chest, respiratory, lung, asthma
Cold, Influenza, Fever, Pneumonia	Cold, Influenza, Fever, Pneumonia
n/a	Covid-19 – Self isolating following close contact (not vaccinated)
n/a	Covid-19 – Self isolating following positive test – unable to work
n/a	Covid-19 – Symptomatic
Ear, nose, throat, tonsillitis, glandular, mouth/dental problems, sinusitis	Ear, nose, throat, tonsillitis, glandular, sinusitis
	Mouth, dental
	Eye, vision
Fracture, injury, accident outside of work	Fracture, injury, accident outside of work
Genito-urinary; menstrual problems	Genital / urinary / kidney
	Gender transitioning
	Menopausal, menstrual
Headache, Migraine, Vertigo	Headache, Migraine, Vertigo
Heart, blood pressure conditions, circulation	Heart, blood pressure conditions, circulation
Industrial Injury/Accident at work	Industrial Injury/Accident at work
Infections	Infections
	IVF
Other	
Other musculo-skeletal problems (inc. arthritis)	Musculo-skeletal problems (inc. arthritis)
	Neurological (e.g.Epilepsy, fibromyalgia)
Phased return	Phased return
Pregnancy related	Pregnancy related
Stomach, liver, kidney, digestion	Stomach, digestion (eg IBS)
	Liver
Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue	Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health, fatigue
Surgery, surgery recovery, hospital appointment/procedure	Surgery, surgery recovery, hospital appointment/procedure
Virus (inc e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, food poisoning)	Vomiting, diarrhoea, food poisoning

## Agenda Item No: 4



### Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### Hybrid Working

---

#### The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:

1. Review the progress made with hybrid working
  2. Note the impacts that hybrid working has (or hasn't had) on performance, customer satisfaction, savings and HR metrics
  3. Note that this approach will continue to develop as we learn from our experiences
- 

**Date of O&S meeting:** 13 September 2022

**Chair of O&S Committee:** Cllr Ovenden

**Relevant Portfolio(s):** Cllr Pickering

**Summary:** Members of the committee were interested in exploring how well the hybrid arrangements were working and in particular wanted to consider this in terms of performance, customer satisfaction, savings, human resources and recruitment. This report will aim to provide a review of these areas.

**Exempt from Publication:** NO

**Background Papers:**

**Contact:** Michelle.pecci@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330602

## **Report Title: Hybrid Working**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. Since the pandemic, and the major change in attitudes around more flexible forms of working, hybrid working in particular has created new employee expectations and desires. At Ashford we already had flexible working policies and the ability to work remotely but the pandemic, and the emerging picture that hybrid working was likely to be widely adopted across other organisations, meant that we needed to ensure we could respond effectively to the wider employment market.
2. As the restrictions on workplaces eased, it became more evident that organisations who were not supporting flexible forms of working risked increased employee turnover, reduced employee engagement and limited the ability to attract talent in the future. This meant that we had to be flexible in how we adapted to hybrid working recognising that it would not be for everyone, and one size may not fit all.
3. A number of staff could not work remotely (AMC staff, Facilities staff, Civil Enforcement Officers, Aspire) and a number of staff do not wish to work remotely, and have been accommodated in the civic centre throughout pandemic, as the rules allowed.
4. We reviewed our homeworking/remote working and flexible working policies in early 2021 so that as restrictions eased we were prepared and could make consistent decisions within a framework of guidance.
5. The remote working policy supports requests for hybrid work giving flexibility for both the staff member and the organisation recognising that needs change and both sides benefit from a requirement to review the success of the arrangement. The flexible working policy is a route to be taken where both the individual and council needs certainty about working hours or location and becomes a contractual term. An individual can only make one flexible working request per year so it is less flexible in this respect.

### **Hybrid working**

6. We have been careful to keep engaging with staff throughout the pandemic to establish the likely demand for hybrid working and to understand the perceived benefits and challenges from a staff perspective.
7. It has widely been reported that despite the many complexities and challenges of living and working through the global pandemic, staff have still identified many benefits from working from home, for both them and their employer. These benefits include a better work–life balance, greater ability to focus with fewer distractions, more time for family and friends, saved commuting time and costs

and higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, improved productivity and reduced absence rates.

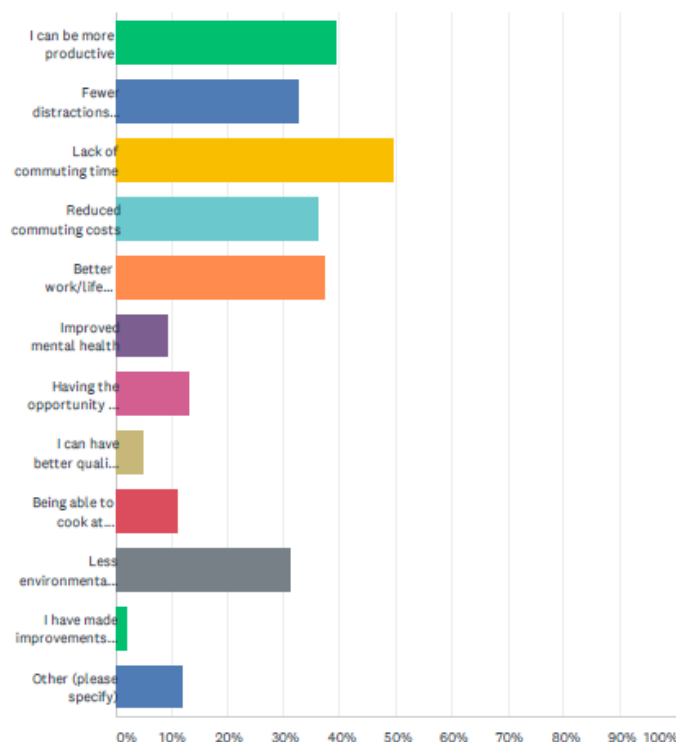
8. Hybrid working also provides other opportunities for organisations in terms of enabling employee wellbeing, supporting inclusion and diversity and reducing facilities costs, with some employers reducing their office space to help make savings
9. The reported benefits for employees are consistent with the feedback we have had from staff in the surveys we have conducted during the pandemic. (Appendices 1 and 2).
10. The data from the staff surveys told us that staff were interested in continuing to work remotely but most felt they would want to be in the offices some of their working week, the survey also asked staff to identify the benefits of remote working for them:

Given the choice, would you like to work from home more frequently  
once the offices re-open?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Work from home - all of my week	9.56%	28
Work from home - UP TO 80% of my week	21.84%	64
Work from home - UP TO 60% of my week	22.87%	67
Work from home - UP TO 40% of my week	18.09%	53
Work from home - UP TO 20% of my week	14.33%	42
I do not want to work from home in future	10.92%	32
My role requires me to be onsite e.g. Facilities, AMC, CEO	2.39%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

What are the TOP THREE benefits of working from home?  
MAXIMUM THREE ANSWERS

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



11. Whilst the full benefits/dis-benefits of hybrid working as a specific form of flexible working are yet to be fully researched, the CIPD have conducted a study of homeworking during the pandemic that has provided a useful snapshot of issues to consider:

- a. Increased productivity among homeworkers is often achieved through work intensification.
- b. For some workers, homeworking can provide a more productive environment because there are fewer distractions.
- c. Knowledge sharing and team relationships often suffer – unless task-related processes are designed to take location into account.
- d. Innovation can suffer if knowledge sharing and team relationships deteriorate.
- e. Social isolation can be a problem for some workers, but this depends on personality and lifestyle.
- f. Avoiding the commute is a major benefit for most.
- g. Attention to work-life boundaries is helpful not just for homeworkers but for anyone in the digital age.
- h. The career downsides are real and need to be managed.

Source: [Working from home: assessing the research evidence | CIPD](#) September 2020

12. This CIPD research underpins the fact that homeworking working can be difficult to get right, and the importance of ensuring there is face to face contact to help



build team relationships, share knowledge, learn and to innovate. These are crucial elements we have had to consider as we have shaped our approach to hybrid.

13. As case studies and examples emerge it is clear that there is no single way to implement hybrid working, and its exact form is likely to vary from organisation to organisation. Ways of addressing some of the challenges that are associated with remote working will vary from team to team depending on the nature of the service provided and this will require us all to be flexible and adaptable.
14. We are still working through some of the challenges and it is likely that our approach will need to change as we learn from our experiences, and learn from the feedback from staff, customers and members. We will also need to be flexible as technology, service design and customer demands/needs changes to ensure service delivery is responsive, efficient and effective.
15. We have already seen how learning and development, for example, has had a seismic shift in approach. Many programmes have gone online through virtual/zoom/Teams for their person to person sessions. Developments in the software now mean that traditional breakout groups are possible and this has broken down the barriers to remote learning. Many programmes now have a blended approach with a mixture of virtual seminars, independent eLearning and face to face. It is fair to say that the days of traditional learning are changed forever due to the advancements in hybrid technology.
16. At Ashford we have taken care to regularly survey staff to ensure that hybrid working practices continue to deliver benefits to both staff and the organisation, enabling us to tackle problems in a timely way. i.e. how to accommodate people who did not want to/could not work remotely, providing space for colleagues to sit, and work together, how to promote team working etc. as well as to gain a common understanding of what the new office norms could look like.
17. Managing remotely is very different to managing in a face to face environment and the skills and behaviours of managers need to take this difference into account. Whether they have a whole team working remotely or just a small number of the team working at home for a couple of days a week, we have therefore produced a guide (appendix 3) to help to support managers in the communications they have with their team, how to building team morale, tackle difficult conversations, setting objectives and supporting development.
18. We have developed a similar guide (appendix 4) for staff designed to assist them in understanding the basic requirements and tools available, as well as to emphasise the importance of looking after their wellbeing and especially that although they are physically distanced it is important to remain socially connected.
19. Further important considerations for us were cyber security, data protection and health and safety. We have ensured a varied comms plan has been rolled out for each of these including staff training and awareness across all three areas.

20. Once the Covid restrictions were lifted we set about reconfiguring the office spaces. It was clear that time in the office would need to provide opportunities for collaboration (as this is the aspect that is more difficult remotely) as well as space to have hybrid meetings with people not physically in the office.
21. Covid-secure meeting rooms were set up with webcams and speakers so that hybrid teams meetings could be held. The Port Health team were based on level three of the civic centre and would be for a number of months so initially we decided to reconfigure levels one and two of the civic centre so as to accommodate everyone on two floors. We would then reconfigure level three to meeting, collaboration and flexi space once Port Health were able to move into their building at Sevington.
22. The IT team have spent some time to research and test hybrid meeting equipment that is suitable for the committee rooms so that larger meetings and committee meetings can be held in a hybrid environment. The selected equipment is due to be installed in the committee rooms in early August; this will enhance our ability to hold effective larger meetings. Whilst legislation does not allow some formal council meetings to be held virtually, this will open up options for interested parties to observe meetings increasing citizen participation and potentially improving the diversity of people being able to access local democracy. Member services are currently working with a provider to design a hybrid meeting solution for the Council chamber too.
23. The staff surveys indicated that likely working patterns would be up to 60% of people in the office at once and so after a mammoth spring clean a new layout, providing 60% of the desk numbers we had previously, has been implemented.
24. The spring clean enabled us to destroy unimportant files and documents that hadn't been needed for more than a year and scan those hard copies we needed to retain. Importantly this meant that we did not need the storage space (bookcases, cupboards etc.) and we were able to space-out the desks more than previously acknowledging that Covid security would continue to be a concern for people as they returned to the office.
25. Services are now located in zones and a set number of desks are allocated per service. Staff use a booking system to ensure there is a desk for them to use in their service zone when they come to the office and in addition, there are banks of 'hot desks' that anyone is able to book. The hot desks are intended to be able to accommodate additional staff should all the team be in the building and extra desks needed, or to encourage collaboration between staff working on common projects etc.
26. Port Health have not fully moved out of the building due to the delays with the import checks, and they are likely to need some space for a while so plans are being developed for one or two wings on level three. What our experience so far has taught us is that as well as more meeting and collaboration space we need more confidential space to make long telephone and Teams calls. The office environment is much quieter than pre-pandemic as we have no desk telephones to ring and fill the office with noise, consequently telephone conversations can

be more disruptive and so longer calls are better to be taken in a confidential space when possible.

- 27. Fewer days in the office has contributed to a reduction in our carbon footprint. Before the pandemic we asked people about their commute to work, 85% said they travelled to work by car. We also asked staff how long their commute was, 43% of respondents live 11+ miles from the civic centre.
- 28. By way of a modest estimate, if all these staff who live 11+ miles away remote work for one day per week (and usually drive) this would give an annual reduction of circa 184k\* commuting miles. This is a significant contribution to our carbon reduction strategy.

[\*Based on 46 working weeks x 22 miles per day=1,012 miles per person per year. 85% of 500 staff= 425 staff drive to work. 43% of those 425 staff that drive live 11+ miles away =182 drivers. 1012 miles x 182 drivers= 184,184 miles]

How long is your commute to work?]

Less than 5 miles	44.71%
5-10 miles	11.60%
11-20 miles	27.30%
More than 20 miles	16.38%

**How has it worked out so far?**

- 29. Members were interested in exploring how well the hybrid arrangements were working and in particular would like the Committee to consider this in terms of performance, customer satisfaction, savings, human resources and recruitment. The rest of this report will aim to provide a review of these areas.

**Performance**

- 30. Better productivity is cited as a major benefit of homeworking, in some teams it can be difficult to measure this objectively by having tangible measures. For example the accountancy team will be measured on whether monitoring and reporting is complete and if budget pressures etc. are highlighted in a timely way, it will not necessarily measure how many or how long a piece of work took. However there are teams where it is easier to objectively see how performance was before widespread hybrid working compared to now.
- 31. We have always seen the Customer Service and R&B homeworkers with higher productivity than equivalent office based staff. The following table shows Customer Service data for the fourth quarter of 2019/20 (pre pandemic), compared to the fourth quarter of 2021/22 (this year).

Month	Calls Answered + Callbacks Handled	Emails Handled	Wechats	Telephone Appointments	Face to Face	Total Tenderden	Total Contacts Dealt With	Percentage Answered	Average speed of answer (hh:mm:ss)	Average ACD handling time (hh:mm:ss)
Jan-20	7173	1669	0	0	2206	298	8842	70.79%	00:01:14	00:04:41
Feb-20	6317	1196	0	0	1675	175	7513	73.48%	00:01:09	00:04:25
Mar-20	7175	2707	0	0	2168	416	9882	74.47%	00:01:14	00:04:23
Jan-22	7549	2142	90	34	413	8	10236	82.84%	00:01:30	00:04:57
Feb-22	7545	2779	95	41	456	20	10936	84.20%	00:01:31	00:04:46
Mar-22	9107	3426	104	54	695	29	13415	87.26%	00:01:23	00:04:50

32. It can be seen that the percentage of contacts answered have increased from circa 73% to circa 85% across each quarter despite the total numbers of contacts increasing by around 8,000 contacts. Some of this can be attributed to fewer face-to-face contacts (that take longer and have more down time) but much of this is as a result of fewer distractions than being in the office and therefore higher productivity.
33. The following data for R&B shows that average time to process a change in benefit has improved whereas average time to process a new claim has increased slightly. What this data does not show however is that the R&B teams have also taken on a significant level of additional work including: distributing business grants, test and trace isolation payments and Council Tax energy Rebate schemes. This has resulted in tens of thousands additional applications/payments/correspondence for the team to deal with and this has been managed within existing resources, with some overtime being worked in the team with a minimal impact on processing time.

Average time to process a change in benefit			
2019/20	Q1	Q2	Q3
	2.82 days	2.64 days	2.61 days
2021/22	Q1	Q2	Q3
	1.75 days	1.94 days	2.02 days

Average time to process a new claim			
2019/20	Q1	Q2	Q3
	25.63 days	23.5 days	22.27 days
2021/22	Q1	Q2	Q3
	26.35 days	24.27 days	25.2 days

## HR measures

### Sickness

34. During the pandemic the council's sickness levels dropped from 9.1 days per full time equivalent (FTE) to 4.7 days per FTE. This reduction was attributed to a lower incidence of seasonal colds and flu, lower exposure to things that may

cause stomach upsets etc. and reduced physical activities that may give rise to musculoskeletal problems/broken bones etc. In addition staff were able to log in remotely if they were able to work, when previously they may have called in sick and not worked. The reduction in absence levels was always a temporary dip in sickness as the environmental factors that cause sickness absence would be reintroduced as restrictions eased.

35. Our current sickness rate (2021/22) is 6.3 days per FTE (excluding covid related absence). A full report on sickness absence is due before the O&S committee in September, this will provide analysis on the breakdown of sickness absence, but compared to pre pandemic levels sickness levels continue to be lower.

### **Employment Relations**

36. There have not been any trends in formal employment relations cases linked to hybrid working. Case numbers generally have reduced; in the six months to the end of 2019/20 the HR team opened 110 cases. These were all types of cases i.e. included welfare issues, organisational change, H&S, performance, capability, probation sickness etc.
37. For the same period in 2021/22 the HR team opened 66 cases. This suggests that 'organisational health' is much improved compared to the previous period. Some of this will be due to fewer sickness numbers, and some due to fewer flexible working requests as the hybrid model provides the flexibility that would otherwise need to be wrapped up in a formal HR process.

### **Recruitment/vacancies**

38. Our turnover due to all reasons in 2019/20 was 11%, with 9% due to resignations. In 2021/22 ABC's turnover increased to 12.5% overall in 2021/22 with 10% due to resignations. The national figure for turnover is circa 15.5% for 2021/22.
39. Of those who completed exit interviews the reasons for leaving were varied with one person who resigned for another role and one retiree specifically highlighting their difficulties with remote working as the reason for leaving. Other leavers specified flexibility as an element they appreciated whilst working at ABC.
40. With vacancies now being reported as being higher than unemployment it is clear it is a candidates market. 45% of employers saying they have hard-to-fill vacancies. Many are increasing pay, offering a wider range of benefits to attract and retain workers, as well as upskilling and training the existing workforce. These other benefits are important to note because it suggest that employers may be reaching a limit in terms of raising pay in response to recruitment and retention challenges.
41. When other employers are offering the ability to work remotely it is important that we also open to supporting flexible working arrangements and the remote working policy includes this as an option from day one for new starters; if we are to remain attractive as a potential employer. There are clearly constraints around some roles, and these must be made on a role-by-role basis, taking into account the needs of the service.

42. We have continued to be flexible in how we conduct interviews, supporting managers and candidates to conduct some or all of the process remotely. We have found that in most cases candidates and managers want to meet face to face before making a final decision before offering/accepting a job.
43. Key considerations for us as we continue to learn from working in a hybrid way is both not making assumptions about how candidates and recruiting managers want to work.
44. From an equality and diversity perspective, hybrid working opens up opportunities to individuals who, for example have health difficulties that make being in an office all day difficult, or who have caring responsibilities and benefit from less commuting time to fit these responsibilities into their day. This is a benefit to the council in that the staff feel supported by their employer and are motivated to do a good job, they are also more representative of the communities they serve and provide insight to how we deliver services to our community. Being more inclusive through offering hybrid-working arrangements also widens the recruitment pool for us generally which is important especially as the recruitment market is challenging.

### Customer satisfaction

45. A review of our complaints tracker has shown that there are no incidents of complaints related to staff working at home. The phone system allows a seamless direct dial to officers and the customer should therefore not know if the officer is in the civic centre or working elsewhere.
46. The current resident survey asks questions about:
  - Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Ashford Borough Council runs its services? and
  - To what extent do you think Ashford Borough Council understands the needs of customers?

Once analysed, the feedback to these questions, compared to the previous survey results, will help us determine if customer satisfaction has changed and whether we need to explore this further in light of hybrid working.

### Savings

#### 47. Utilities

With the increase across all utilities, we will not be able to show savings per se. It is easier to consider the usage rather than the costs. The table below shows the data for the use of water, gas and electricity for the fourth quarter of 2019/20 (pre pandemic), compared to the fourth quarter of 2021/22 (this year).

	Water (m3)	Gas (KWH)	Electricity day (KWH)

2019/20			
Jan	240.00	109474.35	27200.65
Feb	228.89	100018.53	22185.60
March	173.00	107019.83	19864.60
2021/22			
Jan	76.00	128482.02	19922.40
Feb	82.00	100783.86	17585.70
March	108.00	96965.32	18503.70

48. You can see from the table that the water consumption has reduced despite the facilities team having to run off hot and cold water more frequently to ensure legionella compliance temperatures are achieved.
49. Gas usage increased in January and February, partly due to having to set hot water storage temperatures higher than they were set overnight to ensure no legionella bacteria can form whilst less water is being run through the taps, and to compensate for having to have windows open for Covid ventilation measures. The comparison for March shows a reduced gas usage.
50. Finally, electricity usage has decreased, this will be as a result of fewer items left on desks on standby, fewer printers left on standby, a proportion of level three not being used and generally fewer people being in the building using power.
51. **Printing**  
Hybrid working has further reduced the costs of printing for the council. Pre-pandemic we had 13 printers on lease in the civic centre, we now have eight and are looking to rationalise this further.
52. The volume of printing has reduced as people are not in the building and this has reduced the 'click charges' per page printed and the volume of paper.

	Costs of printers and paper
2019/20	£ 39,899
2021/22	£ 18,931

53. **Refreshments**  
The council provide tea, coffee, milk and sugar in each of the kitchenettes. Fewer staff in the building has resulted in reduced consumption with a pre pandemic spend of £495 per month to a spend in Feb 2022 (post pandemic) of £86. This is likely to increase as visits to the building become more frequent but is unlikely to return to pre pandemic levels.

	Refreshments	
Jan-20	£	495
Feb-22	£	86

## Actions in the pipeline

54. The latest staff survey aimed to highlight any barriers to coming into the office so that these could be addressed. The issues highlighted were practical issues and these have been, or are being addressed. They included:
- a. Covid security-some staff continued to be concerned about being safe from Covid. Whilst we have removed many measures we continue to have well ventilated offices, anti bac wipes and hand sanitiser. We have also introduced red and amber lanyards as a visual sign for colleagues that an individual would like a bit more space
  - b. Staff asked for developments to the desk booking system that allow staff to see which other staff have booked a desk, to see a floor plan and desk lay out so you know if you are near a window, next to a noisy/quite team etc.
  - c. There were some practical issues such as somewhere to keep personal items such as a mug, or stapler etc. empty cupboards are currently being relocated for this purpose.
  - d. The availability of meeting rooms was highlighted as a challenge at times, but level three is currently being looked at with a view of providing additional meeting space.
  - e. Staff, and managers asked for refreshed remote working guidance that included meeting and office etiquette and good practice. This has been reviewed and updated and is available on the intranet.

## Conclusions

55. We can conclude that hybrid working will become/is now a permanent feature of a modern workplace. If we are to remain relevant as an employer, we will need to ensure that we can meet candidates and existing employees expectations; but equally that managers are well equipped to manage issues that crop up as a result of remote working.
56. As we have seen there are both financial and non-financial benefits to both the staff member and the council of supporting hybrid working. We do however need to strike the balance and bear in mind that one size will not fit all and there is no single way to implement hybrid working. Its exact form is likely to vary and change between services and as we learn from our experiences as well as learn from the feedback from staff, customers and members. This will require us all to be flexible and adaptable. We will also need to be flexible as technology, service



design and customer demands/needs changes to ensure service delivery is responsive, efficient and effective.

57. This need to be flexible can be a challenge, management team recognise that it will take hard work to get hybrid working right but are committed to make it work to realise the benefits for the council, and its staff.

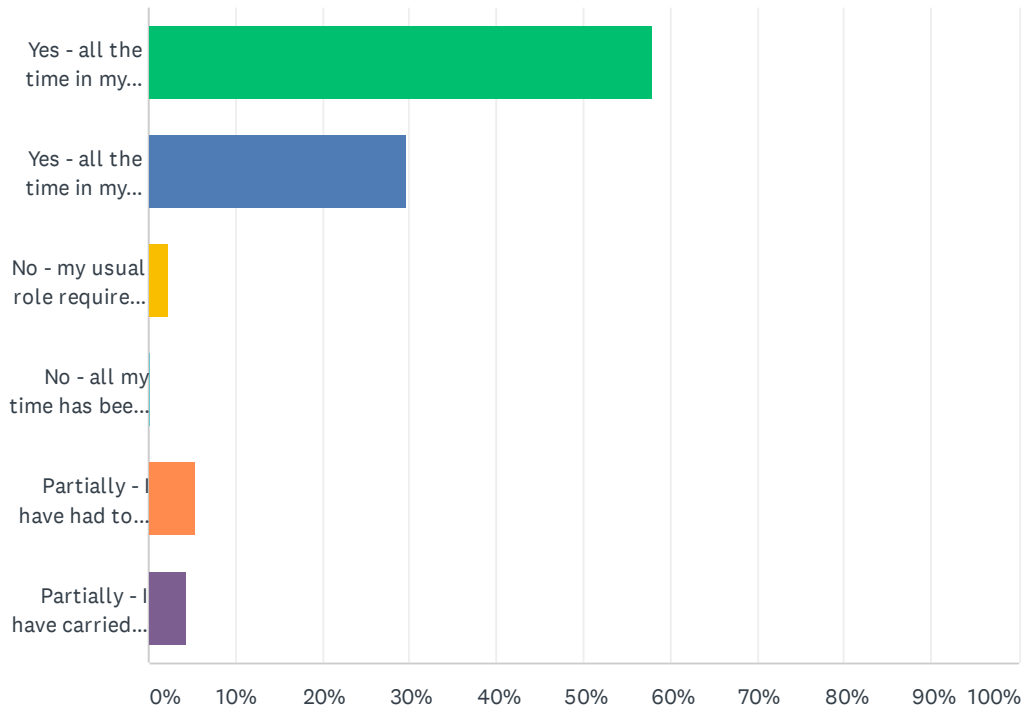
## **Contact and Email**

58. Michelle Pecci  
Michelle.pecci@[ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.pecci@ashford.gov.uk) 01233 330602

This page is intentionally left blank

# Q1 Have you been working from home during the Covid-19 lockdown?

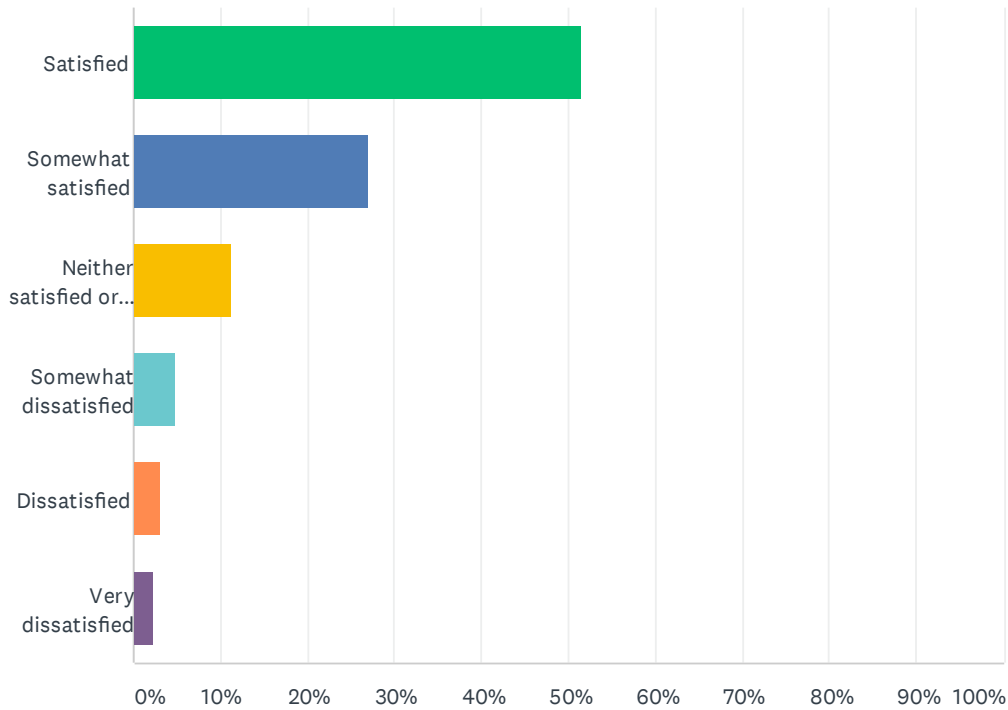
Answered: 337 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes - all the time in my usual role	57.86% 195
Yes - all the time in my usual role and in redeployed duties supporting our response	29.67% 100
No - my usual role requires me to be onsite all the time	2.37% 8
No - all my time has been deployed on front line Covid response work	0.30% 1
Partially - I have had to attend the offices to do some of my role	5.34% 18
Partially - I have carried out some of my usual role from home and have been involved with front line response work	4.45% 15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>337</b>

## Q2 How satisfied are you with your current work from home arrangement?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



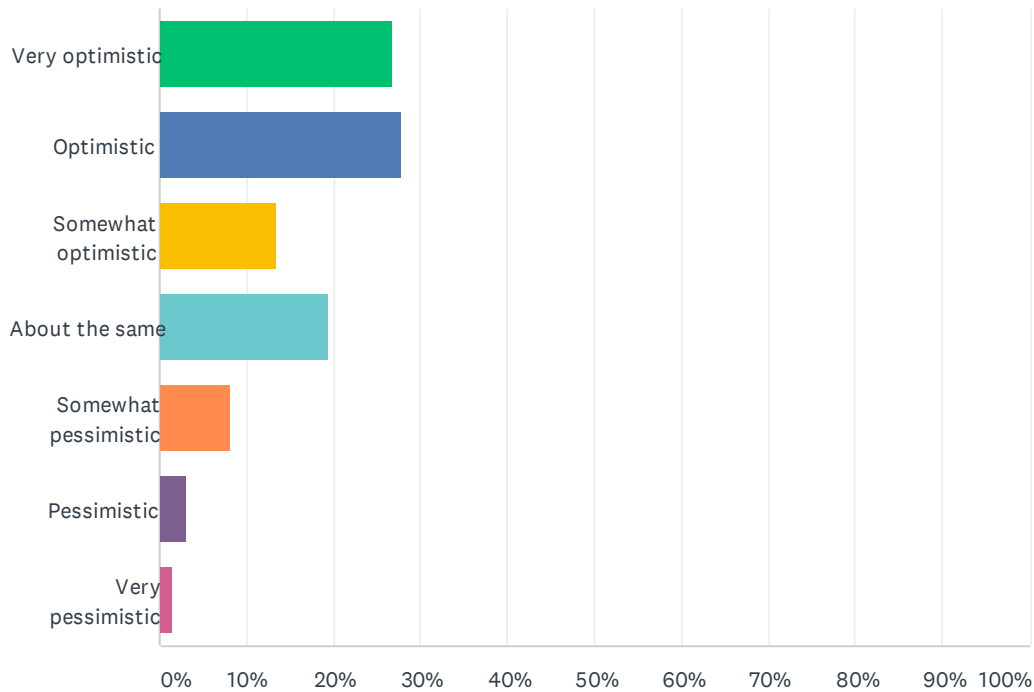
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Satisfied	51.37%	150
Somewhat satisfied	27.05%	79
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	11.30%	33
Somewhat dissatisfied	4.79%	14
Dissatisfied	3.08%	9
Very dissatisfied	2.40%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>292</b>

### Q3 How could your homeworking arrangements be improved?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45

# Q4 Compared to prior to the lockdown, are you feeling more optimistic or pessimistic about working from home?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



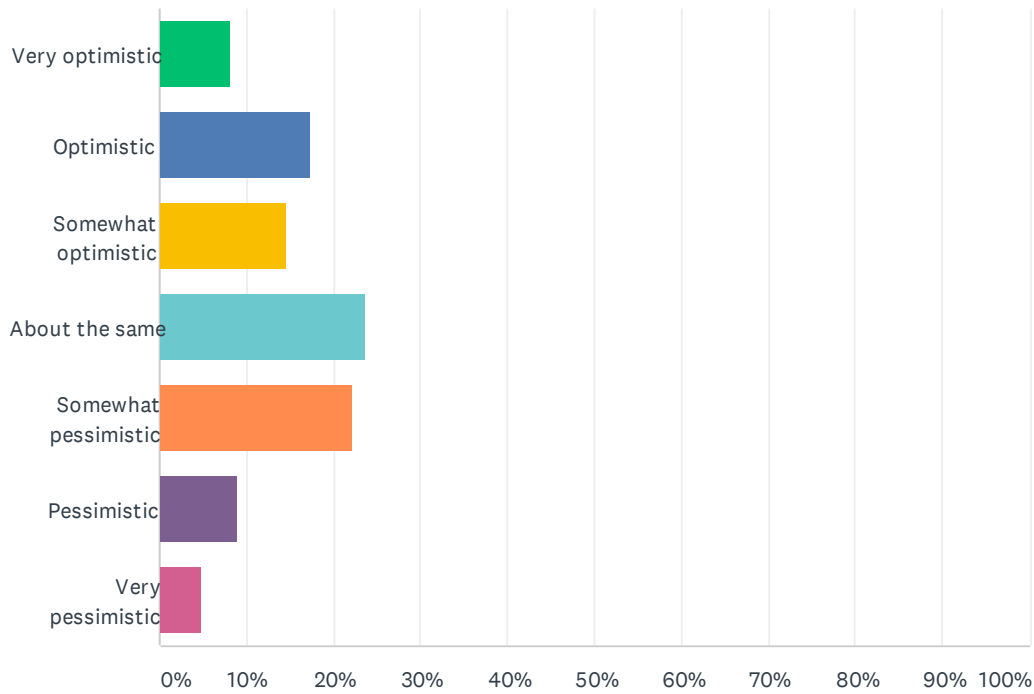
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very optimistic	26.71%	78
Optimistic	27.74%	81
Somewhat optimistic	13.36%	39
About the same	19.52%	57
Somewhat pessimistic	8.22%	24
Pessimistic	3.08%	9
Very pessimistic	1.37%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>292</b>

## Q5 Why do you feel this way?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45

## Q6 Compared to prior to the lockdown, are you feeling more optimistic or pessimistic about returning to the office?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very optimistic	8.22%	24
Optimistic	17.47%	51
Somewhat optimistic	14.73%	43
About the same	23.63%	69
Somewhat pessimistic	22.26%	65
Pessimistic	8.90%	26
Very pessimistic	4.79%	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>292</b>

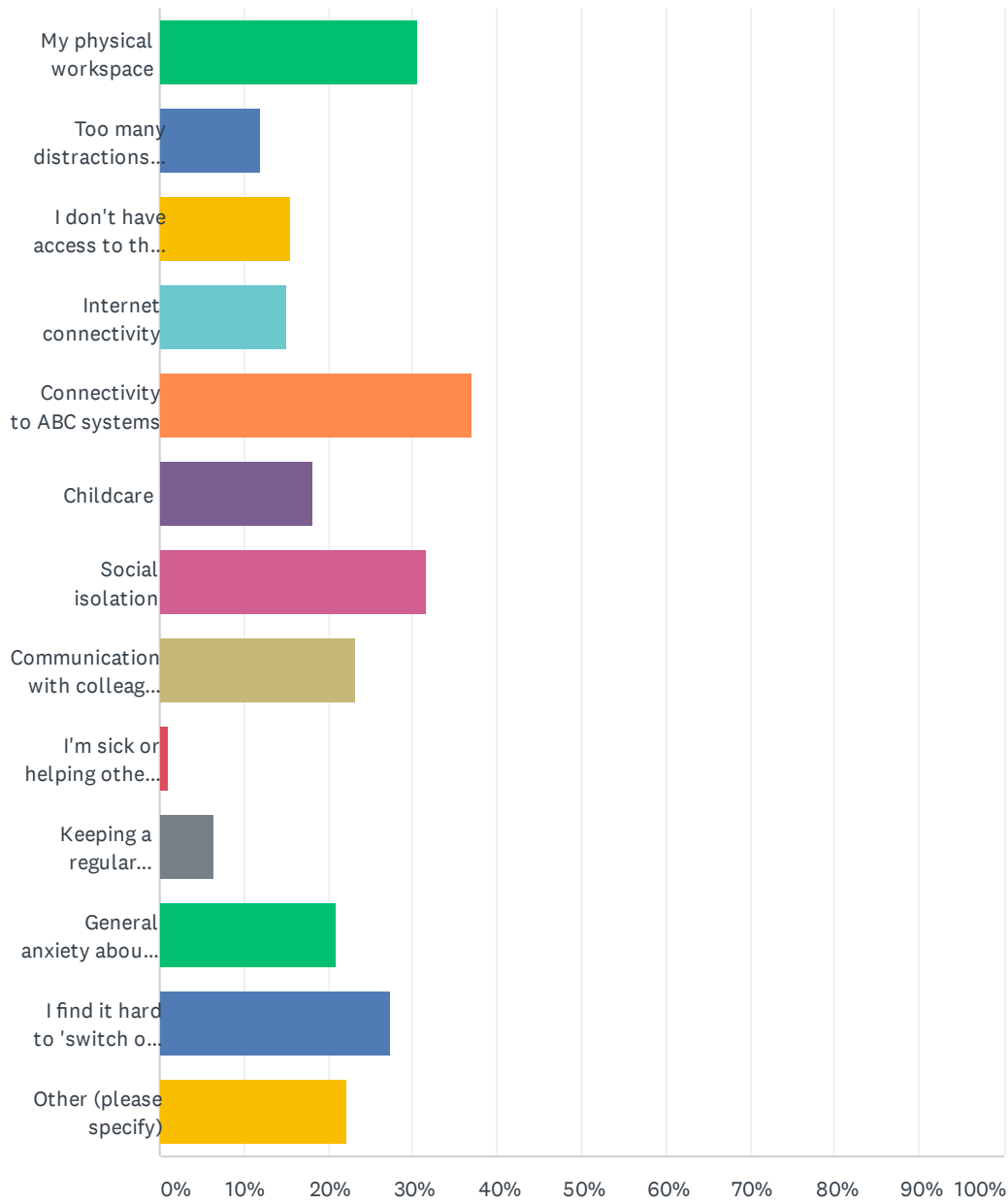


## Q7 Why do you feel this way?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45

### Q8 What are the TOP THREE biggest challenges you are currently facing while working remotely? MAXIMUM THREE ANSWERS.

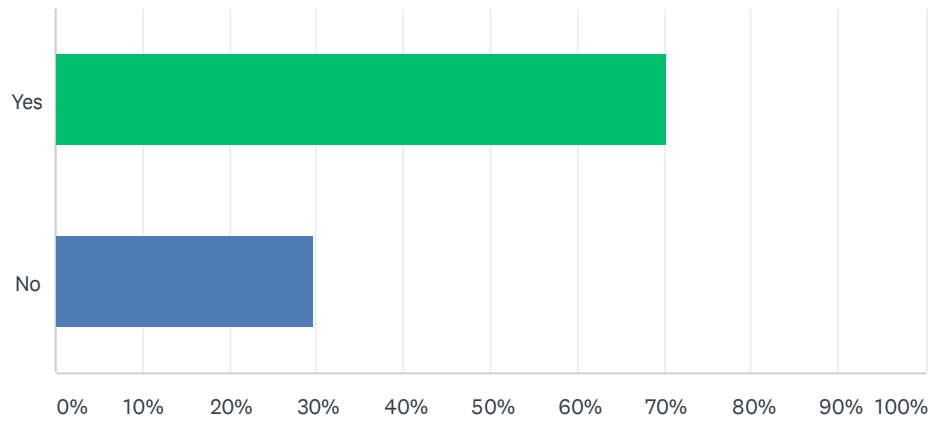
Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My physical workspace	30.48%	89
Too many distractions at home	11.99%	35
I don't have access to the tools or information I need to do my job at home	15.41%	45
Internet connectivity	15.07%	44
Connectivity to ABC systems	36.99%	108
Childcare	18.15%	53
Social isolation	31.51%	92
Communication with colleagues is harder	23.29%	68
I'm sick or helping others who are sick	1.03%	3
Keeping a regular schedule	6.51%	19
General anxiety about the impact of coronavirus on my life	20.89%	61
I find it hard to 'switch off' from work	27.40%	80
Other (please specify)	22.26%	65
Total Respondents: 292		

# Q9 Do you have all the equipment you need in order to do your work from home?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



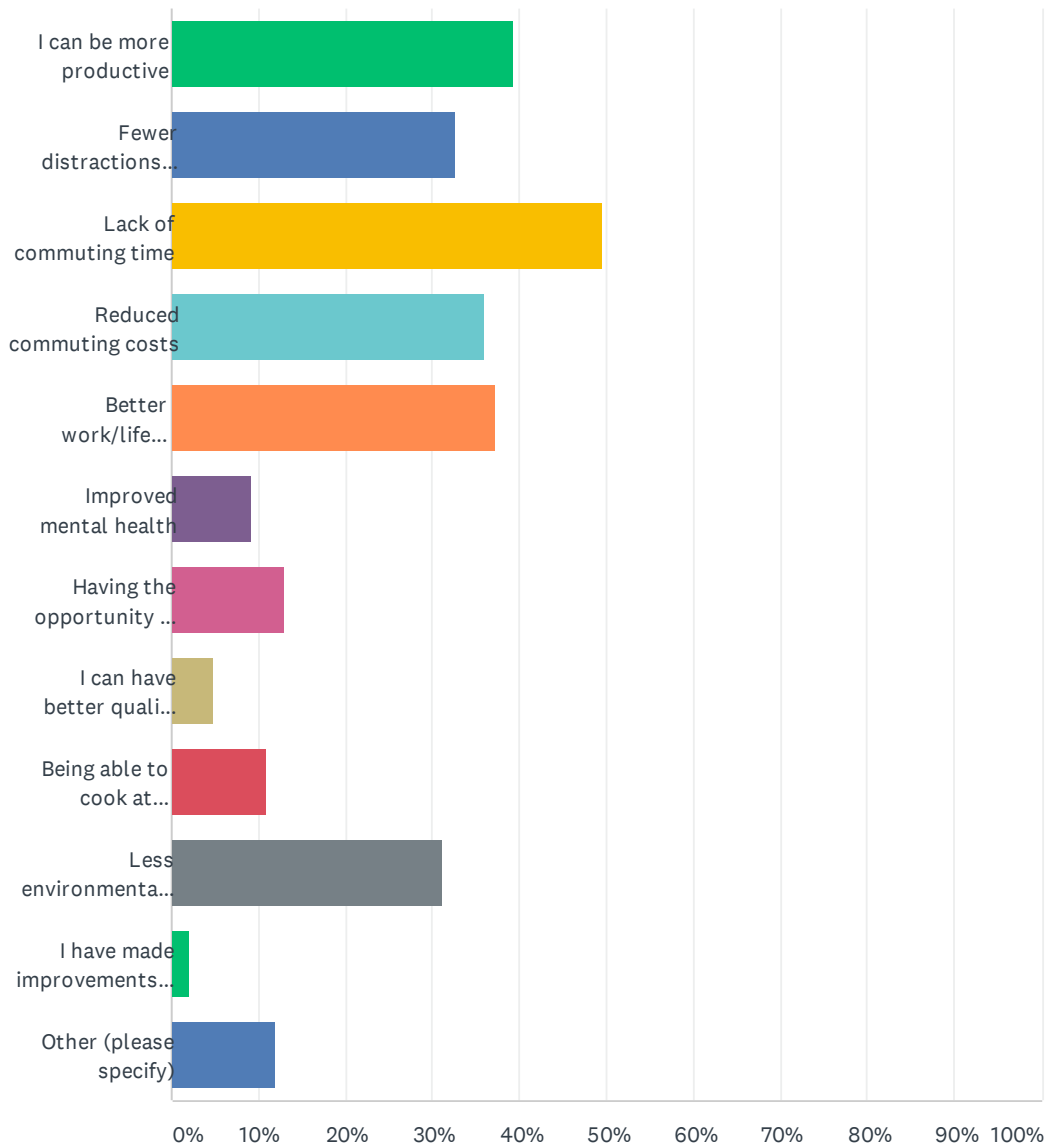
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	70.21%	205
No	29.79%	87
TOTAL		292

## Q10 What else do you need to do your job well whilst working remotely?

Answered: 292 Skipped: 45

# Q11 What are the TOP THREE benefits of working from home? MAXIMUM THREE ANSWERS

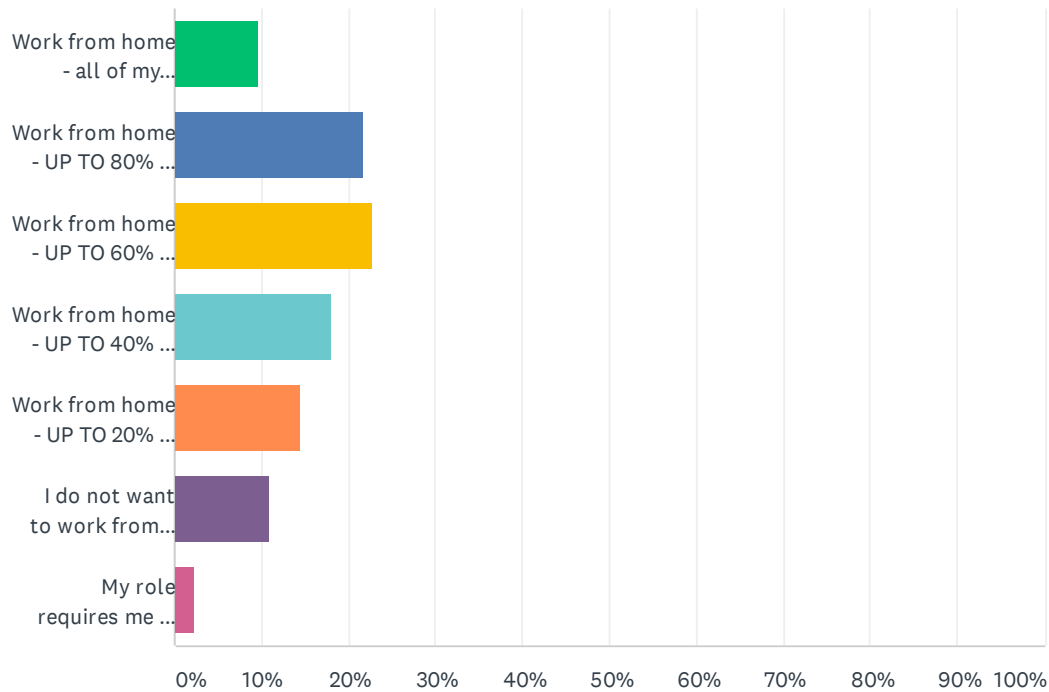
Answered: 292 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I can be more productive	39.38%	115
Fewer distractions at home	32.53%	95
Lack of commuting time	49.66%	145
Reduced commuting costs	35.96%	105
Better work/life balance	37.33%	109
Improved mental health	9.25%	27
Having the opportunity to have lunch with my family	13.01%	38
I can have better quality of discussions with my colleagues or customers	4.79%	14
Being able to cook at lunchtime	10.96%	32
Less environmental impact from commuting and printing	31.16%	91
I have made improvements to the way I work (please specify below)	2.05%	6
Other (please specify)	11.99%	35
Total Respondents: 292		

# Q12 Given the choice, would you like to work from home more frequently once the offices re-open?

Answered: 293 Skipped: 44

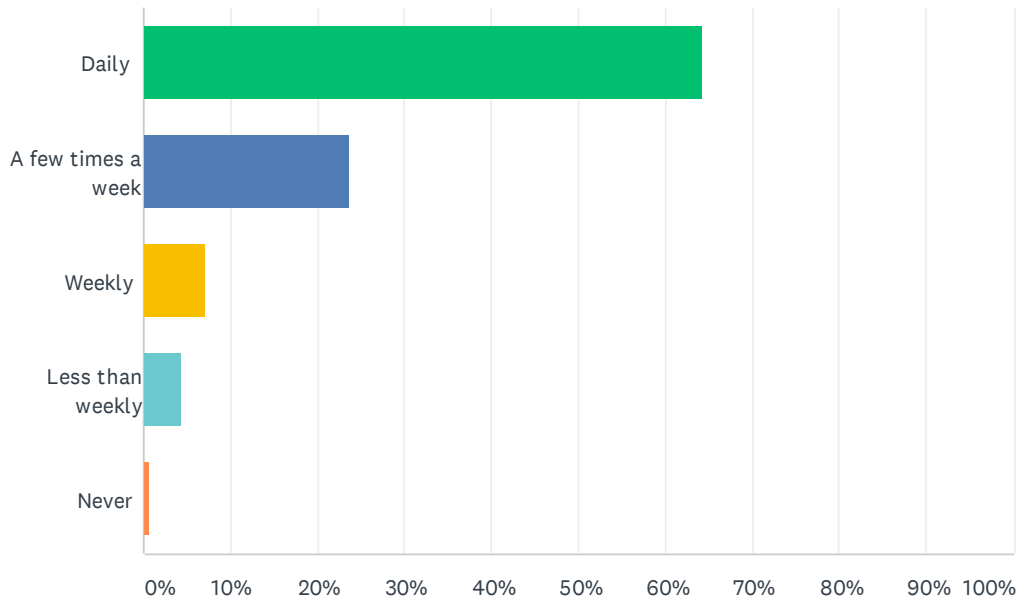


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Work from home - all of my week	9.56%	28
Work from home - UP TO 80% of my week	21.84%	64
Work from home - UP TO 60% of my week	22.87%	67
Work from home - UP TO 40% of my week	18.09%	53
Work from home - UP TO 20% of my week	14.33%	42
I do not want to work from home in future	10.92%	32
My role requires me to be onsite e.g. Facilities, AMC, CEO	2.39%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>



### Q13 How often are you in touch with your colleagues via phone or video?

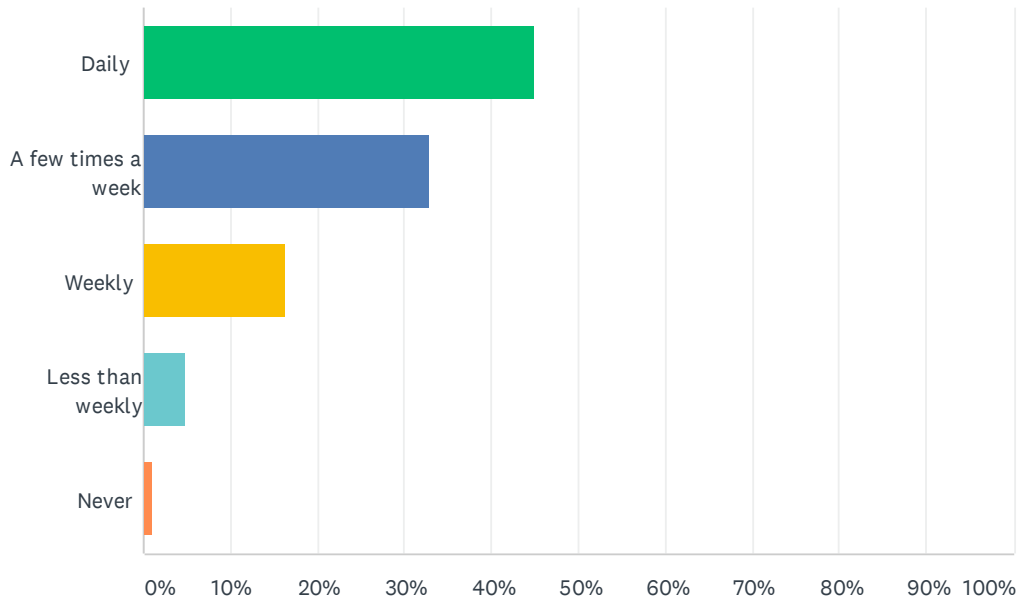
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	64.16%	188
A few times a week	23.55%	69
Weekly	7.17%	21
Less than weekly	4.44%	13
Never	0.68%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

# Q14 How often are you in touch with your manager via phone or video?

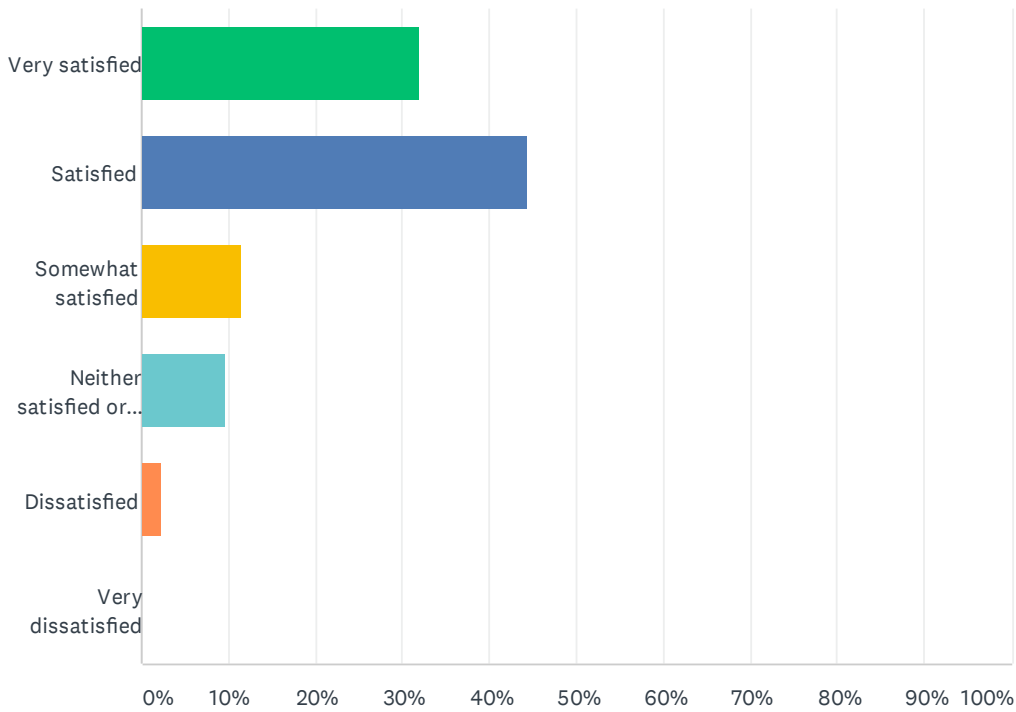
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	45.05%	132
A few times a week	32.76%	96
Weekly	16.38%	48
Less than weekly	4.78%	14
Never	1.02%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

# Q15 How do you feel about the communications and updates you've been receiving throughout the lockdown?

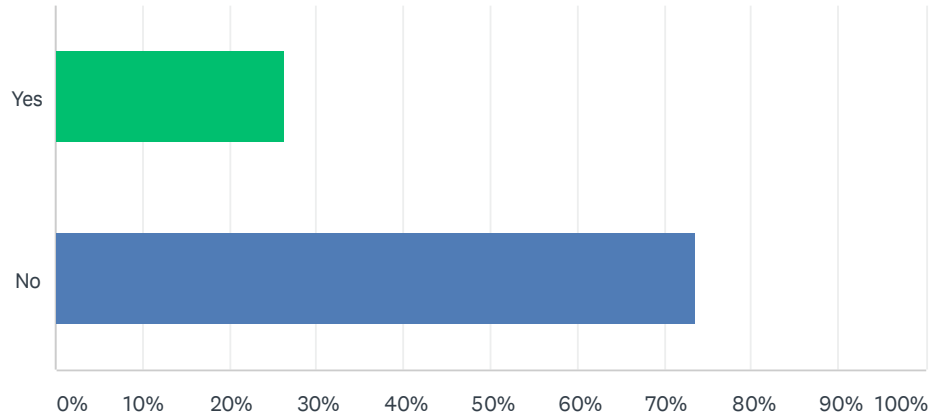
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	32.08%	94
Satisfied	44.37%	130
Somewhat satisfied	11.60%	34
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	9.56%	28
Dissatisfied	2.39%	7
Very dissatisfied	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

### Q16 Do you manage staff?

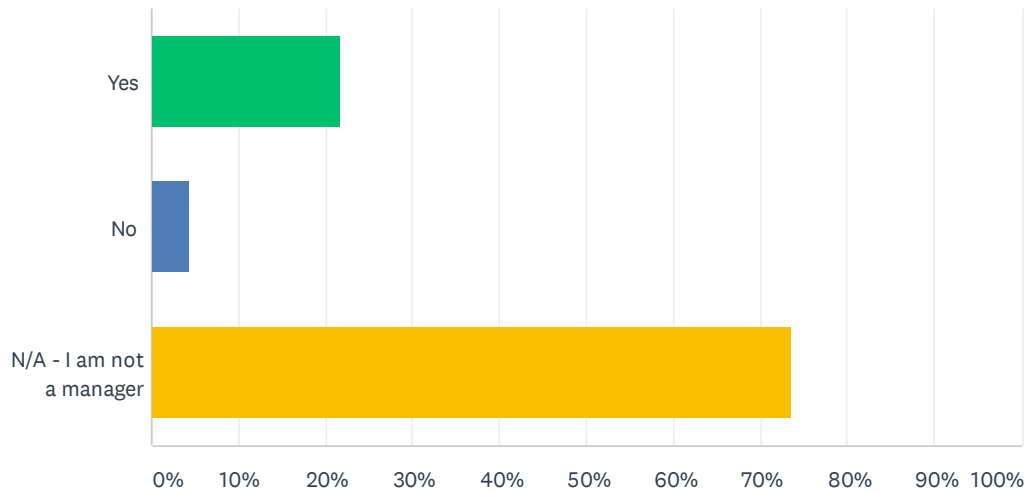
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	26.28%	77
No	73.72%	216
TOTAL		293

# Q17 If you manage staff would you be able to accommodate increased homeworking across your team?

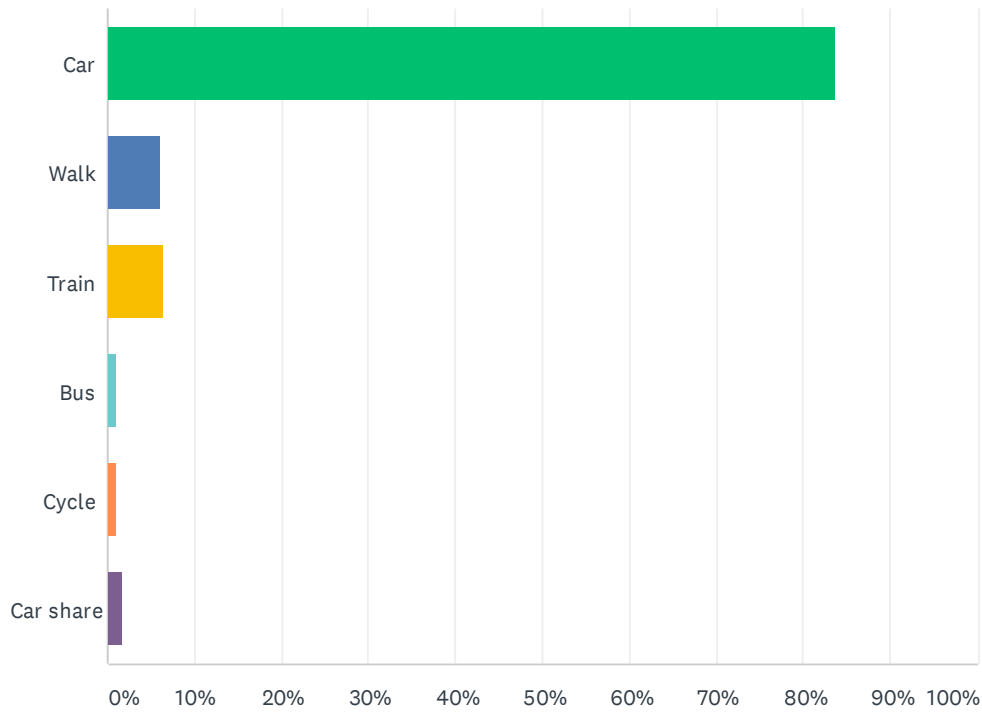
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.84%	64
No	4.44%	13
N/A - I am not a manager	73.72%	216
TOTAL		293

# Q18 Prior to lockdown, how did you generally travel to work (for the main part of your journey)?

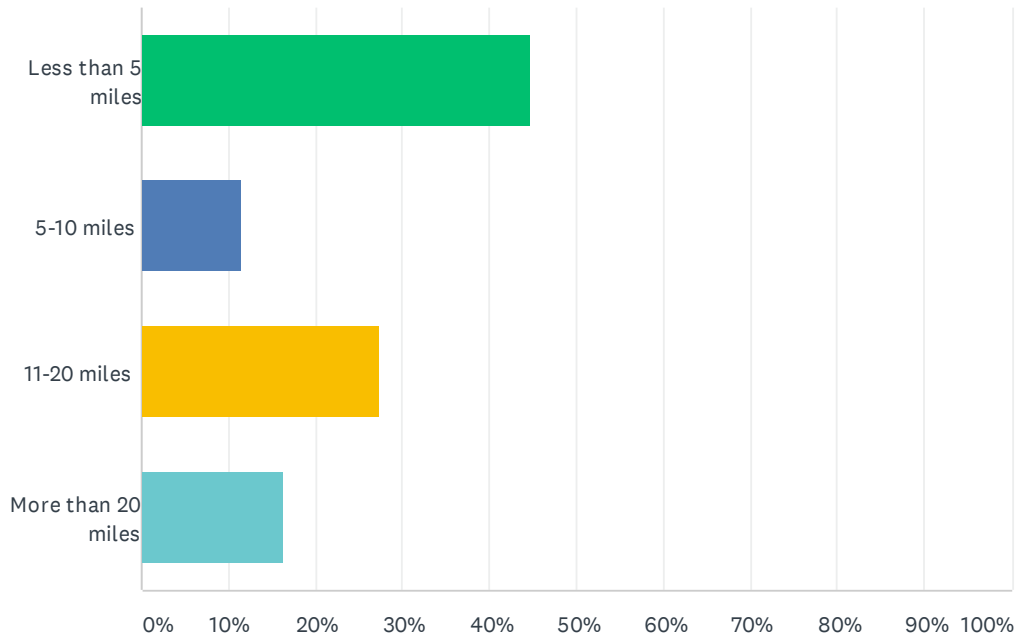
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Car	83.62%	245
Walk	6.14%	18
Train	6.48%	19
Bus	1.02%	3
Cycle	1.02%	3
Car share	1.71%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

### Q19 How far is your journey from home to work?

Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 5 miles	44.71%	131
5-10 miles	11.60%	34
11-20 miles	27.30%	80
More than 20 miles	16.38%	48
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

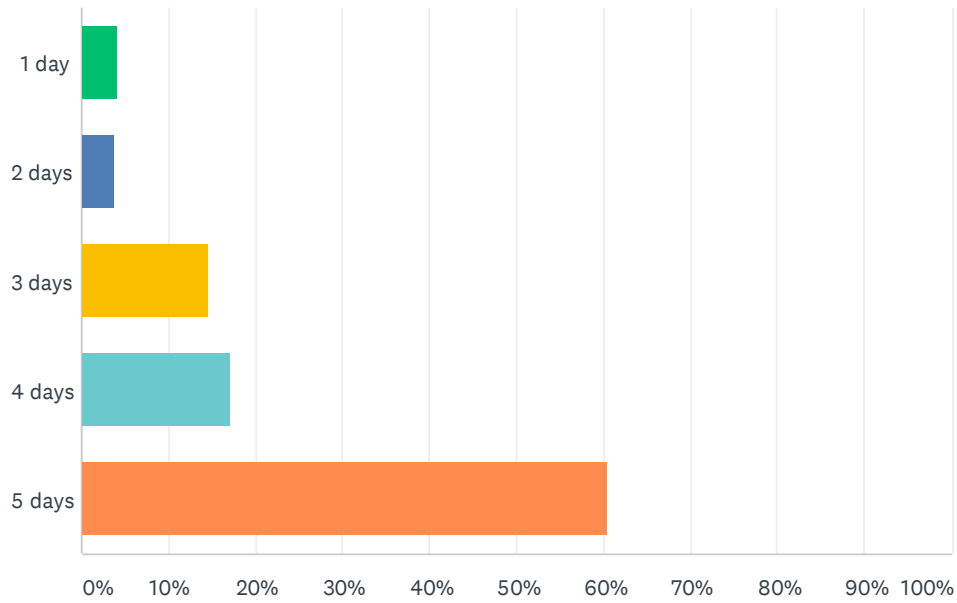
## Q20 Contracted hours of work

Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



## Q21 How many days per week did you generally come into the office?

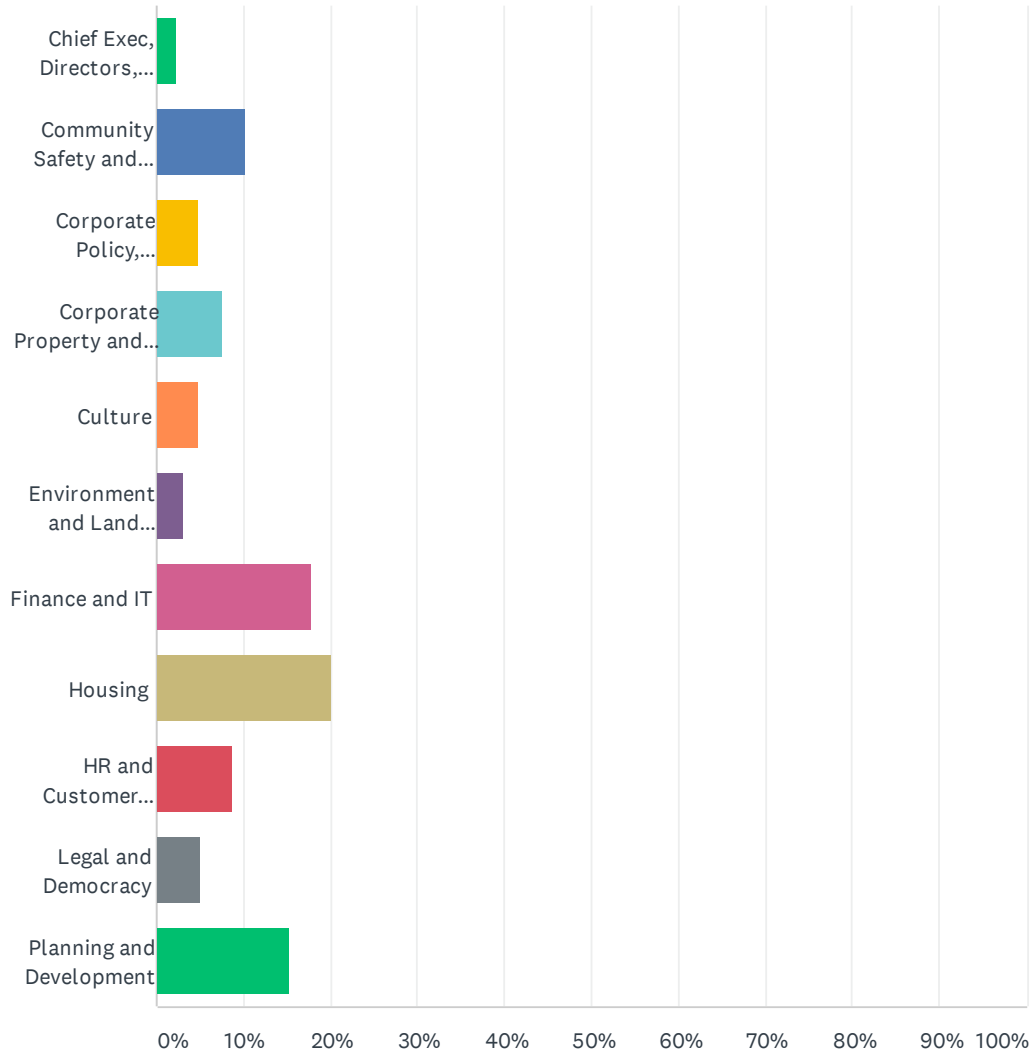
Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 day	4.10%	12
2 days	3.75%	11
3 days	14.68%	43
4 days	17.06%	50
5 days	60.41%	177
TOTAL		293

# Q22 Service

Answered: 293 Skipped: 44



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Chief Exec, Directors, Support and CMO	2.39%	7
Community Safety and Wellbeing	10.24%	30
Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	4.78%	14
Corporate Property and Projects	7.51%	22
Culture	4.78%	14
Environment and Land Management	3.07%	9
Finance and IT	17.75%	52
Housing	20.14%	59
HR and Customer Services	8.87%	26
Legal and Democracy	5.12%	15
Planning and Development	15.36%	45
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>293</b>

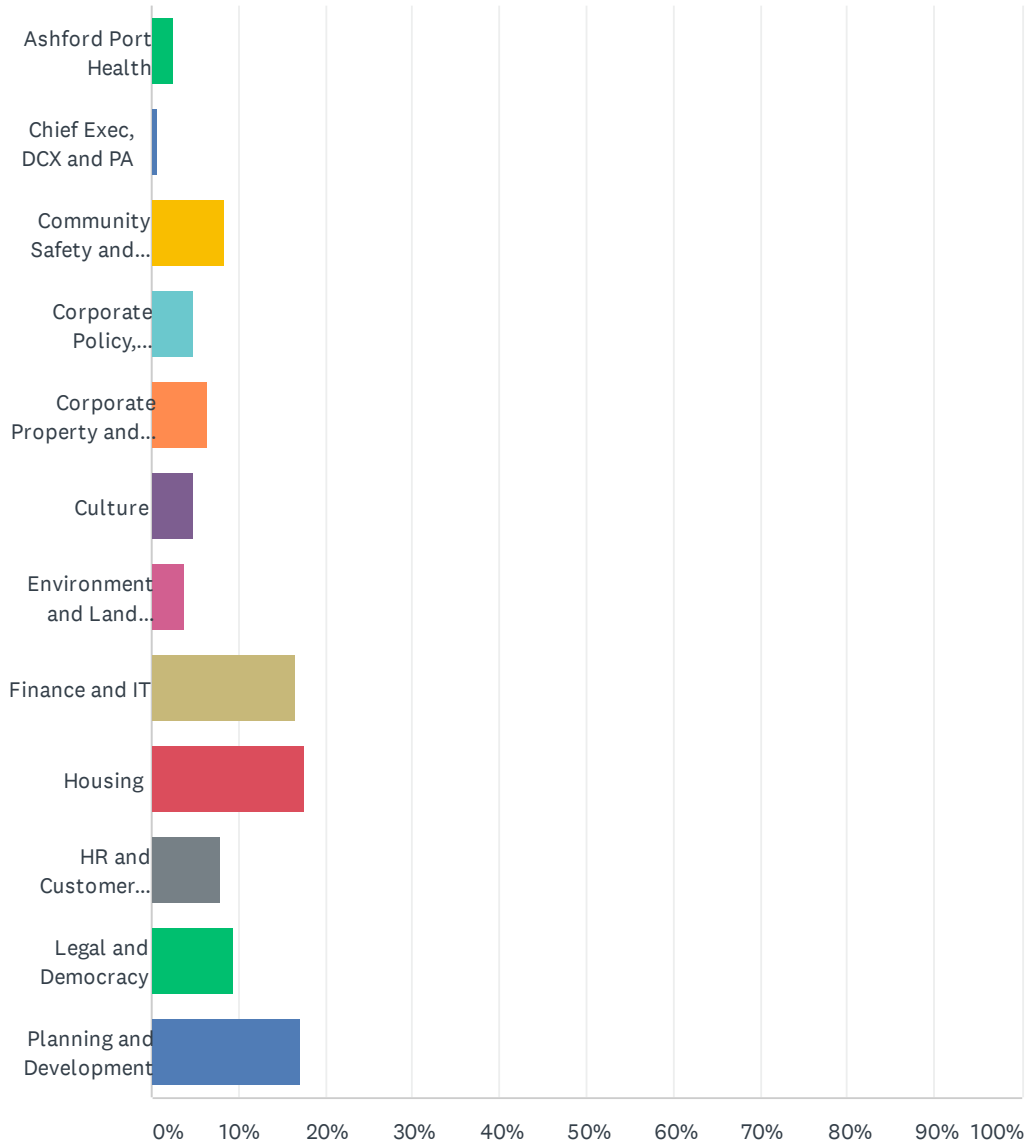
This page is intentionally left blank

## Q1 Name

Answered: 290 Skipped: 0

# Q2 Service

Answered: 290 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Ashford Port Health	2.41%	7
Chief Exec, DCX and PA	0.69%	2
Community Safety and Wellbeing	8.28%	24
Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications	4.83%	14
Corporate Property and Projects	6.55%	19
Culture	4.83%	14
Environment and Land Management	3.79%	11
Finance and IT	16.55%	48
Housing	17.59%	51
HR and Customer Services	7.93%	23
Legal and Democracy	9.31%	27
Planning and Development	17.24%	50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>290</b>

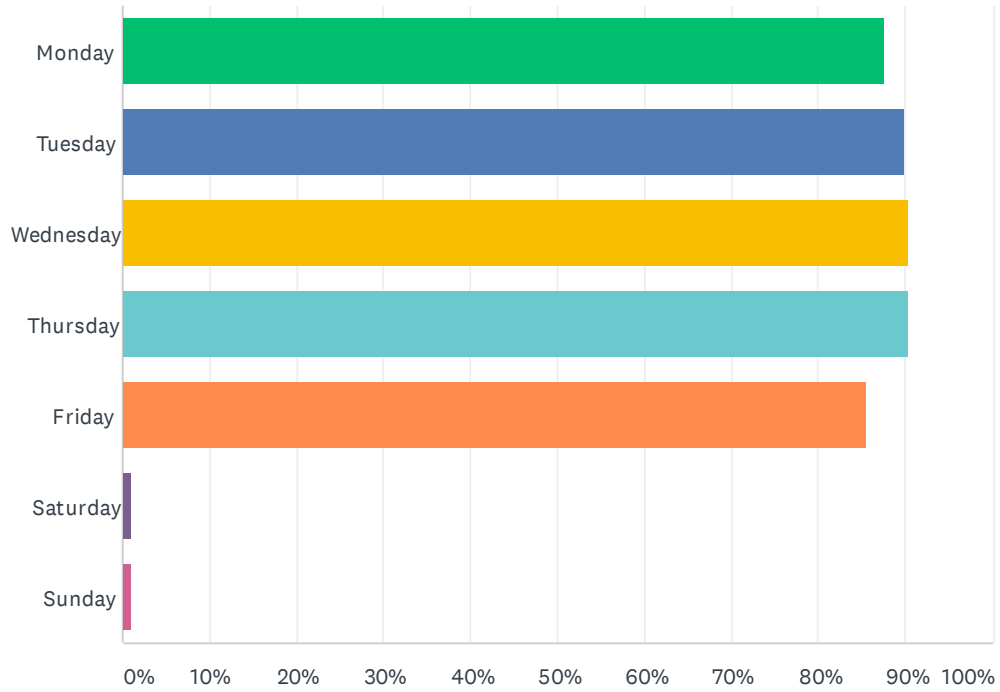
## Q3 Contracted hours per week (full time is 37)

Answered: 290 Skipped: 0



### Q4 My usual days in the office are:

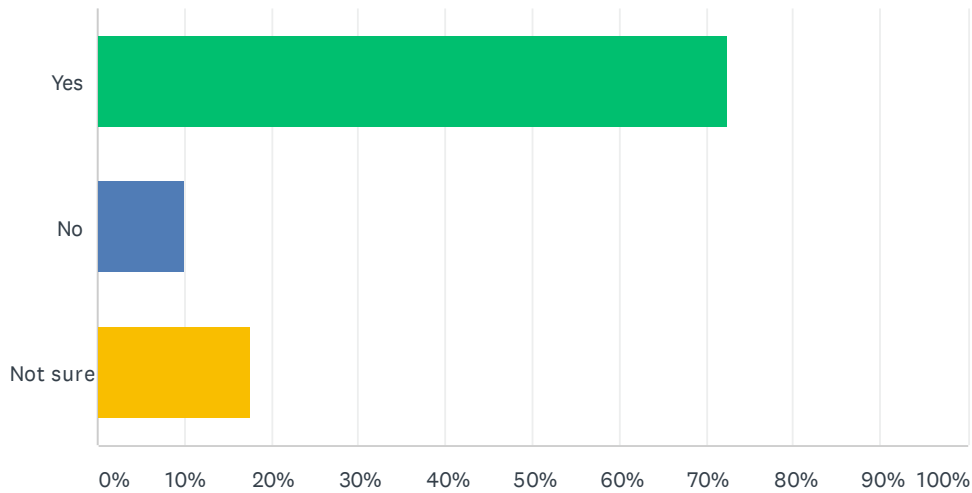
Answered: 290 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Monday	87.59% 254
Tuesday	90.00% 261
Wednesday	90.34% 262
Thursday	90.34% 262
Friday	85.52% 248
Saturday	1.03% 3
Sunday	1.03% 3
Total Respondents: 290	

Q5 Do you intend to request a regular homeworking arrangement when we return to normality?(regular homeworking is working a proportion of your working week at home as opposed to taking adhoc days at home to complete a particular task to limit distractions)

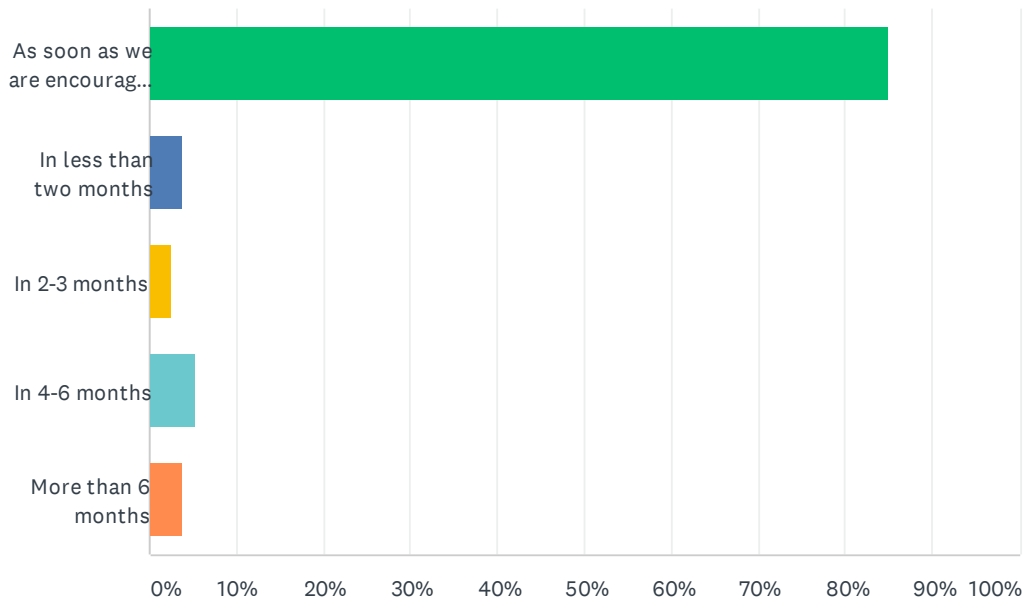
Answered: 290 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	72.41%	210
No	10.00%	29
Not sure	17.59%	51
TOTAL		290

# Q6 How soon do you think you will make a request to regularly work from home?

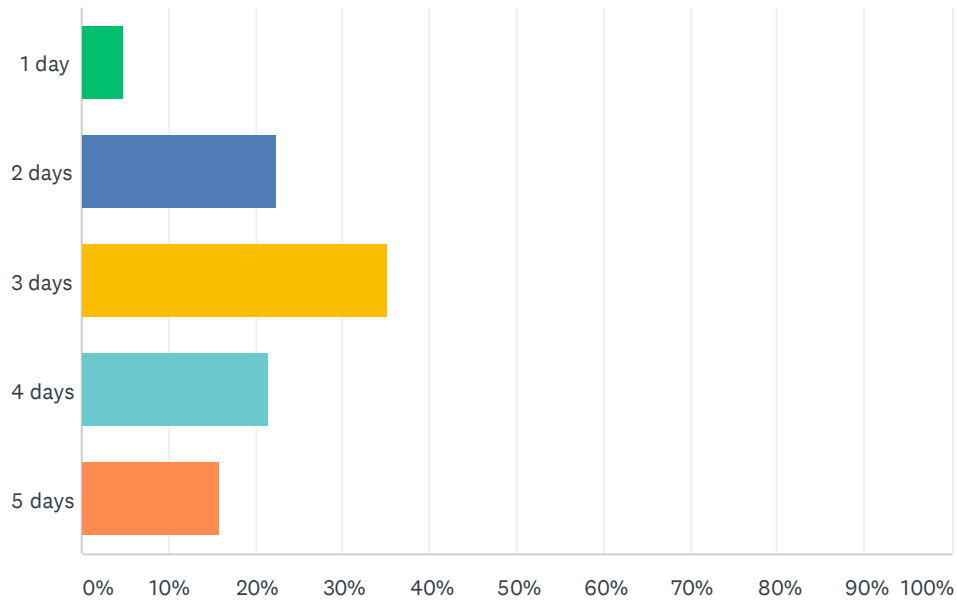
Answered: 245 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
As soon as we are encouraged to do so	84.90%	208
In less than two months	3.67%	9
In 2-3 months	2.45%	6
In 4-6 months	5.31%	13
More than 6 months	3.67%	9
TOTAL		245

# Q7 How many days per week are you likely to request to work from home?

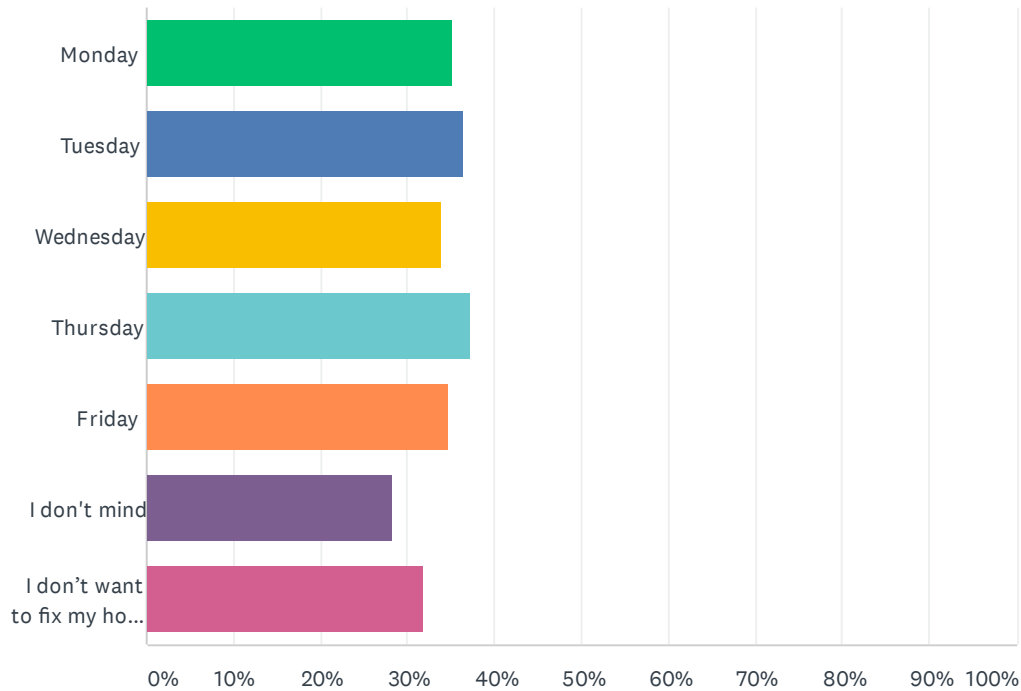
Answered: 245 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 day	4.90%	12
2 days	22.45%	55
3 days	35.10%	86
4 days	21.63%	53
5 days	15.92%	39
TOTAL		245

## Q8 Which days of the week are you likely to request to work from home?

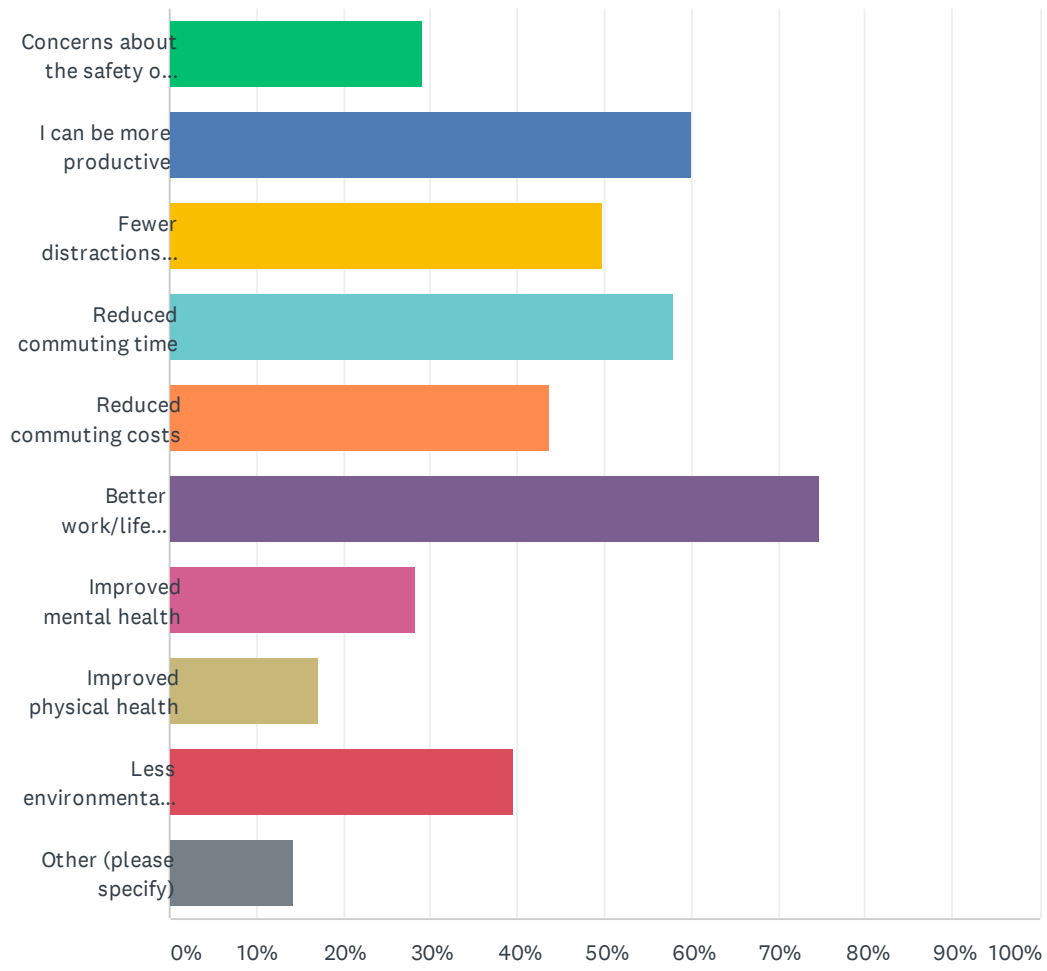
Answered: 245 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Monday	35.10%	86
Tuesday	36.33%	89
Wednesday	33.88%	83
Thursday	37.14%	91
Friday	34.69%	85
I don't mind	28.16%	69
I don't want to fix my home working to specific days	31.84%	78
Total Respondents: 245		

# Q9 What is your main reason for wanting to work from home more frequently?

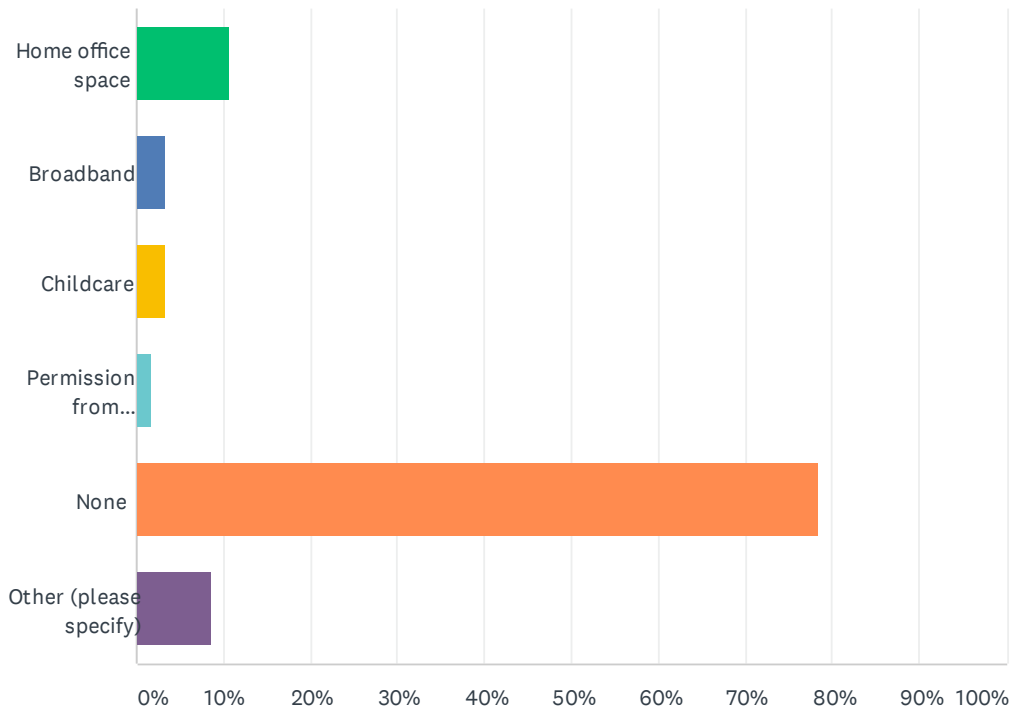
Answered: 245 Skipped: 45



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Concerns about the safety of returning to the office post lockdown	28.98%	71
I can be more productive	60.00%	147
Fewer distractions at home	49.80%	122
Reduced commuting time	57.96%	142
Reduced commuting costs	43.67%	107
Better work/life balance	74.69%	183
Improved mental health	28.16%	69
Improved physical health	17.14%	42
Less environmental impact	39.59%	97
Other (please specify)	14.29%	35
Total Respondents: 245		

### Q10 What other practical difficulties will you need to resolve before commencing a new working from home arrangement?

Answered: 245 Skipped: 45

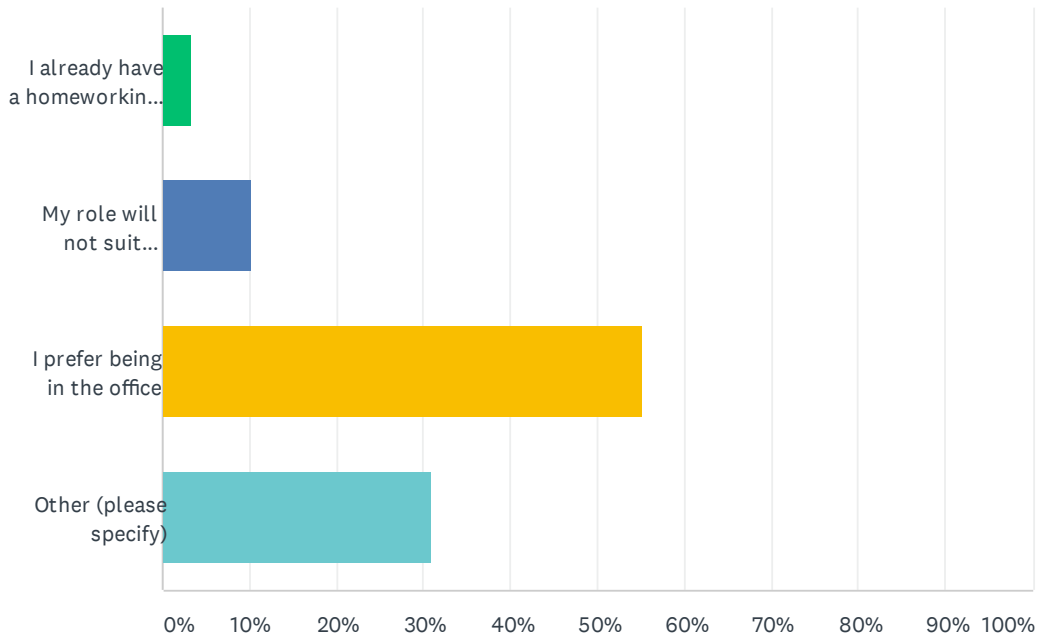


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Home office space	10.61%	26
Broadband	3.27%	8
Childcare	3.27%	8
Permission from landlord/mortgage company	1.63%	4
None	78.37%	192
Other (please specify)	8.57%	21
Total Respondents: 245		



# Q11 If you do not intend to request regular homeworking, why not?

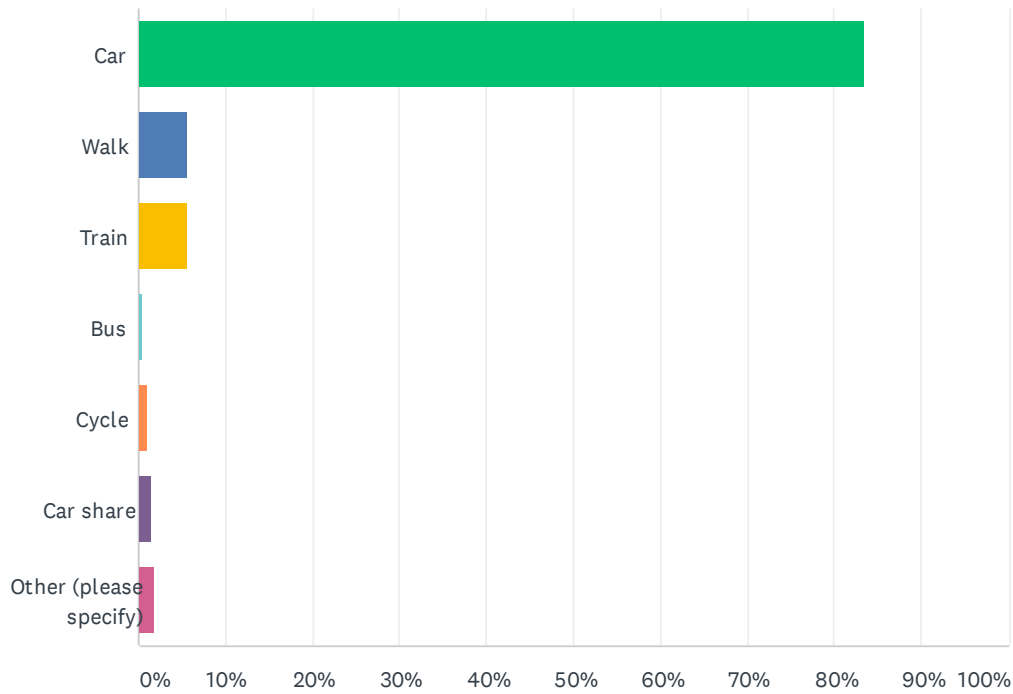
Answered: 29 Skipped: 261



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I already have a homeworking arrangement in place	3.45%	1
My role will not suit homeworking as I physically have to attend work (e.g. AMC, CEOs, Aspire, Facilities, Port Health etc.)	10.34%	3
I prefer being in the office	55.17%	16
Other (please specify)	31.03%	9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>29</b>

## Q12 Prior to lockdown, how did you generally travel to work (for the main part of your journey)?

Answered: 261 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Car	83.52%	218
Walk	5.75%	15
Train	5.75%	15
Bus	0.38%	1
Cycle	1.15%	3
Car share	1.53%	4
Other (please specify)	1.92%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>261</b>

## Q13 How far is your journey from home to work in miles?

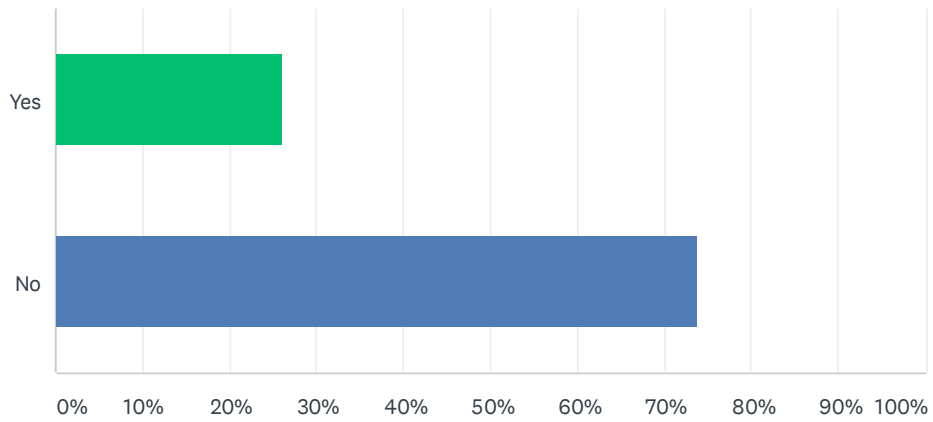
Answered: 261 Skipped: 29

**Q14 Do you have any ideas or suggestions about models, systems and approaches that you know work well elsewhere?**

Answered: 261 Skipped: 29

### Q15 Would you like to be involved in developing an etiquette/guidance for use of desks?

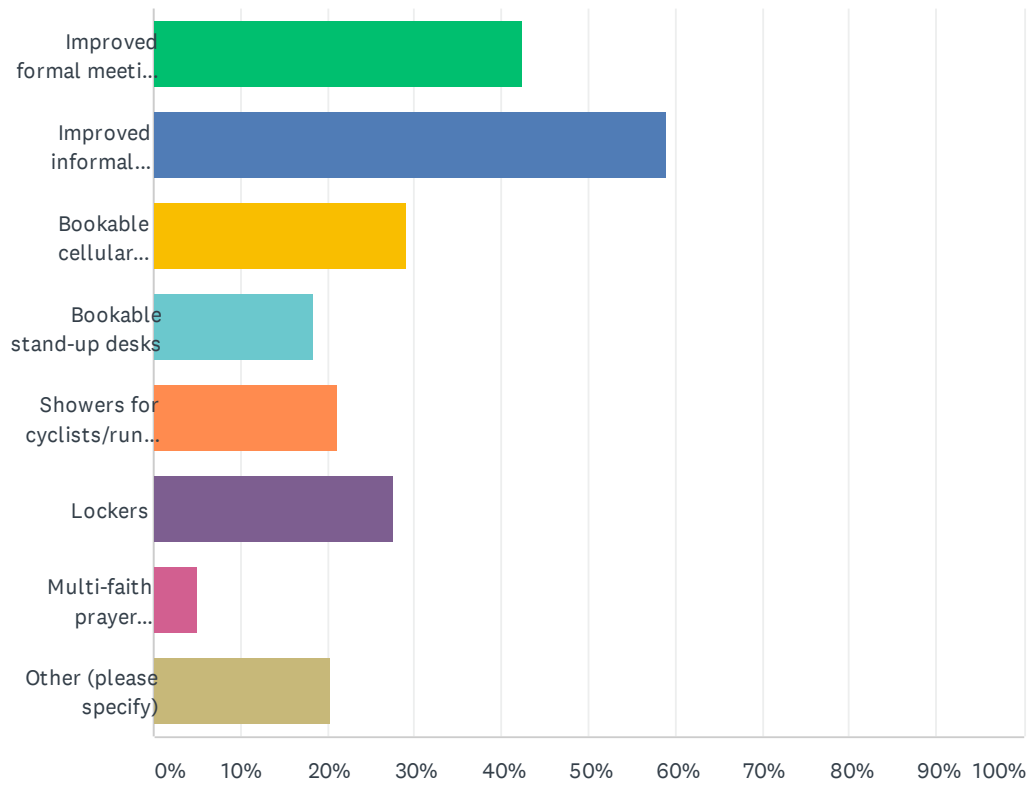
Answered: 261 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	26.05%	68
No	73.95%	193
TOTAL		261

### Q16 If there is capacity to reconfigure parts of the building what would you like to see introduced:

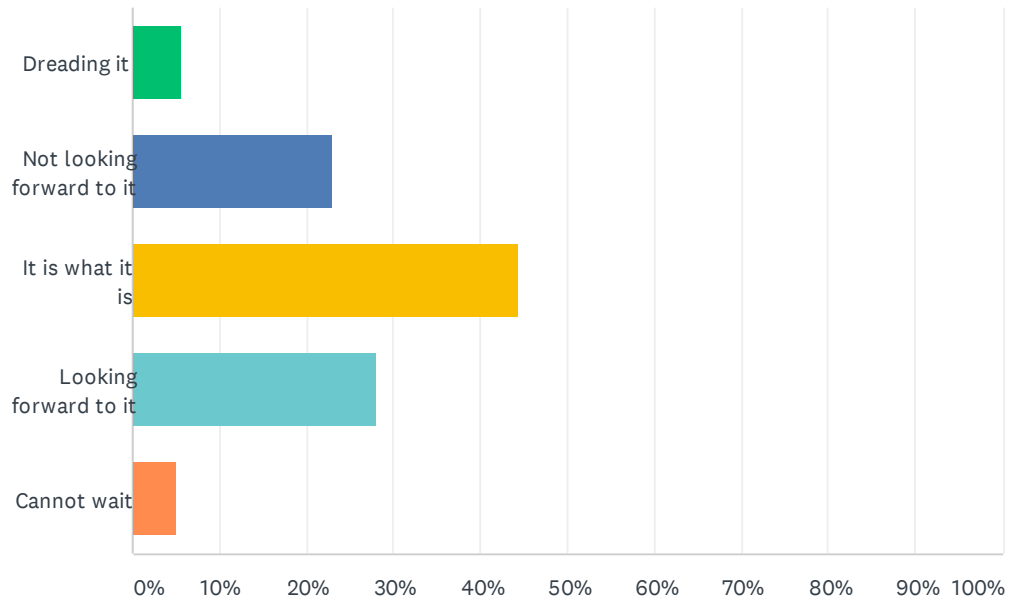
Answered: 261 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Improved formal meeting space	42.53%	111
Improved informal meeting areas	59.00%	154
Bookable cellular offices	29.12%	76
Bookable stand-up desks	18.39%	48
Showers for cyclists/runners	21.07%	55
Lockers	27.59%	72
Multi-faith prayer room/meditation room	4.98%	13
Other (please specify)	20.31%	53
Total Respondents: 261		

## Q17 How are you feeling about the return to the office?

Answered: 261 Skipped: 29



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Dreading it	5.75% 15
Not looking forward to it	22.99% 60
It is what it is	44.44% 116
Looking forward to it	27.97% 73
Cannot wait	4.98% 13
Total Respondents: 261	

Q18 In terms of your wellbeing, how can we best support you on the return to the office? Is there anything you'd specifically like us to do? For example  
- a video around the office to show you what you to expect in terms of signage, flow around the corridors in advance of your return.

Answered: 261 Skipped: 29





## Essential guide to Managing Remotely

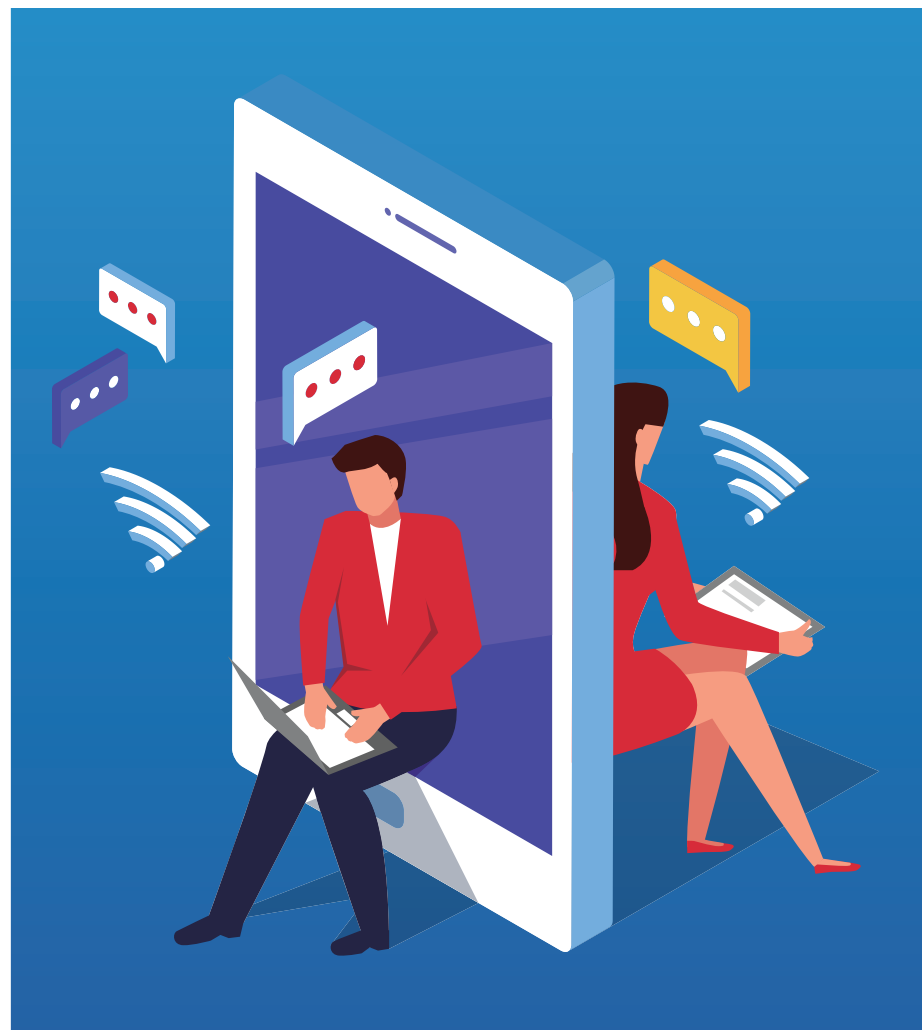
Managing remotely is very different to managing in a face to face environment and our skills and behaviours as managers need to take this difference into account. Whether you have a whole team working remotely or just a small number of the team working at home for a couple of days a week this Essential Guide is for you. It will help to support you in the communications you have with your team, building team morale, tackling difficult conversations, setting objectives and supporting development.

## Communication

It is important that you communicate regularly with your remote team members to ensure that they remain motivated and engaged when working remotely. You should aim for at least one video call a week with all of your direct reports. This is an opportunity for you to check in with them and look out for signs that they may be struggling, and to take steps to help where appropriate.

Depending on their personality, style of working and role, your team members may need different levels of contact, and you may need to adjust the communication required to enable each individual to work productively. For example, some employees will need more regular feedback to carry out their role remotely, while others may feel overloaded if they receive too many messages or meeting invitations.

Your communication with remote workers needs to be even clearer than it would be if you worked together face to face as there is more room for misunderstandings and it is more difficult for them to double check their understanding with you. Video calls can help as long as you focus on the camera and on your team members face rather than just on your keyboard or another part of your screen.



## Team Morale

When team members are not working in the same location, holding regular meetings will help bring the team together, maintain team spirit and encourage collaboration. It is important that you continue to celebrate success and acknowledge the achievements of team members so they know that their contribution is being recognised.

Some teams may find a daily team virtual huddle useful, others may find a weekly or fortnightly meeting may be more appropriate. Whichever works for your team keep it regular and ensure the team can continue to meet even if you are on leave.

Choose a medium that everyone can attend via, this may be a daily or weekly video meetings or monthly face to face meeting. Mixed medium meetings when some of you are in person and others are on video can make the remote team members feel isolated.

Encourage everyone to put their videos on, they can always blur out the background if they want to. Seeing your colleagues helps build stronger connections and improves understanding as you can see their body language and pick up on non verbal clues to how they are feeling.

Build in a little extra time for non-work conversations at the start or end of meetings and encourage your team members to communicate with each other by telephone or video call as well as by email. This can enable employees to support each other, and these conversations can also include a social dimension that may be more difficult in written communication.

Think about other ways to replace the social aspects of being part of a team with the use of technology - for example, if the team would usually sign birthday cards for each other, these can be replaced with virtual cards that everybody can sign.

## Difficult conversations

Sometimes remote working can highlight skills or performance gaps that may not have been noticed in the office. However, it can be more difficult to provide feedback remotely rather than in person.

You need to prepare to have this discussion with the person. As it will be a remote conversation its best to both use video on the call. That way you have the benefit of being able to use the non-verbal communication indicators to help you to communicate as well as you would if you were face to face.

It helps to have a kitbag of questions to help you understand what has been happening to cause the gap. These questions are a good starter:

- What is the actual problem?
- When did it happen?
- How long has it been occurring?
- Was there a trigger?
- Who is involved?
- What has been done to rectify?
- What do you want the outcome to be?
- Has the person ever been able to do what you are asking them to do?
- Have they been trained?
- Did they have clarity of what should be done?
- Did they have the capacity (time/resource) to be able to do it?
- Are there any external factors to consider?

Obviously you may not need to ask all of these questions, but if you charge straight in without understanding it makes it difficult to resolve the situation as the root cause of the problem itself may still exist.

Now think of the person to whom you will be talking to, when is a good time for them to receive this feedback, are there times in the day when background distractions are minimal. If you let them know that there is something that you would like to talk to them about, or make this conversation part of a one to one, they will more open to receiving the feedback. You should also consider what their reaction is likely to be. Knowing that they are likely to be confrontational or emotional does not stop you having the conversation, but it does mean you are prepared. An unexpected reaction can cause you to go into a fight, flight or freeze response. This can involve you getting defensive, emotional, or just going blank. None of these is welcome and usually can be detrimental to the conversation.



By being prepared you can remain calm and professional and remain in control. If you experience a response you are not expecting you can call a short break in order for them to compose themselves or possibly to allow the information they have been given to sink in.

Even if the problem is a temporary one it needs to be addressed. There have been many cases where performance has not been addressed and then it becomes harder to do so later on when the situation deteriorates. It may have a knock on effect with others who see the situation not being addressed. This has a high impact on engagement and morale.

Although you need time to get the information together you need to make sure that you act as soon as you can.

Make sure you have all of the information, use 'I' (as in I'd like to talk to you today about the x project that you have been working on) instead of things like 'it's come to my attention' – that makes it seem as though people have been talking about them.

You may be having this conversation over a video conference (preferable to a phone call- it means you can both use body language as a guide to emotions) make sure you have plenty of time and no distractions. Make sure it is private with nobody walking around behind you.

Have the detail, dates, times, exactly what happened. Let them know what the discussion is about and why you are there, what needs to happen as a result of the discussion.

Make sure you use appropriate language for the person you are talking to, clarity is important, this is no place for ambiguity. Also what is your body saying? Are you defensive, aggressive, nervous? All of these can have an impact on the outcome of the discussion. Use positive statements, instead of “you were late for today’s training session – use “to benefit fully from the training you need to be punctual”

Ask them for their version of events – there may have been factors of which you are unaware. They may have had to make a decision that turned out to be a poor one because of the situation.

You cannot change a personality in a performance discussion – personality is formed over many years! However you can address poor performance or inappropriate behaviour. Let the person be part of the solution. You will get more buy in.

If the person realises that their performance or behaviour has fallen below expectations they will generally be more committed to the resolution.

Agree with them what they need to do next, what support they require from you and what timescales they will be able to address the shortfall in.

Don’t forget though at the one to one meeting it is important to acknowledge the change in performance. Give praise – (sincere) for exactly what is now being done to the correct standard in order to encourage more of the same. If further improvements are needed then you need to have another conversation. Using the same guidelines as before. What has improved, what is still outstanding?

## Standard setting

If you are objective setting as part of a standards setting meeting, you will have agreed what needs to be done with the person, this will be in writing with agreed follow up times. Remember, the objectives you set have to be attainable within the period given or you are setting them up for failure. Check in with them at appropriate times to ensure they are ok, or if they need additional support. Remember praise and encouragement are vital as the person may have taken a knock to their confidence.

Please speak to a member of the HR Team if you are looking to commence standard setting with your team member.

## Setting objectives

Objectives are not just for the annual appraisal, in fact they should be part of your regular one to ones. You can review them, alter them, and reset them all through the year. As things change your goals can too. In order to measure them though they should be SMART.

Setting your team SMART objectives is probably the easiest way to increase productivity in the workplace. How often have you had an image in your mind, asked somebody to do it for you but when you check it is not what you wanted? The image in your brain could not be seen by the team member so they created their own image and worked off that!

Setting a SMART goal is the way you transfer the same image that you have into their brain and increases the chance of doing the job right first time.

- Specific** State exactly what you need to achieve.
- Measurable** Could another person measure whether or not you had achieved it?
- Achievable** Is it realistic? Can it be done? Setting an impossible target will just demotivate the person trying to do it and it will not get done, although a goal should be stretching there should always be the ability to achieve it.
- Relevant** Will it contribute to the corporate plan? What value will it add to the council?
- Time-bound** When should it be completed by? What is the deadline? Remember it needs to be a realistic deadline.





## Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

In order to maintain and improve we all need to continually develop ourselves – even just to stand still as the world moves ahead.

The easiest way to start is with a PDP, we have a **Corporate Template available on Achieve that you can access here.**

**Behavioural** - How you do your job – soft skills

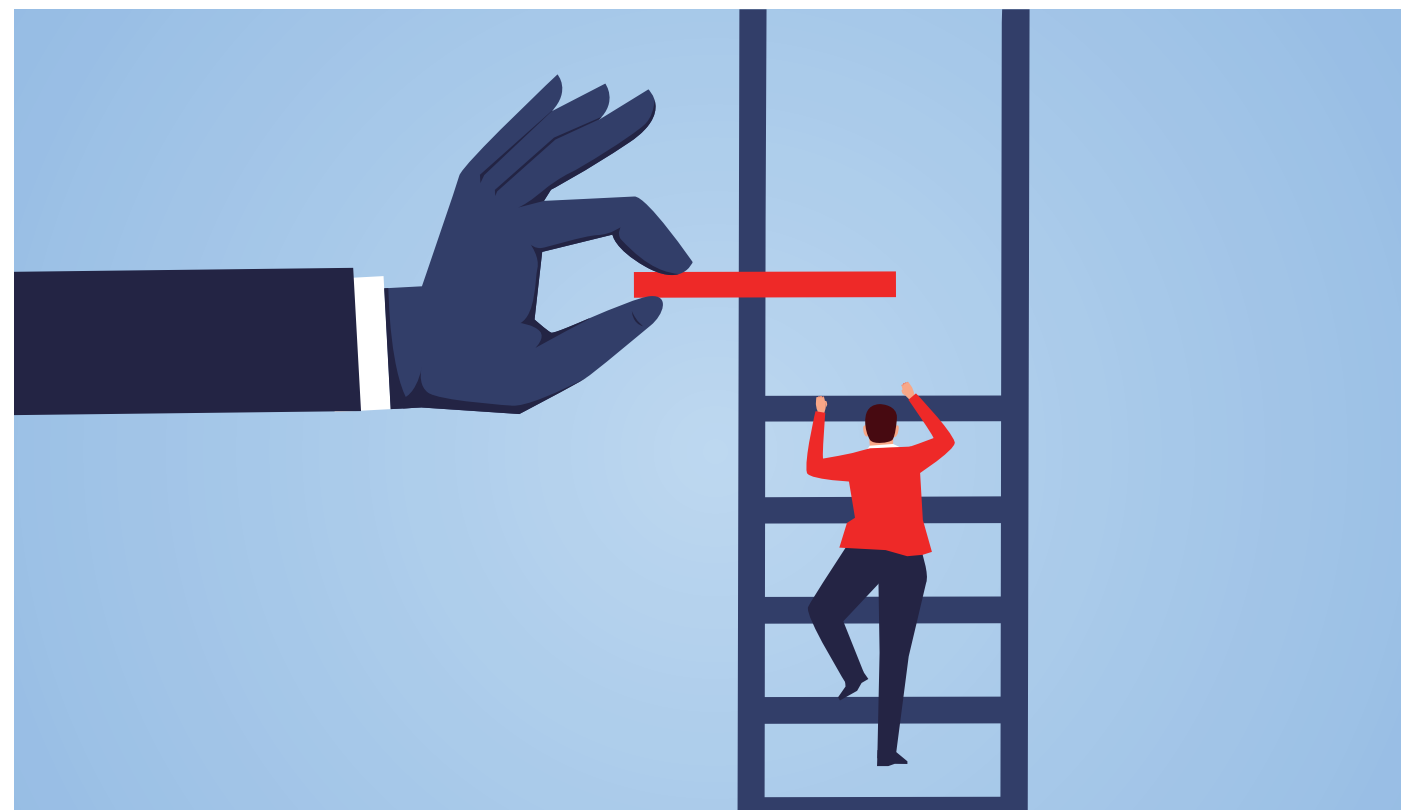
**Technical** - What you are doing – technical skills

**External** - Adding value – horizon scanning or looking at external factors

We do this monthly and can tie it in with our one to ones and competencies. Then if the perfect 'next' job comes along you are in a great position and can demonstrate your development. If you wish to book a PDP session please contact [gillian.crayden@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.crayden@ashford.gov.uk)

The team version is to look at the corporate objectives and cascade these to your team. What development do they need to succeed and achieve these objectives? Is someone likely to fit into your succession plan? If so what development do they need to do? You can add this to their learning plan on Achieve if there are elearning or physical/virtual courses they can attend.

Part of their development is also to make sure that they complete their mandatory elearning, you can monitor this in your reports on Achieve.



## Elearning

As a manager you have a responsibility to ensure you and your team complete their mandatory learning. You can view this on Achieve by going to the 'reports' tab and selecting 'certification completion' (my team). You can filter by person, by topic or by status of the learning. Remember to select 'active' for the user so only your current team are displayed, not those that have left the Council. You can also view this information in your 'Teams' tab by selecting the records for the person directly.



# Guidance On How To Review Remote Working Arrangements

The success of the council's remote working policy will be determined by how many arrangements are approved and stay in place. It is therefore important to conduct regular reviews of the arrangements. Figures relating to the withdrawal of remote working arrangements will be reported to MT alongside the other HR metrics on a 6 monthly basis and themes will inform future reviews of the policy.

## Review of remote working arrangements

As well as being good practice to review working arrangements, we also wish to avoid remote working arrangements agreed via the Remote Working policy becoming contractual over time due to custom and practice so it is essential that arrangements are reviewed regularly.

Managers are required to review the remote working arrangements on a regular basis to ensure they continue to remain viable for both employee and organisation. Reviews should ideally take place every 6 months and a note be made of the discussion. However, if during the intervening period an important issue arises in relation to the effectiveness of the arrangement it should be dealt with at that time, and not left for the review.

Should the arrangement need to be reversed one calendar month's written notice of the termination will normally be required on both sides, please take advice from HR before taking action.

The basic principles of performance management will apply when managing employees who are working remotely and the following areas should form part of the review discussion:

1.1	Has the employee clearly recorded their hours worked on the My Portal system?	
1.2	Has the employee managed their time effectively and not worked overtime or excessive hours to build up flexi time without the prior approval of their manager?	
1.3	Has the employee remained in contact with their line manager or as directed, either through e-mail or by telephone at regular intervals?	
1.4	Has the employee indicated their availability when working remotely using the status options on any online communications software i.e. Skype, Teams and Outlook?	
1.5	Have the agreed work outputs been delivered?	
1.6	Has there been at least one face to face team meeting taking place every 8 weeks and this attended by the employee who works remotely?	
1.7	Has the employee participated satisfactorily in 1:1 meetings each month either face to face or online?	
1.8	Has the employee booked annual leave in accordance with normal council procedures?	
1.9	Has the employee followed reporting procedure when unwell in accordance with normal reporting procedures?	
1.10	Has the employee reported any accidents, injuries, diseases or dangerous occurrences arising from and/or relating to the performance of their work that occurred whilst working remotely?	
1.11	Have there been any concerns over customer service standards because of the employee working remotely?	
1.12	Is there evidence of good team working, knowledge sharing and effective working relations within the team?	
1.13	Has there been reasonable flexibility when the employee has been asked to come to the office on a day they would otherwise been working remotely?	
1.14	Are you confident that we have maintained good data protection and information security standards?	
1.15	Are there any concerns about the employee's wellbeing as a result of working remotely?	
1.16	Are there any new personal circumstances relating to childcare or elder care that need to be considered?	
<b>Conclusions:</b>		
Can the remote working arrangement continue, or does it need to be revised or withdrawn? Please consult with HR over likely decisions to revise or withdraw arrangements.		



## Essential guide to Working remotely

If you are a manager please also refer to the 'Essential Guide to Managing Remotely'. Both guides should be read in conjunction with the Remote Working Policy.

Remote working has many benefits for both the individual and the organisation. This guide has been designed to assist you in understanding the basic requirements and tools available, as well as to emphasise the importance of looking after your wellbeing.

Although physically distanced it is important to remain socially connected.



# Communications protocols

## Daily basis

### Recording of hours

Fill in My Portal with your time recording each day, clocking out for breaks in the normal way. You should not work overtime or excessive amounts to build up flexi time without the prior approval of your manager.

### Breaks

Working remotely can really help our productivity but, because we can focus more easily, we may end up having fewer breaks.

Make sure you **review the wellbeing section** of this guide and ensure you give your eyes a rest from your screens.

Also make sure you use your annual leave entitlement to give you a change of routine and scenery.

## Regular basis

### Availability updates

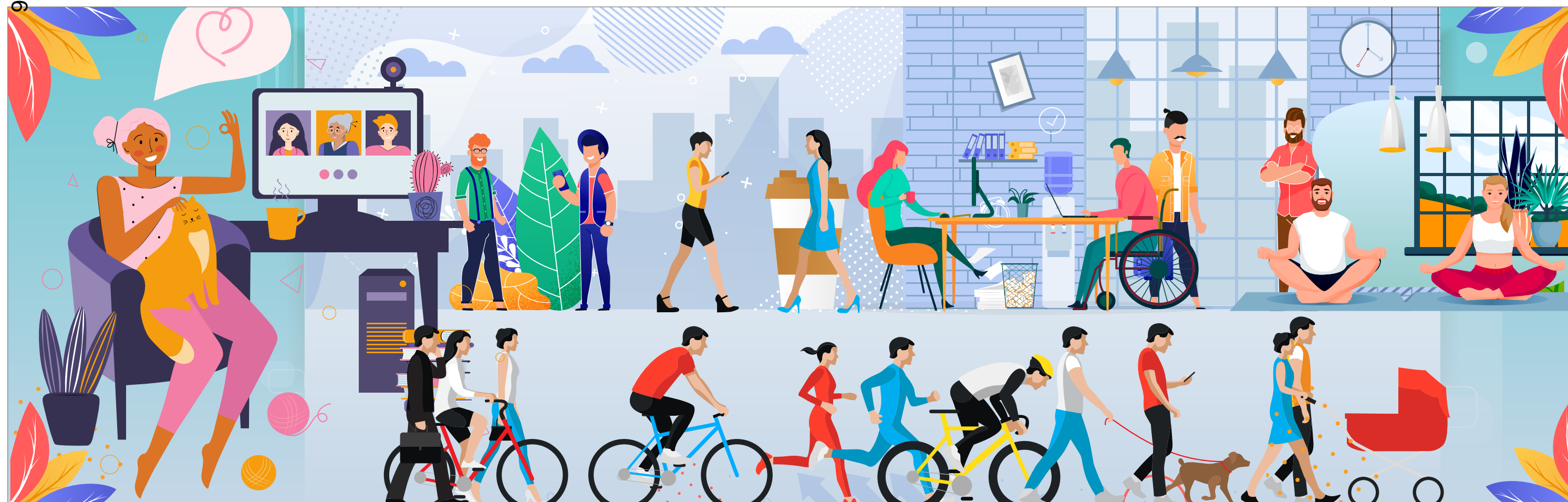
It is important to highlight your working pattern in your calendar so colleagues know when you are available. Make sure your calendar is readable to the whole organisation – you can make specific items private if necessary.

Use your out of office when you are not working to advise when you will be back and who to contact for urgent items.

### Social interaction with colleagues

We all need to be reminded that we work and interact with real human beings, not just virtual ones. Wherever possible turn on your cameras so you can 'see' your colleagues; not only does it help us feel more connected to them but being able to see their facial expression and body language helps to prevent misunderstandings.

Even though you may be on a work call it's ok to talk to each other as you would over a cuppa in the office – ask your colleagues how their week is going, how their family is or what they are doing at the weekend. Even better, if you are able to, why not schedule lunchtime walks with each other.





### Data/IT security

Regularly check that you are up to date with our remote working and portable device guidance in relation to data protection.

- Keep mobile devices and laptops safe from theft
- Do not leave devices unlocked if left unattended in the house
- Make passwords secure
- Ensure you cannot be overheard whilst on a call or in a meeting
- Make sure you are the only one who can see your screen
- Avoid saving items to the desktop as these are not remotely backed up
- Store physical data securely out of sight
- Do not destroy physical confidential data at home – keep this secure until you are able to dispose of it properly at the office
- Be vigilant of phishing attacks and keep up to date with your cyber security training

### Weekly basis

#### Catch-up

We recommend that you have a video catch up with your direct line manager once a week.

### Monthly basis

#### One to ones

It is important to have a monthly discussion with your manager dedicated to reviewing your progress against objectives and training.

This meeting should ideally be a video chat on Microsoft Teams accompanied by a one to one form within Ashford Achieve to keep a record of the discussion. Speak to our Learning and Development Officer for assistance with this.

It is also a good opportunity for another check in with how you are feeling and what support you need.



### Appraisals

When you review your objectives and training needs regularly as part of your monthly one to ones then your annual appraisal and mid-year reviews are a breeze.

**Make time for these** – the more thought you put into how you feel the past year has gone and what you'd like to concentrate on/learn during the next year the more productive these will be!

### General tips

#### Health and Safety

Continually review your workstation to check you are following health and safety advice and keeping yourself safe.

Report any accidents, injuries, diseases or dangerous occurrences arising from and/or relating to the performance of your work that occur whilst working at home to your manager and complete the normal reporting procedures.

#### Staff updates

Make sure you keep up to date with all the latest internal staff communications via the ABC newsfeed blog on the Smarthub. You can 'follow' this and receive email notifications when something new is uploaded. Alternatively you can use the Connect+ app as explained later in this guide.

#### Recognition

It is just as important to say thank you to your colleagues whilst working remotely, or to recognise when someone displays one of our values (Ambitious, Creative and Trustworthy).

As you will not be passing their desk to do this, think about making use of our e-cards on the Smarthub so everyone can celebrate the excellent work that goes on daily throughout the organisation.

#### Sickness

You should report in sick in accordance with normal reporting procedures.

#### Face to face contact

At least one face to face team meeting will take place every eight weeks and these will be attended by all employees including those who have remote working arrangements.

There may be other instances where you are required to attend the office during your normal remote working hours for a specific meeting or training.

## How to use tools – tips and etiquettes

Below we have listed some of the most frequent tools and systems we use and how to access them. Please speak to your manager if you need to know how to use one of your services' systems if it is not listed.

It is really important to keep your technical skills up to date when working remotely and this can be difficult when no-one is sitting near you to lend a hand. If there is something you are stuck with or feel like there must be an easier way to do something, make a quick call to your manager or colleague and find out how. Don't be shy! Think of all the time you could save.

### Skype

#### Making a call

Skype will automatically load when you switch on your pc. Click the icon on the task bar to bring the app up. Here you will see members of your team and any other contacts you have added.

To make a call, double click their name. A box will appear and at the bottom you have the option of sending an instant message, making a video call, an audio call or sharing your screen. To make a standard audio call click the telephone icon and select 'Skype call'.



#### Send an instant message

Click the speech bubble and a text box with cursor will appear. Type your message and press enter.





### Make an external call

To make an external call you can either type the number into the search bar or select the keypad and type in the number there. Press enter.



### Microsoft Teams

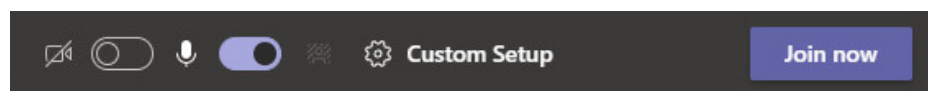
MS Teams will also load automatically on start up. **You can access training on the different functionality here.**

### MS Teams etiquette

If you are engaged in a meeting or telephone conversation on Teams it is good practice to switch your video camera on so you can see and talk to your caller clearly.

Also please ensure that your setting is suitable and you can't see a lot of clutter or items that you would not want others viewing behind you. If you can't have a clear background you can always use one of the pre-loaded ones or blur your background by clicking the silhouette on the toolbar.

If your environment is at all noisy please remain on mute until you wish to speak. Also follow the normal courtesies of allowing others to speak and not talking over them.



### Accessing systems

#### Pulse

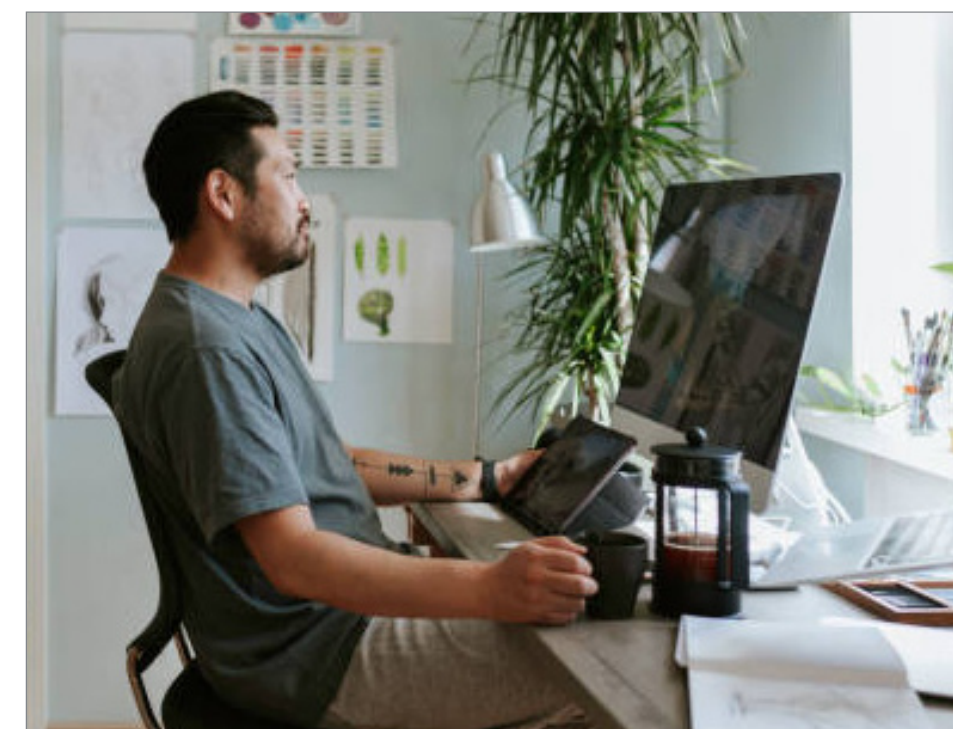
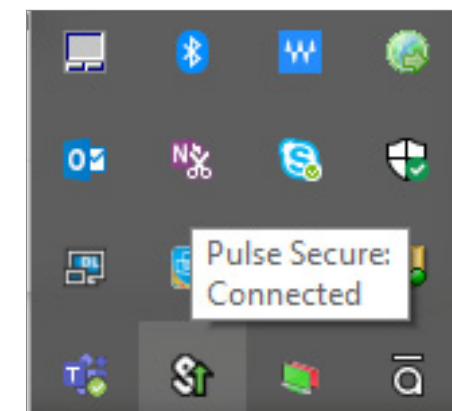
Follow the instructions issued by IT for initially getting set up to use Pulse, then simply select the Pulse icon in the system tray when you log on.

Double clicking this icon will bring the connect box up.

Click connect then you should see your username. In secondary password type **push**.



You will now see that you are connected and can use your laptop to access our different systems.





### Drive access

On the task bar at the bottom of the screen you will see the file explorer icon.



Clicking on this will show your frequently used folders, recent files and on the left hand pane you will see the drives you have access to. Where the drive has a green connector, clicking it will bring up the folders within that drive. If there is a red cross as shown below, clicking it should make the red cross disappear so you can access the files. If not, log a call with IT.



### Efin

To access efin, double click the icon on your desktop. From here you will need to enter your username and password. This is your standard system logon.

### Ashford Achieve

To access Ashford Achieve for your learning and development either hover over the self-service tab on the top of the intranet homepage or [access Ashford Achieve learning and development here](#) to go straight into the system.

This will take you to your logon screen. Your username is your firstname.surname (all lower case).

If you can't remember your password select 'Forgotten your username or password' and enter your username or your email address (not both). You will receive an email if your account has a current email address that will allow you to reset.

### iTrent

To access iTrent hover over the self-service tab on the top of the intranet home screen. You can select either iTrent (self-service) if you wish to book holiday or change your personal details or if you are a manager and you are looking for the team information select iTrent People Manager.

### My Ashford Rewards

#### Accessing the site - Apps

There are two free apps to download.

#### 1. Connect+

The first is the **Connect+ app** which you can download free from Apple Store and Google Play (search Connect+). It will verify who you are by sending a code to the email address you use for My Ashford Rewards.

This app provides mobile, on-the-go access to important employee communications as well as the ability to easily send and receive e-cards, and look at the social recognition wall.

The app will give you a notification when a new blog is posted (a discreet app icon) and you can scroll through all the news at your leisure (with the added bonus of easy access to ecards).

#### 2. SmartSpending™

The second is the **SmartSpending™ app** which you can download free from Apple Store and Google Play (search SmartSpending). It will verify who you are by sending a code to the email address you use for My Ashford Rewards and then you can set up a four digit pin number.

This app is for the shopping discounts. With it you can purchase Instant Vouchers at a discount and use them in-store and online, earn Cashback when shopping, order new and top up existing reloadable cards and view your account details – all from your mobile device.

You'll even receive alerts when top retailers increase their discount!

These two apps don't show you the homepage for My Ashford Rewards which contains other information about locally negotiated employee benefits, wellbeing, the Onion Club and more so make sure you also review the website periodically to make the most of everything.





### Accessing the site - Website

Visit [www.myashfordrewards.co.uk](http://www.myashfordrewards.co.uk) from any computer or mobile device – it's accessible to you 24/7 and on the go.

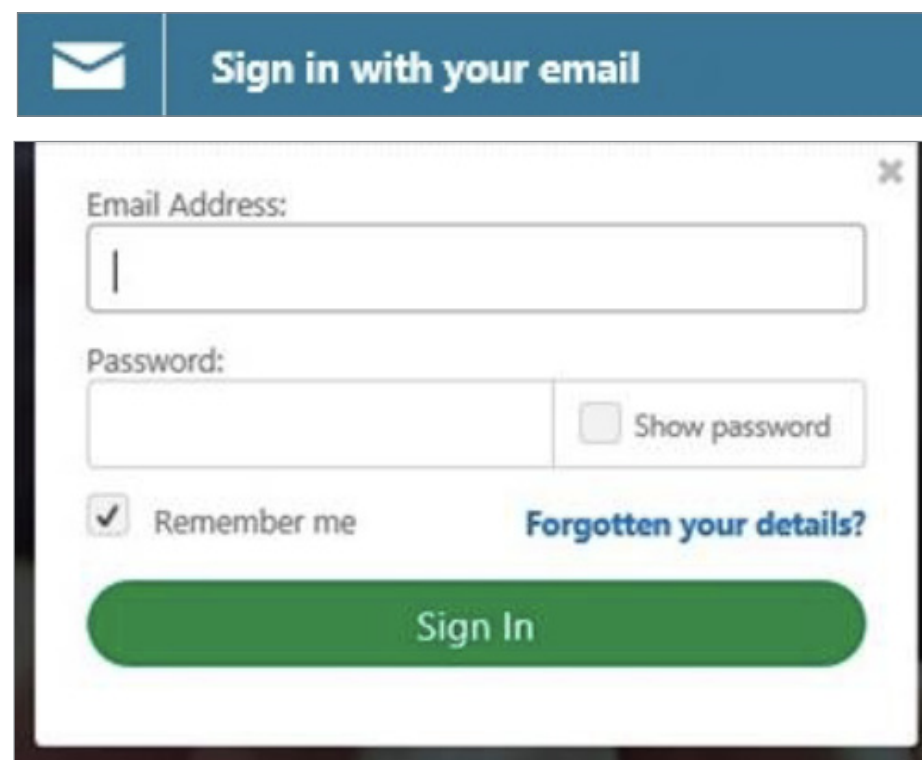
You then have a choice of how to login going forward when you come to the home screen:

1. Click on 'login with windows login' and use your work email address and computer password that you use to login to your pc. Click on 'remember me' and you won't need to login every time you want to access the site on that device.



OR

2. Use your email address that you use for the site (initially this was set up as your work email address but you may have changed this since) and password that you set up. Click on 'remember me' and you won't need to login every time you want to access the site on that device.



Can't remember your password? No problem! Click on **forgotten your details** and it will ask you for the email address you use for the site and send a verification code to it.

## Wellbeing

Your wellbeing is important to us. Everyday life and balancing the requirements of work and home can create pressures for all of us.

When remote working it is critical to take care of yourself and ask for help when you need it as your manager and colleagues cannot spot the signs of needing support as easily as when working together in the office.

### Stick to a routine

Try to stick to the same time to wake up and go to bed every day. Waking up at a set time helps stabilise your internal clock and improves your sleep. You'll feel less tired, more refreshed and find it easier to concentrate throughout the day.

Get showered and dressed and instead of going straight from your bed to your desk try to fill the time you'd normally commute with a little exercise or a longer breakfast.

Routine keeps our mind occupied and helps us feel in control, which helps to reduce stress and anxiety.

### Look at your work environment

Set up a comfortable workspace, ideally away from your sleeping area, with enough light and space – preferably away from others in your household and away from through areas. Remove clutter and other things like mobile phones that could be distracting.

Always take the advice from Health and Safety on how to set up your workstation, as you would in the office.





## Try 3G VIP

### 3g

Write down (this is more effective than thinking) three things that you are grateful for and try to vary this daily. This could be things like – my daily walk in the fresh air with my dog, the sun shining, crunching in autumn leaves, a smile from a stranger or a conversation with a loved one.

You cannot have two emotions at once so by filling your mind with positive things it gives you an immediate mental boost and sense of wellbeing.

### VIP

Write down your:

**Vision** – what do you want to achieve this week/this year/in your life? This can help you clarify your thoughts and work out what is important to you.

**Intention** – what is your intention for the day? Identify one main thing you want to achieve and try to tackle this early on when you are fresher. This will give you a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

**Progress** – look back at previous days/weeks to see how far you've come and think about what you've achieved for extra motivation.

## Hydrate

Did you know that just a 5% drop in hydration can reduce your productivity by 35% – not to mention affect your immunity! Make it a habit to have a long glass of water as one of the first things you do in the morning. Ideally this should be slightly warm water that has been boiled, but if you don't fancy that then just try to avoid ice cold water for your first glass of the day.

## Keep in touch

Maintain regular contact with your manager and colleagues. Use Microsoft Teams for group video meetings which can provide an opportunity to share concerns and offer help and support to each other. Keep communications positive and have some time to talk about things other than work. This can help you feel more connected to those faces you'd usually see on a daily basis.

## Create natural energy

Stand up to make your calls or walk around the room when considering a problem.

## Take regular breaks

Rest and recovery is extremely important for optimal wellbeing. Regular breaks are also essential for productivity and creativity. If you were in the office you would do a tea round or chat with a colleague so make a cuppa, give your pet a cuddle, put a load of washing on and get some exercise at lunchtime – just ensure you log out for your lunchbreak and keep an eye on your hours.

Where possible, schedule a walk each day. Movement and exposure to nature will boost your mental health.

## Upgrade your lunchtime

If you're working from home you may have more variety in your cupboards than the bog standard sandwiches. Take the opportunity to step away from your computer to make something from scratch or maybe read a book or sit in your garden.

Plan your meals. This encourages eating for wellbeing and contributes to a sense of achievement.

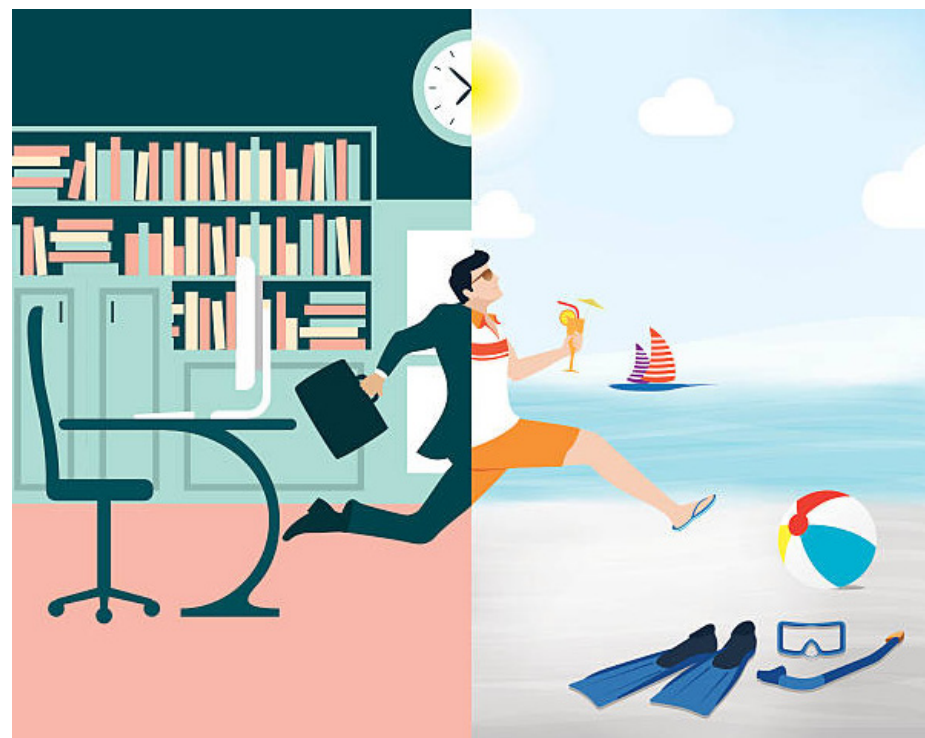
## Mark the end of your day

Just like you did in the morning, develop a ritual for the end of the day to signify that you have finished work. If you can, put your laptop away, tidy your desk and get changed. Anything that naturally signals the end of the workday will establish some boundaries.





### Occupy your commute time



Many of us use our commute as 'me time' so allocate that time to something you enjoy. It's easy to fill that extra time with work, family demands or household chores so if it's possible try to do something solely for you.

It could be reading, walking, painting, gardening, board games, jigsaws, colouring in, sewing, juggling, meditation, exercising, listening to podcasts, watching documentaries, calling a friend or anything else that calms you.

You could do a short online course to learn a new skill. You could discover a new hobby, plan a new trip or reminisce and get the photos out of a past holiday.

Or you could take advantage of volunteering opportunities to help others, which also nurtures our own sense of purpose and self-worth.

Page 153

### Enhance your physical health

Here we are talking about movement for optimal well-being which is separate to exercise. Always talk to your GP if you have any health conditions.

It is essential to keep our bodies moving. Movement helps pump oxygen to our brains, helps our lymphatic system get rid of toxins and releases pressure on our immune system.

Sitting for long periods is thought to slow the metabolism, which affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, blood pressure and break down body fat.

#### So remember 45 - 10 - 2! \*

##### 45 minutes

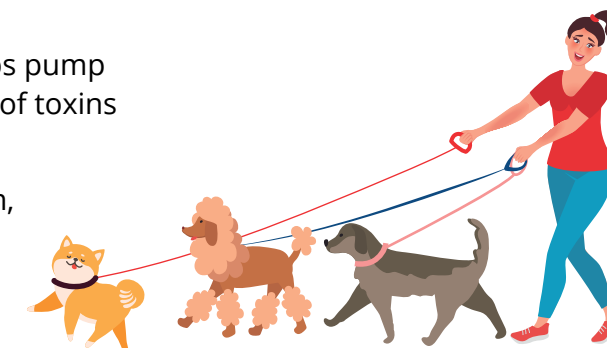
You should stand up and move around at least every forty-five minutes – even just a short walk to get a glass of water or walk up and down the stairs.

##### 10 minutes

You would benefit from a gentle walk for ten minutes outside in the fresh air each day.

##### 2 minutes

You should try to have two minutes of vigorous activity every day. This could be something as simple as doing jumping jacks or running on the spot whilst boiling the kettle.



Stand up!  
Every 45mins

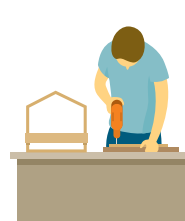
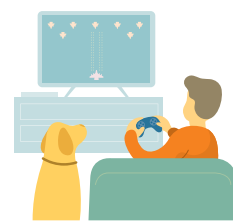


Fresh air  
for 10mins



Cardio for  
2mins

\* Source – The Wellbeing People











## Mental health

Remote working has numerous benefits, and some people feel it boosts their mental health and they have less social anxiety. Over a long period of time however is important to look out for signs that extensive remote working is affecting you adversely. This may never be the case for you, but if it is, speak to your manager immediately.

Try to stay in the present rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future excessively.

### Isolation

If you start to feel lonely then this could increase your risk of depression, stress and anxiety. It is important therefore that you prioritise connection and your emotional health by reaching out to your co-workers and managers.

### Online meeting fatigue

When remote working, online meetings will be essential to keep a team feeling connected, to get projects moving and sometimes for training.

However sometimes ask yourself – do we need to have this meeting or will an email suffice? If it is going to be a long meeting could we schedule a break? Using video can require greater focus than a face-to-face conversation. We miss nonverbal cues and unnatural silences can cause anxiety for some people.

On the other hand a quick video call can cut out extensive email conversations and save time not to mention inboxes. It's all about balance!

### Burnout

We can be very stressed and still see a way out, whereas burnout often leaves us feeling empty and beyond caring. Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

It may be recognisable by exhaustion, lowered immunity, frequent headaches, feeling detached, loss of motivation, withdrawal, adopting a negative outlook or using harmful coping strategies.

Whilst this can also occur when working in an office, it may be more difficult for your manager or co-workers to spot these signs when remote working. It is therefore important that you keep up communication with your manager and ask for support.

### Identify your stressors

These could be internal, for example – low self-esteem, being dehydrated, excessive caffeine or alcohol. These could be external, for example – the weather or behaviour of a loved one.

Are any of these within your control to change? Focus on the ones that are, and decide what positive action you can take about those that are not.

### Allocate time to worry

Sometimes things are a bit too overwhelming to cope with and it would be impossible not to worry or feel low about them. A great tip is to allocate 10 minutes of your day for these feelings. That way, when you find yourself thinking about them your brain can push them out of your mind until that time. During the allocated time you could write down how you feel and why. When the time is up, resolve not to think about it again until your next allocated time. Take control of it – don't let it take control of you.

### Breathe

When we get anxious, this can affect our breathing. It may feel as though you are breathing higher up in your chest, more shallowly or restricted.

Working on the simple breathing technique below may help to calm your body and mind (just five minutes will do).

1. Stop what you are doing and find a quiet place, away from your laptop and mobile if you can (you can even lie down – in fact this is also a great technique to do before you go to sleep).
2. Place one hand on your chest and one on your tummy and turn your attention to your natural breath. You are not trying to change it, just become aware of it. Notice if there is more movement in your chest or tummy.



**3.** Now move both hands to your tummy and allow your breath to just come and go naturally.

**4.** Keep your attention focused on any movement that you might feel underneath your hands. It may be minimal, that's fine. You may also find your mind wandering but just keep bringing it back to your breath and the movement of your tummy. After a while your breathing may naturally deepen with this continued focus.

### Speak to someone

If you need mental or emotional support speak to your line manager, your colleagues or [access the Health Assured, our employee assistance programme website here.](#)

Username: ashford

Password: council

Free 24-hour Confidential Helpline on 0800 030 5182.

### e-Hub App

Download the e-Hub app on your mobile device. The Health e-Hub app provides total support in the palm of your hand. It's free to download and available on both IOS and Android.

---

If you have a question about anything in this guide please speak to your line manager or email [human.resources@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:human.resources@ashford.gov.uk)

now it's me time...





# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Report Tracker – September 2022

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Consultation and Engagement Task Group	October 2022	Policy and Performance	A final report of the O&S Task Group findings and recommendations. The Task group examined the council's involvement and engagement of the public and look at the consultation process for corporate issues.
Future Plans for the Affordable Homes Programme	October 2022	Housing	Members were keen to get some more information over the future plans for the Affordable Homes Programme, specifically the financial implications regarding the purchase of new sites for the next consignment of affordable and social housing.
Freedom Leisure Contract	Autumn 2022	Environment and Land Management, Sports and Leisure	<p>A report to review the council's new leisure operator. Scrutiny of this topic would examine how the service has been running, the savings made to the council and the levels of customer satisfaction with the service.</p> <p>Note: An internal audit of the contract is underway and a report could come to O&amp;S after the audit process has been completed.</p>
Planning Service Progress Update	November 2022	Planning and Development	During scrutiny of the draft budget for 2022/23, Members agreed that it was important to closely monitor the progress of the Service and an update report on this in later 2022 would be requested by the Committee.
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

This page is intentionally left blank