



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

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The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

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

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

### Agenda

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| 1. | <b>Apologies/Substitutes</b>  |         |
|    | To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)                            |         |
| 2. | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>   | 1 - 2   |
|    | To declare any interests, which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: |         |
|    | a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)  |         |
|    | b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)  |         |
|    | c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests   |         |
|    | See Agenda Item 2 for further details   |         |
| 3. | <b>Minutes of the last Meeting</b>  | 3 - 6   |
|    | To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2022                             |         |
| 4. | <b>Report of the Consultation and Engagement Task Group</b>   | 7 - 18  |
| 5. | <b>Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2 2022/23</b>  | 19 - 44 |
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## Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **11<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman)

Cllr. Chilton (Vice-Chairman)

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

### **Apology:**

Cllr. Krause

### **Also Present:**

Cllr. Wright

### **Also in Attendance (virtually)**

Cllrs. Harman, Howard-Smith, Forest

Head of Policy & Performance, Development Partnership Manager, Service Lead Finance, Senior Accountant

### **In attendance:**

Housing Development & Regeneration Manager, Policy & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer

## **178 Declarations of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Burgess	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as he was Deputy Portfolio Holder for Housing	180

## **179 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **180 Future Plans for the Affordable Housing Programme - Presentation**

The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager and Development Partnership Manager gave a comprehensive presentation on Land Acquisition to the Committee, which covered the following topics:

- Background – self-financing and delivery
- Good Foundations - identifying and searching for land
- Being competitive in the Marketplace – cross departmental working, being municipal and social value
- Building the HRA Business Plan – Accelerating delivery, aligning with other projects and viability
- Where do we want to go – Housing Delivery Framework and corporate thinking
- Next Steps – Possible Land Acquisition Group, partnering with Community Land Trust consultation and stakeholders.

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

- A question was asked about the development of Community Land Trusts (CLT) going forward, with particular reference to Tenterden. The Development Partnership Manager explained they were working in various ways. Some delivered homes via S106 agreements and traditionally CLT land was gifted land, but ABC was not in a position to gift land, particularly in the Tenterden area. Currently more discussions were needed with the Diocese about a specific piece of land that may be of interest, and potentially then work with a CLT. The Rural Housing Enabler (who ran the Kent Community Housing Hub) were also working alongside to deliver meaningful housing. Cllr. Mulholland asked to be kept abreast of any development within Tenterden.
- It was noted that in reference to community led housing, a Point of Contact within ABC would be very beneficial, particularly for rural areas and Parish Councils. The Development Partnership Manager explained that initially people would be referred to the Kent Community Housing Hub or the English Rural Housing Association, but he was happy to be a conduit for that issue.
- Stodmarsh was highlighted by a Member as a long-standing issue that had influenced housing development and the idea of a Land Acquisition Group was welcomed. He spoke about increasing the amount of land parcels being acquired and that it needed to be a unified, joined up and bold approach, once the issue of Stodmarsh had concluded. He applauded the constant progressive approach to affordable housing and procurement of land. The Development Partnership Manager went on to speak about finding the balance between demand and supply, whilst decarbonisation placed additional pressure on the Business Plan. He added that ABC had been nominated for two awards at the UK Housing Awards in November.

- A Member asked whether the recent increase to interest rates, would result in an increase to tenants rent rates. The Housing Development & Regeneration Manager explained that this was already being factored in and business models were being revised. Rent had been kept below 80% of market rent to stay affordable, and negotiations with Homes England would continue, since social rent demanded greater grant levels, than they could provide. Government were currently consulting about rental increases, with the three potential options being 3, 5 or 7 %, and traditionally it had been Consumer Price Index plus 1%. Affordable rent was deemed around 80% Market Value whilst social rent was around 60%. ABC collection rates were very good, but any arrears were in those higher rate rental properties. The Service Lead Finance explained that the interest rates in correlation to rents did not move linear, since rents were based on the CPI whilst interest rates affected borrowing.
- A Question was asked about the number of uninhabitable properties that ABC owned, and if funds were available to make those properties fit for purpose. Those statistics would be provided after the meeting.

**Resolved:**

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

## **181 Budget Scrutiny Introduction - Presentation**

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer gave a short presentation on Budget Scrutiny 2023/2024. This covered an introduction to what Budget Scrutiny was about, the key considerations and the three stages of the Budget Scrutiny process. The meetings would take place virtually and at 6pm. Councillors Chilton, Barrett, Ledger, Hayward and Ovenden volunteered to sit on the Budget Scrutiny Task Group.

## **182 Reports Tracker and Scrutiny Matrix**

The Policy & Scrutiny Officer introduced the report and highlighted that the Committee had proposed to review the recent implementation of the Planning IT system with Arcus Global. A Task Group would now be assembled, with the first meeting to be held at the end of October, and those meetings would be held virtually and at 6pm. Councillors Barrett, Ledger, Mulholland, Harman and Ovenden volunteered to sit on that Task Group. The Chairman added that the meetings would be privately held, as they would take the form of one on one meetings with Officers.

A Member asked about an Officer Wellbeing Group that reviewed homelessness, social care and food banks. It had been suggested that the reports from that Group were presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and he sought clarification on this. The Policy & Scrutiny Officer would find out what the report was and feedback to Members.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted**

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**Agenda Item No:****Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee**Date of Meeting:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022**Report Title:** Report of the Consultation and Engagement Task Group**Report Author:** Abi Sheppard  
**Job Title:** Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
**Task Group Chairman:** Cllr. Noel Ovenden

**Summary:** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review consultation and engagement as part of the 2022/23 work programme.

This report outlines key areas discussed by the Task Group during the review and details any findings and conclusions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to approve the draft recommendations to then be considered at the next Cabinet meeting.

**Key Decision:** NO**Significantly  
Affected Wards:**

- Recommendations:**
1. **The Task Group would like to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:**
    - I. **Corporate consultation guidance be produced to provide services with good practice for setting up future consultations. The guidance should include details on the different methods of consultation and set out some minimum standards that need to be complied with before and after a consultation has concluded.**
    - II. **Non-conventional methods of consultation should continue to be explored by the council in order to increase levels of engagement from residents such as video and Hello Lamppost.**

- III. The use of easy-read versions of consultation papers should be considered for all public consultations.
- IV. An internal advisory group should be formed for Officers to review consultations before they are published. The group would meet informally to test and feedback to services about proposed surveys.
- V. A calendar of consultations is produced to ensure that the council can oversee how many consultations are issued to residents during one period.
- VI. Work to increase subscribers to ABC publications should continue to be developed by the Council.
- VII. The council explore options around creating a Citizens Panel to encourage local residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the Borough.
- VIII. Residents are engaged with the scrutiny work programme each year using the Council's communications channels

**Policy Overview:** N/A

**Financial**

**Implications:**

**Legal Implications:** N/A

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** Not Required

**Data Protection Impact**

**Assessment:** Not required

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

**Sustainability Implications:**

**Other Material  
Implications:**

**Exempt from  
Publication:**

**NO**

**Background  
Papers:**

**Contact:**

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

## **Report Title: Report of the Consultation and Engagement Task Group**

### **Foreword from the Task Group Chairman**

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group has reviewed Consultation and Engagement at the council. The review highlighted that conventional ways of engaging with residents did not always reach all groups of people in the Borough. New methods of consultation outside of traditional paper and digital surveys were increasing and Members felt that these options should be explored further.
2. Research from other Local Authorities showed that they had implemented corporate guidance for Officers to refer to when they were required to consult with residents. It was found that the council would benefit from having a set corporate process which could be made available to all staff. Furthermore, the Task Group also endorse the setup of an internal advisory group to provide an opportunity to discuss consultations on an individual basis and ensure the best method taken.
3. I would like to extend my thanks to Members of the Task Group and Officers involved for attending meetings and participating in discussion and debate.

### **Introduction and Background**

4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to review the council's approach to consultation and engagement. Members were particularly interested in how the council consulted with residents regarding current issues, new policies and projects. Members also wanted to understand what the challenges were with engaging hard to reach groups and compare best practice with other local authorities. It was agreed consultation and engagement would be a priority topic for the scrutiny work programme during the 2022/23 municipal year.

### **Review Scope**

5. The Task Group assembled 5 Members; Cllr Ovenden (Chair), Cllr. Chilton, Cllr. Ledger, Cllr. Blanford, Cllr. Barrett to examine the councils methods of consultation and engagement and, if required, make some recommendations to improve this to the full Committee.
6. A scope was initially compiled for the review to establish where scrutiny could be beneficial. A scoping document was agreed which outlined 5 key aims for the review:

- a. What methods of engagement and communication are used by council services and could they be improved to engage with hard to reach groups?
  - b. How is the council engaging with hard to reach groups in the Borough and what are the obstacles.
  - c. To understand the council's public consultation process and how this contributes to decision making.
  - d. To explore best practice and the tools used by other Local Authorities to carry out public consultations.
  - e. Identify ways that Overview and Scrutiny could engage more with residents to increase public participation at Committee meetings.
7. The Task Group discussed the methodology for this review and agreed that a combination of research reports and witness sessions would be the best approach. It was also suggested that council officers from other authorities could be invited to discuss the methods they use. Tunbridge Wells BC was identified as an authority who had recently adopted a new consultation software and so the Task Group would look to invite a representative to a future meeting. Essex County Council were also invited and provided evidence to council officers outside of the task group sessions.
8. The Communications Team were also considered as key officers for this review. It was noted that this would not be a review of all the communication issued by the council but instead look at what consultation methods have been used to engage residents.
9. The Panel would like to thank everyone that gave their time to the review.
10. In order to keep the scope timely and focused, Members agreed to exclude the following sub-topics from this review:
  - a. Planning consultations (except where relevant to consultation software)
  - b. Engagement with Parish Councils
  - c. Communication with local business
  - d. Internal communications
  - e. Tenant Engagement

## Review Findings

### ABC's Public Consultation Tools and Methods

11. A report was prepared for the Task Group regarding how the Council services use public consultation to engage with residents over:
  - a. Draft policies or strategies (e.g. Equalities Policy)
  - b. The quality of council services (e.g. Residents Survey)
  - c. Upcoming Housing Developments (e.g. Henwood Site)

- d. Planning proposals (Both planning policy and development management)
  - e. Changes to some licensing or financial laws (E.g. Gambling Act 2005)
  - f. Budget Consultation
12. Consulting residents on strategic projects and key policies had created opportunities for residents to have a say in council initiatives. Therefore, this type of consultation has the potential to help strengthen the council's relationship with communities.
13. However, with the increased use of online platforms to carry out consultations, there have been some challenges with reaching all groups of people. The council collects survey responses online through a digital software, 'Inovem' and Officers are able export the results and analyse the data. Some of the more hard-to-reach groups of people in the Borough may be digitally isolated and therefore unable to participate easily online. Different ways of interacting with digitally excluded groups of people are being explored by Officers and alternative formats are always offered. **(Recommendation II)**.
14. There are also benefits to digital consultation and engagement. Online consultations are more efficient to conduct and many people prefer this method as people do their business online at a time of day convenient to them. We have also seen an increase in engagement at council meetings due to the new hybrid working arrangements and the ability to stream videos and upload them to YouTube.
15. There were a variety of consultation software solutions that could be used for administering consultations. Bang The Table and Citizen Space were alternative systems used by other local authorities and were introduced to the Task Group. Members felt that the most important aspects for online consultations were that they should be engaging, to the point and in plain English. It was agreed that in comparison with other providers, the council's current software was capable of carrying out consultations in similar ways.
16. The Policy and Performance team worked as a main contact for providing help and advice to services regarding their surveys and questionnaires. Although the team were able to assist in this regard, there was no formal guidance or central process for consultation. Research from other Local Authorities showed that toolkits were used offsetting out minimum standards which were expected to be complied with and also helped users to consider the aims and objectives of the consultation in question.
17. Dover District Council have developed a 'Consultation Toolkit' which is designed to give services a step by step process for carrying out consultation work. The toolkit provides a set of minimum standards which are expected to be complied with and asks you to consider the aims, objectives of the consultation. There is also a section that advises on the different consultation methods and the benefits and drawbacks to each one. Also, the Consultation Institute has commended guidance issued by Northampton Borough Council. In a similar way to Dover DC, the guidance gets users to think about what they are trying to achieve out of undertaking a consultation exercise and ensures that methods and resources are considered in the process.

18. It was proposed that the council create a guidance document for corporate consultations in a similar way to other local authorities and based on best practice set out by the Council. The Task Group agreed that having a framework could help address some of the challenges experienced by Officers, for example, by ensuring that there was a recommended minimum time frame for which a consultation should run. It could also provide guidance on deciding the most appropriate type of survey, constructing questionnaires and different formats. Furthermore, a guidance document could help to widen the methods of engagement used by the council and help bring forward new ways of consulting, which is particularly important when seeking views from hard to reach groups. **(Recommendation I)**

19. As well as traditional paper based or online surveys, it was found that the council could look to use other methods more frequently to ensure hard to reach groups had their voice heard. For example, it was suggested that easy-read version of consultation papers or videos could help explain things in a more simple way. Essex County Council provided evidence about their approach to easy read consultations and how they employed an external company to create easy read versions when appropriate for the subject matter.  
**(Recommendation III)**



20. The Task Group discussed the process of how consultations were published. Members proposed that more could be done to ensure there was a clear quality checking process for future consultations. An example had been provided of where a consultation had been too long and repetitive which had led to a number of the responses not being fully completed. It was suggested to Members that an informal internal consultation advisory group could be formed for Officers to create a process for submitting and publishing consultations. This would ensure that all avenues of consultation were discussed and explored during the early stages of a consultation. It would also enable the consultation to be properly tested to ensure plain English, question routing and length was appropriate. **(Recommendation IV)**
21. Members also wanted to ensure that a calendar was created to clearly set out what consultations were expected during the year. The calendar could then

inform the advisory group as to when they should convene. Creating a record of consultations could also help to track what methods the council has used more frequently and capture lessons learned to inform future consultations.  
**(Recommendation V)**

### **Witness Sessions**

22. The Task Group invited the Communications Manager from Tunbridge Wells BC (TWBC) to attend a meeting and talk about the consultation methods they used at their council.
23. The Task Group compiled a list of questions which were presented at the meeting.
  - a. Can you provide an overview of how consultations work at your council?
  - b. Have you seen an improvement with getting consultation responses since you have implemented the new system?
  - c. How do you collect a database of people to consult with on specific issues?
  - d. What other methods of consultation and engagement do you use that are/have been successful?
  - e. Are consultations reviewed by a panel or individual before being published?
24. Members took interest in the community group database that had been created by TWBC and was used to consult residents on specific issues. It was noted that only contact details from subscriptions that allowed you to opt in could be used for consultation purposes. It was felt that using the 'opt in' feature more in council communications would help build up a subscriber list of contacts of people who wanted to engage with the council more often.

### **(Recommendation VI)**

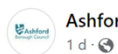
25. As part of the research for this review, the scrutiny team made contact with Essex County Council to discuss their online methods of consultation and engagement. Essex were identified as a council that used a different consultation software called Citizen Space. Essex had also used Citizen Space to develop a Residents' Panel. The panel are regularly asked to provide feedback on services and issues that are important to residents, up to six times a year. Any adult resident who lives in the area is able to sign up and choose what to take part in and prize draws are ran on occasion as an incentive to take part.
26. Whilst it was good to have the option for people to sign up to a Panel it was important that any panel was representative of the local community to ensure a diverse range of voices were heard and that the borough was represented properly. If ABC were to adopt such a Panel then consideration to the membership to ensure wide representation should be given. It was also important that any panel would have a reasonably active programme of consultations, surveys or straw polls each year to ensure momentum was maintained and membership did not become outdated.



27. The introduction of a Citizens Panel at Ashford Borough Council could be another way of increasing engagement with residents. Collecting feedback to consultations from Panel Members regularly could also help the council understand what the most prominent issues are facing residents.  
**(Recommendation VII)**

## Communications and Engagement

28. Members were interested to learn about how the Communications team used different media platforms to engage with residents. A presentation was provided to the Task Group and advised on the following
- Overview of Communications key functions
  - Ashford For You magazine
  - Readers' Survey
  - Social Media channels and digital approach
  - Promoting consultations
  - Ongoing challenges and possible solutions



Ashford Borough Council

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The cost of living crisis is affecting so many so we would like to hear how we might be able to help you/your family with rising costs. It could be sharing food bank locations, meal advice, energy saving tips, household budgeting, access to grants or other ideas. We've created a short survey to find out what support and advice you'd like from us so we can focus on what will be most useful for you.

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29. The Task Group discussed the use of social media to convey council messages. Keeping up to date with the increasing number of social media channels had proven to be a challenge. However, it was useful to target certain groups of people by choosing social platforms that they used more often, for example, Instagram was a popular platform used more by younger people. Council meetings such as Overview and Scrutiny were announced on social media and the meetings were also promoted as hybrid which allowed residents to join online from home. It was suggested that further work could be done to promote council meetings by sharing what topics were due on the agenda in advance. For Overview and Scrutiny, using social media and the council's magazine could help engage residents with the work conducted by the Committee. One way of doing this could be to ask residents to submit their own ideas for the scrutiny work programme each year. These could be reviewed by the Committee using the scrutiny topic selection matrix.  
**(Recommendation VIII)**

## Conclusion

30. The Task Group recognised the importance of consulting residents on various issues. Although public consultations had been undertaken for many policies, strategies and developments, a high response rate was not always received. Members agreed that new ways could be explored to help reach all types of residents in the Borough which may involve looking outside of traditional surveys and questionnaires. The creation of a Citizens Panel was also considered as a new way to increase regular engagement with residents.
31. Creating a corporate approach to consultations was seen as key for ensuring their quality. The Task Group concluded that more could be done to guide Officers when considering consultation methods and a wider group of consultation experts in the council could be formed to help with this.
32. The Task Group found that public participation at public facing committees had improved due to the new hybrid working arrangements. However, it was suggested that more work could be done to engage residents with the work of the O&S Committee through social media and the council's resident magazine.

## **Recommendations**

33. The Task Group would like to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:
  - I. Corporate consultation guidance be produced to provide services with good practice for setting up future consultations. The guidance should include details on the different methods of consultation and set out some minimum standards that need to be complied with before and after a consultation has concluded.
  - II. Non-conventional methods of consultation should continue to be explored by the council in order to increase levels of engagement from residents such as video and Hello Lamppost.
  - III. The use of easy-read versions of consultation papers should be considered for all public consultations.
  - IV. An internal advisory group should be formed for Officers to review consultations before they are published. The group would meet informally to test and feedback to services about proposed surveys. .
  - V. A calendar of consultations is produced to ensure that the council can oversee how many consultations are issued to residents during one period.
  - VI. Work to increase subscribers to ABC publications should continue to be developed by the Council.

- VII. The council explore options around creating a Citizens Panel to encourage local residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the Borough.
- VIII. Residents should be engaged more with the annual scrutiny work programme via the Council's communications channels.

## Next Steps in Process

34. The final report of the Task Group was submitted to the council's Management Team who have provided advice to the Cabinet regarding each recommendation. Overall, Management Team were supportive of all the recommendations and their advice is tabled below:

No.	Recommendation	Management Team Advice
I	Corporate consultation guidance be produced to provide services with good practice for setting up future consultations. The guidance should include details on the different methods of consultation and set out some minimum standards that need to be complied with before and after a consultation has concluded.	<b>MT supported the recommendation and endorsed using best practice issued by the Chartered Institute.</b>
II	Non-conventional methods of consultation should continue to be explored by the council in order to increase levels of engagement from residents such as video and Hello Lamppost.	<b>MT agreed that more informal methods of engagement should be considered for future consultation.</b>
III	The use of easy-read versions of consultation papers should be considered for all public consultations.	<b>MT agreed that easy-read publications should be available where relevant.</b>
IV	An internal advisory group should be formed for Officers to review consultations before they are published. The group would meet informally to test and feedback to services about proposed surveys.	<b>MT recommended that the communications team should be involved in the group to help ensure the use of plain English in publications.</b>

<b>V</b>	A calendar of consultations is produced to ensure that the council can oversee how many consultations are issued to residents during one period.	<b>MT supported the recommendation.</b>
<b>VI</b>	Work to increase subscribers to ABC publications should continue to be developed by the Council.	<b>MT endorsed the approach taken by the Communications team to increase subscriptions to publications.</b>
<b>VII</b>	The council explore options around creating a Citizens Panel to encourage local residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the Borough.	<b>MT agreed with the idea of a Citizens Panel in principle and supported further research in to how this could operate at Ashford BC.</b>
<b>VIII</b>	Residents are engaged with the scrutiny work programme each year using the Council's communications channels.	<b>MT support the recommendation.</b>

35. Following the approval of the recommendations by the Committee, these will then be submitted to the Cabinet for adoption.
36. Subject to Cabinet approval, it has been proposed that an update on the recommendations is brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during later 2023 to review their progress.

## Contact and Email

37. Abi Sheppard, Policy and Scrutiny Officer  
[Abi.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Abi.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk) 01233 330394

**Agenda Item No:**

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



**Date of Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Tuesday 08<sup>th</sup> November  
Cabinet: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November

**Report Title:** Performance Report, Quarter 2 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, for the Quarter 2 period 2022/23.

This report pulls from across council services the information necessary to reflect the quarterly KPIs. Representing these in the four themes of the Corporate Plan that of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford, Targeted Growth and the councils underlying principles.

In addition to surrounding narrative for specific KPIs where available, this report highlights some of the key actions over the quarter where relevant to the aims and objectives of the Corporate plan.

**Key Decision:** No

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None

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

**I. Consider the performance data for Quarter 2 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.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	Not required as the report presents information on past council performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment:</b>	N/A
<b>Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):</b>	N/A
<b>Sustainability Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt from Publication:</b>	No
<b>Background Papers:</b>	The Corporate Plan 2022-24
<b>Contact:</b>	Tom.Swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330432

#### **Portfolio Holder's Views:**

This Q2 performance report provides an opportunity to monitor and review the council's performance against its Corporate Plan. It demonstrates some of the progress and constraints that are influencing our short and medium term performance.

Regular review of the material included in this report ensures Members and Officers remain focused on our priorities and understand the issues that are affecting our residents, providing an early indication of the areas we need to focus our attention on moving forward.

## Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 2 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 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 2 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. Whilst measures reflecting our statutory functions continue to show positive progress and largely meet targets. It is clear from a number of measures that the cost of living squeeze is starting to have a material impact on our residents.
6. With our communities still in the recovery phase following the pandemic, the cost of living squeeze is a further set back and is starting to show an impact across our KPI suite.
7. Specifically within Ashford Town Centre where occupancies rates whilst still above their pandemic low are starting to fall, this is reflected in both CP\_KPI\_34 and 35. This will likely filter through to our commercial investment measures with time. The council has ownership of a number of key sites within Ashford Town Centre and with the Town Centre Reset, a now Super Six project, this will continue to be an area of focus.
8. This cost of living squeeze can also be seen in an increase in the number of homelessness presentations being received CP\_KPI\_19 with the financial implications of this being closely monitored in our Financial Monitoring reports.
9. The Council is currently running a short [survey](#) asking residents what additional support and advice it can best offer to aid with the increasing cost of living. Additionally residents are reminded that our [Welfare Intervention](#) Officers are available to assist.
10. Finally, due to the short turnaround time of this report, for O&S, the Planning related KPIs have not yet been updated, the narrative has however and it is expected that performance will broadly be in line with the previous quarters. It should be noted that in the medium term with the new planning system bedding in and Stodmarsh mitigation measures now moving forward, improvements in these measures should start to be seen.



# Performance Report for the Corporate Plan 2022-24, Quarter 2 - 2022/23

## 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
<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.	Tackling climate change by achieving carbon neutrality  Enabling development whilst protecting the environment  Ensuring no one is disadvantaged as we reduce the carbon footprint of our services and operations	<b>GP1:</b> Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets  <b>GP2:</b> Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles  <b>GP3:</b> Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business	<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>
<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.	Enabling homes that are affordable to local people on low incomes  Improving wellbeing and opportunities for people living in the most disadvantage areas  Raising educational attainment and skills level of local population	<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  <b>CA2:</b> Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment  <b>CA3:</b> Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people  <b>CA4:</b> Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility	<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>
<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.	Ensuring our towns remain vibrant places and adapt to changing consumer habits  Matching local skills with the needs of employers  Attracting new industries to establish in borough and retain and grow existing business	<b>TG1:</b> Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough  <b>TG2:</b> Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents  <b>TG3:</b> Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy  <b>TG4:</b> Support growth in the visitor economy  <b>TG5:</b> Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business	<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>

## Introducing the Super Six







With the 'Big 8', a set of strategically important infrastructure projects, which became the cornerstone of the [AshfordFOR](#) inward investment campaign, now delivered or significantly completed, a new chapter in the Ashford FOR story is needed

The period of this report, saw the announcement of the super six projects, made up of; Project Green, Ashford College phase 2, Town Centre Reset, Stodmarsh, Newtown Works and South of Ashford Garden Community. These all sit within our Corporate Plan, fitting neatly across the themes of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth.

The creation of the Super 6 provides a new focus and impetus for a new campaign to help deliver these ambitious projects, but also to put Ashford on the map nationally, ensuring the maximum opportunity to attract future investment and government funding.



## Corporate Plan Themes and Key Performance Measures

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

### Green Pioneer

#### Highlights from the Quarter

##### Ashford's first Great Big Green Week

In the quarter, for the first time, Ashford Borough Council took part in the nation campaign – The Great big Green Week (24 September – 2 October).

The council worked with local organisations to produce a weeks' worth of events. Bringing together and raising awareness of local green initiatives to the community and helping residents learn how they can play a part by contributing through everyday actions and choices.

The main event – The Great Big Green Week Roadshow, created a vibrant atmosphere in Ashford town centre. Many residents engaged with the local stalls, learning tips on recycling, saving energy, how to get a more biodiverse garden and tips on shopping locally. Families got to enjoy the free activities available, which included making your own draft excluder and for the more competitive the smoothie bike challenge.







##### The Queen's Green Canopy Update - Memorial Tree Planting For Her Majesty

Following the death of Her Majesty The Queen, and the wishes of our Patron, His Majesty The King, The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative will be extended to the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees in memoriam to honour Her Majesty.

As a nationwide initiative created to mark the Platinum Jubilee, The Queen's Green Canopy was due to conclude in December - the end of the Jubilee year. However, as the official tree planting season in the United Kingdom is from October to March, the initiative will now be extended to include this full tree planting season, beginning in October 2022 and concluding in March 2023.

## Quarterly Measures

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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_06  Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to 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.  Initiatives to get people cycling through 'guided rides' and bike repair and maintenance schemes have been successful and will continue to be offered through the autumn of 2022									
CP_KPI_09  Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	49%	50%		54.67%	50%		50%	50%		Q2 figures based on data for July figure only – data to follow from KCC shortly for August and September.
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>											
CP_KPI_10  Refuse Collection Success Rate	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.	99.97%	99.96%		99.96%	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 Waste and recycling statistics</a>

## **Caring Ashford**

### **Highlights from the Quarter**

#### **Work begins on Phase 2 of Ashford College**

It's an exciting time for Ashford College, with construction work underway on a brand new extension.

Called Phase 2, the new wing will house classrooms and laboratories for Business, Information Technology, and Engineering. The new facilities will create a renewed focus on these up-and-coming fields, and allow 250 more students each year to access the high quality education offered at Ashford College.

Featured will be an 'Engineering Hub', which will highlight the role engineering can play in creating solutions to climate change and promoting decarbonisation.

The extension will also be key in delivering the new T Level qualifications, which are equivalent to three A Levels and provide learners with work experience as part of their training.

#### **Eat Well Spend Less a success**

A series of Eat Well Spend Less roadshows took place in July, August and September, across East Kent, focussing on providing targeted help and advice for local families who may need extra support because of rising food prices.

The 12 events (three in Ashford) brought together a range of partner organisations (over 50 across the region) including Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, frontline NHS staff and council officers, outreach organisations and charities, in one easy-to-access place.

The roadshows had a family-focus to provide practical advice, information and support in key areas such as: healthy eating on a budget, benefits advice, free school meals and healthy start vouchers, support available from food banks and other voluntary sector provisions.

Ashford's events took place at The Ray Allen Centre, Stanhope, Repton Connect and the One You Shop, Park Mall.

### **Ashford Civic Awards honour community heroes**

The Ashford Borough Council Platinum Jubilee Civic Awards took place on Friday 23 September at Chart Hills Golf Club, Biddenden.

The awards provided an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the hard work and dedication of individuals who have enriched the lives of others in their community, who have made significant achievements or who have acted as role models for our residents.

Taking place in this historic year of the Platinum Jubilee of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the event honoured those people who have delivered community service by outstanding achievement or dedicated contribution within the borough of Ashford.

### **Tenterden Leisure Centre swimming pool reopens**

The swimming pool at Tenterden Leisure Centre reopened on Wednesday 21 September, following an extended period of closure while the centre's storm-damaged roof was repaired.

Work had begun in September 2021 to remove the roof covering and replace it with a more thermally efficient option, which will also require less maintenance. However, storm damage in October last year meant the pool had to close completely while investigations were carried out into the extent of this damage.

Following extensive repairs to the roof, a deep clean of the facility and the installation of a new filtration system, the centre operators Tenterden Leisure Centre Trust have been able to announce it's reopening.

### **Plans on short-stay accommodation for homeless people at Henwood Road car park approved**

Ambitious plans have been approved to create new high quality short-stay accommodation apartments for homeless people on the under-used Henwood car park on the edge of Ashford town centre.

This will be the first-of-its-kind modular development in the borough. It will be built on a steel podium, and all necessary safety features and flood risk mitigation measures have been adopted for this scheme due to the site situated in a flood zone area.

## On the right track – new athletics running track at Julie Rose Stadium opens

The Julie Rose Stadium now has a brand new athletics track following a £300,000 investment on the new running surface by Ashford Borough Council.

Freedom Leisure and Ashford Borough Council worked on plans to re-surface the outdoor athletics track at the iconic stadium that was built in 1997. Works began in March this year and the finishing touches were completed in July.

The next phase of investment will see the indoor running chute replaced along with a refurbishment of the indoor throwing cage later this year.

This follows on from the complete refurbishment and opening of the new gym and exercise studio last year, and is further evidence of the great partnership between the council and the not-for-profit leisure trust to improve the health, wellbeing and sporting facilities for the people of Ashford and the surrounding area.

## Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 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*	99.1%	98.5%	✓	99.2%	98.5%	✓	98.8%	98.5%	✓	
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: <a href="#">Food Services Plan 2022/23.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)</a>											
CP_KPI_17 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	31			17			0			There are now no houses on site sadly. This is as Halstow Way is completed and all other sites are caught up in the planning system or 'subject to Stodmarsh' mitigation measures in time.
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	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
<b>CP_KPI_18</b> <b>Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases</b>	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	3			3			1			The quarter saw 1 completion.

As listed in previous quarters this way of acquiring properties is not as competitive as it was during recent months since the property market boomed over the early part of the year when the stamp duty holiday was in place. There are reports that the market is slowing down so the suitability of such an approach in the market will be re-evaluated as things progress.

<b>CP_KPI_19</b> <b>Homelessness Presentations</b>	No. of homelessness presentations	404			391			466			
<b>CP_KPI_19b</b> <b>Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)</b>	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	28			24			28			

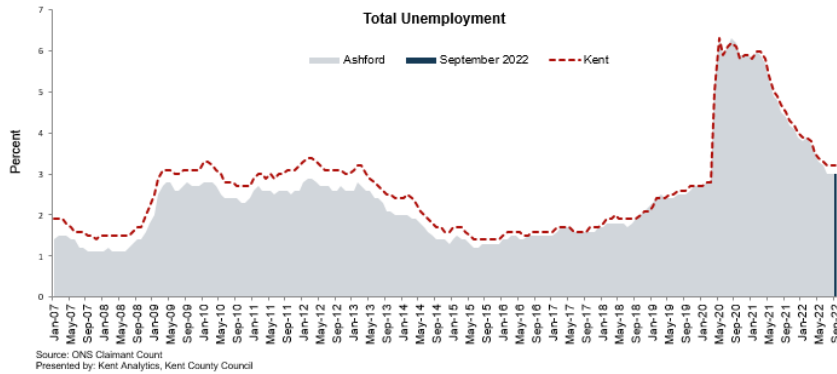
The latest data tables on local government housing including Ashford Borough Council, covering social housing sales, homelessness, and affordable housing supply are available at the following links: [Social housing sales](#) [Homelessness](#) [Affordable housing supply](#)

The prevision of Temporary Accommodation has seen an increase in demand and in the latest [financial monitoring report](#) forecasted a pressure of £183,000, this is an area of increased risk in the current economic climate.

<b>CP_KPI_20</b> <b>Disabled Facilities Grants Completed</b>	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	13			16			20			Average figure for the time of the year.
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_20b Disabled Facilities Grant Spend	Actual spend per quarter for disabled facility grants	£200,928.24			£196,521.61			£284,750.48			Average spend for this time of the year
CP_KPI_21 Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	3.7%			3.2%			3%			<p>The unemployment rate in Ashford is 3%. This is below the rate for Kent (3.2%). 2,335 people were claiming unemployment benefits in Ashford. This has fallen since last month.</p> <p>More information available within - <a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a></p>



September 2022	Number	% rate	Number change since August 2022	% change since August 2022	Number change since September 2021	% change since September 2021
Ashford	2,335	3.0%	-20	-0.8%	-1,095	-31.9%
Kent	30,650	3.2%	+205	+0.7%	-12,060	-28.2%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 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	6%			4.9%			4.9%			<p>More information available within - <a href="#">Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</a></p> <p>Latest available data on Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is available from - <a href="#">Tracking Young People - KELS!</a></p>



#### 18-24 Unemployment

September 2022	Number	% rate	Number change since August 2022	% change since August 2022	Number change since September 2021	% change since September 2021
Ashford	430	4.9%	+5	+1.2%	-175	-28.9%
Kent	5,365	4.5%	+40	+0.8%	-2,425	-31.1%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 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	1.84	10	✓	1.94	10	✓	2.17	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	25.96	28	✓	28.78	28	⚠	27.72	28	✓	Processing time returned to target following Q1 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_29 Value of grants awarded via community grant fund.	Value of grants awarded via community grant fund	£334,453.70 for 2021/22			£249,101 for H1 of 22/23						Value of grants awarded via community grants fund to date this financial year - £249,101. This level of funding will not be repeated in the next 6 month period as some grants schemes are fully allocated at the beginning of the financial year
CP_KPI_30 Number of tickets sold local lottery Scheme	Number of tickets sold local lottery scheme – generating x amount.	New Measure			Since start of scheme 17 Feb 2022, 16,614 tickets			Since start of scheme 17 Feb 2022 <b>24,106 tickets</b>			Lottery: Since lottery scheme started selling tickets on 17 Feb 2022, 24,106 tickets generating £12053 income for good causes to date.

Income direct to good causes will rise by 10p to 60p from each ticket sale from 7 Nov when change takes effect.

Information about the Ashford Community Lottery is available from [Ashford Community Lottery: Easy online fundraising for good causes - Ashford Community Lottery](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_32	Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	New Measure			<b>Ongoing projects and activities:</b>  <b>Silent Sunday (SEN);</b> 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. Local link ups to Age UK are aiming to boost participation.  <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.						

Overall performance across the leisure centre contract has remained constant or shown increases in participation in some areas. This summer holiday period was the first one the Stour has been fully open since Freedom took over which meant that a full programme of swimming and holiday activities could be delivered for the first time. The Julie Rose running track was re-laid by AS-C's contractors at the end of this quarter, with positive feedback from users. August saw Centurion, North Downs Way 100 mile Ultra Race was hosted by the Julie Rose Stadium with 219 participants.

Pressure on operational costs from increases in utility prices remain as key challenges. A pre-booking system for the tennis courts a Spearpoint came into use (remaining free to use). Freedom continue to develop their environmental policy, with some key targets being developed for the future of the contract.

Stour Centre Members 2068. Julie Rose Stadium 448 Members. Learn to Swim participants 114. Stour Centre total visitors 89,117. Julie Rose total visitors 6,107. Total swimming visits 36,446. Spearpoint visitors 527. Facebook page visits were up by 26.7% at 5230 visits

## Targeted Growth

### Highlights from the Quarter

#### Hello Ashford - finding out resident's views on our Town Centre changes

Using the engagement platform Hello Lamp Post, members of the community will be able to interact with objects around the town centre via their mobile phone.

Residents can strike up conversations with familiar street furniture such as benches, bins, flower beds, lamp posts, the bandstand and more.

Signs are placed in and around Bank Street and Middle Row, you can either text the number displayed on the sign or scan the QR code to receive information on the object.

#### Fabric of Ashford

Ashford's high street saw a series of family-friendly events and workshops as part of The Fabric of Ashford; The Place That Makes Us campaign. This has featured a line-up of events throughout July and August including pop-up workshops, live music, storytelling workshops, street entertainment and art installations.

The finale event on 20 August showcased the borough's community spirit in the form of the Ashford Tapestry; a community-created art project comprising colourful fabric artwork, all sewn together to form an impressive art installation.

#### New places to enjoy in Ashford Town Centre

Parts of Ashford Town Centre looked a little different during the period as new seating, furnishings and bunting decorating upper Bank Street and Middle Row.

This temporary pilot scheme delivers some interventions that links to key themes from the Town Centre Reset - integrated play, feature lighting, temporary public realm and outdoor seating. If successful this could lead to further, more permanent features in the future.

This short-term regeneration project aims to encourage active and healthy lifestyles by introducing informal play opportunities, attractive places to meet and dwell and enhancing of public spaces.

It provides a new look and feel to areas of the town centre, with additional cleaning, re-decoration and new planting, bunting and seating adding a touch of colour.

### **Fibre to the Premises is rolling out in the Ashford borough**

Areas of the Ashford borough are seeing Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) being rolled out by several companies including Netomnia and Openreach. Work is underway by both companies to upgrade infrastructure in a number of areas across Ashford and Tenterden.

In July Netomnia invited Cllr Neil Bell, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, along with officers from Ashford Borough Council on a site visit to see how FTTP upgrades happen on the ground. They began at the BT Exchange in Ashford and then visited two properties enabling them to see how the fibre cabling is installed and understand its journey from the exchange to households and businesses.

One of the objectives in our Corporate Plan 2022-2024 is to enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents.

### **Ashford Borough Council supports businesses with two innovative programmes**

As part of our continued commitment to developing the economic prosperity of the borough, we are working with Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC) to roll out two exciting programmes to support businesses and enable them to grow further.




Scale Up Ashford and Growth Entrepreneur Ashford are both expert-driven growth and expansion schemes to help businesses to fulfil their full potential and explore new ideas and concepts that they need might need further guidance or help to drive forward.

## Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 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	8.4%			8.65%			9.4%			5335 properties 341 exemptions 160 empty 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	14.8%			15.4%			15.5%			July 2022 335 units 52 empty - 15.5%
<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. Although improved from the low, remain significantly above the previous low of 8% in November 2017, and remain significantly above national benchmarks, which were 12% in January 2022.</p>											
<b>CP_KPI_35</b> <b>Contribution to budget from commercial investments</b>	Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the councils budget books.	85%			92.2%			81.5%			Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos.
The Corporate Property Annual Performance Report 2021/22 reviewing revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year, as well as advising on its likely future performance is on the October Cabinet agenda.											

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note																								
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status																									
CP_KPI_36	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	8%			8%			6%			<table><tr><th>Site</th><th>Square foot let</th><th>Total square foot</th><th>Percentage let</th></tr><tr><td>Ellingham</td><td>64,897 sf</td><td>64,397 sf</td><td>99.2%</td></tr><tr><td>Carlton Road</td><td>37,244 sf</td><td>42,065 sf</td><td>88.5%</td></tr><tr><td>Elwick Place</td><td>92,026 sf</td><td>94,351 sf</td><td>97.5%</td></tr><tr><td>International House</td><td>72,800 sf</td><td>82,462 sf</td><td>88.3%</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>266,967 sf</td><td>283,275 sf</td><td>94.2%</td></tr></table>	Site	Square foot let	Total square foot	Percentage let	Ellingham	64,897 sf	64,397 sf	99.2%	Carlton Road	37,244 sf	42,065 sf	88.5%	Elwick Place	92,026 sf	94,351 sf	97.5%	International House	72,800 sf	82,462 sf	88.3%		266,967 sf	283,275 sf	94.2%
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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.

CP_KPI_38	Digital uptake - % of total council transactions /% Increase transactions completed electronically.	80%	80%		83%	80%		80.39%	80%		Our current digital uptake target is 80%
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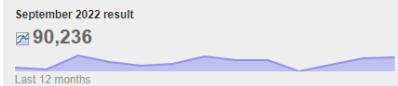
The Customer Service, IT and Digital Strategy was adopted at the end of June 2022 with a key focus of keeping the customer at the centre of our services. [Customer Service IT Digital Strategy.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

	July 22	Aug 22	Sept 22
Digital Transactions	31577	28557	31545
Total Transactions	39173	36091	39239
Digital Uptake	80.61%	79.12%	80.39%

CP_KPI_39	Social media engagement	<u>Q4 (Jan-March)</u> <b>Impressions</b> Facebook: 972.4k Twitter: 84.4k Nextdoor: 78,163k Instagram: 3k	<u>Q1 (April-June)</u> <b>Impressions</b> Facebook: 977,240 Twitter: 62,471 Nextdoor: 91,593 Instagram: 2,747	<u>Q2 (July-Sept)</u> <b>Impressions</b> Facebook: 867,487 Twitter: 47,088 Nextdoor: 123,428 Instagram: 8,766	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.  The data will allow the Council to better understand the needs of our
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
		Followers			Followers			Followers			residents and ensure that our social media strategy is shaped by the results of the data.
		Facebook: 9.9k Twitter: 9k Nextdoor: 22k Instagram:2.5K			Facebook: 10,115 Twitter: 9,082 Nextdoor: 25,536 Instagram: 2,574			Facebook: 10,459 Twitter: 9,112 Nextdoor: 26,407 Instagram: 2,633			With circa 50,000 combined total followers across all ABC 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>Page 39</b> <b>CP_KPI_41</b> <b>Parking usage</b>	Parking usage	250,895	243,026	259,506	 <p>September 2022 result 90,236 Last 12 months</p>
	Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks				

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

### Top Performing Car Parks this month

1. Vicarage Lane Car Park ( A) – £48,961.00, slightly down but on par with last month and forecast for this car park alone at end of financial year = is over £500k, which equates to around 20% of total income.
2. Recreation Ground Car Park (T) £37,238.00
3. Elwick Place – £30,804.00

### Total Financial Year Figures/ Income

Forecast for 2022-23 - £2,505,000









2021-22 £2,203 918

2020-2021 £ 819 698





2019-2020 Income £2,591 786

## Our Principles

### Quarterly Measures



Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 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%		98%	95%		95.6%	95%		180 requests received in the period, 8 responded to outside of the 20 working day window. 155.5 officer hours used to respond to requests in the period.
CP_KPI_43 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	97.6%	99%		30.12%	24.75		56.38%	49.5%		Government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates are available <a href="#">here</a>
CP_KPI_44 Council Tax Collection Rate	Percentage of council tax collected - cumulative figure per month	97.4%	98.25%		30.1%	24.57%		57.25%	49.14%		
CP_KPI_45 Percentage of invoices paid on time	Percentage of invoices paid on time	New measure			Due to system upgrades the information remains pending						



Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_51  Number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings ( volume measure)	number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	140			Number of ongoing litigation matters = 92  Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0			Number of ongoing litigation matters = 109  Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0			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 – 4  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – 5  Number of 106 cases completed – 3			Number of new 106 files opened - 10  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – 4  Number of 106 cases completed – 56			Number of new 106 files opened - 6  Number of draft 106 agreements sent out – 7  Number of 106 cases completed – 3			
CP_KPI_53  Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	85%	90%		85%	90%		Q2 Data Pending.			
The national average performance for the percentage of planning applications approved is usually around 87 to 88% Q1 performance nationally was 88%. Whilst 85% is below the 90% target it should not be a cause for concern.											
CP_KPI_54  Speed of Major Planning	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in	85%	65%		50%	65%		Q2 Data Pending			

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
Application Decisions	writing between the applicant and the local authority)										
CP_KPI_54b	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	85%	75%	✓	82%	75%	✓				
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month											
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>											
Performance remains good across the broader period in respect of major application determinations. This quarter's performance is below par but it is based on just 11 cases (i.e. 5 out of 12 is 55%). The cases that ran over the statutory target date were mostly subject to particular causes of delay and difficulty associated with S106, Stodmarsh, Committee referral and two were refused without agreement to an EOT from the applicant.											
CP_KPI_55	% 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).	79%	75%	✓	86%	75%	✓	Q2 Data Pending			
CP_KPI_55b	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to	90%	80%	✓	90%	80%	✓				

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Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2021/22			Q1 2022/23			Q2 2022/23			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	reflect 24 rolling month										
<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.</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	839	550		817	550		Q2 Data Pending			
<p>Application numbers have continued to increase. Stodmarsh is a known factor which is holding applications up (approximately 220 cases) and implementation of the new planning application management system (ARCUS) has resulted in the number of live applications increasing temporarily. In relation to Stodmarsh, officers are taking cases to the point where proposals can be agreed in all other respects 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. In relation to the build-up of cases as a result of the introduction of ARCUS, officers are considering another clearance week following the very successful clearance week in May. This is designed to shift a lot of cases by freeing planning officers for one week to focus purely on making planning decisions. In May this resulted in 170 applications being determined in one week.</p> <p>Staffing resources remain fairly 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>											

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Report Tracker – November 2022

Current Work Programme			
Report Title	Date due to O&S	Reporting Service	Scope of what is to be scrutinised
Implementation of Planning IT System	October to December 2022	Planning and Development	The Committee proposed to review the recent implementation of the planning IT system with Arcus Global. This would be a review to understand what lessons can be learnt for the roll out of future transformation projects.
Budget Scrutiny Meetings	December to January 2022/23	Finance and IT	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2023/24 will take place over three or four meetings during December and January.
Freedom Leisure Contract	Early 2023	Environment, Property and Recreation	<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	Early 2023	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.

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