



## To the Members of the Borough Council

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council, to be held in the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on Thursday, 21st July, 2022 at 7.00 pm.

Yours faithfully

T W Mortimer  
Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer

### Agenda

### Page Nos.

1. **Apologies**
2. **To consider whether any items should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of Exempt or Confidential Information**

3. **Declarations of Interest**

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To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as ex the attached document:

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)
- b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)
- c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests

See agenda item 3 for further details

4. **To confirm the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 19th May 2022**
5. **To receive any announcements from the Mayor, Leader or other Members of the Cabinet**
6. **To receive any petitions**
7. **To receive any questions from, and provide answers to, the**

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**public (being resident of the Borough) which in the opinion of the Mayor are relevant to the business of the Meeting**

8. **To receive, consider and adopt the recommendations set out in the Minutes of the Meeting of the Regulatory Committee held on the 19th July 2022 (to follow)**
9. **To receive, consider and adopt the recommendations set out in the Minutes of the Meetings of the Cabinet held on the 26th May and 30th June 2022** 13 - 22
10. **To receive, consider and adopt the Minutes of the Meetings of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on 30th June 2022** 23 - 40
11. **To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 21st June 2022** 41 - 44
12. **To receive the Minutes of the Meetings of the Appointments Committee held on 27th May and 21st June 2022** 45 - 48
13. **Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2021/22** 49 - 62
14. **To consider Motions of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 11**

*"Council deplores the unfortunate and ill-judged remarks of the Deputy Leader published in the local press on June 2nd. It is deeply disappointing to hear the majority of members of this chamber, who work hard for their communities and on whom the minority administration must rely for Council business to be carried on, being referred to as 'odds and sods'. Both Council Members and Ashford residents have found this deeply offensive: it brings the Council itself into disrepute and reflects badly on the whole democratic process, so I would respectfully ask Cllr Bartlett to apologise to full Council."*

**Councillor Liz Wright**

15. **Questions by Members of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 10**

NOTE: - If debate on any item included within this Agenda gives rise to exclude the press and public due to the likelihood of Exempt or Confide information being disclosed the following resolution may be proposed a seconded and if carried, the press and public will be requested to leave meeting for the duration of the debate.

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item likely that in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to the appropriate paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Act, where in the circumstances the interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure of information.

13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

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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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## Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **19<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

### **Present:**

His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor C K Knowles (Chairman);

Cllrs. Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clarkson, Clokie, Cornish, Farrell, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Hayward, B Heyes, Howard, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Krause, Ledger, Link, Meaden, Michael, Mulholland, Nilsson, Ovenden, Pickering, Rogers, Shorter, Smith, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Turner, Webb, Wright.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Lindsay Hammond said prayers.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Anckorn, Campkin, Tina Heyes, Pauley, Walder, Wedgbury.

### **Also Present:**

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Director of Place, Space and Leisure, Civic Officer, Member Services Manager.

## **1 Election of Mayor**

Prior to the Election of the Mayor, the Retiring Mayor, Councillor Callum Knowles presented certificates and a gift of thanks to his outgoing Mayor's Cadets: - Leading Cadet Willow Mackenzie - Ashford Sea Cadets; Cadet Lance Corporal Grace Ball - Royal Marines; Cadet Cate Phillips - Army Cadets; Cadet Sgt. Niraj Marar – Air Training Corps.

Councillor Barrett nominated Councillor Jenny Webb for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Forest.

Councillor Barrett said it was actually quite difficult to give an introduction to Councillor Jenny Webb as everyone knew her so well. Introducing someone quite so well-known required a little bit of forethought and planning so he would do his best and hopefully do her justice. Firstly he wanted to ask a couple of rhetorical questions – What made a good Councillor? Was it passion? Dedication? Empathy? Well, you needed all of those traits but primarily you needed determination and for him that separated the movers and shakers from the politicians who existed in the background and the word determination really summed up Jenny.

So who was Jenny Webb? Jenny was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1949 in Canterbury and went to get at St Thomas' Roman Catholic School. Back then Canterbury was a

much more rural place than it was now and Jenny's early memories were of happiness, freedom and being able to be a kid without the pressures that children encounter today. In a world without social media and constant self-scrutiny 'kids could be kids' and he knew Jenny cherished those early years. Leaving school at 15 she went to work at Bing Mineral Water as a Finance Clerk and like all the other new starters she was expected to 'muck in' to a myriad of other duties from cleaning to deliveries. Jenny learnt at this early stage the importance of an eye for detail and she felt this early career experience helped to form her as a person. The 1960s and 70s were Jenny's favourite decades with too many fond memories to mention but these set in stone the image of the Councillor and the woman all knew today. During the 1980s Jenny was working at Lenley's Furniture and it was there she met David, her husband who she was still happily married to today. In 1993 they moved to Ashford in to the Norman Ward and it was at this moment that her political awareness really began to pique. Noticing things around her from dirty rivers to litter in roads, Jenny began to both contact the Council and write letters to the local newspaper to try to affect change.

Councillor Barrett advised that Jenny was actually headhunted by the Conservative Party as they had already recognised her talents. Councillor Peter Feacey was tasked with knocking on her door and asking her if she would be interested in making the move from active citizen to active politician. After not much thought she decided it was the right thing to do. A light had gone on in Jenny's mind and the rest was seven years of history! By the time Jenny was elected to Norman Ward in 2015 she was already well known and indeed it was difficult to visit her Ward with her without a resident saying hello, or asking her for an opinion, help or advice on a local issue. He said that Jenny never shied away from a difficult topic, be that Adley's Yard or a housing query. Once she began a task she made sure she finished it, even if that took years, and it was this determination that he had already spoken about that separated Jenny from an average Councillor and gave evidence to the huge body of work she had achieved in her seven years as a Councillor.

Councillor Barrett said that Jenny had already been a hugely successful Mayor in 2019-20 but that time had been hit by Covid-19. He believed that this year would be an even better one for Jenny and they would all be richer for the year of service that she would undertake. He said he was therefore pleased to nominate Councillor Jenny Webb to be the Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the upcoming Municipal Year.

Councillor Forest said that truth was that it was extremely difficult for him to second the nomination because it would result in the loss of such a superb Deputy Portfolio Holder to him. Jenny had been beside him in his Portfolio for Culture, Tourism and Leisure over the last couple of years since her last term as Mayor had been so cruelly cut short by the pandemic. However, he was in no doubt that Jenny would again be a magnificent ambassador for this Council and would reach out to the individuals, groups and communities who they strived to assist as an Authority, and who so often helped the Council with the work it was trying to do. He knew Jenny's touch would help those relationships to flourish. He said it therefore gave him great pleasure to second the proposal for Councillor Jenny Webb to be Mayor.

On a final note, Councillor Forest said he wanted to give Jenny thanks for the unwavering support she had given him in the Portfolio – both at the Council and in his personal life. He wished Jenny the best for her return and thought it was a role that was made for her.



There were no other nominations.

During the vote Councillor Wright said that during the current Term of Office the Mayor had refrained from wearing the traditional fox hair on his robes and asked if the incoming Mayor would follow that lead? Many Ashford residents, especially the younger people who they wished to engage with, felt very strongly against the use of fur on clothing. She said she was aware that this particular fox would have been hunted to death some years ago, but it was about the message that was sent out by such an outdated tradition.

The Retiring Mayor said that this was a topic that should be correctly addressed by the incoming Mayor.

**Resolved:**

**That Councillor Jenny Webb be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2022/23.**

## **2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor**

Councillor Webb made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The retiring Mayor, the Chief Executive, the newly elected Mayor and the Mayor's Chaplain then left the meeting. Upon their return, having been invested with her chains of office Her Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb assumed the Chair.

## **3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain**

Her Worshipful the Mayor advised that her Chaplain for the coming year would be the Reverend Dr Sue Starkings. The Reverend Starkings then said prayers.

## **4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for His Election**

Her Worshipful the Mayor said she would firstly like to address the question raised by Councillor Wright regarding the robes. She said that she was in complete agreement with what she had said, but the Mayor's robes were part of the heritage of Ashford. Unfortunately, the newer ones that Councillor Knowles had worn during his Term of Office were currently too long for her to wear and had not yet been adjusted and she knew that Councillors would not like her to trip on the stairs! So, this was something she would look at during the year.

Her Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking everyone present. He thanked Councillors Barrett and Forest for their nominations and fantastically kind words. She hoped she could live up to their expectations in the coming year and would try not to put a foot wrong!

She said that following the pandemic and the upheaval of the last couple of years, it was good to now be coming back to some normality. Her focus therefore for the year ahead would be to encourage the rebuilding of communities and raising support and awareness for the regeneration of businesses after a prolonged pause in everyone's normal working and family activities. She hoped all would be pleased to know that

her chosen charity for the year would be Singleton Spaces who operated Singleton Environment Centre. She would be working alongside their team of volunteers to raise funds for new interpretation panels and increasing the educational and community activities that were open to all, as well as creating awareness for the work they did. Ani and Darren were present this evening and were working extremely hard for the Environment Centre and people in general because they loved Ashford, and she looked forward to working with them this year.

Her Worshipful the Mayor said it was a real honour and privilege to be Mayor for a second term, especially in this extra special year celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. There would be a fabulous range of activities to mark this milestone, including participation in the Queen's Green Canopy project. Her message therefore to everyone was to look forward and celebrate a brighter future, whilst also considering the greater care of the natural environment. As she got out and about across their great Borough to visit its diverse communities, she would be doing everything she could to preserve, protect and enhance their green spaces. She thought it would be a great year and that they would all be working together to achieve that.

## **5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayoress**

Councillor Pickering said that when he proposed Councillor Callum Knowles to be the Mayor this time last year he was expecting him to do a good job but this had not been the case, he had done a fantastic job. He said that Callum had had to meet the 'gold standard' for being a Mayor, but he had set a 'platinum standard' which would make it very difficult for all future Mayors.

In a first for the Borough, whilst Callum had been Mayor of the Borough, his wife Lisa had been the Town Mayor of Tenterden and they had been able to undertake many joint engagements which had been enchanting. One point he had noticed though was that he thought they should swap the Mayor's badges as Tenterden's was much nicer! In his year, which had included different Covid lockdowns, Callum had attended some 291 events which was an awesome total. During the year there had also been an avalanche of media notifications regarding engagements he had undertaken and events he had attended.

Councillor Pickering said that Callum, like himself, was ex-military and all things military were vital to their psyches. Ashford was a military town and rightly proud of that fact, and also had a significant community of wonderful Gurkhas – a group who had been vital to the British military for generations. He had first met them on active service in the jungles of Borneo and ever since he had been grateful for their presence. Unfortunately, in recent times, they had become somewhat isolated from Ashford's community and so Callum had made a special effort this year to tie them closer to that community. This had involved a great deal of reaching out, especially to the senior members of the community through the military. Callum had worked with many businesses, signposted funding for veterans, shared time litter picking and generally being close to the community. A demonstration of the affect Callum had had on the Nepalese and Gurkha community was that during the previous weekend they had organised an Ashford Cleaning Day which they now intended to make an annual event. The final icing in the cake had been to involve the Senior Gurkha Military in the resurrection of the local Ashford branch of the Royal British Legion, together with Wing Commander Ryles of the Royal Air Force. Callum had become the Vice-President of the Ashford branch of the Royal British Legion and also the

Ashford branch of the Royal Naval Association. It had certainly been a successful year, combining his role as Member Champion for the Armed Forces.

He said that Callum's designated charity had been the Shaw Trust's "Live Well Kent", which included the Samaritans, Age Concern and Demelza Hospice Trust as well as local charities such as JR Counselling, Mid-Kent Mind, 'Shedkwick', the Jean Mealham Pop-In Centre and many others. The Mayor's Achievement Awards had also continued and recognised many people in the Borough. Particularly for those whose community spirit had shone through by reaching out to those in need, helping effective Neighbourhood Watch schemes, litter picking and fundraising for good causes. An increased awareness of wellbeing through his designated charity Live Well had also seen Callum join woodland walks, community gardening projects and promotions. The Mayor's Environmental Action events bringing together the Parish Councils, funding bodies, project leaders and others with the aim of sharing good practice, had also been another legacy for Callum to be rightly proud of. This had led to a resurrection of the schools' Environmental Forum which had been started by Councillor Jessamy Blanford in her Mayoral year. There had also been opportunities to link with The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Green Canopy Project which would continue in to the coming year. There had also been fun events such as the Mayor's ABBA night at the Ashford International Hotel to enjoy, although he understood that Callum's singing voice was a unique one!

Councillor Pickering concluded by quoting a few words directly from Karen Hegarty from the Shaw Trust. She had said - *"We would like to say a massive thank you to Mr Mayor for being chosen as his charity and we were honoured to have been asked. The year has been a fantastic opportunity for us to promote our service and spread the word about wellbeing and mental health and the support we offer. It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience thanks to Mr Mayor's knowledge of local services and his willingness to involve us in so many ways. We have met many new people, linked up with other organisations and visited inspiring projects which we would not have been able to do without his help. We will continue to work with these organisations, share our experiences and help even more people next year. Huge thanks, it had been an incredible year for us which would not have been possible without us being chosen. We look forward to continuing the Mayor's legacy and to help even more people to improve their wellbeing and mental health."*

Councillor Pickering thought there was not much more he could add to that. He was so proud to have proposed him as Mayor after seeing the enormous impact he had made on their Borough and he wanted to propose the vote of thanks to him, and his wife Lisa, for their service.

Councillor Feacey said it was his great pleasure to second the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Callum Knowles and his Mayoress Lisa, for what had been an extraordinary year.

## **6 Response by the Retiring Mayor**

Councillor Knowles said that he felt so humbled by the words that had been said and what a year he had experienced! First of all he wanted to thank the Members of this Council for voting him in as Mayor and giving him the opportunity to serve for this year. He also wanted to thank the people of Ashford. He had met many amazing people and community groups in his travels around the Borough. When he had become Mayor he promised to try to travel to every single ward in the Borough and he thought he had pretty much achieved that – getting out and meeting people

absolutely everywhere, with a mixture of visits to schools, community groups, charity fundraising events, environmental forum meetings and a variety of other things. As had been mentioned there had been 291 events and he wanted to thank the now Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb for doing another 44 events as Deputy Mayor when he had been unavailable. He was also amazed to hear from the Council's Communications team that over 161,000 different people had viewed social media content from the Council about the Mayor and his own Mayor's social media posts had been viewed 142,500 times. This showed the importance of social media to the people of Ashford, facilitating interactions with the Mayor and information about what the Mayor was up to.

He said that for his charity, Shaw Trust with their Live Well Kent projects, he had been able to raise in the region of £6000. In a way, he was a bit sorry about this as Covid restrictions had cut his ability to do more fundraising, but he was pleased that many colleague Councillors had been able to support him at events. He wanted to particularly mention Councillors Cornish, Clarkson, Forest, Iliffe, Rogers, Ledger, Hayward, Wedgbury, Bernard Heyes, Mulholland, Walder, Howard, Harman and Charles and Lyn Suddards (even after he tried to feed Charles to a white tiger at the Big Cats Sanctuary!). He wanted to truly thank those Members for their support and company and was sorry if he had missed anyone. He had been a bit hazy when leaving some of those events – particularly the ABBA night! He also wanted to thank Councillors Blanford and Clokie for attending the Ashford Choral Society event on his behalf the previous week when he had been unable.

Councillor Knowles said he really wanted to thank the Parish Councils and community groups that had attended his Mayor's Environmental Forums and the Leader, Chief Executive and other Officers who had took time to present and help. These had been very important to him and had really showcased the good work going on in the Borough. A lot of good ideas had also been shared and he really hoped that work would continue. Something else that had really warmed his heart was interaction with the staff and pupils from the various Primary Schools who had taken part in the Eco-Challenges begun by Councillor Blanford in her Mayoral year. They had such bright and inspirational children in their Borough, with a passion for learning about the environment and protection of the world around them - this was something they must continue to encourage and support. He also wanted to thank the members of the Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Afghan and Syrian communities that he had engaged with during his year. They were all extremely warm people and an inspiration. A lot of them had come from very challenging backgrounds and they all loved Ashford and being part of the wonderful multi-cultural family of Ashford. As had been said, he had been out litter picking with the Nepalese last weekend and they just wanted to be everywhere, be part of everything and help everyone. He had marked Eid with the Afghans and Syrians and they had been so grateful for the way they had been welcomed in to Ashford's community.

He said that before he closed there were too many others to mention who he could thank, but he had to mention two very important people who helped him organise his year, run his diary and get him to functions on time. Firstly Sandra, who was much more than the Mayor's driver. She was an event organiser, a source of information of all things about the Borough, knowing exactly where to buy the best raffle prize, and her trips to McDonalds after events were legendary! Many past Mayors and Councillors had been frequent visitors to the Drive-Thru and he was certainly a little bit larger than he had been this time last year! More importantly though, after knowing Sandra for many years, he counted Sandra as a true friend and thanked her for the amazing things she did to support the Mayors. Finally he wanted to give a big

thank you to Donna, the Civic Officer. He would not have been able to juggle his events and all of the functions without her. Her amazing organisational skills and seamless knitting together of his diary had been almost magical. This had enabled him to make the most of his time. How she had managed to fit everything in and still got him around the Borough had been amazing – despite once even managing to book him in for an event in Ashford, Middlesex! He would really miss the diary sessions in the office and trying to eat all of the chocolates he had brought back from Spain!

Councillor Knowles said that finally he wanted to say thank you to Ashford for allowing him to be their Mayor for the last year.

## **7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “Councillor Larry Krause be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the forthcoming Municipal year”. He said Larry was not a flamboyant person but he was a thoroughly solid and good Member of this Council, serving on a range of important Committees including chairing the Audit Committee. He did a great deal of work in his own ward and Councillor Clarkson said he was often on the receiving end of ideas he wanted to achieve for the people he represented, but that was to be respected! Councillor Krause also contributed to the work going on across the Borough, along with his wife Sue, who was already serving as the Mayor’s Chaplain this year so it was a real “2 for 1” coup going forward! He knew they would support Councillor Webb in her Mayoral Year and prove a good team and he thought all could take comfort in such an appointment.

This was seconded by Councillor Bartlett.

There were no other nominations.

### **Resolved:**

**That Councillor Larry Krause be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2022/23.**

## **8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Krause made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with his chains of office.

## **9 Appointment of Mayor’s Cadets for 2022/23**

The Mayor introduced her four Mayor’s Cadets for 2022/23. As Members were aware, each Mayor had the opportunity to appoint an outstanding Cadet from each of the four armed services for their term of office. For this year those individuals were: -

- **Leading Cadet Ross Lumsden - Ashford Sea Cadets.**
- **Cadet Lance Corporal Grace Ball - Royal Marines.**

- **Cadet Warrant Officer Helme - Army Cadets**
- **Cadet Sgt. Jack Finch – Air Training Corps.**

The Mayor gave a short citation for each Cadet and then called them forward individually to present them with their badge of office for the year.

## **10 Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **11 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2022/22 by the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, confirmed that the make-up of his Cabinet for 2022/23 would be as follows:-

<b>Member</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Deputy Portfolio Holder</b>
Clarkson	Leader	N/A
Bartlett	Deputy Leader (including Port Health)	N/A
Bell	Planning and Development	Blanford
Buchanan	Housing	Burgess
Feacey	Community Safety and Wellbeing	Howard-Smith
Forest	Environment and Land Management (including Sport and Leisure)	Howard
Iliffe	Regeneration and Corporate Property	Mulholland
Pickering	HR and Customer Services	Mrs Bell
Shorter	Finance and IT	Krause

## **12 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 be approved and adopted, subject to the inclusion of the changes set out in the addendum paper.**

## **13 Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and adopted with the exception of Minute No. 381**

(ii) Minute No. 381 be approved and adopted.

## **14 Audit Committee – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

## **15 Appointments Committee – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appointments Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

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## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **26<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Bartlett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bell, Buchanan, Feacey, Forest, Pickering, Shorter.

### Apologies:

Cllr. Iliffe, Chief Executive.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Ovenden, Sparks.

### In attendance:

Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Head of Policy and Performance, Communications Officer, Member Services Manager.

## 16 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Forest	Made a Voluntary Announcement as one of the Ward Members for Repton, but had not been involved in negotiations.	19

## 17 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 18 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said there were a few matters he wanted to mention this evening. Firstly, the Government had earlier that day announced significant financial help to assist

with the cost of living crisis which was very welcome and he looked forward to look at the detail of that.

Secondly, he welcomed news received last week of a grant for £750,000 for the South of Ashford Garden Community (which included Chilmington Green, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green).

Finally, he said everyone's thoughts would be with the victims of the Texas school shooting earlier that week. 19 young children and two of their teachers had sadly been killed in their school environment and he considered the continued lack of gun control in the United States beggared belief.

## **19 Repton – Land Acquisition in the HRA**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing introduced the report which updated on progress on the acquisition of the land parcel and the discussions on bringing forward the healthcare element.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management reiterated that discussions on the nature of the healthcare facility would happen at a later stage, but he fully supported the acquisition and the funding elements.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the acquisition being made under the delegated authority of the Assistant Director – Housing.**
- (ii) the acquisition price of the land, as contained at Exempt Appendix B to the report, be noted.**
- (iii) it be agreed that the funding of £146,000 (£65,000 of which is a sustainable loan to be repaid by 2024), secured from the One Public Estate (OPE), be used to support the feasibility study to identify the facilities that could provide most benefit to the local community, and note that a further report will be presented to Members when this work has been completed.**

## **20 Equality Policy 2022-24**

The Leader introduced the report which presented the draft Equality Policy 2022-24. The policy was a new one, bringing together the Council's statutory responsibilities, equality objectives and areas of focus for the 2022-24 period. Together with the policy was an action plan which explained how the Council planned to deliver its equality objectives over a two year period.

### **Recommended:**

- That (i) the Equality Policy 2022–24 and associated action plan be adopted.**

- (ii) the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism be adopted.

## **21 Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission – Notes of 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission held on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

## **22 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – Notes of 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

## **23 Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board – Notes of 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

## **24 Compliance and Enforcement Board – Notes of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be received and noted.**

## **25 IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee – Notes of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be received and noted.**

## **26 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken**

**Resolved:**

**That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.**

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## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **30<sup>th</sup> June 2022**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Bartlett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bell, Feacey, Forest, Iliffe, Shorter.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Buchanan, Pickering, Barrett, Chilton.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Burgess, Harman, Knowles, Ovenden, Sparks, Wright.

### **In attendance:**

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Director of Place and Space, Assistant Director of Planning and Development, Interim Service Lead for Finance, Customer Service and Digital Project Manager, Property Building Services Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Governance and Data Protection Officer, Specialist Management Support Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Communications Officer, Member Services Manager.

## **74 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **75 Climate Change Action – a Systemic Approach**

The Portfolio Holder read out a statement from the Chairman of the Climate Change Advisory Committee endorsing the report and the work already undertaken and planned for the future. The report outlined the Council's framework for climate action and demonstrated acceptance of the urgency, challenge and collective responsibility to act in order to meet agreed carbon reduction targets. This delivery would contribute to local decarbonisation, in pursuit of national and global targets. The report also highlighted the extensive work the Council had already undertaken to

reduce the carbon impact of its own assets, and its “Ashford to Zero” journey. He concluded by thanking the Officers for the sheer amount of work undertaken so far - it was impressive and welcomed.

In response to questions about the Community Stakeholder Group, it was explained that this would be a sounding board of around 100 people from across the local community. It would not be exclusive, but it was currently viewed as the most effective way to begin to understand the views of the community and consult in a meaningful way.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the proposed Climate Change Strategy document and Climate Action Plan for 2022-24 be approved.**
- (ii) the spend of £125k to set up the Climate Action Team, be approved.**

## **76 Ashford Borough Council Annual Performance Report 2021/22**

The Leader introduced the report which presented the Council’s Annual Performance Report - looking at the achievements and milestones the Council had realised over the last year in the context of the Recovery Plan 2020-22; and summarising performance against the Council’s suite of Key Performance Indicators for the year 2021/22. He thanked the Officers involved for pulling together such an illuminating report.

**Resolved:**

**That the contents of the Annual Performance Report be noted and approved for publication on the Council’s website.**

## **77 Financial Outturn 2021/22**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the outturn revenue position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account for the 2021/22 financial year. It also presented the outturn for capital works and how these works had been financed, the Collection Fund position, reserves position and a treasury management update.

The Portfolio Holder wanted to draw particular attention to the “looking forward” section of the report (paragraphs 25-33), which he believed was essential reading for all Members, as well references to the Kent Business Rates Pool and the sections on Reserves and Treasury Management. He thanked Officers in the Finance and Revenues and Benefits teams for their diligent and dedicated work in monitoring and controlling the Council’s finances.

The Leader directed Members' attention to the Update Report which included an amended last table in Appendix A to the report.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the financial outturn for 2021/22 be noted.**
  - (ii) the Capital Outturn, Collection Fund position, and Treasury Management update be noted.**
  - (iii) the provisional reserve transfers and position (Table 4 of the report refers) be approved.**
  - (iv) the 'Looking Forward' section of the report be noted.**
  - (v) the responsibility to make any minor changes to reserves be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.**

## **78 Food Service Plan 2022/23**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the Council's Annual Food Service Plan 2022/23. It included a review of performance in delivering official food controls during 2021/22 and set how the food authority proposed to deliver them in the year ahead. The Plan incorporated the Council's policy approach as a designated Competent Authority. He concluded by praising the staff who had experience a tough couple of years working through the pandemic, but would have completely caught up with their inspections schedule by the end of July.

**Resolved:**

**That the Food Service Plan 2022/23 be approved.**

## **79 Customer Service, IT and Digital Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Property and Recreation read a statement from the Portfolio Holder in his absence in introduction of the report. The updated Strategy set out the Council's vision for putting the customer at the centre of the services it provided. It explained how they would develop their services digitally and inspire confidence in digital services to make them accessible to all and enable the Council to deliver outstanding customer services. A high level digital strategy brochure would also be available to view and download on the Council's website in accessible formats.

Members welcomed the strategy but stressed the importance of not "leaving behind" those who could not engage digitally. The importance of cyber security and continuing to develop the use of mobile devices and technologies was also emphasised.

**Resolved:**

**That the Customer Service, IT and Digital Strategy be approved and adopted.**

## **80 Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update 2022**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the draft Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2022 which set out a project plan and timetable for preparation of Local Plan documents. He drew particular attention to the proposal to combine the work on the separate Gypsy and Traveller SPD into a future Local Plan review.

In response to questions it was explained that the decision to combine this work was linked to the complexities associated with resolving nutrient neutrality. Work on the next iteration of the Local Plan was scheduled during the next Administration.

**Recommended:**

**That the Local Development Scheme 2022 be adopted by Full Council, as required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).**

## **81 Ashford Borough Council Fire Safety Management Policy**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought agreement of a revised Fire Safety Management Policy. This was last issued in 2018 and was due for review. The Policy had been revised and updated to provide additional clarity relevant to Officer responsibilities and to further strengthen governance of fire safety management within the Council. The revised policy also streamlined arrangements to enable the organisation to respond quickly to anticipate changes to legislation.

There was a discussion about storage of gas canisters in properties following the tragic explosion in a Council property last year. It was clarified that tenancy agreements strictly forbade this and it was also being checked for on routine visits. Annual gas safety checks were undertaken at all properties and the Council had a right of access.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the revised Fire Safety Management Policy be agreed.**
  - (ii) the Assistant Director of Safety and Wellbeing be authorised to agree any minor amendments to this policy.**



## **82 Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission – Notes of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission held on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be received and noted.**

## **83 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be approved and adopted.**

## **84 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Recommended:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be approved and adopted.**

## **85 Climate Change Advisory Committee – Notes of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be received and noted.**

## **86 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be received and noted.**

## **87 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken**

**Resolved:**

**That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.**

## **88 Joint Transportation Board – Nomination of Membership**

### **Resolved:**

**That the following Members be appointed to the Joint Transportation Board: Councillors Cornish, Feacey, Bernard Heyes (VCh), Tina Heyes, Krause, Meaden and C Suddards.**

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## Selection and Constitutional Review Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **30<sup>th</sup> June 2022**.

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Bartlett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Farrell, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Hayward, Howard-Smith, Meaden, Ovenden, C Suddards.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c) Councillor C Suddards attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Chilton.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Barrett, Chilton.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Burgess, Shorter, Wright.

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development) and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Member Services Manager.

## 70 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 71 Background and Principles of Political Balance and Administrative Structure and Changes to Committee Membership

The Member Services Manager introduced the report which presented the Political Balance for the Authority for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year and other constitutional matters that needed to be recommended to the Meeting of the Full Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022. There was a change to the Balance following the decision of Councillor Knowles to leave the Conservative Group and become an Independent Councillor. The Balance calculations contained in the Appendix to the report had been agreed by Group Leaders.

The Chairman advised that since the publication of the original report Councillor Pickering had decided not to take on the post of Member Champion for Armed Forces

and the Military Covenant and that would pass to Councillor Feacey and be combined with his Member Champion post for Civic and Ceremonial Liaison.

Members pointed out a couple of typos in the document which would be amended in the final version.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the Political Balance of the Authority at Appendix A to these Minutes be adopted, subject to the Council agreeing that the requirements of the Political Balance Regulations be not applied to the Membership of the Joint Transportation Board, Appeals Panels, Standards Committee and the Sub Committees of the Licensing and Regulatory Committees established under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005.**
  - (ii) the following Committees be constituted for the Municipal Year as detailed in Part 3 of the Constitution:**
    - Appeals**
    - Appointments**
    - Audit**
    - Investigation and Disciplinary**
    - Joint Arrangements – Joint Transportation Board**
    - Licensing**
    - Overview and Scrutiny**
    - Planning**
    - Regulatory**
    - Selection and Constitutional Review**
    - Standards**
  - (iii) the remaining seats on the Licensing and Regulatory Committees be allocated to Councillors Michael and Walder.**
  - (iv) the changes in Committee membership for the remainder of 2022/23 as notified by Group Leaders, at Appendix B to these Minutes, be noted.**
  - (v) the membership of Cabinet Boards, Advisory Committees and Task Groups for the remainder of 2022/23, as set out in Appendix C to these Minutes, be noted.**
  - (vi) the make-up of the Cabinet for the remainder of 2022/23 be noted.**
  - (vii) Councillor Peter Feacey be appointed as Member Champion for Armed Forces and the Military Covenant and Civic and Ceremonial Liaison.**

## **72 Amending the Constitution to Reflect Improved Procedures Implemented During the Coronavirus Pandemic 2020-22.**

The Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development) and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced his report which sought the permanent retention of some new or revised procedures that were introduced during the Coronavirus pandemic. This was in the interests of increased efficiency, continued public health and improved public involvement in decision making.

Members said they particularly welcomed the increased flexibility for members of the public who wanted to attend meetings physically and deliver their speeches in person, to not have to submit speeches in advance and to a 400 word limit.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the changes to the Council's Constitution as set out in paragraphs 8-11, 18, 19, 23 and 24 of the report be adopted.**
  - (ii) the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any necessary consequential changes to the wording of the Constitution (including all of its Parts, Articles, Appendices, Rules, Codes, Protocols, Schemes etc.) to give full effect to the above.**
  - (iii) the intention of the Chairman of the Planning Committee and Officers to operate the procedures recommended in this report for the next meeting of the Planning Committee on 13th July 2022 be noted.**

## **73 Notice of Forthcoming Updates and Re-Presentation of the Constitution**

The Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer introduced his report which advised of two separate work streams to improve the presentation of the Council's Constitution. These related to more accurately reflecting the current legislation around Executive arrangements and a general "healthcheck" of the Constitution in terms of rationalising information and presenting it in a more modern way. Group Leaders would be consulted in the autumn on reformatted sections of the Constitution with a view to presenting a final version to this Committee in time for adoption prior to the election of the new Council in May 2023.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the report be received and noted.**
  - (ii) Members be informed when updated provisions on the Executive arrangements are finalised.**

- (iii) **Group Leaders to be consulted on proposals for rationalisation and re-presentation of the Constitution following the proposed “healthcheck” exercise and a further report be presented to this Committee in the New Year in time for adoption of the Constitution by the Council prior to the elections on May 2023.**

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**APPENDIX A**  
**(Minute No. 71/6/22 refers)**

**THE POLITICAL BALANCE CALCULATION**  
**JULY 2022**

**A.1 All Committees to which balance applies**

	Committee	Seats/Committee		<i>Total Seats</i>
1 x 12	Overview and Scrutiny	12	=	12
1 x 14	Planning	14	=	14
1 x 13	Licensing	13	=	13
1 X 13	Regulatory	13	=	13
1 x 12	Selection	12	=	12
1 x 8	Audit	8	=	8
1 x 5	Appointments	5	=	5
<b>Total</b>				<u><b>77</b></u>

**B. Percentage of group in relation to total membership of the authority**

47 members = %

23 Conservative	=	48.396
11 Ashford Independent	=	23.404
6 Labour	=	12.766
4 Green	=	8.5107

Note:

1 Independent	2.123
1 Independent	2.123
1 Independent	2.123

---

**100**

### C.1 Allocation of Seats on Committees in proportion to Group strength

<i>Committee</i>	<b>Con</b>	<b>AI</b>	<b>Lab</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>To Be Allocated</b>	<b>Total</b>
1 x 12 O&S	6	3	2	1	0	12
1 x 14 Planning	7	3	2	2	0	14
1 x 12 Selection	6	3	2	1	0	12
1 x 13 Licensing	6	3	1*	1	2*	13
1 x 13 Regulatory	6	3	1*	1	2*	13
1 x 8 Audit	4	2	1	1	0	8
1 x 5 Appointments	3	1	1	0	0	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>38 (37.681)</b>	<b>18 (18.021)</b>	<b>10* (9.830)</b>	<b>7 (6.533)</b>	<b>4*</b>	<b>77</b>

\* Under the draft calculation the Labour Group had been allocated 12 seats when their overall entitlement across all Committees is 10. All other Groups have received their overall entitlement to seats. There was therefore a need for the Labour Group to gift two of their allocated seats to Independent Members. The Labour Group have offered their seats on the Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.

There is one seat to be allocated on each of the Licensing and Regulatory Committees. All other Groups have received their overall entitlement to seats so it is proposed to offer these seats to an Independent Member.

### C.2 Allocation of seats on all ordinary Committees to achieve overall proportionality

**Political Group entitlement in relation to all seats: 77**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>37.681</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Ashford Independent</b>	<b>18.021</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>9.830</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Green</b>	<b>6.533</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>7</b>

**Total** **73**

<b>1 Independent</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Independent</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 Independent</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>0</b>

**Total** **77**



**D. Committees to which balance will not apply either as a direct result of joint arrangements or the Council agreeing, i.e. no member votes against this arrangement, on each occasion the Council adopts a revised political balance for the Authority.**

*1 x 15	Appeals	3 Members per meeting drawn on rota from a panel of 15 Members	=	3
x 1 x 7	Joint Transportation Board		=	7
*1 x 3	Licensing (3 Member Panels)		=	3
*1 x 3	Regulatory (3 Member Panels)		=	3

\* Council's choice as to whether balance will apply to this Committee. **This may only happen if no member votes against this arrangement.**

x Due to the Joint Arrangements and the manner in which seats are allocated by the Kent County Council, it is impossible to have a balanced allocation of seats.

Committee	Con	AI	Lab	Green	Ind	Total
<b>*1 x 15 Appeals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>x1 x 7 Joint Transportation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>**1 x 8 Standards</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>8</b>

\* That the requirements of the 'Political Balance' regulations be not applied to the membership of the Appeals and the Licensing and Regulatory Panels of 3 Members which are drawn for each meeting.

\*\* Standards – broadly politically balanced as membership is based on posts.

## APPENDIX B

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, PANELS, TASK GROUPS AND BOARDS INCLUDING CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN

On the basis of the draft Political Balance Calculation agreed with Group Leaders the entitlement to seats is set out below.

The Committee may wish to confirm the proposed identities of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of each Committee, for appointment in accordance with the Constitution, by the Full Council.

#### Overview and Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)

Members of the Cabinet may not be appointed to this Committee

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (2)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Barrett	Hayward	Chilton (VCh)	Meaden
Blanford	Ledger	Farrell	
Brooks	Ovenden (Ch)		
Burgess			
Howard-Smith			
Mulholland			

#### Audit Committee (8 Members)

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Buchanan (VCh)	Hayward	Spain	Wright
Krause (Ch)	Smith		
Mulholland			
Shorter			

**Planning Committee (14 Members) (plus 1 ex-officio)**

**Training is compulsory for anyone sitting on the Planning Committee.**

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (2)</b>	<b>Green (2)</b>
Blanford (VCh)	Harman	Chilton	Campkin
Burgess (Ch)	Ovenden	Spain	Meaden
Forest	Sparks		
Howard			
Iliffe			
Mulholland			
Shorter			
Bell (EO)			

**Selection & Constitutional Review Committee (12 Members)**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (2)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Barrett	Harman	Chilton	Meaden
Bartlett (VCh)	Hayward	Farrell	
Clarkson (Ch)	Ovenden		
Feacey			
Forest			
Howard-Smith			

### **Licensing Committee (13 Members)**

Group Leaders are reminded of the importance of nominating Members who are available to attend day-time hearings of the Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Training is compulsory for anyone sitting on the Licensing Committee.**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (2*)</b>
Buchanan	Ledger	L Suddards	Wright	Michael
Burgess	Rogers			Walder
Feacey	Smith			
Howard (Ch)				
Krause (VCh)				
Pickering				

\*Seats allocated to Independent Members as all other Groups had received their allocation across all Committees as part of the Political Balance calculation.

### **Regulatory Committee (13 Members)**

Group Leaders are reminded of the importance of nominating Members who are available to attend day-time hearings of the Licensing Sub-Committee.

**Training is compulsory for anyone sitting on the Licensing Committee.**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (2*)</b>
Buchanan	Ledger	L Suddards	Wright	Michael
Burgess	Rogers			Walder
Feacey	Smith			
Howard (Ch)				
Krause (VCh)				
Pickering				

\*Seats allocated to Independent Members as all other Groups had received their allocation across all Committees as part of the Political Balance calculation.

### Appointments Committee (5 Members)

<b>Conservative (3)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
Feacey	Ovenden	Chilton	
Clarkson (Ch)			
Pickering (VCh)			

### Appeals Committee (15 Members – 3 Members to be drawn per meeting)

Members should not be a Member of the Cabinet. Group Leaders are reminded of the importance of nominating Members who are available to attend day-time meetings.

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (4)</b>	<b>Labour (2)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>
Blanford	T Heyes	Anckorn	Campkin	Knowles
Burgess	Ledger	L Suddards		
Howard	Sparks			
Krause	Turner			
Link				
Mulholland				
Wedgbury				

### **Investigation & Disciplinary Committee (15 Members – 3 Members to be drawn per meeting)**

To include at least one Member of the Cabinet, Group Leaders and the Chairmen of the Overview & Scrutiny and Audit Committees.

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (4)</b>	<b>Labour (2)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>
Bartlett	Cornish	Anckorn	Campkin	Knowles
Mrs Bell	Ovenden	Chilton		
Bell	Sparks			
Blanford	Turner			
Clarkson				
Feacey				
Krause				

### **Standards Committee (8 Members)**

Broadly Politically Balanced. Should include at least one Member of the Cabinet plus the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Mrs Bell (Ch)	Ovenden	Chilton	Meaden
Buchanan	Turner		
Pickering			
Shorter (VCh)			

### **Joint Transportation Board (7 Members)**

<b>Conservative (3)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Feacey	Cornish	C Suddards	Meaden
B Heyes (Ch)	T Heyes		
Krause			

### Community Grants Panel (7 Members)

<b>Conservative (3)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Feacey	Pauley	L Suddards	Nilsson
Forest (VCh)	Smith		
Link (Ch)			

### Joint Consultative Committee (6 Members) – At least one Member from each Group – the remainder from the administration.

Membership is to include the Leader and/or appropriate Portfolio Holder.

<b>Conservative (3)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Mrs Bell	Smith	L Suddards	Wright
Mulholland			
Pickering (Ch)			

### Member Training Panel (8 Members)

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Mrs Bell (VCh)	Pauley	Spain	Wright
Blanford	Smith		
Howard			
Pickering (Ch)			

**Local Government and Polling Districts Task Group (10 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (2)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>
Bell (Ch)	Rogers	Anckorn	Meaden	Michael
Blanford	Sparks			
B Heyes				
Mulholland (VCh)				
Wedgbury				

**Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group (11 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (3)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>	<b>Independent (1)</b>
Bartlett (Ch)	Harman	Spain	Wright	Walder
Bell (VCh)	Ledger			
Mrs Bell	Sparks			
Blanford				
B Heyes				

**Trading and Enterprise Board (4 Members and 1 Observer)**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>
Bell (Ch)
Forest
Pickering
Shorter

\* Councillor Ovenden to be appointed as Observer.

\*\* Councillor Bell (as Chairman) to be the Shareholder Representative under the Articles of Association of the Trading Companies.



## APPENDIX C

### MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET BOARDS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES FOR 2022/23

The following are set out for information only.

#### Boards

#### Ashford Strategic Delivery Board (6 Members)

<b>Conservative</b>
<b>(6)</b>
Bell
Clarkson (Ch)
Feacey
Forest
Iliffe
Shorter

#### Regeneration, Infrastructure and Improvement Co-Ordination Board (8 Members)

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Ashford Independent</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Green</b>
<b>(6)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(0)</b>
Clarkson (Ch)	Ovenden	Spain	
Feacey			
Forest			
Iliffe (VCh)			
Shorter			
Webb			

### **Economic Regeneration & Investment Board (6 Members)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1*)</b>	<b>Labour (0*)</b>	<b>Green (0*)</b>
Bartlett (VCh)	Ovenden		
Clarkson (Ch)			
Forest			
Iliffe			
Shorter			

\*One seat allocated to the Leader of the largest Opposition Group

### **Compliance & Enforcement Board (6 Members) (plus 1 ex-officio)**

<b>Conservative (5)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (0)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
Bell (Ch)		Spain	
Buchanan			
Feacey (VCh)			
Forest			
Shorter			
Clarkson (EO)			

### **Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board (6 Members) (plus the Mayor as ex-officio)**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
Burgess	Ovenden	L Suddards	
Clarkson (Ch)			
Feacey			
Forest (VCh)			
Mayor (EO)			

## Advisory Committees

### Climate Change Advisory Committee (7 Members)

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Green (1)</b>
Barrett (Ch)	Ledger	Anckorn	Campkin
Blanford			
Feacey (VCh)			
Mulholland			

### IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee (5 Members)

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Labour (0)</b>	<b>Green (0)</b>
Bell (VCh)	Ovenden		
Forest (Ch)			
Krause			
Pickering			

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## Ashford Borough Council: Audit Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit Committee held in Committee Room 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **21<sup>st</sup> June 2022**.

### Present:

Cllr. Krause (Chairman);  
Cllr. Buchanan (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Ledger, Shorter.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c) Councillor Ledger attended as Substitute Member for Councillors Hayward.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Campkin, Hayward.

### Also in Attendance (virtually):

Cllrs. Spain, Ovenden, Wright.

Accountancy Manager, Senior Accountant.

Audit Manager – Grant Thornton UK

### In attendance:

Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance, Senior Member Services Officer.

## 56 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Shorter	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was the Portfolio Holder for two of the items on the agenda.	58, 59

## 57 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 58 Internal Audit Annual Report & Opinion 2022

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the item. Unfortunately due to illness the Interim Head of Internal Audit had been unable to attend the meeting, therefore he would introduce the item and endeavour to answer any questions Members had.

Over the past 12 months the service had seen considerable change with the departure of both the Head and Deputy Head of Internal Audit. Following this, there was the appointment of an Interim Head and Deputy Head of Internal Audit, with the recruitment of a permanent Head of Internal Audit having concluded recently and an appointment being confirmed this week. Attention was drawn to Project Clean Sweep, a strategy put in place by Mid Kent Audit to deliver as much of the 2021/22 planned work and to ensure that there would be no knock-on effect on the delivery of the 2022/23 audit plan. The Deputy Chief Executive wished to highlight the success of Project Clean Sweep and the dedication of the Audit Team who rose to the challenge. There had been one “weak” assurance rating given during the year for Section 106 Income, this had been reported to the Committee and a follow up would be reported later in the year.

The Chairman felt that only one “weak” assurance rating was positive. He drew attention to the Head of Audit Opinion statement for 2021/22 as contained within the report. Further, he wished to put on record his personal thanks to the Interim Head of Audit Partnership and his team and the Director of Customer, Technology and Finance and her team for all the work they had undertaken during this period.

A Member questioned whether references in the report to delays due to Covid were considered a valid excuse in 2022. He further questioned what was being done to remedy the staffing issues experienced in the service. The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged the point in respect of Covid and noted that moving into the “new normal” meant that new ways of working had been established and it was down to the service to determine how they operated, whether that be a hybrid method, in office or virtually. There had been a high staff turnover during the period in question, interim management had been put in place and an appointment had now been made to the Head of Audit Partnership role.

A Member questioned whether Ashford was in a comparable position with the other Authorities in the partnership, in respect of audit assurance ratings and competition for audits/time. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that it would be difficult to comment on the audit opinions for other Authorities. He could confirm that there was no competition for audit attention. Further, he confirmed that other 151 Officers within the partnership had not reported any issues.

Making reference to the turnover of Mid Kent Audit, a Member felt that it had been a “perfect storm” and the continuous professional development of staff that had been encouraged by the previous Head of Internal Audit should be continued. He endorsed the Chairman’s thanks to the Interim Head of Internal Audit.

**Resolved:**

**That**

- (i) the Committee notes the Internal Audit Report and Annual Opinion. The opinion states that, for the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, the Council operated an effective framework of corporate governance, risk management and internal control.**

- (ii) the Committee notes that the work to support the opinion was completed with sufficient independence and in conformance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

## **59 Informing the Audit Risk Assessment 2021/22**

The Senior Accountant introduced the item. She advised that as part of the Audit Risk Assessment the Council's External Auditors were required to obtain an understanding of management processes and the Council's oversight of the following areas; management, fraud, laws and regulations, related parties, going concern and accounting estimates. The purpose of the report was to contribute towards effective two way communication between the Council's External Auditors and the Audit Committee. There was one small addendum to note, the date contained within the recommendation should read 2021/22.

A Member drew attention to question 11 in the report in respect of related party transactions that could give rise to instances of fraud and noted that the second question, how would such risks be mitigated was silent. He requested that this be answered comprehensively next time.

Referencing the delay to the fully operational date for the Border Control Post at Sevington, a Member questioned whether this would cause additional financial and operational risks to the Council. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the costs to date had been met by Defra. Once operational haulers would be charged for the services provided which would cover the cost of running the facility, it would effectively be self-funding. Delays to the commencement of operation had been unfortunate but Defra had funded the cost during that period. There was a requirement to bid for such funding however the Council had previously been successful and were awaiting a further announcement. Members were mindful that this matter was routinely discussed at Management Team and was on the Corporate Risk Register.

### **Resolved:**

**That the Audit Committee confirms that the management responses within the "Informing the audit risk assessment for Ashford Borough Council 2021/22" document are consistent with its understanding.**

## **60 External Audit Progress Report**

The Audit Manager – Grant Thornton UK introduced the report. It set out the current position and an updated position on the 2020/21 audit which was unfortunately still awaiting finalisation. Due to capacity constraints they had been unable to finalise the financial statements audit for that period ahead of this meeting, however he hoped that it would be ready to be presented at the July meeting of the Committee. Moving to the 2021/22 audit he advised that the substantive work would commence in October with completion in December.

Members expressed their frustration and disappointment at the delays to the completion of the 2020/21 financial statements audit and strongly counselled that it be presented to the next meeting of the Committee. Further, they noted that the

report provided a generic statements rather than Ashford specific statements and reflections. Discussion was had regarding writing to the PSAA to follow up on the Committees previous letter relating to the performance of the External Auditor and it was proposed that a follow up be written and sent on behalf of the Committee.

The Audit Manager – Grant Thornton UK offered his personal regret for the situation and advised that they were trying to conclude the 2020/21 audit as a matter of urgency.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that a management response had been sought and sent the previous week to Grant Thornton, it was hoped that would bring the matter to a conclusion and the audit and accounts could be presented to the Committee at the same time. He drew attention to the findings in respect of the Housing Benefit Assurance Process which for 2020/21 did not identify any errors. This was a great achievement and those involved should be applauded for all their hard work.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the update be received and noted.**
- (ii) That a letter be sent to the PSAA further expressing the Committee's concern at the delays to the completion of the 2020/21 Financial Statements Audit.**

## **61 Report Tracker & Future Meetings**

The Senior Member Services Officer advised that the Section 106 Income – Follow Up would be presented to the Committee at the November 2022 meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members of the 'Statement Of Accounts' training session that was scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> July via Teams.



## Appointments Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Appointments Committee held in Committee Room No.2 (Bad Münstereifel Room), Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **27<sup>th</sup> May 2022**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Pickering (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Chilton, Feacey, Ovenden.

### **Also Present:**

Chief Executive, Human Resources Manager, Member Services Manager.

## **27 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **28 Exclusion of the Public**

### **Resolved:**

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **29 Appointment of Assistant Director Posts and Update on Other Assistant Director Roles**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive which sought approval for the planned recruitment campaign for the Assistant Director role of Environment, Property and Recreation within the revised Senior Management Structure. The report also updated on the proposed structural changes and pausing of recruitment to two vacant Assistant Director roles where the Chief Executive would develop and implement an interim structure, to be introduced on a temporary basis (up to one year, to be reviewed after six months).

The Chairman indicated his view that the job description for the Assistant Director of Property and Recreation needed more specific reference to the relationship with Elected Members. He had drafted an alternative job description which he tabled. The Committee Members agreed to take the two job descriptions and person specification away, review them together and make sure all relevant points were covered in a final document. It was agreed that comments would be fed back to the Human Resources Manager by Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May and that the start of the proposed recruitment timetable be pushed back by two days.

With regard to the three positions to be introduced in Customer, Technology and Finance as part of the interim structure, the Committee agreed that these be titled "Interim Service Leads" to reflect their temporary nature.

It was agreed that the questions to be asked at the interviews follow those as asked at the previous interviews for the Director posts.

The Committee noted the rest of the proposals set out within the report.

The Committee also asked the Member Services Manager to diarise the dates for upcoming Appointments Committee meetings and it was agreed that the Director for Place and Space be invited to attend the interviews.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) subject to the incorporation of feedback received by the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022, the job description, person specification and remuneration package for the Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation post be approved.**
  - (ii) the planned recruitment timetable for role be approved subject to the commencement being pushed back to the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022.**
  - (iii) the interview questions for the Assistant Director role as discussed at the meeting be agreed.**
  - (iv) the changes to the structure and pausing of the other two Assistant Director roles be noted.**

# Ashford Borough Council - Appointments Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Appointments Committee held in the Leader's Office, Civic Centre on the **21<sup>st</sup> June 2022**.

## **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Pickering (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Feacey, Ovenden.

## **Apologies:**

Cllr. Chilton.

## **In attendance:**

Chief Executive, Director of Place and Space, Human Resources Manager, Member Services Manager.

## **51 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **52 Exclusion of the Public**

### **Resolved:**

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **53 Appointment to the Post of Assistant Director for Environment, Property and Recreation**

The Committee interviewed five candidates (candidates 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) during the exempt part of the Committee meeting.

The Committee unanimously agreed that candidate 3 should be offered the post of Assistant Director for Environment, Property and Recreation.

**Resolved:**

**That candidate 3 should be offered the post of Assistant Director for Environment, Property and Recreation subject to:-**

- (i) consultation with the Cabinet in accordance with General Procedure Rule – Appendix 1 – Procedural Decisions Relating to Staff – (4)(2) and the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.**
- (ii) the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer confirming that the procedure referred to in (i) above has been completed with no outstanding objections.**

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



CHAIRMAN

**CLLR. NOEL OVENDEN**

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REPORT AUTHOR

**ABI MOFFATT**



# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2021/22 year. The report details work carried out by the Committee over the year in line with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Committee carried out a major scrutiny review of the Section 106 Process and this was conducted by a Task and Finish Group which resulted in 8 recommendations. I am pleased to note that all recommendations were endorsed by the Cabinet in November 2021. The Committee will be looking to receive an update on these recommendations later in the year.

More recently, the Budget Scrutiny Task Group also carried out another successful review of the draft budget for the 2022/23 year and all recommendations were approved by the Cabinet.

I would like to extend my thanks to all Members in and out of the Committee who have attended meetings and contributed to discussion. I would like to also thank Officers who have taken the time to present information to the Committee and Task Group, and participate in a number of question and answer sessions.

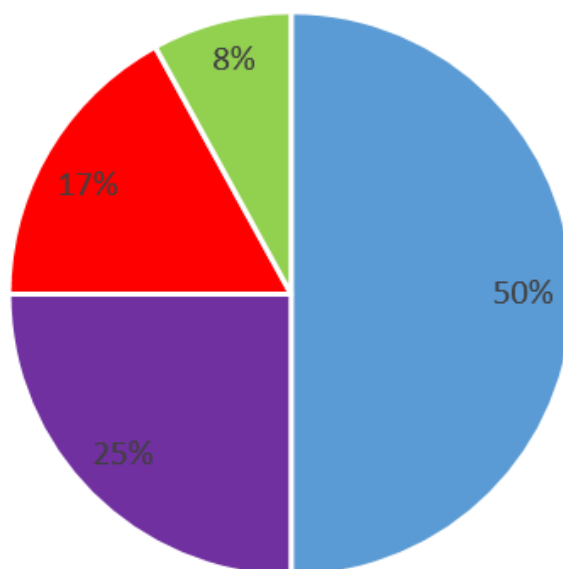
**16****SCRUTINY REPORTS  
& PRESENTATIONS****7****COMMITTEE MEETINGS****2****TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Cllr Noel Ovenden (Ch)  
 Cllr Brendan Chilton (VCh)  
 Cllr. Michael Burgess  
 Cllr. Heather Hayward  
 Cllr. Kalysha Howard-Smith  
 Cllr. Jessamy Blanford  
 Cllr. Dara Farrell  
 Cllr. David Ledger  
 Cllr. Geoff Meaden  
 Cllr. Ken Mulholland  
 Cllr. Larry Krause  
 Cllr. Trevor Brooks

## POLITICAL BALANCE

The chart shows the political balance of the 12 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



■ Conservative
 ■ Ashford Independent
 ■ Labour
 ■ Green

# INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Local Government Act 2000 (the Act) introduced a requirement that councils with a 'Leader and Executive' arrangement must include the provision of one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees within their council structure. Under section 21 of the Act, the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has power to submit reports and make recommendations to the Cabinet or full Council on any aspect of council business or any matter affecting the Borough or its residents.

The constitution of Ashford Borough Council contains provisions for a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out the functions detailed in the Act, although the Committee may assemble task groups from its membership for specific reviews.

In the 2019/20 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had 12 members, appointed in line with the broad political balance of the council. The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee were appointed to opposition members, although the Committee operates apolitically in its discussions, with all members of the Committee working together to ensure that the council and its services are acting effectively and efficiently.





# SCRUTINY AT ASHFORD BC

## Methods of Scrutiny

Issues can be scrutinised by the Committee in the following ways:

By considering reports produced by Officers and having the opportunity to ask questions about the different aspects of the council's business.

Inviting representatives from outside bodies or Parish and Community Councils to talk about topics of interest to residents.

Using the 'call in' method to bring forward matters of urgency for considerations by the Committee, and which are of interest to the public.

The Committee welcomes and encourages Cabinet Members and other non-Committee Members to attend and take part in meetings when appropriate.

## Call-In

The call-in process allows the Chair of the Committee, or five members of the Council, to call in a decision which is the responsibility of the Cabinet, which has been made but not implemented. The Committee can ask the Cabinet to reconsider the decision or can refer it to Council.

There have been no called in items this year.

## Public Participation

Overview and Scrutiny is open to participation from the public and involvement in the process is actively encouraged. Throughout the year, scrutiny has been committed to being open and accessible by the public and therefore has been kept as a hybrid meeting. This has meant that residents have been able to access the meeting either in person or watch live online. As of the most recent meeting in May 2022, 10 public attendees joined the live meeting held in the council's Committee Rooms and online via Microsoft Teams.

Although attendance at the actual meetings was fairly low, recordings of the meetings on YouTube received up to 45 views per video from meetings in 2022.

Some of the ways for the public to get involved include suggesting a topic for investigation as a task and finish group; providing evidence to or at a meeting; and being co-opted on to a topic group. The Committee is keen to see more public participation both in its task and finish groups and in its committee meetings.

# YEAR OVERVIEW



**June 2021**

- Youth Unemployment in Ashford Borough



**July 2021**

- Support Given to the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector
- O&S Annual Report



**September 2021**

- Support Given to the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector
- O&S Annual Report
- Young People's Mental Health



**October 2021**

- Carbon Neutral Action Plan
- Digital Transformation Update
- Budget Scrutiny Review
- ABC Annual Report



**November 2021**

- Section 106 Final Findings Report



**February 2022**

- Annual Safeguarding Report
- Annual CSP REport
- Corporate Performance Report
- Budget Scrutiny Final Report



**March 2022**

- Overview and Scrutiny Work
- Work Programme

# SECTION 106

## TASK GROUP

During April 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the Section 106 process. Members raised particular concern over not being involved or consulted on proposed Section 106 contributions, prior to a report being submitted to the Planning Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group conducted an in depth review to ascertain the various stages of the process and understand where Members and Parish Councils could have greater input.

The Task Group assembled of 7 Members; Cllr Ovenden (Chair), Cllr. Chilton, Cllr. Ledger, Cllr. Blanford, Cllr. Mulholland, Cllr. Campkin and Cllr. Farrell, to examine the Section 106 Process and make some recommendations to the full Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group recommendations reflected discussions had during the series of Witness Sessions. Both oral and written evidence was provided by Officers and Parish Councils to help the Task Group understand the Section 106 process. The committee are looking forward to hearing regular updates on how the review recommendations are being progressed.

Members insisted that a process mapping exercise of the Section 106 process was undertaken prior to progression of the later recommendations. It was agreed that once all the stages of the Section 106 process had been mapped out, this information would inform the details necessary to implement recommendations II to VIII.

## Recommendations

**I. A process mapping exercise is undertaken to provide clarity and guidance to Officers and Members involved in the Section 106 process. Once completed, the process map will inform recommendations II to VIII.**

**II. Guidance and training is provided for Officers involved in the Section 106 process to clarify roles and responsibilities of all Officers. Additionally, a 'handbook' is created for both Members and Parish Councillors, to explain the basic concepts of Section 106.**

**III. Communication over Section 106 is improved between the Planning Service and Parish Councils including key contact(s) for accessing advice.**

**IV. Training on Section 106 should be provided to Members and Parish Councils on an annual basis. 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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**VII. There is a standardising of Section 106 Agreements and use of templates where appropriate.**

**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.**

# BUDGET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

In accordance with the council's Constitution, the council has a duty to scrutinise its draft Capital and Revenue Budgets. The Committee constituted a Task Group made up of three Committee Members and one co-opted Member to undertake this work, and present its findings of the draft Budget for 2022/23 within a final budget scrutiny report.

The draft budget for 2022/23 was presented to the Task Group at its first meeting; this included all service budgets and financial risks. Over a series of meetings, Members decided to dedicate additional scrutiny time to the following topics:

- The Port Health Service
- The council's reserves positions and forecast
- Savings and recharges
- Planning and Development Service and the achievability of their savings target.
- Details on expected borrowing interest rate increases.
- Housing Service and delivery of savings target.
- The risks around the maintenance of assets.
- Risks linked to the commercial property portfolio.

## Recommendations

The Task Group concluded budget scrutiny at a wrap up meeting and approved the following recommendations to Cabinet:

I. The council's draft budget for 2022/23 is sound and that mitigation plans are in place for any increases to borrowing interest rates during 2022/23.

II. The council's reserves position is sufficient to manage the economic risks to the 2022/23 budget.

III. The Task Group support Cabinet's recent decision to have regular monitoring of delivery against Service savings targets, through the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23.

IV. It be noted that the Task Group have concerns over the ability to deliver the savings target in the Planning and Development Service for the next budget year.

V. It be noted that delivery of the Henwood project needs to be timely in order to meet the savings targets in the next financial year.

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

# PRIORITY TOPICS

## Youth Unemployment

Further to Member concerns around low levels of employment in young people, the Committee requested information around youth unemployment in the Borough.

External representatives included the Skills and Employability Manager at KCC who gave a presentation regarding youth unemployment in Ashford and the South East, as well as the information around the varying levels of unemployment in different areas of Ashford. Additionally, the Principal Lead for Post 16 Education at KCC also attended to provide the Committee with information around young adults who were not in education or training, and explained what was being done to help these younger people. A final presentation was given by the Partnership Manager for Ashford at the Department for Work and Pensions, who was able to advise the Committee how their team helped young people get in to employment and the work currently being done with local businesses to encourage this.

A question and answer style session was opened up to Members who wanted to gain a better understanding of the barriers preventing young people from taking up jobs. Other lines of inquiry included the impact of the pandemic for 16 to 18 year olds and how different sectors were hit worse than others.

The Committee endorsed the work done internally towards improving youth unemployment in Ashford and supported the programme of work at KCC and the DWP.

## Young People's Mental Health

The Committee requested information around young people's mental health and the provision that was available for young people with mental health issues. Members welcomed the Associate Director of Children and Maternity at the NHS Kent and Medway CCG to a Committee meeting, who gave a detailed presentation which covered the following themes:

- Spotlight: Impact of Covid
- System Response
- Continuing Challenges
- Services in Ashford
- Ashford children and young people's mental health and neurodevelopment services
- KOOTH online counselling
- Mind and Body early-intervention self-harm support
- NELFT locality (MH) waiting times
- NELFT ND assessment waiting
- Local Transformation Plan

Members had the opportunity to ask questions in addition to the presentation. In particular, Members asked about the relationship between the NHS CCG and the council. Further discussion was also had around the waiting times for mental health services for young people and the resources available to assist child refugees.

# PRIORITY TOPICS

## Carbon Neutral Action Plan

The Carbon Neutral Action Plan was received by the Committee as Members felt it would be beneficial to scrutinise this prior to its adoption at Cabinet. The Strategy and Policy Development Manager gave a presentation to the Committee, which provided a recap of the Plan and an overview of the consultation outcomes. It included details around the overall aim of the plan, the eight priorities and the recently conducted public consultation.

Members were invited to ask questions regarding the Action Plan. Members suggested that targets should be included in the Plan going forward. Members also raised questions around how the council was going to help improve air quality and carbon offsetting. The Committee noted and supported the Action Plan.

## Digital Transformation Recommendations Update

In June 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group formed to conduct a review on the progress of digital transformation across council services. The review resulted in eight recommendations and these were approved by Cabinet in October 2020. In October 2021, the Committee wished to review the progress made for each of the actions since they were approved.

Members noted that since Cabinet approved the digital recommendations last year, good progress was made for some of the actions. Several actions had been completed so far and any outstanding were expected to be delivered by the end of 2021 or during 2022.

Although Members were pleased that progress had been made, some Members expressed some concern that the progress on some of the recommendations had been slow. However, Members were advised that the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee would be happy to look in to some specific queries Members had.

# ANNUAL REPORTS

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## Annual Sickness Report

This report provided annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2020/21 and wider data that provided a picture of the council's general corporate health.

## Safeguarding Update

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

## Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Update

This report provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the community safety annual update. The report referred to the council's statutory obligation to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder, the work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The report detailed crime statistics for the borough and positioning against other districts within the county. Ashford was shown as being a safe borough as the level of recorded crime remained low and there was a reduction in many crime types including serious violence offences.

The report highlighted an overall reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour with the exception of the town centre ward. It gave information on current community safety priorities, actions that had been taken to meet the priorities and raised awareness of emerging issues. It also supported the delivery of the priorities set by the Police and Crime Commissioner through his Safer in Kent plan 2021/2022. Two major CSP projects were spotlighted. The Safer Streets Project that aims to make our public spaces safer and help women and girls feel safe, and the Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) which empowers communities and changes lives by improving health, education and employment and reducing crime.



# ANNUAL REPORTS

## Corporate Performance Reports

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





# WORK PROGRAMME

## 2022/23

Topic	Scope of what is to be scrutinised	Date
Consultation and Engagement	A Task and Finish group will be set up to examine how the council engages with residents and look at the consultation process for corporate issues.	Spring/Summer 2022
Hybrid Working	A report will be brought forward for Members to explore how well the hybrid arrangements have been working and in particular consider this in terms of performance, customer satisfaction, savings, human resources and recruitment.	July 2022
Annual Sickness Report	The Committee expect to receive a report providing the Committee with annual sickness information for the recent year.	July 2022
Freedom Leisure	Members have requested to review the council's new leisure operator. Scrutiny of this topic will look to examine how the service has been running, the savings made to the council and the levels of customer satisfaction with the service.	September 2022
Planning Service Progress Update	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 has been requested by the Committee.	November 2022
Budget Scrutiny Meetings	Scrutiny of the draft budget 2022/23 will take place over three or four Task Group meetings during December and a final report is expected to the Committee to summarise the findings.	December to January 2022/23

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