



CABINET

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on
Thursday, 28th September, 2023 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Cabinet are:-

Councillor Ovenden - Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Prosperity and Resource

Councillor Campkin - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate, Environment and Transport

Councillor Barrett – Portfolio Holder for Homes and Homelessness

Councillor Betty – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Investment

Councillor Harman – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing Delivery and Communication

Councillor Hayward – Portfolio Holder for Performance and Direction

Councillor Nilsson – Portfolio Holder for People and Services

Councillor Walder – Portfolio Holder for Recreation and Public Spaces

Councillor Wright – Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health

NB: Under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, members of the public can submit a petition to the Cabinet if the issue is within its terms of reference or ask a question or speak concerning any item contained on this Agenda (Procedure Rule 9 refers)

Agenda

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20 September 2023

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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 as adopted by the Council on 19 July 2012, 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 reasons alone, such as:

- Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, 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: an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc; OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI].

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **27th July 2023**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Betty, Harman, Hayward, Nilsson, Walder, Wright.

Present:

Cllr. Barrett.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Bell, Chilton, Dean, Feacey, Gathern, Gauder, Giles, Hallett, Heyes, Meaden, Michael, Pickering, Roden, Spain.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Director of Place, Space and Leisure, Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Leisure, Assistant Director of Planning and Development, Assistant of Director of Housing, Head of Policy and Performance, Head of Economic Development, Service Lead – Finance, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Economic Development Manager, Town Centre Regeneration Manager, Project Manager (National Lottery Heritage Fund), Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Recovery Officer, Economic Development and Regeneration Officer, Communications Officer, Member Services Manager.

96 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Feacey	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.	106
	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Chairman of the Ashford International Development Company	99
Gathern	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a friend of one of the report authors.	101

97 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29th June 2023 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

98 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that after the Full Council meeting the previous week there had been several observations on the poor state of the Council Chamber microphone system. Some Members may know that this would be the last Cabinet Meeting using the existing Audio Visual equipment. During August there would be extensive renovations carried out which would see new modern meeting equipment installed, including new microphone units, screens, projectors, cameras and, importantly, facilities to livestream and hold hybrid meetings. This would replace the current obsolete and unreliable equipment which was at its "end of life". This would also allow the Council to be able to professionally film and livestream their meetings itself, and be able to hold meetings in a hybrid fashion, with participants genuinely able to join remotely (although voting Members on Committees would still have to attend in person as per current legislation). They would also be able to undertake electronic voting and a number of other upgrades. It was hoped that the equipment would be fully installed and operational for meetings from September and ahead of the first few meetings, there would be training from the installers themselves for Members in how to use the new equipment. He was sure colleagues would agree this was a huge step forwards and reflected their ambitions as a modern and forward thinking Council.

He said that within tonight's agenda they were making proposals for setting up several Working Groups on : - Parking Strategy; Medium Term Financial Plan; Parks Foundation; and Housing Repairs. The make-up for these Groups would be the relevant Officers, Cabinet Portfolio Holder and one Member from each Political Group – which he would expect to be the Shadow Portfolio Holder. This was to ensure a focused conversation and allow continuity with joint portfolio meetings. They also had the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group, which was open to all Members, and obviously Overview and Scrutiny as well. He considered this was cross-party working and Member involvement on a new and unprecedented scale.

The Leader also advised that he had recently come across one of the schemes supported using money from the Household Prosperity Fund. The Council had approached 10 Primary Schools in the Borough offering £1000 each to help families with things like school uniform for the next school year. He thought this was a really nice scheme, where they were using some Government money to help some of those in most need in the Borough.

99 Financial Monitoring Report

The Service Lead - Finance introduced the report which presented the Quarter 1 budget monitoring position up to 30th June 2023. The changing economic picture continued to put stress on the original budget assumptions and this was reflected within the report. The Quarter 1 forecast showed an overall pressure to the General Fund of £429,000. A full break down of the key movements since Quarter 2 was shown in the report. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was reporting a pressure of £542,000. The report also provided an update on the collection fund, treasury management, reserves and progress on corporate savings identified in the 2023/24 budget.

Members asked a number of questions on the report and the following responses were given: -

- The Medium Term Financial Plan Working Group would consider the proposed elimination of the capital budget for the Hubert Fountain in Victoria Park, against the merits of proposed capital expenditure on other projects. It was noted that there may also be opportunities to raise funding and gain grants via the proposed Ashford Parks Foundation.
- There was no specific delay on the modular housing solution at Henwood and this would still be delivered to the agreed timescale. The Council had attempted to bring this date forward, but this had not been possible due to the manufacturer's construction timescales.
- The current support for Tenterden Leisure Centre would be in place for 18-24 months. They would be going out to a full procurement for a permanent operator with capital investment and a payback/profit share arrangement so it was hoped this would generate an income in the future. The Portfolio Holder advised that there would be a targeted messaging campaign to ensure that local residents, users and potential users all knew that the Tenterden Leisure Centre was again open for business.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) the Quarter 1 forecast position for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be noted.**
 - (ii) the Collection Fund position be noted.**
 - (iii) the Capital Monitoring position be noted.**
 - (iv) the Treasury Management position be noted.**
 - (v) the provisional reserve allocations, at Table 8 of the report, be noted.**

- (vi) **the amendments to fees and charges, as outlined in Appendices C and D to the report, be approved.**
- (vii) **the proposal to create a Working Group to develop the Medium Term Financial Plan, including Shadow Portfolio Holders, be supported.**
- (viii) **the update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, at Appendix E to the report, be noted.**

100 Revenues and Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule

The Senior Recovery Officer introduced the report which proposed the formal write off of £344,479.14. The proposals were in line with the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service Write-Off Policy and the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) had been consulted along with Heads of Service for relevant areas. She advised that the Council had robust processes in place for reviewing such debts and a suite of methods for tracing individuals and businesses. She would be happy to meet with any interested Members to explain the process in more detail.

In response to a question, the Leader said it was certainly his intention to continue the previous practice of going through a couple of cases at random with the Officers to provide assurance.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) **the action that accounts totalling £39,032.58 have been written off under the delegated powers (Financial Regulations 11.1 refers) be noted.**
 - (ii) **the write offs listed in the Exempt Appendices totalling £305,446.56 be approved.**

101 Ashford Parks Foundation

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which updated on the position of the £5.1m Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) project in Victoria Park (this figure was inclusive of uplift, contingencies, and separate British Cycling Pump Track works). The report also sought to set up an Officer and Member Task and Finish Group to further explore, investigate and understand the feasibility, practicality and financial implications of delivering an Ashford Parks Foundation. In order to achieve this the report also sought to extend the employment of the HLF Project Manager to lead on this work.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the delivery of the National Lottery Heritage Funded (NLHF) capital project at Victoria Park be noted.**
 - (ii) it be agreed to extend the employment of the HLF Project Manager from December 2023 to 30 April 2024, in order to lead and report on a feasibility study for the potential of an Ashford Parks Foundation and to provide continuity with volunteer groups to continue required the legacy works.**
 - (iii) an Officer and cross-party Member Task and Finish group be set up to explore the viability of an Ashford Parks Foundation.**

102 Parking Tariff Review

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that over the last few years, the Council had experienced a significant increase in its costs relating to car parking, mainly driven by increased utility costs. The Council had a policy to review parking charges on a triennial cycle, however the last review had been postponed and so it had been four years since the charges were reviewed. This meant that the charges had now got out of sync with the cost of the service. The specific proposal was to increase all tariffs by an agreed percentage, approximately 10% (rounded to the nearest 10p) whereas CPI has increased by 20.18% since the last increase in charges. The report advised that the proposed charges would still be lower than those of their competitors, but there did need to be a review of the Council's wider parking policy to make sure that, whilst fitting within the budget envelope, the Council's parking provision and charging policies delivered its corporate objectives. The outcome of this review would be the production of a new parking strategy that would come forward to a future meeting of the Cabinet. The Portfolio Holder advised that he established a Working Group to have an oversight of this review and to bring forward proposals later in the year.

Members asked a number of questions on the report and the following responses were given: -

- Price increases were always regrettable, particularly in a cost of living crisis, however charges had not been increased for four years and the proposals were still significantly lower than the CPI increases during that time and were needed in order to cover operating costs. The new charges would be comparable with neighbouring areas.
- The 'free after 3(pm)' parking would still be in place for the timebeing, but would form part of the wider review.
- There could be no guarantees given about future pricing charges at this time. These would be looked at as part of the wider review. The Working Group would have an important role to play in that, considering all of the issues such as climate change, cycling/walking, bus usage and accessibility. It was

important to take the time to look at the wider picture and consider the matter properly.

- The review would certainly involve extensive consultation with local businesses and well as a wide range of other stakeholders.

Resolved:

That an increase in on-street and off-street parking tariffs, from 1 October 2023, across the borough be agreed, by approximately 10% on current tariffs (e.g. £1.20 to £1.30, £2.40 to £2.60 etc.) and in accordance with the specific rates detailed within the report.

103 Ashford Town Centre Business Grants

The Portfolio Holder said that following from the last item she was hoping that this report would keep Ashford's car parks in place and busy. Ashford Town Centre should be the beating heart of the Borough and the previous administration had recognised this with the introduction of the Ashford Town Centre Support Grant scheme 2021/22. This had showed some success with £88,000 leading to nearly £250,000 in investment, 75 jobs created or supported, additional Business Rates receipts (£23,000) and six newly-filled premises. Despite current economic challenges, it was recognised that they needed to do more to further revitalise Ashford's Town Centre and create a place of prosperity and opportunity. The report detailed how the Council could continue to support a Town Centre Grant Funding Scheme by utilising Section 106 developer monies - therefore at no additional cost to the Council.

The Head of Economic Development introduced the report which reviewed the trial grant scheme and set out a proposed new Ashford Town Centre Grants policy for the period up to March 2025.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the content of the report and the work to deliver grants in Ashford Town Centre be noted.**
 - (ii) the Ashford Town Centre Business Grants Policy, to run between 2023-2025, be approved.**
 - (iii) the use of Officer delegation to approve the £140,000 of Section 106 funding to deliver this grants scheme be supported.**
 - (iv) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive to approve grants and administer the scheme.**

104 Corporate Enforcement Statement

The Director of Health and Wellbeing introduced the report which presented an updated Corporate Enforcement Statement - setting out the Council's overarching approach to enforcement and implementing best practice as set out in the Regulators Code. Adopting a refreshed Statement would reiterate the Council's approach to taking fair, proportionate and transparent action when there were breaches of legislation or regulation that it was responsible for upholding.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Enforcement Statement be approved for publication on the Council's website.

105 Statement of Community Involvement - Update

The Portfolio Holder advised that she was pleased this update had come forward and it would be a key part of the upcoming Local Plan review. It would also be valid for all other plan-making and planning application processes and they would continue to look to expand to more platforms in the future. An update to the Statement of Community Involvement was required every five years, or prior to the formal examination stages of Development Plan Documents. Updates had been made to the document in accordance with revised legislation and the changing function of the planning service with regard to community planning issues and cooperation with other public bodies. She was also pleased to report that the Arcus system had restored the option to allow residents to sign to weekly email alerts for new planning applications on a ward basis. She hoped in future this could be expanded to a Parish level.

The Assistant Director of Planning and Development introduced the report and stressed that the statement outlined the minimum that the Council will do in different planning consultation situations and they would always look to go beyond that. In addition, for the first time, the statement set out who would be directly consulted on planning applications and that all planning applications would be available on the Council's website.

With regard to consultation on the Local Plan review a Member said he had appreciated the previous 'roadshows' out in the Parishes and hoped these would be repeated this time round.

Resolved:

That the content of the updated Statement of Community Involvement be agreed and the Assistant Director - Planning and Development, or the Spatial Planning Manager, be authorised to make any grammatical or other changes that are necessary in their opinion, for accuracy and consistency with legislation; and,

Recommended:

That the updated Statement of Community Involvement, incorporating such changes, be adopted as a local development document.

106 Policy for Funding the Voluntary and Community Sector and Shared Prosperity Fund Criteria

The Portfolio Holder said that as a Borough they were blessed to have an amazing variety of organisations within the voluntary sector, all supporting residents and this policy provided structure to how those organisations could be financially supported by the Council. The policy had returned to Cabinet having been presented to the previous Administration and then gone out for consultation. They had taken on board the comments from the consultation and also included how they intended to distribute the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund funding they had recently been awarded.

The Head of Policy and Performance introduced the report which updated on outcome of the consultation and presented a final draft of the policy.

In response to a question, the Head of Policy and Performance advised that the consultation had targeted the Voluntary Sector and Parish, Town and Community Councils.

The Leader advised that the final policy would include the two matters discussed by Group Leaders – namely inclusion of being able fund adjacent Wards through Ward Member grants and ensuring that faith based organisations are only funded for projects or services that are available to the wider community.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the outcome of the consultation for the Policy for Funding the Voluntary and Community Sector be noted.**
 - (ii) the inclusion of UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund grants be noted.**
 - (iii) subject to the addition of Members being permitted to fund adjacent Wards through Ward Member grants, and ensuring that faith based organisations are only funded for projects or services that are available to the wider community, the final draft policy be approved and adopted.**

107 Housing Repairs Contract

The Assistant Director of Housing introduced the report which advised that the provision of a day to day responsive repairs service was currently outsourced by the Council to a main contractor – Equans (formerly Engie). Equans had given six

months' notice to terminate the contract which would end on the 30th November 2023. The report set out the options available to the Council to ensure that the Housing Service's 5,000 tenants continued to receive a service after the end of the contract and explored the most favourable option for delivering an improved and more efficient repairs service, including highlighting the potential for savings in the proposed delivery model to the Housing Revenue Account.

In response to questions it was confirmed that the proposals would give the Council the option to offer more traineeships and apprenticeships as well as potential revenue streams in the future. It would also allow the service to be more flexible and responsive.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Responsive Repairs service become an in house operation.**
 - (ii) a cross-party Member Task and Finish Group be set up to include the Housing Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holders.**
 - (iii) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders, to make a final decision on proceeding with bringing the repairs service in house - full business case will be developed to support the transfer.**
 - (iv) the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer be authorised to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.**
 - (v) it be noted that the TUPE implications for bringing the service in house will be identified and discussed with Human Resources.**

108 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.

109 Joint Transportation Board – Nomination of Membership

Resolved:

That the following Members be appointed to the Joint Transportation Board: Councillors Feacey, Forest, Gathern, Heyes (Ch), Joseph, Michael and Meaden.

110 Trading and Enterprise Board – Nomination of Membership

Resolved:

That the following Members be appointed to the Trading and Enterprise Board: Councillors Betty (Ch), Harman, Ovenden, Walder. Councillor Bell to be appointed as Observer as the Leader of the largest Opposition Group.

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Agenda Item 6



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 12th September 2023
Thursday 28th September 2023

Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 1 2023/24

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

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Heather Hayward
Portfolio Holder for: Performance and Direction

Summary: This report summarises performance against the council's suite of KPIs reflecting the Corporate Plan 2022-24, for the Quarter 1 period 2023/24.

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

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

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **Overview and Scrutiny**
The Cabinet is recommended to:-

I. Consider the performance data for Quarter 1 2023/24

Policy Overview: Performance measures reflect the objectives and priorities of The Corporate Plan 22-24.

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

Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	None
Equalities Impact Assessment:	Not required as the report presents information on past council performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	Not required
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	Not required
Sustainability Implications:	None
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024
Contact:	tom.swain@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330432

Portfolio Holder’s Views:

This Q1 performance report provides an opportunity to continue the monitoring and review of the council’s performance against its Corporate Plan. It highlights the progress made and constraints that are influencing our short and medium term performance.

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


Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 1 2023/24

Introduction and Background







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

These along with our underlying principles provide a framework that focuses our efforts on working towards our strategic objectives.
4. This report seeks to provide an overview of performance against the council's key performance indicators for Quarter 1 2023/24 period. The council's performance framework captures key performance data from across the organisation as it relates to the council's Corporate Plan.

Performance Report for the Corporate Plan 2022-24, Quarter 1 - 2023/24

Ashford Ambition: To be a thriving, productive and inclusive borough by 2030 and beyond; a vital part of Kent and the South East where local businesses, social enterprises, communities and the public sector provide collective leadership to promote shared prosperity, happiness and wellbeing.			
			
Theme	Challenges	Objectives	Outcomes
Green Pioneer Our long term aim: Every community and individual plays their part in becoming a carbon neutral borough, through a more sustainable way of life. And the natural environment is protected and enhanced.	Tackling climate change by achieving carbon neutrality Enabling development whilst protecting the environment Ensuring no one is disadvantaged as we reduce the carbon footprint of our services and operations	GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homes are energy efficient and cheaper to heat. Renewable energy generation and consumption increases. Fewer local car journeys are made, air quality improves and residents are more active and healthy. - Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases - A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce
Caring Ashford Our long term aim: Towns, villages and rural communities are welcoming, safe places for all who live and work in them, offering a high quality of life where everyone is valued and respected.	Enabling homes that are affordable to local people on low incomes Improving wellbeing and opportunities for people living in the most disadvantage areas Raising educational attainment and skills level of local population	CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs - Local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability - The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved - Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding
Targeted Growth Our long term aim: A thriving, productive local economy supporting a range of business and industry offering good work to local people and is recognised as a high quality visitor destination.	Ensuring our towns remain vibrant places and adapt to changing consumer habits Matching local skills with the needs of employers Attracting new industries to establish in borough and retain and grow existing business	TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes - Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business - Local business survival rates improve - The borough is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences - Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities

Corporate Plan Themes and Key Performance Measures

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

Green Pioneer

Highlights from the Quarter

Ashford's Great Big Green Week 2023

This year's national 'The Great Big Green Week' activities organised by Ashford Borough Council were well met by local residents.

The Great Big Green Week is a national celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. Ashford Borough Council organised various activities throughout the week to ignite conversations and encourage residents to get involved. The main event, Great Big Green Week Roadshow, took place in Ashford Town Centre.

Handlebars Vs Cars

A commuter revolution, where we set presenter [Liu Batchelor](#) the challenge of racing a car on her bike during rush hour traffic from Singleton to Coachworks. The aim to inspire more people to give active travel, cycling and giving commuting by bike a try. The project still continues to pick up media interest, interviews and positive feedback. During the two-week campaign Liu's own social media avenues attracted 16,283 facebook engagements, 8,773 linkedIn Impressions, 9,201 Instagram Views and 3,060 Tick Tock Views.

Green Heat Network

Heat Networks are a feature of the national low carbon energy strategy – delivering heat from centralised generation or waste sources directly to our homes and business rather than fuel like gas or oil. Following our successful bid for £97k to undertake feasibility work to explore options in Ashford, work with the Dept for Energy Security and Net Zero has been ongoing to finalise the specifications for the Newtown Heat Network feasibility study and an Ashford Town wide Heat Network Zoning Study which will identify areas suitable for exploring our first Borough Heat Networks. Tenders will be awarded for the studies early in Quarter 2.

Electricals Recycling – Materials Focus

£10k external funding has been secured to run six amnesty style electrical recycling projects. Aim is to highlight the potential to recycle electricals and remove them from the waste stream and also increase accessibility for those in Parishes unable to get to the recycling centres easily. Projects will work alongside pop up repair café's and mens' sheds projects to additionally offer a preferable alternative to recycling through re-use. We have secured an independent recycling partner to collect disposed items to ensure all projects are wholly self-funded. Our bid also allows for PAT testing training to be offered to community groups to support increase reuse options and safety. The project has been set up with longevity in mind and dependent on success further rollouts are possible using the pre-funded 'kit' and new partners. Project roll out starts in September.

Integrating Climate Considerations into the Day to Day

Climate Impact Assessments are now embedded into the project management toolkit and part of the Project Management Approval process. A simple questionnaire generates a visual Red Amber Green - RAG rating to help project officers consider climate impacts and where necessary redesign projects to ensure they are as sustainable as possible. It covers fossil fuel use as well as exploring the circular economy, material choices and recyclability; impact on biodiversity; and adaptation to climate change. The visual aid will help decision makers consider climate impacts and while this is a qualitative assessment it is the start of our journey to better evaluate and quantify carbon costs in our business choices. Our Ashford template (adapted from one set up by Cheltenham Council), has been presented to Kent Climate officers (as well as at an APSE webinar) and has been picked up as good practice and integrated into the procedures of several other Kent authorities.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Our Principle Contractor (E.ON) is now in place and is mobilising fast. Retrofit Assessments are imminent on all 727 properties selected and the results will determine the phasing of the scheme. We are looking at a fabric first approach to all properties – External Wall Insulation, Cavity Wall Insulation, Loft Insulation, window replacement etc, as well as trialling some Ground Source Heat Pumps if feasibility is successful. Tenants have now all been actively engaged in the process and workshops have taken place in July with more planned for September. We are working with E.ON on a social value strategy too which will look at imparting some educational value on residents about the green employment sector/climate change mitigation.

Solar




Carlton Road, PV Panels have been installed on all industrial units bar the three that are not council-owned. A period of testing and commissioning will now take place before the panels are 'live', we are already using some monitoring software that shows the carbon savings. We are looking at options to possibly export the excess energy, the feasibility of which needs to be determined by UK Power Networks.

Stour Centre Solar Array, Detailed designs are being finalised for this project. Planning and Procurement are actively engaged and a project programme is being drawn up.

Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_06 Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	Officers are developing a proposal for a travel plan for Ashford Borough Council staff. Work continues to explore how we can work with a local business to pilot an active travel plan within the borough to inform further role out.									
		Initiatives to get people cycling through 'guided rides' and bike repair and maintenance schemes have been successful and will continue to be offered.									




KCC – Feasibility study for Route 4 of the Local Cycling Plan Work has been initiated to engage Sustrans to deliver a feasibility study for a designated cycle route from Repton Park to Gasworks Lane. This is part of ongoing work to deliver the Borough's Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan. This study will put us in a strong position to bid for Capital funding to develop the route next year.

CP_KPI_09 Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	47.53%	50%		46.3%	50%		52.5%	50%		Defra's nationwide recycling league tables - Local authority collected waste: annual results tables (Historical) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
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Our recycling rate is cyclical with a fall seen over the Christmas, new year period. Garden waste collected during the winter months also falls with tonnages being low up until the warmer/drier days return in the spring.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links. [WasteDataFlow Waste and recycling statistics](#)

CP_KPI_10	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.	99.97%	99.96%		99.85%	99.96%		99.73%	99.96%		
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[New Waste Contract.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#) This Cabinet report identifies the evaluation undertaken, the costs and the key changes and benefits that will occur from the proposed new waste contract.

Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links: [WasteDataFlow Waste and recycling statistics](#)

During the progress of the last of the performance reports through the committee stages, A Member queried whether the Council anticipated an increase in the number of Fly Tips registered, owing to the departure of an Enforcement Officer. We can report, that at this stage whilst it is too early to determine, we can confirm that we have continued to manage the investigation of the larger fly tipping reports. Additional support on the investigatory work has also been provided by the councils fraud team. Impacts on the loss of resource are expected where prosecutions are pending taking the limited front line resource away from their proactive works.

Caring Ashford

Highlights from the Quarter

Social housing repairs service set to be brought in house providing tenants with an improved service

Taking the repairs service for our 5,000-plus housing stock in house has the potential to save money and provide tenants with an improved and more efficient service, Cabinet heard during a meeting in [July](#).

The provision of a day-to-day responsive repairs service is currently outsourced by the council to a main contractor Equans. It has given notice to terminate the contract and this will end on 30 November 2023.

Officers have consulted the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to assist in reviewing the options available and HQN has identified that by bringing the service in house, a saving is possible, as well as achieving a significant increase in satisfaction levels based on sector-wide experience.

Celebrating the newly revamped Victoria Park

The Mayor of Ashford, Cllr Larry Krause unveiled a plaque to launch the revamped park and local councillors and invited guests took a tour of the new facilities.

The Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Project is a £5m+ project delivered by Ashford Borough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve and protect Victoria Park for the local community.

Amongst other things, visitors to the park can now enjoy:

- A community building with new café and public toilets (open from 8am until 6pm daily)
- A new playground with climbing frame, swing, trampolines, a zip-wire and more
- A new hard-surface track for BMXers, skaters, and all other mini-wheels users – designed and built by the team behind the London 2012 Olympic BMX track.
- A colourful and fragrant sensory garden in the heart of a woodland meadow

- An entirely new seasonal wetland area in the heart of the park
- A better space for people at the fountain with new access and seating, improved surfacing and lighting, and new formal planting

Landscaping works will continue in the park into the autumn period, with further works around the river corridor, fencing to the infant playground and reinstatement works across the park. In addition the new nursery adjacent to the café and playground will also be operational from the end of the autumn.

New drive to provide affordable rented homes in rural areas; RACE launched by Kent Housing Group

For people struggling to find affordable rented housing in their local rural community or older residents needing to move from their current home there is hope that help could be on the way.

The Rural and Community Housing Enabling service (RACE) is an independent service for Kent and Medway, providing expertise and working directly with communities to deliver housing that matches what local people need.

RACE works with parish councils, housing teams at district and borough councils, housing associations and local developers to identify rural communities where action needs to be taken to meet the housing needs of local people.

Eat Well Spend Less came to Farrow Court

The Eat Well Spend Less roadshow came to Farrow Court in July offering support and suggestions to counter the impacts of rising food prices.




The event brought together a range of partner organisations including frontline NHS staff, council officers, outreach organisations and charities, in one easy-to-access place.

The free to attend event was open to all, not just residents of Farrow court.

Tenterden leisure Centre swimming pool reopened

Freedom Leisure and Ashford Borough Council announce that the wait for the swimming pool at Tenterden Leisure Centre to open was over. Tenterden Leisure centre managed under contract by Freedom leisure on behalf of Ashford Borough Council, reopened the swimming pool in June.

Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_13 Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3	98.8%	98.5%		98.5%	98.5%		98.2%	98.3%		

Ashford Borough Council's Annual Food Service Plan 2022/23, includes a review of performance in delivering official food controls during 2021/22 is available at: [Food Services Plan 202223.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2022/03/24/food-services-plan-2022-23/)

CP_KPI_17 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	0			4			0			Stodmarsh issues continue to hinder homes delivered in this period.
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[Housing Revenue Account HRA Business Plan 2022 -2052 including Financing and Affordable Homes Pro.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2022/03/24/housing-revenue-account-hra-business-plan-2022-2025-including-financing-and-affordable-homes-pro/)

CP_KPI_18 Council Affordable	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable	1			2			2			2 properties completed in this period. There was one completion for, the local authority
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
Housing - On-Street Purchases	homes delivered by council housing										housing fund (LAHF), 3 are also pending for LAHF (going through the conveyancing process), 2 street purchases for the HRA are also pending and 1 property completed for the rough sleeper accommodation project
<p>As listed in previous quarters this way of acquiring properties is not as competitive as it was during recent years since the property market spiked when the stamp duty holiday was in place. There are reports that the market is slowing down so the suitability of such an approach in the market will be re-evaluated as things progress.</p>											
CP_KPI_19 Homelessness Presentations	Number of new triage cases received in the Quarter	394			631			733			35 homelessness applications throughout June. 8 at prevention stage 27 at relief stage

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_19b Homelessness Preventions (still in accomodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	27			30			33			

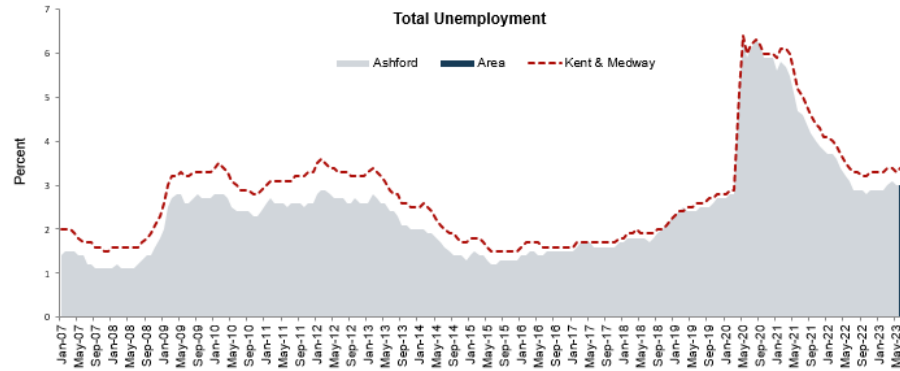
The latest data tables on local government housing including Ashford Borough Council, covering social housing sales, homelessness, and affordable housing supply are available at the following links: [Social housing sales](#) [Homelessness](#) [Affordable housing supply](#)

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CP_KPI_20 Disabled Facilities Grants Completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	20			32			25			The high number for June (15) is due to the backlog of works carried over from previous quarter.
CP_KPI_20b Disabled Facilities Grant Spend	Actual spend per month for disabled facility grants	£309,199.04			£235,990.22			£328,260.04			Excellent spend month with a high number of completions

This report sets out the findings of a review into the Councils' processes for administering Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) and disabled adaptations in the Council housing stock [Disabled Adaptations Review.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

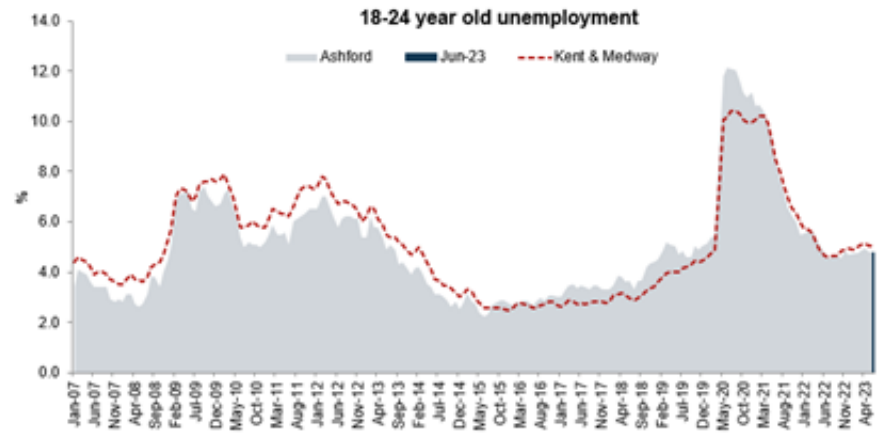
Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_21 Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	3%			3%			3%			June - 2450 unemployment count representing 3.0% More information available within - Economy and employment data - Kent County Council



June 2023

Area	Number	Rate	Number change since last month	Percentage change since last month	Number change since last year	Percentage change since last year
Ashford	2,450	3.0%	+45	+1.9%	-55	-2.2%
Kent & Medway	38,325	3.4%	+440	+1.2%	+150	+0.4%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_22 Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data	4.7%			4.8%			4.8%			June – 440 equating to 4.8% More information available within - Economy and employment data - Kent County Council



18-24 unemployment

Area	Number	Rate	Number change since last month	Percentage change since last month	Number change since last year	Percentage change since last year
Ashford	440	4.8%	+0	+0.0%	+5	+1.1%
Kent & Medway	7,010	5.1%	+55	+0.8%	+595	+9.3%

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_26 Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	2.14	10		1.85	10		2.1	10		Benefit change of circumstance and new claim processing times continue to remain on target.
CP_KPI_27 Benefit New Claim Processing Time	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	26.1	28		24.64	28		24.94	28		Benefit change of circumstance and new claim processing times continue to remain on target.
CP_KPI_30 Number of tickets sold local lottery Scheme	Number of tickets sold local lottery scheme – generating x amount.	Since start of scheme 35,305 tickets sold			Since start of scheme 46,134 tickets sold			Since start of scheme 56,306 tickets sold			Up to 30 June 2023, 56,306 tickets have been sold and £33,783.60 raised for good causes.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_32 Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	<p><u>New in this quarter:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickle Ball: A new bookable activity along side badminton and offered in the sports hall, as well as added into programmes such as evergreen badminton and community based activities • Cardiac Arrest Clinic: Added in an extra hour to this each week on a Wednesday • Home Education Clip and Climb: Sessions added in for home educated children for clip and climb that compliment swim sessions already in place • Gym Induction: New simplified gym induction put into place, that is easily bookable and offers everyone an induction and programme utilising the Technogym app, and Biocircuit induction for those who are eligible. <p><u>Ongoing projects and activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday programme: Make this more sport focused, with camps that specialise in particular areas such as trampolining. • Walking Football: Increased the session time on this due to popularity, also added in a specific Parkinson football group who are on the schedule weekly. • NEET Programme: Continues to work within the centre, taking young people who are not in work, education or training to learn interview skills and discipline with skills such as boxing sessions. • Kent Refuge Football: Regular slot on Sunday working with Kent Refuge UK to provide sport for refugee children 									

Targeted Growth

Highlights from the Quarter

Supporting town centre businesses through tough times

A new town centre business grants scheme is being introduced to provide businesses the opportunity to apply for funding support to bring empty premises back into use and enable improvements to their current properties.

Following on from the success of the Ashford Town Centre Support Grant (ATCSG) in 2021/22, [Cabinet](#) in July, agreed the use of £140,000 of section 106 funding (from the Designer Outlet expansion) to deliver this grants scheme.

Proposed benefits include increased footfall, decreased vacancy rates and improved business resilience for successful applicants.

Parking charges to rise for the first time since 2020

Parking charges across Ashford and Tenterden are set to increase by less than the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the first increase for over three years.

Over the last few years, car parking costs have risen. Electricity bills for our parking sites have gone up by £173,000, and a significant funding gap currently exists. It is important that our car parks are maintained to ensure they are safe and we generate funds to invest, enabling the council to improve our services for the future. Members reluctantly agreed to a [proposal](#) of a minimal increase in charges. All tariffs will rise by approximately 10% (rounded to the nearest 10p), half of the CPI, which has increased by 20.18% in real terms since the last increase in charges.

Ashford's street art festival UNFRAMED

UNFRAMED, Ashford's first mural festival officially launched in the period. The contemporary street art trail, curated by Accent London and The London Mural Company, transformed blank walls and building surfaces into high quality mural paintings and bespoke integrated artwork.

Work began on the murals in Ashford, Kent, at the beginning of March 2023, when world renowned Mr Doodle, who lives in the Ashford borough, created what is believed to be the world's biggest doodle on the side of a multi storey car park.

Other artists including Alex Chinneck, Charley Peters, Curtis Hylton and local artist Danielle Williamson all took on the challenge of converting blank walls into spaces of colour and creativity.

Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_33 Business survival - current vacancy rates	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records Current Vacancy rates	8.7%			9.2%			9.2%			5437 properties - 306 exemptions and 197 empty reliefs

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

CP_KPI_34 Ashford town centre vacancy rate	Ashford town centre vacancy rate	15.2%			14.3%			15.2%			Jul-23 - 335 units surveyed 51 empty (15.2%)
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The area surveyed is the High Street, Middle Row, New Rents, North Street, Bank Street, Tufton Street, County Square, Park Mall and Elwick Place. This is surveyed manually quarterly.

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Vacancy rates peaked at 20% in September 2020, due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. Although improved from the low, vacancy rates remain significantly above the previous low of 8% in November 2017, and remain significantly above national benchmarks, which were 12% in January 2022

[Ashford Town Centre Reset - Strategy Action Plan.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Ashford Town Centre Business Grants [\(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

CP_KPI_35	Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the councils budget books. Measure to start from Sept 20	88%			93%			85%			Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos.
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The Corporate Property Annual Performance Report 2021/22 reviewing revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year, as well as advising on its expected future performance: [Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2021/22](#)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_36 Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	6.5%			9.7%			10.5%			

Site	Square foot let	Total square foot	Percentage let
Ellingham	63,397 sf	64,397 sf	98.4%
Carlton Road	37,244 sf	42,065 sf	88.5%
Elwick Place	90,807 sf	104,391 sf	87.0%
International House	71,101 sf	82,462 sf	86.2%
Total	262,549 sf	293,315 sf	89.5%

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note																				
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status																					
CP_KPI_38	Digital uptake - % of total council /% Increase transactions completed electronically.	83	80		83	80		90.95	80		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Digital Transactions</th> <th>Calls</th> <th>Total Transactions</th> <th>Digital Uptake</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 2023</td> <td>47880</td> <td>6529</td> <td>54409</td> <td>88.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 2023</td> <td>58808</td> <td>7827</td> <td>66635</td> <td>88.25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>June 2023</td> <td>81357</td> <td>8091</td> <td>89448</td> <td>90.95%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Month	Digital Transactions	Calls	Total Transactions	Digital Uptake	April 2023	47880	6529	54409	88.00%	May 2023	58808	7827	66635	88.25%	June 2023	81357	8091	89448	90.95%
Month	Digital Transactions	Calls	Total Transactions	Digital Uptake																											
April 2023	47880	6529	54409	88.00%																											
May 2023	58808	7827	66635	88.25%																											
June 2023	81357	8091	89448	90.95%																											

In June we had the best ever month in terms of digital uptake surpassing 90% of transactions via digital channels. One reason for this increase is the fact that we are now using the new Google Analytics product so we are using page view stats for certain services but June also saw a high increase in online payments, which can be attributed to garden waste subscription payments.

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

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-March)	Q1 (Apr-June)	Latest Note
		Impressions	Impressions:	Impressions:	
CP_KPI_39	Social media engagement	<p>Facebook: 798,723 Twitter: 27,170 Nextdoor: 172,687 Instagram: 11,724</p> <p>Followers</p> <p>Facebook: 10,679</p>	<p>Facebook: 522,101 Twitter: 21,731 Nextdoor: 110,663 Instagram: 5,105</p> <p>Followers:</p> <p>Facebook: 11,002</p>	<p>Facebook: 572,290 Twitter: 57,012 Nextdoor: 102,792 Instagram: 8,588</p> <p>Followers:</p> <p>Facebook: 11,312</p>	

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
		Twitter: 9,101 Nextdoor: 27,004 Instagram: 2,677			Twitter: 9,109 Nextdoor: 27,996 Instagram: 2,718			Twitter: 9,103 Nextdoor: 28,400 Instagram: 2,755			

Ashford Borough Council's Communications team is responsible for managing the council's social media accounts. Our most active platforms that residents can engage with the council on, include Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor and Instagram.

The data will allow the Council to better understand the needs of our residents and ensure that our social media strategy is shaped by the results of the data.

With circa 50,000 combined total followers across all ABC social platforms, the Communications Team are also actively exploring methods to further grow each platform through various digital tools so that they can effectively reach more residents across the borough, including those in rural areas.

CP_KPI_41	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	277,199			289,988			295,041			
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Overview of Car Park and on-Street sales for Q1. These income figures are generated from the following systems, Pay and Display Machines (Flowbird), Pay by Phone (RingGo) and SAGOSS (ANPR).

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Monthly sales can fluctuate because of daily variation and the number of weekdays and Saturdays that fall within a given month, which may have a slight effect on income trends .

Please see monthly revenue as below;-

Month	Income
June	£240,629
May	£235,976
April	£234,877
March	£235,293
February	£227,163
January	£204,063
Average monthly total	£229,666

Month	Transactions
June	88,356
May	87,280
April	87,055
March	104,758
February	97,806
January	87,424
Average monthly total	92,113

70% of our income comes from Ashford and 30% from Tenterden.

Busiest car parks over the last three months:

1. Vicarage Lane Car Park (Ashford)
2. Elwick Place car Park (Ashford)
3. Civic Centre & Stour Centre Car Park (Ashford)

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

Total Income										
2022-23		£2,602,042								
2021-22		£2,203,918								
2020-21		£819,698								
2019-20		£2,591,786								

Figures show as increasing each month compared with the same periods last year. Income appears to be levelling out to pre-covid levels.

Our Principles

Highlights from the Quarter

Citizens Panel

A Citizens' Panel, to encourage residents to give their views and opinions on services and issues that affect the borough, has been launched.

Aiming to bring together cross section of local people to engage with the council regarding issues and proposals across the borough.

Citizens who sign up will be able to share opinions and take part in consultations through online surveys and polls to provide their views on various topics of interest to residents.

Ashford joins in national call for Government intervention to find nutrient solution

Ashford Borough Council Leader, Cllr Noel Ovenden has joined a growing number of local authority leaders across the country in signing a letter asking Prime Minister, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, to act now on nutrient neutrality.

Without it, they say, it will continue to stifle housing development and local economies. The letter from the District Councils' Network, outlined the concerns from local government leaders, and demanded the Government intervene.

Council outlines progress being made on Stodmarsh mitigation measures










Ashford Borough Council continues to respond to the various issues that have arisen from the need for new housing and other developments to achieve 'nutrient neutrality', due to the deterioration of Stodmarsh Lakes.




Since July 2020, certain planning applications (those providing overnight accommodation, including new housing) located within the Stour catchment and/or which discharge foul water into the catchment, have been put 'on hold' until they can achieve nutrient neutrality.

In response to this issue, the council has been working on a way to deliver long term nutrient mitigation, by identifying suitable land in the borough for strategic wetlands, which can generate off-site nutrient mitigation that can then be secured by developments, allowing them to be granted planning permission.

For further information please see, [March's Cabinet meeting](#).

Quarterly Measures

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_42 FOI Response Rate	% of freedom of information requests responded to within 20 working days	100%	95%		98%	95%		99%	95%		186 requests received -1 request completed outside the 20 day window.
CP_KPI_43 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	82.11%	74.25%		98.6%	99%		29.1%	24.75%		Government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates are available here
CP_KPI_44 Council Tax Collection Rate	Percentage of council tax collected - cumulative figure per month	85.57%	73.71%		97.5%	98.25%		30.03%	24.57%		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note	
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status		
CP_KPI_45	Percentage of invoices paid on time	Invoices paid within 30 days of the date of the invoice - 96.56 % 1st April 2022 – 17th March 2023										
Percentage of invoices paid on time												
CP_KPI_46	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.87%	100%		100%	100%		100%	100%			
Gas Safety Certificates												
Our homes must meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely, our target is 100% and there is reviewed focus to achieve this consistently with a zero tolerance approach to access issues.												
CP_KPI_47		10.41 days per FTE					9.68 days per FTE					
Number of days sickness per full time equivalent												







Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	




A total of 4,716 days were lost due to sickness absence across the 12-month period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. Based on the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees at 31 March 2023, 487.12 FTE, the total amount of working days lost due to sickness in 2022/23 is 9.68 days per FTE.

[Annual Sickness Report 202223.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

CP_KPI_48	Average wait time for customer service calls - to be benchmarked with results across Kent	0h 00m 49s	0h 01m 38s		0h 00m 48s	0h 01m 38s		0h 01m 12s	0h 01m 38s		
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CP_KPI_51	number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	Number of ongoing litigation matters = 118 Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0	Number of ongoing litigation matters = 125 Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0	Number of ongoing litigation matters = 167 (increase further to disrepair claims) Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0	Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.
	number of	Number of new 106 files	Number of new 106 files	Number of new 106 files	The Overview and Scrutiny

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
CP_KPI_52 number of new 106 files opened	new 106 files opened	opened - 4			opened – 7			opened – 5			Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the council's Section 106 process, recommendations available within the final report. S106 Task Group - FinalReport.pdf (moderngov.co.uk) with a S106 Scrutiny Review – Update provides to the committee in May 22
CP_KPI_53 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	92%	90%		87%	90%		88%	90%		
<p>The national average performance for the percentage of planning applications approved is usually around 87 to 88%. As the financial year has progressed our performance here has stabilised to around target. A recent update on the Stodmarsh situation was presented to Cabinet Report Title: (moderngov.co.uk), explaining the progress made towards a mitigation to this strategic issue.</p>											
CP_KPI_54 Speed of	% of major planning applications determined	88%	65%		78%	65%		67%	65%		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
Major Planning Application Decisions	within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority)										
CP_KPI_54 b % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	77%	75%		76%	75%		71%	75%		

The latest data tables on local government Planning including Ashford Borough Council, covering the speed and quality of planning decisions

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	

are available at the following link: [Live tables on planning application statistics](#)




Performance remains good across the broader period in respect of major application determinations. Q1 performance was below par but it was based on just nine cases. Of the three cases determined outside statutory timescales, two were determined without being able to secure agreement to an Extension of Time from the applicant.

CP_KPI_55 Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions	% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks (or within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the council).	81%	75%		85%	75%		78%	75%		
CP_KPI_55 b % of non	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks	87%	80%		86%	80%		84%	80%		

Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	amended to reflect 24 rolling month										

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

Performance in non-major schemes remains strong and above target.

CP_KPI_56	Number includes all conditions applications, pre-app cases, as well as applications for outline, full or reserved matters consent. Reducing backlog with	985	550		792	550		775 (603)	550		Reduction in cases can be seen this quarter although no significant changes to previous quarter commentary.
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Code & Short Name	Description	Q3 2022/23			Q4 2022/23			Q1 2023/24			Latest Note
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	
	a capacity set at 550 open cases										

Nutrient neutrality requirements related to Stodmarsh lakes continue to be a significant factor that restricts the issuing of planning decisions. Since performance was last reported here, a recent High Court judgement has extended the scope of application types to which the requirement for nutrient neutrality may apply and this has increased the overall number of live cases where Stodmarsh constraints apply.

At the time of drafting this report, 172 live cases (inc. six at appeal) fall into this category leaving a net figure of live NON-STODMARSH cases reflected in the table in (brackets) above. Officers are continuing to take cases to the point where proposals can be agreed in all other respects pending the nutrient mitigation solution.



Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date: 28 September 2023

Report Title: Update on the Broadband and Digital Infrastructure improvements in the Ashford Borough

Report Author: Tom Jenkins, Economic Development Manager

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Noel Ovenden, Leader of the Council

Summary:

Ashford Borough Council has been very pro-active in the approach to improving broadband and digital connectivity across the borough for a number of years. ABC has built a reputation as a council that providers and developers can work with.

Over the past 12 months officers have been working on the following:

- Worked with the Digital Enablers Group to bring forward key activity for improving digital infrastructure
- Liaising with KCC on activity in the county and in the borough, particularly in relation the Government's Project Gigabit
- Supporting Openreach and Netomnia with delivery of FTTP to ABC's housing stock
- Engagement with providers including Openreach, Virgin Media O2, Lightning Fibre and Netomnia

This report sets out the actions recommended moving forward and updates Cabinet on the progress made within the last 12 months particularly:

- Increasing Superfast broadband coverage (30 Mbps or higher) to 93% of premises in the Borough.
- increasing FTTP coverage by 27% to nearly half of the Borough's premises.
- an increase of 2% in the number of premises covered by 4G from all four MNOs to nearly three in four premises in the Borough.
- a reduction to 0.4% of premises unable to receive 10Mbps download speed (Universal Service Obligation).

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: All Wards

Recommendations: Cabinet are asked to:-

- I. Note the content of this report and the Broadband work undertaken in the past year.
- II. To note that the delivery of broadband is, and

should remain, a key priority in the council's Corporate Plan.

III. Approve the actions set out in section 38 of this report.

Policy Overview:

Within the Ashford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2022-2024, the importance of improved digital infrastructure is highlighted in Objective TG2 under Targeted Growth "Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents". The document explains that fast, reliable digital connectivity across the whole Borough is critical for businesses and residents to trade and access services. Some areas of the Borough are disadvantaged because of poor digital connectivity. A lack of digital connectivity can stifle innovation and business growth.

The Ashford Local Plan (Adopted in February 2019) also identifies the importance of great telecommunications infrastructure through the adoption of Policy EMP6 – Promotion of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP).

Each of these strategic documents prioritise the requirement for improvements to the existing telecommunications infrastructure as well as future proofing where necessary.

Financial Implications:

It is not proposed that ABC take on direct financial endeavours relating to broadband provision. Cabinet approved the creation of the Digital Enablers Group last year which is delivering on the work programme required to deliver the Corporate Plan actions. This report will update on progress to date and seeks to continue this agreed programme. There is therefore no further resource implication apart from ongoing staff time for officers that attend the Digital Enablers Group.

**Legal Implications:
Risk Assessment**

N/A
Please see Section 39 within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

A fundamental priority in improving affordable reliable broadband and mobile access for residents and businesses within the Borough, is to reduce social exclusion and rural isolation. The aspiration to level up access across the Borough will look to reduce the current inequalities in access, highlighted since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Exemption Clauses:

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Agenda Item No.

Report Title: Update on the Broadband improvements in the Ashford Borough.

Purpose of the Report

1. To report to Cabinet on the latest activity undertaken by officers regarding broadband and digital infrastructure improvements in the Borough, provide an update on Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) and Superfast broadband coverage and outline plans for ongoing work.

Issue to be decided

2. Cabinet to take note of the update on the latest position and approve the priority and proposed actions for improved broadband as set out in section 38 of this report.

Background

3. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has been responsible for delivering the government's policies on increasing economic growth and productivity through improved digital connectivity. Central to this is the Government's target of rolling out gigabit-capable infrastructure capable of download speeds of at least 1000 megabits per second (Mbps) to at least 85% of UK premises by 2025 through Project Gigabit. Gigabit-capable broadband, such as full fibre, can provide speeds of over 1,000Mbps, fast enough to download a High-Definition (HD) film in seconds.
4. The Government has allocated £5 billion to rolling out Project Gigabit by 2025. While commercial suppliers who are expected to deliver up to 80% of the UK's coverage where profitable, the public sector needs to provide support to build gigabit infrastructure in the remaining 20% of less commercially viable areas. In order to achieve this, DCMS supported a series of programmes including: "outside in" deployment of FTTP in areas unlikely to be commercially viable; FTTP via schemes such as the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN); Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes for the final 20%; and a Gigabit voucher scheme.
5. Over 72% of UK premises now have gigabit-capable networks available to them. The main way to deliver gigabit capable broadband (>1000 Mbps) is using Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) cabling, however, other technologies may need to be used to deliver in harder-to-reach areas, such as Satellite or Fixed Wireless Access (FWA).
6. Ashford Borough Council has been pro-actively supporting the rollout of superfast broadband across the Borough for many years and is recognised by Government as one of the best case studies of Local Authorities taking the lead on broadband improvement. The major development in this sector has been ABC's inclusion of Policy EMP6 (Promotion of Fibre to the Premises) in its Local Plan from February 2019, which requires nearly all new developments in the Borough to provide fibre broadband connections to the premises.

7. The Economic Development team also co-ordinates the Ashford Digital Enablers Group, a cross-departmental ABC body set up to support broadband rollout within the borough. The Group meets on a monthly basis to ensure the public sector is supporting commercial providers efficiently and removing barriers to local Gigabit rollout.
8. To support the understanding of this report, a glossary of terms has been incorporated in Appendix B to this report.

Ashford Borough broadband status

9. The Ofcom Connected Nations Report explains in detail the digital connectivity under different technologies, different speeds and different areas. We have attached to this report as Appendix A the results from the latest report (2023 Interim). The following key measures can be identified for Ashford Borough:

Number of Ashford premises with Superfast broadband (>30Mbps): 56,159 (93.0%)

Ashford change since spring 2022: +1,302 (+1% overall Ashford coverage)

Superfast broadband UK average: 96%

Number of Ashford premises with Full Fibre (FTTP): 28,271 (47%)

Ashford change since spring 2022: +16,515 (+27.3% overall Ashford coverage)

Full Fibre UK average: 47%

Number of Ashford premises below Universal Service Obligation level (<10Mbps): 234 (0.4%)

Ashford change since spring 2022: -94 (-0.2% overall Ashford coverage)

Below USO premises UK average: 0.3%

Percentage of Ashford premises covered with 4G indoors by at least one Mobile Network Operator (MNO): 99.0%

Overall Ashford change in coverage since spring 2022: +0%

Average across all LAs in UK: 99.1%

Percentage of Ashford premises covered with 4G indoors by all 4 MNOs: 73.4%

Overall Ashford change in coverage since spring 2022: +1.9%

Average across all LAs in UK: 82.1%

10. The figures above need context alongside the comparative UK figures to explain what they mean for Ashford as a predominantly rural Borough and why they are like this. The Superfast broadband percentage of properties covered matches approximately population densities due to the required Return on Investment (ROI) by providers in reaching clusters of premises. The more rural an area, the lower the population density and the less percentage of premises are likely to be covered. This is evidenced by the fact that across the country, Tewkesbury (which has approximately the same population density to Ashford – 2.3 people per hectare) also has 93% coverage, Braintree (slightly higher population density – 2.6) has 98% SFBB coverage, while East Devon (lower population density – 1.87) has 92% coverage. Rural areas will always be an issue for commercial infrastructure builds which is why it is important for the council to lead, coordinate and lobby for investment.

11. It is also worth noting that most FTTP rollout nationally is being driven by commercial deployments which, as mentioned above, require Return on Investment (ROI) for the providers. That leads the providers to mostly install FTTP where it is more cost-effective to do so, with schemes like Project Gigabit aimed at making connections in the more rural parts of the country more viable.
12. We would note that the introduction of Local Plan Policy EMP6 has contributed to a high level of superfast broadband coverage, meaning that FTTP coverage - which stood at 7.8% in 2021 - has now risen to 47% in 2023. Without Policy EMP6 it is likely the figures in 2023 would have been lower. EMP6 will also have enabled additional infrastructure which is currently being upgraded, meaning FTTP can be delivered quicker in these early stages. Overall, there has been a large increase in planning applications where an EMP6 condition has been applied.
13. These latest figures from Ofcom show that Ashford's FTTP coverage is now in line with the UK average coverage (47%) which should be welcome news and shows the considerable progress made considering the factors set out above.
14. Mobile coverage has not significantly changed across the UK since last year (with no reported change in the percentage of premises covered by at least one MNO). Densification of mobile coverage has taken place, with an increase nationally and locally in the number of premises covered by all four MNOs.

Gigabit Voucher schemes and Project Gigabit update

15. The responsibility for coordinating digital infrastructure improvements nationally has recently been passed to the new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). To date there has been no indication that the scope of programmes already in place will change.
16. The Economic Development team has been working closely with KCC to ensure that the Government's vouchers schemes have been publicised and that communities across the Borough are able to improve their connections. The Gigabit Voucher Scheme was closed in May 2020 and the Rural Gigabit Connectivity scheme was replaced by the UK Gigabit Voucher (UKGV) scheme in April 2021. To avoid duplication of government subsidies in areas targeted by Project Gigabit procurement, UKGV (including any Community Fibre schemes) was paused in September 2021. It is anticipated that UKGV scheme may be resumed after the procurement for Project Gigabit is complete.
17. For Project Gigabit, Building Digital UK (BDUK) – an executive agency of DSIT - have allocated Kent & Medway £112 million to deliver gigabit-capable connections to areas that are not expected to benefit from telecom providers' own upgrade programmes. This would cover 72,000 premises in the region. BDUK is currently in the procurement process for a single contract that will be established to deliver these new connections across Kent. Kent County Council's broadband team has been asked to partner with BDUK and support the local delivery across Kent.

18. As part of the pre-procurement work, BDUK has identified the areas that were not commercially viable through Open Market Review (between 12 August 2021 - 13 September 2021) and Public Review stages (between 4 February 2022 - 4 March 2022). BDUK has published the outcome of the Public Review and provided postcode level data. BDUK will only provide subsidy to target premises that have been designated 'White' in the review. From the data published, the Ashford Borough has approx. 6,400 premises in 860 postcodes designated as 'White'. A map in Appendix D shows the postcodes across Kent that are in scope for this project.
19. Procurement is currently underway from BDUK to identify a provider that will undertake this project for Kent. The outcome of this procurement was due to be November 2023 but an announcement is likely to be made in early 2024.
20. Beyond fixed broadband, the Government has published its Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, aimed at delivering 5G connectivity to all populated areas by 2030, as well as investing in the next generation of connectivity. The strategy reaffirms Government's commitment to extending 4G coverage to 95% of the population and deliver 5G to all populated areas by 2030. This strategy provides the vision and framework for improving wireless connectivity. Officers at Ashford Borough Council will ensure the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy is considered as part of our approach to Mobile and Wireless infrastructure moving forward.

Council-focussed work update

21. Members will be familiar with the fact that Ashford Borough Council has implemented the first Local Plan policy in the country which requires developers to install Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) on most new developments in the Borough. Whilst there are exceptions, this policy is proving effective in ensuring that residential and commercial properties in the Borough are future-proofed. Following the approval by Cabinet last year of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Policy EMP6, the Economic Development Team have continued to provide support to colleagues in Planning with regards to the implementation and conditioning of the policy when possible.
22. Following guidance from Government aimed at supporting Local Authorities provide leadership and create a strategy, the Economic Development team has established a cross-organisational Ashford Digital Enablers Group of KCC and ABC officers who are 'digital enablers' who can work from within their departments to further the digital connectivity ambitions of the council. Key objectives of the group so far have been the creation of flexible wayleave agreements, supporting the rollout of FTTP to the council's housing stock and monitoring the application of Local Plan policy EMP6.
23. Ashford's Digital Champions (Portfolio Holder and Deputy Chief Executive) and Digital Infrastructure Coordinator (Economic Development Manager) also support this work, which form part of the duties required of the relevant Member and officers and as such is not considered to require additional resource or time.

Provider updates

24. Openreach has concluded its main build in Tenterden. Not all premises connected to the Tenterden exchange are covered under this rollout, with premises upgraded being in close proximity to the High Street and town core up to parts of St Michaels. Tenterden's FTTP coverage can be seen in Appendix C.
25. Virgin Media O2 (VMO2), which is present in the Ashford Urban Area and parts of Bethersden, are upgrading their infrastructure to gigabit speeds but these won't go live until the majority of the UK network is upgraded. The whole network should be upgraded to fibre by 2028, covering 15 million premises across the UK.
26. Openreach and Netomnia have been progressing their FTTP rollout across the Ashford Urban Area. This includes approx. 35,000 premises, with Netomnia rolling out to an additional 20,000 premises, including businesses. Both providers have been rolling out extensively in the Ashford area as can be seen on the map in Appendix C.
27. Openreach has also announced that in Biddenden, High Halden, Hamstreet, Sevington, Wye, Chilham, and Charing exchanges are due to be upgraded to FTTP however the only one planned soon to be complete in the next 12 months is Sevington. Please see the maps in Appendix E to see Openreach's planned FTTP rollout for the Ashford Borough.
28. Lightning Fibre are rolling out FTTP to 4,000 homes and businesses in Tenterden, with the build period due to end by December 2023. This represents the first Kent build for this AltNet provider and will be a base for further expansions across Kent.
29. Kent-based Trooli have also started to deploy their FTTP network in Charing. No further details are available at present and officers will continue to attempt to engage with the company.
30. The Borough has also seen 5G being installed across Ashford town centre with three of the four main MNOs reportedly being able to provide 5G coverage (see attached maps in Appendix C). The coverage according to Ofcom's data seems to have widened since last year, covering the majority of the Ashford Urban Area and some of the hinterland as well as Wye and some villages to the north of the borough.

Digital connectivity work going forward

31. Broadband has been a growing priority for many, with technology evolving constantly and social trends changing at an increased pace. Residents and businesses in the Borough's communities rely on this technology and we need to ensure the future-proofing of infrastructure to enable better digital connectivity. The Coronavirus pandemic further highlighted this need, with vulnerable residents in isolation and working from home continuing to be widely adopted. Digital connectivity remains a top priority for the council in the Corporate Plan 2022-2024.

32. The work undertaken to date has ensured that the Ashford Borough could reach the levels of coverage seen today because without Policy EMP6 it is likely the figures in 2021 would have been lower, meaning the current figures would also be lower. With a Local Plan Review being undertaken in the coming year, officers in the Digital Enablers Group will support this work with the inclusion of digital infrastructure policies to support the council's ambitions for improved coverage.
33. Ashford Borough Council has been one of the first councils to introduce flexible wayleaves, allowing providers to agree the rollout of FTTP to our housing stock under one wayleave document. This has led to efficiency within the council with much less officer time needed to review legal documentation and agreements. As the council has now signed two flexible wayleaves, officers in the Digital Enablers Group will support the rollout to the council's housing stock over the coming year.
34. Whilst there are positive signs with increased levels of investment being seen in the borough, there remains a higher than average proportion of premises below the Universal Service Obligation (USO; i.e., having poor broadband below 10Mbit/s download speed and 2Mbit/s upload). There has been a decline from 0.6% in January 2022 to 0.4% in 2023, however this is the highest level in Kent and slightly above the 0.3% UK average. See Appendix A for a table of this data. Focus for improvements will therefore continue to be needed in the final 10% of hard-to-reach premises in rural areas. The increased investment now being seen in the urban areas of the Borough provides a starting point from which network expansion into rural areas can start. The Government's Phase 2 Gigabit Programme and subsequent funding for KCC to deliver improved broadband to those commercially unviable premises in rural parts of the county presents a key opportunity to support this. Officers will continue to liaise with KCC and BDUK to ensure the Ashford premises identified as being in scope for Project Gigabit are delivered within this programme.
35. During the procurement phase of Project Gigabit, the Government's Gigabit Voucher scheme (UKGV) has been paused for Kent. As soon as the UKGV is available to Kent again, officers will continue to promote these and related community projects as alternative support for rural connectivity improvements.
36. Mobile coverage in parts of the Borough is known to be an issue, with approximately 1% of premises not being able to access 4G indoors and some premises having issues with 2G and 3G. Mobile coverage is part of the essential digital infrastructure needed by residents and businesses especially following the Covid-19 pandemic. The Economic Development team will increase engagement with mobile network operators to support investment in the borough in appropriate locations. The siting of mobile masts can be a controversial issue due to them needing to be located in specific areas to maximise coverage, but also needing to be sensitive to the environment and location in deciding where they are best sited. Taking forward improved communication with mobile operators will help to find the best locations for new infrastructure.
37. To date the Economic Development team, together with colleagues across the council, have managed to attract investment from providers, create a

policy which will future proof developments and continued to promote ways for broadband improvements to take place. The work is undertaken across a number of teams but coordinated by the Economic Development Manager, with support from the Head of Economic Development and the Assistant Economic Development Officer. The Economic Development Manager normally dedicates approximately 20% of their time to this activity, and the work undertaken over the past year has included:

- i. Working with Planning colleagues on implementing Policy EMP6 as conditions for applications
- ii. Light touch engagement with providers known to be building or have plans to build in the Borough
- iii. Engaging and coordinating the Openreach and Netomnia rollout for Ashford town centre, particularly working with the providers and colleagues in Housing on deploying FTTP to ABC's housing stock
- iv. Continue working with the cross-departmental Ashford Digital Enablers Group to barrier-bust internally

38. Broadband is a key priority in the Corporate Plan and the work being undertaken so far by all parties is delivering much-needed improvements. Officers at ABC recommend that this work should continue in the following year:

- i. Continue the cross-departmental officers group to ensure the council has clear and pro-active processes across departments that allow providers to engage and invest easily and with more confidence
- ii. Continue to work with broadband providers to support improved connections and increase investment
- iii. Continue the coordination of the Ashford urban area FTTP rollout and ensure other planned rollouts are continuing at pace
- iv. Continue to support the rollout of FTTP to the council's housing stock, particularly in Ashford and Tenterden
- v. Proactively engage with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Mobile UK to seek improved mobile connectivity in the borough
- vi. Support the Local Plan Review with evidence and the development of policies relating to digital infrastructure improvements needed during the lifetime of the new Local Plan
- vii. Support KCC in their involvement in the Government's Phase 2 Gigabit Programme and the delivery of this significant government investment in future years and to seek maximum coverage within the Ashford Borough through this investment
- viii. Support the promotion of UK Gigabit Vouchers (UKGV) and related community projects to deliver digital infrastructure improvements in rural areas.

Risk Assessment

39. The main key risks currently identified are:
- a. Lower levels of access to broadband and mobile networks will impact on the economic aspirations for the Borough to target more knowledge based businesses and employees.

- b. Lower levels of access will impact residents' employment opportunities where employers are increasingly likely to require them to work from home, particularly following the pandemic.
- c. Lower levels of access will impact students within the area with their increasing need to access online education and training resources.
- d. Lower access impacts resident's levels of social inclusion and isolation from services, and have the potential to increase inequality.
- e. The Council's, residents and businesses digital transformation plans will be impacted by the levels of broadband and mobile access throughout the Borough.

Options Considered

- 40. In considering the options for Ashford Borough Council to act, the principle objective has been to maximise the opportunities for residents and businesses within the Borough to access affordable ultrafast broadband and mobile telecommunications.
- 41. The chosen option has been to dedicate officer time, where possible, to attract investment, work with partner organisations and support improved broadband rollout across the Borough. The scope and prioritisation of this work stream is widening to include mobile coverage and future technologies as well.

Next Steps in the Process

- 42. If approved by Members, officers will continue to work on the key actions in section 38 to deliver Objective TG2 of the Corporate Plan 2022-2024.
- 43. Officers will provide updates to the Portfolio Holder and key stakeholders on a regular basis and continue to provide a yearly update to Cabinet on progress of Digital Infrastructure improvements.

Conclusions

- 44. Ashford Borough Council is one of the few local authorities to have dedicated officer time to improving broadband within Kent. Successes such as the implementation of Policy EMP6 (Fibre to the Premises) in Ashford's Local Plan and the agreement of flexible wayleaves in 2022, have placed Ashford as a leading authority on broadband improvements. However, it is clear that more can be done and should be done to improve digital connectivity for residents and businesses in the Borough. The Borough is seeing significant investment coming forward, especially in the form of Openreach and Netomnia providing FTTP for existing premises which will boost Full Fibre and Gigabit-speed broadband significantly to at least 55,000 premises as part of their current rollout. Beyond this commercial investment, the Government's Phase 2 Gigabit Programme and allocated funds to connect Kent's commercially unviable premises presents a great opportunity for the Borough over the coming months and years.

45. Covid-19 and ongoing working from home trends have highlighted the issues that affect rural communities in the Borough that do not have decent digital connectivity. However rural premises are also in areas that will likely be left until last to be connected due to the commercial nature of FTTP rollouts. It will be important for the next 12 months to ensure the current planned commercial investment is delivered successfully, including through the continued support of the Ashford Digital Enablers Group. However the main focus should be to support the Kent & Medway Project Gigabit procurement and facilitate the ongoing private provider rollout, while also promoting UK Gigabit Vouchers for rural community-led rollouts. Finally, the impact seen with the inclusion of Policy EMP6 in the current Local Plan demonstrates the need to review the requirements for the new Local Plan to ensure these facilitate future investment and improvements. Digital Infrastructure activity will also need to be considered in any review of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2024.

Portfolio Holder's Views

46. "This excellent report highlights where the borough is provisioned regarding broadband and what we are currently doing to improve connectivity in both urban and rural settings.

I would draw colleagues' attention to paragraphs 38 & 39 in particular. These describe the vital work that should be continued in the following year and the risks that inadequate broadband pose"

Cllr Noel Ovenden, Leader of the Council

Contact: Tom Jenkins, Economic Development Manager

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Appendix A: Current Coverage and Situation (Connected Nations Report 2023 Interim)

Local Authority	All Premises	All Matched Premises	SFBB availability (% premises)	UFBB (100Mbit/s) availability (% premises)	UFBB availability (% premises)	Full Fibre availability (% premises)	Gigabit availability (% premises)	% of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	% of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	% of premises below the USO	% of premises with NGA	% of premises able to receive decent broadband from FWA
ASHFORD	60356	60314	93	67.8	66.1	46.8	65.1	0.3	1.2	2.3	6.9	0.4	98.8	34.9
CANTERBURY	74598	72546	92.9	46.6	46.6	46.6	46.6	0.2	0.5	0.9	4.3	0.2	96.9	14.7
DARTFORD	51041	51035	98.2	77	75.6	42	74.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	1.8	0	99.4	0
DOVER	56680	56646	95	65	65	39.3	65	0.5	0.7	1.2	4.9	0.1	98.7	32.9
FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE	55291	55074	94.5	62	61.8	36.1	61.8	0.7	1.2	2	5.1	0.1	97.8	12.5
GRAVESHAM	46151	46055	97.3	82.9	80	53.4	76.3	0	0.3	0.4	2.5	0.1	98.9	0
MAIDSTONE	81083	80929	94.3	75.7	72.1	42.4	69.2	0.4	0.8	1.3	5.6	0.3	98.3	28.7
MEDWAY	124169	124062	97.7	87.5	85.4	54.2	82.9	0.1	0.4	0.8	2.2	0.1	98.8	2.8
SEVENOAKS	53893	53861	95	66.8	66.7	44.5	66.6	0.2	0.4	0.8	4.9	0.1	99.5	0
SWALE	68874	68671	95	74	72.1	56.7	70.4	0.2	0.6	1.3	4.7	0.1	98.9	29.3
THANET	74326	74155	97.6	64.2	64.2	64.1	64.2	0	0.6	0.9	2.2	0	99.4	24.5
TONBRIDGE AND MALLING	58213	58162	96.3	76.8	75	45.9	73.4	0.1	0.5	1	3.6	0.1	98.8	8.5
TUNBRIDGE WELLS	53931	53899	95.6	75.2	73.3	59.1	70.4	0.1	0.5	1.1	4.3	0.3	99.2	0.1

Appendix A: Current Coverage and Situation (Connected Nations Report 2023 Interim) (Cont'd)

Local Authority	All Premises	All Matched Premises	Number of premises with SFBB availability	Number of premises with UFBB (100Mbit/s) availability	Number of premises with UFBB availability	Number of premises with Full Fibre availability	Number of premises with Gigabit availability	Number of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	Number of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	Number of premises below the USO	Number of premises with NGA	Number of premises able to receive decent broadband from FWA
ASHFORD	60356	60314	56159	40931	39872	28271	39277	160	715	1398	4155	234	59611	21065
CANTERBURY	74598	72546	69338	34777	34776	34777	34777	132	377	672	3208	119	72302	10975
DARTFORD	51041	51035	50100	39299	38573	21441	37891	58	104	144	935	12	50737	0
DOVER	56680	56646	53866	36835	36835	22258	36835	276	398	674	2780	67	55927	18635
FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE	55291	55074	52265	34257	34196	19971	34196	363	650	1123	2809	50	54097	6923
GRAVESHAM	46151	46055	44905	38277	36923	24628	35228	21	130	178	1150	48	45652	0
MAIDSTONE	81083	80929	76422	61356	58421	34404	56102	302	622	1056	4507	248	79688	23260
MEDWAY	124169	124062	121361	108693	106030	67317	102898	84	465	946	2701	75	122646	3512
SEVENOAKS	53893	53861	51207	36013	35935	23984	35892	96	216	410	2654	69	53641	0
SWALE	68874	68671	65464	50957	49642	39061	48512	155	431	877	3207	74	68089	20189
THANET	74326	74155	72545	47750	47750	47655	47750	13	456	701	1610	28	73879	18211
TONBRIDGE AND MALLING	58213	58162	56061	44709	43631	26732	42730	73	265	572	2101	80	57515	4920
TUNBRIDGE WELLS	53931	53899	51569	40564	39508	31873	37976	44	265	598	2330	158	53474	78

Appendix B: Notes for Connected Nations Report 2022 Interim figures

ACRONYMS:

SFBB – Superfast Broadband

FWA – Fixed Wireless Access

UFBB – Ultrafast Broadband

NGA – Next Generation Access (incl. Fibre-to-the-Cabinet)

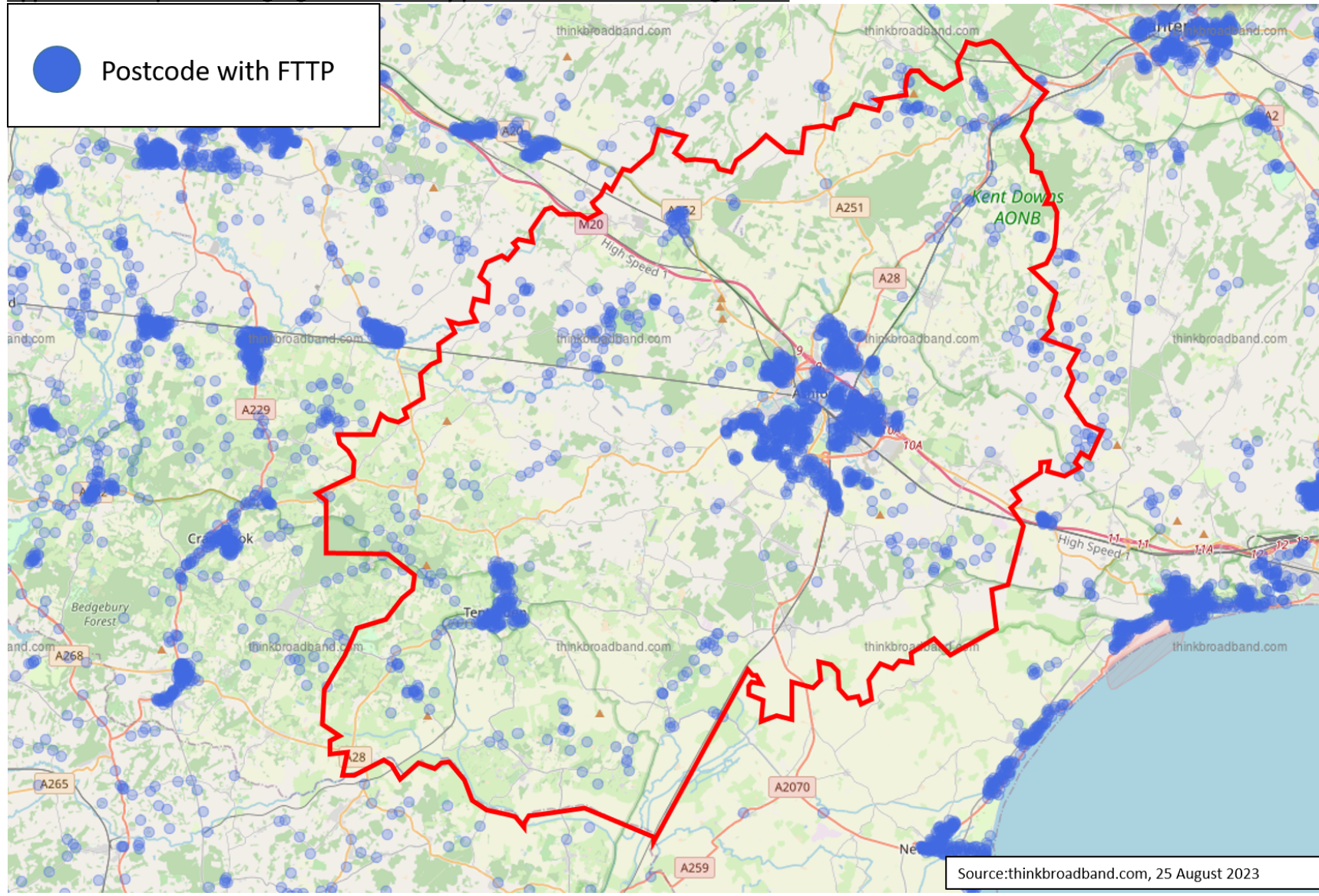
USO – Universal Service Obligation

WISP – Wireless Internet Service Provider

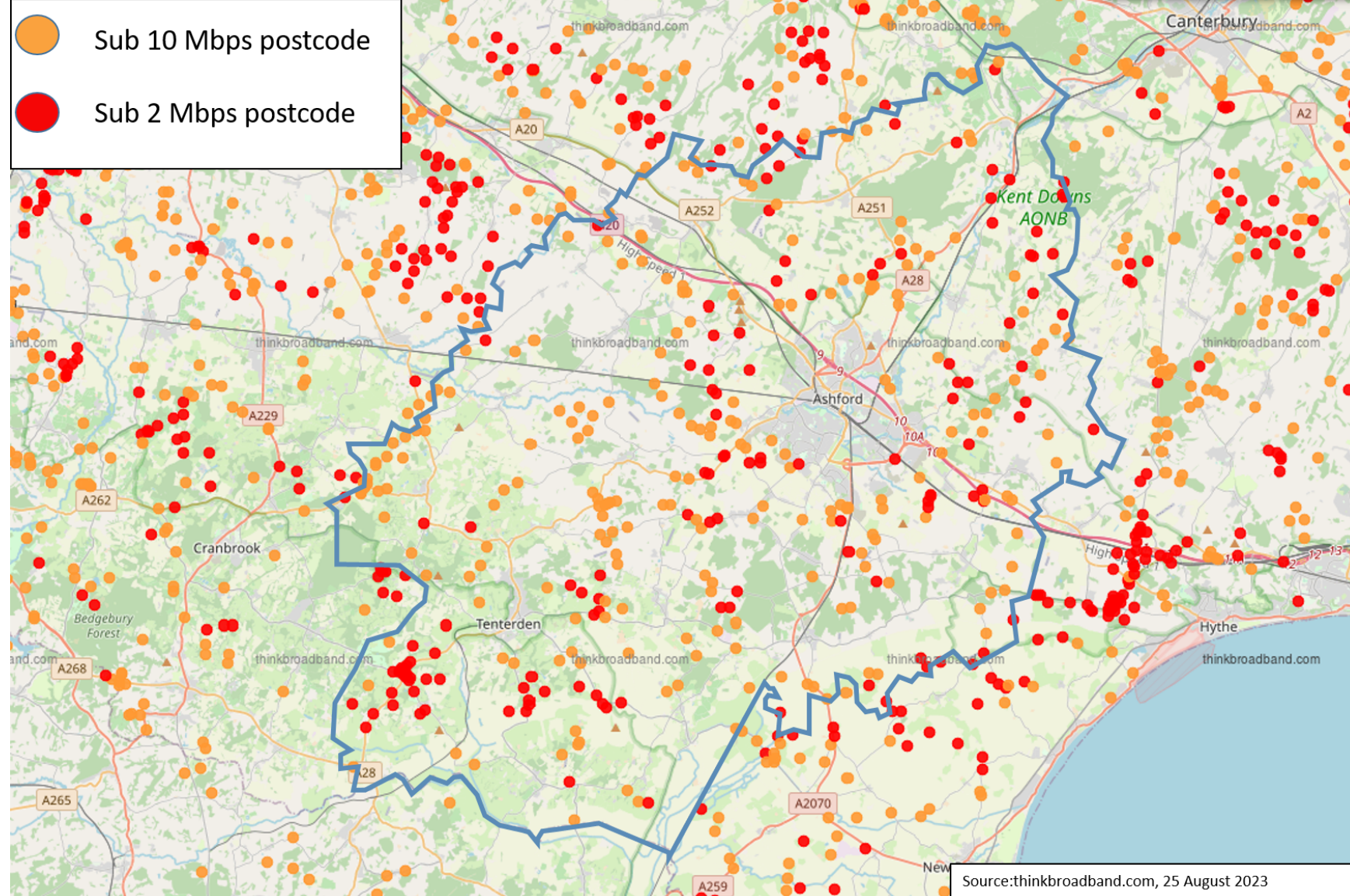
Column Header meanings (the same definition applies to percentage and number figures)

Current headers	Note
All premises	Count of all premises, in scope, based on Ordnance Survey AddressBase® Premium Epoch 81
All matched premises	Count of all premises matched to operator records with a nonzero recorded coverage. Unmatched premises are unclassified
SFBB availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Superfast Broadband (30Mbit/s or greater) coverage from fixed broadband
UFBB (100Mbit/s) availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Ultrafast Broadband (100Mbit/s or greater) coverage from fixed broadband
UFBB availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Ultrafast Broadband (300Mbit/s or greater) coverage from fixed broadband
Full Fibre availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have coverage from a full fibre service from fixed broadband
Gigabit availability (% premises)	Percentage of premises that have Gigabit capable services from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 2Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 2Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 5Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 5Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 10Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 10Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s	Percentage of premises that do not have access to services above 30Mbit/s from fixed broadband
% of premises below the USO	Percentage of premises that do not have access to download speeds at or above 10Mbit/s and upload speeds at or above 1Mbit/s including non-matched records and zero predicted speeds from fixed broadband, WISPs and Mobile FWA
% of premises with NGA	Percentage of premises with Next Generation Access from fixed broadband
% of premises able to receive decent broadband from FWA	Percentage of premises with Decent Broadband from WISPs

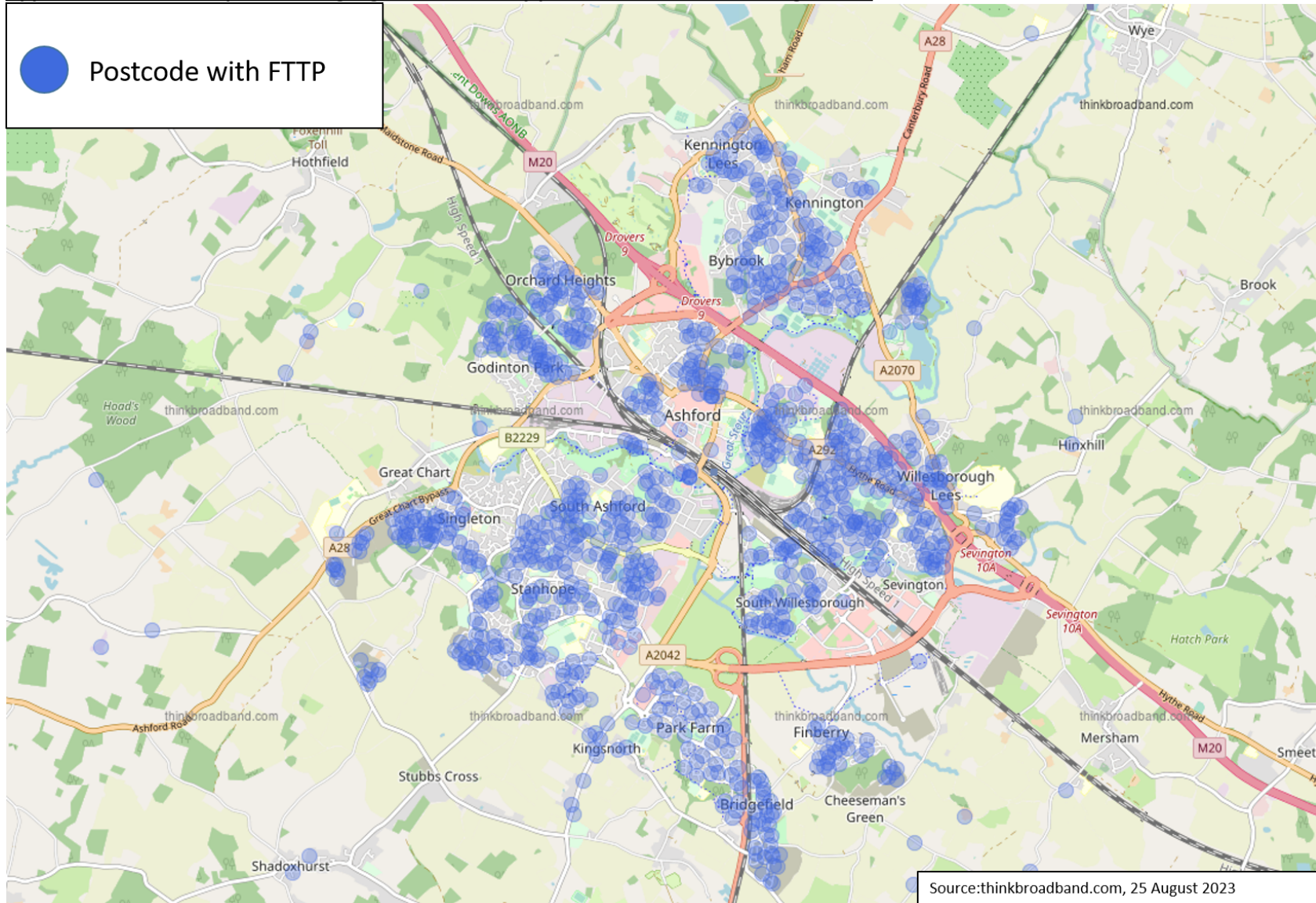
Appendix C: Maps indicating digital connectivity provision across the borough, 2023



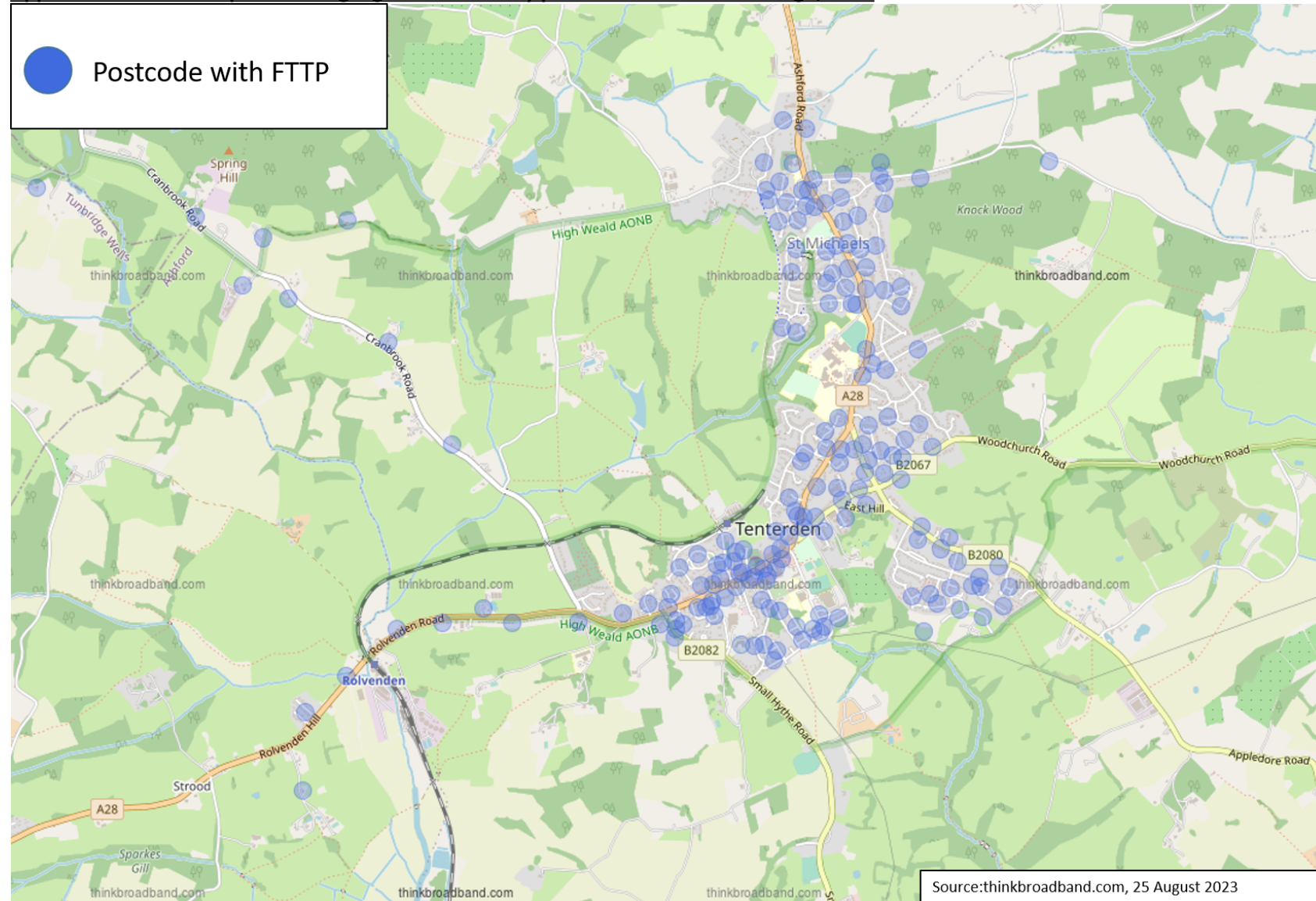
Appendix C Cont'd: Maps indicating digital connectivity provision across the borough, 2023



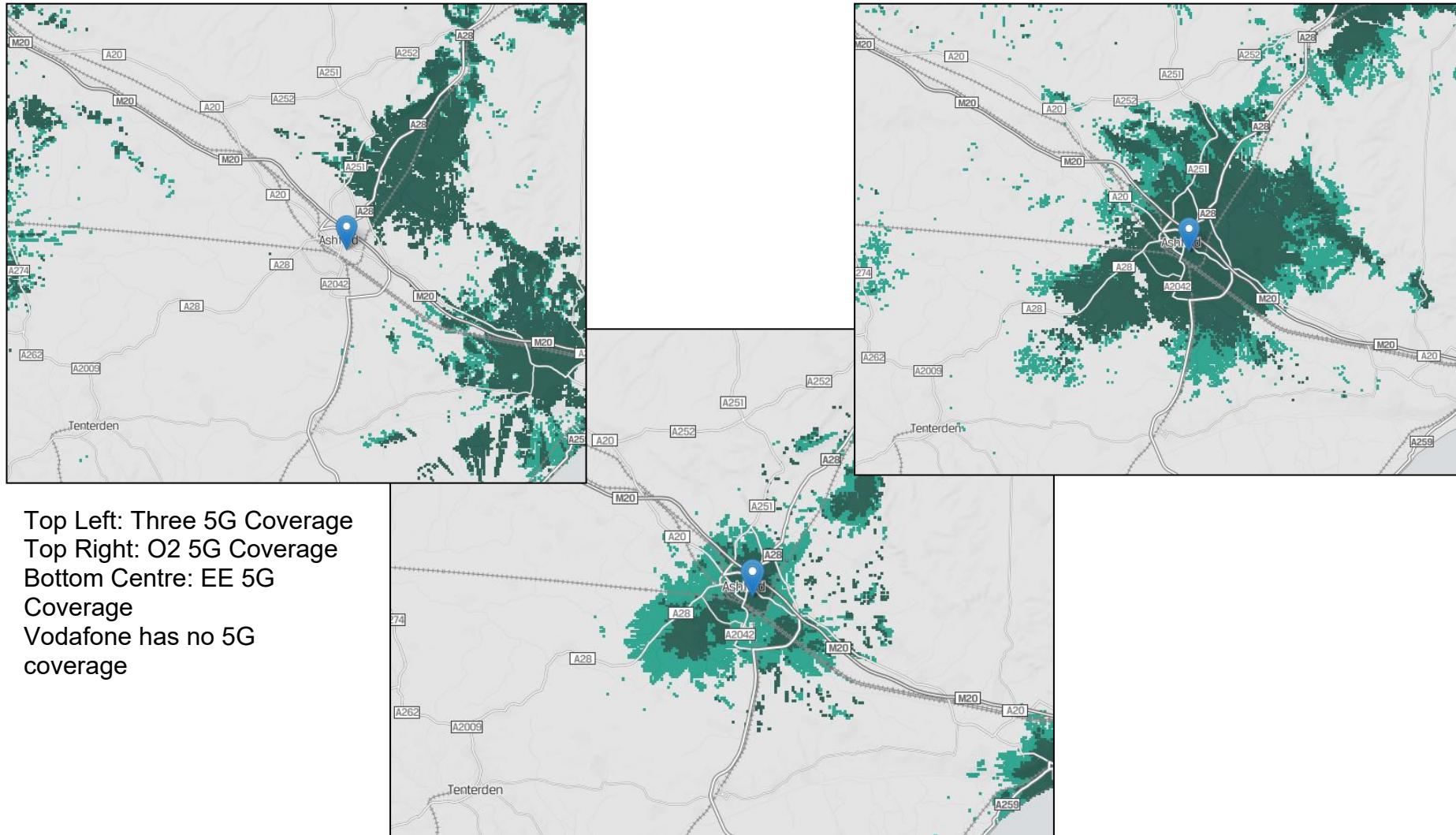
Appendix C Cont'd: Maps indicating digital connectivity provision across the borough, 2023



Appendix C Cont'd: Maps indicating digital connectivity provision across the borough, 2023



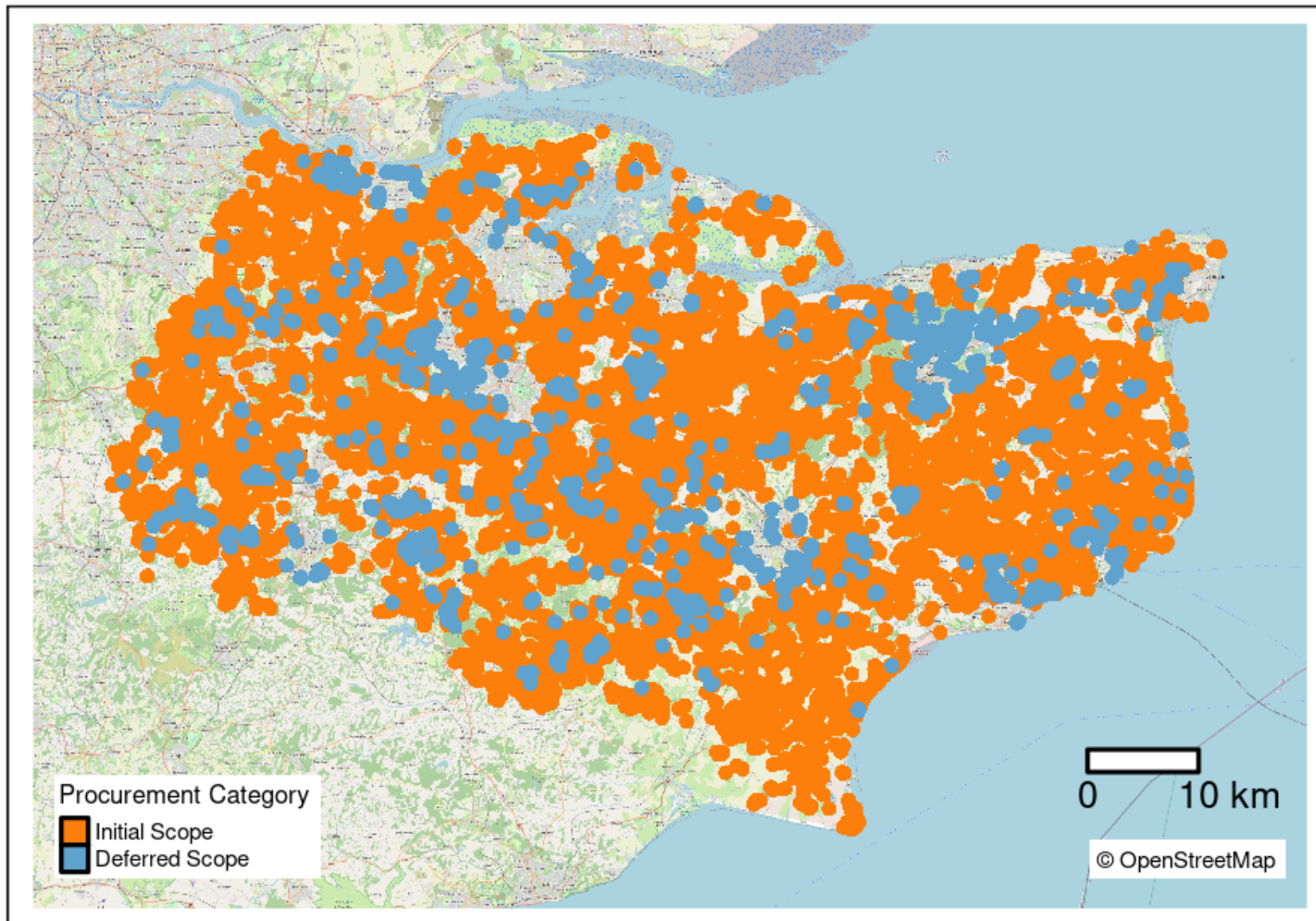
Appendix C Cont'd: Map indicating digital connectivity provision across the borough, 2023



Top Left: Three 5G Coverage
Top Right: O2 5G Coverage
Bottom Centre: EE 5G Coverage
Vodafone has no 5G coverage

Ashford Borough 5G coverage map, Ofcom Mobile Coverage map as of 25 August 2022

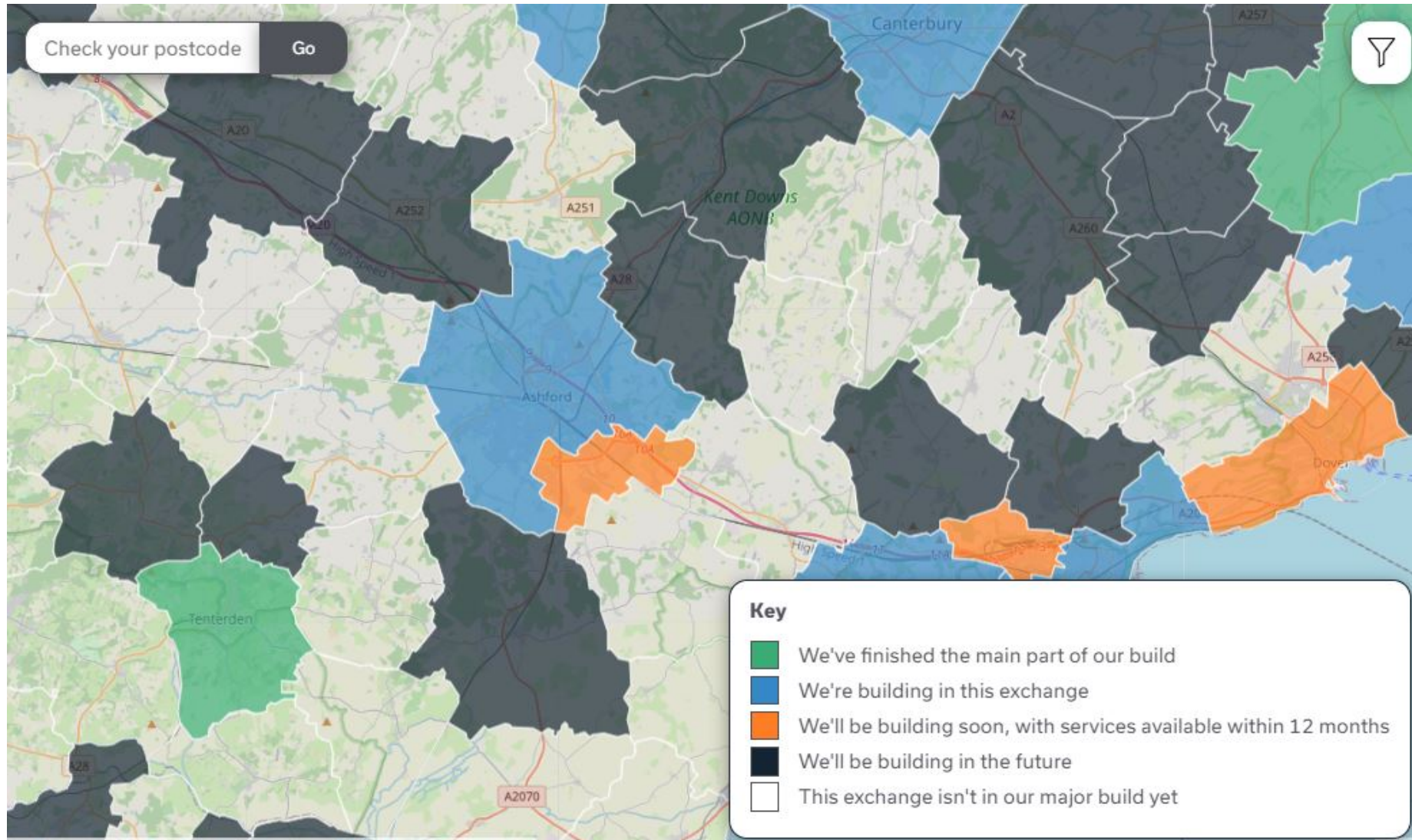
Appendix D: Project Gigabit Kent Public Review outcome map¹



Project Gigabit Kent Public Review outcome postcodes map, gov.uk, Kent Public Review closure notice – 25 August 2023

¹ 'Initial Scope' (orange) are premises that will be targeted for subsidy. 'Deferred Scope' (blue) are premises that will not be targeted unless they have been determined as eligible as part of BDUK's monitoring process.

Appendix E: Openreach exchanges FTTP upgrade map



Openreach When and Where rollout plans, Openreach – 25 August 2023

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Report To:	Cabinet / Council
Date of Meeting:	28 September 2023 / 19 October 2023
Report Title:	Updated Senior Structure
Report Author & Job Title:	Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder	Cllr N Ovenden
Portfolio Holder for:	Leader of the Council
Summary:	Chief Executive has reviewed her senior management structure and plans an update in order to meet the required savings agreed in the mid-term financial plan and to continue to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan.
Key Decision:	NO
Significantly Affected Wards:	None specifically
Recommendations:	<p>The Cabinet is recommended to:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the Chief Executive's recommendations regarding an update to the senior structure. 2. Note the costs associated with the early release of pension (set out in the exempt appendix), in the event a redundancy results, and to seek approval by Council. 3. Note the potential redundancy costs set out in the exempt appendix.
Policy Overview:	Managing Restructure, Redundancy and Organisational Change policy
Financial Implications:	The report details the cost of the updated structures and includes details of the potential redundancy cost and pension release cost that will be funded from the Fund Future Expenditure Reserve.
Legal Implications	See Report
Equalities Assessment	Impact See Attached
Other Implications:	Material None
Background Papers:	N/A

**Exempt from
Publication:**

YES – Appendix A

Not For Publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.] as the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

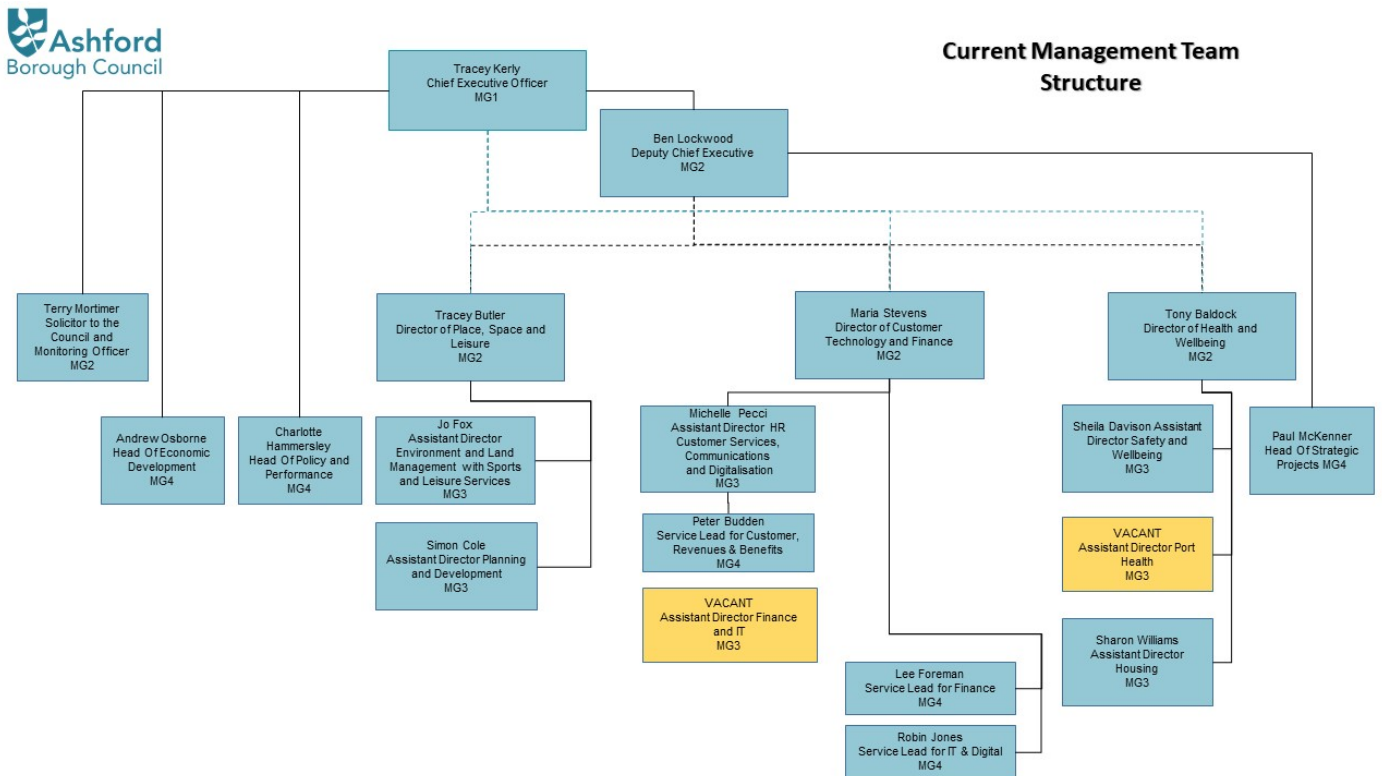
Contact:

**Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive Officer –
tracey.kerly@ashford.gov.uk**

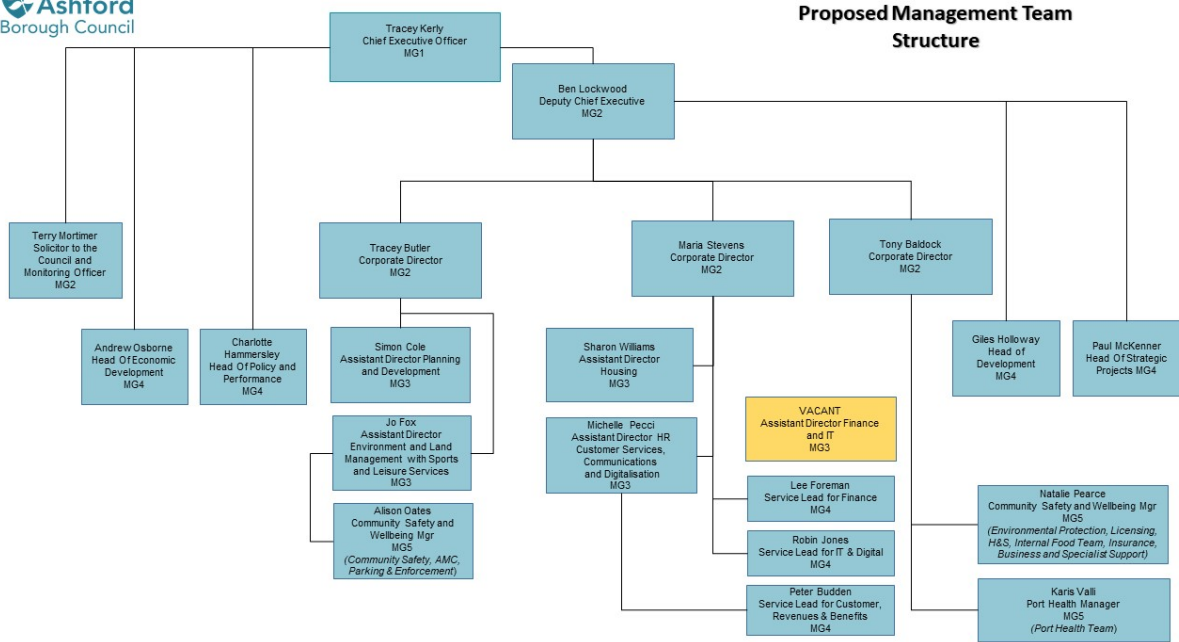
Report Title: Updated Senior Structure

Introduction and Background

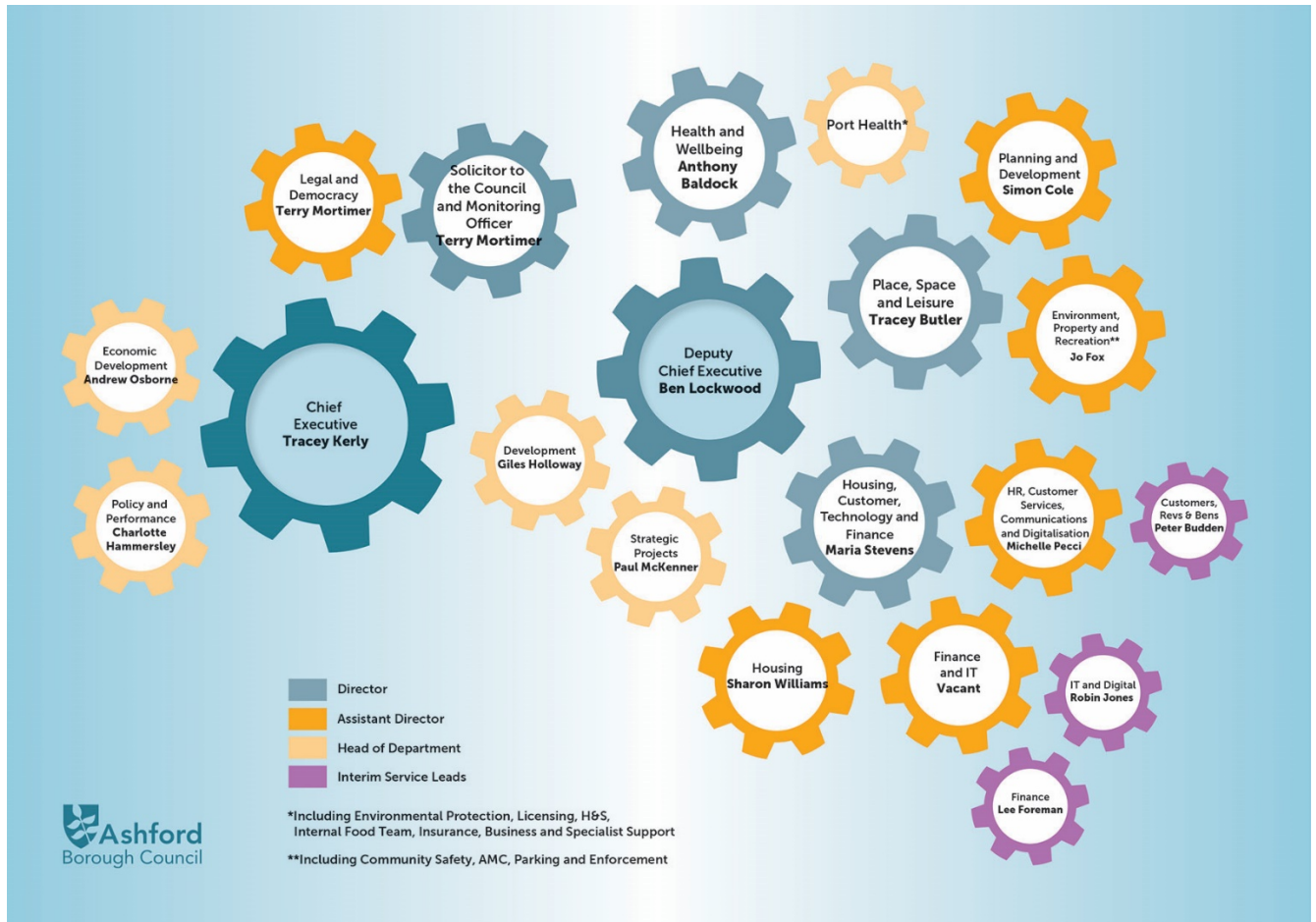
- 1 The Chief Executive has reviewed her senior management structure and plans an update in order to meeting the required savings agreed in the mid-term financial plan and to continue to deliver the Council’s Corporate Plan.
- 2 The Director structure which was introduced in 2021 has been successful but some changes are proposed which will impact some members of Management Team.
- 3 The proposed changes recognise the need to reduce overhead costs but ensure the structure continues to be responsive and integrated in its approach.
- 4 The current management team structure is set out below



- 5 A revised management structure is proposed.



6. A revised cog structure is proposed



7. The post of **Assistant Director for Safety and Wellbeing** is proposed for redundancy. The Council's policies for managing redundancy will be applied to this post holder with a view to seeking suitable alternative employment.

8. The current vacant post of **Assistant Director Port Health** will be deleted from the establishment resulting in no increase to the posts currently with agreed funding from DEFRA.
9. In the last review we created a specialist project officer, funded by the projects, reporting directly to the Deputy Chief Executive that will be part of the Council's management team. The need to have dedicated resources on key corporate projects such as the Newtown Works, Stodmarsh mitigation and 'Project Green' is extremely important and retains the focus we need to ensure we maintain the momentum for the delivery.
10. There are a number of substantial development projects that are delivering Housing schemes across the Borough, and we have recently purchased some key sites such as Kent Wool Growers and have planning consent awaiting delivery once we have a nitrate and phosphate mitigation solution. The officer responsible for these sites sits within the Housing team under the Assistant Director for Housing.
11. This review proposes that we create a **Head of Development** working alongside the Head of Strategic Projects reporting directly to the Deputy Chief Executive. It will be important to keep the delivery of these strategically important Housing projects on course delivering the much-needed affordable housing along with some of the necessary decarbonisation works.
12. The current **Housing Development & Regeneration Manager will become the Head of Development** and with his team, report into the Deputy Chief Executive. The role will become responsible for the coordination and delivery of specific projects relating to the delivery of affordable housing.
13. Current interim arrangements in place for the **Assistant Director for Finance and IT** role will continue until the end of the year providing an opportunity for the Director to ensure appropriate reporting lines and resources are in place.

Financial Implications

14. The proposed changes will deliver approximately £233k savings to the General Fund as required by the MTFP.

	Total saving
Removing 2 posts from the current structure	
Assistant Director Port Health	0
Assistant Director Community Safety & Wellbeing	119,723
Corporate Director (Recharge to the Port)	112,302
Corporate Director (Recharge to the HRA)	14,038
Head of Development (grade pressure)	(13,268)
Total	232,794

Consultation Undertaken

14. Fifteen individual consultation meetings took place during weeks commencing 10 and 17 July 2023.
15. On 24 August 2023 the JCC received a report on these proposals and the consultation process undertaken. The JCC considers the proposals to be acceptable and would advise that it be agreed.
16. The proposals and consultation process are presented to Cabinet Meeting on 28 September 2023 and to Full Council Meeting on 19 October 2023 for agreement on any costs associated with early release of pension.
17. The effective date for the changes will be 23 October 2023.
18. If the proposals are accepted following the consultation process employees at risk of redundancy will be served contractual/statutory notice of the potential deletion of their post and either the terms and conditions of their new redeployed role or provided with notice of redundancy.

Implications Assessment

19. The implications of this proposal are that one post holder will be put at risk of redundancy.
20. Should the proposals go ahead employees at risk of redundancy will be consulted with about potential suitable alternative roles within the organisation and redeployed if possible.

Avoiding the proposal

21. The proposal is viewed as being favourable for the organisation and therefore no alternative proposals are put forward at this stage (although they are welcomed as part of the consultation process).

Risk Assessment

22. None identified.

Conclusion

23. The proposals are intended to meet the targets set for the MTFP and also recognise the changing focus for environmental health and port health which is on the horizon for the authority. There is an overall reduction in the General Fund budget of approximately £233k by implementing this new structure for 2023/24.

Comments from the Portfolio Holder

I am supportive of the proposals and the contribution that they make towards required savings in the MTFP. I am positive about the opportunities that the proposals present for existing staff to develop their careers within the

organisation (through interim, secondments arrangements and also through job re-evaluation).

Contact and Email

Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive

Tracey.Kerly@ashford.gov.uk Tel: (01233) 330 601

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 28th September 2023

Report Title: Civic Centre Relocation

Report Author: Maria Stevens, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance
Job Title: Hannah Clayton-Peck, Project Manager (Commercial)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Ovenden – Prosperity & Resource

Portfolio Holder for: Cllr. Betty – Economic Growth and Investment

Summary:

This saving proposal is a unique opportunity for the Council to make significant cuts in expenditure without reducing the level of services to the Borough of Ashford. There are no redundancies as a result from this move and this is reflected in the saving stated.

This proposal looks at rationalising the Council's office space bringing forward significant savings in the region of £1.3m per annum, the Key areas of this report include:

- An annual saving of £1.3m, removing a pressure of £6.5m across the Medium Term Financial Plan (5 year plan). The proposed savings of £1.3m will need to be added as a pressure in the MTFP if this proposal doesn't move forward
- There are no cuts in services
- There are no proposed redundancies
- The future expansion or contraction of the Council will be easier to control at International House due to the size and layout of the building
- The Council has vacant office space within our property portfolio currently standing at 2234m²
- Staff and public consultation were well responded to and there were no areas of concern that couldn't be addressed or satisfied as appropriate through review and response.

Should this move not go ahead alternative savings will be required and the Council will be unable to generate this level of savings without stopping services. To achieve £1.3m of saving an average reduction in staffing would be around 32 full time equivalent staff from discretionary services, such as enforcement, town centre, economic development and areas where statutory services have been enhanced.

Key Decision:	YES
Significantly Affected Wards:	All
Recommendations:	<p>The Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council to:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Approve the relocation of the Civic Centre to International House including Phase 1 & Phase 2 II. Note Phase 3 which will include a future report to Cabinet detailing the future use of the Civic Centre III. Authorise the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.
Policy Overview:	<p>This report brings forward a savings proposal, the relocation of the Civic Centre to International House, put forward by the last administration, following the reported budget gap that required a savings plan to be drawn up.</p> <p>Following pressure on the MTFP and savings being identified this project would not only contribute to critical savings but also contributes to the following corporate objectives;</p> <p>GP1 – reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets CA1 – Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meets the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely TG1 – Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough.</p>
Financial Implications:	<p>A move to International House will result in annual savings in the region of £1.3m. Revenue Budget savings already identified in the MTFP of £415,000 and revenue savings from debt costs due to capital works of £885,000 to bring the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard.</p> <p><u>Should this move not be approved costs of £1.3m per annum will be added to the MTFP and alternative savings proposals would need to come forward.</u></p> <p>Although savings from bringing the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard are included, works required for the decarbonisation agenda are not included as they are not yet fully known. Therefore, it should be noted that there are further savings that have not yet been quantified at this time.</p>
Legal Implications: <i>Text agreed by Chief Solicitor and</i>	<p>The project will involve some variations and/or terminations of existing leases, contracts etc. and entering into new service and other agreements. This work is now being</p>

*Monitoring Officer on
06/09/2023*

scoped and authority to enter into such new or revised arrangements is sought within the recommendations.

Staff contract terms and conditions will need to reflect new working locations.

**Equalities Impact
Assessment:**

See Attached at **Appendix C**

**Data Protection
Impact
Assessment:**

See Attached at **Appendix D**

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

There is a risk over how this project will be perceived by the public, this is a project which saves money and protects services that our residents rely on. This will need to be communicated effectively to the public.

This project will deliver a considerable saving for the Council and support our medium term financial plan. Failure to deliver this saving will have wide ranging consequences on the way the council operates.

**Sustainability
Implications:**

The Council will be working to bring International House up to new EPC standards over the next few years and this work would be required whether the Council relocate to International House or not.

The Civic Centre will require decarbonisation works but these will be addressed by the new owner (or the HRA) during the redevelopment of the building should the Council move forward with this proposal.

**Other Material
Implications:**

**Exempt from
Publication:**

No

**Background
Papers:**

None

Contact:

Hannah.clayton-peck@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330421

Report Title: Civic Centre Relocation to International House

Introduction and Background

1. In February 2023 the previous administration agreed a programme of savings as part of the 2023/24 budget report totaling £1.4m, to reduce the contributions from reserves that are required to balance the annual budget. The programme was to be implemented over this financial year.
2. One of the savings was to explore relocating the Civic Centre to International House. Many businesses are downsizing their office space and looking for smaller modern office accommodation. Due to the financial risk to the Council in owning two large unmodernised office blocks the Council is looking to rationalise its office accommodation.
3. International House currently has around 3 floors of vacant space and the Civic Centre has over one floor of vacant space, totaling 2234m². The Council is therefore in a good position to decommission one building from office use, providing us with an opportunity to masterplan the repurposing of the Civic Center and the recently acquired Wool Growers site and make significant savings.
4. Whilst there are a number of vacancies within International House the office building is still positively contributing to the Council's budget, this year the Council are projecting a net income of £536,000 (budget for 2023/24 net income of £316,000).
5. The initial savings target was set at £300,000 however, based on our current data, as at 30 August 2023, the Council are working on annual budget savings of £415,000 (net of International House move costs), with that growing to £1.3m due to a reduced capital programme. This saving excludes the future decarbonisation costs for the Civic Centre as they are not currently available.
6. The net saving includes costs of moving to International House of £1.75m, these costs are detailed in **Appendix A**.
7. This is a unique opportunity for the Council to make significant savings without reducing the level of services to the Borough of Ashford as services will just be run from a different location. There are no redundancies as a result from this move and this is reflected in the savings presented below.

Current Position

8. The Council has been based at the Civic Centre for many years and up until the pandemic the building was used for Council operations with a few tenants. The Council has struggled to attract tenants to the Civic Centre in the past and there will be a need to invest in the space to encourage tenants into the building. The Council has recently lost its last private sector tenant, Chapel Down (August 2023).
9. Level 3 of the Civic Centre is currently closed and being used for storage only. To rent out this space the Council would need to refurbish the area to a high standard to attract and retain suitable tenants to the building.

10. Council Offices are operated over the remaining floors of the Civic Centre with two remaining public sector tenants, Public Health England and Driving Standards.
11. Desk capacity is currently set at around 60% (220 Desks) of staff contractually based at the Civic Centre, our current data (May 2023 – July 2023) demonstrates a consistent usage of around 55% (120 Desks) of the current desks within the Civic Centre. It should be noted that the usage fluctuates over the days of the week, with Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday being the most popular days in the office.
12. The Civic Centre has had minimal investment over the last 10 years and does require a significant amount of spend to bring it up to a reasonable standard. Based on quotes received in 2020, inflated to today's prices, costs will be in the region of £10.8m to achieve these standards. These costs are not currently built into the Medium Term Financial Plan however, should the move not take place the financing of this work would need be added. This would add a pressure of £885,000 per annum to the plan. In addition there would be a need for further decarbonisation work if the move does not take place. These costs are not yet known so not included in the savings.
13. International House also needs work to bring the building up to reasonable standards (estimated at £4.1m). These works and any decarbonisation works would need to be taken forward whether the Council makes the move to International House or not. The Council is looking to apply for decarbonisation funding to match fund the decarbonisation works.
14. International House is currently being operated as offices and contributes positively to the Council's finances. The Council has a number of larger secure tenants in the building including DWP, British Transport Police and Southeastern, therefore is it not proposed to dispose of International House.
15. International House does currently have around 2.6 vacant floors overall. This gives the Council an opportunity to consider options for its office space including rationalisation of the total estate to reduce the Council risk to the sector which is seeing a downturn in demand.

The Proposal

16. Officers have been working on bringing this project forward following approval of the Annual Budget by Council in March 2023 where this project formed part of a proposed savings plan to close the budget gap.
17. The current proposal is to transfer the whole of the Civic Centre to International House over two phases and phase 3 will be the disposal or redevelopment of the Civic Centre. The diagram below shows the proposal timescales.



Phase 1 – Office side relocation

18. The project team have been working on configuring the office spaces to enable the Council to work across whole sections/floors and not spread over the whole building in the current vacant areas. This work has led to floors 1, 3 and 4 being available to the Council. There are costs included to relocate tenants within **Appendix A**.
19. There was an initial concern that by moving to International House this would downsize the workable office and meeting space. To address this the Council is in discussion with a current tenant on floor 4 that is looking to move to another Council run office building. The proposed plans now include this area and whilst there is slight reduction in desk numbers this is now fairly minimum (220 to 204) and is sufficient based on the desk data, which shows a usage of around 120 desks per day. The number of meeting rooms have been increased and there have been some informal sound reducing pods introduced to the plans for small meetings.
20. The floors have been configured into service zones to allow service areas to be found easily. Some updates and adjustments to work areas have been made following advice directly from services and the project team to ensure service needs are accommodated and the Council has followed legislation set out in the workplace regulation act 1992 to result in the optimal layouts for the floors.
21. The Council is working with International House tenants to secure space within the reception to enable our customers to access face-to-face services, including incorporation of an accessible toilet, in the best way possible from the ground floor. This area is smaller than our current space and the Customer Services team will need to work differently. The project team are working closely with the Customer Services Managers to ensure the best solution is developed.
22. This work is progressing well and will continue to be updated up to the point that it goes out to tender. The current plans can be found at **Appendix B**.
23. The IT team have been working with the project team on desk and meeting room booking solutions. The team have found a product that integrates with Microsoft Teams and will manage all spaces efficiently, including freeing up areas that are not being used for other users. The system will enable services to book other spaces should their zone be fully utilised, which will ensure there will always be enough desks to meet capacity.

Phase 2 – Civic Suite, Elections & Ashford Monitoring Centre relocation

24. Although this is headed up as 'phase 2' work is currently ongoing to secure space within International House to accommodate the Council Chamber, Committee Rooms, the Monitoring Centre and the Elections team. There have been positive meetings with existing tenants with the aim of securing additional space. Although confidential at this stage it is believed that the Council will secure these areas well in advance of the moving period identified.
25. To benefit from the full annual saving as soon as possible phase 2 will be accelerated to run parallel with phase 1. This will allow us to apply for business rate relief for three months and submit detailed renovation plans to remove the Business Rate liability on the Civic Centre.
26. A working group will be formed to review the Civic Suite requirements which will include Member representation, Member Services and project officers. The focus will be on the best use of space to ensure the spaces are flexible and all hybrid compatible.

Phase 3 – Redevelopment of the Civic Centre

27. The 3rd phase of the project will be looking at the Civic Centre future plans. These are still in discussion and some of the options include redevelopment of the Civic Centre, sale of the Civic Centre, master planning the whole Woolgrounder and Civic site. Reports will come forward in due course.

Consultation

28. The initial plans for the relocation to International House have been shared with the staff through the formal staff consultation process and this has been through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
29. The Council has also consulted with the public through an online form and a physical form available within reception and also promoted online through social media and our website.

Staff Consultation

30. The level of engagement from staff was good, from the responses approximately 68% of staff indicated they were broadly happy with the proposals, and the balance of respondents highlighted some concerns.
31. Importantly there was no feedback from staff that suggested the move to International House should not happen. On this basis further work on the plans to address some of the concerns has been undertaken. The concerns mainly related to desk capacity, desk size, noise, number of meeting rooms and storage. Following this feedback revisions to, and clarification of, the proposals were undertaken and a revised set of proposed plans were presented to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
32. The Joint Consultative Committee received the staff consultation report on 14th September 2023. The discussion at the committee was mainly focused on questions relating to desk capacity, the timing of the various phases, parking and staff room facilities. Overall, the JCC considered the proposals to be acceptable.

33. There will continue to be redesign work over the coming weeks, as plans develop, but the main detail will have to be finalised by end of September.

Joint Consultative Committee

34. The Joint Consultative Committee received the staff consultation report on 14th September 2023. The JCC considered the proposals to be acceptable and would advise cabinet that it be agreed.

Public Consultation

35. This consultation has been conducted based on Phase 1 and 2 of the proposal (relocating services to International House) so targeting those that visit the Civic Centre in-person. If the Council redevelops the Civic Centre (phase 3) this will be subject to consultation through the Planning process.
36. In developing the plans for the relocation of the council offices a public consultation was undertaken between 17th July and 18th September 2023. The consultation aimed to capture the views of residents that currently use the Civic Centre.
37. The consultation was held on the council's website and members of the public visiting the Civic Centre were invited to take part with both digital and paper formats being available. The consultation was supported by promotional materials in the reception area of the Civic Centre. It was also promoted through our social media channels.
38. The consultation sought to understand what services people currently visit the Civic Centre for. It also sought to understand how people travelled to the Civic Centre and provided respondents with the ability to provide comment or ask questions.
39. The consultation received 123 responses. 93% of responses were completed online through the council's website and 7% were completed in-person at the Civic Centre by visitors. 8% of respondents were under 30 years old, 62% were between 30 and 60 years old and 30% were over the age of 60. A majority of responses came from wards in central Ashford Town.
40. As part of our equalities monitoring process, respondents were asked whether they used a disabled bay when visiting the Civic Centre and whether they experienced mobility problems that made parking close by a necessity. 15% of respondents indicated that they used a disabled parking bay when visiting and 27% reported problems with mobility. A few respondents also left comments enquiring about the provision of disabled parking, access and facilities at International House.
41. Reasons given for visiting the Civic Centre was asked, the most common reasons for which respondents visited the Civic Centre were for general information and council meetings. 48% of respondents visited for general information about council services. Waste collection and benefits advice services were the least frequently quoted reasons for visitation.
42. 70% of respondents used a car when travelling to the Civic Centre, with 32% walking at least part of the way. 13% travelled at least part of the way by bus and 9% by bike. No respondents reported travelling by train. 10% of respondents indicated that they might travel differently if visiting International House. The majority of these were respondents who travelled by car indicating that they might instead walk, or vice versa.

43. The most common queries from respondents were about the future of the Civic Centre and what would become of the space. Respondents were also commonly concerned about parking availability and disabled access. Sentiment analysis of comments indicated that 30% were broadly positive about the move, 30% were broadly negative and 40% were neutral.

Financial Position

44. The table below is based on moving the whole organisation as per the current plan (phase 1 and 2). The table breaks down the current savings projected for both the move to International House and savings from future capital works on the Civic Centre. It should be noted that the capital works will need to commence as soon as possible should the Council wish to stay at the Civic Centre as these works are now required for the building to meet a reasonable standard.

Table 1	Civic Centre Total Cost	Saving Full Move	Comment
PREMISES	684,645	(684,645)	
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES	15,650	(15,650)	
TRANSPORT	6,240	(6,240)	
H-INCO	(84,383)	84,383	
Total Costs	622,152	(622,152)	
Cost of Capital works to Civic Centre	885,355	(885,355)	Costs of £10.9m - 20 year annuity, 5%
Cost of moving to international House	-	197,219	Costs of £1.75m - 12 year annuity, 5%
Total	1,507,507	(1,310,288)	

45. The estimated costs of relocating to International House of £1.75m are detailed in **Appendix A**. The current estimate is based on moving both phase 1 and 2, these figures are subject to change through value engineering, procurement and negotiations with tenants. If the costs change significantly this will be reported through the Financial Monitoring process.
46. The costs of refurbishment are included within our cost estimates. If the Council does not relocate a significant part of these cost would still be required to prepare the office space for letting.

Implications and Risk Assessment

47. There is a risk over how this project will be perceived by the public, this is a project which saves money and protects services that our residents rely on. This will need to be communicated effectively to the public.
48. There is also a reputational risk that if the Council does not make best use of our assets, the Council has an obligation to the residents of the borough to use its resources in the most efficient way. This project allows the Council to demonstrate this.
49. This also applies if the Council decides not to progress with the Civic Suite move, the perception from the Public could be that the Council is prioritising its own accommodation over service delivery to the residents of the Borough. The Civic Suite is currently underutilised with only around 12 meetings a year requiring a meeting room the size of the Council Chamber.
50. This project will deliver a considerable saving for the Council and support our medium-term financial plan. Failure to deliver this saving will have wide ranging consequences on the way the council operates. An annum pressure

of £1.3m will be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan and a savings programme will need to be drawn up.

51. Costs of the move could be more or less than estimated, for example, if costs come in at £100,000 more than budgeted the overall saving would reduce by £11,000 per annum. This £11,238 is the financing of the additional £100,000.
52. The project costs will be value engineered before moving forward on procuring a contract and during the procurement process. The costs will be monitored and managed throughout the implementation process.
53. Retaining large amounts of office space could have a negative impact in the Council's budgets due to works required to bring the buildings up to a reasonable standard. Whereas reducing office space within the Ashford Borough could have a positive impact on other office buildings in the borough, as supply decrease.
54. The timetable will be kept as short as possible but there will be a small period of disruption for each department as it moves to International House. The timetable will be put in place and services will be kept informed throughout the process.
55. Should Council operations stay based at the Civic Centre, areas that are currently void will need a significant amount of investment to bring them up to letting standards. Due to the current demand for office space this would sit outside of our current financial risk appetite.
56. Future growth would be easier to control through expansion at International House. Based on empty spaces being let out, both at the Civic Centre and International House, as International House is significantly bigger and is likely to have more divert tenants, the Council can contract and expand more easily should it need to.
57. The table below includes the costs of bringing both International House and the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard. International House costs less to bring up to a reasonable standard in comparison to the Civic Centre due to a number of contributing factors. These include the works already in train to replace the roof at International House, the infrastructure and plant at International House being more cohesive and in better condition and the building itself being in better condition. This is due, in part, to the contributions from the service charge and the tenanted areas being regularly refurbished which means the building as a whole needs less work to bring it up to a reasonable standard.

Table 2	£'000	Annual cost/saving of financing £'000
CIVIC CENTRE		
Works (reasonable standard)	10,775	
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE		
Works (reasonable standard)	4,122	
Costs of retaining both the CC & IH	14,897	1,105
Savings - no longer occupying Civic Centre*		1,310
Loss -no longer occupying International House**		(205)

* The Civic Centre savings include costs of running the building, income generated from the building, as well as costs of moving to International House.

** The International House loss includes costs of running the building and income generated from the building.

58. Both the Civic Centre and International House would generate a capital receipt. These have not been captured in the calculations above.

59. In summary the decision to move to International House enables the Council to deliver the same services whilst reducing overall costs. The move will reduce the Council's exposure to financial risk by disposing or redeveloping the Civic Centre.

Equalities Impact Assessment

60. Members are referred to the attached Assessment at **Appendix C**. The key issues arising are a significant number of visitors to the Civic Centre have mobility problems and use disabled parking. The move to International House will have a positive impact for people with mobility problem as the building is move accessible inside and outside. Please refer to the EIA for details.

Options Considered

61. Disposing of International House was ruled out early due to the net return. If International House was sold the Council would benefit from a capital receipt (one-off) however there would be a loss of annual income, net projected income this year of £536,000.

62. Retaining just the civic suite has been considered, the project was initially split over two phases to give us the time to consider this option. There are a number of concerns raised with retaining the Civic Suite as it is:

- a. The Customer Service Team need to be located close to the Housing Team. The Housing Team regularly have face to face appointments and are required to attend reception throughout the day to deal with visitors including in relation to homelessness from vulnerable individuals and families. If Customer Services were not relocated to

International House some departments in Housing would need to co-locate at the Civic Centre which is not ideal.

- b. The access at International House is better for the visitors to reception. The access is level and disabled parking is at the front of the building.
 - c. The current Council Chamber is a large space that is underutilised with Full Council (around 6 per annum) and the occasional committee meeting requiring a space of that size, such as Planning. International House could offer an opportunity to use the spaces more flexibly and still retain a Council Chamber that is of a similar size. This opportunity enables the Council to reduce spend of Public funds on large, underutilised meeting spaces.
 - d. If the Civic Suite remains operational larger meeting rooms for staff would remain at the Civic Centre site, as to provide these at both locations would be costly. This poses issues for access for officers and the IT and facilities teams would need to regularly attend both sites which would increase staffing requirements adding additional costs.
 - e. As well as being operationally challenging the process to isolate the Civic Suite will be resource intensive.
 - f. The costs of retaining the Civic Suite are detailed below, the capital costs would be £255,000 with an annual cost of £186,000 (not including additional staffing costs).
63. Retain both buildings and rent out vacant space. This was considered however, due to the costs of modernising the Civic Centre to a high standard (expected by most tenants currently) this is prohibitive.
64. Reduce the office space further by moving to International House. This was considered but there is a strong message from staff and Members that they want to keep a strong presence in the office. It has therefore been decided to closely match what is currently provided within the Civic Centre. International House will enable the Council to expand or contract more easily in the future.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

65. The Council has a significant pressure coming forward in its financial plan based predominately on the uncertainty around future funding streams, such as Business Rates. This project is currently estimated to reduce the Council's future annual spend by £1.3m. Should this move not go ahead alternative savings will be required and the Council will be unable to generate this level of savings without stopping services. To achieve £1.3m of saving an average reduction in staffing would be around 32 full time equivalents from discretionary services, such as enforcement, town centre, economic development and areas where statutory services have been enhanced.
66. No service delivery will be reduced following the move, therefore a relatively easy win for reducing costs for the Council and its residents.
67. International House is a larger office building which will offer more flexibility around growth and hybrid working longer term should the Council want to expand or contract. This advantage is there due to the nature of the building and its tenants. The Civic Centre is more likely to attract a Public Sector tenant on a longer term lease so will limit expansion for the Council.

68. The Council/ General Fund will receive a capital receipt/reduce borrowing from disposing of the Civic Centre. Although this will not fund long term revenue for the Council it could be used to fund decarbonisation works across the Council's property portfolio.
69. There is an opportunity for a creative piece of placemaking. This would allow for a mixed tenure development over the Civic Centre alongside the Woolgrowers site that is already in the Council's ownership.

Next Steps in Process

70. A detailed project plan to be developed to ensure works progress as soon as possible.
71. Project teams will be reviewed and updated to deliver the move to International House.
72. Officers are currently finalising plans, working with tenants in International House for additional space to accommodate the whole Council and working with International House tenants on the use of the reception area and other shared spaces.
73. Once approved by Council Officers will work on the procurement to secure a works contract and other contracts that will be required, such as moving company and temperature control solutions.

Conclusion

74. To ensure the Council can deliver an affordable Medium Term Financial Plan the move to International House is a sound commercial decision. The costs saved (£1.3m) from this move will not have a negative impact on the residents of Ashford and there will not be any reductions in services delivered.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Cllr Noel Ovenden

75. I welcome this proposal, that without cutting services to the residents of Ashford, the Council will save £1.3m per annum. I am also pleased that no staff redundancies are necessary to achieve this.

Cllr Simon Betty

76. The relocation and disposal of the Civic Centre, whether through sale or redevelopment will rationalise the office space owned, reducing the financial risk and provide more flexibility for the Council to change its accommodation requirements over time.

Contact and Email

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Estimated costs of moving to International House

Item Description	Cost	Notes
Cost Order estimate	1,133,000	Works to Internatmate
Relocation of tenants/lost income of future spaces	500,000	This is an estimate based on costs to fit out move on offices and lost income for future office space (for Civic Suite)
Moving equipment	5,000	Moving costs including large Print room devices.
IT requirements	44,000	Cabling, networking, wifi, circiuts
Hybrid equipment for meeting	40,000	10 meeting spaces requiring equiment estimated at £4k each
Resource booking solution (desk and meeting room booking)	8,000	
Air conditioning	18,000	Units before decarbonisation works for air cooling system
TOTAL	1,748,000	

It should be noted much of the space that the Council will be occupying will require refurbishment to attract tenants to the building therefore a significant proportion of the works to International House would be required if the Council retained both buildings.

APPENDIX B



BOOKABLE MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 10 person
- Level 3: 1 x 10 person
- Level 4: 1 x 20 person or 2 x 10 person
- 1 x 15 person
- 1 x 10 person
- 1 x 8 person

INFORMAL MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 8 person
- Level 3: 4 x 4 person pods
- 3 x 2 person Director's offices

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

1400mm desks to have single standard or large (32") monitor

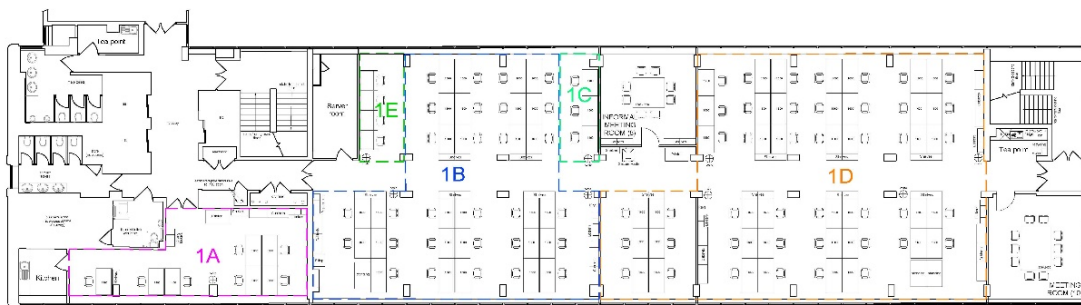
1600mm desks to have single large (32") monitor or two standard monitors

1400mm desks to be designated as hot desks where possible

Permanent desks to have under-desk pedestal where possible

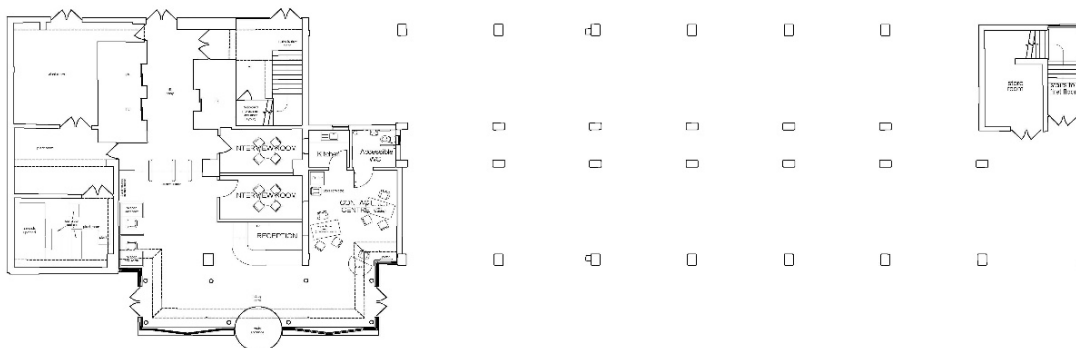
Tall ventilated lockers for drying clothes to be provided on level 1

LEVEL 1



- 1A: Customer Services - 7 desks
- 1B: Accountancy, Revs & Biers, Procurement - 30 desks
- 1C: All Departments - 3 hot desks
- 1D: Housing - 45 desks
- 1E: All Departments - 4 mini hot desks

LEVEL 0



1	Project Manager	11
2	Project Engineer	10
3	Project Engineer	10
4	Project Engineer	10

Civic Centre Relocation to International House

Floor Plans as Proposed - Level 0 & Level 1

NO.	REV.	DATE	BY
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BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING

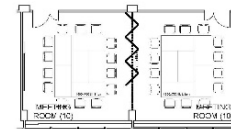
PRELIMINARY



LEVEL 4



- 4A: HR - 8 desks
- 4B: Legal & Democracy - 8 desks
- 4C: Executives Office & Senior Leadership Team - 10 desks
- 4D: IT - 11 desks



ALTERNATIVE MEETING ROOM LAYOUT

LEVEL 3



- 3A: CEOs - 2 desks
- 3B: Economic Development, Property Building Services & Facilities, Environment & Contracts, Estates, Projects, Comms, Policy & Performance & Member Services - 30 desks
- 3C: Community Safety & Wellbeing, Port Health - 18 desks
- 3D: Planning & Building Control - 30 desks

BOOKABLE MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 10 person
- Level 3: 1 x 10 person
- Level 4: 1 x 20 person or 2 x 10 person
- 1 x 16 person
- 1 x 10 person
- 1 x 8 person

INFORMAL MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 8 person
- Level 3: 4 x 4 person pods
- 3 x 2 person Director's offices

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT:

- 1400mm desks to have single standard or large (32") monitor
- 1800mm desks to have single large (32") monitor or two standard monitors
- 1400mm desks to be designated as hot desks where possible
- Permanent desks to have under-desk pedestal where possible
- Tall ventilated lockers for drying clothes to be provided on level 1

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Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:
2. No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
3. Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
4. Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
5. Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

6. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
7. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
8. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
9. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).
10. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

11. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

12. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.

13. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
14. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
15. In terms of timing:
- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

16. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
17. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
- Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

18. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Hannah Clayton-Peck
Decision maker:	Maria Stevens
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Change of location for the Civic Centre
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	19/10/2023
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	Aim: Relocate Ashford Borough Council offices from the Civic Centre to International House. Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved financial position for the Council • Successful demobilisation of the Civic Centre • Reduced carbon footprint

	<p>Key Actions: Successful mobilisation of International House</p> <p>Users affected: visitors to the Civic Centre and council staff.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes: The project supports the council's savings targets following significant pressure on the MTFP. Benefits are expected within 12 months and savings will be made across 10 years.</p>
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the finances for both International House and the Civic Centre have been undertaken and show that savings in excess of £500,000 can be made by relocating. • Analysis of meeting rooms and desk usage indicates that the overprovision of space at the Civic Centre has rendered the office accommodation unsuitable. This has presented an opportunity for income generation for redevelopment of the Civic site.
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff consultation has been undertaken and informed the designs and some of the decisions around the details of the relocation. Individual questions and queries were addressed in a response provided on the council's Smarthub. • A public consultation took place to understand the impact on customers and ensure that those are taken into consideration. The consultation was held between July and September 2023 and a

	<p>summary of the analysis is provided in the report.</p> <p>30% of people reported that they had mobility problems that meant parking close to the building was important.</p> <p>15% of people said that they used a disabled parking bay when visiting the Civic Centre.</p> <p>The decision to relocate from the Civic Centre to International House will not result in less provision of disabled parking and will be located directly outside International House.</p> <p>International House is by design more accessible for people with mobility issues and therefore a neutral/positive impact is expected for visitors through the move. There is level access throughout the building. The area outside of International House is more level than at the Civic Centre. International House is closer to public transport than the Civic Centre. There would be no change to public toilet provision.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Middle age	Low	Positive (Minor)

Young adult	Low	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Children	Low	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Mental	Medium	Negative (Minor) A change in the location and the environment could be difficult.
Sensory	Medium	Negative (Minor) A change in the location and the environment could be difficult.
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	Medium	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport and better access within the building
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	Low	Neutral
Women	Low	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	Low	Neutral

<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	Low	Neutral
Former service personnel	Low	Neutral
Service families	Low	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Negative impact has been identified for sensory and mental in that the change in location could be challenging for those who fall into those protected characteristics. However prior notice, regular communication and signage will be used to ensure that this is mitigated as much as possible.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be 	<p>The move from the Civic Centre to International House is intended to provide services in the same way from a different building.</p> <p>Two consultations have been held on the proposed move which sought views on how it could impact both staff and the public that use the Civic Centre.</p> <p>Questions and individual requirements raised during the consultation have</p>
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<p>made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>been addressed. There is an appendix summarising key questions from the public and answers are provided. Staff were also provided with answers to queries and questions raised.</p> <p>The public consultation results showed that a high percentage of visitors to the Civic Centre have mobility problems. The move to International House should have a positive impact on these groups.</p> <p>There will be ongoing monitoring of how International House is used by staff and members of the public. For example, visitor times throughout the day and desk/meeting room booking.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>Throughout the project and finalised on 18 September 2023.</p>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Ashford Borough Council

Data Protection Impact Assessment

Data Protection Impact Assessment Template

Project Name: Relocation Project	Approved by: T. Swain
Author:	Date: 25 th August 2023

Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) are tools which can help Ashford Borough Council (ABC) identify the most effective way to comply with its data protection obligations and meet individuals' expectations of privacy. An effective DPIA will allow ABC to identify and fix problems at an early stage, reducing the associated costs and damage to reputation which might otherwise occur. DPIAs are an integral part of taking a privacy by design approach, and are a legal requirement under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) whenever a 'process is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of the natural persons'.

Overview**Aim:**

Relocate Ashford Borough Council offices from the Civic Centre to International House.

Objectives:

- Improved financial position for the Council
- Successful demobilisation of the Civic Centre
- Reduced carbon footprint
- Successful mobilisation of International House

Step 1. Data Protection Impact Assessment Screening Questions

These questions are intended to help ABC decide whether a full DPIA is required. If the answer is yes to any of the questions a DPIA will be required.

Will the project involve the collection of new data about individuals?	No
Will the project compel individuals to provide data about themselves?	No
Will data about individuals be disclosed to other organisations not previously privy to the data?	No
Will data about the individuals be used for purposes it is not currently used for?	No

Does the project involve new technology that might be perceived as being privacy intrusive?	No
Will the project result in making decisions or taking action against individuals in ways which could have a significant impact on them?	No
Is the data about individuals of a kind particularly likely to raise concerns e.g. health records, criminal records - which may be considered private?	No
Will the project require contact to individuals in ways they may find intrusive?	No

If yes has been answered to any of the questions above – the below full DPIA below requires completing.

Although the screening questions would normally indicate that, a DPIA is not required, with no new processing activities or additional data being collected. Due to the scale of the project, involving the relocation of all council services, personnel and equipment and the speed under which the project is hoped to be completed, data protection needs to be considered as a central pillar to the project.

Step 2. Describe the processing

Describe the nature of the processing: how will you collect, use, store and delete data? What is the source of the data? Will you be sharing data with anyone? You might find it useful to refer to a flow diagram or other way of describing data flows. What types of processing identified as likely high risk are involved?

Ashford Borough Council processes personal data to enable it to provide a range of services to local people and businesses; as such we do collect and process personal data where necessary to:

deliver public services

contact our residents by post, email or telephone

understand the needs of our residents

obtain their opinion about our services

update our customer records

process financial transactions

prevent and detect fraud and corruption in the use of public funds

allow us to undertake statutory functions efficiently and effectively

make sure we meet our statutory obligations including those related to diversity and equalities

and other reasons

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment, with this assessment covering only the relocation of the office.

Describe the scope of the processing: what is the nature of the data, and does it include special category or criminal offence data? How much data will you be collecting and using? How often? How long will you keep it? How many individuals are affected? What geographical area does it cover?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Describe the context of the processing: what is the nature of your relationship with the individuals? How much control will they have? Would they expect you to use their data in this way? Do they include children or other vulnerable groups? Are there prior concerns over this type of processing or security flaws? Is it novel, or utilises untested systems or software in any way? What is the current state of technology in this area? Are there any current issues of public concern that you should factor in?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Describe the purposes of the processing: what do you want to achieve? What is the intended effect on individuals? What are the benefits of the processing – for you, and more broadly?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Step 3. Consultation Process

Consider how to consult with relevant stakeholders: describe when and how you will seek individuals' views – or justify why it's not appropriate to do so. Who

else do you need to involve within the Council? (Data Protection Team/ Legal/IT/Etc.) Do you need to ask your data processors to assist?

A comprehensive team has been identified and consulted with, a staff representative group has been formed and a staff consultation and a public consultation have taken place which has impacted delivery plans for the project. Legal, IT and officers relevant to operational delivery are engaged on relevant areas to ensure process is followed.

Step 4. Assess Necessity and Proportionality

Describe compliance and proportionality measures, in particular: what is your lawful basis for processing? Does the processing actually achieve your purpose? Is there another way to achieve the same outcome? How will you prevent function creep? How will you ensure data quality and data minimisation? What information will you give individuals? How will you help to support their rights? What measures do you take to ensure processors comply? How do you safeguard any international transfers?

N/A

Step 5. Identify and assess risks

Describe source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary. Along with identified measures to mitigate the associated risk.

Risk 1 – Potential loss of current data protection measures

Ensuring the data protection arrangements currently in place at the Civic Suite remain the same or are strengthened following the relocation:

- Physical access controls to the new office building, (fob entry or similar) possibly multiple fob entry required doors to access the most sensitive areas.
- Visitor arrangements.
- Office layout – with those service areas processing the most personal data located furthest away from entry points.
- Considerations to screen positioning to minimise overlook.
- Adequate areas for confidential meeting to take place.
- Access to locked storage facilities for the securing of physical documents.
- Clear desk policies.
- Confidential waste bins.
- Follow-me-printing

Risk 2 – Data protection vulnerabilities during the moving process

Ensuring data protection and security is considered during the actual activity of the move:

- Ensuring that both locations remain secure during the transition with adequate restricted access to both sites.
- Prior to moving create an inventory of the files/boxes which are to be moved.
- That sensitive data is appropriately labelled – secured and sealed and accompanied to its new location.
- That any contractors utilised within the moving process are trusted, and understand the importance of confidentiality.
- That a process is in place to ensure nothing is left behind.

The relocation is likely to offer a good opportunity to determine what physical documents are held, which need to be kept and which need to be destroyed. If confidential/personal data needs to be destroyed, ensure that it is disposed of in the correct manner.

- Ensure that appropriate confidential waste bins are available.

Risk 3 – Loss or interruption of data and or services

Ensuring loss or interruption to services is kept to minimum during the office move:

- Appropriate number of customer facing officers available at all times.
- Staggered move, minimising any downtime.
- Consideration given to time of day and service demand.

It is understood that the relocation of the server room (potentially to the cloud) along with the contents of the strong room are considered outside of this initial project scope.

Step 6 Sign off

Item	Name/position/date	Notes
Measures approved by:	Tom Swain 25/08/23	<i>Integrate actions back into project plan, with date and responsibility for completion</i>
Residual risks approved by:	Tom Swain 25/08/23	<i>If accepting any residual high risk, consult the ICO before going ahead</i>
<p>Summary of DPO advice:</p> <p>Adequate measures are being actioned and continued consideration of data protection is being considered throughout the project.</p>		
DPO advice accepted or overruled by:	Accepted – Maria Stevens / Hannah Clayton-Peck	If overruled, you must explain your reasons

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Agenda Item No: 10

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 28 September 2023

Report Title: Anti-social Behaviour Policy

Report Author: Laurel Niven

Job Title: Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader

Rebecca Smith

Housing Operations Manager, Income and Neighbourhoods

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bill Barrett Housing

Portfolio Holder for: Cllr Liz Wright Safety and Wellbeing

<p>Summary: The report presents for renewal of the Ashford Borough Council Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Policy. The policy provides clarity on how the Council meets its responsibilities under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.</p>

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: All Wards

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is asked to recommend that the Council approve the renewed Ashford Borough Council Anti-social Behaviour Policy**

Policy Overview: I.
The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (section 5 and 6) requires local authorities and the police to work together at a localised level to develop and implement strategies for reducing crime and disorder in their area.

The Policy as presented will guide elected members, officers and external partners in their roles and responsibilities. The Policy sets out the council's commitment to managing ASB. It therefore brings together the Ashford approach for delivering effective ASB solutions across the partnership. It ensures the Council has effective ASB processes in place to meet its legislative and regulatory obligations.

Financial Implications:	Currently the budget allows for one full time officer post within the service. If an ASB matter required further investigation and was progressed to court then we seek recovery of costs to cover our resource.
Legal Implications: <i>Text agreed by Samantha Clarke on 6th September 2023</i>	The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (amending the Housing Act 1996), places a legal requirement for all local housing authorities to publish a statement of their policies and procedures in relation ASB. This document is ABC's Council statement showing how it will deal with ASB and sets out the general approach to ASB enabling staff and residents alike to understand what is meant by ASB and the commitments to deal with it and manage expectations. This policy specifically focuses on ASB and does not include issues investigated under other legislative frameworks.
Equalities Impact Assessment:	See Attached
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	N/A
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	<p>By having an agreed policy it reduces the risk on the organisation by ensuring members, officers and external partners understand their role and the expectations placed upon them in respects of ASB management.</p> <p>Officer's dealing with the management of ASB need to ensure they are regular up to date with the latest legislation, tools and powers use to tackle ASB. The organisation therefore need to ensure appropriate training is provided to all staff within the area.</p> <p>The ASB process may highlight and identify vulnerable individuals or locations that need physical improvement as the environment is contributing to the ASB within the community.</p>
Sustainability Implications:	None
Other Material Implications:	Increased activity in this area will inevitably increase workload for those dealing with Anti-social Behaviour.
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	None
Contact:	Laurel.niven@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330271)

Introduction and Background

1. Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) is a broad term used to describe incidents of crime, nuisance and disorder that harms on individual victims or the community as a whole. A number of the council's services deal with ASB on a daily basis, whether this is for housing tenants, private residents or visitors to the borough.
2. ASB can have a significant influence on victim's lives and wider communities; it can impact an individual's feelings of personal safety, make a neighbourhood an unpleasant place to live or work and greatly reduce quality of life. Tackling and preventing ASB is a priority for Ashford Borough Council and we would like every resident of Ashford to feel safe, enjoy living in their neighbourhood and feel confident when reporting incidents of ASB.
3. The primary aim of the ASB policy is to demonstrate the council's commitment to ensuring robust and effective processes are in place to deal with ASB within the borough. The council wants to ensure private and ABC housing residents have a consistent approach in the way that the council and relevant external partners deal with ASB. The Policy aims to ensure a coordinated approach towards tackling anti-social behaviour and nuisance is achieved, wherever possible.
4. The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the council's ASB Policy and recommend the reviewed version for approval by the Council.
5. The Policy, as presented at Appendix 1 highlights the individual roles and responsibilities within the organisation and other external agencies to ensure that those with responsibilities act in accordance with the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Proposal

6. The safety & wellbeing service, housing service and environment and land management have worked together to produce a policy relevant to whole authority.
7. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, gives local authorities increased tools and powers to address ASB and take necessary action to resolve the issues.
8. The renewed policy is recognised as best practice and provides the assurance and links between the various operational documents in place. It clearly set out the Council's commitment to ASB as well identifying individual responsibilities.

9. The Policy includes the following elements:
 - a. Identifies objectives, scope and policy management;
 - b. Identifies key roles;
 - c. Identifies responsibilities;
 - d. Addresses policy awareness; and
 - e. Review arrangements.
10. The Chief Executive is appointed as having overall responsibility for the Policy with oversight being provided by Members.

Equalities Impact Assessment

11. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. The key issues arising are Anti-social Behaviour can affect anyone irrespective of gender, sexuality, age, class, religion or ethnicity. The policy covers all groups and recognises that ASB may affect individuals and communities differently. Activities/interventions to prevent ASB need to be designed and reviewed to meet the legitimate and particular considerations of gender, age, sexuality, disability and ethnicity. The policy has a positive impact and will enable the council to act quickly and effectively in order to tackle ASB targeted at vulnerable groups using the powers available in legislation.
12. Please see attached Equalities Impact Assessment.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. The policy has been developed in conjunction with relevant council services and external agencies. It is directly relevant to the Community Safety Partnership objectives and has been developed having reference to the annual strategic assessment.
14. Following the review of the existing policy the Housing Service committed to undertake consultation with tenants about the planned review, to ensure that the policy was reflective and fit for purpose in respect of handling and managing ASB from a tenant's perspective. The consultation was undertaken by the Tenant Engagement Officer over a period of three weeks. Each complainant of ASB to the Housing Service over the last twelve months was contacted by email and by post, with the opportunity to complete and anonymous survey to obtain their feedback. The survey was eighteen questions in total and ranged with from multiple choice answers for direct questions around reporting opportunities to comment boxes to establish more information about a particular element of their ASB complaint handling and resolution. Those contacted by the Tenant Engagement Officer were also offered the opportunity to speak about their feedback on the telephone.

Unfortunately, despite the multiple channels and short process to undertake the consultation there was no feedback or commentary received. This is disappointing, however, this type of targeted engagement with our tenants is a very new approach, we will continue to commit to consult on any changes to

the procedure that sits beneath the policy once endorsed, and we will also be in a position to review feedback about ASB more generally as we conclude our Tenant Satisfaction Measures Perception Surveys at the end of September. The outcome of the perception survey and Management Information from our internal system will be submitted formally to the Regulator of Social Housing and does cover our handling of ASB, so going forward this feedback may assist in our development of future policies or their revisions.

Other Options Considered

15. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, Part 2, amends the Housing Act 1996 and inserts Section 218A which states that a Local Housing Authority must prepare a policy in relation to ASB and procedures for dealing with such occurrences. Furthermore, there is a requirement for the Local Housing Authority to keep its policy and procedures under review.
16. Ensuring that we have robust ASB arrangements is fundamental to the council's operation. The development of an ASB policy is, however, only recommended as good practice other than in the case of our responsibilities as a social landlord.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

17. The policy will ensure a clear organisational approach and commitment to managing and addressing ASB within the borough. The policy will set out the obligations of all stakeholders including the CSU, Housing, Kent Police and Members.

Next Steps in Process

18. Once agreed the renewed policy will be made available to members and officers on the council's intranet and the public on the council's website.

Conclusion

19. Adoption of the renewed Policy provides a clear direction and shows the commitment by the Council in ensuring it has processes and direction in dealing with ASB.
20. The policy provides reassurance for all stakeholders by clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of members' officers' and external partners for ASB.

Portfolio Holder's Views

21. We are committed to improving the quality of life for those living and working within our communities including our tenants, as well as providing a safe and secure environment to enable people to live together free from the negative impact of ASB. The policy provides clarity and encourages consistency in our

approach to dealing with ASB and explores the working procedures which is much welcomed.

Cllr Liz Wright Cllr
Cabinet Member for Communities and Health

Cllr Bill Barrett
Cabinet Member for Homes & Homelessness

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Contact and Email

22. Laurel Niven, Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader
Laurel.niven@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330271

Rebecca Smith Housing Operations Manager, Income and Neighbourhoods
Rebecca.smith@ashford.gov.uk 01233 330808

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the

potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:

- Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or

service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	<p>Laurel Niven Community Safety and Resilience Team Leader</p> <p>Rebecca Smith Housing Operations Manager, Income and Neighbourhoods</p>
Decision maker:	<p>Cabinet</p>
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<p>The Cabinet is recommended to approval of the renewed Ashford Borough Council Anti-social Behaviour Policy</p>
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	<p>27 July 2023</p>
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the Ashford Borough Council's recently reviewed Anti-social Behaviour policy for adoption.</p> <p>The policy provides clarity on how the Council meets its responsibilities under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (section 5 and 6) requires local authorities and the police to work together at a localised level to develop and implement strategies for reducing crime and disorder in their area.</p> <p>The Policy as presented will guide elected members, officers and external partners in their roles and responsibilities. The Policy sets out the council's commitment to managing ASB. It therefore brings together the Ashford approach for delivering effective ASB solutions across the partnership. It ensures the Council has effective ASB processes in place to meet its legislative and regulatory obligations.</p>
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? 	<p>Tenants who have reported ASB over the last twelve months (ABC Housing tenants) were contacted and invited to complete a survey or speak with the Tenant Engagement Officer. The consultation survey and work was to draw out and use the tenant's experience of our handling of ASB to inform the review of the Policy and to also then be reflective in a subsequent review of the process beneath this.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Unfortunately there was no feedback from this survey work, however, this was conducted at short notice part way through the policy review but is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing so necessary.</p> <p>The outcome of the tenants survey from 2022 and the expectations set out by the Regulator of Social Housing, along with the Housing Ombudsman are reflected more clearly in the review of the Policy and will ensure that we are meeting these, alongside working in partnership with our colleagues internally managing ASB more widely in the community. There is no evidence to suggest from outcomes or the review of the policy that any people with different protected characteristics will be effected by this review of the Policy. The review accounts for a victim centred approach and considering each report on a case by case basis, adopting and using the appropriate response based on the information provided and investigation undertaken.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Low	Neutral
Middle age	Low	Neutral
Young adult	Low	Neutral
Children	Low	Neutral
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Low	Neutral
Mental	Low	Neutral
Sensory	Low	Neutral

<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u>		
Men	Low	Neutral
Women	Low	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u>		
Regular/Reserve personnel	Low	Neutral
Former service personnel	Low	Neutral
Service families	Low	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>There is no negative impact to mitigate in relation to this policy. As this is an overarching document.</p> <p>The ASB procedures that sit behind the policy will include a risk assessment process including a vulnerability assessment and due regard will be taken to that and appropriate response provided.</p>
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?	
Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A

1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	NA
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	NA
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	NA

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The due regard for equality has been considered throughout this report. However due to the nature of the report there are no negative impacts. • There is no unlawful discrimination arising from this report • The proposals are not considered to have any impacts on equality and will provide reassurance that we have procedures in place to support victims of ASB. • Monitoring will be completed through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of ASB reports and resolutions • customer surveys • attendance at relevant multi-agency meetings
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EIA completion date:	14 June 2023

Anti-social Behaviour Policy

2023 to 2026

Date: September 2023

Review date: March 2025

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1.0 Scope and purpose of this Anti-social behaviour policy document

This policy document will set out what Ashford Borough Council means by anti-social behaviour (ASB) and will set out the principles that we will apply and use to demonstrate a clear and consistent approach to tackle ASB. The overall aim of our policy and the procedures that sit behind are to promote safer, stronger communities and to provide and sustain a better quality of life for the residents of Ashford.

This policy was adopted in March 2020 and is managed jointly by the Safety and Wellbeing Service and Housing Service. It will be reviewed every 18 months. The policy is underpinned by the collaborative work of the community safety partnership.

Through setting our principles and approach to tackling and reducing ASB we will ensure that residents have realistic expectations when reporting ASB. We will provide a balanced view about the different roles and responsibilities through partnership working to successfully tackle ASB, as well as being clear and acknowledging that resolution may be difficult and timely in some cases.

1.1 Introduction

Within the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is defined as the following:

- (a) conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person,
- (b) conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
- (c) conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

Ashford Borough Council recognise that ASB can have a significant impact on victim's lives and the wider communities. It can affect an individual's feelings of personal safety, make a neighbourhood an unpleasant place to live or work in and greatly reduce on the overall quality of life for residents living in local communities.

All residents are entitled to live in a peaceful environment and visitors to Ashford have the right to visit and enjoy a safe and attractive borough.

Ashford Borough Council recognises that the problems created by ASB need to be dealt with in a robust and timely manner. The council aims to work as quickly and efficiently as possible to tackle ASB, this may be determined by the nature of the ASB incidents and appropriate resolutions.

1.2 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- detail the responsibilities in responding to and tackling ASB,
- record operational standards and outline our duty to share information with relevant partners,
- outline how victims of ASB will be supported,
- describe how residents report their concerns and how agencies communicate with them, and
- detail how agencies work together to utilise all available tools and resources to tackle ASB and support communities.

1.3 Policy Principles

The council's ASB policy is founded on the following principles:

- reports of ASB will be investigated and dealt with professionally,
- ASB will be dealt with fairly and proportionately,
- we will work with partners to deliver an effective ASB service across the community, and

How will we meet these principles?

We will meet our commitment by:

- publicising and promoting the various services we provide to tackle and reduce cases of ASB,
- encouraging people to report ASB and make it easy for them to do this using the identified reporting methods,
- recording each case that is identified as ASB and investigating the complaint to ensure we work towards an appropriate resolution,
- seeking to resolve ASB by taking the justified and proportionate response,
- using relevant tools and powers available to us set out within the legislation and according to our best professional judgement,
- seeking to respond to each report of ASB as quickly as possible in line with our procedure and by using best practice to ensure that procedures remain fit for purpose and effective,
- setting out an initial plan of action, risk assessment and in accordance with the victims code when appropriate, which sets out how we will keep the complainant informed of progress and possible enforcement powers,
- refer cases between the different sections of the Ashford Borough Council and to other agencies, as necessary,
- ensuring that any crimes reported to the council is quickly passed to the Police, with a continuation of dialogue between agencies if appropriate and necessary.

- providing information, instruction, training and supervision for Ashford Borough Council employees to help them understand their role and responsibility in ASB management,
- actively promote mediation, where appropriate and with the consent of those involved, before considering the need for formal or enforcement action,
- explaining our reasons should we choose to take no action, and suggest self-help or other alternative courses of action, including private legal proceedings where relevant, and
- obtaining feedback from our council tenants through surveys or formal tenant engagement channels about their experience and satisfaction of the ASB service provided, reporting satisfaction levels to the Social Housing Regulator and acting on any negative feedback to improve our service when appropriate.

1.4 Our Responsibilities

Ashford Borough Council have a broad remit in respect of responsibilities when responding to ASB, these are set out as the following four areas:

i) Our role as a social landlord

As a social housing landlord under the [Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#) we have a duty to investigate allegations of ASB affecting those living in properties we own and manage and to respond as each incident is reported to us. Our landlord duties and powers are different from and are in addition to, the duties and powers we have to deal with ASB in the wider community. Within this policy document and the procedure documents that sit behind it we will be clear about when a policy objective or procedural action applies to Ashford Borough Council tenants. Set out in the [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) are a number of additional powers that can be used to take action against those who are causing ASB.

The tenancy agreements provided by us as social housing landlord sets out the expectations about the behaviour of tenants. Action can be taken against tenants who do not comply, and there is a right to seek to evict a tenant in serious cases of ASB.

As a social housing landlords, the council will work with all appropriate partners and utilise relevant powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle reports of ASB. These powers include:

- Criminal Behaviour Orders – issued by a criminal court against a person who has been convicted of an offence and is causing anti-social behaviour.
- Dispersal Powers – this allows police officers to order a person who is causing harassment, alarm, or distress to leave a specific area for up to 48hours.

- Community Protection Notices – local authorities, the police, and sometimes social landlords can issue Community Protection Notices to address a wide range of problems such as littering and noise nuisance.
- Public Space Protection Orders – used by local authorities to prevent behaviour and nuisance that is persistent, unreasonable and/or detrimental.
- Closure Orders – a court order which closes down properties that are causing serious nuisance, disorder, or criminal behaviour. This means there is a temporary ban on occupying the property.

Before making a referral to another partner, tenants will be advised as to why this is necessary and any necessary permissions will be obtained. Despite a referral to another partnership organisation or agency it remains important for the council as a social housing landlord to continue communication with tenants and undertake management of an ASB case.

ii) Our role as part of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Under the [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#), the council must work with the Police and other agencies to reduce crime and disorder within the borough. In this role, we play a key part in dealing with ASB of all kinds. The [Ashford CSP](#) enables Ashford Borough Council to work together to develop and implement strategies to protect our local communities from crime and to help people feel safe, including but not limited to developing local approaches to deal with issues including anti-social behaviour, drug or alcohol abuse, domestic abuse and re-offending.

iii) Our role as part of the Community Safety Unit (CSU)

The CSU is the operational group that sits beneath the Strategic Community Safety Partnership. The role of the CSU is to implement the various projects, programmes and initiatives to meet the objectives set by the CSP. This is done through regular partner meetings and ensuring linkages with other task groups operating within the borough.

It is then the responsibility of the CSU to deal with ASB cases appropriately by working with partner's agencies and internal departments.

The CSU organises and participates in multi-agency working groups dealing with specific ASB issues that are within certain hotspot areas and key locations within the borough. The CSU will also work with housing associations, private landlords, letting agents and businesses to provide professional advice and support as required, so that these organisations can act confidently to prevent or tackle ASB, making use of their own resources.

iv) Our environmental protection role

The council has a range of responsibilities to deal with “environmental” ASB, examples of this include but is not limited to noise, litter, bonfires, fly tipping and

abandoned vehicles. These responsibilities arise from a number of Acts and local byelaws, but in particular from the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#).

Local authorities have specific powers to deal with noise pollution. Environmental Health teams can investigate noise complaints and take action to help, including issuing noise abatement orders or community protection notices, which set out what the person causing the noise must do to stop the nuisance. If they do not comply, they could face further legal action.

v) **Our partnership working arrangements**

Whilst these are four distinct roles this policy provides clarity and commitment to the very strong links between them and that close working arrangements have been developed between teams that deliver the various services. The key services involved in the council's ASB work are:

- Community Safety
- Housing
- Environment & Land Management
- Environmental Protection

2.0 Victim-centred approach

The council will always consider the harm victims of ASB as crucial and operates a victim-centred approach when responding to, tackling, and finding resolutions to instances of ASB. Each incident reported will be managed on a case-by-case basis and this policy recognises that two ASB cases where the behaviour type is identical, the victims may suffer a differing level of harm.

Language barriers and certain forms of illness or disability may make it difficult for some people to express themselves or communicate clearly so officers will consider the use of advocates, translation services and/or make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of the individuals.

2.1 Examples of ASB

Ashford Borough Council considers the following as examples of anti-social behaviour, however this is not an exhaustive list:

- Noise nuisance from within or outside a dwelling or building, loud - music, persistent shouting or excessive noise, frequent loud parties, and other domestic noise.
- Environmental ASB - fly tipped domestic rubbish, littering, vandalism, dog fouling, dog control, bonfires, graffiti, fly-posting and abandoned vehicles.
- Commercial ASB - construction noise, fly tipped environmental waste.

The council works in close partnership with the Police regarding intimidation, harassment, violence and hate crime. This partnership working can include, but is not limited to threatening or aggressive behaviour, harassment, assault,

damage to property, keeping and failing to control an aggressive dog, using or allowing premises to be used for illegal or immoral activity such as prostitution, selling, handling or storing or using illegal drugs or handling stolen goods and domestic violence.

It should be noted that the above list does not cover every situation that may be deemed to be ASB. Therefore, each case will be assessed and how it is handled will vary depending on the specific circumstances of the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. This requirement of our Safeguarding Policy takes primacy over this policy.

2.2 When we may not be able to get involved

Although antisocial behaviour is defined in law, it can be difficult to define what behaviours and actions are ASB and there are some types of behaviour that are not officially classed as ASB for example but not limited to:

- Children playing in the street or communal areas and young people gathering socially, unless they are being threatening or deliberately intimidating.
- Parking issues (not being able to park outside your own home or badly parked vehicles).
- Civil disputes between neighbours, for example shared driveways.
- Complaints about normal household noise.
- Disagreements between two neighbours where there are no impartial witnesses or evidence to support either party.

The Council is not an emergency response service. Incidents where there is an immediate risk of harm to person or property must be reported to the police or other appropriate emergency service.

Incidents of a criminal nature must be reported to the police, for example, drug dealing. The police are the lead response and investigatory service for criminal offences. The Council work closely with the police and will consider criminal behaviours when investigating an anti-social behaviour case.

The Council will not investigate anonymous complaints. It is important for us to be able to speak to a complainant about the behaviour they are concerned about.

3.0 Additional Considerations

i) Confidentiality and information sharing

Where appropriate, the council will share information with the Police and other key agencies under the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Protocols (KMISP). This ensures all agencies can carry out their functions and duties in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The council will work within the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 that provide a background for sharing information and the need for confidentiality and privacy. We will not disclose personal information unless required to for such purposes as a prosecution, a safeguarding concern, where it is in the public interest or with the persons consent.

The council's [Information Rights](#) webpage sets out how we lawfully process and share any personal information.

ii) **ASB Case Review (The Community Trigger)**

An ASB case review (often referred to as the Community Trigger) gives victims and communities of persistent ASB the right to request a review of their situation to examine how local agencies have responded to previous ASB complaints and consider whether further action should be taken.

Across Kent, a common approach has been developed to support all agencies involved in case reviews. This provides victims of ASB with a clear and effective response regardless of where they live in the county.

Further information at: [Ashford Borough Council ASB Case Review Information](#)

iii) **Discretion**

This policy commits the council to dealing with ASB in a fair and proportionate way. We may occasionally need to exercise discretion to vary our approach when dealing with ASB because each case is unique. A commit is given to respond and deal with the most serious reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB) as a matter of urgency, especially where vulnerable people are involved, either as the complainant or the perpetrator.

iv) **Vexatious complaints**

Where the Council has reason to believe that a complaint is false, malicious or unreasonable, we will consider taking appropriate action against the complainant. Please refer to the separate council's policy on [Vexatious complainers](#),

4.0 **Links to other corporate strategies and policies**

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Council safeguarding policy
- Council corporate complaints policy
- Council CCTV code of practise
- [Housing Letting policy](#)

5.0 Legislation

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when developing and implementing this policy:

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Children's Act 2004
- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Equality Act 2010
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Harassment Act 1997
- Homeless Reduction Act 2018
- Housing Acts 1985, 1996 and 2002
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Local Government Act 2000
- Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007)
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984
- Social Housing (Regulation) Bill 2022 - 2023

6.0 Partner Agencies

We work in collaboration with a number of agencies to prevent and manage ASB. Details of partnership organisations and agencies that we work with can be found by visiting <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/community-safety/community-safety-partnership/>

7.0 Policy Awareness and Review

This policy will be communicated through the relevant endorsement process and channels within the council, including Management Team, Cabinet, Audit Committee and will be published on our internal staff information website (Smart Hub) and the Ashford Borough Council website pages relating to [ASB](#).

This policy document and the procedure documents that implement the policy objectives and principles will be reviewed every 18 months. It will be amended, if necessary, to take into account any change in legislation or introduction of regulatory requirements, to reflect any non-statutory guidance from central government and ensure implementation of relevant industry standards.

8.0 Equality and diversity

The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunities in its services. [The Equality Act 2010](#) provides a framework to ensure Ashford Borough Council services are not provided in a discriminatory manner by having due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

Under this policy, the council will also:

- Demonstrate that we have considered any vulnerability identified within the Act when deciding to proceed to legal action.
- Ensure that the proposed legal action is a proportionate response to the ASB.

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Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in Committee Room No. 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **5th September 2023**.

Present:

Cllr. Heyes (Chairman) - ABC
Mr. P Bartlett (Vice Chairman) - KCC

Cllrs. – Forest, Gathern, Joseph, Meaden, Michael - ABC

Mr M Hill – KCC

Mr G Cosgrove - KALC Representative

Apologies:

Cllr. Feacey – ABC

Mr C Campkin, Mr D Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr C Simkins – KCC

Mrs C Drury – KALC

Also present

Cllrs. Hicks, Shilton, Spain - ABC

Head of Economic Development, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Technical and Transport Officer, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer

In Attendance (virtually):

Cllr. Ledger – ABC

Highways & Transportation Strategic Resilience Manager, Highway Manager
Ashford – KCC

Mr G Williams - Secretary General and Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer
Eurostar

120 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 6th June 2023 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

121 Update on Eurostar Service to Ashford

The Chairman introduced this item and acknowledged receipt of a petition from Ms Akhtar on the return of the Eurostar service to Ebbsfleet and Ashford. He reminded the meeting that the Council, as the local authority, had no decision-making powers in this regard. The Council, together with KCC, had lobbied central Government, High Speed 1 and Eurostar and this topic had been discussed at previous Joint Transportation Board meetings on numerous occasions. He emphasized that the Council was very keen to encourage the return of the service to Ashford.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Ms Akhtar attended and spoke on the item. Her speech is attached to these Minutes at Appendix A.

In accordance with procedure Rule 9.3, Ms Mbali attended and spoke on the item. Her speech is attached to these Minutes at Appendix B.

In accordance with procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Bienfait submitted a speech on this item and his speech was read out on his behalf by the Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer. His speech is attached to these Minutes at Appendix C.

The Head of Economic Development explained that the service to Ashford had stopped in March 2020 as a result of the Covid pandemic and that a great deal of work had been undertaken pre-Covid to enable Ashford International Station to accommodate the Eurostar service. He said it was important to recognize that there were significant challenges to reinstating the service at Ashford but attention must be given to sustainable travel and the green agenda with the ability to access this service locally.

The Secretary General of Eurostar introduced himself. He explained that the Ashford service had only been 3% of their market, but it was a steady and loyal service, and closure of the service had not been a trivial decision. The Covid pandemic had cut Eurostar revenue by 97% for 18 months and the company had not received any direct Government support. It had been necessary for the company to borrow at full commercial rates and the consequence was that difficult commercial decisions now had to be taken to maximize income to repay the loan. The other important factor was the future of border controls and the consequences of the UK exiting the EU. New entry systems would be required at Eurotunnel and Dover and it would be some time before the effects of the new systems would be fully understood. Both the financial effects of Covid and the future border control systems had led to a need for harsh commercial choices and a cutting back to servicing core routes only. Next year could see changes following a company merger when consideration would be given to the company's financing and structure, and more would be known about the new systems of access to European borders.

The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member suggested that as the Olympics were to be held in Paris next year, this would be an opportunity to support a reinstated service at Ashford, which could provide excellent transport links and parking opportunities. The Secretary General said that he understood this point, but that at present the business needed to focus on making the most effective use of resources, and that focus would continue to be on the London market. He advised that there had been a significant increase in loads on trains in London post-Covid, and it was not commercially viable to add the costs of stopping at Ashford while the trains from London were full. However, it may be possible to look at broader options in future.
- There was a question whether Eurostar had exclusive rights to the international service from Ashford and Ebbsfleet stations. The Secretary General said that this was not the case. Access to services was regulated and open to any operator and he confirmed that Ashford had no lack of station or track capacity. In response to a further question about trains, he said that only one type of train had been cleared for passing via the Tunnel and this could be purchased from the manufacturer by any operator.
- A Member asked whether the commercial impediment to stopping at Ashford was related to the extra cost of staff or whether it was due to running costs. The Secretary General replied that the running costs to Ashford were already built in so there was no penalty to stop at Ashford or Ebbsfleet. However, there would be additional staffing costs at Ashford in relation to border control. International train running costs were very high, with steep commercial charges imposed on operators. A Member asked if there was no potential to stop at Ashford and the Secretary General replied that there was currently too much demand from the London market and there was insufficient rolling stock to add extra services for the Ashford market.
- There was a question about border fluidity and how it impacted the service. The Secretary General said that 9 million people per year passed through security and exit/inbound border control, which required intense staff resources. Now that the UK was out of the EU, UK travelers would be third country nationals requiring additional border checks. Limited resources from control authorities meant that those resources had to be used where the need was most pressing.
- A Member asked whether the situation might be reviewed next year. The Secretary General said that business recovery was key at the moment, but the company did want to grow and diversify and they would continue to keep the situation under review.
- The Head of Economic Development emphasized that the Council was highly supportive of the reintroduction of the service at Ashford. He asked what more the authority could do. The Secretary General said that the Council was currently doing all the right things, such as maintaining visibility of the issue via petitions and support from the local Member of Parliament. This was effectively keeping this issue on the radar.

- A Member asked whether the primary impediment to reintroducing the service at Ashford was the company's debt situation. The Secretary General replied that it was a combination of the need to maximize contributions to pay down the debt and complexities around future border controls. He finished by saying that he appreciated the opportunity to attend the meeting and provide an update and he thanked those who had submitted the petition and spoken at the meeting. He said that Eurostar were aware that Ashford had been a steady and loyal market in the past.

122 Minutes of meeting with Stagecoach on 11th July regarding bus service changes

The Chairman opened this item for discussion and invited comments/questions.

- A KALC representative said that he had been asked by Kennington Parish Council to enquire about the withdrawal of the bus services from Little Burton Farm. This had been done without consultation or communication with the Parish Council or residents.
- Mr Bartlett commented that KCC had supported 44 bus services across the county, and that other authorities were also available to provide support if they so chose.
- A representative from Kennington Parish Council said that there used to be an hourly service running through the estate. The withdrawal of the bus service from that route clearly impacted residents, with no information or warning given prior to ceasing the service.
- A Member said it was necessary to give notice to the Transport Commissioner before suspension of any bus service. He added that he was disappointed that at the meeting with Stagecoach in July they had not mentioned the withdrawal of the service from Little Burton Farm.
- A Member asked whether there was any work being undertaken to see if the services were viable for funding by others. He also noted that buses in other local areas were empty at certain times of the day and he questioned whether it would be viable to reduce services at those times and increase them at busier times.
- The Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that a new District Bus Partnership Group has been established and the first meeting is on 12 September, to include Council Members, Stagecoach senior representatives and officers from the Council and KCC.
- There was a question about the recent free bus weekend which had been designed to encourage bus use. A Member said that this had not been well publicized and many people she had spoken to knew nothing about it. She felt this was a missed opportunity. The Safety and Wellbeing Manager said she would feedback to KCC on this point.
- A Member noted a diminution in bus services around Ashford in past years, and he pointed out that this was not encouraging less car use.

123 Border Traffic Management

The Strategic Resilience Manager introduced this item. He said that Operation Brock had been in place over the summer, and would continue for some time as there was currently no alternative when there was congestion at Eurotunnel or Dover. Although Operation Brock was not in place at the moment, National Highways were undertaking works between Maidstone and Ashford and hence the limits on the motorway were still in place. The system of border controls would be changing next year after the Olympics with the introduction of the Entry Exit System (EES) system, followed by the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) system. The full impact of the new systems could not be assessed until more was known from the EU. The Kent Resilience Forum and KCC were looking at transport systems to encourage fluidity and would develop traffic management plans as soon as more information was available

The Chairman opened up the discussion for comments and questions:

- The Head of Economic Development noted that Eurostar was piloting an app at St Pancras Station but it needed final approval before it could be fully rolled out.
- A Member asked about the land reclamation programme in Dover and questioned whether this would provide more traffic holding capacity. The Strategic Resilience Manager said that he was familiar with the suggestion but that it was a long-term project. At present there was no space at Dover for holding traffic for customs clearance. There was a proposal to fill in the dock at the old marina to process coaches and cars, but this had some drawbacks as well as the obvious benefits.
- A Member suggested using the car parks at the IBF facility in Ashford. The Strategic Resilience Manager explained that the French border force were likely to require the security of a vehicle once it had been checked. He considered that the IBF facility would be too far away to guarantee this security.
- There was a question about transport of goods. The Strategic Resilience Manager advised that 85-90% of freight was European which would impact less on checks and these could be managed by the port. The main problem was the necessary checks on coaches and cars.
- A Member noted that, in the main, HGVs had kept to the main routes in the past during Operation Brock. He asked whether checks were still in place with penalties for using different routes. The Strategic Resilience Manager replied that the authorities set up controls in strategic areas to mitigate the problem but resources were limited.
- A Member asked whether it was likely that the motorway between Ashford and Maidstone would have all three lanes in operation again. The Strategic Resilience Manager said that National Highways were currently working on the road but he had been assured that once the maintenance works were complete, all three lanes would be open, together with the 70mph speed limit. This would be the situation unless further maintenance work was required or Operation Brock was introduced.

124 Highway Works Programme Update Report

The Highway Manager – Ashford introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report.

The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- A Member asked about the roadworks on Trinity Road. He said he usually got advance warning about road works in his ward but this had not happened on this occasion. The Highway Manager – Ashford replied that Ward Members were usually notified about road works in advance unless they were emergency road works, in which case the work could commence before an advice was sent out.
- A Member asked the Highway Manager – Ashford to report back to her colleagues that the roundels in Bybrook Road had not been repainted.

125 Parking

The Technical and Transport Officer introduced this report and highlighted the key points. The Chairman opened up the item for discussion:

- A Member noted that a great deal of work had been done in preparation for the parking spaces on Tannery Lane outside the Sorting Office and he thanked officers. He was very pleased to learn that three spaces were to be provided instead of two. However, he was disappointed that the introduction of the parking spaces coincided with severely reduced hours at the Sorting Office. The Technical and Transport Officer confirmed that parking outside the Sorting Office is anticipated to be in place by end of October 2023.

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APPENDIX A

BUSHRA AKHTAR

Thank you for inviting us to this meeting which is of great importance to us. My name is Bushra Akhtar and I am part of the 'Bring Back Euro Trains' residents committee who are a group of active Kent based residents passionately campaigning for the reinstatement of our European train connections. We present to you a petition with over 30,000 individuals who have signed, who want to see the return of the Eurostar service in Ebbsfleet and Ashford as it was before Covid. The signatures represent a small fraction of individuals who would be using this critical service for either business, tourism and visiting families.

The ceasing of the Eurostar service in Kent has had an impact to our communities, particularly to jobs and businesses, not to mention dual European and British families like mine, who have had to reduce how often we visit each other. For these reasons we hope that you will hear our voices and help support the initiative to get our European train connection re-instated.

<https://www.change.org/p/bring-back-eurostar-train-services-to-kent>

We understand that behind the scenes there are complexities to the Eurostar service returning, including the impact of Covid and border control checks caused by Brexit. We hope that the 'Bring Back Eurostar Petition' can be used as an element in order to help build a case for Eurostar to re-consider their current position, as it shows sentiment and interest for their service within Kent. We want to continue to help support the joint initiative with local government and would like to provide our modest contribution where we are able to.

Under what circumstances would Eurostar re-consider re-instating this service?
How can we continue to help build enough of a solid case to convince Eurostar to return to Kent?

CHARLOTTE MBALI

I am Charlotte Mbali, the Vice chairperson of East Kent for Europe.

East Kent for Europe is a branch of the European Movement. One of the movement's aims is to further links between THE UK and Europe. We wish to know if Eurostar, in advance of restarting regular timetabled stops at Ashford for individually booked passengers, would consider charter trains again, similar to the ski train that used to run. Also, to enhance tourism on both sides of the Channel, it would be good to run local-to-local tourist trains (Ashford-Calais-Lille and back) for group bookings by youth groups, choirs, battlefield and heritage tours etc.

APPENDIX C

ALEXANDER BIENFAIT

I am Alex Bienfait, a resident of Ashford, and part of the 'Bring Back Euro Trains' residents action group. Part of the reason my family choose to come and live in Ashford was because of the town's international train connections.

There are well-publicised capacity constraints at St. Pancras station; reportedly some Eurostar trains are filled to only 70-80% of their maximum capacity. It is perplexing, given the bottlenecks in London, why a short stop in Ashford is not used to help alleviate these problems, and thereby make maximum use of the space on trains. This would also help alleviate the reported shortage of passenger seats.

We look forward to understanding this issue further.

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Ashford Borough Council: Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group held on Microsoft Teams on **26 July 2023**.

Present:

Cllr Bartlett (Chair)
Cllr Ledger (Vice-Chair)

Cllrs Mrs Bell, Blanford, Hallett, Harman (ex-Officio), Meaden, Michael, Roden and Spain.

Also present:

Cllrs Bell, Gathern

In attendance:

Spatial Planning Manager; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Team Leader - Plan Making and Infrastructure; Team Leader, Plan Making and Infrastructure; Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure; Deputy Team Leader – Plan Making and Infrastructure; Monitoring Support Officer; Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development; Member Services Officer.

1 Apologies and substitutions

1.1. No apologies had been received.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 The Chair made a Voluntary Announcement in respect of item 6, that he was a Member of Kent County Council who was responsible for the Local Transport Plan, but that he had had no input into it.

2.2 Councillor Harman made a Voluntary Announcement regarding item 5, that she was the Chair of Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council and Chair of their Neighbourhood Planning Team; she said she would listen to the discussion and be respectful of the confidentiality of the meeting.

2.3 Councillor Mrs Bell made a Voluntary Announcement in respect of item 6, that she was a Member of Kent County Council who was responsible for the Local Transport Plan, but that she had had no input into it.

3. Notes of the last Meeting

3.1 **Resolved**

The Notes of the meeting of 17 March 2023 were received and noted.

4. Progressing a new Local Plan to 2041

- 4.1 The Spatial Planning Manager gave a presentation, drawing Members' attention to the timeframes required to prepare, adopt and maintain a robust Local Plan. He outlined the potential additional policy areas that would likely need to be included and the challenges that this could present. Alongside the Plan, an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and a borough-wide Design Code would be prepared. The Call for Sites for the new Local Plan was to begin in the late summer.
- 4.2 The item was opened up for discussion and questions.
- 4.3 A Member asked how the Council could protect itself against developer claims of non-viability, in respect of Section 106 contributions and climate change mitigation measures. The Spatial Planning Manager replied that there were some set contribution parameters that had to be met by developers; other expectations would need a strongly-evidenced cost calculation to prove viability, if challenged.
- 4.4 A Member asked if sufficient resource was available to keep to the timescales. The Spatial Planning Manager intended to collaborate with neighbouring LPAs, and utilise other networks such as Parish Councils to tap into local knowledge.
- 4.5. A Member asked that Parish Councils be appraised early and comprehensively of the intention to Call for Sites. It was felt Members had a clear role to play in aiding communication regarding this, and they asked to be alerted at least 24 hours beforehand, to facilitate the message being passed on. It was stressed that a comprehensive communication plan was needed, to keep all partners engaged.
- 4.6 A Member queried if the recent Government announcements on 'inner city' development might encompass central Ashford too. The Spatial Planning Manager acknowledged the potential link with Ashford's Growth Area past, but the current announcements do not specifically mention Ashford. It was agreed a skyline strategy could be considered as part of a wider discussion on densification of urban areas.
- 4.7 A Member requested reassurance that green corridors could be preserved, as biodiversity buffer zones.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group noted the content of the report and agreed:

- **A Local Plan period of up to 2041;**
- **The use of the standard method as a starting point to enable work to begin on updating the evidence base for housing and other relevant objectively assessed needs within the borough;**
- **For an Infrastructure and Delivery Plan and a borough-wide Design Code to be prepared alongside the regulation 18 version of the new Local Plan.**

5. Aldington and Bonnington Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 One of the Deputy Team Leaders gave a presentation, commenting that the production of such a plan involved a great deal of complex work for Parish Councils; the role of the Local Planning Authority was that of 'critical friend' in providing support. Good communication throughout the process smoothed the pathway to approval. The feedback that ABC wished to make at this stage was detailed in the report.
- 5.2 The Chair acknowledged and commended the amount of effort already expended by all involved, and opened the item up for comment and questions.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group

- **Received and noted the report;**
- **Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Planning and Development to finalise and agree the response to the Aldington and Bonnington Neighbourhood Plan in consultation with the Chair of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group.**

6. Kent County Council Consultation – Local Transport Plan

- 6.1 One of the Deputy Team Leaders explained that this was a scoping exercise by KCC, with feedback informing a first draft for consultation in Spring 2024. He suggested the priorities for ABC were Operation Brock, Eurostar service re-instatement and the decarbonisation of the travel sector.
- 6.2 The item was opened up for discussion and questions.
- 6.2 A Member queried the breadth of the exercise at this stage. It was confirmed that any individual member of the public or any group can express their views via the portal on the KCC website.

- 6.3 A Member had concerns regarding the proposed new Lower Thames crossing negatively impacting on unsuitably-sized and constructed roads, where satellite navigation on mobile phones indicated all routes in the county were viable for heavy goods vehicles.
- 6.4 A Member wished it to be recognised that maintaining and upgrading well-used existing footpaths and bridleways that were not adjacent to the highway would continue to encourage walkers and cyclists to access the town in an environmentally-friendly way. It was noted that a number of footpaths were not disabled-friendly, requiring improvement.

Resolved

That the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group

- **Received and noted the report**
- **Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Planning & Development to finalise and agree any responses in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing Delivery & Communication, and the Chair of Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group.**

7. Member Tracker

- 7.1 It was agreed to add a 'building height and density' item to the Tracker, in preparation for the Local Plan and any clarification from Government regarding definitive criteria of an 'inner city'.
- 7.2 It was agreed that meetings would continue to be held on the dates and times already set into calendars, as virtual meetings.
- 7.3 A Member asked for more information regarding biodiversity net gain and whether aspirational targets above the statutory requirement were being considered. A workshop was suggested.

8. Date and time of the next meeting

- 8.1 27th September 2023, at 2pm, via TEAMS.

Councillor Bartlett
Chairman – Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group

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Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date: 28TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Report Title: SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN

Report Author and Job Title: Danny Sheppard, Member Services Manager

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holders are individually specified in the attached Schedule.

Summary:	To set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet of Ashford Borough Council.
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Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Where appropriate, individual Wards are indicated.

Recommendations **That the Cabinet receive and note the latest Schedule of Key Decisions.**

Policy Overview: Under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no longer a legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, however there is still a requirement to publish details of Key Decisions 28 clear days before the meeting they are to be considered at. The Council maintains a live, up to date rolling list of decision items on the Council's website, and that list will be presented to the Cabinet each month, in its current state, for Members' information.

Financial Implications: Nil

Legal Implications: n/a

Equalities Impact Assessment n/a

Other Material Implications: Nil

Exempt from publication: No

Background Papers: None

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**CABINET
SCHEDULE OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN**

The following Key Decisions will be taken by Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet on the dates stated.

Ashford Borough Council's Cabinet is made up of: - Councillors Noel Ovenden; Steve Campkin; Bill Barrett; Simon Betty; Linda Harman; Heather Hayward; Dawnie Nilsson; Kate Walder; and Liz Wright.

Copies of the reports and any other relevant documents that are submitted to the Cabinet in connection with a proposed decision will be available for inspection, five clear days before the decision at <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
28th September 2023					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	30/9/22
Update on the Broadband and Digital Infrastructure improvements in the Ashford Borough	<i>To update on projects and initiatives to improve broadband in the Borough and outline the work that the team suggests can take place in the coming year.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Thomas Jenkins	Open	30/9/22
Updated Senior Structure	<i>To review and update the structure at a Senior Management level.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Nilsson	Tracey Kerly	Open (Exempt Appendix)	11/4/23

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Civic Centre Relocation	<i>To request approval to move forward with the first two phases of the project to achieve the maximum savings - Phase 1 moving the office side to IH and Phase 2 to move the Civic Suite side to International House.</i>	Cllr Betty/Ovenden/Nilsson	Hannah Clayton-Peck	Open	11/4/23
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	<i>To approve the reviewed ASB policy in order to ensure a clear organisational approach and commitment to managing and addressing ASB within the borough for private residents and housing tenants. The policy will set out the obligations of all stakeholders including the CSU, Housing, Kent Police and Members.</i>	Cllr Wright/Barrett	Laurel Niven	Open	14/12/22
26th October 2023					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/11/22
Council Tax Base 2024/25	<i>To present for approval the estimated 2024/25 Council tax base calculation for the Borough and each parished area, on which the major preceptors and local Parish Councils will base their requirements.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Jo Stocks	Open	28/11/22
Medium Term Financial Plan	<i>To ask Cabinet to note the Medium Term Financial Plan ahead of this year’s Budget process.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/10/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2023-2053 (including Financing and Affordable Homes Programme)	<i>To detail the financial position in the HRA and ask Members to agree Housing's priorities for the next year.</i>	Cllr Barrett	Jo Stocks/Mark James	Open (Exempt Appendix)	16/12/22
Annual Commercial Property Update - 2022/23	<i>To advise of the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the last financial period and to advise of proposals to increase profitability in the coming financial period.</i>	Cllr Betty	Eloise Duffy	Open	28/10/22
Corporate Property Asbestos Management Policy, Procedure and Management Plan	<i>To seek approval for the revised Asbestos Management Policy, Procedure and Plan for Corporate Property.</i>	Cllr Betty	Victoria Couper-Samways	Open	14/6/23
Update on Levelling Up Funding and Newtown Works Development	<i>To update on the progress in drawing down the Levelling Up Funding, the works undertaken to date, the current programme for the development and the risks for the project.</i>	Cllr Betty	Andrew Osborne	Open	3/2/23
30th November 2023					
Corporate Performance Report	<i>To give Members and residents an overview of how the council is performing with a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	28/11/22

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
Draft Budget 2024/25	<i>To present the preliminary draft service budget and outline MTFP for the purposes of subsequent formal scrutiny by the O&S Task Group and public consultation.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	28/11/22
Brompton Development	<i>To update of the progress of the discussions with both Brompton and the Developer in bringing forward the proposed development including the setting up a of joint venture company.</i>	Cllr Betty	Paul McKenner	Open	28/7/22
Nutrient Neutrality Solution		Cllr Harman	Paul McKenner	Open	27/7/23
Ashford Borough Council RIPA Policy		Cllr Walder	Samantha Clarke	Open	11/4/22
21st December 2023					
25th January 2024					
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	27/1/23
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	24/2/23

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
22nd February 2024					
Revenue Budget 2024/25	<i>To present the draft revenue budget for 2024/25 to the Cabinet for recommendation to Council.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	24/2/23
Corporate Performance Report	<i>The report seeks to give Members and the Borough's residents an overview of how the Council is performing. It seeks to do this in a transparent and easily-accessible manner, giving a key performance 'snapshot'.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	24/2/23
Parking Strategy		Cllr Campkin	Alison Oates	Open	1/12/22
21st March 2024					
Annual Pay Policy Statement (including Review for 2024/25)	<i>A review of the annual Pay Policy Statement and Ashford Living Wage Allowance.</i>	Cllr Nilsson	Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross	Open	31/3/23
25th April 2024					
30th May 2024					

Decision Item	Report Summary	Relevant Portfolio Holder	Report Author	Open or Exempt	Added to Schedule
27th June 2024					
Corporate Plan Annual Report 2023/24	<i>To present the Annual Report 2023/24 highlighting performance against the Corporate Plan priorities.</i>	Cllr Ovenden/ Hayward	Tom Swain	Open	30/6/23
Final Outturn 2023/24	<i>Final budget outturn for previous financial year.</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	30/6/23
25th July 2024					
Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report	<i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Lee Foreman	Open	30/9/22
Revenues & Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule	<i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i>	Cllr Ovenden	Nic Stevens	Open (Exempt Appendix)	30/7/22
29th August 2024					
KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS					

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8/9/23

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