



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL on Tuesday, 14th November, 2023 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:-

Councillor Bell (Chair)
Councillor Chilton (Vice-Chair)

Cllrs. Arnold, Bartlett, Buchanan, Feacey, Joseph, Ledger, Meaden, Michael, Shilton and Suddards.

Agenda

Page Nos..

1. **Apologies/Substitutes**

To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c)

2. **Declarations of Interest**

3 - 4

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

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

See Agenda Item 2 for further details

3. **Minutes of the last Meeting**

5 - 8

To approve the Minutes of the last Meeting

4. **South East Water presentation**

A presentation from South Easter Water to share updates on how they are improving resilience across their network and answer Member questions.

| | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 5. | Community Safety Partnership Update | 9 - 28 |
| 6. | Freedom Leisure at the Stour Centre - presentation | |
| | Presentation providing information regarding overall service delivery including general maintenance and cleanliness | |
| 7. | Savings Plan Progress - 2nd Quarter 2023/24 | 29 - 34 |
| 8. | Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2 | 35 - 72 |
| 9. | Schedule of Cabinet Key Decisions | 73 - 80 |
| 10. | O&S Work Programme 23-24 | 81 - 84 |

6 November 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 relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

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

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

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

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

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

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

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

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

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held in Committee Room No. 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **10th October 2023**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chair),

Cllrs. Bartlett, Feacey, Joseph, Ledger, McGeever, Shilton, C. Suddards.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(c), Cllr McGeever attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Michael.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Arnold, Chilton, Meaden, Michael.

In attendance:

Cllr. Campkin

Director of Place, Space and Leisure, Assistant Director of Environment, Property & Recreation, Head Of Policy and Performance, Commercial Projects and Recreation Manager, Member Services Officer.

Also in Attendance (virtually)

Cllrs. Barrett, Walder.

Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager

163 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 12th September 2023 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

164 Waste Contract Implementation

The Assistant Director of Environment, Property & Recreation gave a presentation to the Committee, which covered in detail the following areas:

- Methodology
- Arrival at tender bid
- Street cleansing, and the role of the Litter Authority
- Update following the third round of competitive dialogue
- Improving service delivery
- What you will see (Vehicles)
- 3rd sector partner (Demelza)

- Costs, and Risks
- Local wider picture
- Kent Resource Partnership aims
- The national picture on changing legislation
- Changing kerbside materials, and recycling rate
- What happens next (for contract implementation) and how Members can assist

The presentation was opened up to the Committee and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- Staff employed by the existing refuse company Biffa would have the opportunity to transfer to Suez, the new company.
- There would be changes to routes (for efficiency and improved resilience) and collection day changes. This would be widely communicated with residents and with plenty of notice. The reasons for these changes were to help balance out capacity issues at the transfer station and improve the missed bin service.
- Garden waste charges to the customer were anticipated to rise from £45 to £60 (to be confirmed at a future Cabinet meeting) owing to increasing costs for delivering the service. This would bring Ashford in line with neighbouring Local Authorities for garden waste collections. The Director of Place, Space and Leisure explained that Biffa had introduced the collections at a discounted price. The risk of residents putting garden waste into their household waste was considered. The Committee were reminded that the garden waste collection was not a statutory service.
- Funding from Central Government for changing legislative requirements were expected to become clearer in the next financial year. The recycling rate for the Council was a percentage of the overall tonnage of waste collected from households.
- Some of the issues with collecting small electrical items with the household waste, was that the cage beneath the refuse collection vehicles for the items had limited capacity, and so once that cage was full it meant that subsequent items had to be left behind. Small electrical items in the future could be dropped at one of six sites around the Borough, in the form of a pop up project. Opportunities to repair items and upskill residents would be available. Additionally, small electrical items could still be taken to the KCC Waste and Recycling centre in Ashford. More details on the pop up projects would follow, once confirmed.
- Stickers for the wheelie bins to clearly explain what could be put in each bin would be considered as part of the Communications programme.
- Tonnage reviews and manual checks (lifting the bin lid) would enable the crew to identify which roads/routes were frequently bringing in contaminated loads to the transfer station, and subsequently provide more communication to that area.

- Contaminated waste did have a detrimental impact on the target figures. Multipurpose litterbins were being piloted in the Town Centre. An assessment would be undertaken to review whether this had been successful, and waste had been separated correctly.
- Broken and lost wheelie bins could still be reported, although a charge would apply. Repairs to bins would be a consideration for the future. A charge had already been introduced for replacement of the larger external food caddies, since people were using them and other bins, for alternative purposes when they were previously free of charge.
- Assisted collections for the elderly and immobile residents would continue where required.
- Comms, IT and partnership working would play a pivotal part in ensuring the transition to the new contractor was a success.

Resolved:

That the Presentation be received and noted.

165 Budget Scrutiny Task Group Membership

The Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager introduced this item to formally agree the Membership for Budget Scrutiny Task Group. Councillors Bell, Chilton, Bartlett, Ledger and Michael were confirmed as the Task Group members.

166 Cabinet Schedule of Key Decisions

Resolved:

That the Schedule be received and noted.

167 O&S Tracker 2023 to 2024

The Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager introduced the report. SE Water would be attending the next O&S Meeting on 14th November and all Members were invited to provide constructive questions in advance.

The 'Using Information and Developing Effective Questioning skills' training scheduled for Tuesday 17th October would be a hybrid session, so Members did have the option to join remotely.

Resolved:

That the Report Tracker be received and noted.

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ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: 5
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2023

Report Title: **Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an interim update on community safety activity in the borough 2023/2024**

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

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Wright
Portfolio Holder for: Safety and Wellbeing

Summary: This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an interim update on community safety. The Council has a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the impact of all their functions and decisions on crime and disorder in their local area. The report outlines how we work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder, this work being progressed through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The report details crime statistics for the borough and its positioning against other districts within the county. Ashford is shown as being a safe borough as the level of recorded crime remains low, and there has been a reduction in many crime types, including serious violence offences. The report nevertheless highlights a slight increase in reports of anti-social behaviour to Kent Police.

The report, which is highly positive, demonstrates the value of multi-agency working and the encouraging results that can be achieved through effective information sharing, joint decision making and coordinated activity. It shows how the partners use a wide range of interventions endorsed by the College of Policing using their crime reduction toolkit to reduce crime and disorder and to tackle issues that matter to the local community.

Information is provided on current community safety priorities, actions that have been taken to meet those priorities and raises awareness of emerging issues.

The activity presented also supports delivery of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan (Making Kent Safer 2022 to 2025).

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Key Decision: | NO |
| Significantly Affected Wards: | All |
| Recommendations: | <p>The committee is recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to note the information contained in this report. ii. to support the formation of a cross party member working group to review the Council's strategic plans for its community safety obligations. iii. to agree that the annual Community Safety Partnership report is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee each November. |
| Policy Overview: | The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is designated as the committee responsible for Crime and Disorder under the Police Justice Act 2006. |
| Financial Implications: | Ashford Community Safety Partnership receives a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner and this is used to fund small community projects within the borough. |
| Legal Implications: | Not applicable |
| Equalities Impact Assessment: | Not required |
| Other Material Implications: | None |
| Exempt from Publication: | No |
| Background Papers: | None |
| Contact: | Alison.oates@ashford.gov.uk Tel: (01233) 330225 |

Agenda Item No.

Report Title: Ashford Community Safety Partnership: an interim update on community safety activity in the borough 2023/2024

Introduction and Background

1. It remains a statutory requirement for local authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). We achieve this through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), where 'responsible partners', namely the local authority (district and county), Fire and Rescue Service, Integrated Care Board, Probation and Police, work collaboratively to make communities safer, reduce crime and the fear of crime, reduce ASB and work with businesses and residents on the issues of most concern. In addition to the statutory partners the CSP is also supported by representation from several other relevant organisations, for example, the chair of the Head Teachers Forum, Ashford College, the Department of Works & Pensions and chairs of the CSP subgroups such as the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum.
2. To set the current priorities, the CSP used police, district and county data and the local crime profile. A stakeholder engagement event assisted in the development of priorities for 2023/24 which are set out below:
 - Tackling anti-social and concerning behaviours
 - Tackling violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse and sexual offences
 - Reducing serious violence, including youth violence, county lines, organised crime and violent extremism
 - Restoring public confidence and supporting communities

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

3. CSPs are responsible for convening a strategy group of all responsible authorities (other organisations are also invited who are not statutory bodies), preparing a strategic assessment of local crime and community safety priorities using information provided by partner agencies and the community, and produce an action plan to meet those priorities. Due to the nature of this requirement, the council's Community Safety Unit (CSU) takes responsibility for coordinating our activities and events.
4. Under the Crime and Disorder Regulations 2007, district and borough CSPs are required to:
 - Produce an annual strategic assessment
 - Produce a rolling partnership plan setting out priorities, with actions to deliver these priorities
 - Have a dialogue with communities to inform these processes and explain outcomes
5. Ashford's actions throughout 2023/24 flow from the annual strategic assessment undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The action plan utilises the four Ps approach (Prepare, Protect, Prevent, Pursue). The actions are informed by the Kent Community Safety Partnership Plan and Safer Kent 2022 – 2025, the plan of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.

6. Overall, the CSP is responsible for ensuring that the identified priorities, actions and targets will be delivered through a multi-agency approach by having:
 - Strong strategic management
 - Tasking joint resources through well-established partnership operational structures, including identifying, managing and reducing risk
 - Strong performance management

Our approach

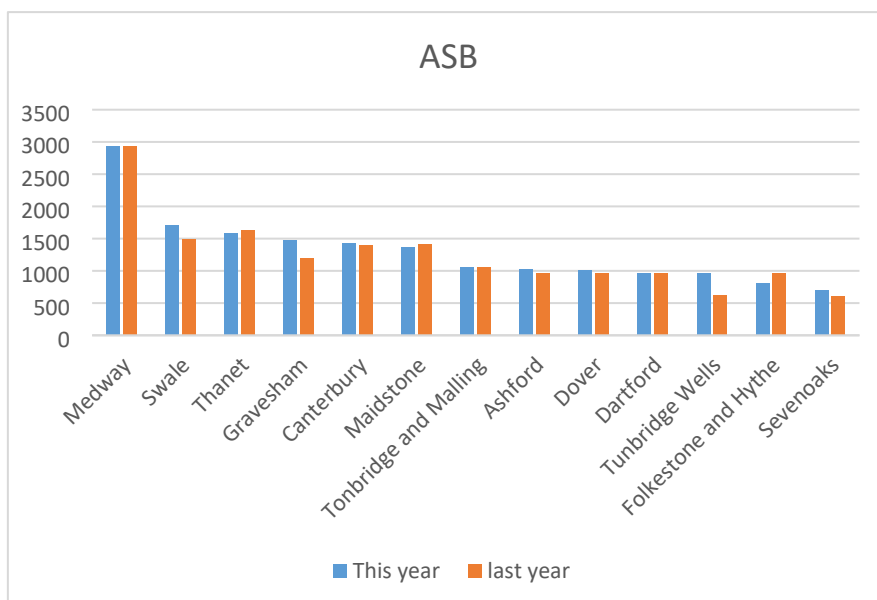
7. The CSP uses a whole system approach to tackling crime and ASB. Experience identifies that more than one type of intervention is needed to resolve the problem. For example, enforcement is most effective if local communities support it and other activity is taking place to change behaviours.
8. A variety of interventions are applied when looking at any type of crime or anti-social behaviour issue that requires the engagement of a range of services, voluntary and community groups to find long-term solutions. The College of Policing crime reduction toolkit is utilised as part of our problem-solving process to assess the impact of the intervention and how to implement the intervention and potential costings.
9. ABC's Environmental Enforcement Team moved services in March 2023 and have now joined the Community Safety and Resilience Team. These members of staff will enhance the current offering and allow even more joined up working with regards to various enforcement opportunities.
10. All data within this report refers to 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. All comparisons are based on data from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.

Tackling anti-social and concerning behaviours

11. All residents have the right to feel safe and secure where they live and the right to enjoy peace and quiet in their homes and communities. The CSP is committed to effectively tackling anti-social and concerning behaviour which can have a serious impact on wellbeing.
12. The ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 defines ASB as: "Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person, or conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person".
13. A range of enforcement options are used against those responsible for ASB. Working closely with the Police and other enforcement bodies ensures enforcement action is appropriate, proportionate and can be escalated swiftly where the need arises. The approach adopted is to intervene early and undertake positive interventions to change behaviours before matters lead to a criminal offence being committed.
14. The Council's ASB policy and supporting documentation has been reviewed this year and the ASB policy was agreed at Cabinet in September 2023.

ASB - Kent Police data

15. The data provided by Kent Police indicates the number of incidents of ASB reported to Kent Police for the Borough of Ashford.
16. As can be seen in the graph below there has been a slight increase of 55 reports in this year compared to the previous year. It should be noted that only three districts across the county saw a reduction in reported ASB.



17. Appendix A provides the ASB figures for all districts, this can be used to benchmark Ashford against other Kent districts. It shows that we have the 8th lowest recorded ASB in the county.
18. Data provided by Kent Police as shown below highlights the three wards within Ashford borough with the highest recorded ASB:

| Ward | 1 April 2023 to 30 Sept 2023 | 1 April 2022 to 30 Sept 2022 | Difference (numbers) | Difference (percent) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Victoria | 263 | 298 | -11.7% | -35 |
| Stanhope | 112 | 31 | 261.3% | 81 |
| Aylesford and East Stour | 70 | 61 | 14.8% | 9 |

19. This illustrates a decrease in Victoria ward, but this still has the highest levels of reported ASB within the borough. This is expected due to the nature of the ward (town centre and Victoria Park). There has been a significant increase in Stanhope and a minor increase in Aylesford and East Stour ward.

ASB - Borough Council data

20. In addition to the police data, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) recorded 103 incidents between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023, a decrease of 20.8% compared to the previous year. As shown in the table below.

| | 1 April 2023 to 30 Sept 2023 | 1 April 2022 to 30 Sept 2022 | Difference (Numbers) | Difference (percent) |
|---------|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ashford | 103 | 130 | - 27 | -20.8% |

21. Reports of ASB into Ashford Borough Council are received via several methods. The most common mechanism is via the council's website where there is an option to 'Report ASB'. This allows the reporter to complete an online form with details of issues they are experiencing. The online form is automatically sent to the relevant email inbox for the officer to investigate.
22. To encourage reporting and meet the needs of residents, the 'Report It' app has been widely promoted as another platform available to use and is managed in the same way as the web link.
23. The reports received cover a number of forms of ASB but the highest types in 2023 were Gathering of Nuisance Youths, Drug Misuse, Harassment, Vandalism and requests for General advice all score the same and were joint third.
24. Ashford Monitoring Centre have provided data in relation to the ASB and criminal incidents that they deal with on a day-to-day basis. This can be found in Appendix C. An individual incident may cover more than one category hence the variance in figures.

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

25. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are designed to reduce and address ASB being committed in a public place. All of the live orders within the borough are available on the council's website. If the order is breached, police and council officers can issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) to the value of £100. There are currently six PSPOs within the borough (three are gating orders, and three are linked to specified locations and particular behaviours). In this reporting period, a total of one FPN was issued by Kent Police. This was in relation to a breach of the PSPO for the consumption of alcohol.
26. All PSPOs must be reviewed on a three yearly basis and subject to public consultation. The council has recently carried out a consultation for the renewal of the Churchyard Gate which took place in August 2023. No objections or recommendations for change were received and it was therefore renewed for another three years. Details of this PSPO and others in the Ashford borough can be found here: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/community-safety/anti-social-behaviour-asb/public-spaces-protection-order>.
27. Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) were issued to two individuals from the same household in August 2023 by Ashford Borough with the support of Kent Police. This was a complex case concerning an ongoing neighbour dispute and impacts on the wider community such as noise and offensive language. There were also significant safeguarding concerns for the children living at the property. Due to a breach of the CPW one of the individuals was issued a Community Protection Notice (CPN). The same household was also under investigation with the Environmental Enforcement Team following reports received in relation to waste build up at the property. This led to the issuing of a CPW, which was breached leading to the issuing

of a CPN and finally ended with a Fixed penalty notice (FPN) due to noncompliance which will be due in court sometime in the future due to non-payment.

28. Due to the complexities of the case mentioned above there was a requirement for multi-agency working involving ABC, Kent Police and KCC Social Services. In September, Social Services progressed the matter to Court following evidence from all three organisations and the children were placed into the care of social services. This has had a positive impact on the surrounding community and residents as the levels of ASB have reduced. All three agencies will continue to work together to support the community and the household involved.
29. Over the year, Kent Police have utilised their powers under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to positively respond to incidents and concerns. Dispersal areas have been implemented under Section 34 of the act on five occasions. Four of these related to preventing ASB in and around the town centre to enable them to move on groups of youths. The other was used in the area of Stanhope in June following a large disturbance. A CPW was issued to a frequent caller to highlight the importance of the 999 service and not to abuse the resource. Officers have proactively utilised the PSPO conditions to manage alcohol-related ASB within the town centre and two FPNs have been issued in relation to street drinking.
30. An ASB case review occurs when an individual is unsatisfied with how their ASB concern has been addressed. There has been one ASB case review this year, colloquially known as a Community Trigger.
31. From 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, Ashford Borough Council housing officers have not secured any closure orders linked to ASB. The housing service still continues to work in close partnership with Kent Police and CSU to reduce ASB and safeguard vulnerable residents in our communities.
32. From 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, our housing service has used Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices to tackle anti-social behaviour in the community and traditional housing tools concerning the tenancy. In total 32 Community Protection Warnings, 7 Community Protection Notices and 1 Fixed Penalty Notice were issued. These were issued for behaviour concerning residents not keeping their dogs supervised and under control, refuse and fly-tipping, unkempt gardens and noise.

ASB action plan

33. The ASB working group with the support of the CSP have completed the following work:
34. A working group has been setup as a subsidiary of the Housing STAR's meeting and part of the Town Centre ASB Strategy. This will include regular multi-agency patrols in and around the town centre to engage with any homeless individuals or street drinking community they may come across. This will hopefully go some way to understanding the needs of these individuals with a view to assisting them and thus preventing some of the ASB noted in certain areas of the town centre. Rough Sleeper Initiative Grants are also received by ABC and members of the Housing Service regularly interact with this cohort of people to try to help them find accommodation.

35. Another working group has been set up to look at the possibilities surrounding a safe space location for the street drinkers and rough sleepers within the town centre. This will involve a multi-agency approach from the CSU, Kent Police, the Rough Sleeper team, Town Centre team and faith group leaders.
36. There have been a number of incidents where excellent communication between Police and the Ashford Monitoring Centre have resulted in successful outcomes. One incident displayed a really great piece of collective work between the retail community, ABC CCTV and Police to identify, locate and convict an individual committing numerous offences in Ashford town centre.
37. On Thursday 1 June B&M staff called up on the radio stating that they had deterred a male suspected of shoplifting and provided his description. CSU officers recognised the description given as a wanted male and the CCTV operator assisted in guiding the officers to the male's location and he was stopped and arrested. He was found to be in possession of a significant quantity of goods stolen from stores within the town, which they were able to recover. Following further investigation, they managed to secure charges for four offences including a burglary and the individual was remanded to court and pleaded guilty and sentenced to a year in custody.
38. Another incident showed excellent work by the CCTV operators and led to the arrest of a suspect for a burglary at the pharmacy in Tenterden. The quick thinking of the operator to identify and track the suspect from the scene to an address led directly to the arrest.
39. The District Contextual Safeguarding Meeting (DCSM) continues to be well attended by community safety agencies. The purpose of this meeting is to explore the identified risks and safety young people experience within a specific context, reduce risks and increase protection and agree an intervention plan accordingly. Through the DCSM targeted intervention pathways are identified to support that young person and prevent them becoming criminally exploited or involved in high harm activity such as serious youth violence.
40. Two key sites within the town centre have caused significant ASB over the summer months. One being Kent Woolgrowers which is now owned by ABC. A site visit was undertaken to establish the access points, this has now resulted in 24/7 security onsite to help with the reduction of ASB and safeguarding of individuals. The other site was the Flour Mills. The licencing team has worked closely with the owners of this building to ensure they put in adequate measures to stop people gaining entry into the building and causing a significant incident like a major fire or personal injury.
41. During the summer months, we received reports of nuisance behaviour at Conningbrook and Singleton Lakes. This was in relation to youths playing within the water and causing ASB. We worked closely with Kent Police to provide a visible presence in these locations to deter the behaviour.
42. Our Environmental Enforcement Team dealt with fly tipped oil drums in the vicinity of County Square. This follows a spate of thefts of cooking oil drums last year in the town centre and neighbouring districts. It is suspected this crime might be on the rise again, after some investigation the vehicle was linked to London, which was the same as last time. CSU has provided the details to the Police and it will be raised at the next Serious and Organised Crime panel meeting.

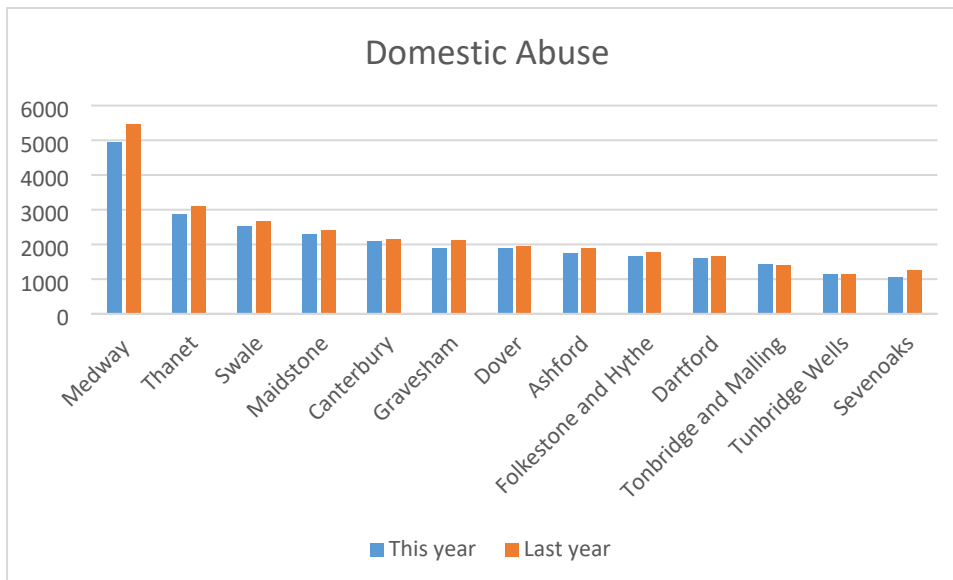
43. Mirrors have been replaced in Taylors Passage and St Johns Passage within the town centre. As well as new ones being placed at the Zig Zag path just behind the cinema on the Eureka complex.
44. A deployable camera was installed in Goat Lees, Kennington due to ongoing ASB in the area. Improvements were also made to the lighting in the Goat Lees playpark. The AMC have been carrying out regular camera patrols of the area on a 2 hourly rolling basis for a 3 month period. There haven't been any significant incidents reported.

Tackling Violence against Women and Girls, including Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences

45. It is recognised that domestic abuse is a serious and life-threatening crime that affects victims and their families, and the priority is that victims and any children are safeguarded from further abuse.
46. The Borough Council's domestic abuse service is managed by the Housing Options team but remains a vital part of our community safety work and requires the same level of multi-agency engagement alongside the other community safety priorities.
47. The Borough Council employs a full-time Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator post (currently vacant) within the housing service and also provides funds annually in support of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service for Ashford via the KCC commissioned Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service.
48. In Ashford, Clarion hold the contract for delivering the IDVA service and already operates the women's refuge in the town.
49. Clarion is contracted as part of the commissioning contract "To facilitate and deliver coordinated, multi-agency access points in local communities across Kent to enable access to information and support". This is known as the One Stop Shop, which Ashford Borough Council supports.
50. The contract also states that Clarion is responsible for "Working with local partnerships, delivery and facilitation of therapeutic and supportive activities to promote independence and future healthy relationships". ABC previously coordinated this group work, such as the Freedom Programme and the Phoenix Programme, but Clarion has taken over delivery this year.

Domestic Abuse Kent Police Data

51. The data provided by Kent Police indicates the number of incidents of Domestic Abuse reported to Kent Police for the Borough of Ashford.
52. As can be seen in the graph below there has been a reduction of 138 reports in this year compared to the previous year. It should be noted that only one district across the county saw an increase in reported Domestic Abuse.



Domestic Abuse Coordinator

53. The post of Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator was introduced to the Borough Council seven years ago. Since then KCC has developed the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS), which covers Kent and Medway and provides advice and information on services for victims, friends and family, and perpetrators of domestic violence. All local authorities in the county contribute towards this cost.
54. The coordinator's focus is to ensure that we are delivering the new duties under the Domestic Abuse Act, as well as to take forward relevant campaigns. This post is more customer focused than in previous years, having had a full review in 2022. In essence, the key aspects of the role includes:-
- To provide leadership with regard to the provision of services for those experiencing or escaping domestic abuse within the Borough of Ashford
 - To undertake any necessary client risk assessments and, where necessary, develop and implement safety plans as identified in the risk assessment
 - To coordinate all referrals for the Sanctuary Scheme, which is designed to help support those at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and avoid the upheaval of homelessness
 - To coordinate and manage the Safe House in Ashford and ensure clients are offered the full wrap around support
 - To participate in and support the work of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
 - To initiate and maintain effective communication with partnership agencies across all sectors at regional and national levels, including participating in the newly formed Local Partnership Board
 - To take the lead in the Make a Stand campaign.

Working with Male Perpetrators

55. In October 2021, funds from the Police & Crime Commissioner made it possible for men from Ashford to participate in the Community Domestic Abuse Programme. This is a 27-week 'roll on/roll off' programme for men who wish to amend their previously

abusive behaviour and make more positive relationships. This was reviewed and is being funded by Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum (ADAF).

56. Kent Police are operating a further programme to address stalking behaviour. The Compulsive and Obsessive Behaviour Interventions (COBI) is an intensive 1:1 programme of 12 sessions, each lasting up to 2.5 hours. This is delivered by staff with a psychology or counselling background or by a qualified Probation Officer. The programme is based on the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) treatment model and is a talking therapy. It focuses on building an individuals' skills to cope with challenging situations, overwhelming feelings, and difficult emotions. The programme is also suitable for harder to treatment groups including those with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) / Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder.

Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop (OSS)

57. The Ashford OSS is a drop-in service for anyone affected, in any way, by domestic abuse where support, help and advice is given.
58. It is a free and confidential service provided weekly and no appointment is necessary. It continues to be an area for professionals to work together to provide a coordinated response to domestic abuse.
59. During this reporting period 90 people contacted the OSS face-to-face for assistance.

Support for Men suffering from Domestic Abuse

60. The OSS is a service men can utilise just as much as women and offers a place for them to get support and advice.
61. Dads Unlimited is an organisation that supports the emotional safety of men and those they care about through three key areas; supporting male victims of domestic abuse, supporting men with family separation; and supporting men's mental health. All of the services use an evidence-based, trauma-informed, person-centred approach. It is achieved through the provision of a family separation helpline, one-to-one mentoring advice, mental health support, peer-led support groups, education and social services liaison support, pastoral support, court support, and adult and child community activities.
62. Clarion (KIDAS provider) provides additional support for male victims and has launched a training package for professionals to be able to utilise.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

63. Several Violence Against Women and Girls 'Walk and Talk' events have been held since 1 April 2023. They were delivered in conjunction with Kent Police and provided an excellent opportunity to engage with members of the public. The public were able to raise concerns in relation to specific locations where they felt unsafe and were able to access personal safety equipment provided by the Community Safety Unit.
64. Kent Police and Ashford Borough Council staff attended the Ashford College Freshers fair and provided advice to new students and supplied them with personal safety equipment. Safety equipment and details of the Safer Streets app are also

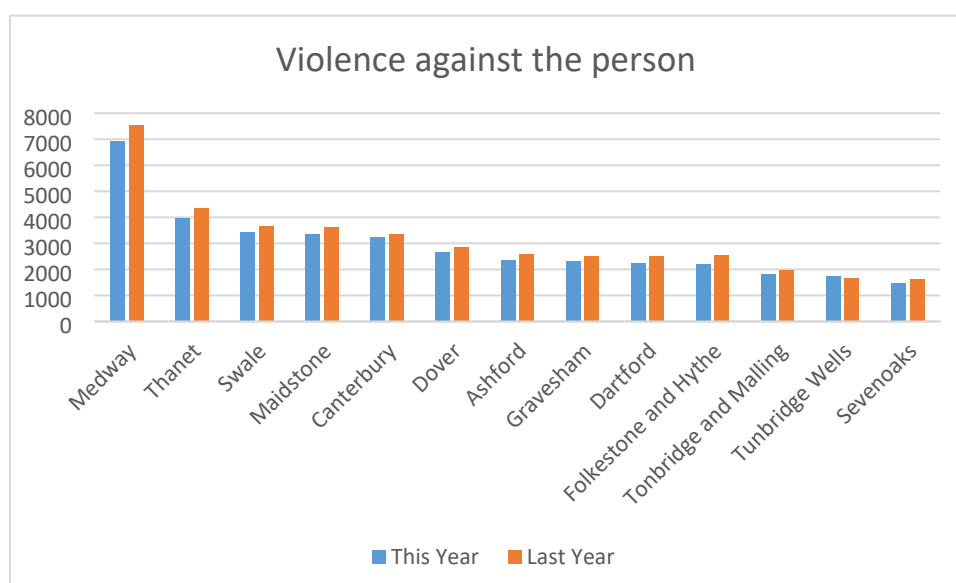
taken along to the Eat Well, Spend Less Roadshows, which are available to the public.

- 65. The Borough Council’s Licensing team has been working with the Night-Time Economy businesses to promote the “Ask Angela”¹ campaign and there have been dedicated Police patrols working in conjunction with partners including the Street Pastors to increase visibility in the Night-Time Economy. The Street Pastors have been successful in recruiting more volunteers to support their work and Safer Streets funding was able to assist in the purchase of a vehicle to become the district’s first ‘mobile safe space’. This has expanded the ability and scope of the Street Pastors to act as visible guardians in the night-time economy protecting vulnerable people from being exposed to harmful situations.
- 66. The collective work and focus of agencies has been successful in gaining the support of businesses to promote the Safe Spaces campaign, and has also seen proactive responses from both businesses and their staff in identifying and intervening in situations where vulnerable females were at risk.
- 67. A VAWG action plan is being drawn up by Kent Police, ABC and the Clarion to identify key actions and will be an area of focus for the CSP for the remainder of this financial year.

Reducing serious violence, including youth violence, county lines, organised crime and violent extremism

Violence related Kent Police Data

- 68. The data provided by Kent Police indicates the number of incidents of violence reported to Kent Police for the Borough of Ashford.
- 69. As can be seen in the graph below there has been a decrease of reports, namely 229 less in this year compared to the previous year. It should be noted that all districts excluding one saw a decrease of reported violent offences.



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

Serious violence including youth violence

70. Safer season operations have had a continued focus on the night-time economy with dedicated foot patrols during peak times. Interventions with offenders have included the imposition of bail conditions to prevent re-offending.
71. Close working with Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC) has led to several exclusions being issued to perpetrators of violence within the night-time economy; a powerful tool for businesses to send a message to those intent on violence that it is not acceptable and has consequences.
72. Kent Police Safer Summer plan focused on reducing NTE related violence by providing dedicated foot patrols on Friday and Saturday evenings.
73. The Ashford Street Pastors provide additional visibility and assist Police and Ashford Monitoring Centre (CCTV) in identifying situations that can escalate into violence. The number of Street Pastors has increased significantly this year, and training has been provided to local officers to improve working relationships.
74. The Best Bar None scheme, which recognises quality operating standards within the licensing community, was formally launched in November 2022, with six venues being the first to be presented with the award by the Mayor of Ashford. Ashford CSP is one of the first in the county to successfully roll out the scheme, with one of the key aims being to deliver a drive to increase the quality of standards across the industry. The successful recipients were:
 - Ashford Club – also recognised as the highest scoring venue
 - Cameo – also recognised for excellence in promoting public safety
 - Tap Room
 - The County Hotel
 - Truckstop
 - Valerie's

County Lines and Organised Crime

75. The Ashford Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Panel meets monthly and is well attended by partners. This is an effective problem solving forum and as a result of these meetings they have led to the continued success has been maintained disrupting Organised Crime Group's (OCGs) based in or operating within our borough.
76. Intensification activity has involved weapon sweeps and multi-agency visits to vulnerable residents at risk of cuckooing and exploitation. There are also planned joint operations at Ashford International Station with British Transport Police in the remaining months of the financial year.
77. The Police Cadet programme is available to young people aged 13 to 17 who live in Kent, irrespective of background or financial circumstances, including those vulnerable to crime or social exclusion. The cadets undergo training and participate in voluntary work with the police in their local community. They develop essential life skills and enhance opportunities for further education, training and employment – whether within the police service or another profession. The Ashford Cadets have continued to expand significantly over this year. They have been working in the

community with the CSU on several projects, including weapon sweeps and bike marking.

78. The Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) has been funded until March 2025 and has worked with 11 high risk individuals during this time period which has seen a reduction in ASB and crime, alongside improved school attendance and relationships with peers and parents. They have continued to run ball court sessions in Stanhope and Victoria Park.
79. Ashford Borough Council secured funding from the Serious Violence Duty Grant for £7692. The funding can be used for the resourcing costs associated with the development of a serious violence needs assessment and associated serious violence strategy which must be in place by 31st January 2024

Violent Extremism (Prevent)

80. The KCC Prevent Team delivered a Prevent Awareness Training event on Friday 21 July. The session covered many topics including Prevent, Radicalisation, Extremist Identities and Incels, all within a local context and information on referral pathways. Several councillors attended the session as well as the CSU staff.
81. This is standing agenda item on the Ashford CSP meeting and a representative from the KCC Prevent team provides a quarterly update. They also provided the yearly counter-terrorism local profile (CTLP) briefing at the last CSP meeting.
82. ABC's Prevent Lead attends the Channel Panel when an Ashford case is on the agenda; Ashford has had two cases in this reporting period. ABC's Prevent lead feedbacks any actions to relevant officers.
83. ABC is involved in the county Prevent Duty Delivery Board and the newly established Prevent Advisory Group (which encourage communities to engage in this subject).

Restoring public confidence and supporting communities

84. It is known that often communities are best placed to tackle their own issues and key to the work of the CSP is building sustainable community capacity to enable this.
85. It is also vital to the work of the Partnership to ensure the services meet the needs of all communities, particularly the most vulnerable such as victims of hate crime.
86. There is also a need to ensure that the perception of crime within the borough reflects the reality of crime and it is known that this requires sustained community leadership and ongoing conversations and effective communications.
87. We have continued to fund Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) until March 2025 to provide diversionary activities, one-to-one mentoring and crime reduction workshops.
88. The re-energised Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC) has increased membership in the "Pubwatch" and "Shopwatch" schemes. APAC supports the flow of information between premises and partners, ensuring key individuals are refused entry and public safety is maintained.

89. Kent Police Beat officers have been holding a host of community engagement events across the district. These have been branded initially as 'meet your new beat officer' events as part of the roll out of the new Neighbourhood Policing Model. Some of these events have been supported by Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) and ABC CSU.
90. The Police and CSU were also recently been invited to a bespoke meeting to discuss community safety issues with residents of Beaver Ward. This was a productive meeting with actions taken from it to address concerns raised.
91. Ashford Independent Advisory Group has recently re-launched with the appointment of a new chairperson. The IAG met on the 21 September where attendees met to discuss the future direction of the IAG for Ashford. This is a positive development with new members now joining the IAG as well. The next meeting is scheduled for December.
92. Kent Police has launched monthly newsletters to complement messaging through My Community Voice and social media where the local beat officers provide a piece on what activity they have been doing in the ward areas, which includes feedback from community engagements and through stakeholder/ agency forums.

Police and Crime Commissioner grant to the CSP

93. The 2023/2024 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) grant to Ashford CSP totalled £31,744. The funding is allocated in two parts. The first aspect is for two thirds of the grant which has been allocated as detailed below:
94. Home Start, Family support worker - £2700: A trained Family Support Worker will visit families in their home (where safe to do so) or in secure community settings to provide practical and emotional assistance such as attending professionals' meetings, accessing childcare and healthcare, attending toddler sessions and support groups, filling out paperwork, shopping, nursery and school access etc. The Family Support Worker for this project has a specific focus on supporting families where Domestic Abuse has or is occurring. The worker may help to re-settle the family in safer accommodation, engage them in the Freedom Programme and/or signpost them to other services such as Rising Sun for targeted support. The worker usually offers 12 visits per family.
95. KCC community wardens, bike marking kits - £360: To support crime reduction initiatives within the borough.
96. Ashford Rural Primary Care Network, ADHD/ASC support group - £1350: The ADHD/ASC support group is a project being run by Children's Health and Wellbeing Navigators. It is a safe space for families to raise issues and provide appropriate interventions safeguarding in a space with multidisciplinary professionals who can help advise and support. The target audience are families from four GP practices with children on the waiting list or already with a diagnosis of ADHD or Autism and their parents. A significant number of these young people are known to support services and have referred to the team due to challenges they are facing. Since they are a rural set of practices, access to support for families in the area is difficult to achieve. Current waiting times for an assessment mean that children are waiting for four years for one and a diagnosis of their ADHD/ASC. The Ashford Rural PCN looks to support families to continue to work with education and support if the decision is made to home-educate. Statistics from the ADHD foundation show that one in four people in prison have an ADHD diagnosis. The aim of the project would be to provide

education, coping strategies and peer support to families by targeting the parents/carers. This would mean that more families are able manage behaviours that challenge and there is less likelihood of their children becoming part of the Criminal Justice System.

97. The Bloomers Trust - £3200: Part of the project will aim to reach out to schools to deliver presentations at assemblies or education weeks in Ashford, and the secondary part of the project is reaching out to organisations in Ashford that support vulnerable service users that may be victims of sexual exploitation/assault or domestic violence to educate them of the signs to spot and the support the trust and other organisations can offer (for example Rising Sun, Police, NHS, etc.). The trust would also like to educate on sexual exploitation and the prevalence of it in society, and the support offered if you either recognise yourself as a victim or if you think someone you know might be a victim. They would love to be able to educate people around these topics and spread awareness, as well as share information known to ensure Survivors receive the support they are entitled to. There are currently 13 Secondary Schools in Kent. All 13 schools will be approached at the start of the funding to book to present at each secondary school throughout the year. Regarding organisations, all 15 organisations/public sectors teams will be approached every three months or more necessary.
98. Mid Kent Mind, Taming my temper - £8118.50: The Taming My Temper Course is a six-week course enabling young people to better understand the underlying connections between emotions and violent behaviour, whilst also exploring how young people can communicate through healthier alternatives. Sessions are delivered by trauma informed ambassadors – supporting young people whose behavior is affected by trauma. Sessions are suitable for all secondary school-aged young people within the Ashford district. Mid Kent Mind will work with schools, parents/carers and other agencies (i.e. Early Help, Community Support Officers, etc.) to identify young people who will benefit positively from these interventions.
99. Willow and Green Funeral Directors, Creative Art Workshop - £1800. To run workshops during the October half term of 2023 with a group or groups of young people who have been identified as being at high risk of becoming involved with anti-social behaviour. These workshops will be facilitated by a registered drama and creative arts therapist with local volunteers, musicians and artists to support and inspire the young people in the workshops. The workshops, their content and the adults involved in the project aim to support the young people to express themselves, their thoughts and feelings through poetry, drama and art. This project will add to the current movement in Ashford to create a safer space that young people can take pride and that helps strengthen ties in the community.
100. Ashford Street Pastors – purchase of two body work video cameras - £841: Purchase of two Body Worn Cameras for the team leaders on each patrol for use during the night time economy in and around Ashford town and within the welfare cabin of the Safe Space Vehicle.
101. Strength2strength – DA related course - £2739.50: This project is to be designed to support people who have suffered domestic abuse in the area, to dictate their own course in life to regain control of themselves and the direction of their life travels and support their own wellbeing to give them confidence and self-worth. This will be covered in a brand-new empowerment programme as well as supporting the Phoenix waiting list. Classroom based or via zoom /teams. The ever-increasing levels of

Domestic abuse suffered in personal or family situations. The courses offered will help people become aware of the support that is available, understand the early signs of controlling behaviour, therefore being able to protect themselves and their children, as well as improving their understanding of the reporting procedures. The programme itself is designed to be adapted to support people from all different backgrounds and needs and is easily modified to help support organisations in the local area.

102. The remaining third is allocated to a tactical pot and can be utilised throughout the remainder of the year for emerging issues. The remaining fund is £10,581.

Emerging themes

103. The Government continues to consider ASB as a key priority with their recent high-profile launch of the ASB action plan. This action plan has yet to be reviewed by the Ashford CSP and date to undertake this has been set for the next meeting on 14 November 2023. The action plan focuses on a number of key areas such as “making communities safer”, “reducing rough sleeping and begging” and “building local pride”. This will require a continued multi-agency approach to be used.
104. The impending formal introduction of The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill sets out the requirements that under Martyn’s Law, venues and other organisations will have to meet to ensure public safety. “Martyn’s law” is a tribute to Martyn Hett who was killed alongside 21 others in the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in 2017. The bill will place additional responsibilities on all agencies when dealing with public accessible locations.
105. The Home Office has recently commissioned a review of CSPs. The Community Safety Partnership review seeks to clarify the role of Community Safety Partnerships, and improve their transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, making it easier for them to serve the needs of their communities in tackling crime, disorder, and antisocial behaviour. Phase 1 comprised of a targeted consultation, exploring the relationship between Community Safety Partnerships and Police and Crime Commissioners, with the aim of improving the way they work together, and strengthening the accountability of Community Safety Partnerships. The consultation closed in May 2023 and has now been analysed, with a government response to be published in due course. Ashford CSP submitted a responds to the consultation.
106. Violence Against Women and Girls will continue to be a focus for agencies that work within community safety but emerging themes of misogynist behaviour and Incels are being seen in Prevent referrals and being reported within educational establishments.
107. There is very strong evidence to show the connections between young people drugs and crime and anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that the CSP will be able to find funding and engage with the school community to run programs building young people’s life skills and resilience to prevent them becoming susceptible those selling drugs or peer pressure. Early investigations have show there to be a number of organisations working in the area.

Next steps

108. This report evidences the strength of the partnership but also details the emerging themes and potential changes to the community safety agenda. Therefore, it seems timely and healthy to review what we are doing as a partnership and how we can

continue to deliver to meet our requirements under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 alongside the wider non-statutory aspects of the work.

109. All agencies are facing budgetary pressures which will impact on their ability to provide resources to continue the delivery of this work or provide funding for the commissioning of projects. Therefore, the establishment of a working group will allow the examination of this and set the focus moving forward, including clear strategic objectives.

Conclusion

110. Ashford's Community Safety Partnership relies upon the continued significant support given by its individual partners and by those from a whole range of organisations who are dedicated every day and night to protecting our community. The work of the partnership continues to have a positive impact on crime reduction and also inspiring confidence within our communities to report crime or ASB.
111. There have been several changes in the community safety arena over recent years with more to come. Therefore, the recommendations sited in this report will enable officers, members and the community to come together to review how we deliver community safety and build on the strong foundations that we have in the borough.
112. It is important that the Council and our partners use the most effective methods available to them to tackle ASB. This includes investing wisely in activities that are known to work based on empirical evidence. The College of Policing Toolkit is therefore an essential source of information that should be used to form our future plans.

Portfolio Holder's Views

113. We are committed to improving the quality of life for those living and working within our communities and in providing a safe and secure environment to enable all our people to live together. We work closely with Kent Police towards our communities becoming free from the negative impact of crime and ASB. The council continues to play an important role in coordinating the Community Safety Partnership and its priorities by enabling strong multi-agency work. This interim report demonstrates the work that can be achieved, and I would like to thank all those involved for their hard work and dedication.
114. There are always new and emerging themes within the community safety agenda and I very much in support of the formation of a cross party working group to review our response to community safety and how this can be developed to support our communities and provide positive outcomes for all.

Cllr Liz Wright
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing

Contact and Email

115. Alison Oates
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Appendix A

Kent wide ASB figures

| | 1 April 2023 to 30 Sept 2023 | 1 April 2022 to 30 Sept 2022 | % change | No change | Position in County Highest to Lowest |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Medway | 2929 | 2929 | 0.00% | 0 | 1 |
| Swale | 1711 | 1498 | 12.45% | 213 | 2 |
| Thanet | 1589 | 1632 | -2.71% | -43 | 3 |
| Gravesham | 1483 | 1194 | 19.49% | 289 | 4 |
| Canterbury | 1430 | 1403 | 1.89% | 27 | 5 |
| Maidstone | 1374 | 1416 | -3.06% | -42 | 6 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 1057 | 1053 | 0.38% | 4 | 7 |
| Ashford | 1020 | 965 | 5.39% | 55 | 8 |
| Dover | 1006 | 969 | 3.68% | 37 | 9 |
| Dartford | 966 | 962 | 0.41% | 4 | 10 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 957 | 618 | 35.42% | 339 | 11 |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 810 | 966 | -19.26% | -156 | 12 |
| Sevenoaks | 699 | 613 | 12.30% | 86 | 13 |

Appendix B

Kent Wide all crime figures

| | 1 April 2023 to 30 Sept 2023 | 1 April 2022 to 30 Sept 2022 | % change | No change | Position in County Highest to Lowest |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---|
| Medway | 15323 | 16122 | -5.8 | -375 | 1 |
| Thanet | 8534 | 9239 | -6.8 | -395 | 2 |
| Swale | 8077 | 7799 | -5 | -799 | 3 |
| Canterbury | 7871 | 7848 | 3.6 | 278 | 4 |
| Maidstone | 7814 | 8037 | -2.8 | -223 | 5 |
| Dartford | 6083 | 6458 | -6.6 | -275 | 6 |
| Dover | 5674 | 5828 | -1.1 | -54 | 7 |
| Ashford | 5644 | 5872 | 2.1 | 84 | 8 |
| Gravesham | 5407 | 5802 | -3.9 | -228 | 9 |
| Folkestone and Hythe | 4773 | 5592 | 0.3 | 23 | 10 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 4666 | 4720 | -2.6 | -154 | 11 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 4137 | 4053 | -14.6 | -819 | 12 |
| Sevenoaks | 3883 | 4158 | -7.6 | -705 | 13 |

Appendix C

AMC statistics

| | April | May | June | July | August | September | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--|--------------|
| Total Incidents per month (incidents can involve multiple incident types) | 195 | 262 | 207 | 270 | 301 | 223 | | |
| Break down of incident type - Ashford | | | | | | | | Total |
| APAC Nominal | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 3 | | 12 |
| APAC Pubwatch | 35 | 44 | 41 | 41 | 60 | 53 | | 274 |
| APAC Shopwatch | 36 | 42 | 38 | 65 | 77 | 45 | | 303 |
| Arson/Fire | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 8 |
| Assault Emergency Worker | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 8 |
| Attempted Theft | 1 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 1 | | 25 |
| Burglary Dwelling | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | 2 |
| Burglary Other | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | 3 |
| Concern For Welfare | 34 | 44 | 30 | 51 | 44 | 31 | | 234 |
| CPN/CPW Breach | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3 |
| Criminal Damage | 5 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 7 | | 40 |
| Disturbance | 0 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 31 | 8 | | 74 |
| Domestic Incident | 8 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 10 | | 40 |
| Drink Driving | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 10 | 5 | | 31 |
| Driving Offences | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 15 | 8 | | 50 |
| Drug Offences | 5 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 5 | | 46 |
| Drunk and Disorderly | 12 | 15 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 17 | | 103 |
| Fraud and Forgery | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | 10 |
| Handling Stolen Goods | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 3 |
| Harassments | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | | 4 |
| Immigration Offence | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 1 |
| Licensed Premises Involved | 11 | 22 | 16 | 27 | 39 | 28 | | 143 |
| Licensing | 8 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | | 29 |
| Major Incident/Emergency Plan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Medical Emergency | 3 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 9 | | 31 |
| Missing Person | 18 | 28 | 25 | 42 | 42 | 24 | | 179 |
| Nuisance Behaviour | 55 | 74 | 48 | 64 | 52 | 38 | | 331 |
| Obstruction | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 6 |
| Possession Of A Weapon | 13 | 10 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | | 43 |
| Public Order | 8 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 5 | | 25 |
| Robbery | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 6 |
| RTC | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 6 |
| Safe Space used | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 2 |
| Section 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | 2 |
| Sexual Offences | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 4 | | 17 |
| Shoplifting | 19 | 15 | 20 | 38 | 38 | 22 | | 152 |
| Suspicious Behaviour | 15 | 18 | 5 | 20 | 26 | 12 | | 96 |
| Suspicious Package | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | | 4 |
| Terrorist Related Offences | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Theft from a motor vehicle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Theft of a motor vehicle | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | | 6 |
| Theft of a pedal cycle | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | | 10 |
| Theft Other | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 15 |
| Threatening Behavior | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | | 14 |
| Traveler Encampment | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 4 |
| Vehicle Interference | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Verbal Abuse | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 12 | | 20 |
| Violence against a person | 16 | 22 | 17 | 23 | 24 | 17 | | 119 |
| Wanted Person | 8 | 18 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | | 65 |
| Overall Total | 340 | 441 | 351 | 492 | 565 | 410 | | 2599 |

Agenda Item 7

Agenda Item No: 7

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14th November 2023

Report Title: Savings Plan Progress – 2nd Quarter 2023/24

Report Author & Job Title: Maria Hadfield
Project Accountant



Summary:

This paper presents an update on the proposed savings plan for the 2nd Quarter of 2023/24 financial year, this was included and supported in the 2023/24 budget report presented to Cabinet in February 2023.

Exempt from Publication: No

Contact: Maria.hadfield@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330545

Savings Plan Progress at Quarter Two 2023/24

Purpose of this note

1. This note updates members on the progress that has been made on the delivery of the savings schedule that was included in the 2023/24 budget report.
2. As part of the report there was an undertaking for these savings to be reported to cabinet.

Background

3. As part of the budget build process a series of budget savings were developed to achieve savings of £1.6m, to close the budget deficit gap. Savings of £200,000 were immediately identified and applied to the 2023/24 budget, and following discussions between Officers and members proposals for a further 1.4m were identified and developed into the following savings plan:-

Proposed Budget Savings for the 2023/24 financial year

| Service | Savings | Target £'000 | Achieved £'000 | Comments |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Corporate | Management Team and wider restructure | 300 | 233 | Based on reducing the size of MT, will require adjustments within team structures. Upfront costs may be required |
| Corporate | Proposal to move to International House | 300 | 0 | Net savings including cost of moving to IH |
| Various | Review of service structures | 505 | 577 | Reviews still ongoing |
| Corporate | Administration review | 150 | 0 | Amalgamated into service reviews |
| Corporate | Enforcement review | 65 | 0 | Review underway |
| Policy & Performance | Reduction in Grants | 100 | 30 | Ongoing review to achieve target |
| | | 1,420 | 840 | |

4. Since the setting of the 2023/24 budget there have been further pressures to the budget including stubborn inflation, further interest rate rises, and continued cost of living crises which is impacting services, all of which present a risk of the deficit increasing.
5. Many areas proposed involved different ways of delivering key services with greater collaborative working between departments. These plans often involve changes to job descriptions and where consultation with staff has already happened these have now been described in some detail.

6. Progress against saving targets is described below.

Management Team and Wider Restructure

7. The requirement to review the Senior Leadership team of the Council had two main drivers. The first driver was the need to deliver substantial savings to help bridge the deficit which was forecast in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The second driver was the need to review and realign the senior leadership responsibilities given the changing nature of the Port Health Service model and a need to increase synergies and resilience within the remit of Environmental Health across the Council.
8. The proposed changes recognise the need to reduce overhead costs, but ensure the Senior Management structure continues to be responsive and integrated in its approach. These changes will achieve £233,000 in savings.
9. Following consultation, the proposed changes are:
 - a. Removing 2 posts from the current structure, the Assistant Director Port Health which is currently vacant and the Assistant Director Community Safety & Wellbeing
 - b. Corporate Director, responsible for Health and Wellbeing will be fully recharged to Port Health and will specialise in Environmental and Port Health, to provide resilience in this specialist professional area, where there are skill shortages nationwide
 - c. Corporate Director, responsible for HR, Customers, IT, Finance will now take on responsibility for Housing and therefore a proportion will be recharged to the HRA
 - d. The Housing Development and Regeneration Manager will become the Head of Development reflecting the strategic nature of the role.

Move to International House

10. The initial saving target was set at £300,000. However, based on current data, as at 30 August 2023, an annual budget savings target of £424,000 (net of IH move costs) is expected, with future capital works, net savings of £885,000, per annum (based on financing through the revenue budget), this cost would need to be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan, should this move not go ahead. Therefore, the annual saving by year two of the Medium Term Financial Plan would be £1.3m.
11. The net saving includes costs of moving to International House of £1.2m, these costs are currently being reviewed and the detail and were reported in the September Cabinet Report.
12. Staff have been consulted on phase one of the move, which would see the majority of services moved to International House, feedback, in the main was positive.
13. The Council is now looking to escalate phases two and three, which would see the Civic Suite move, and redevelopment of the site advanced, to ensure the total possible savings are achieved.
14. These savings are subject to Council approval, and should they not be achieved, additional pressure will be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Enforcement Review

15. Work continues on this review and a report will be with Directors for consideration in the next few weeks. The report will detail several options to achieve the required £65,000 savings which could be phased through to 2024/25.

Review of Service Structures, Grants and Other Savings

16. Budget savings of £200,000 were achieved within the 2022/23 across services and the 2023/24 budgets were amended accordingly.
17. The Policy and Performance service was newly formed as part of the Senior Management Restructure in 2022. As part of the restructure the Funding and Partnership Officer joined the service from the Culture service. Now the service has been functioning for over one year, a number of new ways of working have been introduced that exploit synergies within the teams. This has resulted in efficiencies in working practices, with some processes digitalised. It was therefore decided that a new post would be created, Partnership and Scrutiny Manager and two other posts would be deleted, Scrutiny and Policy Officer and Funding and Partnership Officer. This will result in a saving of £40,000. Following consultation, the Funding and Partnership Officer has opted for voluntary redundancy and the Scrutiny and Policy Officer has taken up the newly created post.

18. By directly charging Project Management time to Capital for a specific post, within the Housing Team, a revenue saving of £75,000 is achievable in 2023/24.
19. The Environment, Property and Recreation service was created in April 2022. Due to a number of resignations in this service area it has created the opportunity to review and re-align roles rather than replace like for like.
20. In total eight posts have been deleted; one post has reduced by 14 hours per week. Two new Apprenticeship roles have been created, one to support the Leisure Contracts Officer, and the other, a Building and Facilities Apprentice, which is expected to be self-funding.
21. Six posts have been regraded to reflect increased diversity, responsibilities and additional requirements of their roles to support the restructure of the service.
22. Overall, there is a saving of £234,000 per year, which will be reduced to £88,000 per year if Cabinet agree the implementation of the Parks Foundation proposal, thereby increasing the establishment by three posts.
23. A review of Parking Services has achieved a saving of £149,626 with the following changes:
 - i. Consolidate the two team leaders posts to create one post of Team Leader (Parking Services). One post has recently resigned
 - ii. Reduce the number of CEO Senior posts from two to one, to manage the day-to-day operation of the parking enforcement function, and consider changing the job title to CEO Supervisor. One post has taken up another role within the service
 - iii. Following retirement, the Senior Operations Officer responsibilities are to be split between other existing posts within the Parking Service, and to others outside the Safety & Wellbeing Service
 - iv. Representatives and Appeals post is to be re-designated a Senior Representatives and Appeals Officer and the current Parking Officer to be re-designated a Representative and Appeals Officer
24. Reduce the number of CEOs from eight to seven. This would see the deletion of one vacant post from the establishment.
25. Within HR, Comms and Customer Services a number of vacant posts totalling £25,000 have been identified for removal from the budget. Other plans are being worked onto deliver the remainder of the savings (£55,000).

26. There is an anticipated saving of £30,000 in member allowances by removing deputy portfolio holders.

Conclusion

27. Further saving are still being worked on and will be detailed in the next monitoring report.
28. The savings described in detail above amount to £842,000, excluding the capital savings of the International House move, but including the £200,000 already built into the budget from the previous year.
29. The remainder of the savings required will be continually monitored and reported accordingly as information becomes available and is suitable for disclosure.
30. To date good progress is being made on delivering the savings identified which are expected to have minimal disruption to services and have in some cases enable the streamlining of service provision.
31. The savings will be delivered partly in 2023/24, and be fully applied to the 2024/25 budget build, given the worsening economic conditions for the Council, delivery of the £1.4m is likely to be only part of a bigger savings requirement once the medium term financial plan is completed. This will result in the need for the Council to make further tough decisions on what can and cannot be delivered.

Agenda Item 8



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda Item No: 8

Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 14th November 2023
Thursday 30th November 2023

Report Title: Performance Report, Quarter 2 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 2 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 2 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:

These performance reports provide 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 2 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. These reports seeks to provide an overview of performance against the council's key performance indicators on a quarterly basis. The council's performance framework captures key performance data from across the organisation as it relates to the council's Corporate Plan.

| 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 taking part in Material Focus Recycle Your Electricals

The first of six E-Cycle Revival events was held in Wye on 21 October where residents were able to recycle their electricals. 0.18 tonnes of electricals were collected for recycling at the event. The next event will be held on 25 November in Tenterden.

Ashford joins In The Loop to boost recycling on-the-go

Nine bright, colourful and eye-catching dual recycling and general waste bins have appeared in Ashford Town Centre, as a new on-the-go recycling initiative - #InTheLoop, is launching in September 2023.

InTheLoop is a three-month trail which will make it as easy as possible for visitors to recycle empty glass, plastic bottles and cans. The initiative is a partnership between Ashford Borough Council, Kent Resource Partnership, Kent County Council, Litter Lotto, metroSTOR, N+P (dry and mixed recycling processors in Kent), and environmental charity Hubbub, made possible with funding from McDonald's.

The new bins have bold graphics showing clearly what goes in each section of the bin. The recycling section collects empty glass and plastic bottles as well as cans, so these valuable materials can be made into something new instead of going to waste.




Carbon literacy

Ashford have received a Bronze award from the Carbon Literacy Trust. Our own in house course (online and face to face) has been fully accredited and other authorities in Kent have asked to use our course materials.



Quarterly Measures

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | <p>October update – Following internal reorganisation, Cycling and Walking has moved back to being the responsibility of the Projects and Recreation team, who now have the resource and capacity to drive this important work stream forward.</p> <p>The period has seen -</p> <p>The reviewing of current Active Travel plans with previous Culture department. Route9 identified (Outlet village connecting Town) as route of interest & Wye crossing which Sustrans has undertaken as self-funded feasibility study.</p> <p>Internal discussions held on Active Travel plan for Staff with a communications plan to commence from early 2024.</p> <p>Meetings held with Tenterden Town Council to offer support and guidance and with KCC planners to review their funding and plans for Ashford routes.</p> | | | | | | | | | |

Page 41

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|------------------------------------|--|--------|-----|--|-------|-----|--|-----|----|--|--|
| CP_KPI_09 Recycling Rate | % of borough waste recycled or composted | 46.33% | 50% |  | 52.5% | 50% |  | 54% | 50 |  | Defra's nationwide recycling league tables - Local authority collected waste: annual results tables (Historical) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) |
|------------------------------------|--|--------|-----|--|-------|-----|--|-----|----|--|--|

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

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|--|--|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_10 Refuse Collection Success Rate | % of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made. | 99.85% | 99.96% |  | 99.73% | 99.96% |  | Missed collection in the quarter: July – 127 August – 164 Sep – 126 | Percentage not yet available for the period but missed bin figures comparable to similar quarters. | | |

[New Waste Contract.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#) 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](#)

Caring Ashford

Highlights from the Quarter

Ashford Borough Council buys former Kent Wool Growers site and vows to breathe new life into historic location

The former Kent Wool Growers site occupying a key location between the town centre and the railway station is set to be given a new lease of life after being bought for an undisclosed amount by Ashford Borough Council's Housing development team.

This council believes the 1.2ha site offers an unrivalled opportunity to create a vibrant community at the gateway to the town. Work is underway to shape a proposal that is likely to include mixed-use homes, commercial space, a community hub and substantial areas of green space.

Bordered by the Great Stour river to the east, the site is part of the Commercial Quarter, which includes the Connect 38 office building, International House and The Platform at The Coachworks.

Court Wurtin renovation work takes shape

Much-needed renovation work is on schedule at Court Wurtin in South Ashford, including the total refurbishment of two flats that will help meet the need for more social housing in the town.

Ashford Borough Council is refurbishing the empty flats to bring them back into use and at the same time creating a waste and storage compound store for unsightly rubbish trolleys, refurbishing a stairwell to include new roof structure, adding external wall insulation, installing PV solar panels and other improvements.

Court Wurtin is a three storey 1960s residential / commercial block, off Beaver Lane. The building comprises a local retail centre with commercial units on the ground floor and flats on the first and second floors.

Eat Well Spend Less roadshow visited Tenterden in September

The Eat Well Spend Less roadshow came to Tenterden in September offering support and suggestions to counter the impacts of rising cost of living.

As with previous events this brought together a range of partner organisations including frontline NHS staff, council officers, outreach organisations and charities, in one easy-to-access place.

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.

Quarterly Measures

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | 98.5% | 98.5% |  | 98.2% | 98.3% |  | 97.7% | 98.5% |  | |

This trend is undoubtedly caused by covid as most food businesses have suffered and experienced tremendous changes in their businesses and are still in recovery. This has had an impact on their food safety and hygiene standards. We continue to support these food businesses by providing advice, signposting and taking enforcement action where necessary.

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 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| CP_KPI_17 Council Affordable Housing - New Build | No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing | 4 | | | 0 | | | 0 | | | Regrettably Stodmarsh restrictions still prevent us from being on site. |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|

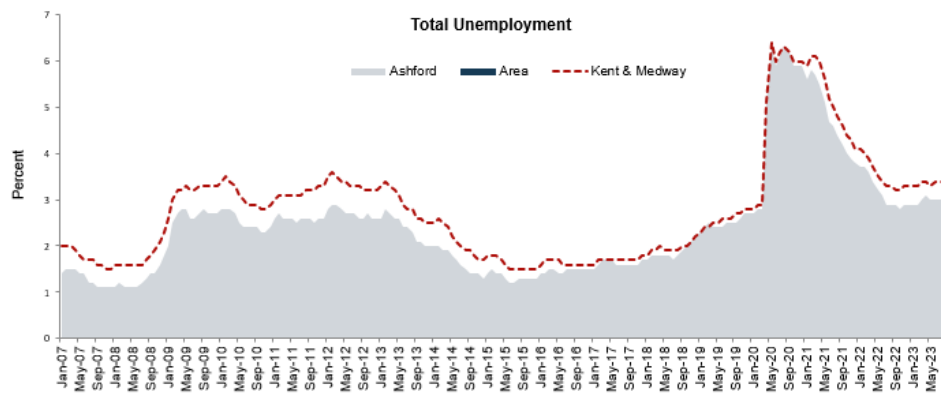
[Housing Revenue Account HRA Business Plan 2022 -2052 including Financing and Affordable Homes Pro.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|--|--|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|--|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_18 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases | No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing | 2 | | | 2 | | | 1 | | | One property added to our stock in this quarter. Some local authority housing fund homes acquired. HRA Business Plan is looking to increase numbers of homes again to 30. |
| CP_KPI_19 Homelessness Presentations New Triage Cases | No. of new triage cases | 631 | | | 733 | | | 620 | | | New approaches to the service throughout the month |
| CP_KPI_19b Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation) | No. of households where homelessness was prevented | 30 | | | 33 | | | 33 | | | Successful preventions throughout month |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---|---|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|---|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_20 Disabled Facilities Grants Completed | No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council | 32 | | | 25 | | | 24 | | | Since April 49 completed grants, a comparably good number compared with previous years. |
| CP_KPI_20b Disabled Facilities Grant Spend | Actual spend per month for disabled facility grants | £235,990.22 | | | £328,260.04 | | | £248,246.35 | | | |

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

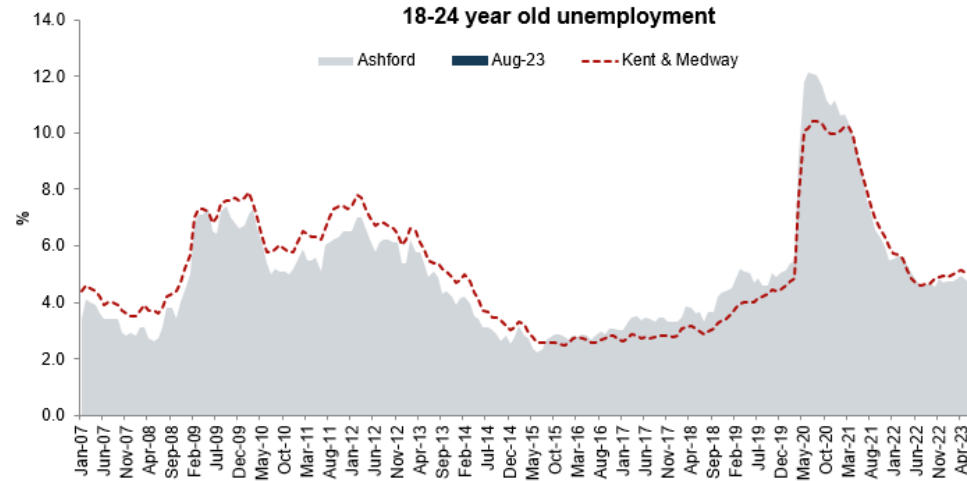
| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---------------------------|---|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|---|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_21 Unemployment | Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data. | 3% | | | 3% | | | 3% | | | <p>August (latest available data at time of report drafting) - 2450 unemployment count representing 3.0%</p> <p>More information available within - Economy and employment data - Kent County Council</p> |



August 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% | +0 | +0.0% | +95 | +4.0% |
| Kent & Medway | 38,330 | 3.4% | +120 | +0.3% | +1,335 | +3.6% |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | 4.9% | | | 4.8% | | | 4.9% | | | August – 455 equating to 4.9% 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 | 455 | 4.9% | +15 | +3.4% | +30 | +7.1% |
| Kent & Medway | 7,020 | 5.1% | +45 | +0.6% | +565 | +8.8% |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | 1.85 | 10 | | 2.1 | 10 | | 2.29 | 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 | 24.64 | 28 | | 24.94 | 28 | | 21.11 | 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 46,134 tickets sold | | | Since start of scheme 56,306 tickets sold | | | Since start of scheme 70,563 tickets sold 14,257 tickets sold in the quarter. | | | Ticket sales remain steady and new causes continue to join. |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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: This is a fun and easy sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis. • Cardiac Arrest Clinic: This is a specialised clinic for people who have had a cardiac arrest or are at risk of having one. With expert advice and support from qualified staff. • Home Education Clip and Climb: They also complement swim sessions that are already in place for home educated children. • Gym Induction: Simplified gym induction process to make it more convenient and accessible for everyone. <p><u>Ongoing projects and activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Football: Extended the duration of this activity due to high demand, also included a dedicated group for Parkinson's patients who meet weekly. • NEET Programme: Ongoing programme at the centre, helping young people who are not in work, education or training to develop interview skills and discipline through activities such as boxing sessions. • Kent Refuge Football: Regular slot on Sunday in collaboration with Kent Refuge UK to offer sport opportunities for refugee children. • Holiday programme: Make it more sport oriented, with camps that focus on specific areas such as trampolining. | | | | | | | | | |

Targeted Growth

Highlights from the Quarter

Council renews pledge to lead the way in broadband provision

A review of Ashford Borough Council's commitment to improving broadband and digital connectivity has highlighted many successes over the past year – and identified that more needs to be done to ensure that all local residents and businesses benefit from access to fast and reliable internet connections.

A report to Cabinet in [September](#) reminded members that the council has been pro-active in its approach to improving broadband and digital connectivity for many years – a policy that is embedded in the Local Plan and which forms a cornerstone of ABC's own Corporate Plan.

It has built an enviable reputation as an authority that internet service providers and housing developers can work with when it comes to planning and delivering broadband and digital infrastructure improvements in the borough.

Ashford Borough Council secures UKSPF funding for new Visitor Economy project

Ashford Borough Council is delighted to announce that it has allocated £50,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) to benefit the borough's visitor economy and hospitality businesses.

The Ashford borough is well known for its locally produced food and drink, as well as its rapidly growing wine industry with vineyards including Biddenden Vineyards, Chapel Down and Gusbourne among others, all attracting large numbers of visitors every year. This new project looks to support and further grow this important sector whilst also supporting the wider visitor economy by working with accommodation providers, visitor attractions and experiences to build an even stronger tourism offering within the borough.

We are really pleased to announce that Visit Kent, who as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) are the County's official Destination Management Organisation, will be delivering the project after taking part in a competitive tendering process.

Two new experiences coming to Ashford Town Centre with Little Land and Virtual Recreation

Two new, exciting businesses are opening in Ashford Town Centre, providing residents and visitors with unique experiences – for both the young and the young at heart.

In September, Little Land, a new role-play centre for little people aged six years and under, opened its doors at Unit 24 in Park Mall.

Little Land transports children into a series of shops, cafes, a supermarket, hairdressers, vets and other recognisable high street businesses, providing them with a space to role-play and explore real life situations in a safe and stimulating environment. There is also a café and seating area for parents and carers to enjoy, as they get to sit back and relax while watching their children play.

From small children to big kids, Virtual Recreation (VRec) is set to hit Ashford Town Centre this November. VRec will transport visitors to another world via their state-of-art VR equipment, providing both Arcade VR and Free Roam virtual reality at Elwick Place.

Create Music Village returns to Ashford Town Centre in October

Create Music Village (CMV) returned to Ashford Town Centre in October with a month-long celebration of music and sound. The diverse programme featured everything from bands to DJs, sing along movies to workshops, and is all driven by four core grass-roots music venues, providing something for all tastes and ages

Revelation and Coachworks return as core venues and are joined this year by Ashford Picturehouse and Low Key Tap Room. There was also a range of fringe events - many of which were FREE - hosted by venues all over the Town Centre.

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.

Quarterly Measures

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | 9.2% | | | 9.2% | | | 9.4% | | | 5437 properties - 313 exemptions and 203 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 | 14.3% | | | 15.2% | | | 15.2% | | | Jul-23 - 335 units surveyed 51 empty (15.2%) |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|--|--|-------|--|--|-------|--|--|--|

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 | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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. | 93% | | | 85% | | | 91.6% | | | Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos. |
|------------------|--|-----|--|--|-----|--|--|-------|--|--|---|

The Corporate Property Annual Performance Report 2022/23 reviewing revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the financial year, as well as advising on its expected future performance: [Report Title: \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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) | 9.7% | | | 10.5% | | | 9.3% | | | |

| Site | Square foot let | Total square foot | Percentage let |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Ellingham | 61,397 sf | 64,397 sf | 95.3% |
| Carlton Road | 42,065 sf | 42,065 sf | 100.0% |
| Elwick Place | 92,357 sf | 104,391 sf | 88.5% |
| International House | 65,087 sf | 76,714 sf | 84.8% |
| | 260,906 sf | 287,567 sf | 90.7% |

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 | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | ✔ | 90.95 | 80 | ✔ | 90.97 | 80 | ✔ | |

| Month | Digital Transactions | Calls | Total Transactions | Digital Uptake % |
|--------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------|
| Jul-23 | 74567 | 6911 | 81478 | 91.52% |
| Aug-23 | 75043 | 7068 | 82111 | 91.39% |
| Sep-23 | 66905 | 6644 | 73549 | 90.97% |

Q1 onwards saw the utilisation of Google Analytics to measure page view stats for certain services.

Significant increases in online views have been recorded for bin collection calendar lookup, housing rent and council tax lookup and online payments.

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------|--------|---|--------|--------|--|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_39 Social media engagement | Social media engagement | <u>Q4 (Jan-March)</u> | | | <u>Q1 (Apr-June)</u> | | | <u>Q2 (July- Sept)</u> | | | |
| | | Impressions: | | | Impressions: | | | Impressions: | | | |
| | | Facebook: 522,101 Twitter: 21,731 Nextdoor: 110,663 Instagram: 5,105 | | | Facebook: 572,290 Twitter ('X'): 57,012 Nextdoor: 102,792 Instagram: 8,588 | | | Facebook: 584,786 Twitter ('X'): 18,881 Nextdoor: 99,279 Instagram: 2,760 | | | |
| | | Followers: | | | Followers: | | | Followers: | | | |
| | | Facebook: 11,002 Twitter: 9,109 Nextdoor: 27,996 Instagram: 2,718 | | | Facebook: 11,312 Twitter: 9,103 Nextdoor: 28,400 Instagram: 2,755 | | | Facebook: 11,646 Twitter: 9,066 Nextdoor: 28,832 Instagram: 2,793 | | | |

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.

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|----------------------------|--|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_41 Parking usage | Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden car parks | 289,988 | | | 262,691 | | | 307,984 | | | |

Increase during this period which is a seasonal trend over the summer holiday period.

Our Principles

Highlights from the Quarter

Update on Ashford Borough Council's approach to nutrient mitigation

Recently, the Government proposed amendments to the emerging Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill which would have removed the need to consider nutrient neutrality matters at a local decision-making level within the affected river catchments across the country.

However, these amendments were defeated in the House of Lords, and at the time of drafting this report, it is understood that the Government does not intend to submit a new bill to address the issue as part of the King's Speech.










The Council welcomes the fact that the Government has indicated its stance on this issue but it is disappointing that positive measures to address it have yet to be announced.. The nutrient neutrality issue is, and should have always been, an issue for the highest levels of Government, with the key bodies actually responsible for water quality being accountable and delivering the solution. It cannot be appropriate for Natural England, the water companies and the Environment Agency to simply pass this burden onto Local Planning authorities to resolve.




However, this activity at the national level clearly necessitates a review of the Council's previously stated aim of delivering strategic wetlands within the borough as a means of providing mitigation for housing proposals currently caught by the need to be nutrient neutral and which are unable to deliver their own mitigation solutions.

Accordingly, the Council is now pausing work on progressing these strategic mitigation schemes with immediate effect. This is the only responsible response to the changed position at the national level and the Council cannot be expected to invest significant sums of money, at our own risk, for something that may not be required in the foreseeable future.

Instead, the Council is looking at different ways in which deliverable nutrient mitigation opportunities may be created from its own assets so that this may enable a limited number of housing schemes to be delivered to help address the need for affordable accommodation in the borough.

Quarterly Measures

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 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 | 98% | 95% |  | 99% | 95% |  | 98% | 95% |  | 190 requests received in the period 4 completed outside the 20 working day window. |
| CP_KPI_43 Business Rates Collection | % of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month | 98.6% | 99% |  | 29.1% | 24.75% |  | 57.13% | 49.5% |  | Government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates are available here |
| CP_KPI_44 | Percentage of council tax collected | 97.5% | 98.25% |  | 30.03% | 24.57% |  | 57.83% | 49.14% |  | |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|--|---|--|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| Council Tax Collection Rate | - cumulative figure per month | | | | | | | | | | |
| CP_KPI_45 Percentage of invoices paid on time | 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 | | | | | | | | | |
| CP_KPI_46 Gas Safety Certificates | % of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates | 100% | 100% |  | 100% | 100% |  | 100% | 100% |  | |

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.




| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|-------------------|--|--------------------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_47 | Number of days sickness per full time equivalent | 10.41 days per FTE | | | 9.68 days per FTE | | | | | | |

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 48s | 0h 01m 38s | | 0h 01m 12s | 0h 01m 38s | | 0h 01m 20s | 0h 01m 38s | | Remains on target. |
|-----------|---|------------|------------|--|------------|------------|--|------------|------------|--|--------------------|




| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---|---|---|--------|--------|---|--------|--------|---|--------|--------|---|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_51 Number of ongoing litigation/ court proceedings (volume measure) | Number of ongoing litigation/ court proceedings (volume measure) | Number of ongoing litigation matters = 125 | | | Number of ongoing litigation matters = 167 (increase further to disrepair claims) | | | Number of ongoing litigation matters = 140 | | | Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services. |
| CP_KPI_52 Number of new 106 files opened | Number of new 106 files opened | Number of new 106 files opened – 7 | | | Number of new 106 files opened – 4 | | | Number of new 106 files opened – 3 | | | The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task Group to review the council’s Section 106 process, recommendations available within the final report. S106 Task Group - FinalReport.pdf (modern.gov.co.uk) with a S106 Scrutiny Review – Update provides to the committee in May 22 |
| | | Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0 | | | Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0 | | | Number of cases where costs have been awarded against ABC = 0 | | | |
| | | Number of Draft 106 agreements sent out – 0 | | | Number of Draft 106 agreements sent out – 1 | | | Number of Draft 106 agreements sent out – 5 | | | |
| | | Number of 106 cases completed - 3 | | | Number of 106 cases completed - 0 | | | Number of 106 cases completed - 2 | | | |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_53 Planning Application Approvals | % of planning applications approved | 87% | 90% |  | 88% | 90% |  | 86% | 90% |  | |

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. This summer, the Council published its Good Practice Guide for non-major planning applications in order to ensure that cases are determined within statutory time periods in the large majority of cases. It is expected that, in the short term, this may result in more refusals being issued but this is expected to be counter-balanced by the re-introduction of the non-major pre-application advice service at the end of 2023. This will enable more applicants to seek informal officer advice prior to a formal application being submitted which, in turn, should see a greater proportion of submitted applications being acceptable in principle.

It is worth stating that if the Council were to refuse applications that are constrained by Stodmarsh and which have no potential to deliver the necessary mitigation on-site, then the value of this indicator would be lower, hence it remains appropriate to hold those schemes that are otherwise acceptable in planning terms pending a strategic nutrient mitigation solution becoming available, rather than determine them.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|---|--|
| CP_KPI_54 Speed of Major Planning Application Decisions | % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in | 78% | 65% |  | 67% | 65% |  | 69% | 65% |  | |
|--|--|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|---|--|

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|-------------------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| | writing between the applicant and the local authority) | | | | | | | | | | |
| CP_KPI_54b | % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month | 76% | 75% |  | 71% | 75% |  | 74% | 75% |  | |

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





Performance remains good across the broader period in respect of major application determinations and Q2 performance remaining above national targets enabling a return towards the rolling 24 month target.

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|---|--|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |
| CP_KPI_55 Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions | % of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks (or within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the council). | 85% | 75% | | 78% | 75% | | 84% | 75% | | |
| CP_KPI_55b % of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month | % of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month | 86% | 80% | | 84% | 80% | | 83% | 80% | | |

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |

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 has improved in Q2 and remains above target. The introduction of the Good Practice Guide is expected to consolidate and improve performance here and reduce the reliance on agreed 'extensions of time' with applicants to achieve good performance.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|---|-----|---|---|---|
| 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 a capacity set at 550 open cases | 792 | 550 |  | 775 | 550 |  | 712 | 550 |  | Reduction in cases can be seen this quarter although no significant changes to previous quarter commentary. |
| Number of live planning casework reducing backlog | | | | | | | (541*) | |  | | |

Q2 has seen a steady reduction in the overall caseload of live cases within the Service. Numbers of decisions has consistently been higher than new cases being received and managers have been proactively working with officers to focus on the handling of older cases alongside the introduction of the Good Practice Guide to encourage the efficient processing of non-major schemes.

| Code & Short Name | Description | Q4 2022/23 | | | Q1 2023/24 | | | Q2 2023/24 | | | Latest Note |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | Value | Target | Status | |

Nutrient neutrality requirements related to Stodmarsh lakes continue to be a significant factor that restricts the issuing of planning decisions. At the time of drafting this report, 171 live cases (inc. 7 at appeal) fall into this category leaving a net figure of live NON-STODMARSH cases reflected in the table (in brackets) above*. This 'net' figure has now fallen below the overall target figure for the first time. Officers are continuing to take cases to the point where proposals can be agreed in all other respects pending the nutrient mitigation solution.

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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 |
|---|---|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 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 |
|--|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 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 |
| 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 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| 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 |
| Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 20232053 (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 |

| Decision Item | Report Summary | Relevant Portfolio Holder | Report Author | Open or Exempt | Added to Schedule |
|---|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Ashford Borough Council RIPA Policy | <i>To introduce the newly drafted RIPA policy which has been updated to reflect any change in legislation or practice.</i> | Cllr Walder | Samantha Clarke | Open | 11/4/22 |
| Corporate Asbestos Management Policy, Procedure and Management Plan | <i>To seek approval for the revised Asbestos Management Policy, Procedure and Plan.</i> | Cllr Betty | Victoria Couper-Samways | Open | 14/6/23 |
| Rural England Prosperity Fund Grants Policies | | Cllr Betty | Thomas Jenkins | Open | 20/9/23 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------|
| Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy | <i>To obtain Cabinet approval for the adoption of the new Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy.</i> | Cllr Barrett | Amanda Gill | Open | 20/9/23 |
| Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy | <i>To obtain Cabinet approval for the adoption of the new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy.</i> | Cllr Barrett | Amanda Gill | Open | 20/9/23 |
| Employment Implications of In-House Housing Repairs Service | | Cllr Barrett | Sharon Williams | Open (Exempt Appendix) | 29/9/23 |
| 21st December 2023 | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| Decision Item | Report Summary | Relevant Portfolio Holder | Report Author | Open or Exempt | Added to Schedule |
|--|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25th January 2024 | | | | | |
| Revenues & Benefits Recommended WriteOffs 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 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 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 |
| Tenant Engagement Strategy | | Cllr Barrett | Rebecca Smith | Open | 17/10/23 |
| 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 |
| Decision Item | Report Summary | Relevant Portfolio Holder | Report Author | Open or Exempt | Added to Schedule |
| 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.</i> | Cllr Nilsson | Michelle Pecci/ Joy Cross | Open | 31/3/23 |
| 25 th April 2024 | | | | | |
| Allocations Policy | | Cllr Barrett | Amanda Gill | Open | 20/9/23 |
| 30 th May 2024 | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| 27 th 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 |
| 25 th July 2024 | | | | | |
| Financial Monitoring – Quarterly Report | <i>Quarterly budget monitoring report</i> | Cllr Ovenden | Lee Foreman | Open | 30/9/22 |
| Decision Item | Report Summary | Relevant Portfolio Holder | Report Author | Open or Exempt | Added to Schedule |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------|----------------|------------------------|---------|
| Revenues & Benefits Recommended WriteOffs Schedule | <i>Proposed formal write-off of debts</i> | Cllr Ovenden | Nic Stevens | Open (Exempt Appendix) | 30/7/22 |
| 29 th August 2024 | | | | | |
| KEEP CLEAR FOR HOLIDAYS | | | | | |
| 26th September 2024 | | | | | |
| 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 | 2/10/23 |
| 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 | 2/10/23 |

If you wish to contact a Report Author by email, unless stated otherwise, the addresses are; first name.surname@ashford.gov.uk

17/10/23

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme 2023 to 2024

| Current Work Programme | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Report Title | Date due to O&S | Reporting Service | Scope of what is to be scrutinised |
| Update on Future System Upgrades with Arcus Global | September 2023 | Planning and Development | The Committee expected to receive updates on the next phase of system upgrades with Arcus Global in the Planning and Development Service and Safety and Wellbeing Service. |
| Corporate Performance Report Q1 | September 2023 | Policy and Performance | Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 1. Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information. |
| Residents Survey and Analysis | September 2023 | Policy and Performance | The Committee requested a presentation regarding the latest results and analysis of the latest Residents Survey. |
| Consultation and Engagement Recommendations Update | September 2023 | Policy and Performance | A report to update the Committee on the progress of recommendations made by the Consultation and Engagement Task Group. |
| Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny | 26 th September 6-8pm | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (external) | This session will help Members of scrutiny to recognise the vital role of scrutiny in helping to constructively test and challenge to council's corporate priorities and the robustness of financial planning to support them. Members should gain an understanding of how scrutiny can test assumptions, risks and pressures that underline budgets |

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| | | | and medium-term financial plans. This session will also help Members to develop questioning strategies to test budget and financial plans and hold to account political decision makers for the delivery of their plans. |
| Waste Contract Implementation | October 2023 | Environment, Property and Recreation | A presentation regarding the recent waste contract implementation, the councils recycling rate and goals and updates on issues relating to bin stores and fly tipping collection rates. |
| Budget Scrutiny Task Group Membership | October 2023 | - | An item to agree Membership for the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. |
| Using information and developing effective questioning skills | 17 th October 2023 | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (external) | This session, hosted by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny, will provide an opportunity for members to acquire or develop their questioning techniques in a scrutiny setting. The seminar will cover how effective, organised and prepared questioning can significantly improve member contributions and overall success of scrutiny sessions. |
| Water Supply in the Borough | November 2023 | South East Water (external) | A presentation from South Easter Water to share latest updates on how they are improving resilience across their network and answer Member questions. |
| Community Safety Update | November 2023 | Safety and Wellbeing | A presentation will be brought forward to provide an update on Community Safety and also the options moving forward, including savings for the Ashford Monitoring Centre. |
| Freedom Leisure at the Stour Centre | November 2023 | Environment, Property and Recreation | Members would like information regarding overall service delivery including general maintenance and cleanliness. |
| Savings Plan Progress – 2 nd Quarter 2023/24 | November 2023 | Finance, IT and Digital | O&S agreed to monitor the delivery of the proposed savings identified on an ongoing and regular basis. |
| Corporate Performance Report Q2 | November 2023 | Policy and Performance | Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 2. Information on what the Council has achieved through its decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information. |

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| Leader's vision and priorities for the next Corporate Plan | December 2023 | Chief Executive | The Leader is invited to attend and discuss the vision and priorities for the next Corporate Plan. |
| Housing Delivery and Management | December 2023 | Housing | A presentation regarding the delivery of units and housing management operations, including an update on the repairs arrangements. |
| Budget Scrutiny Meetings 2024/25 | December 2023 to January 2024 | Policy and Performance Finance, IT and Digital | Scrutiny of the draft budget 2024/25 will take place over three or four meetings during December and January. |
| Equalities , Diversity and Inclusion | February 2024 | Policy and Performance | An overview report of what has been done so far towards promoting equalities, diversity and inclusion at the council. |
| Final Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group | February 2024 | Finance, IT and Digital | A final report and findings from the annual Budget Scrutiny Task Group will be submitted, including any recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. |
| Hybrid Working and Productivity Update | February 2024 | HR, Customer Services, Communications and Digitalisation | An update presentation on a report received by the Committee last September regarding hybrid working and productivity. |
| Safeguarding Update | February 2024 | Safety and Wellbeing | Annual update to the committee on the council's work on safeguarding adults and children at risk. |
| Community Safety Partnership Update | February 2024 | Safety and Wellbeing | A review of the decisions made and action taken in connection with the discharge of crime and disorder functions by the members of the Community Safety Partnership. The Committee operates as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee for the council. |
| Corporate Performance Report Q3 | February 2024 | Policy and Performance | Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 3. Information on what the Council has achieved through its |

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| | | | decision making; key performance data and wider contextual information. |
| Productivity, Staff Morale and Hybrid Working Task Group | Spring 2024 | HR, Customer Services, Communications and Digitalisation | The Committee wished to set up a Task Group to look at workforce productivity, staff morale, remote working (including the remote working/hybrid model proposed for the move to international house). |
| O&S Annual Report | May 2024 | Policy and Performance | A report to summarise the work undertaken by the Committee during the last municipal year. |
| Annual Performance Report | May 2024 | Policy and Performance | A report to summarise the council's performance during the last municipal year. |
| Enforcement Review | TBC | Safety and Wellbeing | The findings of the enforcement review will be brought forward to the Committee once the review has concluded. |