


<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	4	 <b>ASHFORD</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL
<b>Report To:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2018	
<b>Report Title:</b>	Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2017/18	
<b>Report Author &amp; Job Title:</b>	Will Train, Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer	
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Clarkson & Cllr Shorter	
<b>Portfolio Holder for:</b>	Leader of the Council; Finance and IT	

**Summary:** This report seeks to update members and the public on the performance of the council against its Corporate Plan during Quarter 4 2017/18. This includes information on what the Cabinet has achieved through its decision-making, key performance data, and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacts upon the Council's work.

The organisation's approach to the monitoring of its performance against this plan has been revised. Accordingly, attached are summary highlights from the online Performance 'Dashboard' for each of the council's Corporate Plan areas.

<b>Key Decision:</b>	NO
<b>Significantly Affected Wards:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The Committee is recommended to:-</b>
	<b>I. Note the council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 4 of 2017/18.</b>
<b>Policy Overview:</b>	In December 2015 the council agreed a new Corporate Plan - " <i>The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement</i> ".
	This also provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was measured, presented and engaged with by officers and members.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	N/A
<b>Legal Implications</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment</b>	Not required because the report relates to a summary of past performance rather than any item requiring decision.

**Other Material Implications:** N/A

**Exempt from Publication:** NO

**Background Papers:** N/A

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## **Report Title: Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2017/18**

### **Introduction**

1. The report seeks to provide a headline overview of performance against the council's Corporate Plan for Quarter 4 2017/18 and the whole of 2017/18.

### **Background**

2. In December 2015 the council agreed a new Corporate Plan - "*The Five Year Corporate Plan – for Aspiration, Action and Achievement*". This provided an opportunity to refresh the way in which performance against this new Corporate Plan (and its priority areas) was monitored, presented and engaged with by officers and members. Each quarter the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny committee receive an update on how and how well the council is achieving its objectives.

### **New Performance Framework**

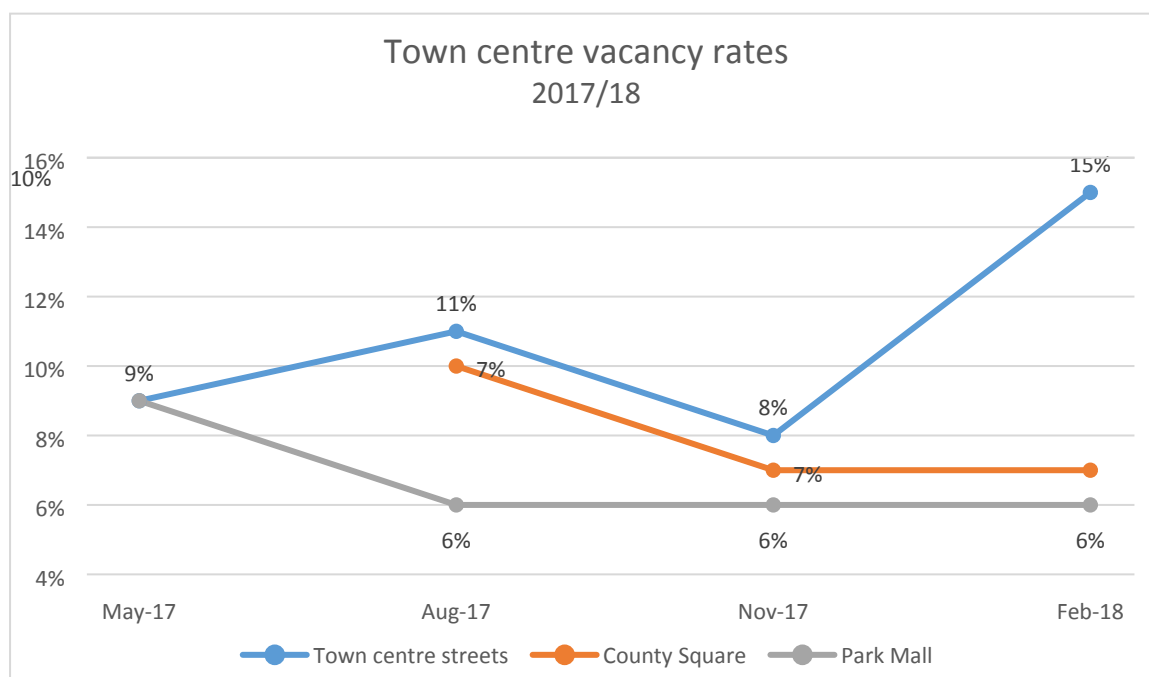
3. Following a review of the council's existing performance monitoring arrangements, a new performance management framework has been derived to reconcile key performance indicators, service level data and contextual measures over which the council has relatively little control (such as educational attainment and workplace earnings) for recording the council's performance from 2018/19 onward.
4. In order to ensure a closer link between performance data and programme management, performance data will be migrated from the current dashboard (Socrata) to the council's existing programme and risk management system (Pentana). This will allow for Heads of Service to more readily integrate performance data into the service planning process.
5. Under the new framework Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny will continue to receive quarterly update reports on key performance indicators directly related to the council's corporate plan, whilst various contextual measures will be compiled into a 'Borough Profile' to be reported on annually.
6. A new Performance Management Board will be created at Management Team level to review service performance on a monthly basis, allowing for the identification of any capacity issues within services and identify existing resources which can be deployed across services and directorates where possible to address these issues.
7. A number of new key performance indicators have been identified by services for inclusion in the new framework and as a result 2018/19 will form the baseline year for reporting.

## Quarter 4 2017/18 - Commentary on whole year performance trends

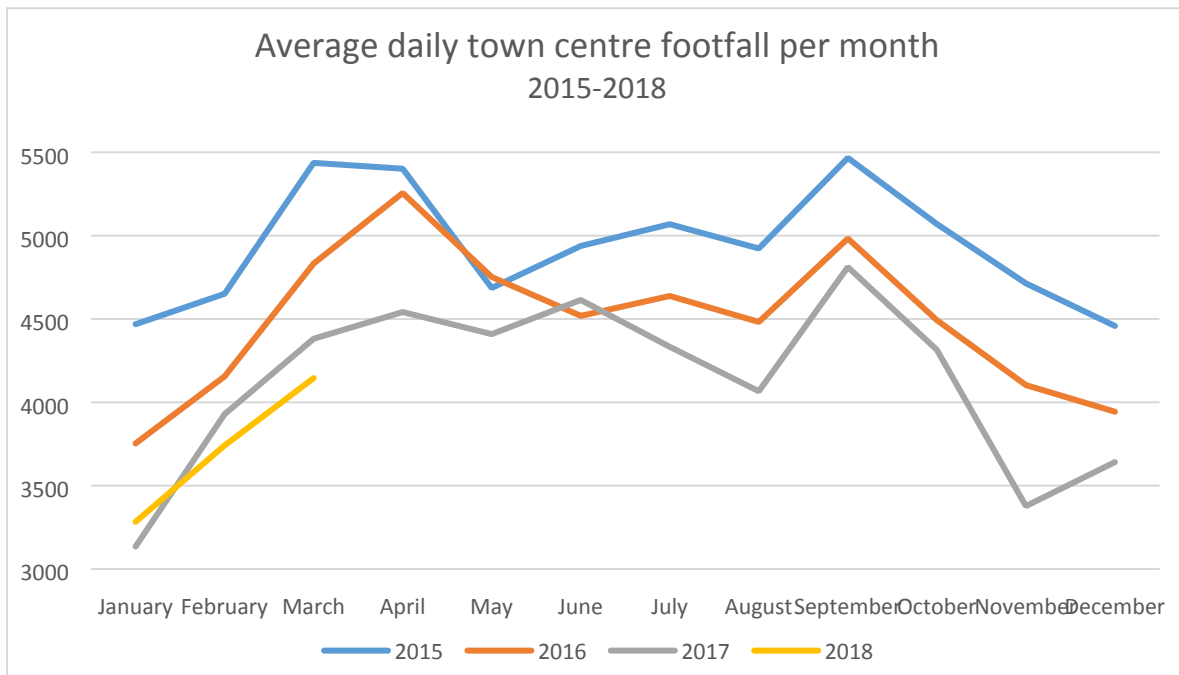
8. As this quarter represents the last of reporting under the existing performance suite, a summary of progress within the corporate plan aims over the whole year is detailed, with reference to performance trends since the start of the corporate plan where possible.

### Enterprising Ashford

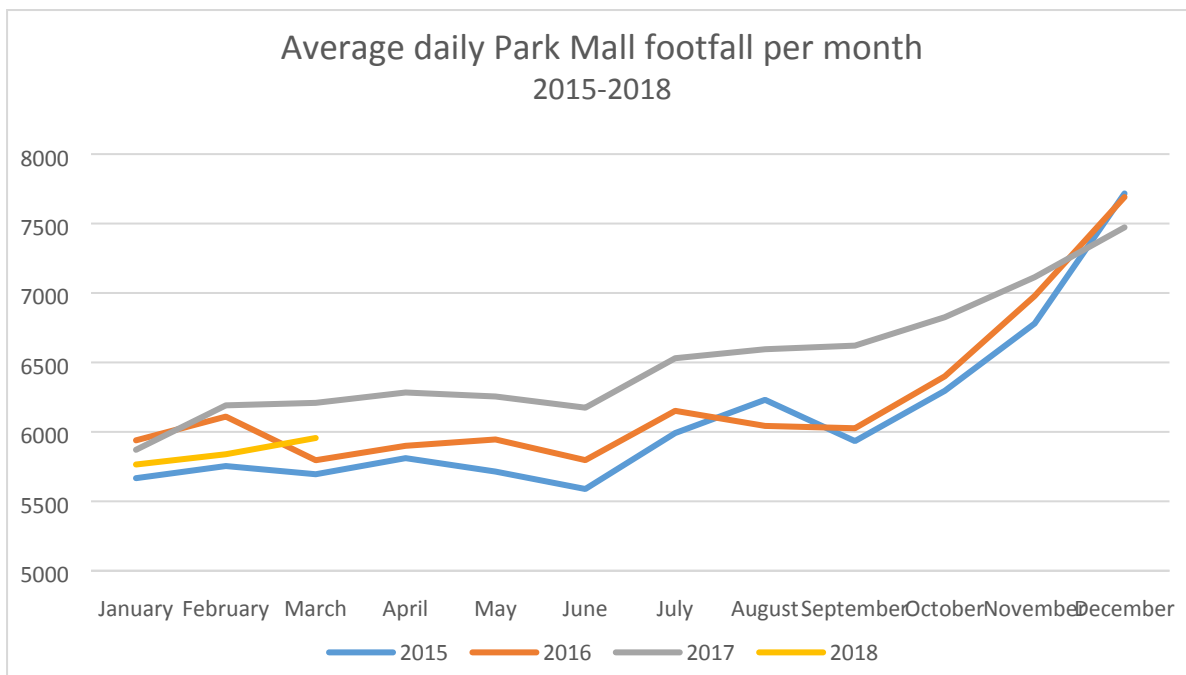
9. Town centre vacancy rates increased in quarter 4 following the end of Christmas trading, driven by increasing vacancies outside of Park Mall and County Square, where occupancy levels remain unchanged from quarter 3. At the most recent survey point (February 2018), 225 units were surveyed in the town centre streets (of which 34 vacant), 58 in County Square (4 vacant) and 32 in Park Mall (2 vacant).
10. Across the year, vacancy rates within Park Mall and County Square have fallen to low levels and remained steady, with greater fluctuation observed in the wider town centre across the year.



11. Town centre footfall dropped in January 2018 following the end of Christmas trading, with average footfall rising across the latter part of quarter 4, following the broad trends seen in previous years, however town centre footfall as measured by the high street footfall counter has generally reduced year on year whilst observing broadly the same trend. The below table shows average daily footfall for each calendar month from January 2015 to date.

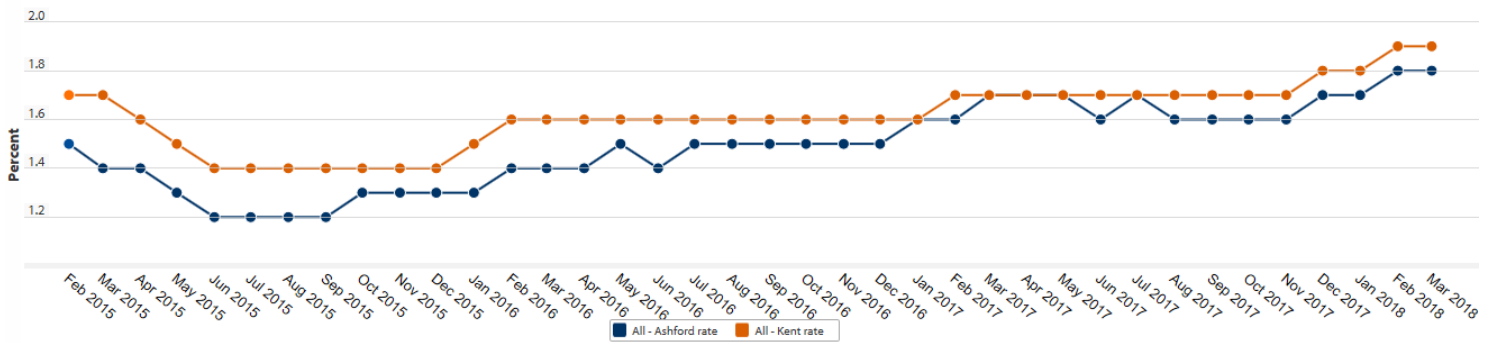


12. The recorded footfall for Park Mall (below) shows a much more consistent trend from year to year with general increases from 2015 onward. Average daily footfall per month in quarter 4 has exceeded recorded levels for the high street but sits below performance for 2016 and 2017. Trend data suggests that footfall will likely remain relatively stable across quarters 1 and 2, rising in the lead up to Christmas.

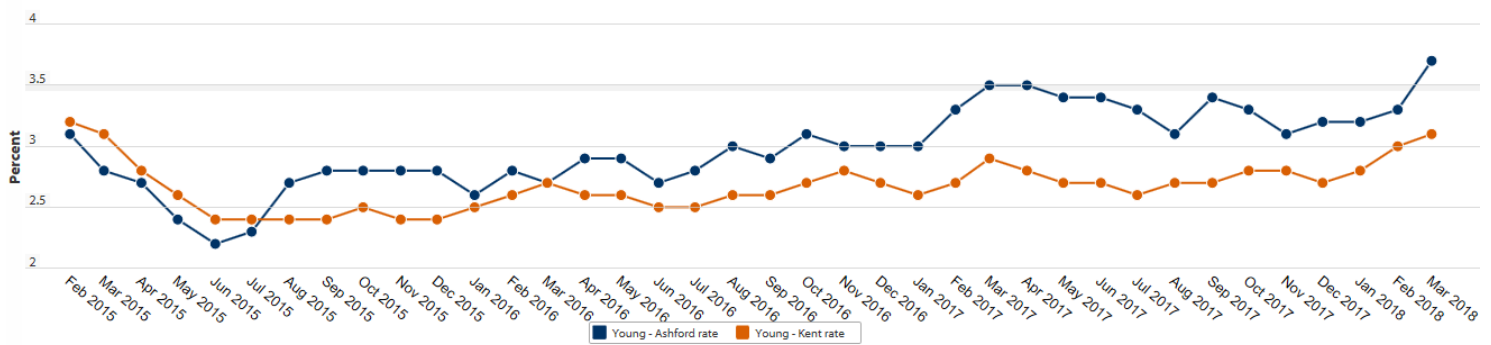


13. Unemployment in the borough has risen slightly over quarter 4 to 1.8%, however this remains below the average for Kent (1.9%) and England as a whole (2.1%). Youth (18-24) unemployment has also risen in quarter 4 and sits at 3.7% as of March 2018, the highest level recorded since February 2015. The Borough's youth unemployment is above the Kent (3.1%) and England (2.9%) averages.

## Unemployment rate

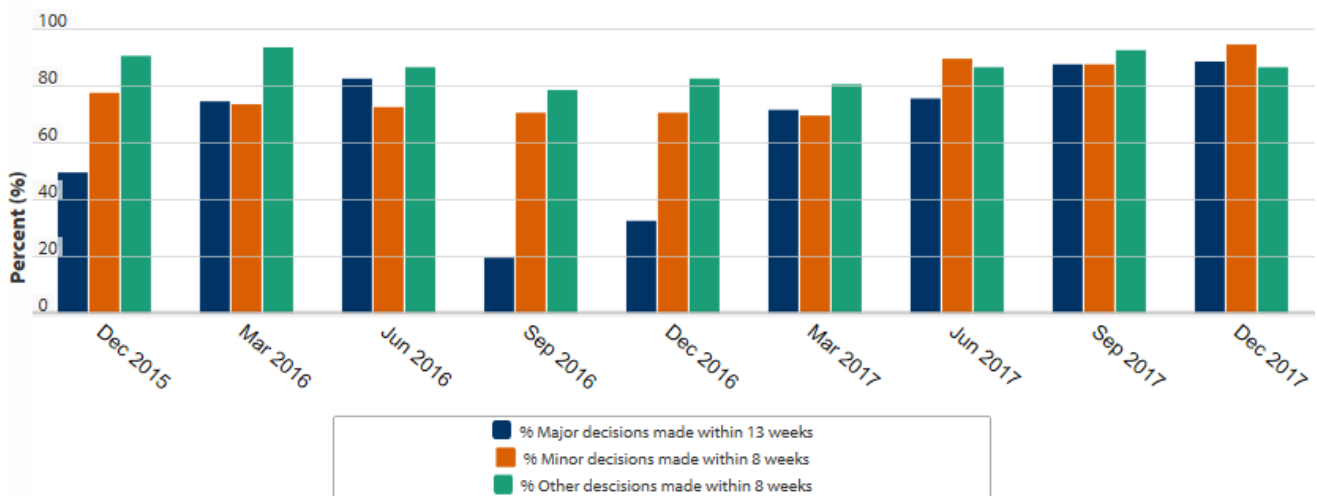


## Youth unemployment rate



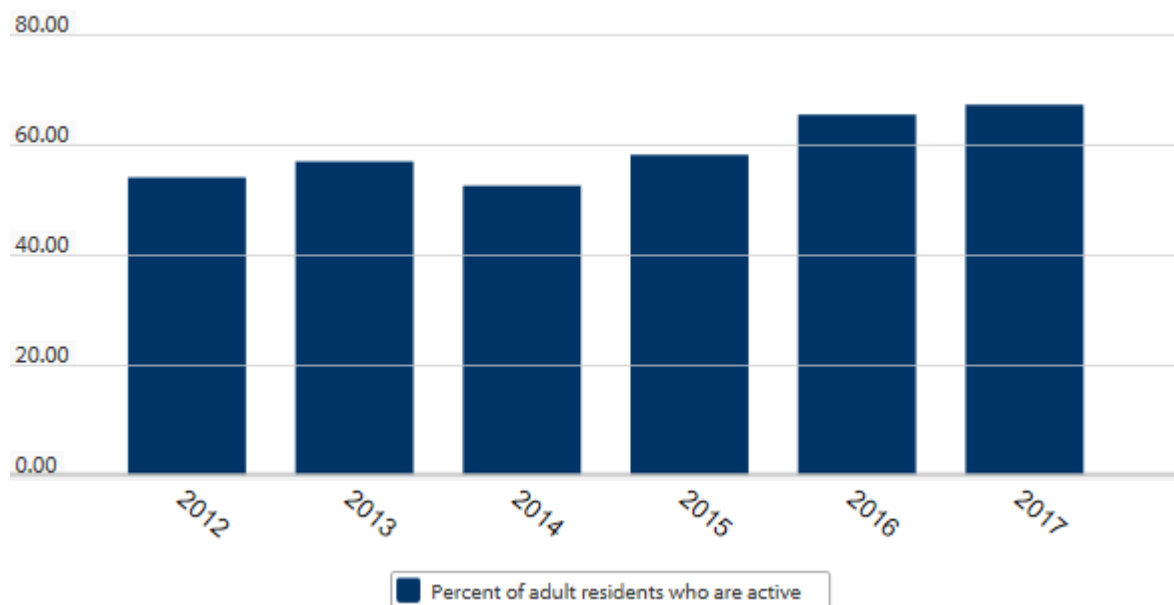
## Living Ashford

14. The speed of planning decisions remains high, with a high approval rate for planning decisions. To December 2017, the council made:
- 69 major development decisions, of which 66 (96%) were granted and 81% were made within 13 weeks
  - 377 minor development decisions, of which 339 (90%) were granted and 87% were made within 8 weeks
  - 933 other development decisions, of which 900 (96%) were granted and 87 were made within 8 weeks



## Active and Creative Ashford

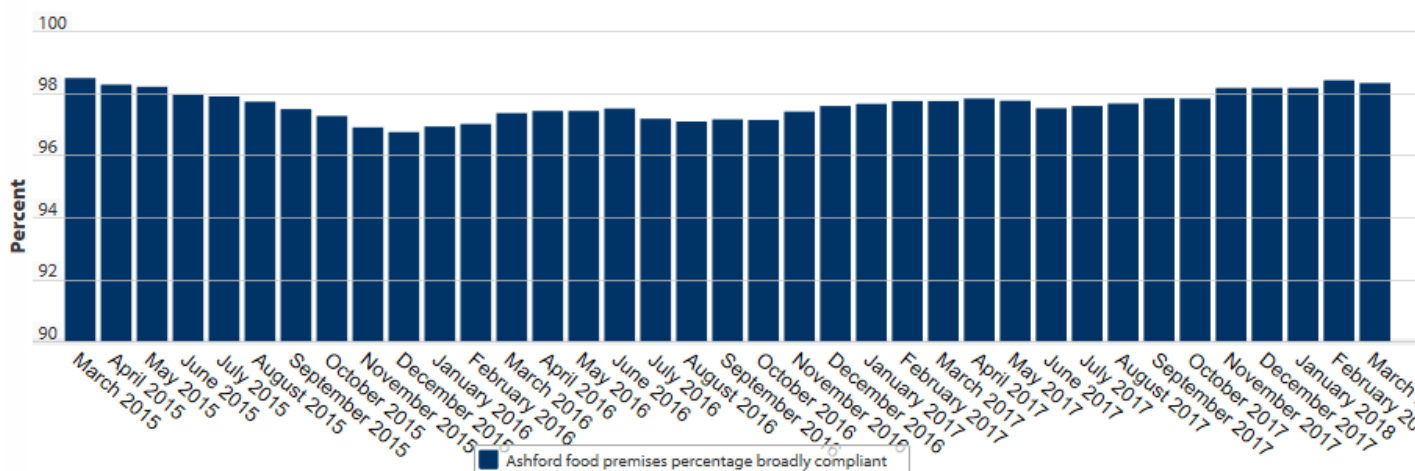
15. The percentage of the adult population who are active remains high, having increased in 2017 according to analysis by Public Health England and now stands at 67.6%, the highest since 2012.



16. Smoking prevalence is declining nationally and locally with the Ashford rate estimated at 17.4% by Public Health England (PHE). The Ashford rate is 1.9% above the national average, however there are more ex-smokers in Ashford than the national average (27.5% in Ashford and 26.2% nationally). PHE estimate that Ashford has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest smoking prevalence in the county with an estimated 16,460 smokers.

## Attractive Ashford

17. Across the over 1,000 food businesses across the borough, the percentage compliant with hygiene standards when inspected has increased over quarters 3 and 4, with over 98% of food premises broadly compliant at the end of March 2018.



18. DEFRA's latest local authority performance data (covering the 2016/17 financial year) confirms that Ashford's recycling rate has increased again to 55%. Ashford retains the highest recycling rate in the county and is now the 35<sup>th</sup> best recycling local authority in the country.
19. The borough's recycling performance fell against quarter 3 performance through quarter 4, with recycling rates of 50% recorded in December and January, rising to 54% through February 2018. The council is currently tracking towards a 56% recycling rate for the 2017/18 financial year.

## **Activity**

20. Quarter 4 saw successful activity on a variety of initiatives which will have a positive impact on the outcomes set out in the Council's corporate plan –

### **January**

- a. Anne Forbes, the council's Syrian Resettlement Co-ordinator, was awarded the British Empire Medal in the 2018 New Year's Honours in recognition of her work which has put Ashford at the forefront of best practice in how to successfully deliver the national Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme.
- b. Construction work on the £90m expansion to the Ashford Designer Outlet commenced.
- c. The council granted a lease to Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council to form a trust to run the Singleton Environment Centre.
- d. Work began to safeguard direct high-speed international services at Ashford International with platform and signalling system upgrades.
- e. The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to release funds to make significant improvements to Ashford Police Station.
- f. Works to create a new zebra crossing and relocate the taxi waiting area in station approach commenced.

### **February**

- g. The preparation work for the widening of the A28 Chart Road began in preparation for the Chilmington Green development.
- h. An expansion of domestic abuse services in Ashford was confirmed with the Ashford Domestic Abuse Forum announcing the introduction of a new scheme in Ashford aimed at helping perpetrators understand the impact they are having.
- i. Work commenced on the new £104m Junction 10a of the M20.
- j. Work began on the delivery of 235 apartments and 26 riverside houses on a brownfield site on Victoria Way.
- k. Cabinet agreed the adoption of 29 recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for preserving and improving air quality in the Borough.
- l. The Local Government Association undertook a peer review of the council's Planning and Development service.



## **March**

- m. The council partnered with Ashford Leisure Trust to procure a new leisure operator for all the main leisure facilities in the Ashford area.
- n. The return of the Ashford Civic Awards was announced, with nominations opened and the awards themselves to be presented in July.
- o. Hip Hop legend DJ Jazzy Jeff was announced as the main stage headliner for the 2018 Create Music Festival.
- p. The council purchased the former Odeon cinema (currently occupied by Mecca Bingo) in the lower high street.
- q. The WYE3 Masterplan consultation was launched.
- r. It was announced that the Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace: 14-18 photographic exhibition will be coming to Ashford in June 2018 before going on to Worcester, Winchester, Edinburgh and London.

## **Conclusions**

- 21. The latest performance data highlights improvements and continuations of strong performance in a number of areas related to delivery of the council's corporate plan, particularly in regard to the speed of planning decisions, recycling rates and the improving health of the borough's residents.
- 22. Adoption of a revised performance framework from 2018/19, as noted in paragraphs 3-7 of the report, will ensure that future performance reporting is more closely aligned to service performance whilst the use of Pentana Performance will allow for greater linking of performance with programme management and risk to enhance the service planning process.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 23. N/A

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

- 24. N/A

## **Other Options Considered**

- 25. N/A

## **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

- 26. N/A

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

- 27. To follow.

## **Contact and Email**

- 28. Will Train, Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer

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