

Ashford Borough Council

Corporate Plan

2022-2024



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Foreword by Cllr Clarkson, Leader



I am delighted that we are now in a position to present our Corporate Plan for 2022. This sets out our priorities to achieve the ambition for the borough that we developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders in 2019/20. Although we had to pause the immediate progression of this work, to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, we didn't lose sight of our long term objectives to be a greener, more caring and prosperous borough for everyone. I am truly grateful to all who helped and continue to help, those affected by the pandemic. The response was exemplary and showed how we can all work together in times of utmost need. We have learnt many lessons from this experience and will be using the positive outcomes to continue to improve how we work with our communities. Together we must now step up to the challenge of climate change and with our best endeavours strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our borough, in the heart of the Garden of England, needs us to continue to be bold, innovative and decisive and lead the way to a more sustainable future for all who live, work and visit here.

We will use our influence to lobby, at all levels, for policy and legislation that ensures we can continue to deliver the best services possible to our residents, now and in the future.

Finally, moving forward we should also reflect and remember the tragic loss that so many have suffered during the pandemic.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cllr Clarkson', written over a horizontal line.

1. Introduction

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 to focus our work towards enabling a timely recovery from the pandemic, supporting residents, communities and local business. Some of the key outcomes are:

- Securing a £1.45m grant to replace the power plant at the Stour Leisure Centre to reduce running costs and cut carbon emissions. Also a new provider for the Stour Centre, Freedom Leisure, were appointed who are investing in a major refurbishment and works programme
- Successfully secured funding of over £1m to build 17 affordable homes in South Ashford and opened a further 8 units of short stay accommodation for homeless families, reducing the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation
- Maintained our excellent recycling rates, above the national average and best in the county
- Agreed to continue the refugee resettlement programme under the UK resettlement scheme. In the 2020 Local Government Chronicle awards the council won the Diversity and Inclusion category
- New tenants have signed leases in the multi million pound Elwick Place development and the plans for the Town Centre reset, to revitalise Bank Street and Elwick Road, were approved
- Completed the purchase of Somerset Heights and Stour Heights providing 109 homes for key workers in the town centre with the support of a £2m grant from Homes England

This new 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.

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.

The Ashford Ambition Report details the process and engagement undertaken in developing the Ambition and themes.

In realising this ambition we need to continue to work in partnership with others, inspire innovation and creativity and challenge our decisions to ensure we are building a sustainable, carbon neutral future and upholding our values (section 5: Our Principles).

Our objectives and outcomes for this Corporate Plan are summarised in the table opposite:

The Ashford Ambition:

To be a thriving, productive and inclusive borough in 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

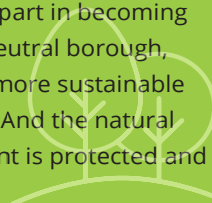
Ashford Ambition:

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

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.



Challenges

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

Objectives

GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets

GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

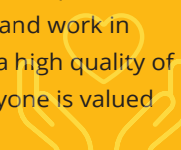
GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business

Outcomes

- 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 disadvantaged 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

- 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

- 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

Our Delivery Plan is found at appendix 1

Central to this Corporate Plan is to consider how every decision made and action implemented is contributing to achieving our carbon neutral aims as set out in our Carbon Neutral Action Plan 'Ashford to Zero'. We will continue to use the Kent Resilience Forum's Principles for a Green Recovery to act as a 'checklist' for decision making.

- All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain
- Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature
- Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycle way's and public transport
- Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events
- Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity
- Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand
- Greater partnership working and collaboration

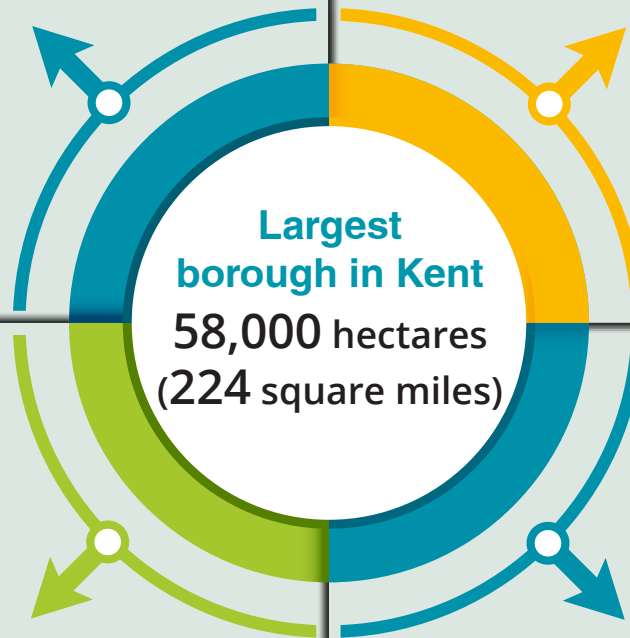
A full explanation can be found in appendix 2.

As the Brexit transition phase came to its conclusion Ashford was informed by the Government that a site at Sevington would be a Border Control Post. The council is now responsible for the setting up and operation of one of the largest inland border posts in the UK in regards of products of animal origin and high risk food not of animal origin. This is of strategic importance not only to Ashford but to the whole country, ensuring animal and public health is safeguarded and compliance with UK rules and international trading standards is maintained.

2. Our Borough

Population estimate in 2020

is **132,420** (6th largest population in Kent exc. Medway)



Population age range

Under 5 (pre-school age)	6.1 %
5 to 19 (school/college age)	18.9%
20 to 64 (working age)	55.5%
65 and over (retirement age)	19.4%

Ethnicity

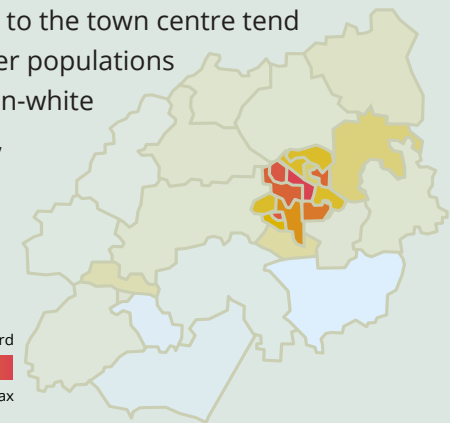
In Ashford **6.3%** of the population are black and ethnic minority, the same percentage as the Kent average. (Census 2011). **91%** of residents were born in the UK.



Ethnicity

Wards closer to the town centre tend to have higher populations of BME or non-white UK residents, compared to rural wards

BME Population (%) by ward
Min Max



3. Strategic context

The Corporate Plan sets the broad priorities of the council and directs the allocation of resources to achieving those priorities. Each priority is supported by a series of objectives. All projects, strategies and policies of the council will in turn support the delivery of the Corporate Objectives.

Sitting directly beneath the Corporate Plan are the Carbon Neutral Strategy and Action Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the Local Plan all of which are key drivers in delivering the Ashford Ambition.

In achieving our strategic objectives we will carry out a wide variety of activities. Each activity will have a different level of risk to assess and manage. We have recognised the need for a number of potentially differing appetites for risk depending on what the activity is. Defining our risk appetite helps us to clearly set out what the risk levels are in our decision making and operational activities which in turn helps decision makers take a consistent approach and is explained fully in the Risk Appetite Statement at appendix 3.

We will continue to invest where it is appropriate to do so and will be guided by our risk appetite. To date we have a successful investment portfolio through being judicious in what we have decided to invest in and reducing our exposure to unnecessary risk.

4. Our Corporate Priorities and Objectives

Our three priority themes are each supported by a number of objectives to achieve an outcome that collectively will realise the overarching Ashford Ambition. Each objective has a series of actions that will be monitored to ensure they are delivering the objective.

4.1 Green Pioneer

The need to live more sustainably and tread lightly on the planet is becoming increasingly urgent as the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation become more apparent. The per capita CO₂ emissions (2018) for Ashford are 4.6 tCO₂, comparable to the Kent and Medway average of 4.7 tCO₂. Through our residents survey we know that local people would like to do more to help reduce negative impacts on the environment with sustainability ranking highly as a priority area.

Our objectives encompass; energy, buildings and infrastructure, transport, the natural environment and waste to achieve our long term aim that: *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.*

Objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets

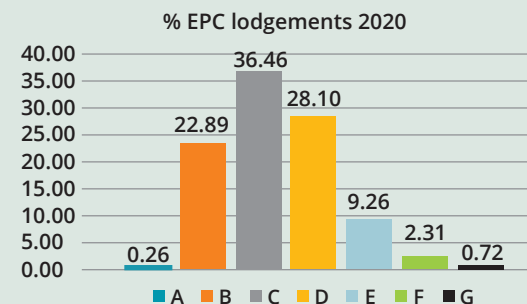
Our aim is for homes and buildings to be as energy efficient as possible and cheaper to heat, for more energy to come from renewable sources and fewer local car journeys are made as opportunities to cycle, walk and use public transport increase.

This contributes to reducing fuel poverty, improving air quality and residents enabled to be more active with the associated health benefits.

Key facts:

The total carbon dioxide equivalent emissions for the borough are 681 ktCO₂e the 7th highest level of emissions in Kent and Medway and the 5th highest for gross emissions per head of population at 5.79 tCO₂e. (Kent and Medway Emissions Pathway report).

Energy Performance certificates for all dwellings lodged in 2020 show Band C as the highest.



Analysis by Kent County Council of EPCs between 2010 and 2019 were collated to provide a proportional value for each letter rating per local authority. Ashford borough is above the Kent and National (England and Wales) average for bands ABC and below the averages for bands EFG.

42% of adults in the borough walk for any purpose (leisure or travel) 3 times a week but only 3.4% cycle 3 times a week. (DfT walking and cycling statistics 2018/19).

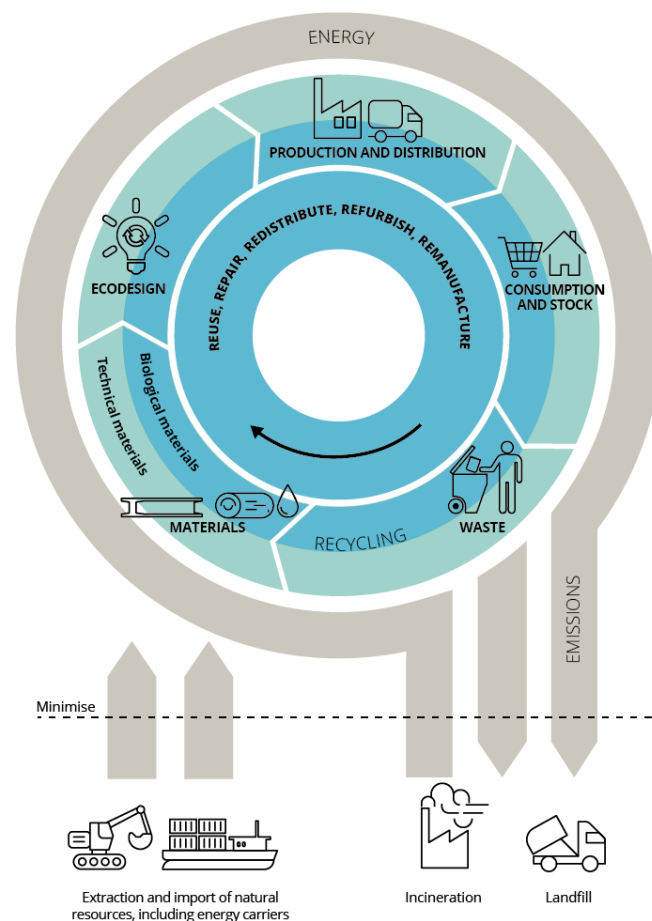
We will:

- Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes
- Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same
- Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with the council's operations and staff use
- Reduce car usage by implementing local active travel initiatives and uptake of public transport together with cleaner travel options
- Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings through retrofitting programmes

Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

Our aim is that all communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment. The decline in species is well documented so we should consider many and varied ways to increase and improve our open spaces for wildlife. This could be green roofs and walls, managing our parks sympathetically for nature or planting more trees, complimenting the work at our strategic parks - Discovery, Victoria and Conningbrook. We will champion the creation of wetland parks to reduce nitrate and phosphate pollution, increase natural drainage, provide habitats for wildlife and attractive outdoor spaces for leisure and recreation. The benefits to our health, particularly our mental health, of spending time outside and enjoying nature are widely recognised. Additionally how we use

resources impacts on the natural world. Reducing demand on finite resources by making careful choices about what we buy, increasing the longevity of products and recycling help to keep products and materials in use and regenerate natural environments, embracing the concepts of the circular economy.



Circular economy diagram source European Environment Agency

Key facts:

The borough has 1701.04 hectares of public open space across urban and rural (including Tenterden) areas, 376.37ha and 1324.67 ha respectively. (Ashford open space strategy 2017)

In the 2020 residents' survey 66% of respondents said they were satisfied with parks.

We will:

- Ensure the biodiversity net gain value through the planning process as set out in the Environment Bill is met or exceeded where possible
- Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife
- Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.
- Conserve water through reduced usage

Objective GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business

We continue to improve our recycling rates and are consistently the best council for recycling in the county. Our waste service strives to educate and inform residents and business on how to reduce the amount of waste they produce. As part of this the council signed up to the Courtauld Commitment 2025, an ambitious voluntary agreement bringing together organisations across the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. Litter and fly-tipping is unsightly, unhealthy and potential dangerous to people and wildlife. We will work with others to strengthen messages about the illegal dumping of rubbish and take enforcement action against fly-tipping and littering. We want to be a borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce.

Key facts:

Ashford borough has the best recycling rate in the county at 54.2%, above the national target of 50%.

An overwhelming majority of respondents to the 2020 residents' survey were satisfied with bin collection service in 2020, with 83% reporting they were satisfied with this service.

Our water bottle refill scheme in partnership with local businesses reduces the amount of plastic bottles used.

Our garden waste service ensures green waste is composted and used as a soil improver, with an increase of 9.22% of tonnes of green waste collected in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

We will:

- Ensure our waste collection service drives the improvement of waste reduction and recycling
- Work with business to implement government introduced schemes to encourage reuse and waste reduction
- Promote responsible behaviour to protect the environment from harmful waste

4.2 Caring Ashford

As we developed the Ashford Ambition the importance of wellbeing resonated with stakeholders. Health and happiness were considered essential to making the borough a good place to live where communities support each other. Young people have the best start in life and everyone feels safe and secure. The ability of people and communities to pull together was demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic. People supported each other through individual action or voluntary and charitable organisations providing much needed on the ground assistance to statutory agencies. Deprived areas were more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirming the importance of good quality, suitable accommodation, healthy lifestyles and access to open space.

Our objectives are to improve educational attainment, reduce health inequalities, celebrate the diversity of our communities and empower local people to work together for the benefit of their local area so that our *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.*

Objective CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely

With a growing population our homes and neighbourhoods must be designed to meet the needs of all our residents, ensuring existing and new communities come together to create strong communities where people look after each other. Good homes and neighbourhoods are the foundations to helping people reach their goals through all stages of life, from childhood to older age. Every community needs a range of homes, affordable to local people and offering suitable accommodation for single people, couples and families. This, together with well-planned local services, from shops and schools to health and leisure facilities, community spaces, parks and green areas that are easy and safe to access are vital to everyone's health and wellbeing. We want to work with local communities to identify what is important to them so they feel safe and secure with access to locally designed and led services.

Key facts:

Our Housing Delivery Test score is 90%, which is 5% below the government target of 95%.

In 2019/20 there were 746 net housing completions down on the previous year of 880 completions, including 84 affordable housing completions, 4 of which were rural local needs homes.

The average house price in 2019 was £327,238. Median workplace based earnings in 2020 (weekly) were £515.90 equating to £26,826.80 per annum. Therefore average house prices are 12 times average earnings.

Significant work has been undertaken as part of moving homeless people into accommodation because of Covid 19 and in Autumn 2020 it was estimated there were no rough sleepers in the borough, down from 25 the previous year.

In 2019/20 there were 91.5 crimes per 1000 people with over half being from theft offences and violence against a person. This is lower than the recorded rate for Kent of 99.4

There were 459 road traffic casualties in 2019, with 48 child casualties.

In our 2020 Residents Survey, overall, 79% of residents were very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

We will:

- Enable housing development that meets local needs, supports independence and creates sustainable communities while resisting over development of housing in rural areas
- Work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas
- Improve engagement with local communities and enable them to increase their resilience to adverse events and emergencies
- Ensure Housing Revenue Account (HRA) buildings are safe to live in and meet compliance standards
- Work with communities to design develop and manage facilities that support community cohesion

Objective CA2: Local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment

It is important that we continue to recognise and respond to the hardship caused by the coronavirus pandemic including the loss of employment. We will work with other partners to make sure that local people are equipped with the skills and knowledge to take up new opportunities as existing businesses adapt and new businesses establish in the borough. Education and training is a key component of enabling young people to be able to realise their potential. The local college and education providers will be instrumental in improving educational attainment for young people. Learning doesn't stop when people leave formal education and we recognise the role that employers, the voluntary sector and social enterprises play in helping people gain and develop skills in many different ways, assisting people to stay in or return to work. Access to a range of initiatives to increase life-long learning will help local people seek positive change for themselves improving social inclusion and employability.

Key facts:

In the working age population (16-64) 11% have no educational qualification. 31% are educated to degree level or above.

In January 2012 there were 99 (3.2%) year 12 and year 13 children not in education employment or training (NEET), similar to the Kent average.

2654 school children (13.6%) have a special educational need (SEN).

We will:

- Create opportunities for young people to take-up education and training
- Work with existing and potential employers to identify the skills and knowledge they require
- Work with voluntary sector to increase informal learning opportunities as route in to work

Objective CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people

The pioneering One You shop has engaged many local people through education and information, alongside personal support to improve their

health. A range of programmes have supported people to stop smoking, achieve a healthy weight, increase activity and lower stress and other health improvement initiatives. Working with partners in health and social care in the statutory and voluntary sectors we will work with communities to identify what are the main health issues in their area and what can be put in place to enable local people to lead healthier, happier lives. We will use our assets to the maximum effect so everyone can benefit, whether these are formally organised, such as sports activities or informal like spending time outside in parks and open spaces. Engaging with other initiatives such as the Kent Reconnects for young people strengthens our ability to achieve positive outcomes. We want to ensure everyone's health and wellbeing benefits and in particular the lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes improves.

Key facts:

Ashford is the 8th most deprived district in Kent and Medway. (Or 6th least deprived)

Life expectancy at birth is slightly higher than both the Kent and England averages at 80.8 years and 84.5 years for males and females respectively. In the most deprived areas, life expectancy for men is 6.8 years lower.

The percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese is 64.9%, worse than the England average (62.8%) The prevalence of overweight children in reception and year 6 are both above the average for England and the South East.

Smoking is significantly worse than the England average during pregnancy and for those in routine and manual occupations.

The percentage of physically active adults is slightly lower than the regional average at 66.9% compared to 69.5%.

Our assisted bin collection service supports over 1,000 households.

There are 5 registered changing places toilets where additional equipment allows disabled people to use the toilets safely and comfortably in addition to other disabled facilities in the borough. Our lifeline service is installed in 1,273 homes in the borough (896 council tenants and 377 private householders) supporting people to retain their independence.

We will:

- Work with communities to identify local issues and implement solutions
- Work in partnership to increase participation in sports and wellbeing activities
- Actively engage with partners to give children and young people the best start in life
- Tackle Homelessness

Objective CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility

The borough has a rich and varied heritage, the history of the railways and the Hubert Fountain in Victoria Park are just two examples. The borough is home to the internationally acclaimed Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company and the award winning Revelation St Marys runs a mixed arts programme. Our rural areas, nestled in the heart of the Garden of England, play host to local and nationally renowned events such as the Tenterden Folk Festival. The ability to come together to enjoy events has been curtailed in the last year as a necessary step to reduce the spread of coronavirus and protect lives. We must not lose sight of how previous events have been hugely successful, such as the snowdogs trail and the carnival of the baubles. Cultural events and local activities can act as a catalyst to galvanise community spirit, having a long lasting impact that brings communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding in a friendly and fun environment.

Key facts:

The snowdogs event attracted over 36k visitors from all over Kent, UK and Europe and it generated an estimated economic impact of £649k for the town. There were also 19 small snow dogs, (snow pups) designed and painted by local schools.

All people in 95% of households in the borough have English as their main language. There are 2.6% of households where no one has English as their main language (Census 2011.)

Residents who stated their religion, 63% were Christian and other religions were 1% or less.

Events during 2019 in the town centre were positively received by respondents to the residents' survey who attended them.

We will:

- Encourage communities to protect and celebrate their heritage
- Empower local communities to identify and deliver local events that support community wellbeing
- Ensure arts, entertainment and local heritage are accessible to all

4.3 Targeted Growth

The borough has strong retail and service sectors but is under represented in manufacturing and pharmaceuticals with a relatively weak presence of industries positioned to access international markets apart from two chemicals industries. Increasing productivity by attracting creative and innovative industries to establish themselves in the borough alongside growing and strengthening the visitor economy are key drivers to good employment and increasing the skills and knowledge base of local people.

Throughout the Ashford Ambition consultation there was a greater preference for a targeted growth approach which stakeholders felt enabled a more socially responsible and sustainable focus. The COVID-19 pandemic and need to achieve carbon neutrality focusses attention on enabling a resilient and sustainable economic sector in the borough. Our objectives to achieve this are focused on increasing productivity, improving digital infrastructure, strengthen the resilience of the local economy and becoming a renowned visitor destination to ensure we have ***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.***

Ashford Port Health is a new service to check certain imports from the EU. This is to ensure only products that are safe to eat enter the food chain and to safeguard animal and public health. The council has implemented a plan which will see a phased opening of the port, as directed by Defra, with it fully operational by 2022. This new service will help drive economic resilience in the borough through recruitment and training of over 120 staff and opportunities for other supporting business to establish alongside the port.

Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough

The business base has grown across the borough by attracting inward investment. The 8 major projects that featured in the last Corporate Plan are now completed or nearing completion. This has made Ashford a prime location for business. Building on this success we will support existing and new business to thrive in the borough with a focus on green, sustainable businesses. This will increase local employment and raise local incomes. There are several exciting new projects already in the pipeline including Newtown Works and Project Green.

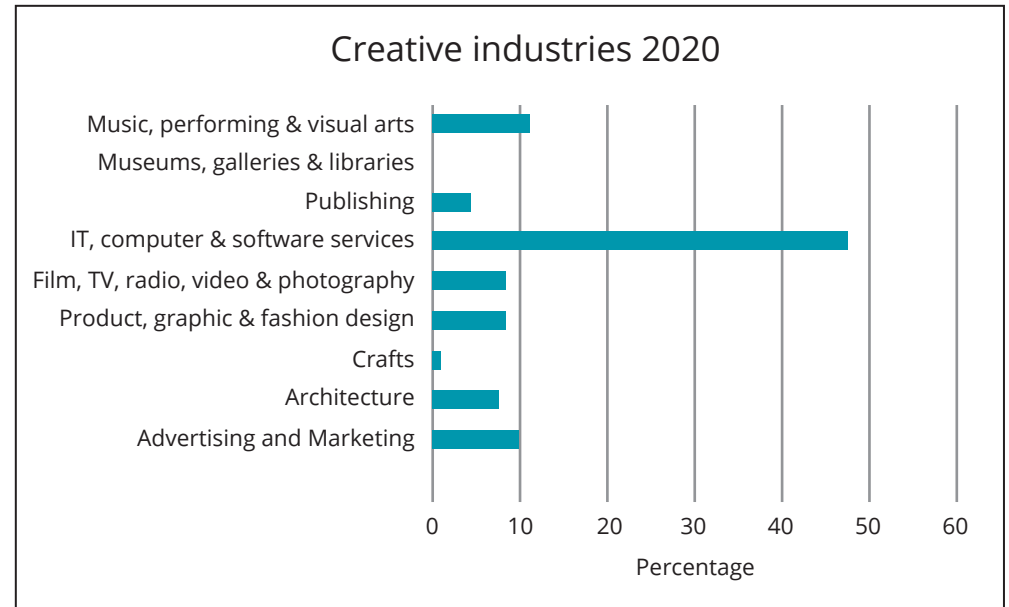
Key facts:

In May 2021 the unemployment rate was 5.5%, slightly below the Kent and UK averages (5.6% and 6.0% respectively). Unemployment in 18 – 24 year olds is higher at 10.1% above both the Kent and UK averages (8.7% and 8.2% respectively).

Creative industries account for 9% of business in Ashford in 2020, lower than the Kent and South East averages of 10.3% and 13.5% respectively. The largest sector is IT, software and computer services.

Over 95% of creative business are micro business with between 0 and 9 employees.

The borough has a slightly higher percentage of enterprises in the knowledge economy 33.2% than Kent (31.5%) but lower than the south east (37%). However there were only 10.3% of jobs in the knowledge economy, below the Kent and regional averages.



We will:

- Support existing dynamic businesses to expand and grow
- Work to attract inward investment to the borough
- Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes
- Strengthen support for creative industries

Objective TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents

Fast, reliable digital connectivity across the whole borough is critical for businesses and residents to trade and access services. Some areas of the borough are disadvantaged because of poor digital connectivity. A lack of digital connectivity can stifle innovation and business growth.

Key facts:

The number of premises with Superfast broadband (>30Mbps) is 52,613 (90%) below the UK average of 94%. There are only 8% of premises with full fibre, below the UK average of 18%. 1% of premises have less than 10Mbps which is below the Universal Service Obligation.

The majority of premises (98.9%) are covered with 4G indoors by at least one Mobile Network Operator (MNO): 98.9%

(Source: Ofcom Connected Nations Report Spring 2021)

We will:

- Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure with gigabit capable broadband and improved mobile coverage and reliability

Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy

Major businesses in the borough can support smaller and establishing business by purchasing their goods and services. Other business can provide services and goods to their employees. This keeps the local economy buoyant and more resilient to fluctuations in global markets, improving business survival rates.

Key facts:

In 2019 there were 6,675 active enterprises in the borough, a growth of 310 on the previous year. Figures for 2020 are awaited to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business in the borough.

In 2019 the 3 year business survival rate was 55.4%, slightly below the Kent and regional averages. The 2019 survival rate is lower than that across the previous

10 years.

There is more fluctuation in 5 year business survival rates across the previous 10 years, with the 2019 rate for Ashford at 45.7% slightly higher than both the Kent and regional average.

There were 20 enterprises in the borough classed as a high growth enterprises (a business with ten or more employees which has seen at least 20% employee growth each year for the previous three-year period). Equivalent to 4.3% slightly below the Kent and national averages.

We will:

- Develop business networks and partnerships
- Establish and deliver the Port Health Service
- Support opportunities for business to develop and increase local employment in rural areas

Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy

The borough has stunning countryside with charming villages and the town of Tenterden known as the Jewel in the Weald. The borough is also ideally placed to be the location of choice from which to explore further afield in the county, London or nearby continent. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy but is often seasonal. The growing wine industry (with over 1 million vines planted) and associated tourist attractions are part of an ongoing European regional development fund (Interreg) initiative to develop a more resilient and sustainable visitor economy attracting increased visitors numbers and spend to the area, making the borough known as a 'year round' visitor destination with quality visitor experiences. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many tourism and related enterprises being required to close to reduce transmission of the virus. As national restrictions are relaxed, but international travel is still uncertain, attracting 'staycation' holiday makers will be important for the viability of many businesses.

Key facts:

In 2019 there were 4.7million visitors to the borough, 4.3 million were day visitors with only 395,000 being overnight visitors.

Tourism contributes £311 million to the local economy and supports over 6,000 jobs (4,500 full time equivalents), 11% of total employment.

We will:

- Increase overall visitor numbers, duration of stays and out of season visits, especially in growing markets such as wine tourism, leisure and green tourism.

Objective TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents visitors and business

Town centres around the country are having to adapt to changing consumer habits and the impact of coronavirus on some retail and hospitality sectors. In Ashford town centre there are flourishing businesses offering quality services to customers, such as the cinema and food and drink outlets in Elwick Place. However, in some parts, recent store closures have left empty units which detract from the overall experience of visiting the town centre. Working with business and residents we need to understand what is commercially viable and what attracts people into the town to ensure it is a lively, safe place where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities.

The rural town of Tenterden is a vitally important hub in the west of the borough providing a range of services that are important to retain and enhance.

Key facts:

In the 2020 residents survey many respondents felt the town centre was unsatisfactory: due to perceptions that it was not safe, that the shopping provision was poor and too many shops were vacant and that it is too difficult to access and has issues with littering.

We will:

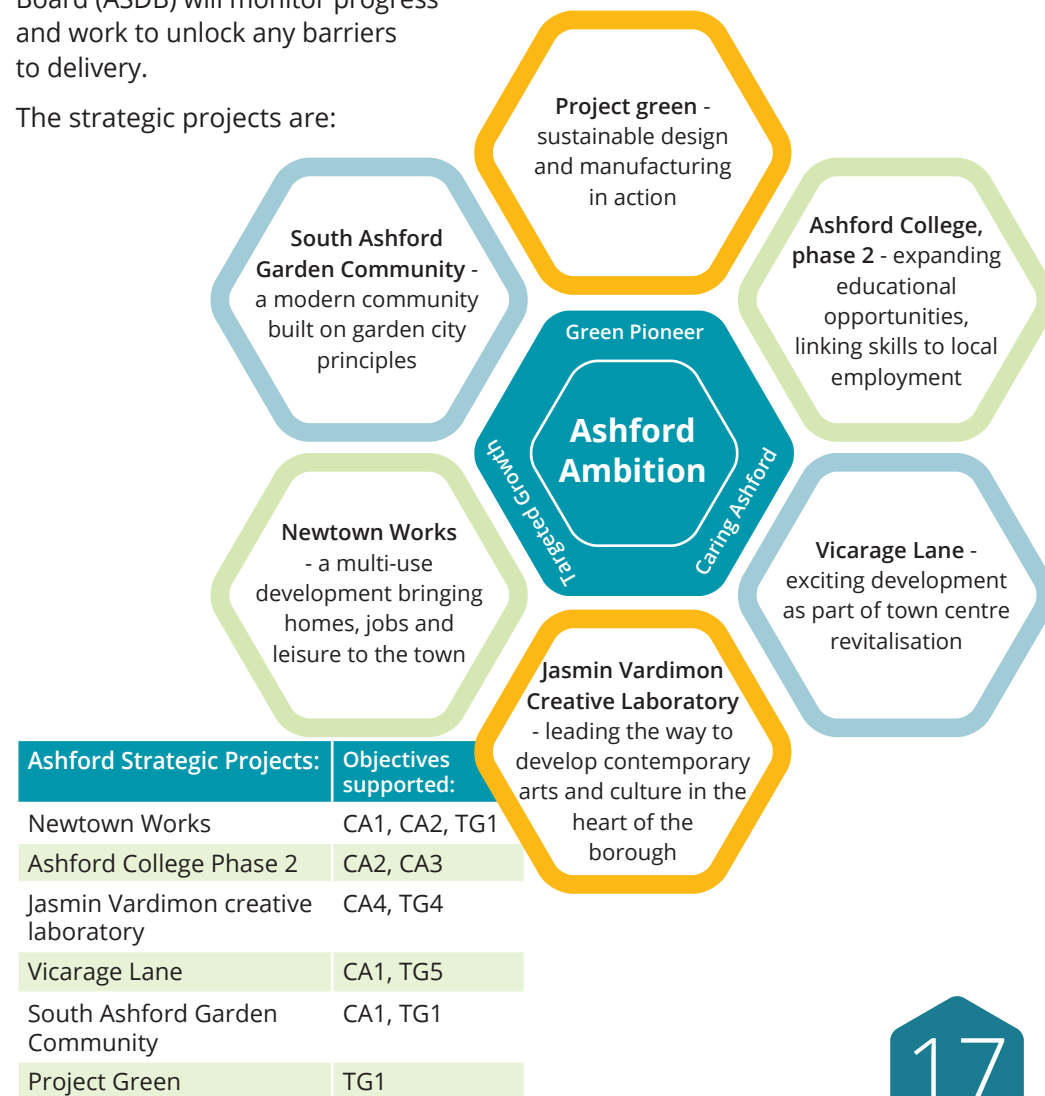
- Progress the Ashford Town centre reset programme
- Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall
- Progress the Vicarage Lane redevelopment

4.4 Strategic Projects

The council, working in partnership with other organisations, has a strong record of delivering successful projects to drive economic growth and the wellbeing of residents. This continues to be a focus for this Corporate Plan.

Each of the strategic projects supports the one or more of our strategic objectives, thus helping to achieve the Ashford Ambition. The Ashford Strategic Delivery Board (ASDB) will monitor progress and work to unlock any barriers to delivery.

The strategic projects are:



In addition the ASDB will have a watching brief over the following projects where the council is taking the lead on delivery.



Key facts

There has been a 48% increase in footfall in the town centre since beginning of March 2021.

The town centre vacancy rates are higher than the national average at 17.5% (Ashford - July 2021) compared to 11.5% (nationally - April 2021).

Anticipated that Elwick Place will have all units fully occupied in 2021.

Ashford Priority Projects:	Objectives supported:
Strategic Parks (Victoria, Conningbrook and Discovery parks)	GP2, CA3, CA4
Town Centre reset	CA4, TG5
Park Mall redevelopment	CA4, TG5
Active Travel (Cycling and Walking Strategy)	GP1, GP2, CA3

5. Our Principles

We will be supporting our staff to be ambitious, creative and trustworthy in all that they do to fulfil the council's ambition to be an effective and well-resourced organisation that will:

1. Treat everyone fairly and with respect
2. Understand and respond to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged
3. Put the customer at the heart of everything we do and ensure our services are accessible
4. Make the most of our assets and invest wisely to ensure we live within our means
5. All work towards achieving the objectives of being a Green Pioneer and Caring Ashford

Our Equalities Policy reflects our values as a caring borough, explaining how we will comply with the requirements of the Equalities Act and Public Sector Equalities Duty, alongside setting out our Equalities Objectives and the commitments to deliver those objectives. The Equalities Objectives can be found in appendix 4

The table below shows examples of the policies and procedures we currently use to ensure we are upholding our principles and what we intend to do to improve and strengthen our adherence to our principles.

As an organisation we will embrace modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality, compliant services. We will be transparent and open in our decision making, listen to our residents and encourage participation in the democratic process.

Current policies and procedures	Future action
1. Treat everyone fairly and with respect	
Equality Objectives Staff training programme	Setting up a staff health and wellbeing champions group Develop an Equalities Action Plan
2. Understand and respond to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged	
Borough Profile Residents' Surveys Local Plan	Continue to build upon and improve our understanding and use of data to better respond to the needs of our communities Adopt a Community Asset Transfer and Management Policy
3. Put the customer at the heart of everything we do and ensure our services are accessible	
Digital Strategy Equality Objectives Complaints process	Review our systems for handling complaints Develop a new digital and customer services strategy Deliver the digital programme Improve engagement with local councils through a regular forum
4. Make the most of our assets and invest wisely to ensure we live within our means	
Risk Management Strategy/Framework Commercial Strategy Asset Management Strategy Medium Term Financial Plan Annual Governance Statement	Continue to develop our commercial programme
5. All work towards achieving the objectives of being a Green Pioneer and Caring Ashford	
Kent Resilience Forum Principles for a Green Recovery Community Safety Priorities Plan Air Quality Strategy Cycling and Walking Strategy Housing and Homelessness Strategies	Adopt Carbon Reduction Action Plan Review Project Management Toolkit Review Committee Template Develop a Social Value Policy and review Contract management toolkit Embed through staff induction and appraisals Review Sustainability Champions group Reviewing our parks and open spaces land management strategies and polices for improved biodiversity

6. Financial Position

The Corporate Plan will be delivered through a number of funding streams. Projects and resourcing which form part of the current establishment will be funded from the existing revenue budget. Projects outside of the existing budget can be funded in a number of ways:

1. For commercial or “invest to save” projects, at least costs recovered – these can be funded from borrowing (the council could choose to fund from a reserve fund).
2. For corporate projects that do not generate savings or an income can be funded from one of the following funds:
 - a. Climate Change Delivery Fund - £2m available – the project will need to contribute to the reduction of carbon in the Ashford Borough
 - b. Improvement Delivery Fund - £3m available – for other projects that will have a focus on delivering projects in the more deprived areas as well as further afield in the borough.

7. Governance, Reporting and Monitoring

Delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives will be monitored at both Member and officer level.

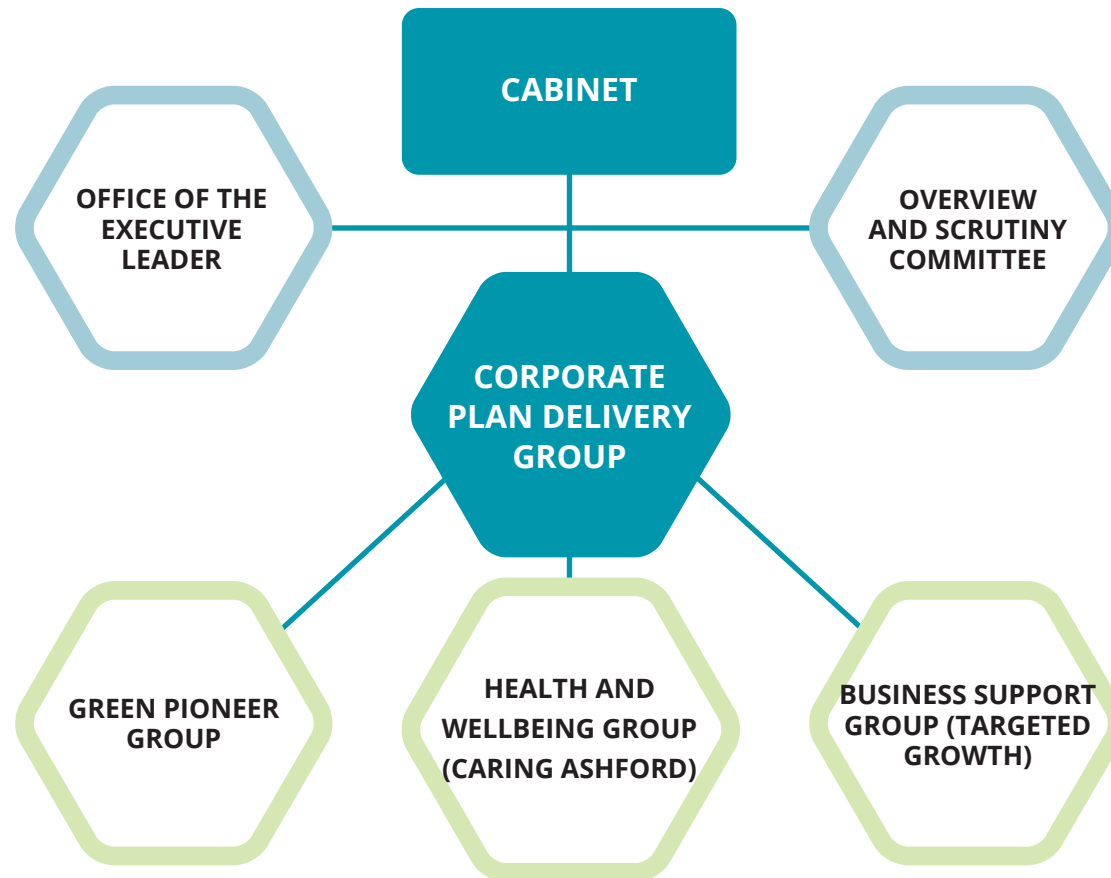
Cabinet will receive Quarterly Performance Reports. An Annual Report to Cabinet in June will provide an update on progress and will detail any proposed changes to the Action Plan and seek approval to instigate such amendments.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also receive the Quarterly Performance Reports and the Annual Report.

The Annual Report and Quarterly Performance reports are compiled by the Corporate Policy Team.

Each theme of the Corporate Plan will have an officer group responsible for monitoring delivery of the actions.

These groups will report to the Corporate Plan Delivery Group. Any significant challenges to the delivery of the action plan identified by the Corporate Plan Delivery Group will be reported by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Leader of the Council. The CEO and the Leader will agree if an exceptional report is required to Cabinet.



Performance Measure	Relevant Objective(s)	Expected Trend	Comment	Reporting Frequency
Councils carbon footprint (tCO ₂ e)	GP1	Decreasing	Net Zero by 2030	Annual
Total potential capacity of council owned renewable energy provision (kWh)	GP1	Increasing	Taking into consideration current solar and future projects.	Annual
Number of EV charging points on council property	GP1	Increasing		Annual
Air Quality - average level of NO ₂ µg/m ³	GP1 (CA3)	Decreasing	Below 40µg/m ³	Annual
Area of land (Km ²) managed for nature conservation	GP2	Increasing	Annual Comment - include any Stodmarsh mitigation sites.	Annual
Number of organisations committed to active travel plans	GP1 GP2 (CA3)	Increasing	As set out in LCWIP	Quarterly

Number of trees planted (net gain) supported through ABC projects	GP2	Increasing	135,500 by 2024 (Queens Canopy Target)	Annual
Level of biodiversity in defined project areas	GP2	Increasing	20% increase using biodiversity metric – data returned on a project by project basis.	Annual
Recycling rate (% of waste collected to be recycled)	GP3	Increasing	50%	Quarterly
Refuse collection success rate	GP3 (CA3)	Increasing	99.96%	Quarterly
Contamination rate in recycling loads	GP3	Decreasing	20% reduction in rejected loads	Annual
Reported incidences of flytipping	GP3	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures.	Annual
% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	CA1	Increasing	98.5%	Quarterly
Number of all recorded crime figures (annual) PLUS the reported Anti-Social Behaviour number	CA1	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures – reflect ongoing work, town centre action plan, success securing the safer streets funding.	Annual
Number killed or seriously injured on the roads	CA1	Decreasing	Fall from current baseline figures.	Annual
Number of play areas revamped/refreshed/replaced	CA1, CA3	Increasing		Annual
Number of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	CA1	Increasing	No target with fluctuations experienced across quarters.	Quarterly
Number of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	CA1	Increasing	No target with fluctuations experienced across quarters.	Quarterly
Number of homelessness presentations	CA3	-	Interventions measure included within note. Noted that Homelessness presentations to some extent out of our direct control. Monitored to reflect case load on service	Quarterly
Disabled facilities grants completed	CA1	-	Note to reflect the budget spend figure annually.	Quarterly
Unemployment rate	CA2, TG1	Decreasing	-	Monthly
Unemployment rate 18-24 years & Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) figure	CA2, TG1	Decreasing	-	Monthly
Indices of multiple deprivation score	CA3	Improving	From current baseline figures.	Annual
Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity	CA3	Improving	Reflects work with the OneYou shop. Information taken from local authority health profiles. Note to include outcomes from health and wellbeing action plan. Benchmarked against regional authorities.	Annual

Annual footfall to key leisure sites	CA3	Increasing	Benchmarked against historic footfall figures	Annual
Benefits change of circumstances processing time	CA3	Decreasing	Under 10 days	Quarterly
Benefits new claim processing time	CA3	Decreasing	Under 28 days	Quarterly
Exceptional Circumstance Payments spend (%) compared to budget available.	CA3	-	100% budgeted figure	Annual
Value of grants awarded via community groups	CA4	-	Reinstate where we were before Covid	Quarterly
Value of local lottery scheme awards (new project)	CA4	-	New projects	
Baseline of current position	Quarterly			
Number of voluntary groups in the borough	CA2	-	Benchmarking with other regional areas.	Annual
Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	CA3	-	Monitored through contracts	Quarterly
Business vacancy rate	TG1, TG3, TG5	Decreasing	Benchmark against national average	Quarterly
Ashford town centre vacancy rate	TG1, TG3, TG5	Decreasing	Benchmark against national average	Quarterly
Contribution to budget from commercial investments	UP	Increasing	Against budgeted figure	Quarterly
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	TG1, TG3	Decreasing	-	Quarterly
Numbers of creative industries in the borough	TG1	Increasing	-	Annual
Digital uptake - % of total council /% Increase transactions completed electronically.	TG2	Increasing	80%	Quarterly
Social media engagement	TG2	Increasing	Increasing against baseline figure.	Quarterly
Percentage of tourism related jobs in the borough	TG4	Increasing	-	Annual
Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden	TG5	-	Against budgeted figure	Quarterly
% FOI responses responded to within 20 working days	UP	Above 95%	95%	Quarterly
Business rates collection rate	UP	-	99% (full year)	Quarterly
Council tax collection rate	UP	-	98.25% (full year)	Quarterly
Percentage of invoices paid on time	UP	-	98%	Quarterly
% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	UP CA1	-	100%	Quarterly
Number of days sickness per FTE	UP	-	Industry benchmarks comparison long and short term context taken from sickness reports	Quarterly
Average speed of customer service calls answer	UP	Average wait time for customer service calls - to be benchmarked with results across Kent	1.38	Quarterly

Complaints resolved at stage 1	UP	% of complaints resolved as stage 1	Benchmarked from historic figures.	Six Monthly
Mean gender pay gap	UP	Mean (average) gender pay gap in hourly pay and Median (mid-point) gender pay gap in hourly pay recorded	Benchmarked figure.	Annual
Ongoing litigation	UP	% of cases on which formal proceedings are issued	-	Quarterly
% of s106 completed within agreed timeframe	UP	% of s106 completed within agreed timeframe	-	Quarterly
% of Planning applications approved	UP CA1		90%	Quarterly
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority)	UP CA1	-	65%	Quarterly
% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	UP CA1	-	65%	Quarterly
% 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)	UP CA1	-	75%	Quarterly
% of non-major planning applications determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	UP CA1	-	75%	Quarterly
Number of live planning applications (open cases)	UP	-	550 (maximum)	Quarterly

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Detailed delivery plan

Actions in **bold** are key corporate priorities.

Time frame Key:

Start date	Due date
Short = commenced or before end of 2021	Short = before end of 2022
Medium = before end of 2022	Medium = before end of 2024
Long = Before end of 2024	Long = after 2024 or an ongoing project

Theme: Green Pioneer - 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.

Objective GP1: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets					
Outcome: 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.					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP1.1 Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes		Identify and allocate sites for renewable energy projects	Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
		Implement the Future Homes standard as a minimum criteria for achieving Zero Carbon homes	Lead (Planning and Development)	Medium	Long
GP1.2 Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same	Investigate feasibility of developing a Solar Farm		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
	Investigate feasibility of developing Solar car ports in council owned car parks		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
	Seek opportunities for solar panels to be installed to commercial /industrial buildings		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
	Explore viability of new ways of generating renewable energy (GSH / wind turbines)		Lead (Corporate Property)	Medium	Long
	Explore possibility of street lighting project phase 2		Enable (Corporate Property)	Medium	Medium
GP1.3 Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with the council's operations and staff use		Review where staff work/commute/travel for work and implement a staff travel plan	Lead (Human Resources)	Medium	Medium
	Consideration of hybrid and electric fleet options in new Waste & Recycle Collections and Street Cleansing Contract		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Short
		Introduce a Port Health Shuttle Bus	Lead (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium

GP1.4 Reduce car usage by implementing local active travel initiatives and uptake of public transport together with cleaner travel options	Deliver the Cycling and Walking Action Plan		Lead (Culture)	Short	Long
	Install electric vehicle charging points in named council owned car parks and facilitate extension to HRA controlled parking areas		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Work the local bus partnership to increase patronage and introduce cleaner vehicles in line with government's Bus Back Better Strategy		Lobby (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Promote/Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app for increased cycling and walking activity		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
GP1.5 Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings through retrofitting programmes	Review corporate buildings to prioritise investment		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
		Refurbishment / retrofitting of corporate buildings to be carbon neutral	Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
	Complete EPC's for all types of Council housing stock. Develop a plan for retrofitting HRA stock to be integrated into the HRA Asset Management Strategy		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
	Private rented sector - landlord education and enforcement, promotion of green homes grants / council funding and referrals		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium

Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles

Outcome: Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases

Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP2.1 Ensure the biodiversity net gain value through the planning process as set out in the Environment Bill is met or exceeded, where possible	Work with land owners / developers to increase biodiversity		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Develop and implement a mitigation plan to reduce nitrate concentrations in the Stour Valley catchment area		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Medium
GP2.2 Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife		Undertake design and consult on options for Discovery Park	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Ensure delivery of Victoria Park refurbishment programme		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
		Work towards the Improvement and extension of the Kingsnorth Buffer Zone	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Progress the completion of Conningbrook Park (inc car park)		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Ensure open space management plans (e.g. QMP) include opportunities for increasing biodiversity		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Medium
		Reduce loss of bio diversity at BCP through appropriate land management in land adjacent to the facility.	Lobby (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium
	Conclude the work of Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission to map the future land use of the borough		Lead (Planning and Development))	Short	Short

GP2.3 Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.		Ensure community grants are assessed and awarded in line with the KRF Principles for Green Recovery	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Facilitate the Queen's Canopy tree planting initiative to plant 135,000 trees across the borough		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Medium
GP2.4 Conserve water through reduced usage.		Reduce water use in corporate buildings / operations	Lead (Corporate Property)	Medium	Medium
		Educate and change behaviours associated with water use and water consumption including growing plants and vegetables	Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Medium	Medium
Objective GP3: Reduce the amount of waste produced from homes and business					
Outcome: A borough free of litter, where everyone takes responsibility for minimising the amount of waste they produce					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
GP3.1 Ensure our waste collection service drives the improvement of waste reduction and recycling	Continued public engagement and education		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long
GP3.2 Work with business to implement government introduced schemes to encourage reuse and waste reduction		Work in partnership to achieve Courtauld commitment targets to promote and increase the circular economy	Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Medium	Medium
	Strengthen enforcement message and action on fly tipping		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long
	Improve engagement of parish councillors and volunteers in addressing litter and fly tipping		Lead (Environment and Land Management)	Short	Long

Theme: Caring Ashford - Our 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

Objective CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely					
Outcome: Communities feel safe and secure with easy access to locally - led services designed with communities to meet their needs					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA1.1 Enable housing development that meets local needs, supports independence and creates sustainable communities	Support the delivery of the South Ashford Garden Community		Enable (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Support the growth and delivery of a wide range of affordable housing solutions for general needs, independent living and temporary accommodation, homes of the right type and in the right place, contributing to meeting the Carbon Neutral target of the borough		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
		Work with Parish Councils to identify rural housing needs by increasing local housing needs surveys	Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
	Deliver carbon reduction measures to be integrated into HRA new build and acquisition schemes		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
	Place-making - ensure planning policies support delivery of adequate community infrastructure (Inc. play pitches etc.)		Lead (Planning and Development)	Short	Long
	Develop the lifeline service to enable residents to live independently and support personal health and wellbeing		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Improve and enhance digital solutions for improved customer experiences amongst HRA Tenants		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
	Develop the Dahlia brand for independent living for older people. Providing range of services enabling different levels of independence		Lead (Housing)	Short	Long
CA1.2 Work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas	Support parishes, town and community councils that wish to introduce and would benefit from 20mph speed restriction and make recommendation to Highways Authority		Lobby (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
CA1.3 Improve engagement with local communities and enable them to increase their resilience to adverse events and emergencies	Increase engagement with local councils including regular local council forum		Lead (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Short	Long
	Conduct a Residents' Survey in 2022 and 2024 to inform our future engagement plan		Lead (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Short	Short

CA1.4 Implement recommendations of White Paper around safe and compliant HRA buildings	Strengthen our governance framework		Lead (Housing)	Short	Short
CA1.5 Work with communities to design develop and manage facilities that support community cohesion		Enable community ownership and management of local assets	Enable (Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Comms)	Medium	Medium
	Facilitate the development of Finberry community facility and subsequent management arrangement		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
Objective CA2: local people have access to life-long learning to ensure they have knowledge and skills to take up local employment					
Outcome: local people seek positive change for themselves and others through the development of their knowledge and skills, improving social inclusion and employability					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA2.1 Create opportunities for young people to take-up education and training	Work with Ashford College to ensure local skills needs are met		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Provide opportunities at ABC for youth employment through Kickstart, apprentices, graduate roles etc		Lead (Human Resources)	Short	Medium
CA2.2 Work with existing and potential employers to identify the skills and knowledge they require		Work in partnership to utilise any government funding to implement and promote new employment support programmes	Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
CA2.3 Work with voluntary sector to increase informal learning opportunities as route in to work	Provision of funding for voluntary and community sector. E.g Ashford Volunteer Centre and Revelation		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
Objective CA3: Reduce health inequalities and improve the wellbeing of local people					
Outcome: The lives of people with the worst health and wellbeing outcomes are improved					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA3.1 Work with communities to identify local issues and implement solutions	Progress the Community Health Engagement Survey Solutions (CHESS) project		Lead (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Short
		Ensure Community Grants & Support Package contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Corporate Plan	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Implement the improvements at the prioritised play areas		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium

CA3.2 Work in partnership to increase participation in sports and wellbeing activities.	Work with leisure operators to maximise use of assets		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
	Work with voluntary sector to deliver community led health and wellbeing programmes		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
	Encourage the expansion of services provided by the One You Shop		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
		Progress the procurement of an operator for the Tenterden Leisure Centre	Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
		Promote and facilitate the local Lottery	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
CA3.3 Actively engage with partners to give children and young people the best start in life	Champion the Reconnect programme (KCC)		Enable (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Continue to work with and support providers of services for young people across the borough including ensuring there is prominent provision for young people within the Ashford town centre re-set proposals		Lead (Culture)	Short	Short
	Promote the Charlton Athletic Community Trust programme		Enable (Community Safety and Wellbeing)	Short	Medium
CA3.4 Tackle Homelessness	Review and improve the homelessness offer		Lead (Housing)	Short	Short
	Develop move on accommodation for rough sleepers		Lead (Housing)	Medium	Medium
	Grow the Social Lettings Agency		Lead (Housing)	Medium	Medium
Objective CA4: Communities celebrate their heritage and the diversity of their population to build a more connected community and strengthen social responsibility					
Outcome: Cultural activities and events bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
CA4.1 Encourage communities to protect and celebrate their heritage	Promote and regularly update the heritage plaque scheme		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
CA4.2 Empower local communities to identify and deliver local events that support community wellbeing	Deliver the Events and Festival Framework		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	In line with White paper recommendations - Empower HRA Tenants to get involved in service delivery and to have a voice and be heard. - Tenancy Engagement Strategy		Lead (Housing)	Short	Medium
CA4.3 Ensure arts, entertainment and local heritage are accessible to all	Work with community organisations to enhance the local heritage offer and arts provision		Enable (Culture)	Short	Long
	Agree next steps for Tank Conservation works		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Short
		Seek to relocate and expand the Ashford Museum	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Long

Theme: Targeted Growth - 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.

Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough					
Outcome: The borough attracts and grows businesses and industries that are innovative and sustainable that benefit local employment and incomes					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG1.1 Progress the development of Newtown Works		Implement the planning permission for Newtown Works	Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
TG1.2 Establish Project Green in the borough		Enable high tech manufacturer to locate in the borough to support green agenda (project green)	Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
TG1.3 Progress the commercial projects at Conningbrook Park	Work with Developer to bring forward and deliver the commercial obligations within the agreements.		Enable (Corporate Property)	Short	Medium
TG1.4 Support existing dynamic businesses to expand and grow	Provide advice and support to existing businesses including specialist support		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Long
TG1.5 Work to attract inward investment to the borough	Focus the AshfordFor programme to attract Inward Investment and new Business		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough		Enable (Economic Development)	Medium	Long
	Lobby for return of Eurostar services at Ashford International station to pre December 2016 timetable		Lobby (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
TG1.6 Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes	Encourage take up of programmes such as LOCASE run by KCC		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
	Develop a community of Green Businesses		Enable (Economic Development)	Long	Long
TG1.7 Strengthen support for creative industries		Review Arts and Creative Industries Strategy and merge the Public Art Strategy within it	Lead (Culture)	Medium	Long
	Creation of Artists Network and sustaining group		Enable (Culture)	Short	Medium
Objective TG2: Enable the improvement of digital infrastructure to support the growing needs of business, voluntary sector and residents					
Outcome: Fast, reliable digital connectivity is available across the whole borough so no one is disadvantaged in accessing online services or doing business					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG2.1 Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure with gigabit capable broadband and improved mobile coverage and reliability	Increase activity in lobbying and attracting commercial investment from providers		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
		Take a leading role in coordinating programmes such as the voucher schemes and community fibre partnerships	Lead (Economic Development)	Medium	Medium
	Provide an increased presence at broadband and digital related events or meetings, raising profile of Ashford for investors		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium

Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy					
Outcome: Local business survival rates improve					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG3.1 Develop business networks and partnerships	Strengthen engagement with the largest local employers		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Long
	Articulate benefits of Ashford through Business ambassadors		Lead (Economic Development)	Medium	Medium
TG3.2 Establish and deliver the Port Health Service		Develop Sevington as a centre of excellence for importers and attract cargo agents and act as Primary Authority in imports exports advice etc.	Enable (Ashford Port Health)	Medium	Medium
TG3.3 Support opportunities for business to develop and increase local employment in rural areas	Promote and facilitate take up of Scale Up initiative		Enable (Economic Development)	Short	Medium
Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy					
Outcome: Ashford is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG4.1 Increase overall visitor numbers, duration of stays and out of season visits, especially in growing markets such as wine tourism, leisure and green tourism	Encourage participation from local business in the INTEREGG project		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	In collaboration (Visit Kent & Kent Downs AONB), develop a Food & Drink Experience including visitor experience around the wine industry		Lead (Culture)	Short	Medium
	Update Visitor Destination Website/plus out and about scheme		Lead (Culture)	Medium	Medium
	Progress the Ashford Borough Destination Management Plan		Lead (Culture)	Long	Medium
Objective TG5: Stimulate vibrant, accessible and sustainable Town Centres for residents, visitors and business					
Outcome: Our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities					
Action	Project or Activity in progress and / or agreed	Project or Activity subject to approval	ABC role (lead service)	Start date	End date
TG5.1 Progress the Ashford Town centre reset programme including regeneration of Bank Street	Ashford and Tenterden Welcome Back Fund Programme		Lead (Economic Development)	Short	Short
TG5.2 Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall	Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall and develop model for delivery		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Long
TG5.3 Progress the Vicarage Lane development	Masterplan and redevelop Vicarage Lane land and the former Odeon building		Lead (Corporate Property)	Short	Long

8.2 Appendix 2 – Kent Resilience Forum Principles for a Green Recovery

1. **All investment to support recovery and future growth should have low or zero carbon emissions, use resources efficiently and aim for environmental net gain.** This means new infrastructure, developments, processes and businesses should be looking to minimise the use of energy and water, reduce waste, promote the circular economy and use renewable energy and sustainable materials where possible. It also means that investment doesn't lock in carbon emissions in the future.
2. **Employees and residents are supported to protect and enhance their wellbeing through a cleaner environment and more access to rich and varied nature.** This means benefiting from the health and wellbeing advantages associated with: warmer, more energy efficient homes; better air quality inside and outside; increased access to public green space; and a high quality natural environment thriving with wildlife.
3. **Communities are well connected both digitally, and through an effective network of footpaths, cycleways and public transport.** This means active travel; public transport and low carbon vehicles are not only the best way to get around in our personal lives but the default for business travel and communications; virtual working is supported and encouraged; and homeworking is enabled to become the norm.
4. **Future development and existing communities are resilient and adapted to the changing climate and severe weather events.** This means adaptations are in place to cope with, and build resilience against, increased drought, flooding and heatwaves, and new designs account for these from the beginning.
5. **Biodiversity is protected, restored and created; nature-based solutions are considered first and invested in at every opportunity.** This means species are protected and, where threatened, are recovered; existing habitats and green spaces are enhanced to regain and retain good health; communities are inspired by, and engaged with, their local environment and are realising the mental and physical health benefits of such a connection; and natural options to tackle climate change impacts such as flooding, temperature change and water management are considered before other options.
6. **Ensure any green recovery solutions are equitable and fair; a green and equitable recovery go hand in hand.** This means ensuring new green spaces are planned in areas where everyone will see benefits and not just new development; and the delivery of clean growth does not affect some people disproportionately.
7. **Greater partnership working and collaboration.** This means engaging all parts of the community to contribute to and realise environmental, economic and social benefits.

8.3 Appendix 3 - Risk Appetite Statement

1. Introduction

The council's risk appetite statement is set at a strategic level by the Cabinet and reviewed formally with the adoption of a new Corporate Plan. Once approved, the appetite will be incorporated into the council's Risk Management Framework and shared throughout the organisation to ensure that all strategic and operational decisions are aligned with the organisational risk appetite. The council's current risk appetite was adopted by the Cabinet in 2018 and reflected the strategic aims set out in the Corporate Plan up to 2020. To coincide with the new Corporate Plan 2022-24 being adopted our risk appetite has been reviewed and is presented together with the new Plan.

Risk is unavoidable if we are to succeed in delivering our Corporate Plan priorities and objectives but these risks need to be carefully assessed before being taken to ensure they are within our risk appetite and that they are tolerable.

Our risk appetite statement helps us to understand the amount of risk we are willing to take in pursuit of achieving our priorities and objectives.

2. Risk appetite definition

A 'risk appetite' expresses the nature and extent of risk we prepared to take to realise the benefits of the **opportunities**, essentially comparing the value (financial or otherwise) of potential benefits with the losses that might be incurred. When considering **threats**, risk appetite involves assessing the level of exposure that can be justified and tolerated by comparing the value (financial or otherwise) of potential benefits with the losses that might be incurred.

3. How we use our risk appetite

As a local authority we carry out a wide variety of activities and have an equally wide variety of different risks that we manage daily. We have therefore recognised the need for a number of potentially differing appetites depending on what the activity is. Defining our risk appetite helps us to clearly set out what the risk levels are in our decision making and operational activities which in turn helps decision makers take a consistent approach. We give detailed consideration to all potential investment opportunities to decide those to take forward and those to decline. All risks that fall outside our risks appetite are reported to the council's Management Team and Audit Committee.

4. Risk appetite statement

The risk appetite is guided by our strategic objectives and our principles set out in our Corporate Plan. Our strategic objectives are ambitious for the borough. Our principles define the way we operate when delivering our objectives.

Out of a range of very low to very high, the council will take risks within the very low to moderate range. It will not take risks which are likely and where the impact is major or catastrophic. More specifically:

ABC's Risk Appetite Statement

The council, working in partnership with other organisations, has a strong record of delivering successful projects to drive economic growth and the wellbeing of residents. In order to support the delivery of our corporate objectives we have chosen to take **Moderate** amounts of measured risk to deliver our **Strategic** aims.

As an organisation we will take **Moderate** amounts of measured risks in the **Delivery** of modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality, compliant services.

As our **Financial** risk appetite is **low**, we will ensure we make the most of our assets and invest wisely to maintain long term financial stability and independence.

Understanding and responding to the needs of our communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged and treating everyone fairly and with respect is of utmost importance to us. We will be transparent and open in our decision making, listen to our residents and encourage participation in the democratic process. Our risk appetite towards regulatory, legal and **Compliance** matters is **Very Low**.

5. Aligning our risk appetite to our Heat Map

The matrix below shows how we assess whether a risk is within our risk appetite. The risk that fall outside of the council's risk appetite are reported to the council's Management Team and Audit Committee.

Strategic (external factors, reputation, strategy) and **Delivery** (Project/service delivery, resources, IT infrastructure)

Financial (revenues, benefits, treasury management, accountancy, costs)

Compliance (constitution, Planning Inspectorate, ethical, health and safety, legal)

Likelihood	> 90%				5) = Very high tolerance	
	> 65%			4) = High tolerance		
	> 40%		3) = Moderate tolerance			
	> 40%		2) = Low tolerance			
	> 10%	1) = Very low				
		1) Minimal	2) Minor	3) Moderate	4) Major	5) Catastraophic
		Impact				

6. Reviewing our risk appetite

We will formally review our risk appetite each time we develop a new Corporate Plan or every four years. The environment within which we operate may mean we need to make changes to our appetite within this time period with any change reported to the Cabinet.

8.4 Appendix 4 – Equalities objectives

Objective 1: Improve our understanding of our diverse communities in all that we do.

We will do this by:

- Improving the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information to shape decision making (e.g. through use of analytical tools, data sources and performance measures).
- Disseminating our improved understanding of different characteristics within our communities to members and officers using tools such as the borough profile and training.
- Maintaining and strengthen community resilience (e.g. maintaining the good relations with our partners built through the Covid-19 response and working together to understand where we may need to target interventions).
- Developing a community action plan.

Objective 2: Encourage all residents to have a say in the decisions that affect them and get involved in their local communities.

We will do this by:

- Further developing ways of engaging individual and communities to ensure their voice is heard (e.g. virtual meetings, social media campaigns, petition scheme).

Objective 3: Deliver services and customer care to meet the needs of all our residents.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring we are not leaving people behind when redesigning our services.
- Delivering Digital transformation (e.g. new website that delivers our accessibility statement through embedded design principles).
- Including appropriate impact assessments in Cabinet reports and ensuring these are completed to a high standard (e.g. through regular reviews of draft Equality Impact Assessments).
- Engaging communities in project and service design.

Objective 4: Deliver organisational change to enable a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

We will do this by:

- Organisational cultural change (e.g. mandatory equalities and diversity training).
- Remote working (e.g. review of HR policies, production of remote working guidance, recruitment and selection and employee engagement).
- Being an inclusive employer by understanding the needs of people with different characteristics within the workforce and making adaptations that make all feel welcome

8.5 Appendix 5 - Glossary

ABC Lettings Agency	Council programme that offers landlords a safe, hassle free and hands off service for letting their property in Ashford or Folkestone and Hythe.
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
Carbon Footprint	A carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organisation, event or product.
Carbon Neutral	Carbon neutrality means having a balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. Removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and then storing it is known as carbon sequestration. In order to achieve net zero emissions, all worldwide greenhouse gas emissions will have to be counterbalanced by carbon sequestration.
Circular Economy	A circular economy offers a wide range of social, economic, and environmental benefits. By maximising the lifetime of our products and materials and designing out waste, circularity reduces both our demand for raw materials and the environmental impact associated with obtaining them.
Climate Change	Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.
CO2	Carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases.
CO2e	Carbon dioxide equivalent. Carbon dioxide equivalent is a measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.
Energy Performance Certificates	Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a building is and give it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient).
EV charging points	An electric vehicle charging point is equipment that connects an electric vehicle (EV) to a source of electricity to recharge electric cars.
Housing Delivery Test Score	An annual measurement of the delivery of housing within each Local Planning Authority over the past three years against the required amount
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Housing Revenue Account a ring-fenced account of certain defined transactions, relating to local authority housing. It records expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities.
INTEREGG	Interegg Europe will co-finance a proportion of a project that is carried out in partnership with other policy organisations based in different countries in Europe.
KCC	Kent County Council.
Kickstart	A government funded scheme to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment.
LoCASE	The Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund to provide a free business support programme in the South East. Its aim is to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions.
NO2	Nitrogen dioxide.
s106	Section 106 agreement, a legal agreement between an applicant seeking planning permission and the local planning authority, which is used to mitigate the impact of a new development on the local community and infrastructure.
Safe Systems approach	An approach to road safety which puts the human being at its centre and which stems from the belief that every road death or serious injury is preventable.
Scale-up	A business programme, providing support for companies located in Ashford with the ambition and capacity to grow.

