

Agenda Item No: 7

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 29th July 2021

Report Title: Annual Performance Report 2021 and Corporate Plan 2022-2024

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Portfolio Holder Cllr. Clarkson
Portfolio Holder for: Leader of the Council



Summary: This report presents the Annual Performance Report over the last year set against the objectives of the Recovery Plan and the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024.

The Recovery Plan was adopted to set out the priorities of the council to guide a timely recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. At the time of adoption there were many uncertainties, however much has been achieved, documented in the Annual Performance Report, in addition to playing a central role in the emergency response to coronavirus, coupled with the associated pressures on finance and resources.

Work on the next Corporate Plan was paused in March 2020, with the Recovery Plan becoming the main strategic document of the Council until the end of 2021.

The work that informed the Ashford Ambition Report, together with a review of the Recovery Plan has shaped the draft Corporate Plan for 2022-2024.

Building on the three themes of the Ashford Ambition: Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, the draft Corporate Plan's objectives and actions will enable the council to continue the journey to achieving the Ashford Ambition that was developed with a wide range of local stakeholders.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: ALL

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. **Note the Annual Performance Report 2021**
- II. **Approve the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024 for consultation**

Policy Overview:	<p>In March 2021 the government published Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth. The key areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tackling long-term problems to deliver growth that creates high-quality jobs• Focus on achieving the people's priorities• Levelling up the whole of the UK,• Supporting the transition to net zero• Supporting our vision for Global Britain <p>With a commitment on delivery.</p> <p>The above key areas are reflected at a local level in the draft Corporate Plan.</p>
Financial Implications:	<p>The Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction of travel and is closely aligned to the MTFP which sets out the strategy to deliver the agreed objectives.</p>
Legal Implications:	<p>None</p>
Equalities Impact Assessment:	<p>No adverse impacts identified</p>
Data Protection Impact Assessment:	<p>Where necessary individual actions will be assessed for any data protection implications.</p>
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	<p>The draft Corporate Plan includes an updated Risk Appetite Statement.</p>
Sustainability Implications:	<p>The draft Corporate Plan has a positive impact on the council's commitment to achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2030. The Kent Resilience Forums Principles for a Green Recovery, embedded in the Recovery Plan, are carried over in to the draft Corporate Plan to guide decision making. The theme Green Pioneer and its objectives correlate to the delivery of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan (currently out for consultation). Throughout the Themes of Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, social, economic and environmental sustainability are key considerations.</p>
Other Material Implications:	<p>None</p>
Exempt from Publication:	<p>NO</p>

**Background
Papers:**

Recovery Plan: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-strategies/recovery-plan/>

Ashford Ambition Report: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-strategies/research-and-data/>

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Report Title: Annual Performance Report 2021 and Corporate Plan 2022-2024

Introduction and Background

1. The Annual Performance Report (2020/21) (Appendix 1) is an important pillar for the council's transparency agenda:
 - Providing an opportunity to look at the council's achievements and the milestones reached, in the context of the Recovery Plan, from the past financial year.
 - As well as summarising the council's performance against its suite of key performance measures.
2. Work on developing the priorities for the next Corporate Plan commenced in 2019 culminating in the Ashford Ambition Report in April 2020. The latter part of this work was undertaken through online methods due to the introduction of the March 2020 lockdown.
3. The focus of the council in 2020 was to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. This paused the bringing together of the next Corporate Plan whilst the impacts of the pandemic were realised and the immediate priorities to aid a timely recovery were agreed and the Recovery Plan adopted.
4. The Recovery Plan did not lose sight of the long-term ambition agreed by stakeholders to form the cornerstone of the Corporate Plan. The Ashford Ambition carries forward, together with the three themes of Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth, in to the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024 (Appendix 2).
5. The work with stakeholders to shape the Corporate Plan placed an emphasis on the importance of individual and community wellbeing, empowering people to take action for themselves, through creating opportunities to reach their potential. Working with communities to identify issues and implement solutions to address deprivation and 'level-up' locally. The Caring Ashford Objectives are:
 - CA1: Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages and incomes 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
6. It was agreed throughout the workshops that each and every one of our actions must be taken with consideration of how it will contribute to reaching the aim of zero carbon. The Kent Resilience Forums 'Principles for a Green Recovery', embedded in the Recovery Plan, will continue to be used to guide

decision making through the life of the Corporate Plan. The Green Pioneer objectives are:

- 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

7. A strong local economy was considered central to achieving the Ashford Ambition but for it to be supported to grow in a sustainable, socially responsible way, helping businesses to be more resilient and creating employment that benefits local people. The Targeted Growth objectives are:
- 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
8. Each objective is supported by a number of proposed actions which will be delivered by project work and activity over the next 2 years. This is set out in the draft delivery plan in the Draft Corporate Plan. The Delivery Plan is a 'live' document and should not be seen as a definitive project list. This means that the Delivery Plan may need to be adapted to respond to the resources available and any new opportunities not currently identified in the plan. As each project or activity comes forward a robust business case will be required to ensure strategic fit with the objectives in the Corporate Plan and its deliverability in terms of the overall programme.
9. The draft Corporate Plan also set out the principles that support the work of the council
- 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

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.

Proposal

10. Members are asked to note the Annual Performance Report
11. Members are asked to approve the draft Corporate Plan 2022-2024 for consultation.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Members are referred to the attached Assessment (Appendix 3). There are no adverse impacts identified.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

13. There has been extensive consultation with members, staff and local stakeholders to develop the long term ambition for the borough as part of the Ashford Futures study. In addition the Ashford Residents Survey in 2020 asked questions relating to priorities for the Corporate Plan and achieving Carbon Neutrality.
14. Cabinet members considered and commented on the themes and objectives at the Forward Planning Day in June 2020.
15. A 'light-touch' consultation will seek the views of those involved in shaping the Ashford Ambition report. In addition, all members, staff and local councils will be invited to comment on the draft Corporate Plan.
16. Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be asked to comment on the draft Corporate Plan.
17. The consultation will run for 6 weeks following Cabinet approval.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

18. The Corporate Plan is the main strategic document for the council. The Ashford Ambition and the three themes were shaped by local stakeholders through extensive engagement.
19. The proposed consultation will reiterate the work undertaken with local stakeholders and offer them a further opportunity to shape the plan.

Next Steps in Process

20. Undertake a 6 week consultation, including with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
21. Review consultation responses and report back to Cabinet in September with a final version for approval to adopt.

Conclusion

22. The Annual Performance Report offers another means by which the council can embrace its transparency agenda. Providing an opportunity to reflect on the performance and achievements of the previous financial year, measured against its strategic priorities.
23. The draft Corporate Plan captures the work with local stakeholders that was completed at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, then paused to concentrate on our emergency response.
24. The Recovery Plan has enabled the council to continue to deliver key actions whilst responding to and reconciling the impact of the pandemic. This experience and information has helped to further shape the draft Corporate Plan.

Portfolio Holder's Views

25. I am proud of the work of officers in delivering the outcomes noted in the Annual Performance report. In what has been a most challenging year, the council has not only responded to the pandemic but has also continued to deliver many projects despite budgetary pressures. This means we can actively move forward with our Corporate Plan
26. The importance of a collegiate approach was formed as we discussed what the future of the borough should look like a wide range of local stakeholders, to inform the Corporate Plan. As we paused this work to respond to the pandemic this approach was cemented through the partnerships created and the community spirit that prevailed. The three themes and their objectives are our roadmap towards achieving the long term Ashford Ambition.

Contact and Email

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Appendix 1

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Annual Performance Report 2020-2021

Our borough in 2020-21 Key Facts and Figures

Size

130,000 Population estimate¹

58,062 Hectares largest geographical area in Kent (approximately 220 sq miles)

2.24 People per hectare

39 Ward areas & 49 parish areas

153,200 Population estimate by 2030²

Health

80.6 Life expectancy at birth – male³

84.2 Life expectancy at birth – female⁴

Economy

£570.30 median resident based weekly full-time earnings 2020⁵

28.9% NVQ4+ level qualification or above placing Ashford in the bottom 20% of authorities in England.⁶

Diversity

Mean age 40.7yrs⁷

25.1% Proportion of population 19 and under

19.4% Proportion of population aged 65 and over

Transport

4,020,566 trips Ashford International Station⁸ 2019/2020 representing a 2% fall from 2018/19

History

More than 3000 listed buildings.

¹ Office for National Statistics Mid Year 2019

² KCC Housing Led forecast (Nov' 2020), Strategic Commissioning - Analytics, Kent County Council

³ Office for National Statistics

⁴ Office for National Statistics

⁵ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

⁶ Annual Population Survey

⁷ 2019 Mid Year Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

⁸ Office of Rail and Road 2019/20

Responding to the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on every aspect of all of our lives nationally as well as our local communities and immediate friends and families. The impact is likely to be felt for many years and there is no doubt that it will shape the future course of the council as we move forward with recovery.

At the start of the pandemic, like that of the Government, our clear objective was to save lives. To that end the council focused on a response that protected life whilst minimises the impact upon the essential services we offer and the local economy.

Overall command and control of the council's response to the outbreak was led by the Ashford Critical Emergency Resilience (ACER) Committee, which met for the first time just ahead of Public Health England (PHE) confirming the first case of COVID-19 in Kent on the 2 March 2020.

ACER, which consists of elected members and senior officers, ensured that our response to the emergency was coordinated and that we remained in the strongest position to protect our residents, businesses and staff. ACER has regularly met throughout the outbreak and has been instrumental in guiding and supporting the council's response.

Day to day operational control was provided by the council's Business Continuity Incident Management Team (BCIMT) which, in the case of this emergency, involved the whole Management Team.

In order to maintain our statutory and essential services throughout the pandemic, the council drew on its well-established and tested business continuity and emergency planning arrangements. All services have business continuity plans which have been supplemented by additional arrangements specific to COVID-19. This has necessitated services working in very different ways, including greater remote working and rapid deployment of digital services.

In the first weeks of the emergency, local authorities were asked by the Government to provide a 'stopgap' for food deliveries and essential provisions for those in need of immediate support. As the pandemic has unfolded our customer contact staff have continued to contact those placed on the Governments/NHS shielded list (whilst shielding advice was in place) and other vulnerable groups to offering support where it may be needed.

From the start of the outbreak, information regarding the council's COVID-19 response has been extensively promoted on the council's website, through regular social media messages, press releases, a special edition of our Ashford For You magazine, and mail outs to our most vulnerable. A spotlight was shone on our voluntary and community champions who have gone the extra mile in the crisis, and residents were signposted to further information, support and advice.

In early May the council's Stour Centre car park was used as a mobile testing centre. The centre managed by the army, allowed for hundreds of people who were showing

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symptoms to be tested. As of the 15 June a drive-through Regional Testing Centre was set up from our new car park at Victoria Road.

The council has also support Public Health England's track and trace programme. As well as administrating the Test and Trace support payment scheme.

Supporting business has been, and remains, a strategic priority for the council. During early April, letters were sent to nearly 3,000 local businesses inviting them to apply for rate relief and business grants announced by the government. Since the start of the pandemic through various business support schemes in excess of 8,000 grants have been administered to our businesses.

Our homelessness communities through the everyone in scheme were and continue to be provided with a safe place to stay and our welfare intervention officers have reached out to support those financially affected.

In short every corner of the council was and continues to be mobilised to serve the best we can the local community.

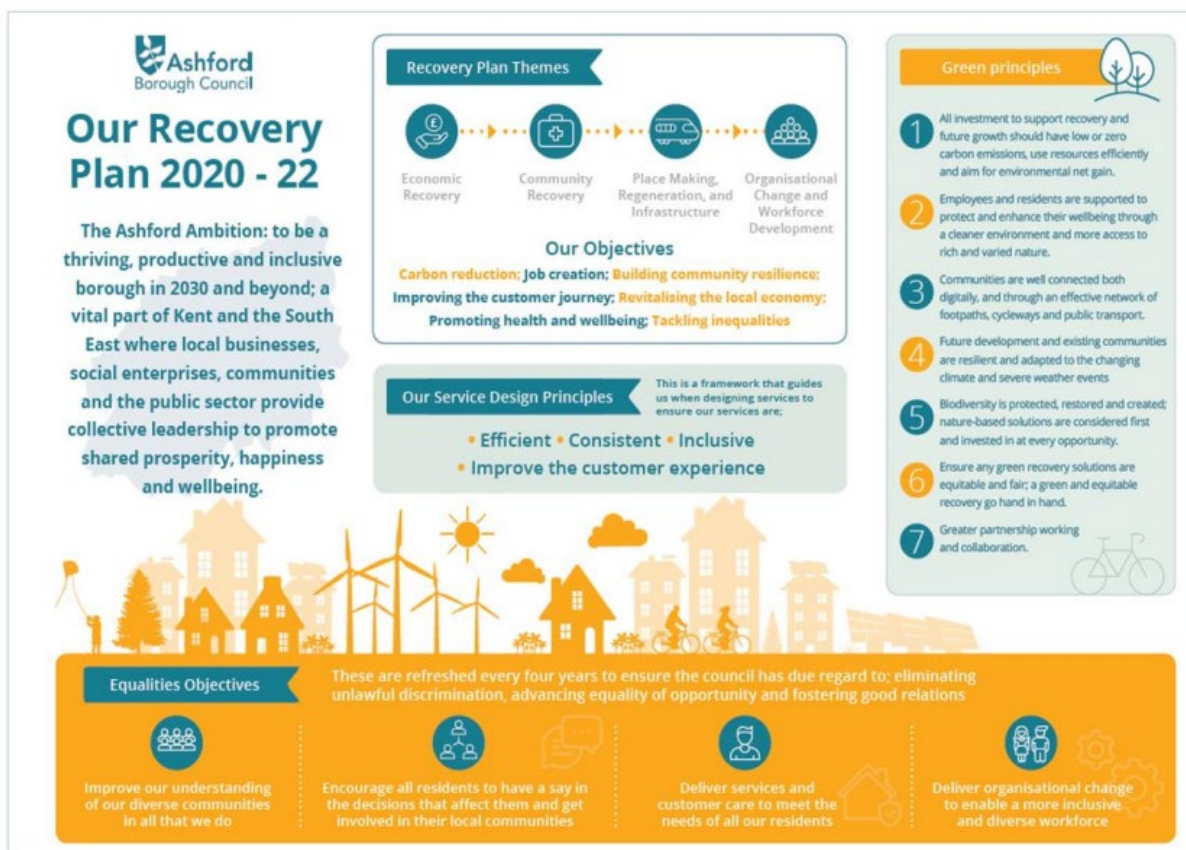
Adoption of the Recovery Plan

The Recovery Plan 2020 was developed to put in place a framework to enable a timely and structured recovery from the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic. This plan set out to deliver a number of actions allowing the council to re-configure how it works in order to most effectively deliver services to residents and in collaboration with others, help mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on the local economy, communities and residents.

The underlying principles of the plan were to build back to a greener, more prosperous, resilient and caring borough.

The council's immediate priority turned to responding to the Covid-19 pandemic; supporting communities, residents and business. This meant that the public consultation for the Corporate Plan, planned to take place during June and July 2020, were suspended and this Recovery Plan put in place as the key strategic document spelling out the councils priorities.

This Annual Report acts as an opportunity to monitor the Recovery Plans performance and highlight any achievements made against it.



Recovery Plan Annual Report – Economic Recovery

Business grants support

During the last year more than 8,000 business support grants have been paid out to businesses within Ashford borough. Ashford Borough Council has been supporting local businesses, processing and administering the many government grant schemes since the first national lockdown in March 2020.

The work of the Revenues and Benefits and Economic Development teams, assisted by colleagues from across the council, has helped hundreds of businesses stay afloat during these unprecedented times.

Ashford town centre reset approved

Plans for the future development of Ashford town centre were approved at November's Cabinet meeting as part of the Recovery Plan.

The Ashford Town Centre Reset, which focuses on the Bank Street and Elwick Road area, are designed to reset the town centre in light of the decline in retail which has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic.

The council is working to ensure that the town centre remains relevant following new developments within the town, making Ashford a place to live, work, visit and invest in, enhancing and embracing the areas which give Ashford its character.

The report focused on several projects which will help revitalise the area. Following the same themes as the council's Recovery Plan.

Ashford prepares to run a Border Control Post

Preparations for the opening of a Border Control Post located at Sevington are continuing ahead of the start date for official controls which is set for the 1st January 2022.

Ashford Borough Council is recruiting circa 130 people to enable it to staff the port health service which is located on the site of the Inland Border Facility (IBF) at Junction 10A of the M20. The IBF site will also be occupied by other Government Agencies such as Border Force and HMRC, who the port health team will work closely with.

The checks that will be undertaken on the site are required as a result of BREXIT due to the UK leaving the single market. At a size of 93 hectares the IBF is one of the biggest in the UK. The Council are set to play a vital role in delivering the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU and will be responsible for undertaking official controls as follows:

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- Imports of Products of Animal Origin (POAO)
- Imports of High-Risk Food not of Animal Origin (HRFNAO)
- Organic food imports (COL's)
- Illegal Unregistered and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)
- Control of Plastics used in products used with food from China

Elwick Place lettings update

The flagship Elwick Place cinema, hotel and leisure development in the heart of the town centre is almost fully let, with contracts signed for more units during the latest lockdown.

The first phase of the council-owned 100,000 sq ft development was launched in December 2018, with a six-screen Picturehouse cinema and a 58-bedroom Travelodge hotel as its anchor tenants. The scheme – built on the site of a former cattle market in partnership with UK developer Stanhope PLC – also has a 282-space car park and is a stone's throw from Ashford International station.

During later phases, efforts to attract restaurant and leisure businesses to fill the remaining eight units have continued against a backdrop of business uncertainty caused by Brexit, an accelerating decline in high street retail and the pandemic.

New tenants have now been secured for all but one unit at the multi-million pound centre. Restaurant operators dominate, providing the people of Ashford with a wealth of new leisure choices just as we emerge from lockdown.

New additions to the site include; The Gastronomist with its open-flamed parilla (grill), family-friendly Italian restaurant Unita 4, and Matches Sports Bar.

Meanwhile food hall and restaurant operator Macknade Fine Foods has recently expanded into an adjoining unit, after a successful first 18 months trading at Elwick Place. And Snap Fitness gym will reopen in line with the Government's Coronavirus roadmap.

Ashford Borough Council has a large portfolio of corporate property assets which generate significant income, even though there has been an adverse impact caused by the pandemic. The portfolio includes Elwick Place, Park Mall shopping centre, International House and the Commercial Quarter, Carlton Road Business Park, Ellingham Road Industrial Estate and many others.

ANPR arrives in Ashford

Whilst our car parking income has taken a significant hit during the pandemic with visitor numbers down and our carparks used for testing facilities resulting in an income fall from £2,591,786 to £819,698.

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As part of the council's on-going programme of investment in our car parks we are starting to introduce automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology. The Elwick Place Car Park in Ashford Town Centre was the first car park to go live with ANPR which started operating in November.

ANPR will improve the quality and convenience of using our car park. It is widely used in both public and private car parks up and down the UK.

Community Recovery

VERA supports three worthy organisations

Shortly after the start of the pandemic Ashford Borough Council launched our Voluntary Emergency Response Appeal (VERA). Seventy donations were made to the fund, with contributions from residents, councillors, ABC staff and local companies such as Givaudan and Countryside Properties.

During the pandemic many local voluntary organisations have helped supply food and essentials to those most in need. VERA funding was made available to - Ashford Vineyard Foodbank, Bright City Church Foodbank and Repton People's Pantry.

As our Corporate Recovery Plan highlights, we will continue to look at ways to strengthen the voluntary sector such as networking valuable groups so they can help each other and share resources in the future.

Ashford's Syrian resettlement programme wins top award

Ashford's proud record of welcoming vulnerable refugee families has earned national recognition, with the Syrian Resettlement Programme winning the Diversity and Inclusion category of the prestigious LGC Awards 2020.

Earlier in 2020 the council voted to continue to welcome refugee families displaced by Syria's long and bloody civil war, despite the fact that the government-organised Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was coming to an end. The government was amalgamating all its refugee resettlement programmes into one, called the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), to continue beyond 2020.

It was agreed to extend the planned resettlement of refugees in Ashford to offer a new beginning for up to 50 people (around 10 families) each year under UKRS, subject to the availability of suitable private rented property. Councillors also agreed to continue the development of projects and infrastructure to enable successful integration and promote community cohesion to benefit the wider Ashford community.

The resettlement scheme is fully funded by the Home Office so there is no major financial burden on participating councils. Ashford decided from the outset not to use any social housing – easing any fears that refugees would jump the queue of those on the housing waiting list. Refugee families are in private sector accommodation and continue to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they have found new homes.

Jasmin Vardimon secures funding for creative laboratory in Ashford

Work on building the Jasmin Vardimon Creative Laboratory and 29 light industrial units on a Kent County Council owned site in Javelin Way, is scheduled to get under way.

The Creative Laboratory, due to open in Spring 2022, will be a major new arts facility for the county, providing a long-term base for internationally renowned dance company Jasmin Vardimon Company who have been resident in Kent, and a key partner in the county's cultural infrastructure, since 2012.

The new facility has been made possible by success in securing £3.069m of capital investment from Arts Council England, alongside £750,000 from Ashford Borough Council (ABC) from the Business Rates Retention Pilot and investment of £578,724 secured by KCC from the Getting Building Fund administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

As well as the construction of a creative laboratory production space, with an area of 13,530sq ft, the development will also provide 29 light industrial units with an area of 47,163 sq ft for sale and/or lease, suitable for additional creative businesses as well as the general market.

The light industrial units are an enabling development with the income from the sales making a contribution to the cost of the creative laboratory. They will also seek to support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in the post-pandemic world by providing opportunities for business development in the creative sector, as well as income from business rates.

Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

Stour Centre closed ahead of major refurbishment

The redevelopment plans for the Stour Centre Leisure Centre in Ashford were altered following the pandemic, keeping the site closed following the first lockdown to allow a major refurbishment and works programme to progress at pace, which will significantly improve the leisure offer of the centre from mid-2021.

The council in partnership with Freedom Leisure, will be investing £6.5m for the Stour Centre, transforming tired features and providing new spaces to boost participation and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The changes include an extended gym with new equipment, a new soft play and clip and climb and dedicated café area, improved reception and access to the existing seating area, new leisure pool features targeted at younger children and major redecoration throughout including the dry and wet changing areas.

Stour power boost for refurbished leisure centre

Ashford Borough Council has secured a £1.45m Government grant to replace the ageing power plant at the Stour leisure centre with a state-of-the-art system which will slash running costs, cut carbon emissions by 45% and provide a boost to bold ambitions to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.

The council submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), which provides grants for public sector bodies to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures.

Benefits of the scheme include:

Reduction of the Stour Centre's annual carbon emission total by 657 tonnes or 45% (the equivalent to the CO₂ emissions from the annual heating of 243 homes).

Energy savings of 40%, contributing to lower running costs at the centre.

A significant contribution to the council's goal of making the borough 100% carbon neutral by 2030.

Frees up vital council funds to be spent on other priority projects.

Ashford Borough Council acquired the New Quarter

Ashford Borough Council complete a deal with developers Dukelease to buy the New Quarter – with an east and west wing (Stour and Somerset Heights) adjacent to the Panorama building in the heart of Ashford town centre – comprising 109 units of one and two bedroomed flats.

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The deal is an £18.5m investment by the council and represents the largest ever handover of general needs accommodation to be managed on one site by the council.

This is to provide affordable rented accommodation to key workers that have an identified housing need. In addition it will also free up existing homes through transfers of keyworkers and, where possible, will provide vacant units in which to house those in temporary accommodation, or from the housing waiting list.

The council was successful in securing grant funding from Homes England of £2.265m.

Ashford Borough Council secured Government funding to build more affordable housing

Ashford Borough Council has secured more than £1 million of Government funding that will enable it to build 17 homes for affordable housing at Halstow Way in south Ashford, on the site of a former run down play area.

The council will receive £1,020,000 to help build the homes, which will be available to tenants on a social rent basis – that's 60% of the level of open market rent.

The funding has been secured from Homes England, with £765,000 paid up front to the council and the remainder handed over on completion of the scheme. The new apartment block is a mix of one, two and three-bed homes.

The play area will be re-provided through the section 106 agreement as the money secured (£61,520) will be put towards informal play, sport, ecological and open space improvements in the area. This will help meet the needs generated by the development. A small number of additional parking spaces are also provided.

Opening of £1m homeless project by Ashford Borough Council

An innovative project that's set to benefit homeless households and save local taxpayers money has opened in Ashford.

Ashford Borough Council bought the large disused home in Beaver Road for £430,000 and has invested around £500,000 to convert it into eight homes, capable of accommodating up to 25 people. An extensive refurbishment programme has been completed, adding facilities like a communal kitchen, dining room and laundry room.

Christchurch Lodge, as the building has been renamed, follows the same blueprint adopted by the council when it created Christchurch House, a rundown property bought at auction for £278,000 in 2013.

Statement on Habitat Regulation issues affecting development in Ashford borough

In mid-July 2020 Ashford Borough Council, received formal statutory advice from Natural England (NE) regarding development proposals in the Stour Valley catchment area with the potential to increase harmful nutrient impacts (principally nitrogen and phosphorus) at designated protected lakes at Stodmarsh in Canterbury. This covers large parts of the borough including the urban area in and around Ashford itself.

In summary, NE's advice is that a significant adverse effect is possible from some types of new development in the catchment area. This applies mainly to housing development but also other schemes involving overnight accommodation. The council is legally obliged to give significant weight to the views of NE in relation to relevant planning applications.

The immediate practical effect of the NE advice is that planning applications for housing development (and some other types of development involving overnight accommodation) within the Stour catchment area cannot be determined until a process of formal assessment of the potential effects on the Stodmarsh Lakes has been undertaken, considered and approved by the council.

In parallel, the council will be working with its partners in central and local government and applicants to draw up a mitigation strategy to address any impacts from development and enable schemes to proceed.

Vision set out for the South of Ashford Garden Community

A Five Year Vision & Strategy setting out how three major combined developments in the south of Ashford will come together, has been adopted by Ashford Borough Council. The Strategy received major endorsements by partners including private developers and the Chilmington Management Organisation, ensuring a commitment to achieving the Vision for the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC).

This strategy represents the aspirations of local residents, local organisations and key partners who are looking to ensure that these developments come forward with quality in mind, where infrastructure is planned and delivered in tandem with new homes, as the community grows.

The importance of high quality design and placemaking, guided by Garden City principles but shaped to reflect 21st century living, is a key theme running through the strategy. Most importantly, it offers a vision of living and working in the wake of Covid-19 as we all seek to recover from the impact of the pandemic and come back stronger as a community.

Urban Tree Challenge branches out into Ashford

Chilmington Green part of the wider South of Ashford Garden Community, which also includes the site areas known as Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green developments will see the planting of 6,666 trees following a successful bid to the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge.

The trees are planned to be planted in an area currently referred to as Discovery Park, with residents invited to be involved in the tree planting project to encourage a greater sense of local ownership.

Recycling success continues

Ashford Borough Council's recycling service remains the best in Kent, according to the latest national recycling league tables. Ashford's position is certainly one to be proud of and demonstrates the excellent recycling our residents have been doing.

Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2%) places us 48th in the country, 16th in the South East and top in Kent. These statistics form part of DEFRA's nationwide recycling league tables.

Organisational Change and Workforce Development

Asset Management Strategy adopted

Ashford Borough Council has adopted an asset management strategy for its corporate property portfolio with the intention to ensure it invests prudently, achieves long term value for money, meets the needs of customers and supports the authority's carbon neutrality objectives.

The Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy (2020 –2024) replaces the previous Corporate Property Management Strategy and sets out the council's high-level strategic framework for managing its portfolio of nearly 2,000 corporate property assets for the next four years.

It will align corporate and property strategies, ensuring the optimisation of corporate property assets in a way which best supports key services, corporate objectives and to provide affordable levels of service within financial resource risk constraints.

It lays the foundation for the efficient use of all assets, providing a platform for structured and rigorous forward thinking and decision-making about operational and property asset strategies. The strategy enables the council to be clear about the extent, value, condition and suitability of its corporate property portfolio and will form the basis for consultative strategy development and clear methodologies for measuring performance and supporting service delivery.

The strategy takes consideration of the council's objective to become 80% carbon neutral by 2025 and 100% carbon neutral by 2030.

The council's wide-ranging portfolio includes International House and other offices, Park Mall shopping centre, the Elwick Place cinema, hotel and leisure development in Ashford town centre, industrial estates and business parks, car parks, leisure facilities, community centres, public toilets, allotments and other land, plus more than 1,500 individual garages for rent across the borough.

New commercial approach by Ashford Borough Council

Ashford Borough Council has outlined how they are looking to take their approach to commercialisation onto the next level.

The council has been successful in the past on a fairly small scale, but with uncertainty over future Government funding, a considerable budget impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and a refocusing on future priorities, this work is now being accelerated after Cabinet endorsed a Commercialisation Strategy.

The council believes it has a great opportunity to fundamentally change how we do business and deliver services in the future, which not only supports our community and economy to recover locally, but also helps to bring in income to protect our front line services.

Appendix 1

With the impact of COVID-19 on the community continuing to be felt, this work is even more relevant due to the additional financial pressures dealing with the crisis has caused.

Initially service areas like Lifeline, CCTV, parking, garden waste, category and contract management, Aspire Landscape Management and our in house electrical services team will be looked at first, and other areas will be explored over time.

Appendix 1

Ashford Borough Council is committed to being open and transparent and we follow the code of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency. As well as our performance reports we produce a number of monitoring reports which are made available on our webpages including:

Annual Governance Statement

Statement of accounts and Budget books

Quarterly Financial monitoring report

Medium term financial monitoring report

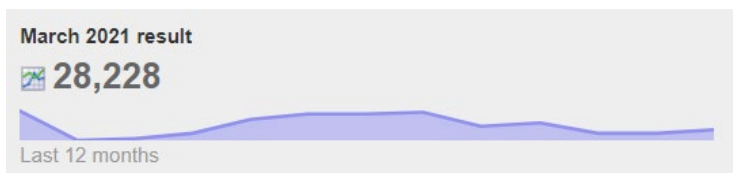
Housing current delivery reports

Planning updates and many more.

Recovery Plan, Annual Performance Indicators 2020/21

Economic Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI30	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks	269,625			44,422			169,865			140,180			73,602		
Parking usage														Total Parking usage: 2019/2020: 1,164,161 2020/21: 428,069		
Latest Note																



Mar 2021 Update

In Ashford, using car parks is often preferable to parking on the street as many town centre roads are reserved for resident permit holders only. Our car parks provide access to the town and an availability of parking space, absorbs traffic and reduces congestion.

This has been a challenging year for us, the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, is unprecedented in our operation, and management has warranted greater attention.

During 2020, we reassessed our strategy given this and various other factors and approved a significantly tighter approach that looks to increase growth where we can, however given we may lose some of our car parks along the way as part of Town Regeneration.

The effect of COVID-19 continues and end of year takings decreased from £2,591,786 to £819,698.

- Therefore achieved around 32 % against forecast target
- We have given free parking for key workers per UK government advice has effected income
- Free parking for COVID testers working at Victoria Road Car Park provided in Elwick Rd Car Park
- Free parking throughout year in various car park in Tenterden
- Elwick Rd being used to give free parking to staff of testing centre = over 100 staff on rotation.

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

- Losses to income were also made when Edinburgh Rd C/P was closed in this fiscal year for upgrade to the lighting, in view of car park becoming open 24/7 in the Summer of 2021 and some anti-social behaviour.
- Vicarage Rd Car Park top car park in Ashford town was also closed for ground testing, in view that this car park may be developed over the next few years.
- In Oct 2020 we installed ANPR into Elwick Place Car park with 2020 occupancy levels being at 17% and 2021 11%. Two thirds of visits made to this car park receive free parking.

Working with finance we look to set targets for our car park income for 2021/22, given loss of some of our car parks, 3 day working week for some businesses, on line shopping and effects on visit to town. We aim to look at all car park tariffs, payment charging times and amend accordingly where appropriate.

Removal of cash transactions (Car Parks) report available from [Sept 2020 Cabinet](#), which introduced the phased removal of cash from Council business in response to the wider changes we are seeing in society as a result of digitisation of services and COVID19. This will result in reduced costs including future replacement of machines as they reach end of life.

Edinburgh Road car park (ERCP) provides a large number of town centre parking bays, however it does not operate 24 hours a day and is closed in accordance with the operating hours. Due to the changing nature of Ashford town centre; namely the increase in residential premises being developed and the change in shopper behaviour linked to Covid-19 a review of this asset is necessary to ensure it is being utilised to meet these demands. [Dec 2020 Cabinet](#)

RPKPI51	Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	25.1%	16.6%	15.4%
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)						

Latest Note

Percentage Occupancy Rate

Ellingham	69,336 sf	69,336 sf	100.0%
Carlton Road	13,118 sf	50,046 sf	26.2%
Elwick Place	66,185 sf	66,185 sf	100.0%
International House	73,700 sf	77,328 sf	95.3%
Total	222,339 sf	262,895 sf	84.6%

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

Across the year we have seen a decrease in vacancies due to a number of new leases being signed. However we have seen a percentage decrease in expected income due the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2019/20 and update to the Property Acquisition, Investment and Disposal Strategy available from [Sept 2020 Cabinet](#). This report provided a summary of how our main commercial assets are performing and the work the Council is undertaking to improve or maintain such performance. Whilst this report looks back to the financial year 2019-2020, due to the unparalleled events over the past 18 months such as the changes in the retail shopping market, the impact and uncertainty caused by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic, the report also considers what impacts these events may have on the council's property portfolio in the short term.

RPKPI80	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	8.64%			8.4%			8.4%			8.4%		
Business survival - current vacancy rates														

Latest Note

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


Q2 Sept 2020, 5059 rated properties in the borough with 256 exemptions and 169 empty reliefs
 Q3 Dec 2020, 5148 rated properties in the borough with 271 exemptions and 164 with empty reliefs
 Q4 March 2021, 5161 rated properties in the borough with 266 exemptions and 165 empty reliefs.

RPKPI81	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic - Following the final tranche of Covid-19 related support, a report will be produced summarising the support provided and to which businesses, these businesses will subsequently be surveyed at a future date to identify their survival.											
Percentage business survival of those who have received support during the pandemic														

Latest Note

Information on the support provided and available to businesses is available on our [webpages](#).

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21																	
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status															
<p>More information on the prosperity of our local businesses is available within the Kent and Medway COVID-19 Economic Recovery Dashboard. The Economic Recovery Dashboard (XLSX, 1.3 MB). This dashboard has been developed to help support the economic recovery from COVID-19 in Kent and Medway. It draws from a range of economic indicators and uses modelled data to help identify the possible impact on local economies and those areas which may be more economically vulnerable.</p> <p>Summary of support provided to businesses</p> <p>Schemes from March 2020 – September 2020:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Small Business Grants</td> <td>1,757 grants paid</td> <td>£17,570,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retail Hospitality (RHL) Grants</td> <td>560 grants paid</td> <td>£10,205,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Discretionary Grants</td> <td>175 grants paid</td> <td>£1,351,000</td> </tr> </table> <p>Schemes from November 2020 onwards: (figures to date, as at 26.3.21)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Local Restrictions Support Grants</td> <td>5,472 grants paid</td> <td>£13,407,171</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional Restrictions Grants</td> <td>2,227 grants paid</td> <td>£3,517,973</td> </tr> </table>																	Small Business Grants	1,757 grants paid	£17,570,000	Retail Hospitality (RHL) Grants	560 grants paid	£10,205,000	Discretionary Grants	175 grants paid	£1,351,000	Local Restrictions Support Grants	5,472 grants paid	£13,407,171	Additional Restrictions Grants	2,227 grants paid	£3,517,973
Small Business Grants	1,757 grants paid	£17,570,000																													
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Local Restrictions Support Grants	5,472 grants paid	£13,407,171																													
Additional Restrictions Grants	2,227 grants paid	£3,517,973																													
RPKPI82	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data.	2.9%	6%	6.2%	6%	6.1% (February figure)																									
Unemployment																															
Latest Note																															
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p>February 2021 result</p> <p></p> <p>6.1%</p> <p>Last 12 months</p> </div>																															

Appendix 1

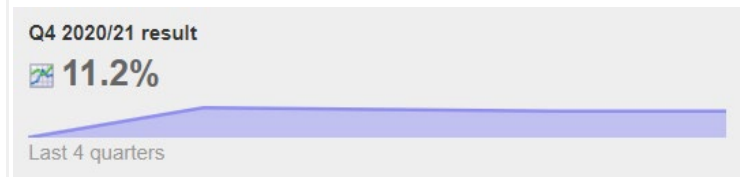
Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on the number of claimants of unemployment benefits. Total unemployment: Ashford: 6.1% (4725) which compares to the Kent figure 6.1% and slightly under the national 6.5%. More information available within [Kent County Councils Economy and Employment data](#).

Statistics on the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) measured down to borough level is available on the .gov website, [Job retention](#) and [Self Employment Income support](#).

RPKPI83 Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data	5.4%			12.1%			11.7%			11.2%			11.2% (February Figure)		
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Latest Note



Unemployment for 18-24: Ashford 11.2% (990) which compares to a Kent figure of 9.7% and a national figure of 9%. More information available within Kent [County Councils Economy and employment data](#).

Appendix 1

Community Recovery

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI01 Rent arrears/loss (Housing)	Snapshot figure of total rent arrears.	New Performance indicator not previously recorded			£531,232			£558,949.55			£638,245.91			£312,078.81		
Latest Note	<p>Collected 98.78% of rents this year, we will see a decrease in the arrears brought forward from £526,878.41 to £312,078.81. Trend continues to be monitored to understand if this alters as the economic hardships of Covid measures work through as support schemes coming to an end.</p>															
RPKPI04 Homelessness Presentations	No. of homelessness presentations	469			367			408			352			365		
RPKPI05 Homelessness Preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented	41			28			30			44			29		
Latest Note	<p>The latest data tables on local government housing including Ashford Borough Council, covering social housing sales, homelessness, and affordable housing supply are available at the following links: Social housing sales Homelessness Housing statistics Affordable housing supply</p> <p>A report provides the current position on homelessness following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and the impact of Covid 19 in 2020/21 was taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October.</p> <p>Officers continue to work from home and contact as much as possible is via telephone interviews or online. IT developments such as 'YOTI' digital signatures have been implemented to enable digital document signing.</p> <p>ABC continues with the "Everyone in" campaign, launched by the Government back in March to bring all rough sleepers off the streets and into emergency accommodation. We have obtained funding to allow us to be able to do this. We are working on pathway plans for this group of people to move them on to long term secure accommodation and are hoping to start a Housing Led scheme in the near future.</p>															

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

The courts have been operating on a limited basis during the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has the potential for increased evictions once they reopen more fully which could in turn lead to increased presentations and placements, increased General Fund spend particularly when the furlough scheme comes to an end. The Early Interventions Accommodation Officer is working with estate agents and landlords. There are also communications campaigns targeted at landlords and tenants to help mitigate this risk.

RPKPI06	No. of complaints regarding poor conditions and/or ASB in the private rented sector resolved with formal action	3			1			3			2			1		
Number of new complaints cases opened (Housing)																

Latest Note

Q4 Most cases resolved via informal route. The one case that required action has been an ongoing case. Across the year small increase in antisocial type complaint seen due to tenants remaining at home for longer periods of time due to movement restrictions.

RPKPI07	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates	99.93%	100%	✓	96.29%	100%	⚠	98.37%	100%	✓	99.43%	100%	✓	99.93%	100%	✓
Gas Safety Certificates																

Latest Note

March 2021 result

✓ 100%



Last 12 months

The downturn in the landlord gas safety record compliancy in Q1 was due to the CV-19 situation with residents shielding and reluctant to provide access. Our compliance consultant, heating service provider and Council staff in housing all worked pro-active to mitigate the dip in compliance working with residents to ensure access where possible and return compliance figures to target.

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI08 Disabled Facilities Grants Completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council	22			6			6			17			20		
Latest Note	Total completions 2019/20: 70 2020/21: 49															
















Reduced figures for Q1 and 2 as Covid lockdowns restricted access and ability to commence building works.

RPKPI24 Estimated total no. of people supported monthly at VERA funded foodbanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor monthly Completion Date: 1st February 2021 	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	<p>In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Ashford Borough Council launched its Voluntary Emergency Response Appeal (VERA) to help with the borough's response to and recovery from the pandemic.</p> <p>Thanks to contributions from residents and businesses £10,205.00 was raised and shared between three local organisations who have been supplying food and essentials to those most in need during the height of the crisis; Ashford Vineyard Foodbank, Bright City Church Foodbank and Repton People's Pantry.</p>
Latest Note	<p>"As the Covid-19 pandemic has evolved, so has Repton Community Trust's approach to supporting people through their community led foodbank 'The Peoples Pantry'. With support from VERA funding, the team developed online ordering and can now offer 24-hour access to food through a unique locker system placed outside Repton Connect Community Centre."</p> <p>"Since March, Ashford Vineyard Compassion has given out over 2,000 frozen meals, food parcels, fresh food boxes, and art/activity packs for children to over 550 families across Ashford."</p> <p>Bright City Church Foodbank, "We are so grateful for the generous funds given by VERA and other funders which have enabled us to support 154 households and families with weekly food parcels throughout the pandemic. This Christmas every household received a Christmas hamper and we gave out 70 individually packed home-cooked Christmas dinners and 50 family portions."</p> <p>RPKPI 26 MEMBER GRANTS – 14 Covid related grants provided in Q2 totalling £17,994.53. No member grants specifically for covid related projects in Q3. This is because VCS responded quickly to source the funding and volunteers needed to tailor services in response to covid restrictions during the first lockdown, so were already well prepared by Q3. Local support networks are now established so the reliance on the council had reduced by Q3 as groups and individuals have adapted and found ways of helping themselves.</p>			

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI25																
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT	<p>ABC was allocated £59,297.47 from the Emergency Assistance Grant received in August 2020 via Kent County Council. The fund was to be used to support initiatives for 12 weeks starting August but with an understanding that pressures may extend past this point.</p> <p>We have strong connections with the voluntary sector and already assisted a number of Covid-19 community support projects, this allowed us to quickly identify where this funding would have the largest impact and this funding has helped with the below.</p>															
Latest Note																
	<p>Ashford Vineyard, Renew Social Supermarket - This funding aided with increasing the hours of both Vineyard's compassion Support Worker and Projects Manager, providing help and support for people to tackle the root causes of food poverty and financial crisis. 307 people helped to date.</p> <p>Ashford & Tenterden CAB - Providing support to cover the cost of debt relief orders for residents who are in need of serious financial relief, due to COVID impacts. Aiming to support 90 residents.</p> <p>Ashford Volunteer Centre - providing targeted support to the wider Voluntary and Community Sector, ensuring the wide-ranging cluster of Ashford based organisations are better networked, referring on appropriately, and are aware of latest COVID advice and funding opportunities. 508 organisations, including repeat orgs, contacted and supported.</p> <p>Ashford Together, Covid-19 Crisis Clinic - A new pilot signposting initiative set in a retail unit right in the heart of the Town Centre, helping link residents suffering from the impact of the pandemic to local community groups and support services available.</p> <p>Kent Community Pantry, Stanhope - The service provides a food subscription service with a community collection point every Friday. 168 people subscribed to the scheme.</p> <p>Fareshare Kent – Children & Families Ltd, Food Parcels – help with additional pressure of free food boxes. 588 free food parcels supplied to Ashford Foodbanks.</p> <p>Report providing reassurance on the processes and contract monitoring of grants to our Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, particularly over the pandemic period was taken to the April meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>															

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI31 Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*	99%	98.5%		99.1%	98.5%		99.4%	98.5%		99.2%	98.5%		99.1%	98.5%	
Latest Note	<p>This figure covers all inspections including for those inspections which are now overdue for their next inspection. Although the backlog was reducing, inspections ceased again with effect from 21st December.</p> <p>Lockdown meant that our food inspection programme was suspended for most of 20/21. However, the team have made contact with most of the premises due an inspection to provide advice and gather key information to help prioritise and speed up the physical inspection process.</p> <p>The figures for 2020/21 shown above are based on inspection data which is no longer current. Many inspections could not be completed during the last year because of restrictions on visits during the pandemic. The Food and Health & Safety team have contacted almost all the premises that were due an inspection in this period to establish what they are doing and to support them where they have changed their business offer. Many new businesses have been registered which have not yet been inspected. Fortunately, to date, not as many have closed as was expected.</p> <p>It is anticipated visits will resume to some establishments in April 2021 and so this figure over the course of the year will start to become more robust again.</p>															
RPKPI62 Benefit Change of Circumstance Processing	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days	2.29	10		1.94	10		2.02	10		2.11	10		1.94	10	
RPKPI63 Benefit New Claim Processing Time	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days	22.97	28		26.83	28		25.39	28		25.77	28		26.33	28	
Latest Note	Benefit change of circumstance and new claims processing time has remained on target throughout the year.															

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

The latest data tables on local government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates is available from the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#).

RPKPI64	Universal credit Monthly new starts	961			5,338			1,101			1,247			364		
Universal credit new claims														Latest available date up to Jan 21.		
Latest Note																



This looks at the number of starts to Universal Credit. The starts figures show the number of claims which have gone through the application process and been awarded Universal Credit. This data is available to Jobcentre Plus areas. The Jobcentre Plus office at which a claimant is recorded at, is based upon the postcode of where the claimant lives. There are thirteen Jobcentre Plus areas in Kent and Medway and this figure is associated to the Ashford office. Source DWP Stat Xplore, Most recent figure likely to be revised.

RPKPI67	Welfare intervention new cases	462			406			434			256			435		
Welfare intervention new cases																
Latest Note																

Increase in Q4 due to pro-active calls. Officers have been calling people who haven't paid any council tax offering help and financial advice. Increase in cases expected when courts start to operate again properly.

Welfare Intervention Officers have taken on Test & Trace payments

RPKPI84	Number of positive covid 19 cases	45			1,217			152			5,235			3,173		
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Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
Number of positive covid 19 cases																
Latest Note																

March 2021 result

 172

Last 12 months

Number of people with at least one lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 test result source <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

RPKPI85	Website visits to covid 19 pages	15,400 incomplete quarter only March 2020 collected	56,835	22,292	50,407	44,890
Website visits to covid 19 pages						
Latest Note						

Unique page views in March: 8,746 (13.5% decrease on February)

Top 5 pages: [Coronavirus Business Grants](#) (1,481), [Additional Restrictions Grant](#) (1,169), [Coronavirus Homepage](#) (1,139), [Local Restrictions Support Grant](#) (967), [Coronavirus testing centre article](#) (730).

RPKPI86	Number of referrals to voluntary sector	New Performance indicator not previously recorded	345	117	201	62
Number of referrals to voluntary sector						
Latest Note						

QCovid population risk assessment tranche added to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list during Q4.

Appendix 1

Place Making, Regeneration and Infrastructure

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI02 Council Affordable Housing - New Build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing	4			0			2			44			0		

Latest Note

Q2 Two chalet bungalows have been delivered in The Weavers, Biddenden

Q3 Currently on site with East Stour Court and The Poplars - The acquisition of New Quarter West block happened in this quarter.

The West Wing contains: 23 x 1-bed apartments and 21 x 2-bed apartments

Q4 East block at New Quarter completion nearing will be 65 flats when it does. 27 x 1-bed and 38 x 2-bed.

The acquisition of the New Quarter (Stour and Somerset Heights) represents the largest handover of general needs accommodation to be managed on one site by the council. In today's climate, such a transaction makes a major announcement about our commitment to affordable housing. The council was successful in securing grant funding from Homes England of £2.265m.

The Council has secured more than £1m of Government funding to enable it to build 17 homes for affordable housing at Halstow Way in south Ashford, on the site of a former run down play area, equating to £60,000 per unit.

RPKPI03 Council Affordable Housing - On-Street Purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing	24			12			12			16			6		
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Latest Note

Completions in Q4 sit at 6, with a further 16 in conveyancing. The revised target of 50 is within reach but the lag, is that solicitors (external) have been in high demand pushing through sales to beat the initial deadline for stamp duty. This has since been extended in the Chancellor's budget and things may settle during the next month or so.

Though we can now set affordable rents (60% in this instance) the stamp duty-free extension is having an impact on viability as prices have increased, given that vendors know purchasers will not have to pay for the stamp duty. Therefore prices are higher.

Appendix 1











Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
Affordable housing – our delivery, aspiration and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was presented at December's Cabinet .																
RPKPI10 Planning Application Approvals	% of planning applications approved	91%	90%		90%	90%		90%	90%		90%	90%		83%	90%	
Latest Note																
The Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough is constrained at present by the potential impact of new residential accommodation on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites, which lie east of Canterbury. Without necessary mitigation of additional nitrates caused by new residential development, the granting of planning permission may be regarded as unlawful. A strategic mitigation plan is under consideration and this may enable permissions to be granted the Stour catchment area when secured. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications. Advice has been given by Natural England on Nutrient Neutrality for new developments in the Stour catchment and more information is available on the planning pages of our website .																
RPKPI11 Speed of Major Planning Application Decisions	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority)	71%	60%		94%	65%		100%	65%		100%	65%		91%	65%	
RPKPI11A % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	58%	75%		64%	75%		67%	75%		88%	75%		72%	75%	
Latest Note																

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

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






Performance has significantly improved across the year and remains good in respect of major application determinations although it is recognised that the impact of the Stodmarsh Lakes habitats issue on the ability to determine applications is likely to result in a delay to determination timescales in the short term for residential proposals in the Stour catchment area. Officers will continue to work closely with applicants to ensure that potential solutions can be identified and revised timescales for determination agreed where possible.

RPKPI12	% 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).	88%	70%		93%	75%		95%	75%		96%	75%		88%	75%	
Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions																
RPKPI12A	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	78%	80%		80%	80%		82%	80%		88%	80%		86%	80%	
% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month																

Latest News

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

Performance in non-major schemes remains strong and above target. Enhanced use of officer delegations is helping to maintain performance levels.

RPKPI14	Number of live planning applications reducing backlog with a	613	550		619	550		643	550		665	550		681	550	
Number of live																

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
planning applications reducing backlog	capacity set at 550 open cases															
Latest News	<p>The Council's ability to determine applications in the Stour catchment part of the Borough is constrained at present by the potential impact of new residential accommodation on the Stodmarsh Lakes European Designated Sites, which lie east of Canterbury. Without necessary mitigation of additional nitrates caused by new residential development, the granting of planning permission may be regarded as unlawful. A strategic mitigation plan is under consideration and this may enable permissions to be granted the Stour catchment area when secured. In the meantime, this is likely to have a negative impact on the ability of the Council to approve applications. Advice has been given by Natural England on Nutrient Neutrality for new developments in the Stour catchment and more information is available on the planning pages of our website. Alongside this, there is evidence of a rise in planning application numbers which is driving up overall caseload in the Service coupled with remaining resource gaps associated with the final stages of the restructure of the Planning & Development Service. A programme of recruitment is well under way and this should assist in bringing overall case numbers down in the months ahead.</p>															
RPKPI21 % of working population cycling to work (at least once per week)	% of working population cycling to work	<p>Not measured for Quarters Latest data for Ashford (Local Authority area) from 2019 (published in August 2020) shows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5% traveling by bike once a month 2.4% traveling once a week 1.6% traveling 3 times a week 1.6% traveling 5 times a week <p>Based on the national walking and cycling data statistics, data is from the National Travel Survey and Active Lives Survey</p>														
RPKPI22 Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/walking	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/walking	<p>Annual target that increases in each year based on our plans to fund the production of travel plans. In year 1 we're looking at a pilot of working with 10 organisations and are hoping that once we see more people returning to offices that this will become more of a priority.</p>														
Latest Note	<p>The procurement of projects has been delayed due to the covid pandemic. Partner organisations are currently prioritising the return to the office and in the process are delaying input into other projects such as the setting up of active travel plans.</p>															

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
<p>It is anticipated there will be more traction and interest for active travel projects once businesses have settled into new modes of working, with workers returning to offices under new working arrangements and hours split between the office and home.</p> <p>Discussions continue with our business partners to understand the pace of change and when they will have the time and resources to engage in the project more directly. We are currently forecasting interest will pick up over the autumn once businesses have established their new working arrangements.</p>																
RPKPI40	% of borough waste recycled or composted	49.33%	50%		53.67%	50%		48.33%	50%		50%	50%		45% Januarys data only	50%	
Recycling Rate																
Latest Note	<p>The rate is distorted by there being three weeks of residual waste and two weeks of recycle for the period. Average recycle rate for period until end of January is 50%. Residents continue to present high tonnages in lockdown.</p> <p>Ashford's recycling rate remains comfortably above the national target of 50%, and the overall figure for Ashford (54.2%) places us 48th in the country, 16th in the South East and top in Kent. These statistics form part of DEFRA's nationwide recycling league tables.</p> <p>Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links. WasteDataFlow Waste and recycling statistics</p>															
RPKPI41	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.	99.97%	99.97%		99.96%	99.97%		99.97%	99.97%		99.97%	99.97%		99.97%	99.97%	
Refuse Collection Success Rate																
Latest Note	<p>Waste data from UK local authorities is reported to WasteDataFlow with statistics available at the following links. WasteDataFlow Waste and recycling statistics</p>															

Appendix 1











Organisational Change and Workforce Development

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
RPKPI50 Contribution to budget from commercial investments	Contribution to budget from commercial investments utilising the budgeted figures provided as part of the councils budget books. Measure to start from Sept 20	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			74%			66%			82%		
Latest Note																

Figure based on Ellingham, Carlton Road, Elwick Place, International House, Matalan and Wilkos.

Corporate Property Performance Annual Report 2019/20 and update to the Property Acquisition, Investment and Disposal Strategy [Cabinet 24th Sept 2020](#)

We have seen a decrease in vacancies due to a number of new leases being signed. However we have seen a percentage decrease in expected income due the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

RPKPI60 Business Rates Collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month	99.1%	99%		27.18%	24.75%		51.61%	49.5%		76.92%	74.25%		94.25%	99%	
RPKPI61 Council Tax Collection Rate	Council Tax Collection Rate	98.1%	98.25%		29.77%	24.57%		57.6%	49.14%		85.4%	74.25%		96.7%	98.25%	
Latest Note																

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status

The collection rates are below target, with more council tax payers struggling to pay council tax, and more businesses struggling to pay business rates, additionally we have not been able to take any recovery action in this financial year, due to the pandemic and the courts being closed. In a normal year, if somebody doesn't pay their council tax/business rates, then they get a formal reminder, and then if they still fail to pay, they get a summons to the magistrates court. At court a liability order is then obtained, which gives us a number of enforcement options to recover the debt (e.g. attachment to earnings, enforcement agents etc).

In 2020/21 none of this has been possible, as the courts have been closed. Which means no enforcement action is possible. So no formal reminders, no court summonses, no liability orders. We have been sending what we call 'soft' reminders asking for payment when they fall into arrears, but this of course has no legal standing.

Finally, for business rates, whilst the government has supported the retail/hospitality/leisure sector in 2020/21 with the 100% rates relief, other sectors (e.g. industrial/manufacturing etc) have not been supported at all...they have had no rates relief in the pandemic, and many are struggling to pay anything.

Government finance including Ashford Borough Council, covering borrowing and investment, capital payments and receipts, local Council Tax support, quarterly revenue outturn and receipts of Council Taxes and national non-domestic rates are available [here](#)

Council Tax Base 2021/22 – report taken to [Novembers Cabinet](#)

RPKPI70	Based on the total FTE	9.1 annualised days	9.1 annualised days	10.42 annualised days	7 annualised days	6.98 annualised days
Number of days sickness per full time equivalent						
Latest Note						

Q4, Based on the total number of FTE – was 454.54 at 31.3.21 (including new PHA staff).

Total Average sickness absence (including absence due to CV19) 6.98 days per FTE annualised (793 days lost in Q4)

Total Average sickness absence (excluding absence due to CV19) 5.7 days per FTE annualised (648 days lost in Q4)

Total Average absence due to CV19 1.28 days per FTE annualised (145 days lost in Q4)

In this quarter we observed a small number of staff taking time off within the coronavirus category due to minor reactions to their vaccination.

RPKPI90	number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	New performance indicator not previously recorded	69	79
number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings						Measure covers those litigation/court proceedings being furthered by legal services.

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
(volume measure)																
RPKPI90A Litigation number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	number of cases in which costs have been awarded against ABC (effectiveness measure)	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			0			0		
RPKPI91 number of new S106 files opened	number of new 106 files opened	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			6			5		
RPKPI91A number of draft S106 agreements sent out	number of draft 106 agreements sent out	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			7			0		
RPKPI91B number of S106 cases completed	number of 106 cases completed	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			2			4		
RPKPICOM1 Income Generation and Savings	Increased income attributable to commercialisation projects – income	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			£73,162.5			£140,600			£163,015		

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
	and cashable efficiency savings.															
Latest Note		<p>Garden Waste Development project, aims to increase customer base through new online payment systems and ability to sign up for annual contract at any time of year are proving successful. Further marketing and route analysis is planned.</p> <p>Other projects that will contribute to overall target require a longer lead in time before financial returns found, eg efficiency savings anticipated through the Category Management project which aims to streamline council contracts.</p> <p>Much of the work undertaken this year will realise revenue and efficiencies in the coming years and is not reflected in the quarterly return. Whilst significant developments have been made in only 9 months of delivery, we are planning on resetting targets to reflect the longer term nature of income generation and will adjust targets to be more heavily loaded towards end of strategy. It is requested that focus is on the direction of travel, rather than individual quarters at this stage.</p> <p>Commercial Services Strategy taken to July's Cabinet.</p>														
RPKPICOM2	Projects completed target	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			28%			48.25%			68%		
Project Completion	Projects complete 80% planned 20/21 tasks.															
Latest Note		<p>Please note value is a %. All projects in commercialisation programme have a detailed project task plan, the % of complete tasks across all projects are combined to create this % score. Work is progressing well, we are adjusting our project plans for new financial year that will better reflect the unexpected scale of some of the project areas.</p>														
RPKPICOM3	Increase staff awareness of commercialisation and a positive response towards it.	New performance indicator not previously recorded			New performance indicator not previously recorded			8%			16.4%			32%		
Improved Commercial Acumen	Percentage of officers who have															

Appendix 1

Code & Short Name	Description	Q4 2019/20			Q1 2020/21			Q2 2020/21			Q3 2020/21			Q4 2020/21		
		Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status
	completed commercial awareness training.															
Latest Note	Supplemented with additional legal training on trading and charging powers, for info 47% have completed or started the training.															

Equality Impact Assessment

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

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

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

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

Protected characteristics

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

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

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

Due regard

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

6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
- encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

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

Armed Forces Community

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

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

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

Case law principles

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

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

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality

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

Lead officer:	Lorna Ford / Jennifer Shaw
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Corporate Plan 2021 - 2024
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	29 th July 2021
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>The Corporate Plan sets out the council's priorities and objectives until 2024, together with the long term Ashford Ambition.</p> <p>The Plan is the main strategic document of the council setting out its main objectives under 3 priority themes: Green Pioneer, Caring Ashford and Targeted Growth.</p> <p>These themes were developed through extensive consultation immediately prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic which paused further development of the Corporate Plan. A Recovery Plan was put in place in the interim.</p> <p>Everyone, living in, working in and visiting the borough will be affected by the Corporate Plan. The Plan seeks to build a greener, more caring and economically productive borough, where everyone is valued and respected.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The Ashford Futures study, to inform the long term ambition for the borough and the next Corporate Plan and Economic Development Strategy was extensively consulted on prior to the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent restrictions.</p> <p>Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Policy carried out the council's biennial Residents' Survey, which assesses resident's opinions of the council, its service provision and the local area.</p>
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? 	Ashford Futures study and residents survey are informing this Corporate Plan together with the monitoring and reporting of the Recovery Plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	Oversight by MT and feedback from forward planning day with Cabinet members.	
<p>Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.</p> <p>When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.</p>		
Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium – percentage of older people in the population is increasing therefore important that objectives support their needs and are not disadvantaged	Positive (major) – Housing, health and wellbeing, safety
Middle age	Medium – economic hardship e.g. furloughed, potential job losses, child care stresses	Positive (Major) - economic regeneration measures, support / advice for business, creation of new industries, skills development, housing, health and wellbeing.
Young adult	Medium – young people particularly those seeking entry level employment.	Positive (Major) - economic regeneration measures, support / advice for business, creation of new industries, skills development, working with college and local business, housing, health and wellbeing, safety.
Children	Low	Positive (major) – safety, health and wellbeing

<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support.
Mental	Medium	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support.
Sensory	Medium	Positive (major) - number of interventions to ensure appropriate support
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	N/A	N/A
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Positive (major) - targeting less affluent neighbourhoods and providing ongoing support through community initiatives
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	Low	Positive (minor) economic interventions but not specifically targeted at men
Women	Low	Positive (minor) economic interventions but not specifically targeted at women
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Neutral
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Neutral
Former service personnel	Medium - risk of homelessness	Positive (major) housing intervention and temporary housing interventions that will be of benefit to homeless persons
Service families	Low	Neutral

Mitigating negative impact:

Regular monitoring of the Corporate Plan will ensure any negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics are

Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	recognised and reported to ensure mitigating steps can be taken.
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?	
Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A Corporate Plan is not discriminatory
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>Local data has been used (Ashford Futures study and Residents Survey) as well as monitoring of national trends. The Corporate Plan should have positive outcomes across all groups.</p> <p>Monitoring will be through Management Team reporting to a member led group.</p>
EIA completion date:	19 July 2021



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DRAFT

Foreword

I am delighted that we are now in a position to present our Corporate Plan for 2021 – 2024. 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 in and visit the borough.

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

Cllr Clarkson

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:

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

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 below:

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.

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 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.

- CA1 – Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages and incomes 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.

- 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
- Ashford 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

Appendix 2 - Corporate Plan_version 5

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 Forums 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. 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

Content to be agreed and Information to be presented as info graphics

Largest borough in Kent, 58,000 hectares (224 square miles)

Population estimate in 2020 is 132,420 (6th largest population in Kent exc. Medway)

Appendix 2 - Corporate Plan_version 5

Population age range

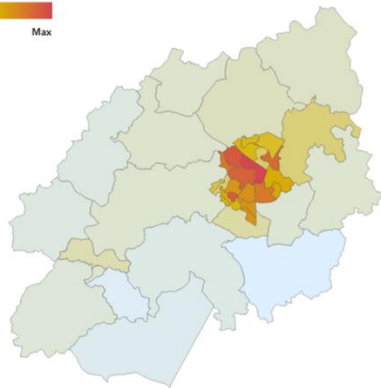
Under 5 (pre-school age)	6.1 %
5 to 19 (school/college age)	18.9%
20 to 64 (working age)	55.5%
65 and over (retirement age)	19.4%

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.

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. 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

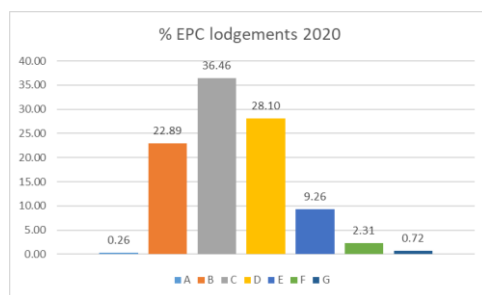
Our aim is for homes and buildings to be as energy efficient as possible and cheaper to heat, for more energy to come from renewable sources and fewer local car journeys are made as opportunities to cycle, walk and use public transport increase.

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.



Gov.uk: live tables on energy performance

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 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:

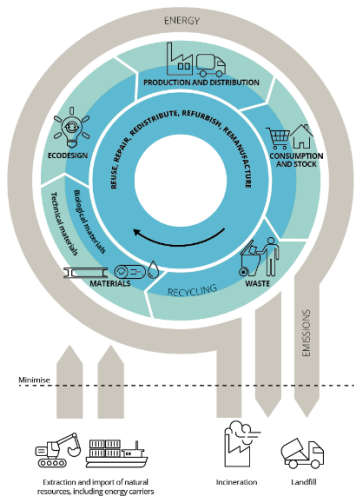
- Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes
- Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same
- Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective GP1 to be agreed and included

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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective GP2 to be agreed and included

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 & 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 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective GP3 to be agreed and included

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 Ashford 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 and incomes 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 communities 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

Appendix 2 - Corporate Plan_version 5

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:

Ashford has a Housing Delivery Test score of 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
- 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective CA1 to be agreed and included

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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective CA2 to be agreed and included

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 helps xx people

There are xx changing places toilets in the borough and our lifeline service is installed in xx homes 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective CA3 to be agreed and included

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 xx visitors and involved xx schools

All people in 95% of households in the borough have English as their main language. There are 2.6% of households where no 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective CA4 to be agreed and included

4.3 Targeted Growth

Ashford 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 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.

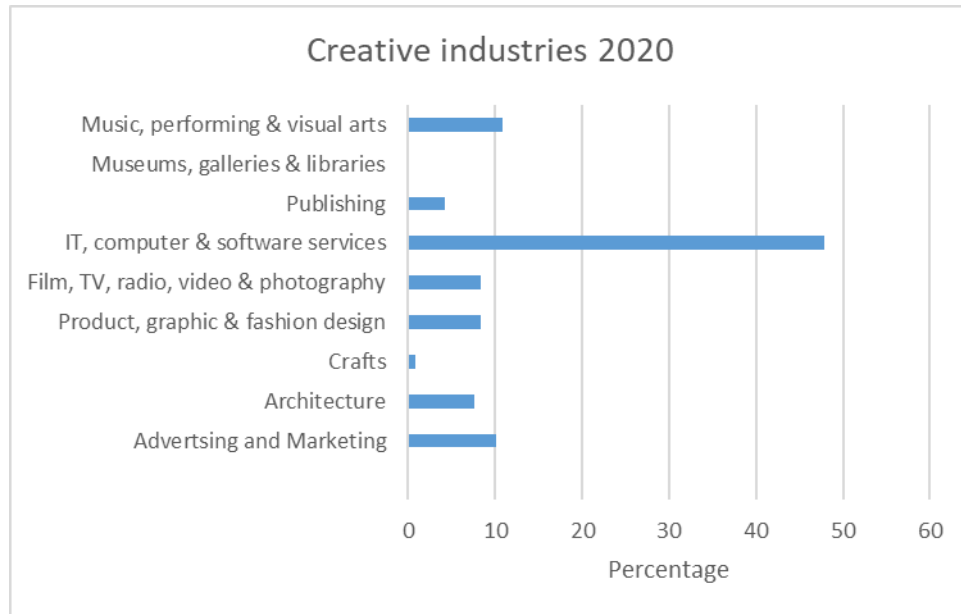
Objective TG1: Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough

Ashford has grown its business base by attracting inward investment to the borough. 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, 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.

Ashford 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 in Ashford 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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective TG1 to be agreed and included

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:

To be included

We will:

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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective TG2 to be agreed and included

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

Progress will be measured by:

Measures for objective TG3 to be agreed and included

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 Intereg 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.

Progress will be measured by

Measures for objective TG4 to be agreed and included

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 our town centres are lively, safe places where people of all ages live, work and visit, coming together to enjoy events and activities.

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

Progress will be measured by:

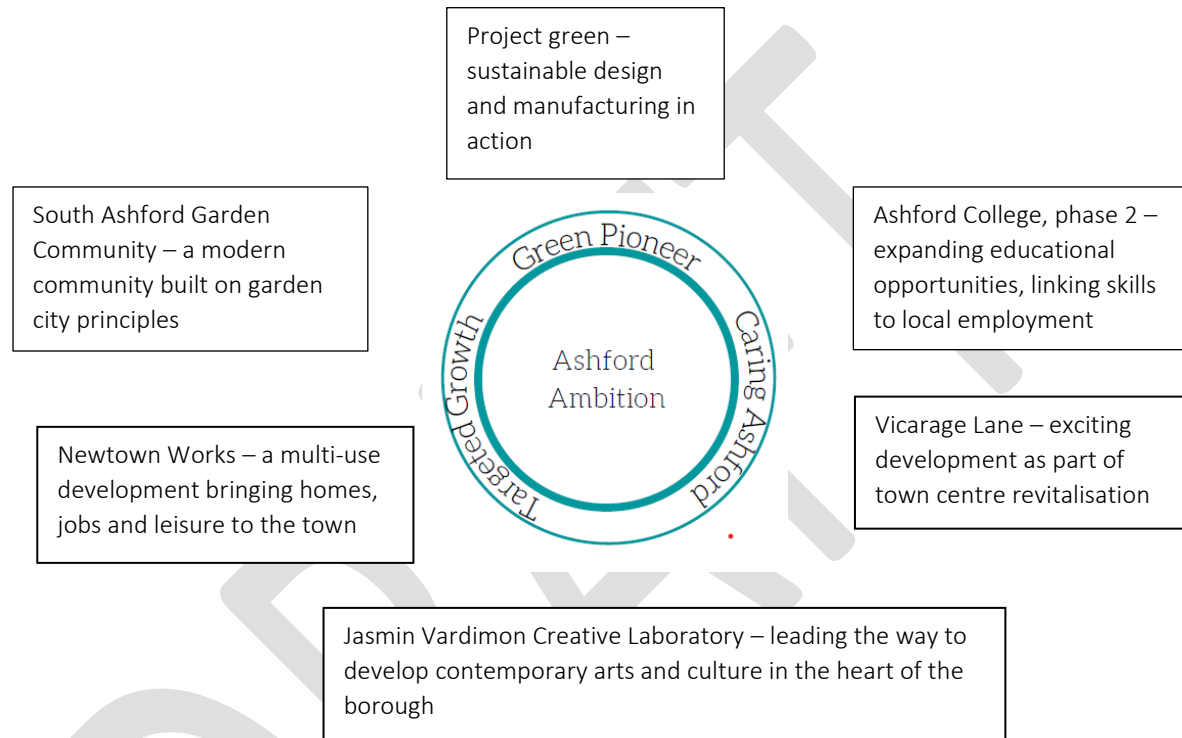
Measures for objective TG5 to be agreed and included

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.

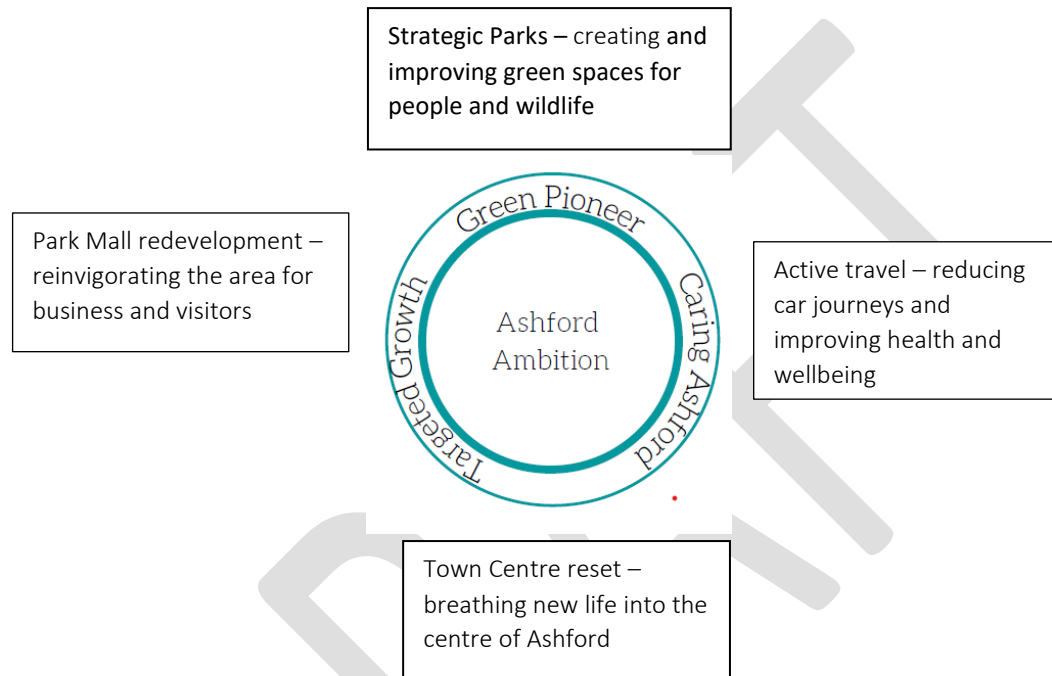
Each of the strategic projects supports the one or more of our strategic objectives, thus helping to achieve the Ashford Ambition. The Ashford Strategic Delivery Board (ASDB) will monitor progress and work to unlock any barriers to delivery.

The strategic projects are:



Strategic Projects:	Objectives supported:
Newtown Works	CA1, CA2, TG1
Ashford College Phase 2	CA2, CA3,
Jasmin Vardimon creative laboratory	CA4, TG4
Vicarage Lane	CA1, TG5
South Ashford Garden Community	CA1, TG1
Project Green	TG1

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



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

TIMELINE – graphic indicating key milestones for above strategic and priority projects to be included

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**

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.

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

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.

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

A description/diagram of governance arrangements for overseeing delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2024, reporting arrangements to be included

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Detailed delivery plan

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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Through the Local Plan process seek opportunities for renewable energy generation and energy efficient homes.	Site allocations (renewable energy)	Lead	Late 2021	tbc
	Homes standards	Lead	Late 2021	tbc
Increase renewable energy generation and use in our own estate and enable and encourage local people and communities to do the same	Solar Farm	Lead	Ongoing	Jan 2023
	Solar car ports	Lead	Ongoing	June 2022
	Seek opportunities for solar panels to be installed to commercial /industrial buildings	Lead	Ongoing	Jan 2022
	Explore viability of new ways of generating renewable energy (GSH / wind turbines)	Lead	tbc	tbc
	Explore possibility of street lighting project phase 2	Enable	tbc	tbc
Decrease carbon emissions from vehicles associated with the council's operations and staff use	Review where staff work/commute/travel for work	Lead		
	Consideration of hybrid and electric fleet options in new Waste & Recycle Collections and Street Cleansing Contract.	Lead	July 2021	Sept 2022
	Port Health Shuttle Bus	Lead		
	Staff Travel Plan / Car club	Lead		
Reduce car usage by implementing local active travel initiatives and uptake of public transport together with cleaner travel options	Cycling and Walking Action Plan Delivery	Lead	2021	2026
	Parking Strategy	Lead		
	Coordinated approach to EV charging across the borough including on our own estate and HRA sites	Lead	July 2021	July 2023

	Working with quality bus partnership to increase patronage and introduce cleaner vehicles	Lobby	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
	Encourage residents to use the Kent Connected digital app	Enable	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
Improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings through retrofitting programmes	Review of corporate buildings	Lead	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
	Refurbishment / retrofitting of corporate buildings to be carbon neutral	Lead	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
	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	Complete survey work by Autumn 2021 followed by an ongoing carbon reduction programme	
	Private rented sector - landlord education and enforcement/ green homes grants / council funding / referrals	Lead		
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
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	Ongoing	
Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife	Discovery Park - design and consultation	Lead	2022	2023
	Victoria Park - investment delivery	Lead	2022	2023
	Green Corridor Plan	Lead	2022	2023
	Kingsnorth Buffer Zone and Extension	Lead	2022	2023
	Conningbrook Park	Lead	2022	2023
	Management plans (e.g QMP) include opportunities for increasing biodiversity	Lead	July 2021	
	Bio diversity from the management of the surrounding countryside at the BCP	Lead		
Champion Project Green Wetland Park and other options to mitigate nitrate concentrations in the Stour Valley Catchment area				

Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.	Community grants - assessed against principles for green recovery	Lead	2022	2024
	Queens Canopy tree planting (135,000 trees)	Lead	July 2021	2023
	Establish community run centre for sustainability	Enable		
Conserve water through reduced usage	Reduce water use in corporate buildings / operations	Lead	Sept 2022	
	Educate and change behaviours associated with water use and water consumption including growing plants and vegetables	Lead		
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Ensure our waste collection service drives the improvement of waste reduction and recycling		Lead	July 2021	Ongoing
Work with business to implement government introduced schemes to encourage reuse and waste reduction	Work in partnership to achieve Courtauld targets	Enable		
Promote responsible behaviour to protect the environment from harmful waste	Strengthen enforcement message and action on fly tipping	Lead	July 2021	Ongoing
	Improve engagement of parish councillors and volunteers in addressing litter and fly tipping	Enable	July 2021	Ongoing

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 and incomes 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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Enable housing development that meets local needs, supports independence and creates sustainable communities	South Ashford Garden Community	Enable	Ongoing	
	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	Ongoing	

	Work with Parish Councils to identify rural housing needs by increasing needs surveys	Lead		
	Deliver carbon reduction measures to be integrated into HRA new build and acquisition schemes	Lead	Ongoing	
	Place-making - ensure planning policies support delivery of adequate community infrastructure (inc. play pitches etc.)	Lead	Ongoing	
	Develop of lifeline services to help people to live independent by working with our partners	Lead	Commence	Sept 2024
	Improve and enhance digital solutions for improved customer experiences amongst HRA Tenants	Lead	ongoing	
	Develop the Dahlia brand for independent living for older people. Providing range of services enabling different levels of independence	Lead	2021	Ongoing delivery
	Upgrade lifeline alarms within Independent living schemes to provide a digital solution	Lead	tbc	
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	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
Improve engagement with local communities and enable them to increase their resilience to adverse events and emergencies	Increase number of parishes with high risk of flooding with emergency plans	Enable	Oct 2021	Sept 2024
	Increase engagement with local councils including regular local council forum	Lead	July 2021	Ongoing
Ensure HRA buildings are safe to live in and meet compliance standards	Strengthen governance framework around safer tenancies and safer buildings.	Lead		
Work with communities to design develop and manage facilities that support community cohesion	Enable community ownership and management of local assets	Enable		
	Facilitate the development of Finberry community facility and subsequent management arrangement	Enable	June 2021	Aug 2023
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Create opportunities for young people to take-up education and training	Work with Ashford College to support their delivery of a phase 2 scheme.	Enable	March 2022	
	Work with Ashford College to ensure local skills needs are met	Enable		
	Provide opportunities at ABC for youth employment through Kickstart, apprentices, graduate roles etc.	Lead		
Work with existing and potential employers to identify the skills and knowledge they require	Raising Green Skills within the borough	Enable		
	utilise any government funding to implement and promote new employment support programmes	Enable		
Work with voluntary sector to increase informal learning opportunities as route in to work	Delivery of programme of activities in Victoria park	Lead	2021	Ongoing to end of NHFL project
	Provision of funding for voluntary and community sector. E.g. Ashford Volunteer Centre and Revelation	Lead	2022	2024
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Work with communities to identify local issues and implement solutions	CHES project	Lead	June 2012	March 2022
	Ensure Community Grants & Support Package contribute to achieving the outcomes of the Corporate Plan	Lead	2022	2024
	Play provision in the borough is supported including historical replacements	Lead	2022	2024
Work in partnership to increase participation in sports and wellbeing activities.	Work with leisure operators to maximise use of assets	Enable	2021	2024
	Work with voluntary sector to deliver community led health and wellbeing programmes	Enable	Ongoing	Sept 2024
	Encouraging expansion of services provided by the One You Shop	Enable	Ongoing	Sept 2024
	Tenterden leisure Centre procurement of an operator in partnership with the Trust	Lead	2021	2023
	Promote and facilitate the local Lottery			
	Champion the Reconnect programme (KCC)	Enable	2022	2024
	Review Skateside provision and management	Lead	2021	2022

Actively engage with partners to give children and young people the best start in life	Town centre youth provision, feasibility to support new spaces for young people to meet (part of town centre reset)	Lead	2021	2022
	Charlton Athletic Community Trust	Enable	Sept 2021	Sept 2022
Tackle Homelessness	Review and Improve Homelessness offer	Lead		
	Develop move on accommodation for rough sleepers	Lead		
	Grow the Social Lettings Agency	Lead		
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Encourage communities to protect and celebrate their heritage	Improve access to burial records for historical research	Lead		
	Adopt a grave project	Lead		
	Virtual heritage plaque scheme	Lead	2021	2024
Empower local communities to identify and deliver local events that support community wellbeing	Deliver Civic (Commemorative), Heritage & Cultural Events Strategy,	Lead	2022	2025
	Empower HRA Tenants to get involved in service delivery and to have a voice and be heard. - Tenancy Engagement Strategy	Lead	Commenced	2022/23
Ensure arts, entertainment and local heritage are accessible to all	Work with community organisations to enhance the local heritage offer and arts provision	Enable		
	Tank conservation survey and conservation	Lead	Ongoing	Dec 2021
	Service level agreement with Revelations St Marys	Lead	2022	2024

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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Newtown Works		Enable		
Project Green		Enable		

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H1 and H2 Commercial agreements - Conningbrook	Work with Developer to bring forward and deliver the commercial obligations within the agreements.	Enable	Ongoing	
	Conningbrook Car Park	Enable	Ongoing	
Civic Centre reconfiguration		Lead	Ongoing	
Support existing dynamic businesses to expand and grow	Provide advice and support to existing businesses including specialist support	Lead	Ongoing	
Work to attract inward investment to the borough	Focus the AshfordFor programme to attract Inward Investment and new Business	Lead	Ongoing	
	Actively encourage green industries to establish in the borough	Enable	April 2022	
	Lobby for return of Eurostar services at Ashford International station to pre December 2016 timetable	Lobby	Ongoing	
Encourage businesses to develop and use green processes	Encourage take up of programmes such as LOCASE run by KCC	Enable		
	Develop a community of Green Businesses.	Lead		
Strengthen support for creative industries	Review Arts and Creative Industries Strategy and merge the Public Art Strategy within it	Lead	2022	2025
	Creation of Artists Network and sustaining group,	Enable	2021	2024
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 / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure with gigabit capable broadband and improved mobile coverage and reliability	Be more active in lobbying and attracting commercial investment from providers	Enable	Ongoing	
	Take a leading role in coordinating programmes such as the voucher schemes and community fibre partnerships	Lead		
	Provide and increased presence at broadband and digital related events or meetings, raising profile of Ashford for investors	Enable		
Objective TG3: Strengthen local supply chains and increase the resilience of the local economy				
Outcome: Local business survival rates improve				
Action	Project / Activity	ABC Role	Start date	End date
	Strengthen engagement with the largest local employers	Lead	Sept 2021	Ongoing

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Develop business networks and partnerships	Articulate benefits of Ashford through Business ambassadors	Lead	April 2022	March 2024
Establish and deliver the Port Health Service	Develop Sevington as a centre of excellence for importers and attract cargo agents etc.	Enable		
Support opportunities for business to develop and increase local employment in rural areas	Scale Up	Enable		
Objective TG4: Support growth in the visitor economy				
Outcome: Ashford is a 'year round' visitor destination renowned for offering quality visitor experiences				
Increase overall visitor numbers, duration of stays and out of season visits, especially in growing markets such as wine tourism, leisure and green tourism.	INTEREGG project	Lead	2020	2023
	(Visit Kent & Kent Downs AONB), Food & Drink Experience 'next big development or attractor 'including visitor experience around the wine industry	Lead	2021	2024
	Update Visitor Destination Website	Lead	2022	2023
	Ashford Borough Destination Management Plan	Lead	2023	2024
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				
Progress the Ashford Town centre reset programme	Update the 'love Ashford' Brand	Lead	April 2021	Sept 2021
	Enable local business and social enterprises to establish in the town centre	Enable	April 2021	Sept 2022
	Create spaces for community use	Lead		
	Develop the night time economy	Enable		
	Support the Made In Ashford Project	Enable	Ongoing	
	Ashford and Tenterden Welcome Back Fund Programme	Lead	April 2021	March 2022
Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall	Masterplan the redevelopment of Park Mall and develop model for delivery	Lead	Ongoing	
Progress the Vicarage Lane development	Masterplan and redevelop Vicarage Lane land and the former Odeon building	Lead	Ongoing	

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 greenspaces 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 greenspaces 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.

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8.3 Appendix 3 - Draft 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. All risks that fall outside our risks appetite are reported to the council's Management Team and Audit Committee.

4. Risk appetite statement

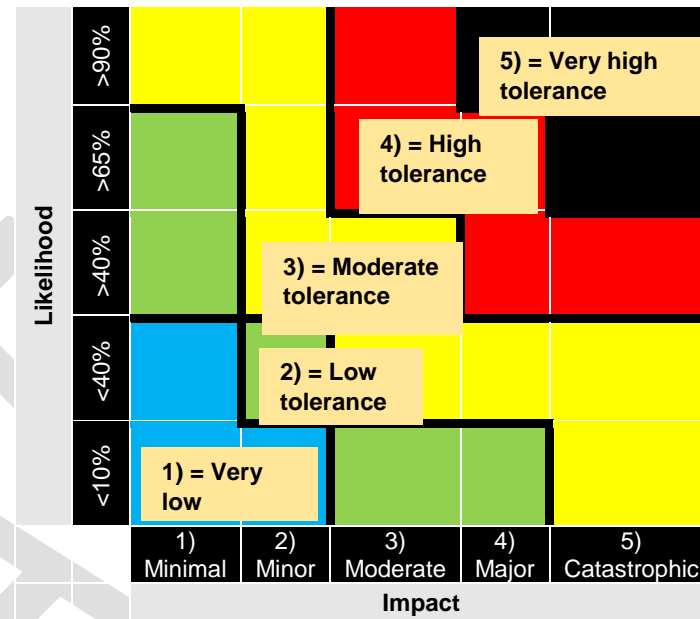
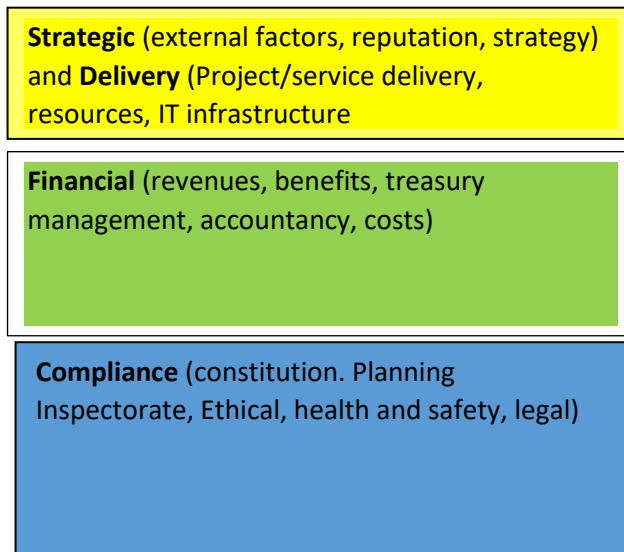
The risk appetite is guided by the underpinning principle set out in our Corporate Plan. Our underpinning principles seek to define the way we operate when delivering services through a number of statements. These statements help us to define our risk appetite for our different risk types.

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:

<p>ABC's Risk Appetite Statement</p>
<p>To enable growth, innovation and generate income to support the delivery of our corporate objectives we have chosen to take Moderate amounts of measured risk to deliver our Strategic aims.</p>
<p>As an organisation we will take Moderate amounts of measured risks to embrace modern and efficient working practices that empowers our staff to deliver high quality services. Our aim is to be commercial in our approach to the Delivery of high quality services and making the best use of our assets.</p>
<p>We will practice sound Financial management to maintain long term financial stability and independence and therefore our risk appetite is low.</p>
<p>Understanding the needs of our communities and treating everyone fairly and equally, with respect and dignity is of utmost importance to us. As is demonstrating the highest standards of compliance when embracing modern and efficient working practices that empower our staff to deliver high quality services. We put the health, wellbeing and public protection of residents, visitors and the environment at the centre of our decision making therefore our risk appetite towards regulatory, legal and Compliance matters is Very Low.</p>

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.



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.