

Our Plan for the Borough

2024 - 2028

Ashford Borough Council

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Captions above from left: Ashford Town Centre, Devil's Kneading Trough in Wye; Tenterden High Street

Foreword



This Plan sets out priorities over the next four years as we face the dual challenges of climate and economy and strive towards **our vision: To make Ashford a place where people, business and nature can collectively thrive.**

Three pillars support this vision:

Planet - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating places for nature will be at the heart of everything we do.

People - Listening and serving the Ashford community is our philosophy; we will make best use of available resources to build an equitable and fair society.

Place - Planning for the future of our community to make Ashford a place people are pleased to call home and love to visit.

Our commitment to be net zero in our own operations by 2030 runs throughout the plan and our aspiration for the borough to be net zero by 2050 is a target that we will work tirelessly with residents and other organisations to achieve.

Locally, we will do all we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect nature in ways to benefit the community and residents.

Listening to what matters most to our residents will help us deliver the services that are important to you. We had a great response to the consultation on this plan and thank everyone who took the time to share their views. A high level summary of what you said is set out in this plan and we have considered your feedback in our final plan. We will be open and honest about what we can and cannot do. Where the responsibility for a service lies with another organisation, we will work with them to make sure those services are meeting the needs of our community.

At a time when money is tight, for us all we must use our resources as efficiently as possible. We will continue to review how we deliver services, where we can be more cost effective and when working in partnership can improve and protect our services, while investing wisely in a resilient future for all.

We will seek to create places that offer mixed housing, to be active, spaces to relax and to build community, while also making space for nature. This will be central to future development in the borough. Our focus will be to bring forward town centre sites like Kent Wool Growers, Park Mall, Former Odeon, Civic Centre.

We want local democracy to be inclusive and welcoming for all and will be making it easier for local people to engage in decision making both in and out of the Council Chamber. Councillors must also feel welcome and safe when representing our residents which is why I felt it was important to add our council to the Debate not Hate campaign.

We will measure our progress against each of our priorities and, whilst we may not be in control of the national picture of which our borough is a part, we are in control of how we react to the issues that affect us. We will be a listening, considerate and inclusive council.

Cllr Noel Ovenden,
Leader of the Council.

What you said about our Borough Plan



Our partners

We have different responsibilities but often work together to deliver the best outcomes for the Borough. Here are some examples:

We work closely with our **health** colleagues to address inequalities, secure infrastructure and innovate services. Along with agencies including Kent County Council and the Kent Community Health Foundation Trust we are creating an Ashford Health Alliance which will set out shared objectives specifically for Ashford.

The **Ashford Community Safety Partnership** brings together **ABC, Kent County Council, the Fire and Rescue Service, Integrated Care Board, Probation and Police.** These agencies collaborate to protect local communities from crime and to help people feel safe.

Local Councils - there are **39 parish councils, 1 town council** and **2 community councils** in our borough. They maintain some local amenities such as **recreational areas, footpaths and cemeteries.** The parish council is also consulted on highway and planning applications.









Our underlying principles:

We are focussed on what matters most to people and providing services that are efficient and effective. We will:

- Put the customer first, learn from their experiences and proactively engage with residents, e.g. through our citizens' panel and residents' survey
- Be inclusive council and treat everyone fairly and with respect
- Continue our digital programme whilst ensuring our services are accessible for all
- Listen, understand and respond to the needs of our resident, business and visitor communities to ensure no one is disadvantaged
- At a local level, work to tackle climate change and protect the natural environment
- Work in the spirit of cooperation and partnership with local councils, other organisations and statutory agencies
- Manage our finances carefully to ensure we live within our means
- Use our performance monitoring to ensure we are meeting customer expectations and our resources are used effectively

We will encourage our staff to be ambitious, creative and trustworthy. Within the resources we have available we will always put residents at the centre of everything we do, try to be flexible and adaptable and respond in a timely manner.

How we will measure the success of achieving our underlying principles can be found in **Appendix 1.**

Our equalities objectives have been reviewed and can be found in **Appendix 3.** These objectives will be carried forward into a refresh of our equalities policy.



All-season accessible trail at Hothfields Heathland.

The borough today:

For how we compare see appendix 4

Population
132,740
(Census 2021)

Area
224 square miles
(largest borough in Kent)

Households
53576
(Census 2021)

Ethnicity
12% population black and ethnic minority
(Census 2021)

Average House Prices 2022
£393,167
(KCC House prices and sales in Kent: 2022)

Average Annual Salary 2023
£31,096
(gross full time by place of work)
(Annual survey of hours and earnings, ONS)

Crime
Average of 950 street level crimes per month
(data.police.uk)

Listed buildings
Over 3000
(ABC website)

Visitors each year
3.1 million day visits
263,500 staying trips
(Visit Kent - Economic Impact of Tourism 2022 results, Nov 2023)

National Landscapes
(formerly AONB)
2 areas
High Weald and Kent Downs

Number of businesses
(VAT and/or PAYE registered
6375
90% are micro business (0-9 employees)
(KCC - UK Business Counts 2023)

Life expectancy
(at birth) (2022)
Males 80.9 | Females 83.9
(Local Authority health profiles – fingertips public health data)

Unemployment rate
3.1% (Nov 23)
(Model based estimates of unemployment, ONS)

Universal credit claimants
14.5% (Apr24_ (age 16-64)
(KCC - Universal Credit Claimants, Nov 23)

14% of homes
are rented from the council or a housing association
(Census 2021)

17.9% of homes
are rented from a private sector landlord
(Census 2021)

Challenges we face:

The most significant challenge we face as a council will be to maintain **financial stability** and this will always **be** at the forefront of our work. Stubbornly high inflation and interest rate rises have significantly impacted the council's financial position which, along with reduced or static government grants produces a background that impacts resources and priorities for this council. The 2024/25 draft budget forecasts a deficit of £890,000, which will be funded from reserves in the short term while saving proposals are developed and implemented.

A growing population and the planning system have been national news and impact Ashford along with all other councils. In addition, the number of **new homes** being built has been reduced by issues in the Stour Valley Catchment area which affects part of the borough. In the South East, **house prices** continue to increase, with the average house price being 11 times the average income, leading to a growing list of people looking for social housing and increased **homelessness** which is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of those affected. Through our public consultation on this plan, we heard how important it is to our residents that infrastructure such as schools and roads and transport keep pace with the growing population. The cost of providing temporary accommodation is growing and creates a huge challenge to local councils, including Ashford, whilst an aging population creates demands for different types of housing that must be accommodated in our planning for the future.

The issues associated with the nutrient levels in the Stour Valley catchment area has a negative impact on the amount of housing that can be delivered and water quality.

The reduction in the overall number of homes being built reduces affordable housing delivery. This means longer waiting times for those on our housing waiting list and increasing use of temporary accommodation.

We are bringing forward homes on our own sites where possible and working with others who are affected or can help on a catchment-wide strategy to implement a solution.



Tackling climate change and supporting nature recovery is urgent to help meet local, national and international targets to reduce the impacts of global warming. Increasingly extreme weather impacts our borough with wetter winters leading to flooding and drier summers causing water shortages. Engaging with residents, businesses and organisations, as well as reviewing how we can deliver services more sustainably will require leadership and innovation at all levels of government.

We will face this challenge together and consider the environmental impact of our actions throughout all service areas.

High Streets across the UK are facing challenges, with the cost of living crisis, changing shopping, working and spending habits as well as business' consolidation of premises. Like the rest of the country, the Borough's town centres are transforming into mixed use hubs encompassing leisure (including hospitality), retail, housing and community facilities.

Over the coming years we will work to support and revitalise our town centres, looking at mixed-use options, connect with the community by evolving markets and spaces as well as our events framework to bring people together. We will consider the residential options to create consistent footfall in our towns, be flexible with use of areas and units to add vibrancy and seek to cater for everyone's evolving needs.

The withdrawal of Eurostar services from Ashford International Station has affected businesses, residents and visitors to the Borough, but particularly for Ashford town centre. Together with other affected councils and our MPs we continue to collectively lobby for the return of a rail service to Europe and hope that, as Ashford grows, Eurostar or other international rail operators will recognise there is opportunity for them too.

The projects below are central to addressing our challenges and to achieving our plan over the next four years.

- **Finding the Nutrient Neutrality solution for the Stour Valley catchment area to bring forward development**
- **Delivering the council's Affordable Housing Programme**
- **Converting the Civic Centre to apartments**
- **Bringing forward the Kent Wool Growers site**
- **Plans for a mixed use Town Centre and taking the former Odeon project forward**
- **Options for the redevelopment for Park Mall**
- **Continue the delivery of Newtown Works with established partners**
- **Facilitate and enable Brompton Bikes relocating to Ashford**

Henwood homes: **the first modular homes in Ashford are being built to provide 23 extremely energy efficient homes that are highly insulated and triple glazed, with heat recovery ventilation and featuring 175 solar panels integrated into the roof. The fabric of the building is designed to create zero carbon homes with very low energy consumption and running costs.**

The 23 units of short-stay apartments will be a 'stepping stone' until people who have become homeless are able to move on to more permanent accommodation.



Planet, People and Place

Our three priorities – **Planet**, **People** and **Place** are closely linked to each other and all contribute to creating a better quality of life for everyone. Such as:

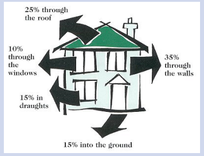
1

Having clean air to breathe is helped by people making fewer car journeys. By walking or cycling there are less emissions and we stay fitter, our roads are safer and we are improving our health and wellbeing.



2

Energy efficient homes are easier to heat and lower energy bills which helps with household costs and tackling fuel poverty. Warmer homes are better for health with reduced damp and mould.



3

Green corridors help nature recovery by linking communities through creating wildlife friendly areas along routes that also provide opportunities for people to walk and cycle and enjoy the outdoors which benefits physical and mental health.





Planet

Working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and creating places for nature will be at the heart of everything we do here at Ashford. That Planet is put first of our three priorities is no accident. Wherever possible we will be working to help our community make the right choices, as we strive to change our own working practices and estate to support our environmental goals.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this	How we will measure our success
Reduce the use of fossil fuel	Use our decision making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Council's carbon footprint (tCO2e)
	Adopt a Local Plan that supports tackling climate change	Digital update
	Improve the energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in our own buildings, machinery and vehicles and use and generate renewable energy	Total potential capacity of council-owned renewable energy provision (kWh)
	Promote cleaner travel (e.g. public transport, walking, cycling, car-pooling) and encourage walking and cycling for leisure	Number of Electric Vehicle charging points on council property
	Take our Heat Network feasibility to the next stage to support homes and businesses with secure, lower carbon heat	Green Heat Network Funding secured
	Work in partnership to deliver energy efficiency schemes and use of renewable energy in homes and business in the borough	Number of Air Quality Management Areas
	Support the development of community energy projects and encourage using energy wisely in homes and businesses	Number of organisations committed to active travel plans
Encourage nature and the enjoyment of natural places	Manage our open spaces and allotments to encourage wildlife	Area of land (km2) managed for nature conservation
	Ensure our local plan polices and the design of new developments contribute to supporting wildlife and access to nature	Level of biodiversity in defined project areas
	Work in partnership to improve water quality and supply	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made
	Help communities care for nature	
Reduce waste	Ensure our waste collection service is reducing waste and enabling recycling	Contamination rate in recycling loads
	Use our powers to deter fly-tipping and prevent littering	Reported incidences of fly-tipping Annually
	Encourage community initiatives such as repair cafes and sharing schemes	% of borough waste recycled or composted
	Promote the five R's: refuse reduce, reuse, repurpose and then recycle message	

Planet

Stour Centre has undergone major works to make it more energy efficient:

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 being carbon neutral by 2030.



Heat network feasibility Funding secured: A district heat network works like a giant looped central heating system, where hot water is carried in an underground system of pipes, releasing its heat where and when required to connected buildings and then returning cooler water in a loop back to an energy centre to be reheated. Imagine local energy sources supplying local energy demand, using clean heat pumps and utilising waste heat e.g. from supermarket refrigeration, electricity sub stations and existing light industry.

- **Benefits of a heat network could include:**
- **Reduced gas usage in the borough and thus a positive contribution to climate action**
- **Stable heat prices to consumers – as heat is locally produced**
- **Opportunities to reduce maintenance costs for individual buildings as they will no longer require their own boiler**
- **Economic development, new skills and job sector as the network extends over time**
- **Potential to provide lower cost carbon heating in time**



People

We will be a **listening council.** Our primary purpose is to serve the Ashford community. We will make best use of available resources to put the heart back into our town. The health, safety and wellbeing of everyone is central to our thinking as we strive to create a place in which both families and business can thrive. We will seek opportunities for younger people and support for older residents as we strive to create a community that is equitable and fair.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this	How we will measure our success
Mixed tenure housing that is affordable to local people	Adopt a Local Plan that will deliver appropriate housing to meet local needs	
	Buy, build and work with other landlords to increase the number of social rented homes	Number of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing Number of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing Number of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing
	Tackle homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation	Number of households where homelessness was prevented Number of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing Housing arrears as a percentage of rent collectable Housing voids – average void time (excluding major voids) Number of families in temporary accommodation six weeks on
	Encourage private sector landlords to use our social lettings agency	
	Work with private sector landlords to improve conditions in the private rented sector	
	Explore affordable home ownership initiatives	
People have more active, healthy and enriched lifestyles	Help people to find information, advice and services that support them to be healthier	Number of adaptions completed against number waiting (HRA) Number of adaptations completed against number waiting (DFG) Indices of multiple deprivation
	Support disadvantaged communities to improve their health and wellbeing	Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity
	Work with health and social care partners to deliver joint priorities	
	Encourage increased participation in sports and activities in local communities that improve wellbeing, including for active later life	Annual footfall to key leisure sites: Stour Centre, Julie Rose and Tenterden Leisure Centre
	Ensure young people have affordable access to sport and recreational activities	Number of visits to youth gym and swimming lessons
	Promote events that celebrate the arts, culture and local history for residents and visitors	Annual update on events programme as part of annual report
A well skilled local workforce	Work with Ashford College and local employers to match training to skills required	Unemployment figures (KCC data) Unemployment 18-24 yr olds (KCC data)
	Support young people with work experience and opportunities for learning and training within the council	
	Promote the value of voluntary work as a step towards employment	Trends in volunteering
A resilient community	Deliver a grants programme that supports the community and voluntary sector	Value of grants awarded via the Community Grants Fund

People

Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) runs programmes within the borough to create safer, stronger, and more respectful communities through engaging young people in positive activities within the immediate communities that they live in.

There are also 1 to 1 mentoring sessions that can reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in serious youth violence and gang related crime.

CACT mentors lead the programme introducing young people to new experiences, challenging them to work positively as a team under their supervision and guidance.

Delivered away from their local communities and any potential negative influences, and by introducing and providing new and unique and exciting activities, the project aims to inspire young people to make positive and beneficial decisions moving forward in their lives.



Ashford's CARNIVAL OF THE BAUBLES

Carnival of the Baubles saw thousands of residents line the streets of Ashford Town Centre to mark the start of the 2023 festive season.

Resulting in the busiest day in the Town Centre for years, with traders commenting that it had been the best day of trade they'd ever had.



Eat Well Spend Less Roadshows help with the cost of living offering a wide range of advice and support out in the community. Bringing together a range of organisations in one easy to-access place and it's free to attend.

Including:

- Health services
- Benefits and housing advice
- Children's services
- Digital support and financial hardship
- Fire safety
- Food banks and community shops
- Guidance on shopping, preparing and cooking healthy, nutritious meals
- Recipe bags with all the ingredients to make and recipe card
- The Hygiene Bank
- Safeguarding and Safer Streets information





Place

We are planning for the future of our community and to make Ashford a place people are pleased to call home and love to visit.

Ashford is a large and varied borough that includes tiny rural villages and the country town of Tenterden, as well as the urban centre of Ashford itself.

It's a fortunate and heady mix that makes our borough a great place to live and do business. We will work to improve our public spaces and create pathways for both our urban centre and rural economy to thrive.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this	How we will measure our success
Thriving, mixed use town and village centres	Alongside the preparation of the next Ashfod Local Plan (2042), produce a new infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) working closely with local infrastructure providers to ensure that the infrastructure needs for existing and future residents and businesses are properly planned, funded and delivered in a timely manner	
	Enable the delivery of the South of Ashford Garden Community	Ashford Strategic Delivery Board monitoring
	Ensure public spaces are clean, attractive and safe	Recorded Town Centre crime Number of all recorded crime
	Enable residential development that delivers a mix of homes alongside leisure, retail and entertainment enterprises	Ashford Town Centre vacancy rate
	Explore using our existing assets to create a flexible multi-use community and civic space in Ashford Town centre, such as the former Odeon building is transformed to add value to the town	Project delivery
	Improve connectivity between the town and designer outlet	
	Maintain a high quality planning service	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (or within such extended period as agreed in writing between the applicant and the local authority) % of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month period Number of live planning casework reducing backlog – with and without Stodmarsh Planning decision quality – quality of decision-making via appeals outcome
Communities that are friendly, safe, inclusive places to live	Ensure developments have good access to facilities and space to support wellbeing	
	Work in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, taking account of the cross- party review findings of community safety	
	Be active in tackling issues that harm young people	Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity
	Encourage the wider use of public buildings for community activities	
The establishment and growth of new and existing enterprises	Adopt a Local Plan that supports sustainable economic growth and development	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Council's Economy and Employment data
	Attract inward investment through use of the 'Ashford For' brand and collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce	Business survival measure based upon our business rates records
	Promote schemes that support sustainable business growth	Vacancy rates
	Engage with the rural business community to understand how they can best be supported	% of all procurements that are based locally Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)
	Lobby for return of rail services to Europe at Ashford International Station	Ashford Strategic Delivery Board monitoring
	Work with providers to improve telecommunication infrastructure	Annual report
	Establish the Port Health Service as a centre of excellence in its field	Clearance times through the Border Control Post Revenue Generated through Border Control Post
Visitors spend more time and money in the borough	Promote tourism in collaboration with Visit Kent and the Ashford and Tenterden Tourism Association	Percentage of tourism related businesses in the borough Parking usage: Ashford and Tenterden car parks Percentage of creative industries in the borough
	Assist tourism enterprises to access funding and advice	

Place

Victoria Park and Watercress Fields.

A £5m+ project delivered by Ashford Borough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve and protect Victoria Park for the local community.

The park's new and improved facilities include:

- A community building
- Flagship new playground
- Sensory garden
- Seasonal wetland area
- River corridor
- Fountain piazza
- Community spaces
- Pump track

Victoria Park



The inaugural Ashford Food and Drink Festival aimed to draw footfall into businesses and create vibrancy in Ashford Town Centre by attracting residents and visitors with a month of events, offers, and competitions.

ASHFORD FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL JULY 2023

Focusing on food and drink gave many opportunities to attract customers to a delicious July, showcasing what the town has on offer all year round, with the purpose of supporting and connecting businesses with extensive marketing and promotion.

Performance Monitoring and Risk appetite

Performance Monitoring

Delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives will be monitored at both Member and officer level. The performance monitoring system is updated regularly by officers. Performance and Annual reports are compiled by the Corporate Policy Team.

Quarterly performance reports will be presented to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Each June, an Annual Report will be present to Cabinet and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Risk appetite

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. For more information on our risk appetite statement please see **Appendix 2.**

A mural from the Ashford Street Art Festival was voted as Best Street Art in the World, via Street Art Cities.

Part of a wider open air gallery created through the Unframed Festival, where local and national artists painted murals across the town creating a contemporary street art trail which also highlights the town's heritage and culture.



Appendix 1: Success Measures

Underlying Principles Success measures
Annual

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Mean gender pay gap	The difference in average pay between men and women in the council's workforce		
Number of local procurements			
Percentage of invoices paid on time			

Underlying Principles Success measures
Quarterly

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Number of Stage 1 complaints			
% Stage 1 complaints resolved in 10 days	% Stage 1 complaints resolved in 10 days		
Number of Stage 2 complaints			
% Stage 2 complaints resolved in 20 days	% Stage 2 complaints resolved in 20 days		
Benefit change of circumstance processing	Average time taken to process a benefit change of circumstance in no. days		
Benefit new claim processing time	Average time taken to process a new benefit payment claim in no. days		
FOI response rate	% of freedom of information requests responded to within 20 working days		95%
Business rates collection	% of national non-domestic rates collected by the council - cumulative figure per month		99%
Council tax collection rate	Percentage of council tax collected - cumulative figure per month		98.25%
Percentage of invoices paid on time			
Gas safety certificates	% of ABC properties with up to date gas safety certificates		100%
Number of days sickness per full time equivalent			
Average speed of customer service calls answered	Average wait time for customer service calls		
Number of ongoing litigation/court proceedings (volume measure)	number of ongoing litigation/ court proceedings (volume measure)		
Number of new 106 files opened			
Planning application approvals	% of planning applications approved		90%
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)		65%
% 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		75%
Speed of non-major planning application decisions	% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks		75%
% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month		80%
Number of live planning casework reducing backlog – with and without Stodmarsh			550
Digital uptake	Digital uptake - % of total council /% Increase transactions completed electronically		80%
Social media engagement			

Planet

Planet – Success Measures – Reported **Annually**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Council's carbon footprint (tCO2e) Annual	Council's carbon footprint (tCO2e)	Baseline figure 3599 tCO2e for Y2019/20	Decreasing – Net Zero aspiration by 2030
Council owned renewable energy provision (kWh) Annual	Total potential capacity of council owned renewable energy provision (kWh)	21-22 estimated average of 492,493.31 kwh per year	Increasing
Number of EV charging points on council property Annual	Number of EV charging points on council property	22-23, 37 Council managed charging points	Increasing
Air Quality	Number of Air Quality Management Areas	Annual measure – Baseline figure from 22-23, 0	Air quality management areas remains at zero
Area of land (km2) managed for nature conservation Annual	Area of land (km2) managed for nature conservation	1.2km2 of land managed for nature conservation (2022/23)	Increasing
Number of trees planted (net gain) supported	Number of trees planted (net gain) supported through ABC projects	107,000 trees planted to date (2022/23)	Increasing
Level of biodiversity in defined project areas Annual	Level of biodiversity in defined project areas	122,000 M2 of meadows (2022/23)	Increasing
Contamination rate in recycling loads Annual	Contamination rate in recycling loads		Decreasing
Reported incidences of fly-tipping Annual	Reported incidences of fly-tipping Annual		Decreasing

Planet – Success Measures - Reported **Quarterly**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Number of organisations committed to active travel plans cycling/ walking	Number of organisations committed to travel plans cycling/ walking	-	Increasing
Recycling Rate	% of borough waste recycled or composted	-	50%
Refuse Collection Success Rate	% of successful refuse collections per 100,000 refuse collections made.		99.96%
Digital uptake	Digital uptake - % of total council /% Increase transactions completed electronically		80%

People

People – Success Measures – **Reported Annually**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Indices of multiple deprivation score Annual	Indices of multiple deprivation score	-	Increasing (1 being the most deprived)
Health profile indicators	Health profile indicators for smoking prevalence, healthy weight and physical activity	-	-
Annual footfall to key leisure sites	Annual footfall to key leisure sites: Stour Centre, Julie Rose, Tenterden Leisure Centre	-	Increasing
Value of grants awarded via community grant fund Annual	Value of grants awarded via community grant fund	-	Descriptive
Trends in volunteering Annual	Trends in volunteering	-	-

People – Success Measures – **Reported Quarterly**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/ Trend
Council affordable housing - new build	No. of additional new build affordable homes delivered by council housing		
Council affordable housing - on-street purchases	No. of additional on-street purchase affordable homes delivered by council housing		
Homelessness presentations			
Homelessness preventions (still in accommodation)	No. of households where homelessness was prevented		
Number of families in temporary accommodation six week on	Number of families in temporary accommodation six week on		
Number of adaptations completed against number waiting (HRA)	Number of adaptations completed against number waiting (HRA)		
Number of adaptations completed against number waiting (DFG)	Number of adaptations completed against number waiting (DFG)		
Disabled facilities grants completed	No. of disabled facilities grants administered by the council		
Disabled facilities grant spend	Actual spend per month for disabled facility grants		
Unemployment	Unemployment figures taken monthly from Kent County Councils Economy and employment data		
Unemployment 18-24yr olds	Unemployment 18-24yr olds taken monthly from the Kent County Council economy and employment data		
Support to 'vulnerable' groups through leisure centre activity	Number of visits to youth gym and swimming lessons		

Place

Place – Success Measures – **Reported Annually**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Percentage of creative industries in the borough			
Percentage of tourism related businesses in the borough			

Place – Success Measures – **Reported Quarterly**

Success measure	Description	Baseline	Target/Trend
Food Hygiene Rating	% of businesses in the borough with a food hygiene rating above 3*		98.5%
Business survival - current vacancy rates	Business survival, measure based upon our business rates records Current vacancy rates		
Ashford town centre vacancy rate			
Contribution to budget from commercial investments			
Vacancy rates (in our corporate property)			
Parking usage	Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden Car Parks		
Number of new 106 files opened			
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)		65%
% 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		75%
Speed of Non-Major Planning Application Decisions	% of minor and other planning applications determined within 8 weeks		75%
% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month	% of non majors determined within 8 weeks amended to reflect 24 rolling month		80%
Number of live planning casework reducing backlog – with and without Stodmarsh			550
Clearance times through the Border Control Post	Clearance times through the Border Control Post Revenue Generated through Border Control Post		

Appendix 2: 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. To coincide with the new Corporate Plan 2024-28 being developed our risk appetite has been reviewed and is presented together with the new Plan. The statement draws on the objectives and principles set out in the 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 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 our strategic objectives and our principles set out in our Corporate Plan. Our strategic objectives articulate our plans for the borough. Our principles define the way we operate when delivering our objectives.

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

ABC's Risk Appetite Statement
We are committed to making Ashford a place where people, business and nature can collectively thrive. In order to deliver on this commitment, we will take **Moderate** amounts of measured risk to ensure our **Strategic** aims are met.
As an organisation we will take **Moderate** amounts of measured risk in the **Delivery** of high quality, compliant and efficient services.
Maintaining financial stability will ensure we can continue to deliver high quality services to our customers and therefore our **Financial** risk appetite is **low**. We will make the most of our assets, invest wisely and be efficient in service delivery to maintain long term financial stability and independence.
Listening and learning from our customers, treating everyone fairly and with respect and protecting the health of our people and borough form part of our underlying principles. Our risk appetite towards regulatory, legal and **Compliance** matters is **Very Low.**

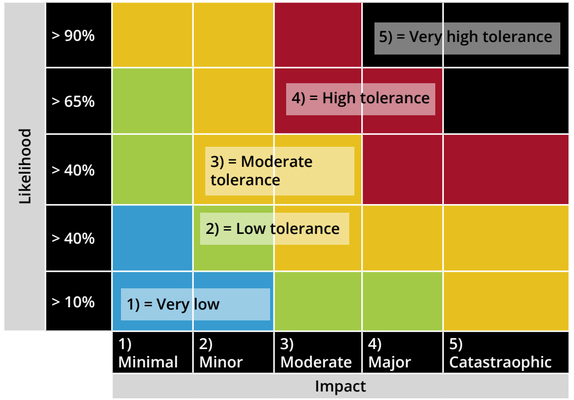
5. Aligning our risk appetite to our Heat Map

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

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

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

Compliance (constitution. Planning Inspectorate, Ethical, health and safety, legal)



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.

Appendix 3: Draft Equality objectives

We set our equality objectives every four years. To ensure they are embedded in all that we do, they are considered and adopted as part of the Borough Plan development. Our cross-service Health and Wellbeing Group has developed the objectives and has a role in monitoring how we meet them:

Objective 1

Improve our understanding of our diverse communities and make it easy for all residents to have a say in decisions about local services

We will do this by:

- Using insight (e.g. analytical tools, data sources, performance, customer feedback) to inform decision-making
- Maintaining a Borough Profile and promote its use across the council.
- Continuing to develop our Citizens' Panel as a way of hearing from a wide range of residents on services and topical issues.
- Ensuring our local democratic arrangements (council meetings, civic life, mayoralty) are accessible and inclusive.

Objective 2

Deliver inclusive services so every resident can live a heathy, fulfilling life.

We will do this by:

- Listening to our customers and using information about our borough to maximise the positive impact our services can make on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Continuing to progress our digital offer so services can be easily accessed at any time whilst maintaining a range of access options for those that need them.
- Considering health inequalities and how they can be addressed at the outset of project delivery and service design.
- Use the accessibility audit to inform future projects that take place in the town centre.
- Recognising the importance of events that bring communities together, increasing tolerance, respect and understanding through our Festivals and Events Framework.

Objective 3

Listen carefully to customer feedback to make sure their needs are met and services are accessible and improved for all.

- Reviewing customer feedback to see how our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can continuously improve and report regularly on our findings as part of our response to the Ombudsman's Customer Complaints Handling Code.
- Engaging communities in project and service design.

Objective 4

Continue to develop an inclusive and diverse workplace that reflects the communities we serve

- Liaise with key internal stakeholders to create and review diversity related HR policies within our conditions of service.
- Attract talent from diverse groups (in order to achieve parity with equality Census data)
- Create an inclusive culture, promoting difference and authenticity, face to face at International House or remotely
- Provide appropriate and regular equality and diversity training across the organisation



Appendix 4:
How we compare

	Ashford	National or Kent	Source
Population	**132,740**	180,281	ABC
Area	**224 square miles**	-	
Households	**53,575**	Out of 24.8 million nationally	Census 2021
Ethnicity	**12% black& ethnic**	18%	Census 2021
Average House Prices 2022	**£393,167**	£294,329	KCC house prices and sales in Kent 2022
Average Annual Salary 2023	**31,096**	34,963	Annual survey of hours and earnings ONS
Crime	**Average of 950 street level crimes per month**		data.police.uk
Listed buildings	**Over 3000**		ABC Data
Visitors each year	**3.1 million day visits 263,500 staying trips**		Visit Kent
National Landscapes	**2 areas**		High Weald and Kent Downs
Number of businesses Formerly AONB	**6,375**	5,352 Kent average	KCC – UK Business Counts 2023
Life expectancy (at birth) 2022	**Males 80.9 | Females 83.9**	Males 78.6 Females 82.6	Local Authority health profiles – fingertips public health data
Unemployment rates	**3.1% (Nov 23)**	3.8	Model based estimates of unemployment ONS
Universal credit claimants	**14.5% (Apr24 (age 16-64)**	14.9% in April 2024	KCC – universal credit claimants Nov 23
Houses rented from council or housing association	**14% of homes**	17%	Census 2021
Homes rented from private sector landlord	**17.9%**	20%	Census 2021

Ashford
Borough Council