



Annual Report

Formerly the Best Value Performance Plan

2006

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1. Foreword

Statement from the Leader of the Council

Welcome to Ashford Borough Council's Annual Report which outlines the services we provide, highlights our achievements from April 2005 to March 2006 and sets out our plans for improvement for the coming year.

We have taken some significant steps over the last year to live up to our mission to protect and improve the quality of life of every resident of the borough, now and in the future. These include:

- Providing quality services while keeping Council Tax rates at one of the lowest in Kent.
- Securing over £20 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) to fund a range of development projects.
- Consulting with Ashford residents to gain approval for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. This sets out our vision for the future of the borough including the growth of the Ashford urban area.
- Achieving a 5% reduction in crime through the effective crime and disorder partnership (CDRP) with the Police and Fire and Rescue
- Investing over £1.5m to improve the borough's parks and open spaces.



Some exciting and challenging times lie ahead of us as we seek to meet Government proposals to provide 31,000 new homes and 28,000 jobs by 2031. We will have to manage carefully how we resource the increasing responsibilities being placed upon us and ensure that as the population of Ashford grows, the provision of transport links, health care, education and leisure facilities grow too. Working in partnership with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations and listening to the views of Ashford residents will help us to do this. You can let us know your views through our website at www.ashford.gov.uk or by visiting the public consultation events that will be taking place around the borough over the coming year.

More information about our services and the latest news can be found at www.ashford.gov.uk and in Ashford Voice, the council's bi-monthly magazine delivered to all households in Ashford

We remain committed to providing high quality and cost effective services to everyone living in the borough and I look forward to an exciting year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Clokie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Paul Clokie
Leader of the Council

Statement from the Chief Executive

2005/6 was another year of significant achievement for the council. We were recognised as a Beacon Council for our excellent approach to asset management. We also won further awards for our excellence in the use of information technology and for the way we support and work with the voluntary sector in the borough.



As this report shows, there has also been an across-the-board improvement in performance against a whole range of statutory and local performance indicators.

I'm proud that we have secured these achievements whilst also delivering significant efficiency savings, reinforcing our claim to be the best value for money local authority in Kent.

We are poised to deliver further significant community benefits in the next two years, particularly as a number of key projects in Ashford town centre come to fruition. During 2006 we will be reviewing and updating our corporate objectives and the Borough's Community Strategy to make sure that we are well placed to meet the community's expectations and fulfil our Councillors aspirations for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

David Hill
Chief Executive

2. About the Borough

Size	224 square miles
Population	107,700 people
Households	44,000

The Borough of Ashford is the largest district in Kent and is located at the heart of the county's finest countryside. Containing a mix of rural and urban communities, the Borough covers the main towns of Ashford and Tenterden, along with 38 villages that all have their own distinct character. It is no surprise that the beautiful settings have inspired so many writers; the village of Pluckley provided the setting for local author HE Bates' "The Darling Buds of May", while Jane Austen depicted characters and scenes from the village of Godmersham in her novel "Pride and Prejudice". Great Maytham Hall at Rolvenden contains the ancient walled garden that prompted Frances Hodgson Burnett to write the children's novel "The Secret Garden".



The town of Tenterden, known as the 'Jewel of the Weald' is popular with visitors due to its host of specialist shops, tearooms, inns and restaurants which epitomise the best of traditional Kent. The town of Ashford is a booming retail and business centre with a busy high street. Development projects are ongoing to enhance the town such as the extension to the County Square Shopping Centre.

Leisure

Ashford prides itself on providing some of the best sporting facilities in the South East with an international standard athletics stadium and two first-class leisure centres. There are also numerous recreation grounds which are used for football, cricket, tennis, netball and bowls and casual recreational spaces such as parks, bridleways, riverside walks and children's play areas. A bowling alley, a 12-screen cinema, an indoor bowls hall and a wide choice of restaurants completes a comprehensive selection of leisure pursuits.

Transport

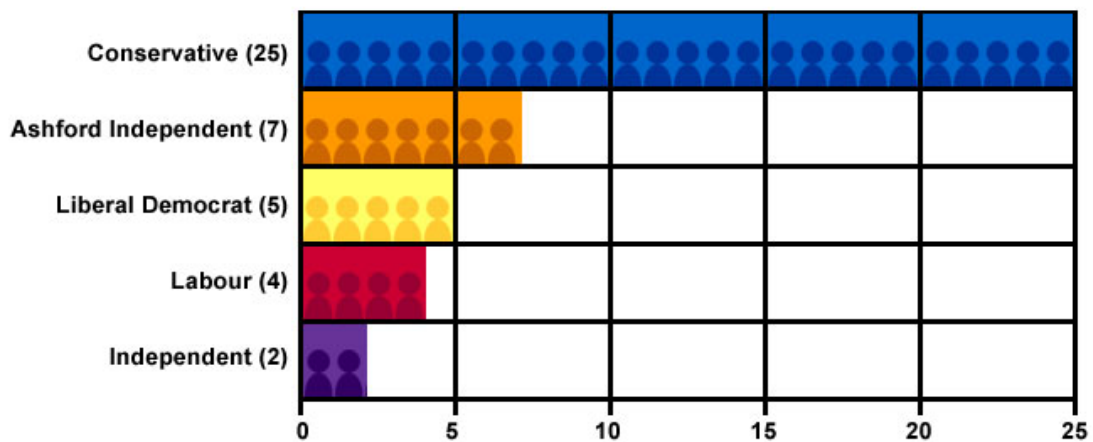
Ashford has been a transport hub since the 1600s when it was primarily a market town, developing with the arrival of the railway in 1842 and foundation of the Railway Works in 1846. Today, Ashford still has excellent transport links; it is just off of the M20 motorway with junctions to the north and to the south of the town, 20 minutes from Dover, 90 minutes from London and at the junction of five major rail routes. Ashford's International Station also brings an exciting range of destinations within a couple of hours travelling time, with Eurostar trains departing regularly for Lille, Paris and Brussels.

Ashford, The Place To Be

The Borough of Ashford is a place of great variety and contrasts, from being the home of the strikingly designed McArthur Glen Designer Outlet to Imperial College's campus in the village of Wye. Our strategic position between London, Paris and Brussels, coupled with excellent road and rail connections makes it the ideal location to live and work. An extensive programme of projects to stimulate and sustain growth means that the unique character of the Borough is continuously evolving, combining a rich heritage with the vibrancy of a modern international gateway.

3. About the Council

Ashford Borough Council is made up of 43 councillors who were elected in May 2003 to represent their local communities until 2007. It operates with a Leader and Cabinet system, rather like the Government Cabinet, with an Executive made up of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and four other elected councillors. Each Executive member has a portfolio of work for which they have personal responsibility. The Executive normally meets every month and makes decisions within agreed budgets and policies. Some decisions can only be taken by the full Council, which meets five times a year; and is the principal forum for major political debate and the ultimate decision-making body. The current political make-up of the Council is shown below. To learn more about our Councillors please follow this link: <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/cgi-bin/members/index.cfm>



Ashford Borough Council employs approximately 520 staff (including Stour Leisure employees). On the 1st April 2006 the Council underwent a slight re-organisation with the Communications & Marketing service coming under the auspices of Corporate Policy & Planning. The arrangement of the services is shown below:



3.1 Local Government Functions

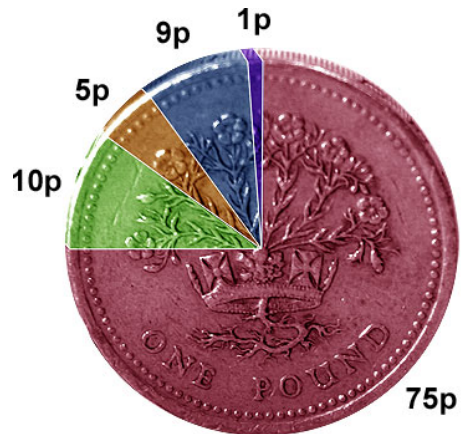
There is a two-tier structure in place where functions and services are split between Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council. At an even more local level there are also 38 parish and town councils in the Borough. There is some degree of overlap between the different levels of local government and with partnership and cross boundary working increasing there is a more seamless service for members of the public. The table below shows how the responsibilities for service delivery are divided.

SERVICE	Kent County Council	Ashford Borough Council	Parish Councils
Education	✓		
Environmental health		✓	
Collection of council tax and non-domestic rates		✓	
Highways (traffic management and street lighting)	✓		
Housing		✓	
Payment of Housing and Council Tax Benefit		✓	
Libraries	✓		
Local plans and planning applications		✓	
Parking (on street and public)	✓	✓	
Public conveniences		✓	✓
Recreation, arts and museums	✓	✓	✓
Social services	✓		
Strategic planning and development	✓	✓	
Trading standards	✓		
Transport	✓		
Waste disposal	✓		
Waste collection		✓	

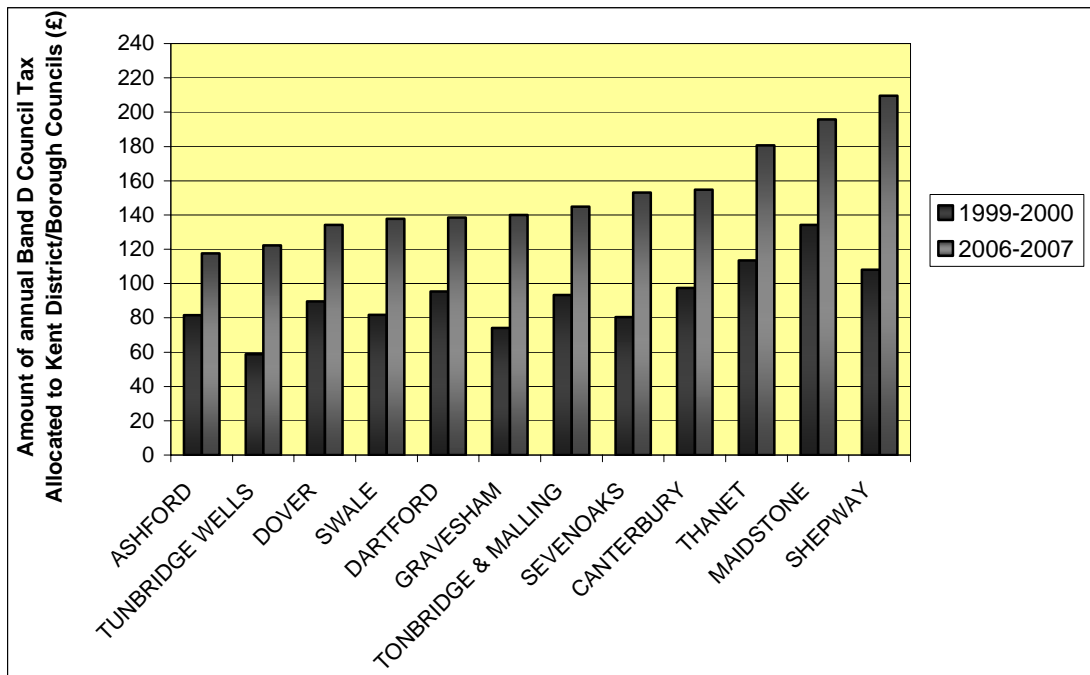
3.2 Council Tax

The Council receives money in the way of grants from Central Government, from Businesses (Non-Domestic Rates) and by charging for a range of services offered by the Council. Total income from these sources is not enough to meet the cost of providing services and the difference is made up by council tax.

The adjacent diagram shows how the council tax paid by residents of Ashford Borough is allocated to the different tiers of local government to provide the services listed previously. For each pound you pay, the rounded figures are: Kent County Council 75p, Kent Police Authority 9p, Kent Fire Authority 5p, Ashford Borough Council 10p and parish councils collectively 1p.



Ashford Borough Council has maintained its council tax at the lowest rate in Kent whilst still delivering a comprehensive range of services.



3.3 Budget

A summary of the Council's Revenue Budget for 2006/2007 showing the projected end of year figures for 2005/2006 is shown below.

REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07				
SUMMARY				
ACTUAL	ESTIMATE	PROJECTED	DETAIL	ESTIMATE
2004/05	2005/06	OUTTURN		2006/07
£	£	2005/06		£
		£		
1,132,432	870,550	952,610	Corporate Core	781,830
168,845	180,630	339,370	Communications and Marketing	219,980
1,148,020	1,197,310	1,173,180	Legal and Democratic Services	1,196,670
1,377,137	1,214,660	1,269,520	Planning	1,242,420
2,484,501	2,875,490	2,957,890	Financial Services	3,308,470
(25,842)	(91,740)	(78,280)	ICT	(2,520)
459,088	491,120	529,120	Housing	518,510
5,195,080	5,501,000	5,405,180	Environmental Services	5,853,670
3,006,795	2,800,490	2,648,480	Cultural Services	2,810,880
71,109	-	(21,000)	Highways and Transportation	-
15,017,165	15,039,510	15,176,070	SERVICE EXPENDITURE	15,929,910
(4,196,235)	(3,552,060)	(3,786,060)	Asset Management Account	(3,260,950)
58,997	69,790	69,790	Concurrent Functions Grant	71,400
177,089	182,410	191,210	Drainage Board Levies	201,280
212,157	96,230	184,870	Contribution to/(from) Balances	(80,880)
11,269,173	11,835,880	11,835,880	ABC BUDGET REQUIREMENT	12,860,760
511,390	585,800	585,800	Total Parish Precepts	599,060
11,780,563	12,421,680	12,421,680	NET EXPENDITURE	13,459,820
			INCOME	
(6,734,463)	(6,949,700)	(6,949,700)	Government Grant	(7,676,100)
(43,280)	(40,970)	(40,970)	Collection Fund Surplus	(40,000)
(511,390)	(585,800)	(585,800)	Parish Precepts	(599,060)
4,491,430	4,845,210	4,845,210	Council Tax required	5,144,660

4. Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan provides a framework for detailed service planning and budget setting. It also means the community can effectively hold the Council to account for the progress made against its planned targets. It gives residents of the Borough a real sense of what we are going to do over the next four years or so and clearly shows how the Council intends to use its resources.

The plan was produced by reviewing previous policies and strategies and has three parts:

1) Mission Statement	-	setting out purpose and overall objectives
2) Action Statement	-	setting out detailed objectives to be achieved between 2003 to 2007 with keys costs and outcomes
3) Statement of Performance	-	to be revised yearly when individual Service Plans and targets are prepared, showing immediate targets for the year and the progress made against overall objectives

The Council's mission is, 'To protect and improve the quality of life of every resident in the Borough, now and in the future.'

We will do this by:

Listening
{ To what our community says
{ To feedback from our staff and customers
{ To what our partners tell us they are trying to achieve
Learning
{ From our experience
{ By training and developing our staff to serve the community better
{ From the best examples set by others
Leading
{ By example
{ By representing the community's interests when the borough is affected by the actions of others
{ By working with others for the common good

The current Corporate Plan will be revised in 2007 to take into account the changing needs of the community as well as economic and political factors.

The Corporate Plan is split into four distinct objectives outlined in the table below. These cascade downwards to the eight service areas in the Council.

Objective	To meet this objective we will:
A Better Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take all necessary steps to ensure future growth and development in and around the Ashford Urban Area is high quality and sustainable • Prepare a new Local Development Framework for the Borough by 2006
A Better Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and improve the local environment • Transform the quality of Ashford Town Centre • Encourage a new approach to public transport • With partners contribute to improving community safety and reducing the fear of crime
Better Lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby, with partners through the Local Strategic Partnership, for new and improved schools and colleges • Increase the opportunities for local residents to prosper • Develop active, creative and sustainable communities • Modernise the Stour Leisure Centre by 2006 • Promote healthy living and social well-being • Develop strategies to ensure our services meet the needs of all
Better Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage our resources so that Ashford continues to have one of the lowest council taxes in Kent • Consult widely and effectively with the community to ensure that our services meet their needs and aspirations • Improve the quality of customer service in all our dealings with customers • Continuously improve all our services to ensure they deliver what is required to a suitable standard, as economically and efficiently as possible • Communicate clearly and effectively

5. Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the method by which Central Government assesses how well local authorities are performing. There are five possible rankings: poor, weak, fair, good and excellent. In 2003 Ashford Borough Council, in its first ever assessment was judged as being, 'a Good Council that is well placed to deliver further improvements'. This was a fantastic achievement, reflecting the hard work and dedication of everyone at the Council.

Building on this success and as a council that strives for continuous improvement Ashford Borough Council is now aiming to be graded as Excellent in the 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In order to do this we will remain focused on continually improving the way in which we deliver services as well as tackling weaker areas and maintaining the strengths identified in our first assessment.

In order to implement improvements throughout the Council we introduced an Improvement Plan in May 2005 designed to improve ourselves as a Council and deliver the excellent services our residents deserve. A refreshed Improvement Plan was approved by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Other Issues) in October 2005 to focus improvement in 9 key areas:

Tighten up Corporate Planning

Strengthen the Ashford Partnership

Improve Consultation and Community Engagement

Maintain efforts to get the best out of Ashford's Future

Secure better communication

Promote a stronger Performance Management culture

Focus on workforce development

Drive further efficiencies throughout the council

Embed a customer focused culture throughout the organisation.

By February 2006 significant progress had been made in most key areas as can be seen in detail in the report to Executive on 9th February 2006 which can be found [here](#)¹. It should be noted that the community consultation exercise has been delayed by an internal review of the Communications service and a Mori Poll will now be completed during late 2006.

¹<http://abc-cf1/cfapps2/IntraDocTracker/index.cfm?fuseaction=DocTrack.getAgendaDoc&AgendaID=4619>

6. What Are Performance Indicators?

The Council is always trying to achieve continuous improvement by having regard to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of our service delivery. Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) are measures of performance set by Central Government against key delivery areas such as council tax collection and level of waste recycling which help us to check if we are improving. In order to get a balanced view of performance the BVPI's cover the following five areas:

- ⇒ **SERVICE OBJECTIVES**
Why the service exists and what it seeks to achieve
- ⇒ **EFFICIENCY**
The resources committed to a service and the efficiency with which they are turned in to outputs
- ⇒ **SERVICE DELIVERY OUTCOMES**
How well the service is being operated in order to achieve the strategic objectives
- ⇒ **QUALITY**
The quality of the services delivered, explicitly reflecting users experience of services
- ⇒ **FAIR ACCESS**
Ease and equality of access to services

Ashford Borough Council has also set a number of Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) which reflect our own priorities and services. These LPIs allow us to monitor and maintain high levels of service in areas that are important to the people of Ashford.

Quality of Life indicators are existing measures from a variety of sources (Police, Health Authority etc.) that central Government has grouped under different headings that cut across public sector boundaries to paint a picture of the quality of life in a local area. They cover a range of important sustainable development issues that influence our long term well-being. The different headings are; Community Cohesion & Involvement, Community Safety, Culture & Leisure, Economic Well-Being, Education & Lifelong Learning, Environment, Health & Social Well-being, Housing, People & Place and Transport & Access. Our 2004/05 quality of life indicators are available on-line by following the following link <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pbviews/book1/book.html>. Our 2005/06 results will be made available once they have been published.

6.1 Service Improvement

Measuring and reporting performance against BVPIs and LPIs allows us to act on the information to inform decision-making and to focus our resources. The use of performance indicators allows us to judge which services are performing well, those that are satisfactory and those that are performing poorly so that we can target, in the most resource effective way, those areas that need the most improvement.

There are currently 91 BVPI's and 69 LPIs. A summary of how the Council has performed in relation to our Performance Indicators for 2005/2006 is shown below

Best Value Performance Indicators:

- { 66.2% (49) of our BVPI results were on or above target
- { 33.8% (25) of our BVPI results did not reach target however, of these
- { 40% (10) were close to achieving target
- { There are 17 BVPI's which cannot be compared to target (1 still awaiting result)

Local Performance Indicators:

- { 70.3% (45) of our LPI results were on or above target
- { 29.7% (19) of our BVPI results did not reach target however, of these
- { 35% (7) were close to achieving target
- { There are 4 LPI's which cannot be compared to target (1 still awaiting result)

The following sections will outline the performance of the Council's service areas over the past year, not only in terms of indicators and targets but also looking at major achievements, current progress against previously stated plans and plans for the future.

7. Service Information

7.1 Communications & Marketing

What Do We Do?

This service makes sure that people know and understand what the Council is doing. This is done through the production of press releases, handling of publicity opportunities, marketing all events, producing in-house information and communication materials, external consultation and research exercises and managing the Council websites.

Past Achievements

Clearer Council Identity

The style of many of the Council's forms and leaflets have been standardised which has helped to reduce costs and develop a clearer corporate identity so that all our activities are clearly recognisable. This has been combined with the promotion of using Plain English in all the Council's letters, publications and reports so that they are easy to understand.

Internet Surveys

This has been an incredibly effective method of finding out how people living in the Borough of Ashford feel about various issues. One online project that has been highly successful in influencing policy is the What Matters survey, which asked young people aged 11-19 questions on topics ranging from transport to crime. The results have helped inform the Borough's youth strategy and led to a variety of initiatives to take action on the concerns raised.

Current Progress

Ashford Voice

The Ashford Voice magazine was launched in March 2005 to keep residents and visitors informed about issues and events going on in the Borough, as well as raising the profile of the Council, voluntary sector and other partners in the community. It has been going from strength to strength and during 2006/07 50,000 copies will be delivered every two months to all households in the Borough.

Website

A brand new web content management system has been commissioned with a new redesigned and restructured website to be delivered this year. This will increase access to information about the Council and its services and enhance the ability of residents to interact with the Council online. The Ashford's Future website is also being re-launched so that people can be kept fully up to date on developments and progress in the Borough.

Future Goals

Service Development Strategy

We have completely revised the structure of this service and our arrangements with other




services in the Council so that we are more proactive. This will include a new approach to web strategy and an advisory rather than event facilitation role for the Planning & Development service. In addition and to further cement the operational change of focus for the Communications & Marketing Service, from 1st April 2006 the service will join the Corporate Core and fall under the auspices of Corporate Policy.

Contact

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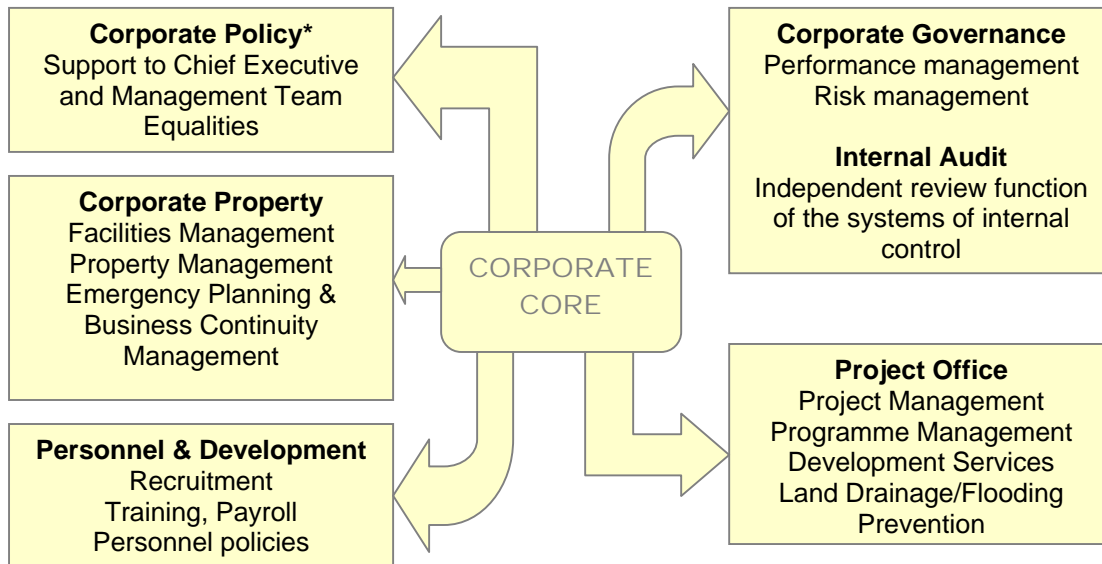
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
C1	% of employees satisfied with information received from Root & Branch*	86.00%	80.00%	91.00%	✓	85.00%

* Root & Branch is the internal staff magazine that is published on a monthly basis

7.2 Corporate Core

What Do We Do?

The Corporate Core assists other services in the Council to deliver service and corporate objectives. This includes supporting the Senior Management Team in providing strategic direction for the authority as a whole and enabling the rest of the organisation to operate more effectively and respond quickly to new challenges. The Corporate Core consists of the following sections:



*Communications and Marketing join Corporate Policy from 1st April 2006

Past Achievements

Beacon Status

The Corporate Property team handles a diverse range of the Council's assets from windmills to leisure complexes and in March 2005 Ashford Borough Council won Beacon status for its management of those assets. Since winning this coveted award we have liaised with other authorities to spread good practice, by methods such as attending national conferences and holding open days.

Audit Partnership

In September 2005 Ashford Borough Council began a partnership with Maidstone Borough Council to provide a jointly managed internal audit service for the two authorities. This innovative arrangement provides a more resilient service as skills, learning and experience are shared and developed jointly between the two councils.

Risk Assessments

A formal programme of workshop based service risk assessments were introduced to enable services to understand their own risk appetite and how vulnerable the service objectives were. All services now have a Risk Register and Risk Actions Plans to manage the above the line risks. This service level work was fed into the Strategic Risk Assessment which was refreshed as usual in December.

What's Your Flava

On behalf of a number of Kent local authorities the Personnel & Development team was responsible for co-ordinating the 'What's Your Flava' show, a huge careers event held at the Kent County Showground for 13-17 year olds. This has been an invaluable way of actively inspiring young people to consider a career in local government and offering information on opportunities available to them locally. Held in March 2006 our involvement in the event was highly successful with an exciting and interactive exhibit which attracted lots of attention.



Project and Programme Management

During the last year the Project Office has introduced corporate project and programme management systems to improve the management of projects and use of resources, both human and financial. This contributed to the award of Beacon status for asset management, since when other Council's have been keen to learn from our good practice. Capital projects completed during 2005/6 include the Ashford Indoor Bowls Centre and the Green Spaces project to improve Victoria Park and nearby areas (shown above).

Current Progress

Performance Management

Each year a series of Best Value reviews are carried out to help services continually improve whilst maintaining or reducing costs so that services are performing at their optimum level. A review was carried out this year of procurement of temporary staff (as part of a wider look at the Council's procurement in general) that has led to the creation of a preferential service user agreement with a small number of temporary staffing agencies. This will create efficiencies in terms of time and costs when temporary staff need to be employed so that service delivery isn't affected.

An interactive version of the Council's Performance Management Framework is now available online (http://www.ashford.gov.uk/about_council/performance_management.asp) so that members of the public and staff can easily access strategies and policies relating to the Council and see how they fit together, as well being able to view progress on various performance indicators.

Emergency Planning Review

The Overview & Scrutiny team facilitates Councillor-led reviews of issues of public concern, a recent example being checking the state of preparedness of the Borough in an emergency. In April 2006 the Overview & Scrutiny function moved to join with the Legal & Democratic Services team to take advantage of the synergy in their work.

Project Office

The Project Office provides professional expertise in architecture, engineering, surveying, cultural planning and project management to deliver a large portfolio of capital projects. It is currently involved in over 20 projects totalling over £25 million in value. The biggest projects currently underway are the Remodelling of the Stour Centre, a 1,000 space Park & Ride

scheme and Singleton Environment Centre, all of which have secured significant government funding. The Project Office is also responsible for providing programme management support to both the Council and Ashford's Future to monitor progress and assist in the planning of hundreds of individual projects.

Future Goals

Equalities

During 2006/07 a comprehensive equality strategy will be produced which will pull together all equality issues across both the Council and the Borough.

Shared Services Review

Following on from the achievement of the Audit Partnership we are continuing to look at opportunities to share services with other authorities. Working with other authorities offers the potential to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in the way the Council delivers its services.

Project Office

The Project Office will continue to develop both project and programme management to raise standards and efficiency across the Council and within the Ashford's Future partnership. We will also be investigating working more closely in partnership with other authorities.

Corporate Property

Corporate Property will be developing Business Continuity Plans for all Council services. These plans will increase the Council's resilience in the event of a major incident causing disruption to the Council's critical functions.

Senior Management Development Framework



This framework is an overall statement of our expectations of senior managers at the Council. The initial stages have been completed and the senior team has now been assessed. From this work bespoke and targeted development programmes will be developed to ensure the necessary competences needed to drive effective organisational performance in the future are available to the Council. In the long-term this framework will be rolled out across the Council as a practical tool for assessing and developing managers at all levels in the Council.



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Planning & Policy Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 2a	The Level of the Equality Standard ABC achieves for race, gender and disability. (1-5, 5 is best)	1	1	0	✓	2	3	3
BV 2b	Quality of ABC race equality scheme. Checklist system - Number out of 19 shown as a %	26.32%	25.00%	26.00%	✓	74%	74%	74%
BV 174	Number of Racial Incidents (where ABC has some direct involvement) reported to ABC and recorded per 100,000 population	1.85	4	1.85	✓	3	2	2
BV 175	Racial Incidents reported to ABC that are followed up	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%	100%	100%

Corporate Governance Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
CG1	Audits Completed	21	32	New	✗	deleted
CG2	% of audit recommendations accepted	Performance Indicator not measured due to change in operational procedures				deleted
CG4	Time between draft and final audit report	Performance Indicator not measured due to change in operational procedures				deleted

Personnel & Development Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 11a	Percentage of Top paid 5% of ABC staff who are women	30.00%	25.00%	21.50%	✓	40.28%	40.28%	40.28%
BV 11b	Percentage of Top paid 5% of ABC staff from an Ethnic Minority	0%	2.40%	0%	✗	3.39%	3.39%	3.39%

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INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 11c	Percentage of Top paid 5% of ABC staff who class themselves as disabled	8.50%	7.60%	New	✓	9.00%	10.45%	11.80%
BV 12	Working days lost due to sickness (average days per FTE)	7.47	6.50	8.61	✗	8.44	8.44	8.44
BV 14	Early retirement rate (excl ill health) Calculated annually	0%	0.14%	0.76%	✓	0.19%	0.19%	0.19%
BV 15	Early retirement rate - ill health only Calculated annually	0%	0.30%	0.19%	✓	0.15%	0.15%	0.15%
BV 16a	% Employees declaring Disability	3.74%	6.00%	3.82%	✗	3.74%	3.74%	3.74%
BV 16b	% Economically active population (age 18-64) who have a disability	10.45%	10.45%	New	n/a	10.45%	10.45%	10.45%
BV 17a	% Employees from an ethnic minority	2.0%	2.4%	1.9%	✗	4.6%	4.6%	4.6%
BV 17b	% Economically active (age 18-64) ethnic minority people in the borough	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	n/a	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
CH1a	Resignation rate of non-managerial posts	3.58%	10.00%	4.61%	✓	10%
CH1b	Resignation rate of managerial posts	0.48%	4.00%	1.51%	✓	4%
P&D3	Cost of overtime (as a percentage of wage bill)	1.12%	1.00%	1.37%	✗	1%

Corporate Property Performance Indicators

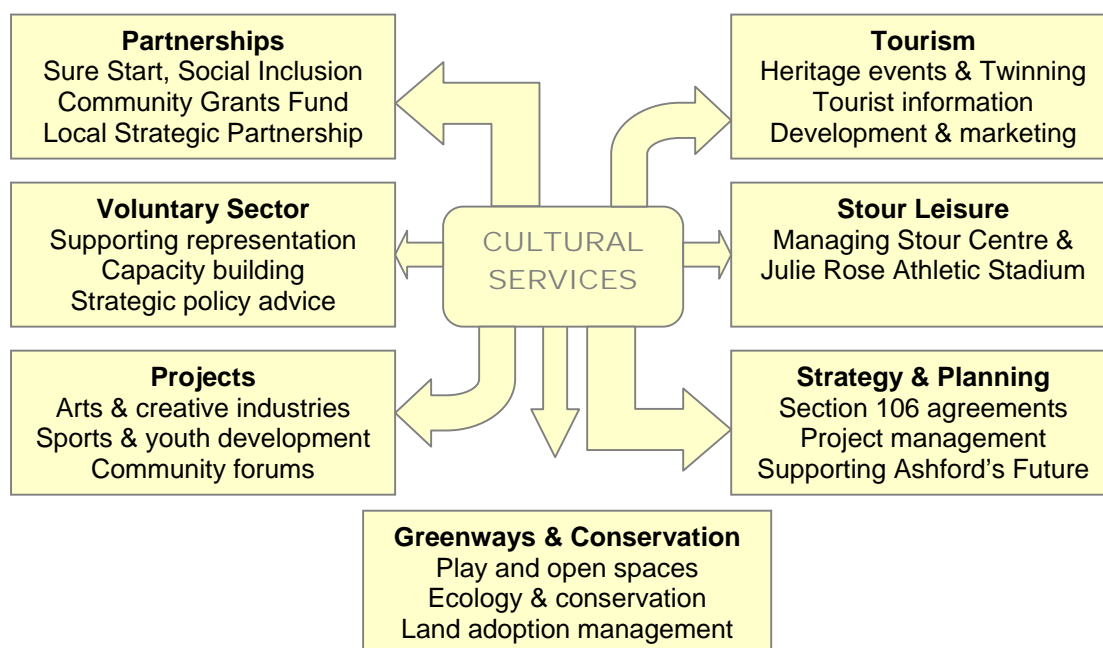
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 156	% of ABC buildings – open to the public- where all public areas suitable for access by disabled people	66.67%	66.67%	66.67%	✓	75.14%	75.14%	75.14%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
PS6a	% of drawings, council houses completed in 10 days	87.00%	80.00%	New	✓	deleted
PS6b	% Planning consultations completed in 10 days	100%	100%	New	✓	deleted
PS8a	% of potential income received (shops)	72.53%	92.00%	92.00%	✗	deleted
PS8b	% of potential income received (Ellingham)	90.72%	90.00%	92.00%	✓	deleted
PS9a	Amount of arrears on industrial properties (£)	£15,875	Not set	New	n/a	deleted
PS9b	Amount of arrears on commercial properties (£)	£16,154	Not set	New	n/a	deleted
PS10	% of floor space let on Ellingham Industrial Estate	95.50%	92.00%	96.25%	✓	deleted
PS11	Average number of void properties on Ellingham Industrial Estate	5	8	4.75	✓	deleted

7.3 Cultural Services

What Do We Do?

Cultural Services meet the leisure and cultural needs for the people living and working within the Borough. By working together with local people, voluntary organisations and the public and private sectors on active and creative initiatives, we are improving the quality of life for residents, ensuring that communities are supported and developed. Millions of pounds worth of external funding has been sourced from outside the Council to carry out a range of projects varying in size and scale. Large projects often take longer than one financial year and the planning and implementation stages can overlap. The diagram below shows the wide remit of Cultural Services:



Past Achievements

Voluntary Sector

Cultural Services is proud of its work with the voluntary sector. They have completed a study on the economic value of services provided within the sector so that external agencies have a clearer view on the importance of supporting the resources and services that voluntary organisations can offer. The creation of an Ashford Community Network will pull together the influence of the voluntary sector as a whole.

Community Forums

Over the past 12 months we have been working with parishes, Tenterden Town Council and urban community forums on projects in specific areas. An example is work with Willesborough Forum and the provision of a new community centre in that area.

Current Progress

Stour Centre Refurbishment

The refurbishment of the Stour Centre is continuing at pace and although there has been a delay in the anticipated completion date for the project it is now hoped to be fully open to the public during the first quarter of 2007. The wait will be worth while though as a state of the art fitness centre and health/leisure pool is something that Ashford desperately needs.

Sports Development

There are a number of sports and leisure developments ongoing in the Borough including a netball centre (which will be the biggest women and girl's netball facility in the South East) that is on target to finish this summer and open in autumn. The very popular Sk8side skate park is due to be upgraded and refurbished by the school summer holidays and holiday fun camps are being expanded at leisure centres in the Borough.



Green Spaces

A £1.5m investment from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in a Green Corridor project is due to be completed, with £850,000 spent on Victoria Park landscaping and children's facilities. There have been public consultations on new major play areas in Godington Park, Singleton and Noakes Meadow, which included a large element of input from children.

What Matters Youth Plan

The 'What Matters' youth strategy is a response to the views and concerns raised by young residents in the Borough through the What Matters survey carried out in 2004. The top concerns are; getting to places, having things to do, having a say, safe and clean streets, and leisure facilities. Working with Kent County Council and the Local Strategic Partnership we have been targeting these issues. As part of this policy we are working with young people to explore ways in which it might be possible to provide an ice rink in Ashford.

Ashford Youth Forum

The Youth Forum has really taken off this year. Growing in both size and impact this group of committed young people work on various projects to make Ashford a better place and ensuring that the views of their peers are heard. More and more young people are getting involved in Youth Forum initiated projects and are contributing to a wide range of Council activities that have an impact on everyone's lives, from planning applications to local democracy. This is definitely something to be celebrated because as a district authority we don't have a statutory responsibility for youth issues.

Discovery Centre / Arts & Media Centre

These are both projects which have changed since their original inception. The plans for the Discovery Centre (a Kent County Council initiative) have changed and it will no longer be a major new public building. For the Arts & Media Centre, following a change in anticipated funding levels from the South East England Development Agency, we have had to scale back our original plans and we will now separate arts and media and create a Media & Knowledge Centre instead.

Future Goals

Arts

An exciting opportunity to utilise St Mary's Church as a permanent arts centre as well as a place of worship is being explored, with support from South Kent College, Arts Council England, local arts groups and the Church of England among others. St Mary's Church will also once again play host to Ashford Summer Sounds Festival, along with being a space for Ashford's new Visual Arts & Architecture Festival in September 2006.

Big Bus Project

This initiative started when a group of young people became frustrated by the fact that they couldn't get around the Borough easily. They came up with the idea of a hop on/hop off bus that operates on a fixed loop, stopping at key points such as the cinema and is covered by a day ticket. The 'Big Bus' will serve as a community facility to improve access for anybody who wants to use it and different organisations e.g. health awareness groups can provide a service on the bus. The Council will facilitate a Big Lottery Fund application to help fund the project and it has had huge influence on local transport provision. Following on from this private companies such as Stage Coach are thinking of changing current routes to meet local needs better thanks to the ideas from young people.

Community Centres

When developers build new houses they have to provide Section 106 funding (money to provide infrastructure and community facilities). Since Ashford is a place of huge growth there are great potential benefits available to residents if the funding is used to it's maximum advantage. A Youth & Community Centre is planned in New Town (Bushy Royds) and an imaginatively designed Environment Centre is to be constructed in Singleton that will be a hub for environmental education, training and community groups.

Contact

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Cultural Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 170a	Number of visits to galleries and museums per 1,000 population	54	32	26.17	✓	877	877	877
BV 170b	Number of visits to galleries & museums that were in person per 1,000 population.	54	32	26.17	✓	514	514	514
BV 170c	Number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups	422	92	New	✓	7031	7031	7031
BV 226a	Total amount spent on advice and guidance services provided by external organisations	£146,248	£120,000	New	✓	£124k	£128k	£130k
BV 226b	% of monies spent on organisations holding the CLS Quality Mark at General Help level & above	76.19%	98.00%	97.70%	✗	98.20%	98.40%	98.60%
BV 226c	Total amount spent on advice & guidance for housing, welfare	Awaiting result		New	n/a	tbc	tbc	tbc

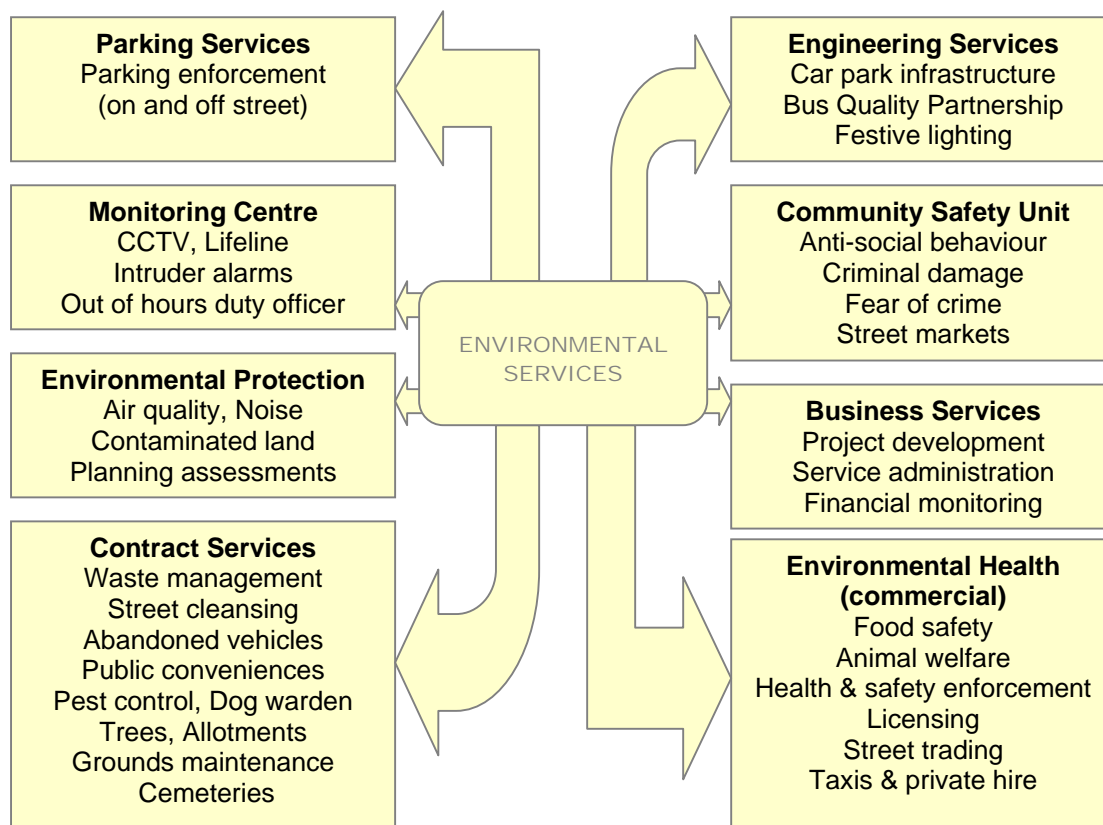
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
	benefits and consumer matters – direct provision by ABC							

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
CS3	Amount of external funding levered into community projects	8:1	5:1	12:1	✓	7:1
CS5	% of Council playgrounds/areas meeting minimum safety standards	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%
CS6	Number of Council owned playgrounds - areas per 1000 children under 12	Not yet available	Depends on result	New	n/a	Depends on result
CS10	Number of usable sports pitches available per 1000 population	0.36	0.36	New	✓	39 (Definition change)
CS20	Number of additional arts/sports/cultural initiatives	8	5	New	✓	3
SL1a	Number of visits to Stour Leisure Centre per 1000 population	1,748	3000	2400	✗	deleted
SL1b	Number of visits to Julie Rose Stadium per 1000 population	817	1000	580	✗	deleted
SL2a	% of visits to Stour Leisure Centre from concessionary groups	26.50%	5.00%	0.09%	✓	deleted
SL2b	% of visits to Julie Rose Stadium from concessionary groups	13.02%	5.00%	n/a	✓	deleted

7.4 Environmental Services

What Do We Do?

Environmental Services ensures that the Borough is kept clean, tidy and safe whilst complying with various statutory responsibilities so that Ashford is a nice place to live, work and visit.



Past Achievements

Domestic Waste Strategy

In April 2005 the first phase of the garden waste collection scheme was introduced to help meet challenging targets of recycling 21% of domestic waste. The implementation has been a great success and we will be expanding the areas covered by this initiative in the forthcoming year.

Community Safety

The Community Safety Team moved into refurbished accommodation in the Old Police Station on Tufton Street so that they can work more closely with police colleagues to reduce fear of anti-social behaviour and crime. This is one of only a few such working arrangements in Kent and a great example for others. The team has carried out a range of proactive campaigns such as distributing 30,000 'spikeys' to pubs and clubs across Ashford and Tenterden to prevent drink spiking.

Monitoring Centre

From October 2005 an upgraded lifeline service was introduced which provides a telephone link for older and vulnerable people 24 hours a day. A disaster recovery element has also been integrated so that there is seamless back up and the service is not disrupted if anything

affects the operation of the Monitoring Centre.

Environmental Health

A 'Safer Food, Better Business' newsletter is distributed by the Environmental Health team to support employers responsible for the health, safety and welfare of their employees and visitors to their premises. We also ensured that businesses were supported when new food hygiene laws were introduced in 2006 and implemented the new legislation successfully.



Current Progress

A Cleaner Borough

A Tidiness of Borough Review carried out by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee produced a range of recommendations for enhancements and led to a weekly slot in the local press raising awareness about a 'Cleaner, Greener Ashford'. The 'Top Spots and Grot Spots' campaign really enthused the community to get involved with improving the area and to take pride in where they live.

The Council has invested in a Grime Buster, a specialised graffiti-removing machine which will be used in partnership with the Probation Service who will be co-ordinating people carrying out community service to operate the machine and clean up around the Borough. This is a fantastic example of trying something a bit different to tackle an unpleasant and recurring problem.

Parking

We have been carrying out parking reviews in Tenterden, Willesborough Lees (around the William Harvey Hospital) and various zones within central Ashford. These reviews involved public consultation and exhibitions and the resulting plans are due for implementation in summer 2006.

Future Goals

The major challenge for Environmental Services is to develop to meet the needs of a rapidly growing Borough. With more residents there will be more household waste to collect, more recycling to be done, more environmental health enforcement to carry out and so on. There is also the commitment to the Ashford Borough Community Safety Partnership, a multi-agency group who work together to tackle issues such as crime, anti-social behaviour, home security, fly tipping, noise problems, litter, vandalism and abandoned vehicles, to name but a few.

Contact

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Environmental Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	
BV 82ai	% of household waste sent for recycling	14.99%	18.00%	13.36%	✗	19.00%	20.00%	21.00%	
BV 82aai	Total tonnage of waste sent for recycling	6,086.27	7215.72	new	✗	tbc	tbc	tbc	
BV 82bi	% of household waste sent for composting	3.77%	3.00%	0.60%	✓	9.93%	9.93%	9.93%	
BV 82bii	Total tonnage of waste sent for composting	1,529.19	1352.95	new	✓	tbc	tbc	tbc	
BV 84a	Number of kilograms of waste collected per head	377.1	425	413.9	✓	396.7	396.7	396.7	
BV 84b	% change in waste collected per head	-8.89%	0%	new	✓	-1.00%	-1.00%	-1.00%	
BV 86	Cost of waste collection per household	£40.45	£39.29	£37.51	✗	£35.31	£35.31	£35.31	
BV 91a	% of population with kerbside collection of one recyclable	82.1%	78.35%	82.14%	✓	100%	100%	100%	
BV 91b	% of population with kerbside collection of at least two recyclables	82.1%	78.35%	New	✓	82.14%	82.14%	82.14%	
BV 126	Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	9.3	10.04	10.57	✓	6.90	6.90	6.90	
BV 127a	Violent crimes per 1000 population	16.3	15.6	New	✗	14.9	14.4	14.0	
BV 127b	Robberies per 1000 population	0.6	0.4	New	✗	0.4	0.3	0.3	
BV 128	Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	8.2	7.60	8.00	✗	7.77	7.77	7.77	
BV 166a	Score against checklist for environmental health / trading standards checklist	94.2%	94.2%	84.2%	✓	97.0%	97.0%	97.0%	
BV 199a	% land and highways with unacceptable litter	11.8%	24.00%	16.30%	✓	11.00%	11.00%	11.00%	
BV 199b	% land and highways with unacceptable graffiti	3%	12.00%	New	✓	8.00%	4.00%	4.00%	
BV 199c	% land and highways with unacceptable fly-posting	1%	3.00%	New	✓	2.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
BV 199d	Reduction of fly-tipping	Not required to be reported for 2005/2006					4.00%	4.00%	4.00%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 216a	Number of sites with land contamination concerns	1073	1073	New	n/a	tbc	tbc	Tbc
BV 216b	Contaminated Land: % of sites that details are known to decide whether to take action	2%	2.0%	New	✓	tbc	tbc	tbc
BV 217	% of pollution control improvements to existing installations completed on time	97%	90%	New	✓	90%	90%	90%
BV 225	Actions against domestic violence	27.3%	27.3%	new	n/a	36.4%	45.5%	45.5%

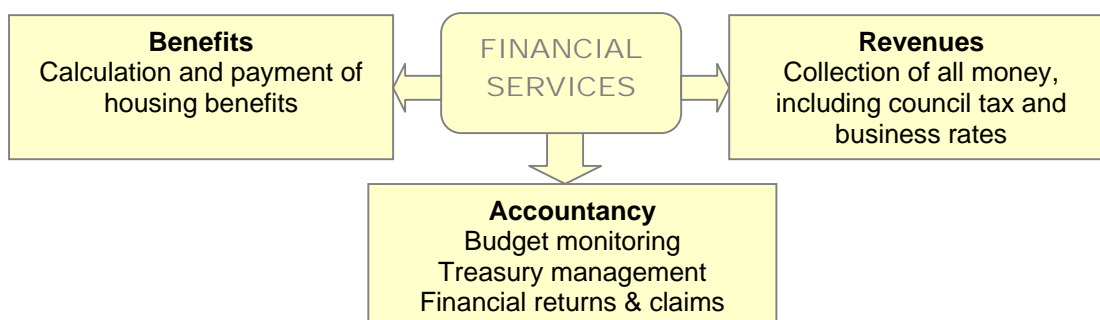
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
HT1	% increase in number of visitors to pay and display car parks	10.80%	1.00%	new	✓	1.00%
HT2	Number of car parking spaces for disabled people per 100 spaces	5.00	6.00	5.00	✗	6.00
HT3a	% Penalty Charge Notices issued per 1000 population	14.40	12.50	12.06	✓	12.50
HT3b	% Penalty Charge Notices subject to appeal	0.07%	1.00%	0.22%	✓	1.00%
HT3c	% appeals which were successful	10.35%	40.00%	24.58%	✓	35.00%
HT3d	% of Penalty Charge Notices cancelled	18.50%	20.00%	12.75	✓	18.00%
E1a	% of life safety alarms responded to in 30 seconds	96.71%	80.00%	96.46%	✓	85.00%
E1b	% of life safety alarms responded to in 60 seconds	98.36%	98.50%	98.65%	✗	99.00%
E1c	% of life safety alarms responded to in 90 seconds	98.92%	80.00%	98.29%	✓	85.00%
E1d	% of life safety alarms responded to in 180 seconds	99.62%	98.50%	99.43%	✓	99.00%
E2	% completion of annual food inspection programme	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%
E3	Number of dog fouling complaints	36	27	New	✗	25

E4	% of environmental pollution complaints responded to in 3 days	98.00%	100%	96.75%	×	100%
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7.5 Financial Services

What Do We Do?

Financial Services is responsible for the management of all financial matters for the Council, from internal budgetary control and compliance through to collecting money owed to the Council and making payment of monies owed by the Council. By ensuring that money is used carefully and to the maximum potential, Financial Services helps the Council to maintain its commitment to keeping the low level of council tax that Ashford's residents currently enjoy.



Past Achievements

Efficiency Savings

The Council achieved efficiency savings of £698,000 during 2005/06, (for example, by reviewing the way telephone bills are handled, £10,000 was saved). We are now looking at other areas such as procurement of ICT so that we can continue to drive efficiencies internally.

Benefit Processing

Delays caused whilst processing benefit applications for council tax and rent benefit have been dramatically reduced through using Document Image Processing (DIP) and the speed of processing has continued to improve over the past few years due to the continued hard work of staff.

Current Progress

Development of E-Procurement

We are setting up an e-procurement system to enable us to buy and tender for goods and services online. This is on target to be implemented during 2007 and will cut down on administration time by transmitting purchase orders electronically directly to suppliers.

IT developments

The debtor system is currently being upgraded so that any debt owed to the Council that isn't council tax or rent can be collected more effectively. Following the success of DIP for benefit applications, scanning of invoices is also to be introduced by Summer 2006. This will reduce unnecessary paper handling and lead to faster turnaround times.

Cheque Payments

Council cheques have been redesigned to improve security and overall we are reviewing our use of cheque payments. We aim to pay most of our suppliers by Banks Automated Clearing System (BACS) and to do the same for Benefits payments as this will be quicker and more efficient.

Future Goals

Budget Consultation

We are looking at the way we consult with members of the public on our budget and are reviewing the consultation process to include the community at the end of 2006. Although there is no legislative requirement to do this, we want to increase public involvement in the activities of the Council as well as increasing the transparency of our operations.

Keep Improving

Financial Services has the responsibility of helping departments within the Council to carry out their functions efficiently as well as directly providing a service to residents. Continuing to improve performance has been a major achievement so far and is our goal for the future making sure that day-to-day financial activities run smoothly whilst actively finding ways to save time and money.

Contact

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Financial Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 8	% of invoices paid within 30 days	94.68%	95.00%	88.95%	✗	95.94%	95.94%	95.94%
BV 9	% of council tax collected monthly	97.97%	97.80%	97.83%	✓	98.30%	98.30%	98.30%
BV 10	% of non-domestic rates collected	98.69%	98.90%	99.65%	✗	99.14%	99.14%	99.14%
BV 76a	Number of housing benefit claimants visited per 1000 caseload	298.16	325.00	311.00	n/a	282.16	282.16	282.16
BV 76b	Number of fraud investigators employed per 1000 caseload	0.41	0.40	0.40	n/a	0.40	0.40	0.40
BV 76c	Number of fraud investigations carried out per 1000 caseload	36.30	38.00	37.00	n/a	53.40	53.40	53.40
BV 76d	Number of benefit prosecutions per 1000 caseload	9.79	4.50	5.40	n/a	5.31	5.31	5.31
BV 78a	Average processing time for new benefit claims in days	31.1	35.0	42.8	✓	29.4	29.4	29.4
BV 78b	Average processing time for change in circumstance notifications	10.4	8.0	8.4	✗	7.4	7.4	7.4
BV 79a	Accuracy of processing benefit claims	94.60%	98.40%	98.40%	✗	99.00%	99.00%	99.00%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 79bi	% of recoverable overpayments recovered	57.68%	60.00%	45.11%	✘	49.93%	49.93%	49.93%
BV 79bii	% of recoverable overpayments recovered: Outstanding and identified	37.87%	40.00%	New	✘	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%
BV 79biii	% of recoverable overpayments recovered: Written Off	0.90%	10.00%	New	✔	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%

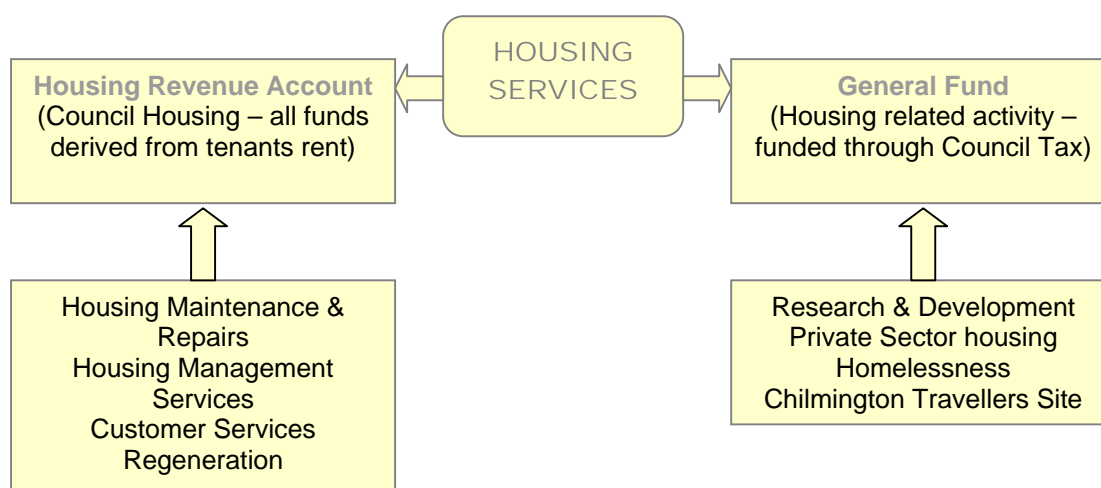
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
RB1	Cost of administering a council tax account	£14.40	£16.00	New	✔	£16.00
RB2	Cost of administering a benefits claim	£75.00	£95.00	New	✔	£95.00
RB3	% of correspondence replied to within 15 working days	80.00%	92.00%	77.25%	✘	92.00%
RB4	% of sundry debtor income collected	85.75%	94.00%	90.25%	✘	94.00%
RB5	% of new claimants who claimed benefit as a result of the awareness campaign	5.42%	5.00%	New	✔	deleted

7.6 Housing

What Do We Do?

The Council's Housing Service covers all aspects of housing and is dedicated to providing decent sustainable homes and communities. It is responsible for:

- Managing 5,400 council properties and 2,300 garages in the borough
- Provision of sheltered housing for older tenants within the councils 13 sheltered housing schemes
- Providing housing advice, including allocation of rented council properties via Choice Based Lettings
- Working with Housing Associations and developers to increasing the numbers of affordable homes in the borough
- Preventing homelessness wherever possible and supporting those who do become homeless
- Administering disabled facilities grants and actively promoting energy efficiency
- Working with private sector landlords to improved the quality of their rented properties
- Managing the Chilmington travellers site



Past Achievements

Providing Decent Homes

Ashford achieved the government's target of meeting the Decent Homes standard in 2004/5 some 5 years ahead of the government's 2010 target and is able to continue to fund this standard for the foreseeable future. Ashford is one of only a small number of authorities in England that have met this standard to date.

Affordable homes

Since 1998 over 800 affordable homes, for rent, shared ownership and low cost home ownership have been completed within the borough of Ashford

Fit for Purpose

Both the Housing Strategy and Council Housing Business Plan were judged as "Fit for Purpose" by the Government Office South East in March 2004, one of the few authorities in England to have achieved this. The Business Plan, which is funded by tenant rents and not Council Tax, continues to report a balanced budget position able to fund the Decent Homes agenda.

Rent collection

The introduction of improved and more flexible payment options for tenants has resulted in very high rent collection levels, over 99% and lower levels of bad debts and write offs.

Choice Based Lettings

Introduced in the borough in 2002, ahead of the government's target, it offers tenants a choice of properties that become vacant via a fortnightly newsletter.

Planned Maintenance information to tenants

Tenants are now informed of forthcoming major refurbishments such as kitchen and bathrooms from the published maintenance plan sent to tenants every 4 years.



Homeless families

We have successfully met the government's target to ensure that homeless families are moved out of Bed & Breakfast within 6 weeks.

Current Progress

Stanhope Regeneration

The regeneration of Stanhope has been a top priority for the council and it is anticipated that the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract will be finalised and awarded during this financial year. There has been extensive community engagement with this project and their views have been taken on board.

Sheltered Housing Review

Housing manage the 13 sheltered housing schemes in the borough and as part of further developing the provision to our older tenants are piloting a scheme for a 24 hour/7 days a week housing related support service. This is a first, and if successful will be implemented across all schemes.

Environment Improvements

Following on from the Option Appraisal work completed in 2005 with tenants and the tenant's forum, the option of developing and pursuing environment improvement in the borough have been agreed. The first two identified areas are in Bybrook Road and Appledore. Some £3m has already been set-aside for these developing programmes of work across the borough.

Affordable Homes – Housing Needs Survey

In 2005 a housing needs survey of the borough (jointly procured with Maidstone Council) was completed and recommended that the provision for affordable housing be raised from 20% to 35%. The evidence from the survey will influence housing development across the borough.

Tenant Participation

Tenant participation has been a key driver in further developing and improving the services provided to tenants. Our approach of both formal and inform communications, via the Tenants newsletter, focus groups, satisfaction surveys to regular meetings has ensured an open and honest dialogue in moving forward the housing agenda. The elected Tenants Forum, whose capacity has grown in the last few years have an active influence on policy and procedural changes.

Future Goals

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

To advance and improve the options available to tenants and applicants, Ashford is now part of a Kent CBL consortium of local authorities and Housing Associations, which have been successful in gaining government funding to further improve and develop services across Kent.

Homelessness

We are working to reduce numbers in temporary housing by 50% by 2010.


Housing Act 2004

The far reaching provisions of this Act, which introduce new powers, duties and responsibilities is aimed at addressing many of the long standing and more intransigent issues in Housing. The Act transforms the approach of assessing the suitability of housing for occupation, including health and safety issues and introduces a licensing regime for bed sits, hostels and other types of houses.

Continuation of delivery and success

Housing Services will continue to develop and expand its activities to the benefit of the tenants and residents of Ashford and will report progress in next years report.

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Housing Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 63	Energy efficiency of housing stock	67	67	66	✓	68	69	70
BV 64	Number of unfit private dwellings returned to occupation or demolished as a result of our action	7.00	6.00	3.00	✓	56.25	56.25	56.25
BV 66a	Proportion of housing rent collected	99.22%	99.00%	99.00%	✓	98.33%	98.33%	98.33%
BV 66b	% of Council tenants with more	14.77%	15.00%	New	✓	14.50%	13.50%	13.50%

Annual Report 2006

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
	than 7 weeks rent arrears							
BV 66c	% of Council tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served	53.17%	53.00%	New	✗	52.00%	52.00%	51.00%
BV 66d	% of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0%	0%	New	✓	0%	0%	0%
BV 74a	% of tenants satisfied when surveyed	80.60% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	78.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 74b	% of Ethnic Minority tenants satisfied when surveyed	72.20% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	78.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 74c	% of Non Ethnic minority tenants satisfied when surveyed	80.70% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	78.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 75a	Satisfaction of tenants with participation	60.50% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	62.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 75b	Satisfaction of Ethnic Minority tenants with participation	57.90% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	62.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 75c	Satisfaction with participation non Ethnic Minority	60.80% (2003/4)		Survey being conducted in 2006/07	n/a	62.00%	n/a	n/a
BV 164	Tackling racial equality in social housing	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV 183a	Average length of stay in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation for the unintentionally homeless	4.26 weeks	1 week	9 weeks	✗	1 week	1 week	1 week
BV 183b	Average length of stay in temporary hostel accommodation for the unintentionally homeless	0 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks	✓	0 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks
BV 184a	Proportion of non-decent local authority dwellings	1%	4.41%	2.00%	✓	21.00%	21.00%	21.00%
BV 184b	% change in proportion of non-decent dwellings over the financial year	14.5%	25.00%	66.10%	✗	22.60%	22.60%	22.60%
BV 202	Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	2	<5	3	✓	<5	<5	<5
BV 203	% change in the average number of	-4.59%	-5.00%	-26.37%	✗	-6.94%	-6.94%	-6.94%

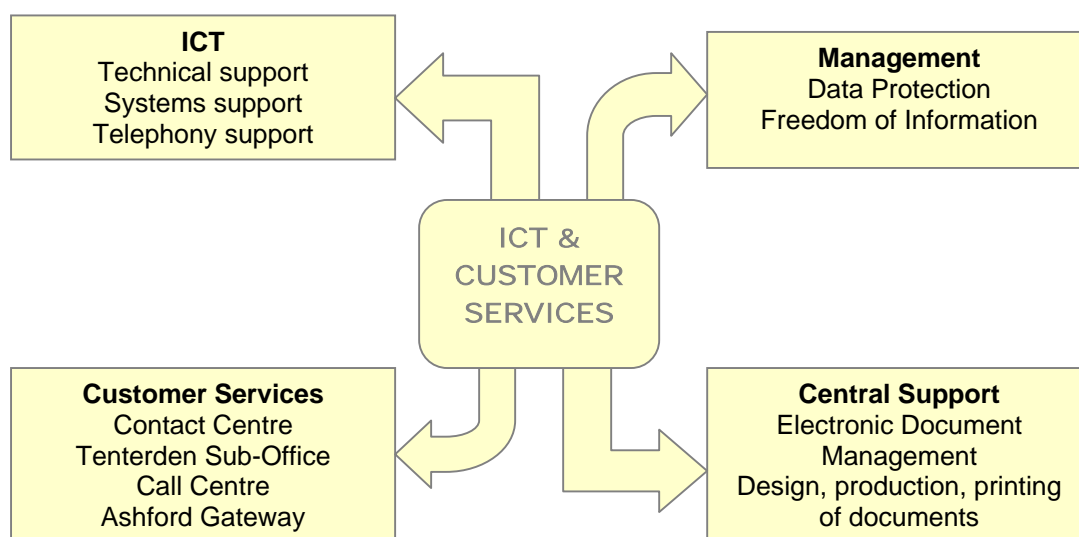
INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
	families placed in temporary accommodation							
BV 212	Average time to re-let Council dwellings	24 days	28 days	New	✓	24	22	21
BV 213	Number of households no longer homeless due to Council action	9	10	New	✗	11	12	13
BV 214	% of homeless households who have been homeless within last two years (repeat homelessness)	7.48	35.00	New	✓	16	14	12

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
H1	Council properties with a current gas safety certificate	97.00%	100%	98.00%	✗	100%
H2	Responsive repairs (committed spend) against target	£976,613	£1m	£1,063,603	✓	£1,000,000
H3	Rent loss on void property	0.49%	0.76%	New	✓	0.70%
H4	Arrears of current tenants as a proportion of the rent roll	0.33%	0.30%	0.28%	✗	deleted
H6	B&B Percentage costs recovered	90.09%	40.00%	82.16%	✓	80.00%
H8	% phone calls answered in 120 seconds	97.00%	85.00%	New	✓	82.00%
H9	Average call answer time in seconds	17	40	New	✓	90
H11	Calls abandoned by caller	6.25%	15.00%	New	✓	10.00%

7.7 Information Communications Technology (ICT) & Customer Services

What Do We Do?

Both sections of this Service work to let people contact the Council in whatever form they want, whenever they want. This includes everything from the Call Centre and Customer Contact Centre to the internal telephone and computer networks. Making sure that the ICT infrastructure is up to date and providing related support enables others to do their work effectively.



Past Achievements

Council Online

We have achieved our target of 100% electronic service availability meaning that all 670 of the Council's services are available online. The 'A-Z of Council Services' on our website provides a wealth of information on everything from electoral registration to bulky refuse collection. GIS digital mapping is also now available on the Internet allowing people to view and comment on planning applications online. Residents can access us quickly and at their own convenience, which is a brilliant development in service delivery, showing how the local authority is adapting to the needs of residents as society changes.

Text the Council

We're always looking to be at the forefront of hi-tech developments and have fully implemented an SMS system that can be used to access our customer service team simply by texting 07887717739. This innovation was recognised nationally as we won the CNET Public Sector Technology Project of the Year in 2005 for integrating SMS into the Contact Centre.

Speak@Ease Automated Switchboard

45% of phone calls into customer services are now handled completely electronically and 66% of payments are now made electronically via touch-tone telephone or online. These figures are increasing all the time. The Speak@Ease voice activated software contributes to this by allowing callers to the switchboard to easily connect if they know the name of the member of staff they wish to speak to.

Current Progress

Ashford Gateway

Opened in autumn 2005 this pioneering development located at the heart of Ashford town centre in Park Mall shopping area brings together Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council Social Services, Education and Occupational Therapy, local healthcare agencies and voluntary organisations under one roof. The centre is one of a few across the entire country and represents a radical new approach from a wide range of public agencies to revolutionise access and convenience for residents. The Ashford Gateway has been very popular and is underpinned by advanced interactive technology, so people can drop in to enjoy computer-enabled learning packages, free internet access with the latest touch-screen facilities and live video conferencing linked to customer service advisors at the Civic Centre.



Exceptional Customer Service

We pride ourselves on having a multi-skilled and highly trained team of customer service advisors. Thanks to their dedication and diverse knowledge about every service in the Council over 90% of enquiries from the public are dealt with at first point of contact. This year we supported National Customer Service Week and are working towards the Charter Mark award. We are also sharing best practice nationally by being peer reviewers for the Improvement & Development Agency and holding Open Days which over ninety other councils have attended.

Document Management System

The decision on whether or not to proceed with a comprehensive document and information management system has been postponed for the time being.

Future Goals

Information Archiving

Our data storage requirements are growing by 75% a year which isn't sustainable. Accordingly the ICT team have been working to improve our electronic storage and archiving systems whilst also complying with various legal requirements regarding data retention.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM is an IT system the customer service team uses as a 'knowledge hub' – a central point of access for enquiries made by members of the public that also links to our internal 'behind the scenes' office systems. This makes the co-ordination of all transactions with the Council much easier and CRM is now being expanded so that all members of staff can access a version online via the web. This will increase seamless customer service across all departments and ensure consistency of information.

Contact

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 01233 330850

ICT & Customer Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 157	% of interactions enabled for electronic delivery	100%	100%	86.19%	✓	Deleted	Deleted	Deleted

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
ICT1	Help Desk calls dealt with in 2 working days	80.50%	80.00%	77.67%	✓	82.00%
ICT2	% of customers seen within average wait time of 15 minutes	91.05%	84.00%	92.75%	✓	90.00%
ICT3	% of computer systems available to services	99.83%	99.50%	New	✓	Definition changing
ICT4a	Time taken to answer Call Centre calls	69.98%	85.00%	80.73%	✗	82.00%
ICT4b	Average time taken to answer by a call centre operator (seconds)	98.50s	90s	New	✗	90
ICT4c	% of calls with a wait time exceeding 10 mins	0.72%	0%	New	✗	Definition changing
ICT6a	% of Call Centre calls dealt with at first point of contact	94.00%	80.00%	New	✓	Deleted
ICT6b	% of Customer Contact Centre visits dealt with at first point of contact	94.00%	80.00%	New	✓	85.00%
ICT7	Number of callers successfully contacted after leaving a message	95.90%	100%	New	✗	deleted

7.8 Legal & Democratic Services

What we do

This service is made up of two sections. The Legal team are legal and business advisors to the Council as a corporate body and to all front-line services individually. The Democratic Services team support the democratic and decision-making processes of the Council. This includes working with councillors (elected members) and all election related administration. From April 2006, the Overview & Scrutiny support function will also be joining this team to take advantage of the synergy between their work.



Past Achievements

Licensing Act

Successful joint working with Environmental Services means that the 24 hour liquor licensing responsibilities which the Council was required to take over in 2005 have been introduced smoothly and without any problems. Thanks to hard work from everybody involved no additional resources were required and all hearings with councillors on the decision panel were carried out as scheduled.

Online Publication

Member Services have saved £10,000 so far by publishing committee agendas, reports and minutes online. This has also made the democratic side of the Council more accessible to members of the public. This is being further enhanced by enabling people to register via our website to speak at meetings. There is now no rush to submit written requests before certain deadlines and this flexibility has increased participation. Once final amendments have been made in April 2006 the Council Constitution will be available online thereby encouraging more people to view it.

Current Progress

Youth Democracy

Taking part in national Local Democracy Week 2005 has been one of the highlights of the year and sparked lots of enthusiasm across the Borough. With Cultural Services we organised a range of events such as 'Take Your Councillor to School Day' and 'An Audience With.....' where students at Christ Church school grilled local decision-makers and senior politicians on local issues that they were concerned about. The feedback has been excellent with young people being highly responsive and getting engaged, and councillors learning too. Direct contact is the best way to rejuvenate democracy at a local level and where better to start than with those who are voting for the first time. We have applied for Government funding to promote youth voting registration in the Borough and will continue our campaign to get young people involved in local democracy.

Property and Community Projects

There are major ongoing projects that we have supported including completion of the legal agreement for the County Square extension, progressing the Stanhope PFI to three chosen bidders and the registering of Tenterden Leisure Centre as a charity to achieve VAT savings.

Public Inquiries

The volume of this work has increased and the number of Section 106 Agreements related to new housing developments being handled is currently at an all time high. Complex negotiations have been completed with the Barracks developers, the developers of the Eureka site and others, and public Inquiries prepared for in respect of Cheesemans Green and Waterbrook. The completion of legal agreements have also been carried out relating to the Park Farm South and East development, including the funding of Junction 10 interim scheme on the M20.

Lexcel Accreditation

Previously we had considered moving towards Lexcel accreditation (a quality mark developed by the Law Society) but have since decided that this is too time consuming versus the benefits. We already have a high standard of legal services and good levels of satisfaction internally.

Future Goals

Elections

Administering elections is a huge job and we were very busy last year with the parliamentary elections, Kent County Council elections, a ward by-election and three parish elections. Voter turnout increased and to encourage this further the personal canvass to houses will be reintroduced in 2006/07. We're now preparing for the 2007 elections by undertaking a parish polling district review and also getting ready for the new Electoral Administration Bill which will introduce major changes including, new security measures for postal votes, verification of personal data and new procedures at polling stations.

Contact

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 01233 330210

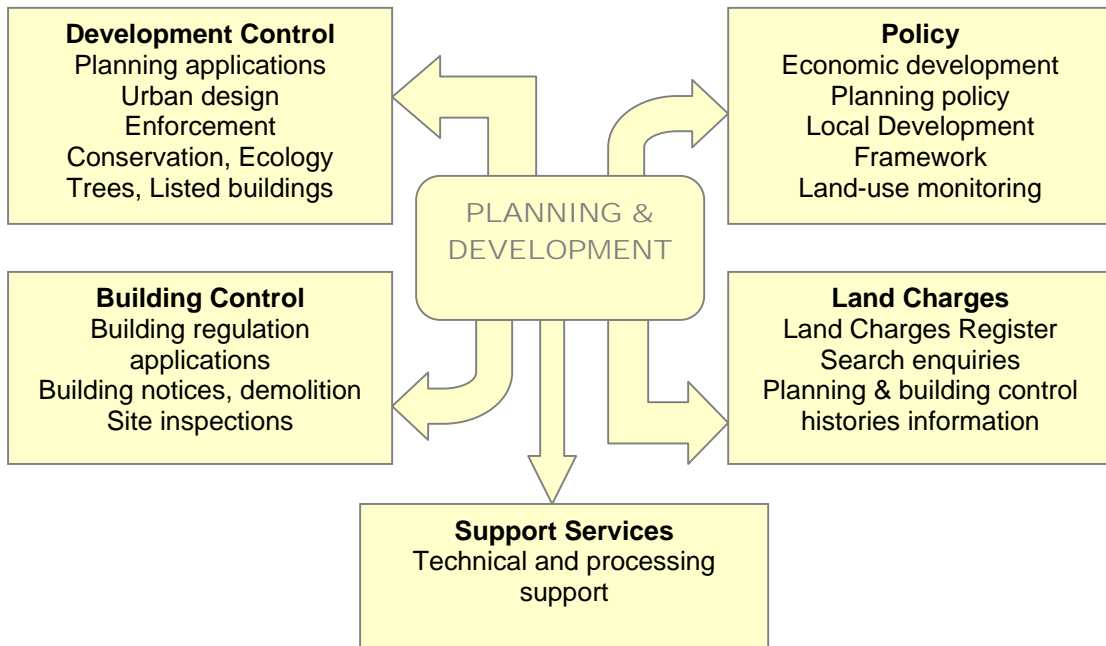
Legal & Democratic Services Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
LDS3a	% of Executive meeting minutes published within 3 working days	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%
LDS3b	% of Non-executive minutes published within 5 working days	95.88%	95.00%	98.08%	✓	95.00%
LDS4	Productive hours recorded for legal services	14,088	12,149	New	✓	Deleted
LDS5	Income for legal services	£170,967	£103,840	£107,909	✓	£103,840

7.9 Planning & Development

What we do

All the varied work that the Planning & Development service does adds up to creating a high quality environment to live and work in and importantly, the development of sustainable communities for the borough of Ashford. This drives everything that we do, from making sure that all development proposals are of the highest quality to promoting economic growth and job creation. Ashford has been selected by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) as a major growth area which has created many major challenges but also some incredibly exciting opportunities as we work with partners and the Ashford's Future Delivery Team to plan successfully for the Borough's future.



Past Achievements

All In One Service

The previously separate Building Control, Land Charges and Support departments have been fully embedded into the Planning & Development service so that every element of the development process is handled in one unit. This means that everything from requesting a land charge search when buying a new house to obtaining a completion certificate for a major site development can be done with ease.

Income Generation

Both Building Control and Land Charges carry out fee-earning work and have a good market standing. This ensures they are self funded activities rather than being paid for from Council Tax. The Building Control team ensure that buildings within the Borough are constructed to a safe standard and are continuously encouraging excellence within the construction industry. The Land Charges team provide a professional service for the co-ordination and processing of searches, assisting house buyers and sellers throughout the Borough and helps to ensure that their conveyancing transactions are not delayed.

Planning Applications

We have made steady improvements on all planning application handling targets and for the vast majority of cases we are well ahead of national targets. Our web-enabled planning

service is achieving high ratings in national surveys and has received very positive customer feedback. We are genuinely focused on customer care and responding to customer demand. As part of our commitment to our customers Planning & Development has setup a new team to deal with the high volume of correspondence and phone calls related to planning applications. This will also help to speed up the planning application process .

We are also very close to meeting national targets for major site developments, which is quite an achievement considering the number and complexity of such cases in Ashford and the limited resources available to us.



Current Progress

Local Development Framework (LDF)

An options report for the LDF core strategy was published in July 05 and subsequent consultation received 1600 replies. After working through the feedback, the next stage is to submit a final version of the core strategy, which is on target for September 2006. Alongside preparing this, a report outlining options for development in the town centre area has been produced and was agreed in April 2006. Public consultation took place on this shortly afterwards. The LDF is an exceptionally important process for residents to participate in and major efforts have been made to work closely with groups representing all aspects of the Borough's community. Everybody has an opinion on how the area in which they live should be planned and this is the ideal way in which to put forward those views.

Town Centre

We have been overseeing work on a Town Centre Master plan and detailed studies on the Victoria Way route, both of which are nearing completion. Preparations are being made to secure a development partner for the comprehensive regeneration of the Elwick Road area, to complement the major shopping scheme under construction at County Square and the works planned to turn the ring road into much more attractive tree-lined streets. By developing a mixed range of residential and retail uses the rejuvenation of Ashford town and surrounding public spaces will be kick-started.

Major Sites Charter

This Charter sets out better ways of working on major sites to deliver faster and better decisions for all concerned. Although this Charter was not formally launched in 2005 as expected, we are already working in the way it advocates on major sites coming forward. Full implementation of this approach will be possible when we have secured additional staff resources from our partners. The Charter is part of a national Government pilot project on 'planning delivery agreements' and will become an example of best practice on how to deliver complicated planning schemes in a smooth and ordered way to deliver better results.

Future Goals

Design Standards

Sustainable development is all about meeting the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations and should be at the heart of everything we do. To encourage this more widely we want to set design and sustainability standards at the highest standard and will produce comprehensive planning guidance including, for example, requirements for levels of renewable energy in new developments.

New Developments

We are going to introduce an 'Ashford Tariff' on new developments to pay for extra physical and community facilities needed to provide for the growth of the town as a whole. This is a groundbreaking new initiative that will help to make sure that essential infrastructure is in the right place at the right time when new housing is being developed.

Ring Road Remodelling

This major project led by Kent County Council has taken longer than originally expected but the overall detailed design is now taking shape and work should begin on the radical improvements in 2007. The Town Centre Action Plan will be rolled out in parallel with the ring road remodelling to achieve high standards of buildings and the surrounding space. This is for the benefit of residents but also to engender business confidence in Ashford to sustain the massive growth in housing and the economy that will be required in the near future.

Contact

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Planning & Development Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 106	Number of new homes built on previously developed land	17.35%	7.00%	13.85%	✓	94.00%	94.00%	94.00%
BV 109a	% of major applications determined within 13 weeks	58.14%	55.00%	52.50%	✓	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%
BV 109b	% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks	85.37%	70.00%	71.12%	✓	76.00%	76.00%	76.00%
BV 109c	% of 'other' applications determined within 8 weeks	92.51%	85.00%	84.52%	✓	88.00%	88.00%	88.00%
BV 200a	Local Development Scheme (LDS) produced by March 2005	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV 200b	Milestones set out in LDS met?	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV 200c	Annual monitoring report published by December last year	Yes	Yes	Yes	✓	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV 204	% of appeal decisions allowed against refusal of planning applications	34.5%	40.00%	24.40%	✓	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target
BV 205	Score against 'quality of planning services' checklist	94.4%	95.0%	83.3%	✘	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%
BV 219a	Number of conservation areas	43	43	43	n/a	43	43	43
BV 219b	% of conservation areas with an up-to-date character appraisal	0%	9.30%	New	✘	30.23%	51.16%	65.11%
BV 219c	% of conservation areas with published management proposals	0%	9.30%	New	✘	30.23%	51.16%	65.11%

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	2005/06 Result	2005/06 Target	2004/05 Result	Target met?	2006/07 Target
Local Indicators						
BC1	% of plans checked on time	92.00%	100%	New	✘	100%
BC2	% structural calculations checked within 12 working days	98.02%	100%	New	✘	deleted
BC3	% letters answered within 5 working days	64.69%	100%	New	✘	100%
SP1	% of affordable housing granted permission on sites of 25+ dwellings	20.00%	20.00%	19.76%	✓	deleted
SP2	Number of affordable dwellings on sites of 25+	376	150	17	✓	deleted
SP3	Average density of new housing on major developments granted planning permission against target	30.00%	30.00%	38.50%	✓	30.00%
SP4	Number of homes for which planning permission is granted during the year	2095	800	2095	✓	800

8. Statement on Internal Control

Part 1 Scope of Responsibility

Ashford Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Ashford Borough Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Ashford Borough Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of Ashford Borough Council functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Part 2 The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Ashford Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realized and the impact should they be realized, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of Internal Control has been in place at Ashford Borough Council for the year ended 31st March 2006 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and accounts and, except for the details of significant internal control issues at section 5, accords with proper practice.

Part 3 The Internal Control Environment

The key elements of Ashford Borough Council's internal control environment are as follows:

- The Council has adopted a constitution, which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and that the Council is accountable to local people.
- Most major policy decisions are made by the Executive Committee in public meetings on the basis of published reports (apart from exempt items). The facilitation of policy and decision-making is through the two Policy Advisory Groups – 'Other Issues' and Resources & Best Value'. In addition, senior officers of the council can make decisions under delegated authority. The Council publishes a Forward Plan which contains details of key decisions to be made by the Council, its committees and officers under their delegated powers.
- The Council has in place robust arrangements to ensure probity in all its decision-making. It adopted the new model code of conduct in 2002 and has subsequently adopted a comprehensive good practice protocol for councilors dealing with planning matters which is overseen by the Council's Standards Committee, chaired by an independent member. In-house and external training has been undertaken for

councillors on probity matters. The Council's Standards Committee also has in place agreed procedures for dealing with local investigation hearings in accordance with the new Regulations which allow the Standards Board for England to refer allegations of misconduct for local decisions.

- The Council has a Risk Management Strategy approved by the Executive on 23rd March 2006. A Strategic Risk Assessment, developed with the participation of Management Team and senior managers e.g. Finance, Legal and ICT had an annual refresh in December 2005. A series of Service specific risk workshops were completed during the Autumn 2005 which created Service Risk Registers and Service Risk Action Plans. There are clear linkages between objectives and the risk evaluation process that ensures that service risks are minimized and are considered as part of the Strategic Risk refresh. Each identified risk has a nominated owner.
- There is a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy in place and a Risk Register for the protection of staff.
- Through reviews by external auditors, external agencies, Internal Audit, Best Value and Service Development Strategies, the District Council constantly seeks ways of ensuring the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, and for securing continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as required by the Best Value duty.
- Services are delivered by trained and experienced people with appropriate professional qualifications. All posts have a detailed job description and person specification. Training needs are identified through Personal Development Discussions and provided by a combination of internal and external training providers.
- The Council has designated the Head of Legal & Democratic Services as Monitoring Officer. It is the function of the Monitoring officer to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. After consulting with the Head of Paid Service and Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer will report to the full Council if he considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered.
- The financial management of the authority is conducted in accordance with the financial rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution and within Financial Regulations. The Council has designated the Deputy Chief Executive as Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council has in place a MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan), updated annually, to support the medium-term aims of the Corporate Plan. Financial monitoring arrangements are in place and reported quarterly to the Executive.
- The Council maintains an Internal Audit Section, managed from September 2005 by a partnership arrangement with Maidstone Borough Council, which operates to the standards set out in the 'Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK'.
- The Council has an objective and professional relationship with external auditors and statutory inspectors, as evidenced by the Annual Audit Letter.
- The Council has an effective performance management framework. The system is driven by the Corporate Plan which focuses attention on corporate priorities. This is cascaded through departmental service plans, individual employee appraisals and action plans. It provides the mechanism for targets, Performance Indicators and objectives to be reviewed by the Executive and Scrutiny Committees and for reviews

of Service Objectives to be fed back into the policy and planning cycle. Quarterly review of key measures at Service specific Star Chambers enables corrective action to be taken where necessary.

Part 4 Review of Effectiveness

Ashford Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the senior managers within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates in their annual audit letter and other reports.

The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control includes:

- The Head of Legal & Democratic Services (the 'Monitoring Officer') has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles are given full effect. The Council has continuously made amendments to the May 2003 Constitution but these are not yet published in a composite document. Members have requested the Constitution be made available in a CD Rom format and published on the website. Note the most up to date version at any time will be the web site version. The proposed 'publication' date is 30th June 06 but this will not include any amendments to Financial Regulations or the financial delegations as these have not yet been proposed and approved by the Executive.
- The Council has two Overview and Scrutiny Committees. They can "call in" a decision which has been made by the Executive but not yet implemented, to enable them to consider whether the decision is appropriate. They allow people to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public reviews into matters of local concern.
- The Council has delegated to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Resources & Best Value responsibility for discharging the functions of an audit committee, including reviewing the adequacy of internal controls, and monitoring the performance of internal audit. The External Audit Plan and the Audit Letter are submitted to the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee.
- Internal Audit is responsible for monitoring the adequacy and effectiveness of systems of internal control. A risk model is used to formulate a three-year plan, which is approved by the Overview & Scrutiny Resources and Best Value Committee, from which the annual workload is identified. The reporting process for Internal Audit requires a report of each audit to be submitted to the relevant Head of Service with a copy to the Chief Executive, the Directors and the Head of Corporate Governance. The report includes recommendations for improvements to internal controls and these are detailed within an Action Plan for agreement or rejection by Heads of Service. The process also allows for follow up work to be completed for all reports issued in order to confirm that the action proposed by the Head of Service has been implemented in practice. The results of the follow-up are reported to the Head of Service, the Chief Executive, Directors and the head of Corporate Governance.
- The Internal Audit Section is subject to regular appraisal by the Council's external auditors who review the adequacy of compliance with the Code of Practice for Internal Audit. The external auditors place reliance on the work carried out by Internal Audit subject to being satisfied with the quality and comprehensiveness of the work. They have been able to do so for the financial year 2005/06.

- The Head of Corporate Governance and the Head of Financial Services bring a report on Key Indicator progress against targets and budget monitoring to Management Team and the Executive as part of the Quarterly Performance Report. Monthly updates are available on all Local and Best Value PI's on the Internet and Intranet. Monthly monitoring reports on budgets are prepared and are posted on the intranet. There have been five Service Development Strategy reviews in progress throughout 2005/06. The corporate support group meets regularly to monitor and influence progress and the results of the review are formally discussed by members at the Policy Advisory Groups. There are still two Best Value reviews that need to be concluded and these will be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
- For management of performance indicators, a traffic light monitoring and reporting system is in place electronically – PB Views. Each indicator has a named owner who can add commentary to the results for the convenience of those viewing the data either live or as a 'snapshot in time' on the net. The quarterly performance report includes commentary for the assurance of members and intended actions to improve any poor performance.
- The Council reviewed and revised the Financial Regulations in May 2003.

Part 5 Significant Internal Control Issues

The following significant internal control issues have been identified:

No.	Issue	Action
1	There is no formal adoption of a Local Code of Corporate Governance.	It would be Best Practice to formally approve a Local Code of Corporate Governance in accordance with the Cipfa Solace Guidance.
2	Risk Management There is a need to continue to ensure risk management is embedded into the culture of the Council.	The Service Risks must be refreshed annually and reviewed quarterly as per the Risk Management Strategy. The Strategic Risks must be refreshed annually and reviewed quarterly as per the Risk Management Strategy.
3	Assurance Statements from Heads of Service.	Actions must be completed to close any gaps in governance within 3 months and will be reviewed during the Annual Service Risk Assessment Workshops.
4	The Constitution has not been easily accessible as a composite document.	The Constitution should be reissued urgently on a CD Rom and by publication on the internet as there have been many updates agreed by Selection & Constitutional Review. Further updates to the electronic version on the Internet should be within one month of approval.
5	Financial Regulations	The Financial Procedure Rules are part of the Constitution and these have not been reviewed or updated since May 2003. an urgent review is required to align the Financial procedure Rules with the approved Procurement Policy. The revised and approved financial regulations must be published as part of the Constitution on the website.

6	Internal Control of bank reconciliations.	Consultants were employed to resolve the problems discovered in Summer 2005. A restructure of the finance section was approved by Executive in April 2006. Internal Audit will complete a review of bank reconciliation procedures and internal control by 30.9.06. and will submit its report thereon to the Overview and Scrutiny (Resources & Best Value) Committee on 03.10.06
7	Monthly budget monitoring.	Although monthly budget monitoring reports are produced, there is no monthly concise summary of the total projected outturn available to Management Team. A concise summary should be produced each month and should be reviewed by Management Team on a timely basis.
8	Late reports to members	The late submission of reports to Members significantly increases the risk of inappropriate decisions being made because the full implications could not be readily assimilated within the timescales. Management Team must introduce a process for reports to be on time or postponed to the next meeting.

Chief Executive

Leader of the Council

Dated.....

9. What Do You Think?

If you have any questions or comments with regards to the Annual Report or if you want any further information please contact:

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Performance Review officer

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10. Useful Web Addresses

www.ashford.gov.uk	-	Ashford Borough Council
www.kent.gov.uk	-	Kent County Council
www.goashford.com	-	Community resource
www.kent.police.uk	-	Kent Police
www.ashfordgateway.co.uk	-	Ashford Gateway
www.ashfordsfuture.org	-	Ashford's Future