



Questions and Answers - Beating the recession

1. **Reid Dudley-Smith, Ashford**

How large is the drop in ABC's income due to the economic downturn, exactly?

2. **Reid Dudley-Smith, Ashford**

In what ways has Ashford not been affected by the recession?

A. Cllr Paul Clokie

Our investments have been hit by lower interest rates - the amount we have allowed in our budget for interest earnings has reduced from £1.2m to £0.6m - a drop of £600,000.

Income expected from Car Parking has been reduced by £60,000 in the budget for the current year and we have recently forecast a further potential drop of £120,000 in the current year giving a total expected drop of £180,000.

Income from our Planning Service is forecast to be down this year by £162,000. That is on top of the original expected reduction for the year of £155,000 - a total of £317,000.

We are also showing a reduction of £50,000 in income from the Industrial Estates we own.

The main areas in the budget show an expected loss of £1,147,000.

In addition to this there have been reductions in the value and number of assets being sold. The sale of Council houses is showing less activity with only 6 completions last year and a total of 6 this year (in 2007/08 there were 18 and 34 the year before). We also had a number of purchases of land that had been agreed before the credit crunch fall through and now we are not assuming income in this area in our forecasts.

Moving onto the second question Ashford has been affected like any other Council with reduced income from parking fees, property searches and planning application fees for example. As the recession has deepened so have people's need for support increased – for example, the number of people claiming benefit and some additional pressures on the housing service.

But it is not all gloom and doom for our borough – in fact the introduction of High Speed Trains is a huge addition to the town's attractiveness. Patronage has been very strong, rising from 6,000 in the first week, to over 20,000 people now using the service each week. Still on the theme of excellent train services – but with a continental dimension - Eurostar have reintroduced their services to Brussels and recently added an additional early morning service to Lille.

Major new investments bringing new jobs have continued to be attracted to the town - the recent opening of Waitrose brought 154 new jobs, and the conversion of the old Police Training College by Education Travel Group to provide educational holidays for young people are just two examples.

All this suggests that Ashford's prospects remain good and that when the recession ends the town is very well placed to benefit.

Questions and Answers - Good quality and affordable homes

3. Jenny Blunt, Kennington, Ashford

Why is the choice based lettings system so unfair?

A. Cllr Paul Clokie

Choice Based Lettings is an approach to letting homes which makes lettings arrangements more transparent and gives prospective tenants more control over the lettings process.

Rather than homes being allocated by the council, choice based lettings allows tenants and prospective tenants to bid for the available properties they are interested in. Available homes are advertised to housing applicants which allows them to see what Council or housing association housing is available in the area and enables them to play a greater role in the process of selecting their home.

The council's lettings policy underwent a major review last year which included extensive consultation processes which were reported to members at the time the policy was adopted. The Housing Act 1996 Part VI required local authorities to give reasonable preference to the groups identified within the Act and the policy reflects these criteria as well as the priorities locally.

The policy was also considered by a prominent barrister's chambers who are specialists in the housing field and was found to be robust and lawful.

The lettings policy covers a wide range of competing needs and aims to provide higher points values to those in the highest needs. There are three main groups Homeseeker,

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Transfer, and Homeless and the relatively small number of lettings available are apportioned across the needs groups in the most effective way possible.

The policy may identify the level of need that an applicant has, but successful rehousing will only occur when there is a sufficient number of suitable properties available to respond to the numbers of high needs applicants that require them.

This combination of high demand and low supply can lead to elongated waiting times for applicants and the perception that the policy is unfair.

Given a situation where the demand for all types of social housing exceeds the supply, it is impossible to devise an allocation system that totally satisfies everyone. That said, our Choice Based Letting system provides a sensible, equitable and flexible response to an impossible situation. However, the success of its inherent flexibility is dependent on constructive feedback from existing and prospective tenants, councillors, officers and others. Therefore we welcome the views that Mrs Blunt has expressed in the past and encourage her and others to maintain this constructive dialogue with us.

Questions and Answers - Good quality and affordable homes

4. Peter Renyard, Singleton, Ashford

Why does the Council allow developers to build 'garages' too small for the average car which then has to be parked in the narrow twisting roads supplied by that same developer?

A. Cllr John Kemp

The guidelines for controlling the size of garages has, until recently, come from the County Council's Structure Plan and the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards. Preferred internal dimensions of 5.5m in length and widths of 3.6m or 6.0m were specified, depending on whether the garage was single or double. The guidance also indicated that the widths of garages could be reduced where it could be demonstrated that cycle parking would be provided elsewhere.

Recent changes mean that the Structure Plan no longer has any status. Officers are therefore currently working on local guidance that will deal with Residential Parking standards - proposals will in future be assessed against this. This guidance will take account of work already started by Kent County Council on how best to approach residential parking, taking account of the lessons from recently completed schemes as well as national best practice advice. This work has included surveys on how people use their garages. The guidance in preparation will deal with the role of garages as part of allocated parking in schemes, together with the necessary dimensions of garages to encourage their use for storing cars.

Questions and Answers - Keeping the Borough Moving

5. **John Walker, Willesborough**

Anti social behaviour may be lower in Ashford but why do I have to put up with motorists parking on the pavement, plus having to avoid cyclists?

A. Cllr Michael Cloughton

It is unfortunate that some people act in a way which causes inconvenience to others and which contravenes the law.

Most parking contraventions throughout Kent were decriminalised in 2000 and these, civil contraventions, are enforced by local councils.

However some parking issues remain criminal offences which only the police can enforce. These include the parking on the pavement.

However, if, a motorist has parked a vehicle straddling or beside a yellow line on a pavement or verge, which is part of the highway, during the hours waiting restrictions are in force, then the local council can issue a Penalty Charge Notice.

We have no powers to enforce laws regarding cycling on pavements as this remains a criminal offence which can only be enforced by the police.

6. **Emily Neighbour, Ashford**

Is the Warren Park and Ride development necessary or appropriate at this stage in the growth of Ashford?

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7. **BE/JA Lawrance, Ashford**

Why is ABC embarking on a bendy bus scheme which is being disbanded in London because of pedestrian and cyclist fatalities? Our market town streets are not suitable for such vehicles.

A. Cllr Paul Clokie

The Drivers Park and Ride site (as this project is now called) has excellent access to the M20, sits well between the town centre (and rail station) and the commercial developments to the north in Eureka Park, and has great links to the A20 and A28 amongst other roads.

The site at Drivers Roundabout has been earmarked for Park and Ride use for some time and offers possibly the best strategically located site of any of the planned Park and Ride sites.

After a long time coming, we can now deliver a high quality Park and Ride scheme, subject to funding, that will support the town's future growth as well as the transport and car parking strategy.

This site will provide approximately 700 - 800 of the planned 2,500 park and ride spaces included in the strategy.

While development in the town centre is needed to support the Park and Ride site (as town centre development generates more people and travel in the town), by providing extra capacity, Park and Ride will enable new developments in the town to come forward quicker.

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Therefore, it is important to have a park and ride site ready for use as the town's growth gathers steam.

The planned growth of Ashford means that we need to build a public transport system that can meet the town's needs now, but also caters for expected demand in the future.

SmartLink is designed to be a 'mass people mover' and is modelled on a tram system. It will be fast, regular and value for money, with its own bus lanes and priorities across the town, and must be able to accommodate a high volume of passengers as an effective alternative to the car.

There are two ways to provide the capacity we need, and using larger articulated vehicles (or 'bendy buses') is just one element of the overall mix.

Articulated buses have more seats/spaces and, therefore, can run slightly less frequently than smaller buses. Alternatively, smaller sized buses can be used but have to be at a higher frequency. Both options have their merits, and one key driver for the decision will be the flexibility that either option may provide and the operational costs that each one will incur.

The proposed SmartLink routes would be suitable for articulated buses if they are to be used.

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However, the use of articulated vehicles is not set in stone at this stage, but we must consider all options to make sure Ashford has the best public transport available to the residents.

Although London may be rejecting them, this is as much a political and nostalgic issue as it is about safety. While the vehicles have attracted negative press in London, they have been very well received in other parts of the country and in Europe.

8. Jonathan Barton, Ashford

Once Victoria Way is built the traffic along Elwick Road should fall significantly. Therefore would you consider reclassifying the lower part of Bank Street and Elwick Square as pedestrian areas?

9. R C Airey

Can we have a simple footbridge linking Victoria Park to Fairwood Industrial Estate? This would make the £17.5 million Victoria Way un-necessary. People need it to get to work on foot or by bike!

A. Cllr Paul Clokie

Elwick Road and Bank Street are designed to be 'shared space' areas allowing motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to occupy the same space, creating a safer environment, with reduced speeds.

When the initial Victoria Way scheme is completed, (by spring 2011) this will take some of the 'through' traffic away from the town centre, although this is only predicted to be around 10%.

Victoria Way itself will be required to cope with significant volumes of traffic both from future developments planned along its route and from 'through' traffic.

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Elwick Road will need to continue to carry traffic accessing Bank Street, County Square car park and the future developments that will be built on the south side of the road opposite Debenhams therefore Elwick Road and Bank Street will remain accessible for all modes of transport, motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Additional foot/cycle bridges over the Stour between Leacon Road (Fairwood Industrial Estate) and Victoria Park would be welcomed.

The Victoria Way project aims to provide Ashford with a new road to serve both the planned development along its route, and to cater for traffic travelling east-west across the south of the town centre.

The Initial Scheme for Victoria Way, to be constructed shortly, will incorporate better walking and cycling facilities, and will include a formal signalised crossing at Jemmett's Path and sufficient room for a future signalised crossing at Gasworks Lane.

These crossings will link with the paths to the two bridges over the river Stour. The new route will also open up the possibility of more north/south routes being provided in the future, perhaps as part of development schemes as they come forward once the new road (Victoria Way) is in place.

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10. **Cathy Streeter, Ashford**

What is the council specifically doing to find "a [cultural] niche for Ashford"?

11. **Cally Carter, Tenterden**

Times are changing, and to add to the mainstream career choices for Art, we have an increasing proportion of adult/elderly/leisure time facilities to address. What is the Council proposing to do to raise the profile of culture and the arts, and to bring a cultural enrichment to all levels of society from playschools to retirement homes?

A. Cllr Gerry Clarkson

The Council recognises that culture must be at the heart of delivering Ashford's growth. This community infrastructure is equally as important as the physical infrastructure of roads and schools in the building of our sustainable communities. But we should not be trying to compete with the cultural offer of Canterbury or London. Instead we should be developing those assets we already have as well as seeking to fill any gaps in services to create a unique Cultural niche for Ashford.

An example of developing our assets is the Arts at St Mary's project to provide an arts & community venue in the centre of Ashford town, working with our partners in the church and Ashford's Future to ensure this iconic building remains the cultural heart of the town. The project helps to preserve the role of the church in serving the Ashford community in the future. This accords with the underlying principle set out in the GADF that we should mend before extend. There are many other examples of developing our assets such as the Stour Centre and our support of the Willesborough & Woodchurch Windmills, the local music Festivals and the Community Grants Fund.

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An example of creating new projects to fill gaps in provision is the award winning Singleton Environment Centre. The new centre provides a sustainable template for new development by harnessing low carbon technologies and promoting community involvement and environmental, play and arts activities under one roof.

Crucially the Council is also looking to the future and working with partners and private sector investors to explore new opportunities for culture & the arts. In addition, there are exciting new attractions being planned for example the three strategic parks proposed at Chilmington Green, Willesborough Dykes and Conningbrook.

The niche for Ashford is a combination of these elements providing Ashfordians with a growing and vibrant programme of traditional and contemporary cultural and arts attractions that are well used, sustainable and promoted so Ashford is best placed for culture.

The Council is strongly placed to plan for and manage the growth in leisure time and demand through the Local Development Framework, the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Cultural Strategy.

The Council already provides a diverse and comprehensive level of community & cultural facilities and services for all ages and groups in the Borough. We also benefit from many excellent facilities and services provided by KCC, Parish Councils, the voluntary and private sectors. A number of these facilities are amongst the finest in the South East and too numerous to list this evening but I will mention just a few.

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- The Ashford Indoor Bowls Club
- Sandyacres Sports & Social Club
- Kingsnorth Recreation Centre
- Tenterden Leisure Centre
- The Stour Centre
- The Julie Rose Athletics Stadium
- The Sinden Theatre

Both this Council and several of our villages have secured regional and national awards for community, cultural and environmental services.

How are we raising the profile of culture to bring cultural enrichment to all levels of society?

The Council works hard to promote its services and those of all our partners to all individuals, groups and levels of society. We are always seeking cost effective means to promote cultural services. For 2010/11 we aim to publish a new Cultural and Arts Guide, and improve the cultural and Ashford Presents pages on our web site. We will continue to promote and support our voluntary music festivals & events and launch a new Plan for Arts and Culture which will include new projects and promotions to raise the cultural profile of the Borough.

We will continue to review and update the Councils Social Inclusion Action Plan and introduce a Race Equality Scheme to promote access to services by all levels of society. We are at the forefront of promoting healthy lifestyles and inclusive services through various creative schemes such as our Active Sports Partnership, providing facilities for playschools and children's play, concessions for 60+ and various groups, a free swim scheme and bursaries for talented disabled sports people, to mention just a few.

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12. Priti Paintal, St Michaels, Tenterden

Why is Ashford Borough Council not supporting its excellent arts organisations with a properly funded marketing strategy and grant-aid? The EQUATOR promotions has been bringing international stars like Juan Martin into the region for the last 3 years and is now threatening to pull out. Other arts companies are also asking the same questions - Why is there no support?

13. Keith Brannan, Bethersden

Reference the Future Challenges Statement for Building healthier, happier and safer lives I would like to know why the Council do not do more to improve the provision for community cultural and arts events- The Council is aware of a strong lobby of opinion that would like a community arts centre and small theatre in the town and yet continue to maintain it cannot be afforded- Why cannot the major redevelopment of Elwick Place on publicly owned and controlled land be the vehicle to deliver a public building in the heart of the new development of Ashford of which the people of Ashford could be proud- Cultural and Arts facilities need a boost to change the perception of the Town and here is the opportunity to achieve it

14. BE/JA Lawrance, Ashford

Why is ABC and the Church PCC hell bent on destroying our English heritage for the sake of a cheap culture centre instead of decent theatre which Ashfordians have been campaigning for over the last forty years?

A. Cllr Gerry Clarkson

The Council supports many of our excellent arts organisations such as Shiva Nova, Tenterden Folk Festival, Ashford Youth Theatre and Egerton Music Festival. We provide some support through our arts budget in a variety of helpful ways and also project funding through the Community Grants Fund. I wish that we were able to do more but the economic realities under which local councils are operating cannot simply be ignored.

Turning more specifically to the question about Shiva Nova this is a commercial music promoter & dance company who have worked closely with the Council for some

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considerable time promoting the arts in Ashford. A number of positive steps have been taken by the Council to support Shiva Nova such as:

- We have sold their performance tickets through our tourist information office
- Assisted them in gaining funding from Arts Council England
- Funded equipment, advertising, marketing and staff to assist Equator arts events in Ashford
- Included Shiva Nova concerts in 75,000 Summer Sounds leaflets at Council expense
- Promoted Shiva Nova through Council publications and press releases across Kent and to the national trade press.

Given the significant funding we have helped Shiva Nova to secure, the income and profits from their event ticket sales and the additional support I mentioned from the Council it is clear that we have been very supportive indeed. Shiva Nova also operates in Maidstone & Shepway and to the best of our knowledge do not receive the level of support given by this Council to provide their cultural programme in those Boroughs.

Our officers have previously discussed with Shiva Nova options for assessing possible grant support from the Council but to date we have never received a grant application and business case that demonstrates clearly their financial need.

To state that there is no support from the Council is to misrepresent the hard work and resources that the Council invests in local arts.

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With reference to the second question about improving the provision for community, culture and arts services we acknowledge that there is a call and need to improve.

In an earlier answer I stated that we are making a good start with this by investing £1.3 m to create a high quality venue in St Mary's Church to expand community and arts activity in the town centre. We have also safeguarded the Create festival in our proposed revenue budget next year and recently adopted a Public Art Strategy

Key to making progress is working alongside Ashford's growth partners, developers and the Arts Council especially within new commercial development sites & on land in public ownership.

I am pleased to announce that as part of the master planning of the Commercial Quarter at Dover Place & Tannery Lane we are working with our partners, notably the Regional Economic Agency (SEEDA) to explore whether future development is able to fund a sustainable arts centre for the Borough. A leading Arts Trust and property adviser has been retained to investigate whether this will be feasible and how best to present this to the private sector as a positive addition to development. The results of this work will follow in the New Year and I hope the Council is able to include this in our Arts Plan which we will consult widely upon.

And finally to answer the third question about St Mary's Church it has served as a hub for religious, communal and cultural life in Ashford for many centuries. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and Diocese sees this broader use of the church as being at the heart of

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Diocese & St Mary's ministry and mission to the town and I support their view.

The Church of England & Church Heritage Forum, Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Defra and others actively promote and subscribe to the wider and better community use of Churches & Faith Buildings within urban and rural regeneration plans.

This approach is now widespread throughout the UK where the Church and community & public partners are working together on exciting collaborations. Similar venues have been established up and down the Country such as the Union Chapel in Islington and St George's Church Brighton and are now celebrated and successful.

The St Mary's Church re-ordering scheme will enhance and increase activities, provide an upgraded, well-appointed, flexible multi-use space in the body of the nave, to host a wide range of religious, arts and community activities - particularly supporting the voluntary arts sector and local artists who currently use the church as a venue and have done so for many years.

Widespread & detailed consultation has been ongoing since 2005 in partnership with the Diocesan Advisory Committee, English Heritage, Victorian Society, Georgian Society and Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings to ensure the works are sympathetic and

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appropriate to the fabric of the building. Subsequently the Church Diocese has issued a certificate recommending that the scheme proceeds.

In conclusion this project is helping to safeguard an historic part of Ashford's heritage, introducing improved heating and other services and improvements. This unquestionably helps preserve the structural fabric as well as making the building more welcoming and comfortable at the heart of our town centre.

So you will see that we are certainly not hell bent on destroying our english heritage but we are determined to be innovative in preserving & encouraging greater public use of these wonderful buildings.

15. **Alan Castle, Ashford**

I appreciated that all Council budgets will need to be reviewed as a result of the current economic conditions. However can the Council confirm that funding for the arts in the Borough of Ashford will not suffer disproportionate cuts as a result of the pressures on the Council's budgets? I am concerned that arts could be considered a soft target at a time when there is a high profile build up to the Olympics with additional expenditure demands from sport and the large sums committed to the proposed work on St Mary's Church. This is particularly concern when a few less enlightened Councils have axed their entire arts budget!

16. **Reid Dudley-Smith**

What cuts have been made to arts and cultural services and what alternatives were considered in this process?

A. Cllr Gerry Clarkson

As portfolio holder for Culture & Arts I am pleased to confirm that developing the Councils support for the arts is a priority. Arts are not a soft target as far as we are concerned, we will

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do all that we can, given the economic realities, to safeguard current resources for the Arts as well as identify additional external sources of support & funding. I am also pleased to confirm that the budget for the Create Festival has been maintained and that there have not been any cuts to the arts services. I do not intend to suggest any reductions for the foreseeable future nor do I intend to allow the arts budget to suffer disproportionately this is not the council's intention either.

The Council has been effectively implementing efficiency measures across all services for several years and whilst Culture has made a significant contribution we have skillfully been able to maintain and in some areas improve and add to our front line services with officers successfully securing significant external funding. Some aspects of Cultural Services however may need to respond to reduced user demand and falling income during this difficult economic period. Ashford Leisure Trust is experiencing just such pressure at the Julie Rose Stadium and consideration is being given to a seasonal reduction in hours early in the New Year as an efficiency measure. Any such reduction will seek to minimize impact, will be notified to all and kept under review so that as and when demand picks up, in the busier seasons for athletics, normal opening should be resumed.

17. **Roger C Airey, Ashford**

Having lost too many public houses to list plus our Lion Brewery and Lemonade Makers Ashford has only five pubs in its Town Centre; The Swan, Old Prince of Wales, The George, The County Hotel and Man of Kent. So our out of town pubs are more important, like The Star and Kent Arms, our question is: 'Why cannot the South Eastern Tavern in Torrington Road be retained as a public house serving good English beer?'

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18. Roger C Airey, Ashford

The South Eastern Railway arrived here this month in 1842 on the 28th November, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway arrived 42 years later on the 1st July. (Branch line from Maidstone East). We thus have 167 years of a train service to celebrate plus our works constructed 790 steam engines from 1853 - 1944 our question is this: 'When is the Council going to support the creation of a long awaited transport museum in our Railway Town?'

19. Roger C Airey, Ashford – Centre Piece Church

Having 'lost' our church with its spire in Church Road some years ago and our Edward Pugin Catholic Church complete with its scissor truss beam roof and rose window, we are soon to loose the Victorian pews of our Parish Church, which is to become an 'Arts Venue' on the cheap, it is rumoured we are to loose our Methodist Church in Bank Street to become more shops, question: 'What is the Council doing to prevent the loss of the Centre Piece Church and Soup Kitchen a local landmark building?'

A. Cllr Gerry Clarkson

The declining number of pubs is an unfortunate national trend that reflects a number of factors. One such factor is the trend towards drinking alcohol at home and in restaurants. Supermarkets sell alcohol at significantly lower prices than public houses.

The decline also reflects the introduction of the smoking ban in 2007, weakening consumer confidence due to the current credit crunch and also the rising overhead costs for public houses, such as the increasing cost of labour and energy. Indeed, according to recent research by the British Beer & Pub Association pubs were closing at a rate of 36 a week, up 33% on the closure rate of 2007." (Source: MDB Research).

The Council supports the role that local pubs can play in local communities and has done what it can by retaining its planning policy from the previous local plan which safeguards the retention of pubs in rural areas where there is no other pub within walking distance. Within

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the urban area this is unlikely to apply and the example quoted of the South Eastern Tavern is a case in point because the Riverside Inn is immediately opposite.

In conclusion I would add a positive note that the Phoenix has opened recently in the town centre, the Pheasant at Goat Leas and as Ashford continues to grow and the economy strengthens we will witness more new pubs opening such as the one planned at Repton Manor.

On the question about a transport museum the Council recognizes the importance of Ashford as a railway town, including the role that it has played in the past and will continue to play in the future.

For a number of years the Council, where possible, supported the aspirations of the Ashford Railway and Heritage Museum Project Group to create a railway museum in the town. The project group, made up of dedicated and enthusiastic local people campaigned and fund raised to make their aspirations for a railway museum a reality. These efforts were successful on a local basis, but unfortunately did not meet the priorities of the major funding bodies, such as the National Lottery Fund, when competing with a range of projects across the country and at a time when funding was and still is being diverted to the 2012 London Olympics.

The Project Group has now refocused its efforts and has joined forces with the Ashford Borough Museum Society with the aim of displaying the smaller railway artefacts and documentation at the museum. Funds raised for the railway project have now been given to

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the Museum Society and will be ring fenced for displays and exhibitions relating to Ashford's railway heritage.

It is hoped that the volunteers of these two groups, with the support of the Council, may be able create the elements of a railway/transport museum in a new way with some existing materials and resources and with a virtual website that tells the Ashford transport story in an exciting and 21st century way.

I would certainly be happy to take this concept forward with officers of the council, if it were agreeable to all parties involved.

And finally, my response to the question about the Centrepiece Church and the soup kitchen.

Where possible the Council's efforts are positively directed to maintaining and increasing the usage & value of voluntary and community sector assets and supporting community groups and their services across the Borough.

The Council has worked for many years with our Church leaders and the Centre Piece building was subject to a detailed survey and evaluation a short while ago. It is a complex building with many levels and has structural and maintenance issues. The conclusion from this evaluation and subsequent discussions is that major repair and remodelling is prohibitively expensive and would not represent value for money.

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We will continue to advise the Church such that if they were to sell the Centre Piece site and a new use is proposed on the land that a replacement church and community facility could be enabled through the planning process, in or as near to the town centre as is practicable.

The Council and our partners will have invested over **£2 million** in voluntary and community sector buildings over the period 2008 – 11 and this will provide a greater quality and quantity of community space in and around the town centre. For example the Swan Centre in South Willesborough will be refurbished and extended in next year and work is to commence shortly to provide a new children's and youth centre. We are also working very hard to support the Citizens Advice Bureau to relocate to new and improved premises in the New Year.

In conclusion I am pleased to confirm that the Ashford Soup Kitchen will be relocated to the Baptist Church to ensure that this valuable service continues without interruption.

20. **Reid Dudley-Smith**

Recently, a councillor quoted a Nazi politician's views on culture, as a joke - is this acceptable?

(For context, this is in reference to an article published in the Kentish Express, June 24 2009, Page 8. Article title: "Meaningless Art is a Waste of Public Money" quote by Cllr Cloughton: "When some people hear the word culture they automatically reach for their revolver")

A. Cllr Michael Cloughton

As a professional playwright I sometimes, unashamedly, make verbal reference to quotes from well respected writers which is precisely what I was doing in this instance. It is a well

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known, and frequently used quote and one which I have always attributed to the great American writer Ernest Hemmingway. However, I am led to understand it is also mistakenly attributed to the former nazi officers Gobels and Goering and possibly Lenin, something of which I had absolutely no previous knowledge.

For the record 'When I hear the word culture I reach for my gun' originally came from the pen of the playwright Hans Jorst in his play Schlagter and has also been used in the award winning film Maphisto. Also, in the 1970's, when it was quoted in an episode of the sit com Rising Damp and if it's good enough for the writer of that brilliant series Eric Chappell then it's good enough for me.

Questions and Answers - Our Environment

21. **Kenneth Shadbolt, Tenterden**

You say you will reduce your carbon footprint. Do you not know that the consensus of scientists who are qualified in this field say that there is NO connection between CO2 and climate change or warming. The ippc and government are completely wrong. Are you therefore wasting our money? If you wish I can give you chapter and verse. When the population realise that they are being conned the anger will be far greater than MPs expensive.

Example. There has been much talk of ice melting at the north pole and the Northwest passage being open. This has happened many times in the past. In 1940 a German warship used this passage to enter the pacific and sink ships. When the Romans invaded England and in the Medieval Warm period the temperature of England was much higher than today. These are undisputed facts. Why did the Vikings colonise Greenland? For goodness sake think.

A. Cllr Paul Clokie, Leader of Ashford Borough Council

There is a general consensus is that Climate Change is happening and evidence to back this up.

But even if there where no link between CO2 and Climate Change, as an authority we have an obligation under government National Indicators to report on our own carbon emissions and what we are doing to reduce them and to report the CO2 emissions per capita throughout the borough and how we are adapting to climate change.

Since Ashford Borough Council's CO2 emissions are largely produced as the result of energy consumption and fuel use, it makes sense in financial terms to cut our emissions - using less fuel and reducing energy costs - saving the council tax payer. Using less also lengthens the availability of finite resources such as oil, gas and coal.

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22. **Margaret Woollven, Kennington**

Why are the recycling arrangements in Ashford so limited? Collection of green waste for composting should be available. Plastic recycling should be available. Will the ABC introduce various wheelie bins at the time of the issuing of the next refuse contract? We have recently found that Swale and Chichester area have far better recycling arrangements than ours. Will Ashford not be missing a costly recycling target if this is not addressed very soon?

23. **Reid Dudley-Smith, Ashford**

What other options for cuts were considered when you decided not to extend the blue box recycling scheme?

A. Cllr Neil Bell,

The current blue box recycling scheme run by the council was conceived in 1999/2000 and introduced in 2001. The scheme was intended to cover the main residential areas within the borough, namely Ashford and Tenterden. But due to varying take up rates the scheme was extended into several rural areas. The scheme is currently at full capacity serving approximately 29,000 homes. It is also worth noting that the scheme was introduced before Ashford was designated as a growth area. This fact, as well as the rapid pace of growth in recycling technologies, means that the scheme now needs to be reviewed. Unfortunately due to budget pressures further expansion at this time has had to be deferred.

The council ran a green waste collection service until early this year when, due to budget pressures, it was decided to cease provision of this service.

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Kent County Council has a trial recycling plastic waste during 2007. Unfortunately it was decided that it was not environmentally sustainable or financial viable to make the trial permanent.

The targets the council has in regard to recycling form part of the wider Kent Agreement 2 target on recycling. This overall target is agreed with the Kent Waste Partnership and Central Government and each council's target takes into account local factors. It is the overall recycling target for Kent that is relevant to any financial reward/penalty.

At the time the original waste collection and recycling services were put in place the Council considered a number of options for the provision of both domestic waste collection and recycling.

These included the provision of wheelie bins, alternate week collection and other options. Due to its size (Ashford is the largest borough within Kent) and the largely rural nature of the borough the cost of waste collection is much higher in our borough than would be the case for a district with a similar population but that is mostly urban. Taking this into consideration the Council decided to provide a service that focused on being cost-effective and one that provided a high level of service whilst at the same time providing value for money.

Accordingly the Council decided to introduce a black bag collection service for general household waste and at the same time the blue box recycling scheme to cover the main residential areas of Ashford and Tenterden. As far as Wittersham is concerned there are two

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paper recycling facilities in the village. We have considered a bottle bank but there are space constraints. We are happy to talk to the Parish Council further if there are any sites that could be suitable for additional recycling facilities.

In 2010 the Council will begin a comprehensive review of its Waste Strategy. As part of this review we will be reviewing our waste and recycling arrangements with the aim of delivering improvements to recycling rates while maintaining a value for money service. This review will consider all elements of waste management including arrangements for waste collection such as the use of wheelie bins and alternate week collection through to the development of local recycling facilities. Once the review is completed councillors will consider the various options that come forward and decide on how they wish to proceed.

24. **Reid Dudley-Smith**

You say "we all" produce too much waste. How much waste does ABC produce and what is the cost of this?

A. Cllr Neil Bell

I am please to say that Ashford Borough Council recycles all its waste paper which is baled and sent for recycling into news print and has reduced its waste by three quarters over the past ten years.

We currently have just one 1100 litre bin of rubbish emptied per day at the Civic Centre which is the equivalent of four and half domestic wheelie bins. The rubbish is mainly made up of food wrappers/waste generated by the 550 ABC staff and other tenants of the Civic Centre and other items which cannot currently be recycled. The cost of disposing of this waste is currently £2,405 per year.