

people
serving
people



Ashford Borough Council
Annual Report
April 2014 - March 2015



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GERRY CLARKSON, CBE

LEADER, ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Welcome....

.....To the second of our new Annual Reports, and the first in this new administration. The report reflects on the achievements and milestones seen across our borough over the course of the last year.

From the opening of a stunning new country park at Conningbrook Lakes, to being named the most improved recycler in the country, there is much to celebrate and be proud of.

Our recognition as the best business location in Kent shows confidence in the borough as a place to invest and expand, which drives local growth and local jobs - while Ashford remains in the top 50 places to live in the country. Future initiatives, such as the planned expansion of the Ashford Designer Outlet and the exciting remodelling of the area around the International Station and Dover Place into a new tree-lined approach to the town centre and Commercial Quarter - 'CQ38' - show that Ashford continues to evolve and develop.

This is not to say that we are in any way complacent, and I cannot wait to share news of Ashford's continued progress with you all in next year's Annual Report.



JOHN BUNNETT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

The council continues to seek innovative solutions to achieve its priorities whilst maintaining the standards of frontline services which residents expect. A recent satisfaction survey confirms that the vast majority of residents have a positive view of not only the borough but also of what the council is seeking to achieve.

Officers are currently working with councillors to refresh our corporate plan, which will inform our priorities for the next five years.

THE UK'S INTERNATIONAL TOWN

38
MINUTES
from
LONDON



3.3 MILLION
PASSENGERS
travel through
ASHFORD
INTERNATIONAL STATION
each year





Internationally
.....
CONNECTED 
.....

PARIS 1hr 52mins
away

BRUSSELS 1hr 37mins

LILLE 56mins

OFFICE RENT
73%
LOWER than
LONDON




NUMBER 1
BUSINESS
LOCATION in Kent


SUPERFAST

TOURISM brings in over
4 MILLION
VISITORS PER YEAR

TO OVER

30
attractions
across the borough

£270
MILLION
PER YEAR

IN THE
TOP TEN%
of the most
DESIRABLE
PLACES TO LIVE

224.5 SQ
MILES
the largest borough in
KENT

ONLY
UNPOLLUTED
DARK SKIES
in the SOUTH EAST

MORE THAN
3,000,000
PEOPLE VISIT
THE OUTLET EACH YEAR

OVER
80
DESIGNER
BRANDS

183,000
SQ FEET



Jobs and economic growth

As a growing borough we are attracting and growing our business, leisure, retail and hospitality sectors.



Quality homes...

We all want quality homes. That is why we are striving to deliver the quality – not just of houses, but also of their environment and infrastructure – which is essential to create the ‘right’ atmosphere where people want to live and enjoy life.



...and quality places to live

It is important to all of us that Ashford is an exciting, vibrant and welcoming place. That is why we support cultural, artistic and sporting events which not only make the borough a better place to live, but bring the community together.



Value for money services

Just to make sure that our services remain right for you, we need to concentrate on delivering effective and efficient services which are responsive to your needs and provide value for money.



It is an exciting – if challenging – time and we are concentrating on the big things which will help Ashford deliver its potential. We have already made good progress in making sure these big things happen. Most would not be possible without working with our residents, charities and local businesses.

Together, we have achieved much worth sharing...

...on helping to create
jobs and economic growth

Ashford - the best business location in Kent

Making Ashford a great place to do business is key to ensuring local employment and investment across the borough. Businesses recognise that Ashford is the best place to open and expand, confirmed by a recent survey by Locate in Kent which named Ashford as the preferred business location in the county. Such confidence drives local economic growth, meaning that the unemployment rate in Ashford fell by a quarter over the year, and remains below the average for both Kent and England.

Ashford's location is one of its most significant assets, with its incredible road and rail links to the rest of the country and the continent. Ashford's status as an international town was boosted further by the recent launch of direct Eurostar services to the south of France, meaning that residents can travel from Ashford to France's three largest cities as well as Lille.

ASHFORD

38 MINUTES TO LONDON

brakes

750 EMPLOYEES in Ashford

INTERNATIONALLY CONNECTED

TRADING IN FRANCE IRELAND SWEDEN

£3 BILLION SERVICE COMPANY

LOCATION

#Ashfordfor

JACQUIE BRADY
Catering Manager
Brakes

Become an Ashford Storyteller
ashfordfor.com

ASHFORD

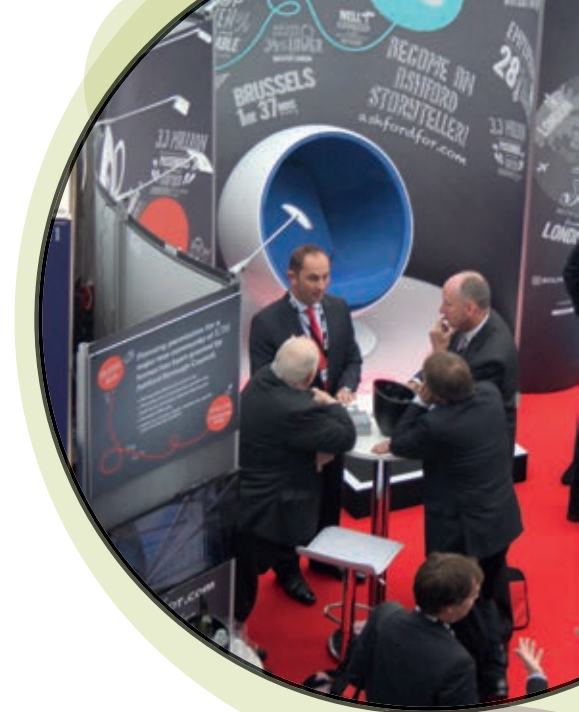
Championing the borough

But we are not complacent about the future, so we have embarked on a proactive marketing drive for the borough. This included exhibiting at a UK-wide property trade show in October, where the town's ability to give business a powerful competitive edge attracted interest from developers and investors.

The council can also help local businesses more directly – which is why we agreed to invest £400,000 in expanding the Ellingham Industrial Estate to give more room for companies to expand and invest in their operations here in Ashford. And to create a year-round focal point for community events and activities we installed a permanent canopy over the town centre bandstand, building civic pride and bringing visitors to the high street.

To ensure that Ashford and Tenterden town centres and retailers get all the help they need, in October the council introduced a discounted parking scheme in numerous car parks across the borough – including free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

It is also crucial that Ashford's young people are not left behind. Not only can the high street entrepreneurs of tomorrow test their business ideas at the successful PopUp Ashford, but as a local employer the council leads the way in providing opportunities for local young people to enter the employment market through work placements, apprenticeships and graduate placements – while offering an Ashford Living Wage which is 'even better' than the national living wage.



loveashford

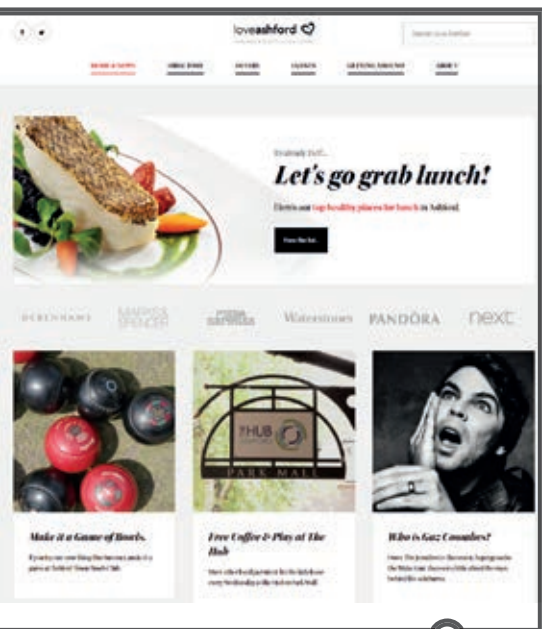


Town Centre Initiatives

Work is now underway to develop a new Commercial Quarter around the International Station, and this year saw the launch of two exciting initiatives to boost the town centre – led by our new Ashford Town Team. This includes a digital high street – LoveAshford.com – and the launch of a Farmers' Market on the lower high street on the first Sunday of every month.

LoveAshford.com allows all town centre retailers to showcase themselves online, share special offers and offer an innovative 'click and collect' service. The site also includes a business-to-business contact list, driving commerce and trade whilst strengthening our local business community. LoveAshford.com has received special praise from both Mary Portas and the High Streets Minister as an excellent example of how digital technology can be used to promote the high street.

Since launching in July, the Farmers' Market has provided local traders with an opportunity to sell their wares, and has received an overwhelmingly positive reaction from shoppers and stallholders alike - boosting footfall to the town centre and supporting our borough's businesses.



ashford
farmers
market



The Ashford Model and 'can do' Planning

We know that a 'can do' approach to planning helps businesses and homeowners develop and expand. That is why we have adopted the 'Ashford Model', a flexible approach built upon our Core Strategy and an insistence on reasonable quality of both design and build to create long-term development which is fit for purpose.

During the year we received over 1,500 planning applications; including almost 300 applications from small businesses and others to expand their premises, and over 900 applications from householders seeking to develop their homes. We know how important it is to decide on applications quickly, so we turned round three quarters within eight weeks, and approved over 90%.



...on creating **quality homes**

Quality homes for all across the borough



Ashford's great countryside, connections, schools and things to do ensured that the borough was listed in the top 50 places to live in the UK this year. But because we understand that housing costs are important to all our residents, we are proud to do our bit by building the most rural affordable housing in Kent. Four out of every ten affordable rural homes built in the county are built here in the Ashford borough.

We are keen to continue this affordable homes building programme, and secured millions in extra funding from the HCA this year to build over a hundred more affordable homes across the borough over the next three years.

Finding innovative solutions to help those in need

We have used an entrepreneurial approach to invest in innovative solutions to help residents. In September we opened Christchurch House – once a rundown commercial property, now transformed into good quality short stay accommodation for people to whom we have a duty to look after as homeless. This has not only cut down on the number of families needing to use more expensive Bed and Breakfast accommodation, but offers a safe alternative at what can be a traumatic time for families and individuals. Such innovative thinking has meant that the number of households in temporary accommodation fell by a quarter during the year.

This is just one part of our strategy to use every tool we have to help local people find a place to live. We have also created a property company to secure homes which we can market at affordable rents. This innovative commitment to delivering quality housing for the community, and led by them, has received national acclaim in government reports.



A growing borough

Following ten years of careful planning, in October the council's Planning Committee approved an outline application for up to 5,750 quality homes, a secondary school and four primary schools and infrastructure at Chilmington Green. Quality is at the heart of this new residential community, which will not only apply 'Garden City' principles but will also be built according to a 30-point Quality Charter, signed by the council and developers, which commits to the very best development possible.

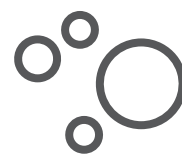
It is important that we keep growing the borough and providing the homes all residents need. Building has begun to create a new thriving community at Finberry in Sevington, which will not only provide families with quality homes but will also include a new primary school, local restaurant, community centre and sports pitches. In October the Planning Committee also approved, subject to agreement, to an application for the 'TENT 1 A' development in Tenterden.

In June the government agreed to fund the long-awaited redevelopment of Junction 10a on the M20, alongside improvements to the A28 Chart Road - work which will not only support the future Chilmington Green and Finberry sites, but will also be a catalyst for economic and commercial growth across the borough.

Homes for all stages of life

Over the next decade 40% of Ashford's population will be over 50. We are preparing for this by making sure more homes we build meet the needs of older people. Phase one of our new dementia-friendly accommodation at Farrow Court began during the year, and is set to be completed soon. The simple layout and clear design of these 104 homes will create a stress free and stimulating environment that can be adapted to meet people's individual needs.

Quality of life affects all stages of life, which is why we worked with colleagues from Kent County Council's occupational therapy team to complete over 250 disabled adaptations - from grab rails to flush floor showers - to homes across the borough during the year. These little changes enable our most vulnerable residents to live more independently and, crucially, remain in their own homes.



highlights

throughout the year

APRIL

After a successful first six months the PopUp Ashford initiative, which gives local entrepreneurs the chance to showcase their business, was extended for the rest of the year.



JUNE

Jasmin Vardimon Company, which has operated from a Production Space here in Ashford since 2012, swept the board at the prestigious East Kent Culture Awards, picking up three awards including the event's top prize.



SEPTEMBER

Willesborough Dykes foot and cycle path, offering a new cleaner and greener route to and from the town centre, officially opened.

Christchurch House, once a rundown commercial property, was transformed into good quality short-stay accommodation for people to whom the council has a homeless duty.



MAY

MAY

Ashford's St Mary's Church played host to a week-long programme of performing arts and events from local schools and groups to celebrate 40 years since the formation of the Borough of Ashford.

JUNE

JULY

JULY

The first of Ashford's monthly farmers' markets took place in the Lower High Street. On the first Sunday of every month the market provides local traders with the opportunity to sell their wares - including artisan breads, pastries, local cheeses, preserves and jams.

AUGUST

AUGUST

Ashford was named the best business location in the county. A study by Locate in Kent found that the borough's excellent road and rail links plus unbeatable location made it the preferred place to conduct business.

OCTOBER

Loveashford.com, Ashford's digital high street, launched. The brand new website and app showcases Ashford town centre and its businesses, including useful information such as opening hours and current offers. It is the first to offer a 'click and collect' service for independent businesses.

Loveashford

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

Planning application submitted to expand the Ashford Designer Outlet, which is already home to over 80 designer brands and attracts three million visitors a year.

DECEMBER

HS1, which cut train journey times from Ashford to London to 38 minutes while attracting businesses and creating jobs, celebrated its fifth birthday.



DECEMBER

JANUARY

JANUARY

Ashford named amongst top 50 places to live in the UK (source: Halifax annual survey).

MARCH

Work completed on a new cover for the bandstand in the Upper High Street, which will provide a year-round sheltered focal point for community events and activities. The canopy reflects Ashford's significant railway history, and includes the borough's crest and motto: With Stronger Faith.



MARCH

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY

Funding secured to deliver the new Ashford College campus on Elwick Road, which will focus on providing skills for the manufacturing, construction and service sectors whilst meeting the needs of local businesses.

...on creating **quality places to live**



The most improved recycler in the country

The first year of the borough's new recycling and refuse collection service has seen Ashford become the most improved recycler in the country, climbing off the bottom of the league tables and quadrupling the amount recycled – with residents recycling 17,500 tonnes of waste during the year.

This would not have been possible without the efforts of all residents, and has meant that the borough has been shortlisted for two National Recycling Awards.

Tourism and the rural economy

As Kent's largest borough, Ashford is surrounded by beautiful countryside that offers stunning walks, charming villages and the jewel in the Weald that is the rural town of Tenterden – all enjoyed by thousands of residents and visitors every year. A brand new wine trail helps visitors to learn more about this beautiful part of the borough and Tenterden's award-winning vineyards.

The borough has a thriving visitor economy, attracting over four million visitors to the borough each year whilst supporting around 5,000 jobs, and we are committed to working with hospitality businesses and others on a number of initiatives over the next five years to further improve the borough's tourism offer. Ashford had a wonderful opportunity to showcase its thriving leisure and business tourism industry when the borough hosted the 2015 National Tourism Symposium in June.

September saw the opening of a new foot and cycle path along Willesborough Dykes, giving Park Farm residents easy access to the town and creating a picturesque leisure park for families who want to explore the countryside.



Kent's largest free music event

The Create festival returned for its 19th year, with over 13,000 people enjoying the usual compelling mix of up-and-coming bands and a range of musical genres. The festival was headlined by Nizlopi and opened by Toploader, who held an intimate set at the 'Create Saturday Night Soundcheck' at Revelation St. Mary's.

Arts and Culture

The town centre's award-winning arts venue Revelation St Mary's is now in its seventh season. In May, Aurora Orchestra, offering accessible orchestral music, added to its extensive UK and international touring by agreeing a residency of at least two performances a year at this town centre arts venue.

Award-winning dance company

The world-renowned Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company, which has had a dance studio at the Stour Centre since 2012, was acknowledged for how it enhances our borough by picking up three awards at this year's East Kent Culture Awards. The company was recognised not only as a centre of excellence for arts education and commercial creativity but also as one dedicated to working with the local area – offering introductory and choreography workshops for Ashford's young people.

The company is looking to expand and enhance their local presence. They have secured capital funding from the Arts Council which, alongside support from the council, brings them a step closer to realising their ambition of providing an international hub for dance here in Ashford.



Support for the Armed Forces

The Borough of Ashford marked its commitment to supporting soldiers, sailors, airmen and their families who live in the borough with a special signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant on Saturday 10 May 2014.

The Community Covenant encourages local people to support military personnel in their area and build awareness of the issues which affect those in the Forces and their families. It is also a recognition of the sacrifices and challenges faced by those who join up.

August marked the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. There was a special dawn-to-dusk guard of honour at the WW1 tank in the town centre and Ashford's War Memorial, in partnership with the REME Army Reserve (103 Battalion) and Royal British Legion. Local communities also commemorated the occasion with events and memorial projects.



Children and young people with places to go and things to do

We want to make sure that the next generation have places to go and things to do. This is why we refurbished one of the two older skate ramps at the popular Ashford Skate Park. We have created the first park in the borough from scratch in the last 20 years – Singleton's Cuckoo community park features a brand new children's play area including a 30ft climbing frame, outdoor gym and youth shelter.

First-class education and skills are key to ensuring that our young people get the best start in life, whilst supporting local growth industries. We are helping Hadlow College, including offering a bridging loan, in their efforts to bring higher education to the heart of the town on a site adjacent to the International Station. The new college will focus on providing skills to meet local business needs in the manufacturing, construction and service sectors.

Sport and active living

Sport is key to keeping people healthy and happy. We work closely with schools and local clubs to promote physical activity, especially amongst our youngest residents. Over the last year thousands of people who may not usually take part in sports received help and support to take part and see the benefits of a healthier lifestyle.

Following site work throughout the year, the new country park at Conningbrook Lakes is now officially open. With a beautiful lakeside setting, views of the North Downs and access to a network of country trails, Conningbrook Lakes is another stunning attraction for Ashford and will become a leisure destination of choice. It will provide not only a gateway for families, walkers and cyclists to explore the Stour Valley but also a site for local water-based clubs and associations. Our long term aspiration for Conningbrook Lakes is not only to provide opportunities to sail, canoe, walk, cycle and jog but also to encourage visitors to engage with nature through access paths, wildlife events and volunteer conservation.





...on giving you value for money services

Self-sufficiency and innovation

To make sure we provide residents with the services they need we are committed to being proactive yet prudent. By acting entrepreneurially we hope to be independent of government grant by 2018-19. Initiatives such as purchasing important local assets like International House, securing extra revenue streams, and setting up new council-owned companies allow us to act in new ways, offer extra support or bridge what would otherwise have been budget gaps while not increasing our share of council tax.

Keeping council tax the lowest in Kent and one of the lowest in the country

We know council tax payers shouldn't have to pay too much council tax, which is why in February we reaffirmed our commitment to continue our freeze on our part of council tax for the next year. This makes sure that we remain the lowest council tax levels in Kent, providing our services at good value for money.

Positive survey

Finding different ways of doing things, and regularly managing and monitoring our priorities, ensures that we provide residents with good value. But because it is important to check this with our residents, we commissioned a borough-wide survey to gain an insight on how they felt we are doing. Pleasingly, the vast majority were positive about their experience of living in Ashford and the services we offer.

Efficient services and new ways of working

It is important that the services that we provide are both efficient and effective, which is why we try to minimise the use of vehicles when carrying out day-to-day activities. We reduced the miles travelled by our fleet by 7% this year, and we commissioned more energy efficient vehicles for our new recycling service.

We want to make sure that the housing our tenants enjoy is as efficient as possible, keeping them up-to-date and reducing energy bills. Over the last year we upgraded and improved hundreds of properties with measures from loft and cavity wall insulation to more efficient boilers. Similarly, we are working with the Ashford Leisure Trust to regenerate the Stour Centre, building a new spin studio to cope with increased demand.

Our Town Centre Action Team deals with a variety of jobs including refurbishing street furniture, tidying council car parks and keeping walkways and flowerbeds tidy. They also help clear litter, dog mess, graffiti and keep pavements gritted in the winter. They have installed an innovative 'Book Stop' shelter on Park Street, mounted on a tree stump, to support education and literacy.

Support for all residents

Although the economic outlook is improving and unemployment falling, it remains tough for some residents. That is why our dedicated Welfare Reform Intervention Officers continue to offer proactive support to those needing advice on financial matters or getting back into work, and why we have worked with partners including the Department for Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Bureau, local charities and others to create a single Welfare Partnership HUB. This provides a dedicated place to help vulnerable individuals and households with the transition to Universal Credit.

We are always looking to take advantage of developments in technology to offer new ways of supporting our residents. Having analysed the ways in which residents interact with us, we have set a new Customer Service Strategy which focusses on helping residents to help themselves. With almost 3,000 residents using 'self help' technology for money matters like paying council tax during the year, our staff are freed up to dedicate more time to complex enquiries.



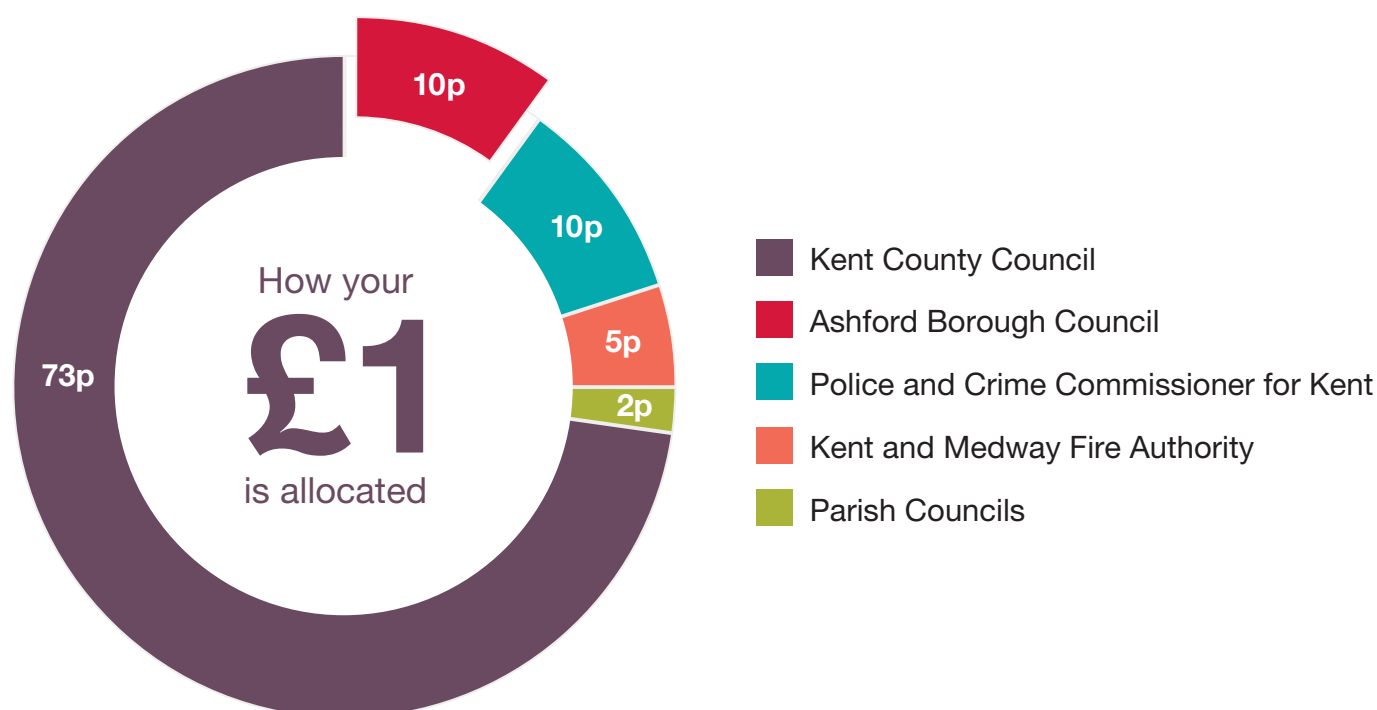
our financial summary

We realise that it is important not only to achieve much, but to do so while keeping our spending – and your council tax bills – to a minimum. This is why our council tax remains frozen for next year and is the lowest in Kent (based on Band D Council Tax per average taxable property). We provide all of your local services for under £2.80 a week.

We have set a prudent budget for next year under difficult external funding conditions, which has limited the impact on front-line services whilst providing important investment in key areas to progress our priorities. Indeed, our auditors have checked our books and agree that we are not only financially resilient but also provide good value for money. This means we can work cost-effectively while also delivering services that residents are happy with.

Here's a summary of how we spent your money last year. To make sure we continue to offer real value, we manage and monitor our spending regularly to make sure they continue to meet our criteria and your standards.

The pie chart below shows where your council tax goes. Although Ashford Borough Council is responsible for collecting the Council Tax payments made by Ashford residents, we only keep around 10p for every £1 you pay to provide our own services, and distribute the rest to Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and the parishes.



The Council's Budget

Service	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	Per Head £
Cultural	1,763	1,804	14.81
Environmental	7,774	8,019	65.83
Planning	3,026	3,152	25.88
Highways & transportation	1,408	(333)	(2.73)
Housing	68,270	66,479	545.75
Central services to the public	6,974	7,661	62.89
Gross Expenditure	89,215	86,782	712.43
Less grants & other income	(73,170)	(73,013)	(599.39)
Net Expenditure	16,045	13,769	113.04
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	(2,336)	6	0.05
	13,709	13,775	113.09

Budget requirement financed by:

Government Grant & NHB	(4,820)	(4,431)	(36.38)
Business Rates	(2,802)	(3,182)	(26.12)
Funding requirement	6,087	6,162	50.59

new cabinet new members new direction

From May 2015, our portfolio holders will be supported by a lead member.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holders



Cllr Gerry Clarkson CBE

Leader,
Ashford Borough Council
Charing Ward



Cllr Jessamy Blanford

Culture, Leisure
& Environment
Great Chart with
Singleton North Ward



Cllr Bernard Heyes

Highways, Wellbeing
& Safety
Godinton Ward



Cllr Graham Galpin

Town Centre Focus &
Business Dynamics
Stour Ward



Cllr Neil Shorter

Finance, Budget &
Resource Management
Washford Ward



Cllr Neil Bell

Deputy Leader,
Government, Policy
Interface & Democracy
Biddenden Ward



Cllr Jane Martin

Information &
Communication
Saxon Shore Ward



Cllr Mike Bennett

Planning, Development
& Enforcement
Rolvenden and Tenterden
West Ward



Cllr Paul Clokie

Housing &
Home Ownership
Tenterden North Ward



Cllr Clair Bell

Public Interaction &
Borough Presentation
Weald Central Ward

Lead Members

Cllr Jenny Webb

Norman Ward

Supporting Culture, Leisure & Environment

Cllr Gareth Bradford

Weald South Ward

Supporting Highways, Wellbeing & Safety

Cllr Bill Barrett

Singleton South Ward

Supporting Town Centre Focus & Business Dynamics

Cllr Stephen Dehnel

Downs North Ward

Supporting Finance, Budget & Resource Management

Cllr Aline Hicks

Weald South Ward

Supporting Education & Work Skills

Cllr Larry Krause

Downs West Ward

Supporting Information & Communication

Cllr Jim Wedgbury

Park Farm South Ward

Supporting Planning, Development & Enforcement

Cllr Callum Knowles

Tenterden South Ward

Supporting Housing & Home Ownership

Cllr Alan Pickering

Weald Central Ward

Supporting Public Interaction & Borough Presentation

Cllr Mick Burgess

Isle of Oxney Ward

Supporting ABC Romney Marsh

Other Elected Members

Cllr Kate Hooker

Aylesford Green

Cllr Jill Britcher

Beaver

Cllr Beverly Murphy

Beaver

Cllr Luke Powell

Bockhanger

Cllr Winston Michael

Boughton Aluph & Eastwell

Cllr Andrew Buchanan

Bybrook

Cllr Peter Feacey

Godinton

Cllr Gerald White

Highfield

Cllr Phil Sims

Kennington

Cllr Marion Martin

Little Burton Farm

Cllr Jeremy Adby

North Willesborough

Cllr George Koowaree

North Willesborough

Cllr Tina Heyes

Park Farm North

Cllr William Howard

Saxon Shore

Cllr David Smith

South Willesborough

Cllr John Link

St Michaels

Cllr Brendan Chilton

Stanhope

Cllr Chris Waters

Stour

Cllr Harold Apps

Victoria

Cllr Dara Farrell

Victoria

Cllr Paul Bartlett

Weald East

Cllr Geraldine Dyer

Weald North

Cllr Noel Ovenden

Wye

Did you know?

Safety and security

It is important that smoke alarms are tested regularly - at least once a month, and the batteries replaced when needed. In England, over 200 people die each year in fires in their homes.

All gas appliances (cookers, boilers and fires) can emit carbon monoxide, an invisible odourless poisonous gas which can kill.

Protecting the home:

- Ensure that all gas appliances are installed by registered engineers and serviced regularly
- Read the manufacturer's usage and safety instructions – and stick to them
- Install a carbon monoxide detector
- Keep an eye out for the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, including headaches, nausea, dizziness and confusion
- Seek medical advice immediately if you suspect anyone has been exposed to carbon monoxide. If you have a Beko, Flavel or Leisure gas cooker which is more than six years old, you could be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Visit www.beko.co.uk/cookersafetynotice for details. Beko will arrange a free modification.
- Home owners should lock windows and doors
- Stay vigilant, noting unusual behaviour
- Leave a low energy light burning or a radio on low
- Not leaving spare keys where they can be found
- Stop newspapers and milk deliveries

when on holiday and arrange for family friends or neighbours to pop in if possible

- Know their neighbours – having a good reciprocal relationship with neighbours can be really helpful
- Avoid leaving possessions on view in gardens or on landings, even discarded packaging can give burglars information about recent purchases
- Secure the shed and consider marking valuables and protecting the window with perforated mesh

Protecting property:

Ashford Police Community Safety Unit's top tips to help reduce the risk of vehicles being targeted by thieves include:

- Vehicles should be parked in a well lit area or garaging vehicles where possible
- Using steering or gear locks to act as a deterrent
- Installing an immobiliser or an alarm
- Fitting locking wheel nuts
- Keeping keys in a safe place and never leaving them in an empty vehicle
- Removing keys from the ignition
- Buying a stereo and Sat Nav that is totally or partly removable
- Never leaving valuables in a vehicle
- Locking all doors, windows and sunroof whenever the vehicle is left unattended
- Bikes should be security-marked, recording serial numbers and a photograph kept in a safe place
- Register bikes on a property database such as www.bikeregister.com

- Add bicycles to a home insurance policy
- Buy bikes and accessories from legitimate suppliers
- Bikes should be secured by locking to an immovable object
- Good locks, especially those made from different materials often deter thieves
- Bikes should be securely stored in a well-lit area in view of passers-by.

Skills and education

Computers are available in all libraries, providing access to a range of software and the internet (under 16s need parental permission to use the internet). Libraries can also offer printing and scanning facilities and software which helps people with disabilities to use them. A range of assistive hardware is also available and one computer is suitable for wheelchair users.

Library visitors with a card number and pin can now also access the internet using their own portable devices - such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones at a number of library locations.

The libraries which offer access online:

Ashford Gateway Plus	03000 414141
Tenterden Gateway	0845 824 7200
Wye Library	01233 812666
Stanhope Library	01233 627591
Charing Library	01233 713177
Bockhanger Library	01233 624308

Skills Plus offer free English lessons to support the Nepalese community in Ashford, focussing on everyday speaking and listening in English.

For support with English, contact:
learnenglish@kent.gov.uk
or ring 0845 6065 606.

Skills, languages and crafts can be learnt

through Kent Adult Education at Ashford Gateway Plus. Courses range from health and fitness to business skills, with a spacious Art Room with inspirational views over the Memorial Gardens.

Sign up for courses at the Gateway, or book online at www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk/about-us/where-to-find-us/ashford.aspx

Help and support

Local Sure Start children's centres will now form part of a new Kent Integrated Family Support Service (KIFSS) – supporting local families with children aged 0-11. To register, pop along, sign up for free, and receive regular updates on the wide range of free activities.

Contacts :

Ray Allen, Stanhope	03000 420174
Bluebells , Hothfield	03000 420598
Sure Steps, Kennington	03000 420598
Waterside, Newtown	03000 420528
Little Explorers, Tenterden	03000 420191

Turning Point provides specialist services which focus on improving lives and communities across mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, primary care, the criminal justice system and employment. For more information or to make a referral please contact 0300 123 1186.

Ashford Mediation Service can help resolve tricky local problems, including disputes, loud music and noisy parties to parking issues, boundary disputes and anti-social behaviour.

For a confidential discussion and impartial advice call 01233 896237 or email info@ashfordmediation.co.uk.

Independent advice on a range of matters can also be found from the Citizens Advice Bureau, whose Ashford office can be contacted on 01233 626185.



This is just a snapshot of Ashford's achievements and the services we provide. For full information, including details of your local councillors, find out more at **www.ashford.gov.uk**



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
Kent TN23 1PL

Useful contacts

Ashford Borough Council

Contact us

www.ashford.gov.uk // 01233 330111 // customer.care@ashford.gov.uk

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Pay bills online | www.ashford.gov.uk/pay |
| • Apply for our services | www.ashford.gov.uk/apply |
| • Report a problem | www.ashford.gov.uk/report |
| • Make a benefits claim | www.ashford.gov.uk/claim |

Kent County Council

Contact KCC

www.kent.gov.uk/roadsand-travel/report-a-problem for:

- Street lights
- Potholes
- Traffic signals
- Broken signs
- Overgrown trees