

**ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN 2030  
EXAMINATION LIBRARY  
GBD03**

**Ashford Borough Council**

**THE CORPORATE PLAN 2015-2020**



The  
**FIVE YEAR  
CORPORATE PLAN**  
for **ASPIRATION, ACTION** and **ACHIEVEMENT**  
2015-2020



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



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**WELL CONNECTED**

for commuting by ROAD and RAIL to LONDON KENT EUROPE

**PARIS**  
1HR 52MINS away

**BRUSSELS**  
1HR 37MINS away

**LILLE**  
56MINS away

**38**  
MINUTES from LONDON

ASHFORD'S LOCATION CONNECTIVITY ACCESSIBILITY make it BETTER BUSINESS

224.5 <sup>sq</sup> MILES  
58,000 ha

.....  
the largest borough in

**KENT**

**65+** AGE GROUP  
.....  
is projected to grow to  
**35,000** PEOPLE  
BY 2030

almost **22,000**  
ASHFORD'S  
POPULATION (2015 DATA)

POPULATION  
.....  
is predicted to increase to

**149,200** BY 2031

POPULATION  
.....  
is predicted to increase to  
**129,900** BY 2021

the largest rural area in

**KENT**

.....  
WITH TWO TOWNS

rural urban  
**ASHFORD** and **TENTERDEN**

**43**

ASHFORD BOROUGH  
COUNCIL  
WARD MEMBERS

**7** COUNTY MEMBERS and **2** MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

plus **38** PARISH COUNCILS  
in the borough

.....  
the number of **JOBS** PREDICTED  
to grow by at least  
**12,400**  
.....  
over a 20 year period to **2030**

# INTRODUCTION



Ashford Borough Council's (ABC) new Corporate Plan for 2015 to 2020 shows the context and sets the direction for the next five years.

It is a five-year-period which is likely to change the face of local government as we know it, with local authority funding becoming less certain and councils being expected to 'fend for themselves' by generating income and becoming self-sufficient. The manifesto, set by the new Administration in the run-up to the May elections, is in line with the Queen's Speech, and our wish to be 'Aspirational Ashford' through the Council's (and others') actions and achievements is demonstrated, we believe, in this Corporate Plan and in all that we do.

Ashford, of course, has a growing population, which means greater demands on services while we are coping with ever-reducing funding and the challenges of finding ways to generate income.

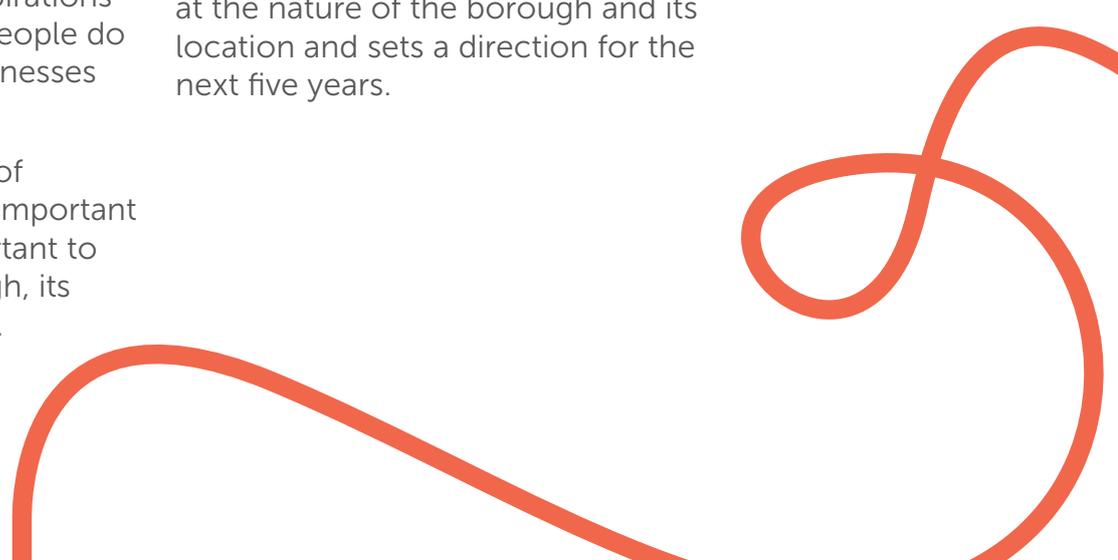
This document sets out our priorities for the future ... and our aspirations to have a borough where people do want to live and where businesses do want to locate.

We have developed a suite of priorities – all of which are important to us because they're important to the wellbeing of the borough, its residents and its businesses.

Our priorities (which we will review each year, just to check we're still 'on track') are to have a borough that:

-  Promotes and delivers economic growth, including investment, jobs and skill levels
-  Delivers on quality housing and planning
-  Recognises the value of tourism and the benefits it brings to our towns, villages and the borough as a whole
-  Supports our growing senior population to lead full and independent lives
-  Provides healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities for all ages
-  Maintains its environments attractively, responsibly and safely
-  Is effective, efficient and sustainable in terms of finance, resources, service delivery and enforcement

This Corporate Plan – covering the period from 2015 to 2020 – looks at the nature of the borough and its location and sets a direction for the next five years.



The next five years might, however, signal further substantial change. From what we now know (at the time of writing), the comprehensive spending review scheduled for November 2015 may well produce substantial reductions in funding available to public services in general and local government in particular.

To this end, ABC is developing trading companies, with an eye to generating income so that we can offer support to businesses and the borough's economy. This, however, may not be sufficient, and we may also have to consider closer collaboration with other public sector agencies – either within the borough, or on a basis of cross-border co-operation for service delivery and, ultimately, possibly integration.

The big issues for the life of this Corporate Plan are, therefore, to:

-  Keep Ashford and its projects on track – particularly driving the 'Big 8' - for the benefit of the borough
-  Continue to find and exploit new funding opportunities
-  Take a new approach to delivery and a new emphasis on compliance (making clear what is permitted and enforcing against what is not)
-  Achieve – and maintain – independence from central government funding
-  Strengthen our focus in rural areas

Whatever we do, or have to do, over the course of the next five years, it is fairly certain that local government will not remain in the form in which we currently know it. ABC, however, is committed to its priorities and principles as set out in this our new Corporate Plan, and committed to be an Aspirational, an Active and an Achieving Borough.



Gerry D Clarkson, CBE BA (Hons)

**LEADER**  
**ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

October 2015

# PRIORITY 1

## ENTERPRISING ASHFORD: ECONOMIC INVESTMENT and GROWTH

### Our Aspiration:

*To promote growth and achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford borough. We will work to secure inward investment to create a wide range of jobs carried out by a highly skilled workforce.*

### WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

#### **A vibrant town centre and a supporting business centre.**

By actively seeking inward investment in new jobs, homes, hotels and leisure attractions in the town centre and, where needed, using council resources to help trigger these major new investments.

Creating new daytime and evening activity in the town centre by promoting the development of a cinema, restaurants, a hotel and new homes at Elwick Place.

Kick-starting major new office development in the Commercial Quarter north of the railway station by partnering with a developer to deliver the first new office building.

Bringing new life to the Park Mall Shopping Centre. The Council has recently purchased the centre and will now work to attract a range of occupiers, including independent retailers, to make it a lively and attractive shopping destination.

Blending exciting new architecture with the best of the traditional buildings in the town to create a vibrant place to work and spend leisure time.

#### **A range of jobs with an emphasis on increasing skills levels.**

Work with partners to help fund and deliver the new Ashford College on Station Road to deliver excellent new facilities for students and also to support the development of apprenticeship schemes.

#### **Creating a new local plan that provides for economic growth by allocating sufficient space for new businesses and encourages a range of jobs, especially higher skilled jobs.**

Provision of high quality office space in the Commercial Quarter and elsewhere.

Invest in new business space for 'high-tech' companies.

Create incubator units for entrepreneurial residents to develop new enterprises.

**1.7 MILLION**  
**EMPLOYEES**  
Live within a  
**60 MINUTE**   
drive time

**Well-planned and well-resourced infrastructure to maintain Ashford's prime location status.**

Focus on delivery of infrastructure projects essential to Ashford's growth and connectivity: Junction 10A (M20), A28 improvement, station signalling upgrade for Eurostar.

**A thriving rural tourism economy and successful rural enterprise.**

Encourage rural business projects in the rural areas which complement their surroundings and help to create local jobs.

Work with the tourism industry on existing and new projects to continue to realise the full potential of the borough as a major centre for tourism.

Continue to secure high speed broadband improvements with operators, especially to tackle areas with slow speeds.

Continue active support for rural business.





HOUSE PRICES   
**34% LOWER**  
than  
**GREATER LONDON**



Farrow Court



# PRIORITY 2

## LIVING ASHFORD: QUALITY HOUSING AND HOMES FOR ALL

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### **Our Aspiration:**

*To secure quality homes across the borough, catering for a range of ages, tenures and need, in well planned and attractive new places.*

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### WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

#### **Identify an adequate supply of housing to meet the range of housing needs**

Make sure that the Local Plan meets the need for market housing, identifying specific development sites and broad locations for growth over the next five, 10 and 15 years.

Recognise the aspiration for home ownership by developing a staircase to ownership and supporting extension of the Right-to-Buy.

Build on the council's record as a front runner in delivering affordable housing in the rural and urban areas of the borough and help people meet their housing aspirations.

#### **Create a supply of town centre housing to suit emerging new markets**

Encourage new private rented accommodation in purpose-built new apartments and houses - Elwick Place and Park Mall – for commuting 'professional singles and couples'.

#### **Help people meet their housing needs and aspirations**

Work with partners to deliver the best housing choices for older people in well designed accommodation that meets their needs, including assisted living and specialist provision (dementia-friendly scheme at Farrow Court and Danemore).

Continue to push for quality development, using the Council's local standards and the independent Ashford Design Panel to help achieve the best places possible. To include space and quality standards as requirements for development.

Continue local needs housing provision while also ensuring supply of rural high value housing.

Housing management companies managed by local residents where possible.

#### **Maintain assurance of confidence in the Planning system**

Strengthen approach to enforcement and take a tougher line on compliance.

Maintain a creative approach to facilitating delivery.

# PRIORITY 3

## ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD: HEALTHY CHOICES THROUGH PHYSICAL, CULTURAL AND LEISURE ENGAGEMENT



### Our Aspiration:

*To provide or enable a range of quality leisure and cultural activities where people can make healthy and affordable lifestyle choices and enjoy assets that create attractive, desirable and active communities*

### WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

#### **Delivery of the best mix of sports, cultural, recreational experiences supporting a range of health and wellbeing benefits for residents of all ages and abilities**

Invest in new provision and refurbishment of existing facilities to provide a high quality sports, culture and leisure offer [Substantial investment in Stour Centre].

Improve the quality of the management of leisure and cultural facilities so that they are among the best in the UK.

Extend the cultural, sport and recreational offers at key sites: Conningbrook, Julie Rose.

#### **Innovative ways for people to choose active lifestyles**

Ascertain and support best solutions for providing healthy and active communities in new developments – Repton Park, Chilmington.

Strengthen culture and sport in the Local Plan and through Master Planning.

Develop a 'cycle town' strategy.

Recognising the growing elderly demographic, embed a new approach to activities for the 60+ group across the borough.

#### **Grow our cultural offer to be a successful and alternative destination**

Deliver town centre cinema and associated attractions.

Continue to support Revelation St Mary's.

Develop Create and exploit its brand.

Attract cultural industries.

Support Tenterden's leisure and cultural offer.

Work with the private sector on cultural and leisure provision.



**Maximise the value of our key green sites**

Masterplan future development at Conningbrook.

Planned improvement to key public space and parks – Victoria Park, Memorial Gardens and Willesborough Dykes.

Conningbrook Lakes and the Julie Rose Stadium



Conningbrook Lakes

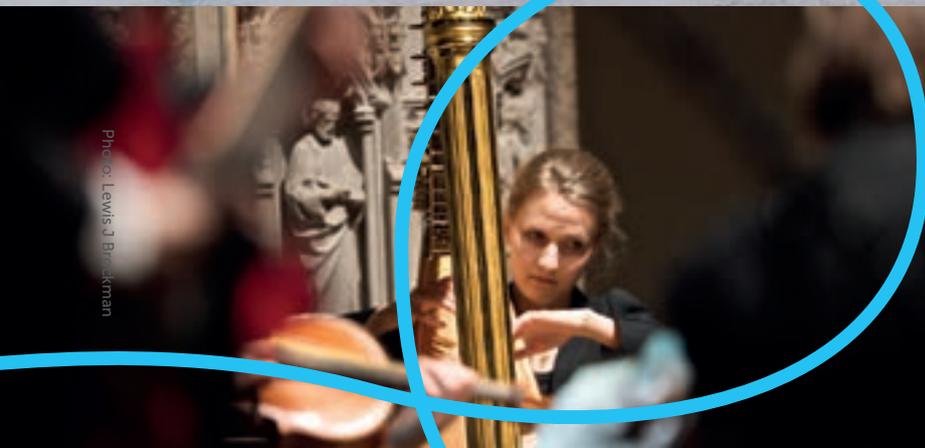


Photo: Lewis J Brockman



**TOURISM** brings  
in over  
**4 MILLION**  
VISITORS PER  
YEAR



Willesborough Dykes cycle path



Chapel Down Brewery



Memorial Gardens

# PRIORITY 4

## ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD: COUNTRYSIDE AND TOWNSCAPE, TOURISM AND HERITAGE

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### **Our Aspiration:**

*To achieve an environment that creates higher standards of public space design, alongside improved standards of presentation of key green spaces. To safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape quality to ensure the very best attractive environment with thriving and vibrant town centres*

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### WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE and HOW WILL WE DO IT?

#### **Improve and safeguard the quality and presentation of the borough, recognising its unique environment, countryside, local heritage and tourism offer**

Create Landscape Action Team and implement higher maintenance standards.

Respond to growth and associated land management issues through quality, flexibility, control and cost management.

Deliver quality gateways and approaches to the town centre.

Bring forward a new green corridor action plan to improve presentation, signage, planting and better water quality.

#### **Delivery of best mix of new and existing parks and green spaces, incorporating quality public art and cutting edge design**

Develop cycle town strategy and connections between green spaces via cycle and footpath links.

#### **Strengthen tourism and local heritage offer**

Build on the success of the tourism symposium.

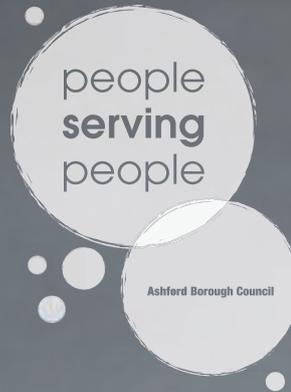
Provide modern visitor information service, including building on website tourism activity.

TO OVER

# 30

attractions  
across the borough

# ASHFORD'S UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES FOR OUR FOUR PRIORITIES



## Our Aspiration:

*To remain a well-resourced council, with effective governance, high quality services, good communications, safe surroundings, demonstrating good compliance and high standards*

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE *and* HOW WILL WE DO IT?

### **A viable and sustainable replacement for Formula Grant, generating an additional £2m per annum by 2020 through:**

Promoting business growth and investment, through actively marketing the borough and delivering the 'Big 8' projects.

Investing in the borough ourselves, in line with the borrowing and acquisitions policy.

Housing growth delivering New Homes Bonus generated by the building programme in line with the Council's Local Plan.

Managing our costs and inflation.

### **Maintain a strong and effective governance framework by:**

Maintaining focus on the strong community outcomes agreed in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans through monitoring and review.

Having focussed decision making and accountability processes in place.

Managing the key strategic risks for the council.

Maintaining ABC's direction of travel and knowing when to change course.

### **A fair deal for all our residents and business through the use of council powers to ensure quality and compliance by:**

Being a high performing local authority.

Holding statutory providers to account.



Ensuring that enforcement powers are used effectively and appropriately.

Handling complaints effectively, fairly and in a timely manner.

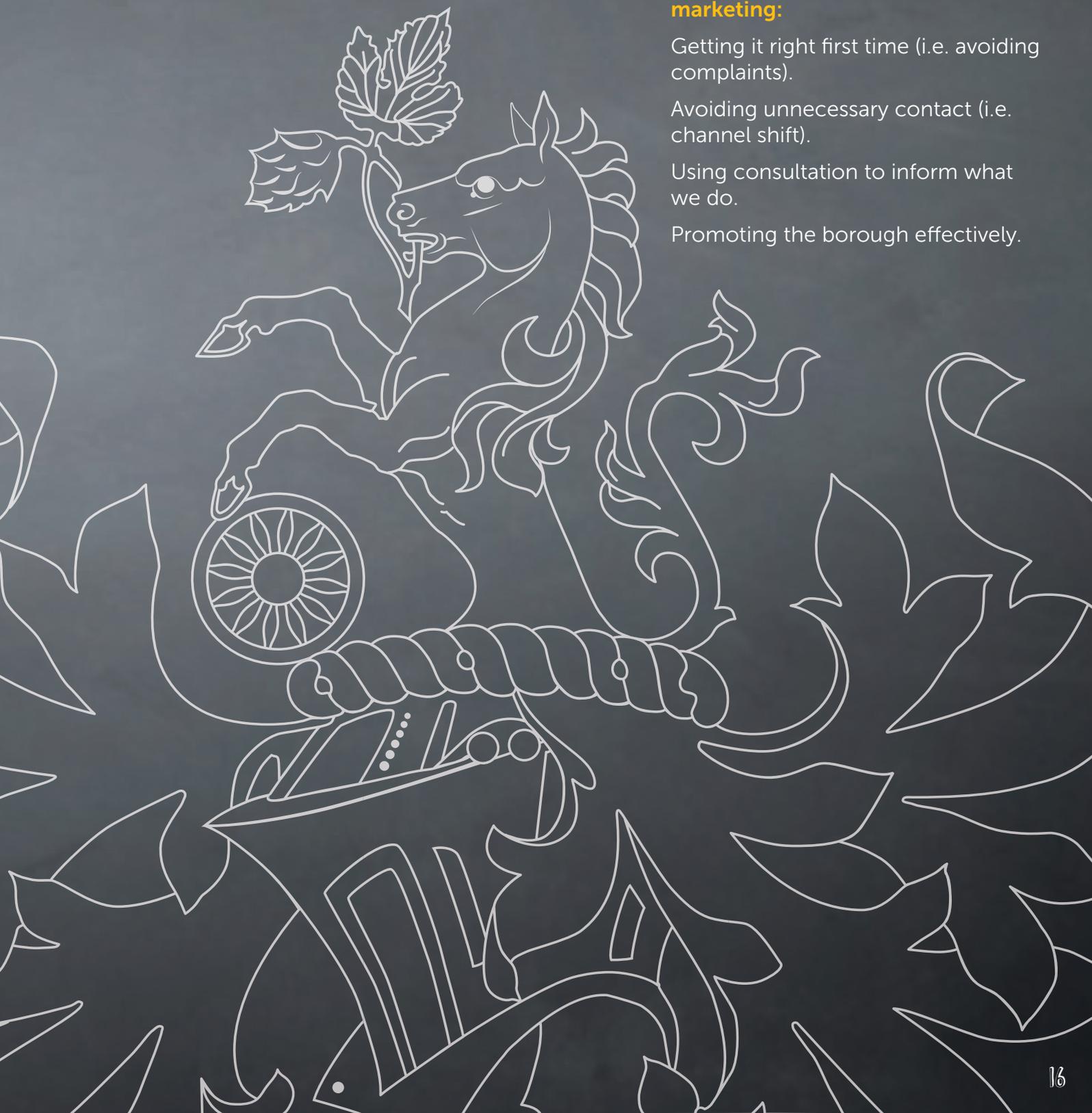
**Proactive, useful, relevant and accessible communications and marketing:**

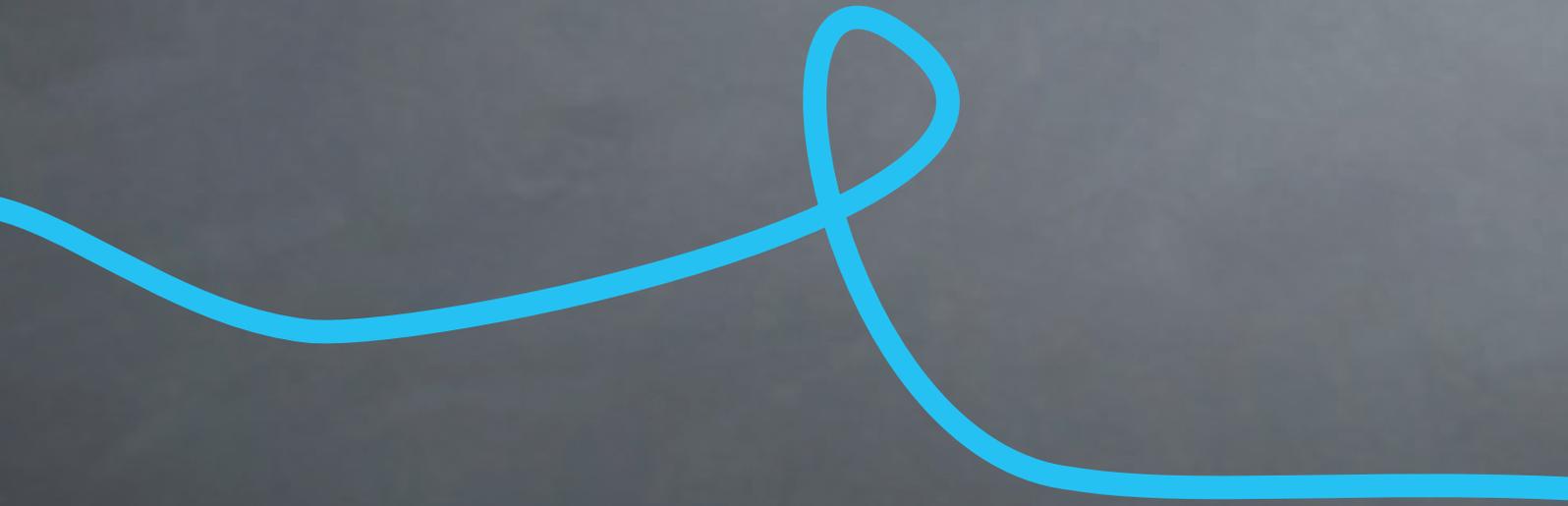
Getting it right first time (i.e. avoiding complaints).

Avoiding unnecessary contact (i.e. channel shift).

Using consultation to inform what we do.

Promoting the borough effectively.





ASHFORD

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