

From: **Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development**
Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste
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To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 21 June 2017**

Subject: Ashford District Deal – Review and Refresh

Decision number: 17/00063

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 June 2017

Future Pathway of Paper: Decision by the Leader

Electoral Divisions: Ashford Central, Ashford East, Ashford Rural East, Ashford Rural South, Ashford Rural West, Ashford South Tenterden

Summary

This report provides both a review of the current District Deal with Ashford Borough Council, as well as a proposed refresh of the Deal. The review and recommendations for the refreshed Deal are set out in a full report in the Appendix.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Leader of the County Council on the proposed decision to enter into the refreshed deal with Ashford Borough Council as set out in appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In September 2015, Kent County Council (KCC) agreed the first District Deal in the County with Ashford Borough Council (ABC). This Deal is testament to the close working relationship the two authorities enjoy and their shared commitment to deliver quality services and major new projects in Ashford. The District Deal provides a good basis to work together to seek continuous improvement in the way the two Councils work for the benefit of the community in Ashford; importantly, however, it has enabled KCC to pilot new ways of working across its services which it can then roll out to other parts of the County.

1.2. After eighteen months of operating under the current deal, both ABC and KCC agree it is an appropriate time to review the achievements made under this Deal and to refresh it with new priorities. A full report appended to this cover report provides a fuller overview of both.

2. Background

2.1. The Borough Council and the County Council enjoy good relations at a political and operational level and have achieved much working together on a wide variety of projects in recent years. However, both are complex organisations, each with its own procedures and priorities and inevitably operational issues crop up which could be tackled better and faster.

2.2. The District Deal signed in 2015 is not a legally binding agreement but a short, clear statement of the Councils' shared commitment to work together in key areas.

2.3. The Deal has two main parts:

- A commitment to focus the combined efforts of both councils on delivering key strategic projects;
- An agreement to improve the way the Council's work together to make sure that we deliver the best quality outcomes possible for residents and businesses

2.4. The original Deal focused on the "Big 8" projects in Ashford:

Project	Summary
1. Chilmington Green	Chilmington Green is an urban extension on the edge of Ashford town which includes up to 5,750 homes.
2. Ashford College	Brand new campus on the corner of Elwick Road and Station Road, expected to accommodate 1,000 students.
3. Ashford International Station Spurs Project	The Ashford International Spurs scheme is essential to provide a signalling solution to enable future interoperability for all international service providers.
4. Jasmin Vardimon Dance Academy	The dance company wish to escalate the work already undertaken and establish the JVC International Dance Academy as a creative centre of excellence.
5. Elwick Place	A major part of Ashford's town centre development. 26,900 sq. m brownfield site for mixed retail, leisure, office and residential use.
6. M20 Junction 10A	The new junction will be located a short distance east of Junction 10 and will act to relieve congestion at the existing junction 10, whilst providing additional capacity to unlock substantial new development in Ashford and the wider area and relieve congestion.
7. Designer Outlet Expansion	Extension of the McArthur Glen shopping centre in phases to increase the existing floor space and create a scale of complex as a rival to Bicester Village.
8. Commercial	The Commercial Quarter offers 80,000 sqm of office

Project	Summary
Quarter	development along with 2,500 sqm retail/ leisure and 150 homes.

- 2.5. There is no doubt that this focus has helped to deliver several projects where both Councils share an interest – achieving the funding needed for both the Ashford station signalling and for M20 junction 10a; and signing the legal agreements to bring forward development at Chilmington Green are all prime examples.
- 2.6. In addition to these projects, there were several examples of improved operational working. For example, KCC and ABC worked together to roll out a successful and pioneering approach to enforcing overnight lorry parking through Operation Kindle, a multi-agency response to unsafe illegal and antisocial parking by lorries in Kent.
- 2.7. There has also been progress in more effective management of the town centre environment by enabling Ashford’s Town Centre Action Team (T-CAT) to undertake independent maintenance within the town centre where there are no moving vehicles. T-CAT also now provide support and additional resource to KCC maintenance teams where KCC have road closures and appropriate insurance in place. Other examples of good practice from the first District Deal are contained in the **Appendix B** to this report.
- 2.8. There are other areas where lessons have been learned and are being applied to improve working. In some areas of both Councils the District Deal is not fully understood and hence does not always attract the priority it deserves. Some of these areas are now the proposed focus of a refreshed District Deal as set out in the next section.

3. New priorities

- 3.1. The refreshed District Deal and review of the last year is attached as an **Appendix B**. In summary, it commits to completing the delivery of the Big 8 and following up next steps and progressing two further ambitious strategic projects – Conningbrook Park and Newtown Works.
- 3.2. The operational priorities for the next year are:
- the delivery of the comprehensive Chilmington protocol which outlines how County and Borough staff involved in the many areas of responsibility affecting Chilmington will work together to deliver a high quality place and a strong Community Management Trust;
 - delivering broadband through BDUKs phase 2 programme in the Borough;
 - working with Town centre developers and investors to integrate infrastructure needed and create high quality public realm around new developments.

4. Governance

- 4.1. On a day to day operational basis the Deal is overseen by a small officer group – extending the remit of an existing group that already support the Strategic Project Delivery Board that works to accelerate delivery of the ‘Big 8’ projects.

4.2. The officer group reports to a District Deal Delivery Board which includes the Leader of ABC and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development for KCC. This group meets twice a year to review progress against the objectives set and follow up where appropriate.

5. Legal implications

5.1. The 'District Deal' is not a legally binding document – it is a statement of political intent to tackle a range of project delivery challenges and to improve the ways the two Councils operate together.

6. Financial implications

6.1. The 'District Deal' in itself does not require additional financial resource; for the most part it is about changing how both authorities deploy existing resource. There are no financial implications beyond each authorities' existing budgets.

7. Next steps

7.1. Assuming both Councils endorse the revisions to the Deal, it will be formally signed by the two Council leaders. Each authority will need to take responsibility for 'cascading' the updated Deal through their authority so that staff at operational levels understand the nature and strength of the commitments made in it.

8. Conclusion

8.1. The District Deal is a real attempt to build on the strength of an existing relationship to deliver even better results for the community in the future. Its success will depend on the commitment of members and officers of both authorities. The oversight proposed for the delivery of the Deal should help to make sure that the best intentions set out in this updated document have a good chance of being met.

9. Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Leader of the County Council on the proposed decision to enter into the refreshed deal with Ashford Borough Council as set out in appendix A.

10. Appendices

Appendix A Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B Refreshing the District Deal: An Annual Report

11. Contact details

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