

COUNCIL UPDATE 6.2026

FINBERRY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

I met with The Church Commissioners for England (CCE) and Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) 1st June to discuss expectations for ongoing management of the grassland and wetland areas. The requirements are with Church Commissioners for England (CCE) to manage it for 15 years with methods for delivering management to be agreed with the KWT.



The Floodplain Meadow between Waterbrook and Finberry along the East Stour. There is no BNG requirement as the planning application pre-dates any requirement. The area falls within the Crest/CCE management agreement and the management plan is being reviewed for future requirement. It was sowed with species rich grassland; watercourses /swales are managed by Crest.

Agricultural Land – Arable Farmland with Field Margins northwest of the school (and grassed area nearer to Aldi). Arable farmland will continue to be managed as it is at present with margins managed to maximise their value for wildlife. Sheep grazing may be considered by fencing put in years ago will need to be renewed. This change help to create a useful mix of grassland structures and help to provide habitats for arable birds and invertebrates.

Captains Wood has been managed by Crest and work on the path maintenance has recently been completed. Long term management will be with the Management Company (and its contractor HML). Boundary and coppicing needs to be progressed.

On site landscape areas/SUDS attenuation are now the responsibility of HML. This is within the service charge and covers about 100m from Goldfinch (north) and the area south of the proposed community centre which includes newt/reptile mitigation areas.

BNG Mitigation Area for the Waterbrook link road northeast of Sevington Lakes will need to be maintained for 30 years and is owned by CCE.

CCE have made Crest aware of their ongoing need to ensure management is carried out in line with original consents.

ABC/KCC JOINT TRANSPORT BOARD

The Board met on 2nd June. Key issues included.

- Outline designs completed and submitted for road safety audit for the installation of pedestrian island between the A20 and The Street Mersham. Delivery expected winter 2026
- Upgrading of existing signing and extension of high friction surfacing on eastern arm of Flanders roundabout (A2042 section rather than A2070), delivery in autumn 2026.
- Installation of new infrastructure to allow for remote CCTV enforcement of existing traffic prohibitions on Bluebell Road (overbridge across A2070) on hold. Scheme requires legal agreements with Network Rail and Highways England to allow for enforcement on their assets.
- Preliminary Designs have been undertaken on outline designs on Active Travel Funding for development work regarding a footway in Chilmington crossing from Ashford Prep School to the new secondary school.
- Improvement at Simone Weil junction with A28 is in technical audit stage with no scheduled date yet as responsibility is with Crown View developers not Aldi.
- Flood Street bridge barrier system currently in place is intended as a temporary measure while arrangements are made for a more robust steel barrier to be installed. This will provide a more secure longer-term solution and should help prevent the issues caused by the displacement of sandbags and water-filled barriers. Permanent strengthening is under a technical audit process but was noted as for delivery in 2026.
- The introduction of free parking for vehicles charging in Vicarage Lane Car Park has, when comparing the three months before and after implementation, increased charging sessions by 184% and energy dispensed by 161%. This has also improved general parking capacity, as electric vehicles are more consistently using charging bays rather than standard bays. The pilot scheme is due to end on 20 August 2026.
- Deployment of EV charger sockets across Kent, primarily on the highway, catering for those without easy access to off-street parking was supported. These are to accelerate the commercialisation of, and investment in, the local charging infrastructure sector. The first year will see 150 locations installed county wide with up to 13 of those located within each Borough/District, subject to site feasibility. It is intended that each location will have an initial 2 sockets available (2 x bays) to minimise parking disruption in the early phases. To reduce disruption later, extra cabling and ducts will be installed so that additional chargers can be easily added in the future when demand grows. The vast majority of the chargers installed will be dual 7kw units with some 11kw and 22kw included where appropriate.



Figure 1 - Examples of on street chargers anticipated to be used in the LEV project

- There is reasonable expectation that separate detailed applications for both the local centre and for the development of the sports and community facilities will be submitted to the Council in 2026.
- The Church Commissioners have requested details of where bus stops are to be in Finberry (an encouraging sign for the 02 to be extended into Finberry). Adoption of Avocet Way has been through its second snagging review and is close to final adoption which will allow work to start on adoption on Brambling. There are issues with the road surface on Robin and a pedestrian crossing across Swift to the play area remains outstanding which will prevent adoption on these roads until they are resolved.
- Plans are being developed to revise the length of Brock on the M20 between J8 and J9 between National Highways and DfT (called “Mini” Brock or Brock 2). The new design will involve starting Brock further east of J8 leaving J8 fully accessible taking traffic away from A20. Designs are done and financing is approved. However, 1,200 HGVs were held in Brock over the May half term so there may be capacity issues given the new checks for cross channel traffic.
- **There are no plans to use the IBF in Sevington for a waiting area for cars to cross the short straight to France in the event of delays to crossings due to enhanced border checks or any other reason.**
This is because the IBF has no welfare facilities on site and additional movements around J10/J10A would create gridlock. The distance from Sevington to the Port of Dover is such that French Border Officials have expressed concern over passenger security if border checks are done at Sevington; French Border staff are not permitted to travel to Sevington to carry out checks.
- ABC enforces four “loading only” areas on behalf of County Square located underground beneath the former Debenhams unit accessed

from Apsley Street. ABC will introduce a fifth area, to facilitate the arrival of Primark.

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Following the AGM of the Ashford Allotment Society (AAS), an expression of interest in taking a 25-year lease over the allotments. This would mean that AAS would:

- Set and collect rents.
- Provide day-to-day administration of plots, waiting lists and tenant agreements.
- Maintain communal infrastructure.
- Engage with tenants, schools and community groups to promote allotment use.
- Develop a 5-year capital improvement plan for allotment infrastructure.

ACTIVE TRAVEL WORKING GROUP

The Group met on 2nd June, key developments included.

- Active Travel England Funding is being explored for walking and cycling infrastructure in Ashford (including the Asda underpass, M20 underpass to the rugby club and the route to WHH from the town).
- £280k of J10A funding remains available for cycle storage at communal housing.
- Summer activities will include an introduction/promoting to bike use including cargo bikes and e-bikes at council owned locations including orienteering days at the Warren and Hothfield.
- Drone footage and promotional videos will be created for the main cycling / walking routes into town.
- Year 6 “Bikeability” will include providing bikes for those that do not have access to bikes for them to learn to ride.
- A new mural promoting bike use will be installed at the end of the Lower High Street / Wellesley Road.
- Cycle Ashford, a new initiative to promote cycling as a key mode of active travel and leisure activity in the borough was introduced. The initiative aims to increase participation from all sections of the community by making it easier for everyone to utilise the cycling infrastructure that is available. Central to Cycle Ashford is a new website, www.cycleashford.org.uk that provides information about cycling in Ashford and a bespoke route planner. In addition, the website promotes cycling events, signposts users to local cycling services and shares hints and tips from local cycling enthusiasts.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The unit met on 4th June, key issues included.

- Current crime recording systems do not identify at parish level. Local crime data is available at postcode or ward level; if data is required for a specific purpose, the CSU may be able to assist.
- Chief Inspector Jennifer Bassan is the new District Commander for Ashford replacing Sarah Rivett.
- Rolling year crime figures show a positive trend in reduction in victim-based crime including serious violence and a significant reduction in shoplifting. ASB has reduced in the town centre areas with new PSPO conditions setting parameters for the appropriate behaviour in the town. ASB has however seen an increase across the borough, but the degree of increase is not as significant as in other Kent districts; part of this is attributable to changes in the recording/classification of incidents particularly those between neighbours.
- The other area of increase is in vehicle related ASB. Responses to tackle this issue includes enforcement of existing and supporting the implementation of new PSPOs (such as in Tenterden) where the use of vehicles including e-scooters/bikes are prescribed.
- Kent Police have recently delivered further speed enforcement advice training to local officers as there is considerable risk to individuals who choose to use vehicles particularly motorbikes without either appropriate licence, training or protective clothing.
- Kent Police produced a video illustrating some of several finds of cannabis cultivations in Ashford where hundreds of plants have been seized.
- The previous knife bins have been relaunched with a wider concept of amnesty bins.
- With the warm weather there have been reports of young people entering areas of water including Conningbrook Lakes where there are real dangers present. It is thought there is a cohort of teenagers who did not have swimming lessons during COVID. Drowning should be recognised as a public health priority after 20 people, including 14 children, died in water-related incidents; many occurring in rivers and lakes by cold water shock in unusually warm weather. There is a lack of public awareness partly because drowning prevention in England is a shared responsibility (including providing floats) across government, local authorities, emergency services, landowners, management companies and water safety organisations.
- Only 90 fly tipping reports in May, the lowest of the year.
- 14 stray dog reports (9 returned to owners).
- Kent Fire & Rescue have carried out 80 free Home Safety Fire Visits (HSFV) near derelict buildings since April 2026 since Swanton House fire, testing hydrants and ensuring adjoining buildings have smoke alarms.

ASHFORD HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Group met on 5th June. Key issues discussed included.

- Budget-friendly cooking tutorials to be held at Stanhope Community Summer Fair on 11th July.
- Suitable sites will be identified for a “Good Food Retail” pilot.
- Several schools do not have active travel plans, and the Council will work with them to develop one to reduce car use including a School Street Pilot, I suggested Lockholt Close.
- A Youth Festival will be held at Civic Park on Wednesday 5th August which will be held and will promote young persons health, £8k funding is being provided for the Stour Centre hour long “hydrox” sessions.
- Clear information on bus times and reliability and access to stops are ongoing challenges.
- Older people want to remain independent at home but struggle with adaptations, unsure where to find advice and contractors.
- Many people are active volunteers about some say it is unclear on how to get involved (nationally 37% volunteer but in Ashford its only 20%).
- Advice will be given on how safe walking routes for older people can be identified; a workshop is planned for 13th July.

CENTRAL ASHFORD FORUM

The Forum met on 8th June. Key actions included.

- The Forum will be required to provide two of its members to sit on the shadow Ashford Town Council.
- The Old Post Office HMO application (21/01933/AS) will be called into the Planning Committee if possible. Waste collection is a concern due to access and ownership, lack of segregation.
- Demolition of the former retail units around Castle Street will have an adverse effect of Soul Food / The Tank Café; this will be monitored.
- The Forum will request that properties that do not recycle (HMOs and flats where the management companies are not obliged to segregate) have weekly collection of residual waste. This is because it causes significant accumulation of waste (and littering as a result) with only two weekly collections.

INLAND BORDER FACILITY

The DfT held two technical workshops on drainage and lighting on 10th June.

- The planning condition for drainage requires that surface water flows can be accommodated by permeable pavements except where vehicles with potentially high-risk contaminated loads are parked. It was noted that the high-risk area in southeast of the site does connect into Pond 5 but can be shut off if there is a potentially contaminated load.
- The footpath southwest of the site currently floods and work is required on that corner.

- Further dimming of the parking lights is not considered feasible. The target average lux level is 20 across the site but some near the Church has a lux level above 40
- Additional baffles are proposed across the south of the site.
- Additional Sodexo litter picks have been arranged with an updated plan of where (bridleway around the whole site will be covered but not the bridgeway to Mersham across the High Field).
- Location for additional signage has been broadly agreed:

Location	Measure
M20 London bound (pre- J10a)	Additional advance sign
M20 J10	Signage for misrouted HGVs
M20 J10a	Improved signage (off-slips & junction)
A2070 (TS10)	Increase size / visibility
A2070	New left arrow sign (site access)
A2070 / Church Road	No right turn (HGV restriction)

ASHFORD BC CABINET JUNE

The Cabinet met on 11th June. Key issues to note included.

- Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, the Council received 1244 complaints an increase of 27%. The top five service lines complained about were housing (66%), environment (14%), finance (8%), public health (5%), and planning (5%).
- Housing complaints increased during 2025/26, largely driven by repairs related issues, particularly seasonal pressures linked to heating, damp and mould, and service delivery delays. The top three reasons are 3rd party contractor, heating / hot water and service standards.

- Housing complaints are highest during the winter months in relation to repairs (heating and hot water).
- Housing is working intensively to make improvements such as the creation of a new team to support complaint handling and amendments to the Housing Complaint Policy and the creation of a new Compensation Policy.
- Tenants' overall satisfaction with our housing service is 55.8% and has reduced by 3.4% in comparison to last year.
- Establishing a town council for the unparished area of the borough in Ashford was recommended to enhance local democracy, improve service delivery, and strengthen community engagement. This approach reflects the interests and needs of residents as found from the consultation response which showed a majority (62.63%) in favour of a Town Council and its associated governance arrangements. There will be 16 Town Councillors with elections expected in May 2027.
- ABC's retail portfolio is performing relatively well, with plans in the pipeline for Park Mall redevelopment (in the process of being demolished) and Elwick Place (a tenant signed for the Cinema and Units underneath and four units underneath the hotel which are going to be marketed for letting). The parades of shops such as Bockhanger and Stanhope are mostly fully let.
- ABC's office portfolio is fully let, except for a small suite at International House. ABC also has a headlease of two floors at Connect 38 where the space is fully let.
- Demand within the Council's portfolio for industrial space remains high from sites such as Carlton Road Business Park and Ellingham Industrial Estate. Voids remain low however we have seen more business failures. There are currently 3 vacant units on the market at Carlton Road Business Park, and we have seen more churn at Ellingham. This is likely because there are lots of small businesses and we are letting in an increasingly more difficult market.
- Support for those suffering domestic abuse (DA) is by Rising Sun (a domestic abuse organisation) who support those affected through every step of removing abuse from their lives and improving their safety; it includes access to refuges (provided by Clarion), hotels or other safe places. Safe places are available until Council or other housing becomes available; DA sufferers are a priority on the housing list. Safe places may need to be out of area, so victims are away from danger, but an issue is ensuring priority of a new school for children; ***children in care are a priority for a new school place but not children where DA is involved***. Responsibility for identifying those in abuse situations is with all agencies, ABC, KCC, NHS, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue. All of which can carry out safeguarding visits, but most referrals are from Kent Police. Anybody can refer a care to Rising Sun using referral forms at www.risingsun.com, calling 0800 2000 247 or in-person at The

Willow Centre Tuesdays 9.30am to 12pm (although The Wardrobe provides an additional drop in opportunity). An increase in DA is expected during the World Cup and a campaign against DA will be led by Football United Against Domestic Abuse and Women's Aid during the tournament noting the games are very late in the day due to time differences.

- Local Plan timetable demonstrates that the new plan can be adopted before ABC is replaced with a unitary in May 2028:

Appendix 2: Ashford Local Plan Timetable – June 2026

Plan	2026				2027				2028			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Ashford Local Plan		NDI	SC	G1	G1	C2	G2	G2	A			

Key:

NDI	Publish Notice of Intention to commence local plan preparation and Timetable (by end of June 2026) – 4 months to Gateway 1
SC	Scoping Consultation (Minimum 3 weeks)
G1	Publish Gateway 1 Self-Assessment (by end of October 2026) – Start of the up to 30 months plan making process
G1	First Statutory Public Consultation on Local Plan Content and Evidence (minimum 6 weeks)
G2	Gateway 2 – with Independent Assessor(s) Appointed by PINS (4-6 weeks) – Publish outcome when known
C2	Second Statutory Public Consultation on Submission Document/Draft Local Plan (minimum 8 weeks)
G2	Gateway 3 – with Independent Assessor(s) Appointed by PINS (4-6 weeks) – Publish outcome when known
	Submission to Secretary of State – Examination phase begins (up to 6 months)
A	Main Modifications and Adoption – by March 2028 (17 months from October 2026)

PARKING STRATEGY REVIEW

The issues raised (in bold) and responses (in italics) are as follows.

Can Vicarage Lane car park cope with the extra demand, following the closure of Edinburgh Road?

Vicarage Lane car park is currently experiencing increased demand following the closure of Edinburgh Road car park; however, it continues to operate within capacity. The forthcoming opening of the new Edinburgh Road car park in November will provide additional provision. Longer-stay users are instead redistributing to alternative sites, particularly Flour Mills and Victoria Road car parks.

Season ticket holders nearest car park causes unacceptable inconvenience involving a long walk particularly for those having to leave and return several times a day. This is a convenient solution for ABC, but traders have complained that it is not the best use of their valuable time.

The alternative provision for season ticket holders is a temporary arrangement pending the opening of the new Edinburgh Road car park. It is acknowledged that this may result in increased walking distances for some users, particularly those making multiple trips; however, this reflects the limited availability of long-stay capacity following the closure. Vicarage

Lane car park will not be made available to season ticket holders, as it is designated for short-stay use with a high turnover of spaces. Allowing long-stay parking in this location would reduce availability for short-stay users and undermine its intended function.

The new Edinburgh Road Car Park will be inconvenienced by imposing a long walk around St George's Square which seems to have gained priority. This will be particularly difficult for the elderly and the disabled.

A second shorter access/exit route has been rejected on H&S issues blaming the cost of installing security equipment although the project team are considering.

Electronic signage displays on the major approach roads to the town centre, updating on current parking availability

Variable messaging signage on key approach routes remains a potential future project but there is currently no budget allocated for this initiative.

A free 1-hour parking across the town centre to cater for the largely pop-and-shop service trade

The introduction of a free one-hour parking offer across all town centre car parks is not currently considered viable. Implementing such a scheme would require significant changes, including updates to tariff boards, payment machines, and supporting software, as well as additional enforcement capacity. These changes would incur considerable cost, and no funding is currently allocated for this purpose.

Parking is free after 6pm across the central car parks and should be extended across the town centre

Extending this approach more widely is not considered appropriate in locations where on-street parking is managed through permit schemes. In these areas, it is important to maintain turnover and availability to ensure residents can access parking in line with the purpose of the permits.

Members of the Stour Centre type in their membership number to secure 4 hours free parking in Stour Centre car park. Parkrun competitors could benefit from something similar, typing in their parkrun number in a similar way at Victoria Road car park for 1 hour on Saturday mornings. The car park is rarely (if ever) full at the time so ABC would not lose income, it would boost take-up at parkrun and make the Jemmett Road residents very happy.

A system like the Stour Centre membership scheme for parkrun would present a number of practical and operational challenges, including the need for system changes, additional enforcement requirements, and associated implementation costs. Attendance at parkrun is not directly comparable to the contractual arrangements in place for leisure centre users. A review of other parkruns across the county indicates that the majority do not provide free parking. Where free parking is available, this is typically due to the specific nature of the location, such as access to private land or dedicated facilities (for example, university campuses), rather than through a managed parking concession. Introducing free

parking for a specific event would set a precedent for other groups and activities to request similar arrangements. This would not be sustainable and would have wider implications for parking capacity, fairness, and the overall operation of parking services across the town. There is also a risk that offering free parking at Victoria Road during this period would further increase demand, leading to the car park reaching capacity earlier and displacing parking pressures elsewhere rather than resolving them. We are also working with Kent County Council to develop an active travel map for Victoria Park, which will be shared with parkrun organisers to encourage participants to consider alternative means of travel. As Ashford owns the park it would be possible to erect display boards advertising and promoting parking and other events in and around the town.

BREXIT

10 years on from 23rd June 2016, I was invited to a interview with RTE to talk about the impact. The UK has yet to go through a reframing and adjustment to put the trauma of Brexit behind it; any obsessive retelling of the Brexit disputes will just regurgitate disaster. Many expressed surprise and dismay at the decision in 2016 but the job of modern democratic government is to embrace the opportunities that change such as Brexit created. We have yet to do that.

Has Brexit contributed to the UK becoming ungovernable with 6 PMs in since the Brexit Vote day (7 very soon) only one of which have served a full term (and that was before vote leave), 8 foreign secretaries and 7 chancellors.

The origin of Vote Leave was:

- the fact that the EU did not agree to Cameron's request for a 50,000 hand break on the number people migrating into the UK.
- The UK needed the economic support of the EU but remaining in the EU meant that EU law was supreme over UK law.
- The UK wanted to be an independent self-governing nation.
- Remain argument was akin to "you just have to grin and bear it".

When emerging from the global financial crisis, we had Brexit uncertainty, COVID lockdowns, stamp duty holiday boom, Ukraine war with double digit inflation and rapid interest rate rises and finally the rise of social media affecting the way people carry out their daily lives. The UK had to deal with all of them in its own way. That said, over that period, we have grown faster than France, Italy, Germany and Japan. Our position in growth per capita is "middle of the pack"; we are not top we are not bottom.

The tools the UK must use get the economy moving have nothing to do with Brexit: they are welfare reform, making it easier for employers to take on those

leaving education and training, bringing down energy prices, making it easier to build things and we need to get on and do it. The UK must be an attractive place to do business.

We have clear opportunities for the things we do well in Ashford, retail and healthcare. Ashford is a commuter belt for the city which should have really benefited from Brexit, free from the regulatory straight jacket (we have too many regulators in the UK). The financial services provisions in the Trade Agreement were about half the length of the fishing provisions in relation to access to waters of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, the Bailiwick of Jersey and the Isle of Man!

EAST KENT HOSPITALS – RECOVERY PROCESS

One of Wes Streeting's last acts was to place EKHUFT in a new “National Intensive Recovery Process” regime by NHSE due to “stubborn underperformance”. Makeshift solutions have become ingrained at the Hospital, due to institutional complacency. EKHUFT has had a troubled history.

A Director of Intensive Recovery Programme has now been appointed by NHSE to provide direct, hands-on support to the Trust's leadership and governance. The Director of Intensive Recovery Programme works alongside the Executive team, helping to strengthen decision-making and organisational capability during the recovery period.

The Trust, supported by the Director of Intensive Recovery Programme, will develop a robust Integrated Intensive Recovery Action Plan which will be agreed by the Trust Board, the Kent & Medway ICB and NHSE. The plan will comprise of three phases: (i) Immediate stabilisation phase (next three months): focused on NED recruitment, leadership assessment and stabilisation. (ii) Intermediate phase: in year recovery and delivery running through to the end of 2026/27. (iii) Wider system strategic change in 2027/28.

The path out of the current position is through demonstrable improvement in governance and leadership, operational delivery, quality and safety, and financial grip.

ASHFORD ECONOMY

I was interviewed on Channel Radio on 24th June about the prospects for Ashford now Andy Burnham looks to take over Number 10.

The stalling of new building at Finberry is symptomatic of the position in the UK generally with housebuilding around half the level needed for the

Government to hit its target of 1.5m homes over the course of the current parliament. Only 850k new houses estimated to be delivered.

The number of new homes being completed is going to get worse before it gets better, with housing starts down 31% in the three years to December 2025, and with planning consents down 39%. The drop in planning consents is indicative of the challenge of the lack of resources to deal with applications.

What we need is local and national government that backs businesses to deliver growth rather than making trading more difficult with regulation and tax costs. Having 7 PMs in 10 years does not show the kind of stability that investors require and adds to the general view that we are a basket case.

The prospects of new national tax hikes are hopefully remote following £75bn of increases under Rachael Reeves, further tax rises by abandoning fiscal rules will be counterproductive. This is because 10-year gilt yields are now approaching 4.8%, the highest in the G7. Any lack of fiscal credibility from Burnham could push them to 5%. This would damage the prospects of local government being able to fund the pipeline of projects in Ashford including housing at Swanton House, former Civic Centre, Kent Woolgrowers etc.

The two biggest employers in Ashford are retail and healthcare. Government ownership of utilities needed to deliver housing cannot be afforded. Transport, water, sewerage and other utilities can never compete with the demands of the NHS and welfare recipients. However, robust enforcement on utility providers is required along with a Local Plan framework that makes it clear what is required from utility providers when new development is permitted.

SOUTHEAST COAST AMBULANCE SERVICE (SECamb)

Governors met on 25th June. Key issues included.

- Response times to calls classed as an emergency or a potentially serious condition that may require rapid assessment, urgent on-scene intervention and/or urgent transport (such as suspected heart attacks, strokes and serious injuries) referred to as “C2” are 4 minutes off target.
- Improving C2 mean response times Improvement depends on expanding virtual care capacity and reducing the number of ambulances dispatched where alternative responses are appropriate. Not enough awareness currently exists about virtual care as a distinct and growing area of practice, recognising that virtual care is a specialism. Only 38 applications were submitted for 100 spaces in Crawley and Medway; less than 30 were appointed.
- Virtual care specialist based in Ashford may need to travel for up to 4 12-hour shifts per week to Medway as 10 local sites (including Ashford)

are being concentrated in two sites (Crawley and Medway). There is National Guidance from NHSE that pre-dispatch care which is centralised (in Medway for Kent) are much more effective. However, 50:50 “agile” working is possible reducing travel to Medway with travel costs reimbursed where it is required.

- WFH kit costs £5,000 per individual.
- Single patient records are proposed in the new Health Bill and ambulance staff will have access to these when rolled out.
- The NHS "left shift" is a strategic policy objective to rebalance healthcare resources by moving activity and funding away from reactive, hospital-based care and towards proactive, community-based services.
- SECamb is successfully collaborating with Kent Fire and Rescue Services and exploring collaboration for operationally suitable and cost-effective sites. Collaboration options with other blue light services enables SECamb to right size its estate whilst ensuring operational performance such as co-location of Call Centres, training and vehicle depots. SECamb are aware of proposals to close on-call fire stations in Grain, Wye, Chilham, Westerham, and Cliffe but have no plans to share any of these sites designated for closure. That said clear collaboration is required with KF&R and SECamb both looking to “right size” their estates.

ABC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 30th June. Key metrics included.

- In May 2021 report from Laser Energy returned a carbon baseline of 1277 tCO₂e for 2019/20. The carbon footprint for FY 2024-25 was 1,148 tCO₂e. This does little to demonstrate the breadth of activity; decarbonisation projects at ABC Leisure facilities do not sit within the scope of ABC footprint as these sites are not directly managed. The move to International House and the significant carbon savings anticipated from that move, will come out in next year's data.
- 13.9% of waste delivered to the Materials Recovery Facility was rejected as contaminated.
- Fly tipping reports for 25/26 1,244 (24/25 1,132).
- High Street vacancy rate is 14.6% (January 2026). The area surveyed is the High Street, Middle Row, New Rents, North Street, Bank Street, Tufton Street, County Square, and Elwick Place.
- Parking usage Ashford and Tenterden down from 275,090 (Q1 25/26) to 247,703 (Q4 25/26).
- 2024/25 Mean (average) gender pay gap in hourly pay 7.5% (up from 23/24 7.0%); 2024/25 Median (mid-point) gender pay gap in hourly pay: 9.1% (up from 23/24 8.9%).

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