



# PARKING

the annual report  
2016-17



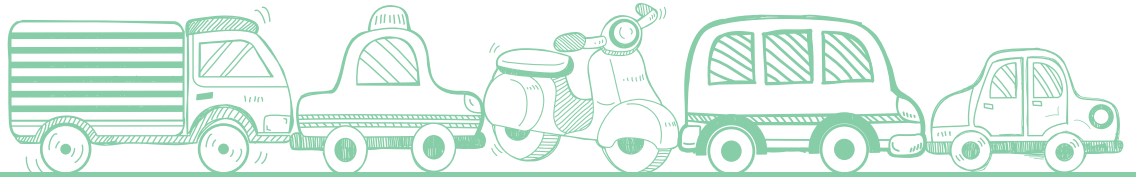
ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> Ashford Borough and what's been going on?	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> Parking strategy	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3</b> CEOs	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b> Permits and dispensations	<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b> Parking appeals	<b>13</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6</b> Parking promotions and review	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7</b> Moreline the Wizhog	<b>16</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8</b> Financials	<b>17</b>





# Introduction

Welcome to Ashford Borough Council's Annual Parking Report. It summarises the activities of the Highways, Parking and Transportation Team over the last year.

The last 12 months have seen extensive change and Ashford is certainly attracting large-scale inward investment.

Development of the Commercial Quarter office building is underway, construction of the cinema complex has recently commenced, and the new college building is complete.

Alongside these developments sit many other critical projects aimed at improving the town for our residents and visitors. Redesign work within the Civic Centre Car Park has commenced to facilitate an improved waiting provision for our taxi drivers which will help to ease the ever increasing demands on this transport interchange. In addition, a new temporary car park is now open in Elwick Road, which will help with commuter and college parking demands in the town.

The speed at which Ashford is developing is fantastic. Only a matter of years ago the town had empty units which are now filling at an incredible rate, driven by the amazing efforts of our Town Centre Regeneration Team. Our parking incentives such as free parking after 3pm in several car parks have sat nicely alongside this and added to the attractiveness. The pace, energy and enthusiasm is second to none and to see the progress and the offer the economic development is bringing to the town is really exciting.



*Cllr Brad Bradford,  
Portfolio Holder, Highways, Wellbeing and Safety*

Other projects include;

- Chilmington Green, the construction of circa 6000 houses, shops, schools and leisure facilities
- Victoria Way - residential and retail development and Chapel Down Brewery
- Expansion of the Designer Outlet Centre
- Widening of the A28 to dual carriageway is set to commence in early 2018
- Funding is in place for the creation of the new Junction 10a, a nationally significant infrastructure project

# Introduction



*The new Ashford College, opened in September 2017.*

The close working relationship with Kent County Council continues and through the Joint Transportation Board we have introduced and reviewed many Highways and Transport related matters. We have had meaningful discussion and debate and been able to hear the opinions of residents and businesses and respond accordingly.

During 2016/17 the Joint Transportation Board was chaired by Kent County Councillor Charlie Simpkin and for this we extend our gratitude. We also need to welcome in the new chair, Ashford Borough Councillor Bernard Heyes, who will preside as Chair of JTB for the 2017/18 term.

The economic growth and development continues to build on the previous work completed and already underway, making our town one of the

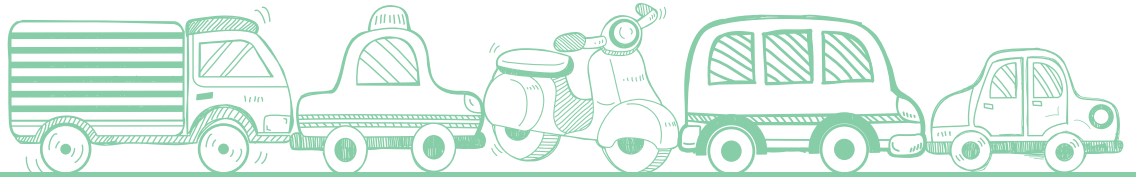
most exciting places to live, visit and work and for me to be a Portfolio Holder and Councillor.

**Cllr Brad Bradford**



*Elwick Road temporary car park.*





## CHAPTER 1

# Ashford Borough and what's been going on?

The borough has the largest rural area in Kent, and is part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Dark skies initiatives form parts of our borough along with the bright lights of the Ashford International Station, the Designer Outlet, the colours of International House and the new community centre in Repton Manor, at night forming their own piece of art. Throw into the mix a rapidly regenerating Town Centre and the commercial and residential development and the future is looking very exciting.

The new college building, cinema complex with restaurants and hotel, and the commercial quarter are just a few of the current projects underway that the Parking, Highways and Transportation Team have had involvement in. Elwick Road Car Park has just been constructed and opened to the public offering great opportunities for commuter, student and town centre visitor long stay parking.



*The glorious view of Wye Crown from level 4 of Edinburgh Road Multi Storey, a stark contrast to the brutalist design of the Town Centre car park itself.*



Railways have played a huge part in the history of the town and continue to do so. Consultations to service changes have been prepared and responded to by the team. Indeed the railway station continues to be a central hub and transport interchange. The Parking, Highways and Transportation team are playing a big part in the project to ease congestion and increase pedestrian safety on the forecourt which is nearing completion. This includes a relocated taxi feeder rank with room for up to 20 taxis, which play a crucial part in the town. In addition a new pedestrian crossing is being installed

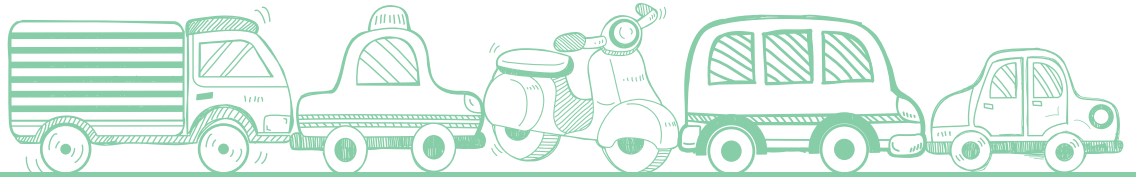
outside the station to help with the volumes of students attending the new college. Passengers travelling to the continent can benefit from the ease of departing from Ashford by Eurostar.

Ashford continues to grow with a population already in excess of 125,000 (predicted to increase to 149,300 by 2030).

These are just a snapshot of some of the changes in Ashford since our last Parking Report.

Go to: [www.visitashfordandtenterden.co.uk](http://www.visitashfordandtenterden.co.uk) for more places to visit and for details of local events.





## CHAPTER 2

# Parking strategy

Our parking strategy is not just about providing more parking for the vehicles that frequent our borough. It is about consistently meeting demand and improving our parking to allow towns and villages in our borough to develop new business, encourage tourism and provide a safe and attractive place to live and visit.

Since reporting last year the borough has seen a lot of change. Taking everything into account and considering the speed with which growth and development are progressing the need to look at future options is fast approaching.

The scope for multi-storey car parks, their location, and the impact of future government recommendations along with a whole host of other considerations will feed into any future parking decisions and strategy.

Any future strategy will be broken down into 3 sections;

- The next two years
- Two to five years
- Five years and beyond

Recent announcements from central government about air quality will fit with many of Ashford Borough Council's current policies including clean air, electric vehicle charging points and energy saving. All of which will be included or considered in any future changes and developments. If the cleaner air strategies and modal shift to alternatives other than diesel and petrol cars is to be a realistic achievement by 2040 then we need to start making changes soon.

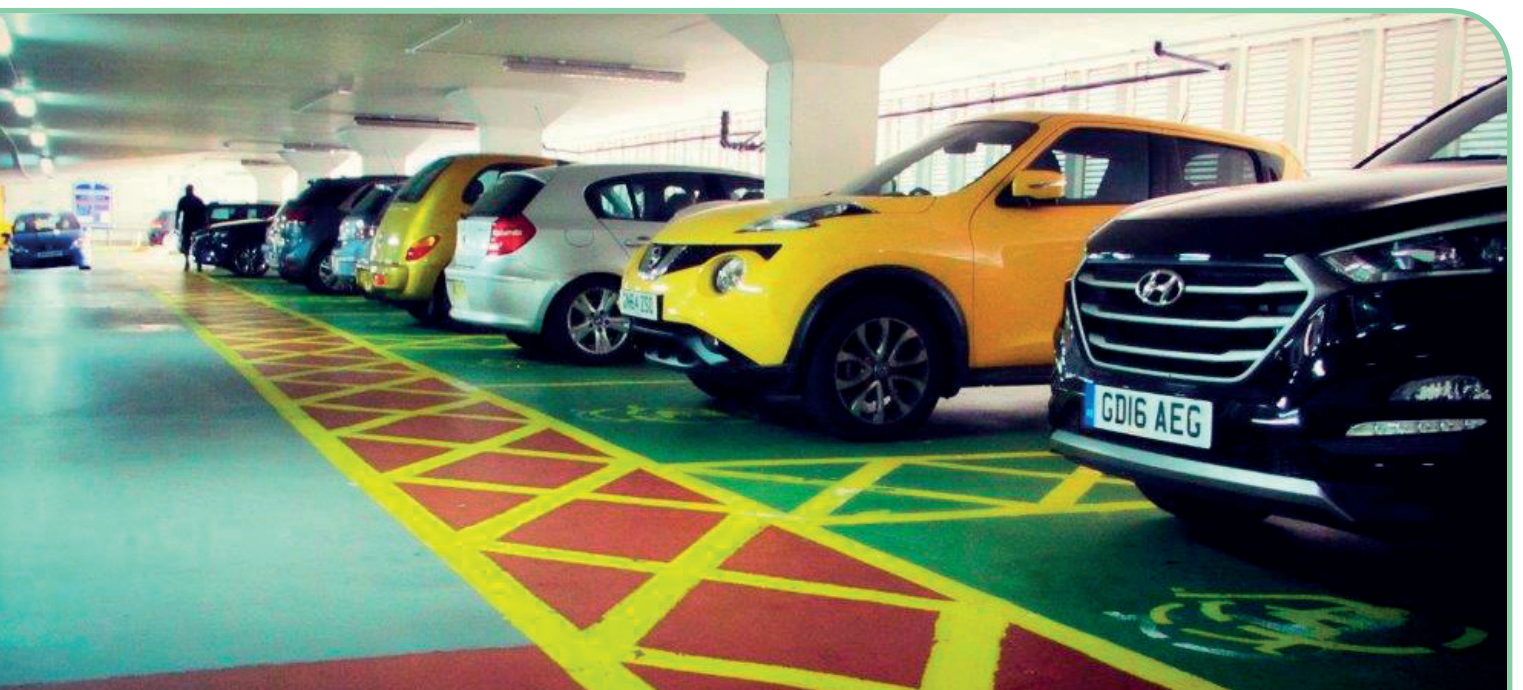
## Electric Vehicle Charging Points and ANPR

The team have this in mind and are already looking at what we can bring to the table. Recent agreement by Cabinet members to continue to offer free electric to vehicle owners at our charge points across the borough shows our commitment to making Ashford a cleaner town and borough. In addition the recent renewal of our contract with Charge Your Car, our electric vehicle charge point partner cements this pledge as we both continue to monitor market growth and look to improve the offer commercially as the electric vehicle sector grows.

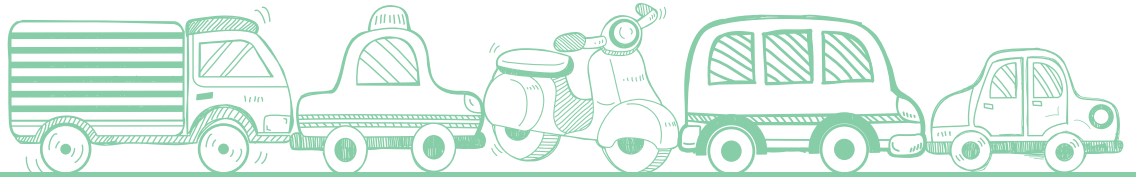


## Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

With the assistance of our neighbours in Canterbury City Council, the team are exploring ANPR enabled systems. Canterbury recently trialled these on three of their car parks with great success. Whilst we recognise the implications involved with introducing such projects the results of the trials show that the public have really taken to ANPR enabled car parks and we hope to replicate this success in Ashford.







## CHAPTER 3

# CEOs

### The Civil Enforcement Team

Our Civil Enforcement Team comprises of 13 individuals; the Team Leader, the supervisor and the 11 Civil Enforcement Officers who have various ways of getting about the borough and a variety of roles they undertake. It's not all about enforcement and issuing tickets to motorists. The daily work involves a variety of activities and this chapter will hopefully highlight the great work they do, the challenges they face and give a little more insight into the day to day work at the same time.

Our team patrol on foot, in vans and also by conventional and electric bikes.

### Our Bike Patrol

Our bike patrols start with maintenance checks to make sure the bike is safe and road worthy for the shift ahead. This includes checking tyres, brakes and all other moving parts.

We then head out to one of three different beats which cover all areas surrounding the town centre. This includes all industrial estates, Willesborough, Kennington, Kingsnorth, Stanhope and everything else in-between. We occasionally cycle to some of the villages including Wye, too.

Riding the bike around these areas with our normal uniform allows us to be a visible deterrent to illegal parking as well as being able to talk to more motorists about how they have parked and give advice about where would be more suitable to park next time. This has worked very well in areas we have previously been unable to visit as much due to us being unable to park legally whilst in a council vehicle.

After a successful trial with a push bike, we now have a fleet of electric bikes which allow the team to remain on them for longer. On a full shift we cover up to 50 miles, similar to what we could do on a mobile shift in one of our vans.

All of the Civil Enforcement Officers will soon have completed the Kent County Council Adult Cycle Training course and will be able to patrol on our electric bikes.

## A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CEO ON PATROL

### 08:30

- Arrive at the bunker
- Check the diary to see where I will be patrolling today
- Collect and sign out my body worn camera and radio for the day
- Sign on to the board so the staff there know where I will be in case of an emergency
- Up to the offices to see if there is anything to go back down to the Bunker (permits for Tenterden, abandoned vehicle sheets etc.)
- Sign on the board up there so the staff in the office know who to call if there is something needing doing out and about today
- Update my hand held with new data
- Check emails and enter details of today's patrol in pocket note book

### 09:00

I start with code 30s. Logging all vehicles in the 2 hour bays in a given area that don't have a resident or visitor permit. I will need to come back here when 2 hours and 10 minutes have passed to see if any of these vehicles are still here and if so issue a PCN.

### 10:00 to 11:15

I issue three PCNs. One in Bank Street, one in a loading area and one in a disabled bay and it is now time to return to Godinton road and check those code 30 logs.

### 11:25 to 11:55

After checking Godinton road. I find one over stay so issue a PCN and another vehicle that has just moved bays and issue a code 22a (for returning to zone within 4 hours).

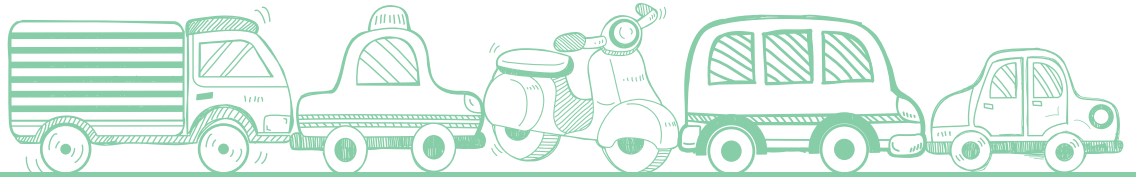
### 12:10 to 12:40

I arrive back at the bunker for lunch a little later than usual after stopping to give directions to a pair of German tourists, and then a foreign student trying to find his friends who are next to "A big brown building". Time to refuel.....

### 12:40 to 13:45

Beat 2 - I issue one PCN in Church Road to a vehicle that didn't have a pay and display ticket on display and as I finish the driver returns with her young daughter from ballet class and is not happy to see me and offers me a piece of her mind.





### 13:45 to 15:30

Vicarage Lane car park - The car park is full and it takes me nearly two hours to check every vehicle and when it is done I have issued four further PCNs:

- One over stay
- Three without pay and display tickets

One of the things about patrolling a car park is with the high number of vehicles in a relatively small area you are more likely to still be in sight when the driver of a vehicle returns and wants to argue their case. On this day this happened twice.

After explaining to the first person and realising their error they calmed down and asked how to appeal, I explain how and add to my notes that they did have a valid ticket at the time of issue (notes aren't just there to support a PCN, They can and should be used to support an appeal when it is appropriate).

The second person is even angrier as they are adamant that payment was made by phone. On closer inspection of the phone used it turns out that payment had been made but for the incorrect car park. The individual is even more annoyed when I tell them I am unable to cancel the PCN myself and that they will have to appeal.

In both cases I go back into the relevant PCNs on my hand held unit and add full details of the encounters.

### 15:30 to 16:30

With 1 hour left of patrol time I return to Beat 2, and I issue one more PCN in Tannery Lane outside the postal sorting office. According to the driver I don't know my job as he gets 20 minutes on double yellow lines if he has his hazard lights flashing! A common misconception.

### 16:30 to 17:00

It is the end of another shift so;

- Camera and radio are returned and signed back in.
- I sign off of the board
- The hand held unit is up loaded on to the main system
- Test tickets relating to PCNs issued in pay and display areas are filed,
- A regulation 10 form is filled out and filed
- Finally the feedback form is filled in noting anything my supervisor needs to know and the total number of PCNs issued today which comes to 11.

And so ends my day as a Civil Enforcement Officer.

## CHAPTER 4

# Permits and dispensations

The parking team continue to offer a variety of permits and season tickets many of which offer cheaper and easier parking for residents and visitors alike.

Where parking is relatively short in supply, for example near to the town centre, parking zones have been created. The aim is to regulate parking where demand is high to ensure there is a safe and free flow of traffic while affording each household the same opportunity to park their vehicle or vehicles.

Within a parking zone the amount of time a motorist may park in a parking bay is limited. Residents who live in one of these zones, who meet specific criteria, are able to buy a residents' parking permit. A permit allows a vehicle to be parked without time restriction.

Residents Parking Permits cost between £30 and £120 each depending on location. This means that the convenience of a Residents Parking Permit costs between 33p in Zone A and 10p in Zones D, E, F and G a day. Residents Parking Permit charges just cover the cost of running the scheme and do not include the cost of any parking enforcement.

Season tickets offer a convenient way to park without the need to buy a pay and display ticket each day. Some can be used in more than one car park and the amount that can be saved increases the longer the season ticket is for.

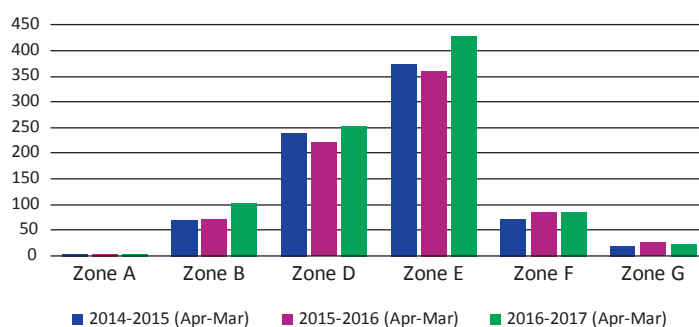
In 2016-17 we issued 2,905 permits and season tickets to our customers.

Residents are able to buy daily permits for visitors. The permits are available from our Customer Service Centre. In 2016-17 we issued 13, 188 Visitor Parking Permits to our residents.

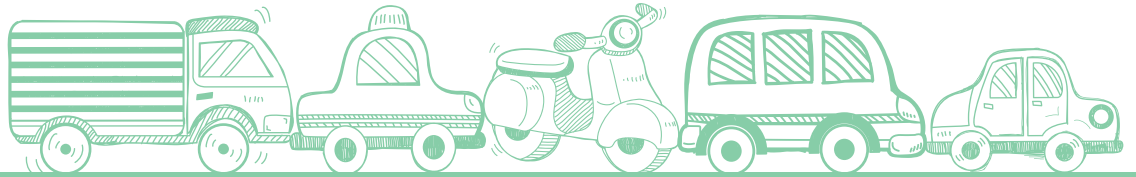
Parking dispensations offer businesses and tradesmen more flexible and longer parking in locations where it might be difficult to find suitable parking place. In 2016-17 we issued 67 parking dispensations.

For more information about our permit and season ticket schemes and parking dispensations go to [www.ashford.gov.uk/parking](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/parking)

### Number of On street Resident Permits issued by Zone



Permits for zones A and B (the town centre) are very much in demand. Parking in the town centre is limited and has to be shared with pay and display ticket customers visiting local businesses. To help, the council has introduced a new 'off-street' residents' permit. Eligible applicants are able to buy a permit to park their car in Dover Place car park.



More details (including how to apply) are available at: [www.ashford.gov.uk/residential-parking-permits](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/residential-parking-permits)

### Season tickets

Season tickets are available for most of the council's car parks. Season tickets offer convenience and a considerable saving against the daily cost of parking.

More details (including how to apply) are available at: [www.ashford.gov.uk/season-tickets](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/season-tickets)

### Parking dispensation notices

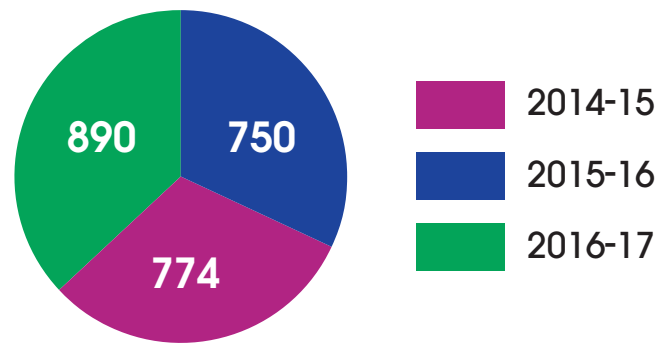
Sometimes it can be necessary for a vehicle to be parked in contravention of parking regulations to enable the driver to perform a task or activity. For example, if a plumber is fitting a boiler where tools and parts are in the vehicle and the tools and parts are needed throughout the job, or if a builder is working on a roof where ladders are needed. A parking bay or bays can be reserved for a specific purpose and for a designated period of time. Where a need is identified, the council will consider an application for a parking dispensation.

More details (including how to apply) are available at: [www.ashford.gov.uk/dispensations-and-waivers](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/dispensations-and-waivers)

### Temporary permits

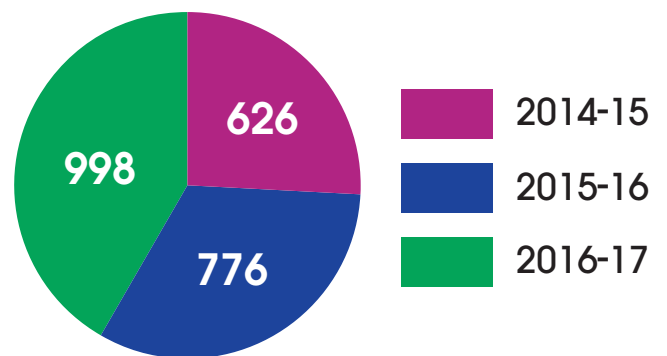
In addition to our standard permits the administration team regularly issues one-off permits and dispensations to assist our partners, charities and other local events.

Number of permits issued per year

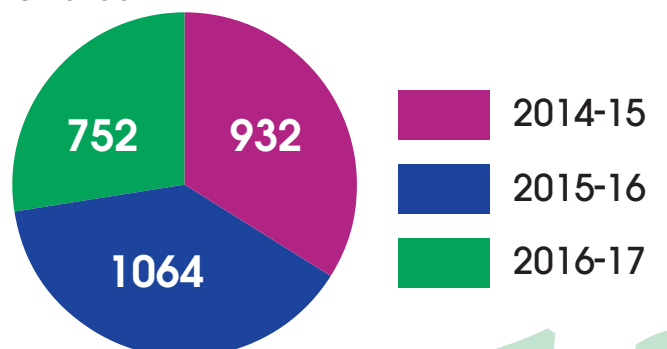


Number of permits issued per year

On street



Off street





## CHAPTER 5

# Parking appeals

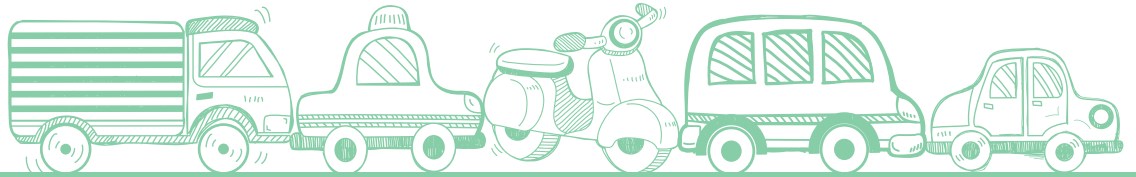


If you receive a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) you have the right to appeal (challenge) that PCN. This must be done in writing and the Representations and Appeals Officers will then decide whether to accept or dismiss that challenge. Should the challenge be dismissed the appellant will be given the chance to make a formal appeal which will be dealt with in depth by Ashford Borough Council. A further appeal can be made to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal should a Notice of Rejection or Representations be sent out.

Online challenges and appeals have increased in popularity with a large proportion of representations being sent via this route. A PCN can be challenged or paid online at both informal and formal stages at: <http://pgc.ashford.gov.uk/pgcuserservices/>

Our enforcement policy and the South East Parking Manager's provide guidelines for the consideration of challenges against PCNs.

The team can be contacted by email at: [parkingcustomercare@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:parkingcustomercare@ashford.gov.uk).



## CHAPTER 6

# Parking promotions and review

Several years ago Ashford Borough Council introduced a range of changes to parking fees in some of its own car parks to help attract more visitors into the town centres and support our town centre retailers. We continue to offer the following free parking which has proved to be a welcome success.

- Edinburgh Road Multistory - Free after 3pm every day and free all day Sundays and Bank Holidays.
- Flour Mills - Free Sundays Bank Holidays
- Station Road - Free after 3pm on Sundays and free on bank holidays
- Bridewell Lane – Free on Sundays and bank holidays

This initiative aims to support the business community in our town centres by encouraging more visitors, boosting trade and making the high street an attractive option for new business ventures. It also supports the local farmers market which continues to trade on a monthly basis in the High Street, Ashford.

This event is further supported by the engineering part of the Parking, Highways and Transportation Team who organise the monthly road closure documents. This affords an area for the market to trade and customers to move freely and safely. In addition free parking dispensations are offered.

## Parking charge review

In April 2017, charges increased for the first time in five years. The rise was set at 10% across the board. Below are some examples of the increase.

Hours	2015/16	2016/17
1	£1.00	£1.10
2	£2.00	£2.20
3	£3.00	£3.30
4	£4.00	£4.40

We reported in 2016 that we had recently removed charges between 6pm and 10pm in many town centre locations as part of a trial to assist economic growth and boost the night-time economy within the town centre. This was a six month trial and proved to be very successful and well received.

Feedback was sought of the town centre businesses in respect of free evening parking and as expected businesses found it beneficial to their customers and trade. Restaurants have reported positively saying their customers like the conveniently located free parking. Here a few of the comments passed back to the team.

### **Pizza Express, North Street, Ashford**

“Our customers at Pizza Express use the free high-street parking regularly as this means they can now park closer to the restaurant. This has also become a great incentive for families and elderly customers as they don’t have far to walk from their cars.

The free parking has had a positive effect on our evening trade as our busiest period has extended into the early evening with customers only have to pay up until 6pm. In the past the restaurant would not get busier until later in the evening.”

### **Imperial Chinese Restaurant, High Street, Ashford**

“The free parking incentive definitely benefits our customers and our business. In the past we have seen customers get up to buy new tickets or even leave early due to parking restrictions on the high street bays. This also eliminates any issues for customers collecting takeaway food, particularly if they are just dropping in quickly or if they don’t know how long they are going to be waiting.”

### **Amici Restaurant, North Street, Ashford**

“We often get calls from new customers looking for parking options and are delighted to find they can park for free in the evenings and it’s become a great incentive for the staff to bring new visitors in.”

It would appear that the change is welcomed by business and this comment is echoed by the town centre redevelopment team with ABC.

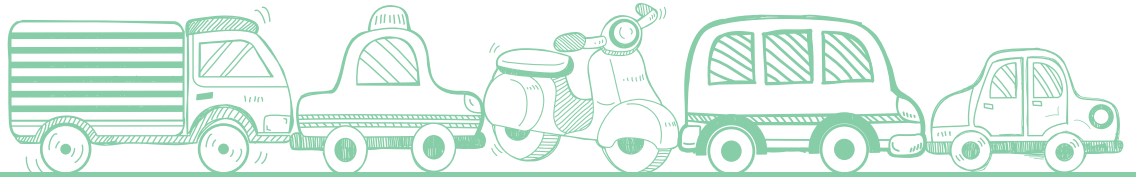
The proposal links directly to Ashford’s corporate plan in terms of ensuring an effective, efficient and sustainable financial resource, service delivery and enforcement environment. This is evidenced by reduced maintenance costs and contributing towards economic development in the town centre by offering enhanced public services. Our portfolio holder Councillor Brad Bradford was kept apprised of the situation and agreed in January 2017 to make the change permanent.

### **Business permit update**

Our trial of business permits in one of our outlying car parks has continued. The Henwood car park is situated just outside of the town centre on the edge of an industrial estate. Though the car park is walking distance to the Town Centre we recognise this is not always an option for some. However, the car park tends to be less busy than others and therefore lends itself perfectly to trialling this type of scheme.

The original permit holders were pleased with the offer and have subsequently renewed their permits for a further 12 months, whilst at the same time another business has taken up the offer to help its staff who work irregular hours to have a convenient location to park without having to negotiate local controlled parking zone rules intended for supporting residents and visitors.





## CHAPTER 7

# Moreline the Wizhog

In 2016 Ashford Borough Council launched a new initiative to try and educate children and parents about the dangers of stopping and or parking on yellow lines outside schools. We introduced a school safety mascot, Moreline the Wizhog. We wanted to present our important safety message in a way that would be fun and informative for the children but with an important safety message at the heart of it. Our road safety team have visited 10 schools and 4 Scout/Beaver groups in the past year, and have had a very positive response to our visits. During our visit we explain the importance of road safety to the children. We show the children pictures of school markings and other road markings, and explain these to them. Moreline's costume has road symbols and lines incorporated within it. We involve the children in the presentation and invite questions from them at the end.

We also have trialed A-Frames that can be placed outside schools as a physical and visible deterrent. Vehicles stopping outside schools is a continuing problem. 7 schools have tried them so far and several of them have bought their own A-Frames.

Moreline the Wizhog had a display at Safety in Action in 2016. We asked teachers to give us feedback. Over 30 schools went to Safety in Action, all of them gave us feedback about parking issues outside their schools. This was very useful information. We have contacted schools to help them with these problems.

We will be arranging visits to more schools in 2017/18. The Moreline the Wizhog initiative has been enjoyable for the team. It is nice to be able to show that the work we do has a purpose and is positive for the local community.



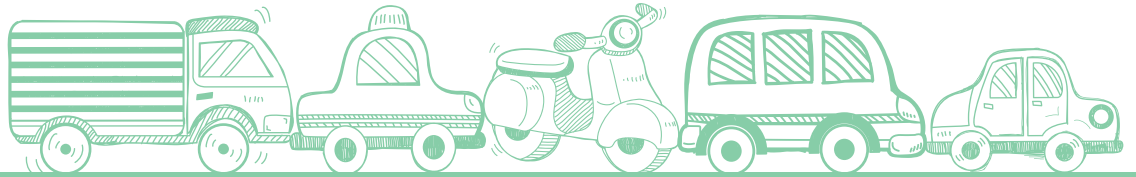
## CHAPTER 8

# Financials

Income	
Resident's permits	£25,799
On street fees –	£123,197
PCN – On street	£264,505
Visitors Permits	£14,000
Off street fees	£1,800,268
PCN off street	£38,389
Season tickets	£247,478
Other income -	£1,509
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£2,515,145</b>
Expenditure	
On street	£195,870
Off street	£419,444
<b>Total expenditure</b>	
Income minus expenditure –	
<b>TOTAL SURPLUS</b>	<b>= £1,899,831</b>

### Notes on Parking Account:

- 1) Income from off-street charges goes into the council's 'general fund' and is not ring-fenced for transport-related schemes as other parking income is
- 2) Under Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 a local authority's surplus can be allocated to cover the costs as detailed below (but not limited to):
  - \* Transport, highway or road improvements
  - \* Environmental Improvements (includes a reduction of environmental pollution)
  - \* Provision of outdoor recreational facilities available to the general public without charge



# Award-winning Parking Annual Report

Ashford Borough Council's 2015/16 Parking Annual report received a Certificate of Excellence at the PATROL (Parking And Traffic Regulations Outside London) Annual Report Awards.

We submitted our annual parking report to PATROL (the body that run the adjudication service for Penalty Charge Notice appeals) as part of the July 2016 awards, and were shortlisted for an award among three other authorities.

The council was up against 309 other boroughs. Members of the Parking Services team were invited to the Houses of Parliament by David Rutley MP to receive the certificate.

The awards are part of PATROL's campaign to change the national conversation about parking, and are designed to reward, share and promote best practice in local authority annual reporting nationwide.







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