

Westbury Town Council

“REDEFINING WESTBURY” TOWN STRATEGY 2018-2022



FOREWORD

Welcome to Westbury Town Council's Town Strategy document. It sets out our vision for the future of the town and the priorities of the council over the next four years to help take the town in that direction. The council has already widely publicised that it is responding to the changes in service levels at principal council level, by taking on services previously provided by Wiltshire Council, in order to secure their continuation or standard. However, our ambitions go far beyond services, we also wish to provide leadership, engage with and empower the community and continue to add real value to our town.

The council believes that in recent times our town has lost some of its identity and we intend to play our part in redefining it. And in doing so, we acknowledge it will take a strong partnership of a number of organisations to attain our goals. As the local authority closest to the people of the town, we are uniquely situated to best represent the views of our communities and to coordinate the actions of those who can deliver improvement. **“Redefining Westbury”** is the recognition of where we are and what needs doing and a commitment to tackle the issues identified. The council will be careful with public money but will not be afraid to invest in the future.

This simple one-page strategy will be supplemented with our business plan, which will add the “how” we are going to deliver our strategy and give more detail about the actions we will take to achieve our aims. This will be accompanied by a 4-year financial plan to identify the longer-term implications of our decisions including local Council Tax. We will report back to you regularly on progress at least quarterly.

As a local council, we have a number of statutory duties and services to administer and will continue to place efficiency, value for money, fairness and transparency at the centre of our operations. Our strategy is intended to inform our councillors and staff, engage residents and all our actions are intended to benefit our town and its community.

Westbury has a number of distinctive features many of which make it attractive, unique, with a strong heritage and most importantly a solid sense of community. Despite this, the town cannot stand still and there will always be issues that require our attention, if we are to achieve our ambitions for Westbury. We are working with our community to develop a Neighbourhood Plan to ensure as far as possible our influence in its future growth.

We are better able to shape Westbury as a place which meets the needs and expectations of its residents, businesses and community organisations. We will continue to develop but remain “good at being Westbury”.

Westbury Town Council

March 2018

Our purpose:

To improve Westbury for its residents, businesses and volunteer groups by providing local leadership, planning for the future and coordinating the efforts of the key stakeholders to commit to and invest in it. We will promote community cohesion and ensure where possible that all our communities and citizens derive benefits prioritised by both need and choice. We will plan, listen and respond, seek your contribution, by doing it ourselves or by working with others to achieve our ambitions. Above all, we will always speak for Westbury.

Our vision:

Whilst remaining proud of our history and heritage, we will shape a modern identity, and develop both affluence and vibrancy by means of an engaged and empowered community. Westbury will become a promotor of its own destiny. To develop into a town for families and a diverse range of businesses and becoming well regarded for its festivals and events.

Our Core Values:

Westbury Town Council promises to work fairly, efficiently, effectively and to provide value for money and to be open and clear. It will engage with, listen to and empower our community to achieve a better town for all.

Our Priorities:

Our Main Priorities are:

Outward facing:

- **Building a single engaged and empowered Westbury community.**
- **Protecting and enhancing the town's environment for the enjoyment of all.**
- **Building on the town's heritage.**
- **Make it a natural home for families.**
- **Sustaining, developing and promoting the town's economy and employment.**
- **Publicising all that we do, our achievements and failings.**

Inward facing:

- **Developing the potential of the Council, by continually improving efficiency and value for money and reviewing and recognising what we achieve.**

ABOUT WESTBURY TOWN COUNCIL AND OTHER GOVERNMENT

Westbury is a civil parish with three electoral wards and with an elected town council of fifteen members, with five in each ward. The chairman of the town council has the title of Mayor of Westbury. The council offices are located in the Laverton Institute, owned by The Laverton Institute Trust, a registered charity. The council is the sole trustee of the trust which rents out the building for use by the community, businesses and to the council. Westbury has a resident population of over 14,000. The town has long been an established seat of local government, having Westbury Urban District Council from 1895 until 1974 when it became Westbury Town Council

The principal authority is Wiltshire Council, the unitary authority of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon), created in April 2009. It is the successor authority to Wiltshire County Council (1889–2009) and also to four district councils—Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury, and West Wiltshire—all of which had been created in 1974 and were abolished in 2009. West Wiltshire District Council had itself been created by the merger of the former urban districts of Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham, Trowbridge, Warminster and **Westbury**, along with Bradford and Melksham Rural District and the Warminster and Westbury Rural District.

In a recently commissioned independent review conducted by LCS Ltd, their Situation Analysis reported “a well managed council with a sound financial and governance core. It is an ambitious council with both officers and members being eager to move the council forward for the benefit of its community. The findings show that the community is at the heart of everything the council does, and councillors demonstrate their preference for active community leadership. The council however lacks a structure to bring all the elements of its community consultation together and translate them into actions. The council recognises that It has no clear or agreed objectives or focus.”

The council has responded to this by undertaking facilitated strategic planning and producing this, its first strategy. The Council will consult on its draft strategy to ensure its priorities are what is wanted by the community. It intends to follow this with a business plan and medium-term financial plan to ensure the strategy is implemented.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Westbury Town Council’s Strategy sets out initial priorities over a four-year period in which it will lay down the foundations to achieve a longer-term vision of the town. The town council intends to do this through four outward facing and one inward facing priority areas:

Each of these priorities will be delivered through one or more key actions for which action plans will be developed within our annual business plans.

PRIORITY 1: Building a single engaged and empowered Westbury community.

1. Engage with and consult the public on all key issues affecting the town and town council.
2. Communicate in an appropriate way to reach all members of the community.
3. Recognise the diversity of our communities of place, origin or interest, and ensure they become integrated. Promote connectivity between neighbourhoods in the town.
4. Lobby for a mix of housing to meet the whole-life needs of our residents and workforce, particularly affordable housing for the young and accommodation to allow others to downsize.
5. Support community and voluntary organisations which forward the aims of the council, help them work better together and encourage multi-interest and cross-community groups.
6. Encourage more people to take an active interest in and become engaged with the town, its local council and voluntary sector.
7. Promote the role of “Town Councillor” and engender pride in the town.
8. Work with local education establishments to increase engagement with the town council and support the improved education in the town.

9. Making it a natural home for families

PRIORITY 2: Protecting and enhancing the town's environment for the enjoyment of all.

1. Protect and enhance our local environment by preserving the natural environment, biodiversity and important landscapes.
2. Lobby to gain a bypass for the town to eliminate the major through traffic on A350.
3. Be an exemplar of sustainability by setting ourselves high environmental standards and audit the council's impact on the environment.
4. Work with like-minded organisations to make the town sustainable and investigate the "transition town" approach.
5. Enhance public open space and green areas in suitable locations and address the identified deficit of green sports pitches
6. Raise the standard of the public realm by tackling litter, fouling, graffiti and neglected or aesthetically displeasing areas through the Town Caretaker service.
7. Encourage and facilitate walking and cycling in and around the town.
8. Strive to make our town safer.

PRIORITY 3: Building on the town's heritage.

1. Preserve and build on the history and heritage of the town and ensure its special features are properly maintained and promoted
2. Support, review, potential expansion and proactive management of the town's conservation areas and ensure listed buildings remain used and maintained.
3. Become an influential participant in dealing with others, working with and holding to account partners and coordinating the activities of stakeholders, to create a shared agenda, manage and improve local services.
4. Develop a Neighbourhood Plan and use it to assert more control over local planning issues and to provide an effective voice for the town in planning decisions.
5. Use the Neighbourhood Plan to gain homes, facilities and services which make the town ideal for families.
6. Supplement the Neighbourhood Plan with a town design guide to ensure new developments are sympathetic to the character of the town.

PRIORITY 4: Sustaining, developing and promoting the town's economy and employment

1. Maintain the successful town events and festivals and add others along with historical themed markets.
2. Encourage the retention or replacement of employment sites for high value jobs and ensure provision for starter businesses.
3. Ensure sufficient infrastructure and utilities to support business developments.
4. Encourage a vibrant town centre which is attractive to a niche offer and a night time economy which caters for a wide mix of people.
5. Engage with trade groups, local businesses, and others to develop the town's economy and create high value jobs.
6. Consider canvassing to establish a Business Improvement District (BID).
7. Maintain a parking subsidy to encourage town centre usage as long as it achieves its aim.
8. Take on additional delegated services where they are essential to the town and would otherwise be lost or reduced in effectiveness.

PRIORITY 5: Developing the potential of the council, by continually improving efficiency and value for money and reviewing and publicising what we achieve.

Develop the capacity and diverse skill base within the council.

1. Increase a diverse skill base within the council through a Councillor and Officer Training and Development Plan and a Value Statement linked to the Code of Conduct.
2. Increase capacity through role review and work procedures linked to quality management.
3. Review terms of reference to committees and working parties and revise the council's scheme of delegation.
4. Develop business planning as a means of delivering the strategy.
5. Develop medium term financial planning.
6. Develop robust performance management and report regularly to the public
7. Have forward-looking governance through a Council Constitution.
8. Maintain a small grants scheme which supports the delivery of the council's core purpose and vision.
9. Work towards Local Council Awards standards and regain the general power of competence.
10. Develop a communication plan for the Council.

HOW IT WILL BE DELIVERED

Westbury Town Council recognises that it does not have either the legal powers or resources to bring about all of its goals on its own. It will partner and support all organisations and projects which share its vision and aims. It is this coordination and driving role that the town Council sees necessary for itself.

The town council will therefore provide a voice for the town and argue strongly for others to contribute towards its vision for Westbury. It will help fill gaps in provision, using its unique position to coordinate effort from all stakeholders and key drivers.

It will use its business plan to translate its strategy into actions, providing details of how it will achieve and fund its aims and specify targets against which its progress can be judged. Performance data will be collected regularly and reported to councillors and the public, together with financial management information.

The council will tackle the challenges which lie ahead robustly and with flair and vigour.