

3rd Draft Business Plan 2024-2027

Purpose and need for a Business Plan

This Business Plan contains guiding principles for Downham Market Town Council to enable it to work in a coordinated way in the best interests of all who live and work in Downham Market. It is a statement of the Town Council's vision, purpose, aims, objectives and values.

The purpose of the document is to provide an overview of the Town Council's plans to maintain quality of life for all the town's residents, businesses, and visitors and to protect and promote Downham Market's history and attractions.

The plan will set out the aims and objectives of the Town Council initially for a three-year period, commencing in 2024. The plan will be regularly monitored, reviewed and updated.

The Business Plan will influence the direction and content of all other internal strategies and Committees of the Town Council and ensures that the Town Council can take a planned and consistent approach to:

- The design and delivery of services
- The identification of improved facilities and services
- The prioritisation and allocation of resources
- The achievement of value for money and best practice
- Financial control
- Ensuring statutory obligations are met

Summary

This Business Plan sets out the Town Council's goals, purpose and priorities for Councillors, staff and the community for the next three years.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by the qualified Town Clerk who is appointed by the Town Council. The Town Clerk is required to carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's proper officer and to issue all statutory notifications. The Town Clerk is also the appointed Responsible Financial Officer. The Town Clerk is supported by the Deputy Town Clerk, one Administrator and one Administrative Assistant.

The Town Council also employs four other staff covering general maintenance and caretaking duties.

SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Town Council owns and is responsible for:

- The Town Hall and its car park
- The Jubilee Community Centre, Sports Hut and management of the Jubilee field (protected by Fields in Trust)
- The Old Fire Station (now the Downham Heritage Centre) and car park
- The MIND building in Paradise Road
- The Paradise Garage building in Paradise Road (sale pending)
- The Town Council offices in Paradise Road (sale pending)
- No 6 Market Square (the TC offices)
- The Hollies nos 1 and 2 car parks
- The Paradise Road car park
- The town clock, town sign and war memorial
- The Memorial Garden (within the Memorial Field, Lynn Road)
- The Town Square
- Public seats, litter bins, grit bins, dog bins and planters
- Specific street lights

The services which the Town Council currently provides for the residents of Downham Market are:

- Managing Town Hall and its facilities to a standard which makes it available at reasonable hire cost to groups and individuals.
- Managing Jubilee Community Centre and its facilities/grounds to a standard which makes it available at reasonable hire cost to groups and individuals.
- Managing Sports Hut on the Jubilee site and its facilities/grounds to a standard which makes it available at reasonable hire cost to groups and individuals (currently sole use of the Boxing Club)
- Managing the Friday and Saturday markets, promoting the market and ensuring legal and licence obligations are met
- Managing and maintaining the Town Council owned car parks (see above)
- Acting as statutory consultee to the KLWNBC Planning process.
- Providing a range of civic and community events, recognising the importance of building community and acknowledging significant national events.
- Supporting tourism in town, in conjunction with KLWNBC.

- Supporting business groups in town, promoting membership and encouraging meetings with Town and Borough Councillors
- Effective management of the Town Council budget enabling the precept to be kept within affordable limits
- Working with the Allotment Association to provide within best efforts land for allotments.
- Working with the Joint Burial Board to ensure cemeteries are managed appropriately, represent value for money, and justify the annual precept request.

VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Town Council is committed to continually examining and reviewing its responsibilities.

Downham Market Town Council's vision is to provide value for money to the people of Downham Market by proactively supporting a safe, friendly and attractive town, where people want to live, work and visit, with all residents having access to a high quality of life both now and in the future.

In order to achieve this vision, the Town Council aims to:

- provide high quality, cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of residents and assist and encourage other bodies to provide such services.
- work in a transparent and open manner.
- provide public venues for Downham Market people to utilise for business and pleasure.
- regularly review the activities of the Town Council to ensure that it is best placed to meet the needs of the local people.
- Consult with the residents of the town through the Annual Town Meeting, monthly Councillor Surgeries, focussed topic-lead consultations.

Councillors and staff

Councillors represent their electorate. In addition they are bound by the Members' Code of Conduct which have been adopted to ensure excellent conduct and behaviour. Downham Market Town Councillors, commit to:

- The highest standards of respect towards each other and towards all those they come into contact with during the course of Town Council business.
- Providing and undertaking relevant training.
- Networking with other Town/Parish Councils.
- Maintaining appropriate and safe staffing levels.
- Ensuring that the objectives and priorities of the Town Council are published for the benefit local people and as a guide to the work of the Clerk and staff.

THE COUNCIL'S OBJECTIVES

Full Council

- To act as the corporate management committee for the Council, making decisions which focus on what is in the best interests of the residents, businesses and community groups.
- Annually setting a fair and legal precept, to allow for contingency and to maintain reserves according to legal obligations.
- Continue to improve the budget setting and monitoring process and to identify efficiencies.
- Continue to ensure accounting and audit procedures are completed in a timely manner.
- Continue to support local non-profit organisations by providing grants.
- To seek funding opportunities to support and develop projects which will bring sustainable benefit to the community and Town, within the restrictions imposed by match funding requirements and staffing capacity.
- To ensure that the weekly markets are attractive for traders (new and existing) and shoppers alike. To ensure that the outdoor Friday and Saturday markets are widely publicised.
- To deliver a workable solution to the parking issues in Town Council car parks. To take into account the opinions of residents, businesses and visitors. To generate some income to help off-set the costs of providing and maintaining the car parks.
- **Communication:** The Town Council will use its website, social media and notice boards as a communication stream for any relevant communications and to ensure that:
 - Agendas are published at least three working days before a Town Council meeting and are posted on the Town Council office and Town Hall noticeboards and on the Council's website.
 - Minutes of Town Council meetings are available in good time and agreed by the relevant Committee, with decisions ratified by Full Council. Once ratified they are posted on the Council's website.
 - It recognises that not all residents have internet access and therefore Agendas and Minutes will remain available in hard copy at the Town Council office for residents to view on request.
- **Financial and Risk Management:**
 - The Town Council will continue to seek further economies in its running costs while, at the same time, looking to improve its return on its main assets, the Town Hall, the Jubilee Community Centre and car parks. Examples of possible economies could include property and maintenance costs. Once a detailed breakdown of this cost has been received, it may be possible to achieve some economies.

- A thorough revaluation of the risks facing the Council has been carried out and agreed and these are reflected in its insurance arrangements. The risks will be continually reviewed and managed by the Clerk in liaison with the Governance Committee.
- The Town Council is elected every four years and future Town Councils may develop more ambitious projects. A period of taking stock has been agreed for 2024-5 and no new projects will be initiated nor external funding be sought. Research into how the Jubilee Community Centre and field can be enhanced will be carried out during 2024-5 in readiness for implementation potentially during 2025-6.
- In all its deliberations the Town Council will take into consideration sustainability, bio-diversity, and equal opportunities with regards environmental, socio-economic and ethical issues.

COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES

Planning Committee

- To consider planning applications submitted by the planning authorities as part of the consultation process.
- To safeguard and enhance the environment in and around Downham Market.
- To consider initiatives such as developing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide appropriate BCKL&WN planning decisions.

Property Committee

- Develop and maintain existing assets, protecting our heritage and produce additional benefits where possible.
- To ensure that the historic Grade II listed Town Hall is continually maintained and developed to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- To enable the Town Hall and the JCC to be enjoyed by as many residents, local groups and businesses as possible by keeping hire rates competitive and ensuring they align with the needs/ambitions of the local population.

Governance and Finance Committee

To provide legal, financial and policy advice to enable the Council to manage its affairs in a transparent, professional and trustworthy manner.

To support the Clerk to manage the many risks associated with the work of the Council.

To monitor the Council's finances in accordance with Financial Regulations - to audit processes and verify financial probity, transparency and accuracy.

To ensure that the agreed Business Plan is central to all key decision making across the Council.

Human Resources

Support the Clerk in her responsibilities with recruitment, retention, discipline, grievance, contracts, health and safety relating to staffing, training, medical considerations and salaries.

Business and Tourism

Support the development of the business community in the town, and work to enhance the tourism potential of the area in conjunction with other agencies eg KLWNBC.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2027

Over the coming 3 years the following will act as a focus for the work of the Council staff alongside their usual duties:

- 1. Town Identity** – to define the town’s identity and work towards strengthening this, appreciating that the Town Council cannot deliver on all desired outcomes, but emphasising joint agency working. This will feed into decisions on the management of the Council’s assets, tourism, business, environment, and heritage.
- 2. JCC Site** – convene working party to focus on the development of the Jubilee site as a whole. To recommend to Full Council visions for the site, improvements, costs, public consultation, planning requirements, liabilities and benefits, income generation, promotion, staffing etc.
- 3. Car Park Orders/Charging** – Define the objective of the car park orders and the charging project, carry out public consultations as necessary to finalise the decisions. Prioritise outcomes and create project plan to implement according to agreed timeline.
- 4. Town Hall** – to define its purpose and the contribution it makes to the work of the Council. To define the costs needed to bring it to a condition to meet the purpose. Create a project timeline to manage progress.

End