



BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL

“DOING THE BEST FOR BIGGLESWADE”- CORPORATE STRATEGY 2016-2020



FOREWORD

Welcome to Biggleswade Town Council's first Corporate Strategy. It sets out our vision for the future of the whole town and our aims and priorities over the next four years. As you would expect, it builds on the Biggleswade Town Centre Strategy and Masterplan, published in 2011 by the Central Bedfordshire Council, in conjunction with the Town Council.

In this document we have highlighted the role of the Town Council in achieving our Vision for the Town because we recognise that 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. We also have a number of statutory duties and services to administer and intend to continue to build quality into our ethos, to ensure we fulfil our role in the most efficient and cost effective way.

The elections in May 2015 have seen all Councillors, irrespective of political party, continue to work together to make a real difference for Biggleswade. **“Doing the best for Biggleswade”** is the recognition of where we are and what needs doing. It is a commitment to tackle the issues identified with energy, over a reasonable period of time. The Council will be careful with public money, but will not be afraid to invest in the future.

Biggleswade Town Council have deliberately kept the Strategy simple, our main direction being set out below. We will supplement this with our Business Plan, which will add the “how” we are going to deliver our Strategy and give more detail about the many actions we will take to achieve our aims. This will be accompanied by a 5-year financial plan to identify the longer term fiscal implications of our decisions. We will report back to you regularly on progress.

Biggleswade has a number of distinctive features which makes it attractive and unique, a strong heritage and most importantly a friendly community that enjoy the benefits the Town offers. Great as our Town is, there are a number of issues which require attention if it is to cope with the unprecedented rate of change in people's lifestyles, demands and aspirations. The planned growth of the Town will bring benefits but will also provide challenges.

We now feel able to shape Biggleswade as a place which meets the expectations of its residents, businesses and community organisations.

Councillor D Albone
Mayor

Rob McGregor
Town Clerk



Our vision:

Our Town will be vibrant and continually developing. One community, working collaboratively to deliver a shared blueprint of an improved local environment. The Town will seek to become Master of its own Destiny and through localised planning will shape its infrastructure, ensuring the protection of its amenities and open spaces.

To achieve this, we will strive to satisfy the needs of our community in work, rest and play. We will stimulate new economic growth within our town. We will develop the confidence and presence to positively influence others whilst acting in a culture of honesty trust and openness.

Our purpose:

is to build the success of Biggleswade, creating a single town community, identifying the economic, physical and social needs and delivering services to meet those needs, working collaboratively with the community and partners.

To achieve this, all members of the Council will work together and with others, to serve and lead the community with a determination to undertake the fullest range of services, responding to the wider need of its residents with fair and proportionate governance.

Main Priorities:

Our Main Priorities are:

- **Stimulating new growth within the town whilst developing and protecting amenities.**
- **Building the success of a sustainable Biggleswade.**
- **Creation of a single Biggleswade community.**
- **Developing the potential of the Council to tackle local issues, deliver better services and effective leadership.**

The Biggleswade Community Promise (Our Core Values)

Biggleswade Town Council promise to be open, trustworthy and honest; providing value for money whilst empowering and working with the community to achieve success for all.

ABOUT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL AND OTHER GOVERNMENT

Biggleswade is a market town and civil parish located on the River Ivel in Bedfordshire. It has grown in population by nearly 10% over the past decade, primarily due to good transport links. It is situated along the A1 road between London and the North, as well as having a railway station on the main rail link North from London (the East Coast Main Line). New housing developments mean that expansion is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future.

Biggleswade has two different tiers of local government, each democratically elected, independent of each other and with very different functions. Central Bedfordshire Council is the “principal authority” having the majority of functions of the former county and district Councils. Biggleswade Town Council is known as a “local Council”. It is in the North East Bedfordshire Parliamentary constituency and the East of England European Parliament constituency. Four Central Bedfordshire Councillors represent the town on that authority.

Biggleswade Town Council was established in April 1974, in the Local Government re-organisation which brought into being Mid Beds District Council and retained Bedfordshire County Council. The historic town had however been at the centre of local government from 1894 to 1974, through the former Biggleswade Urban District Council. A further re-organisation in April 2009 saw Bedfordshire County Council abolished and Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire merged to form a new unitary authority, Central Bedfordshire.

In 2006, Biggleswade Town Council moved to the former Magistrates’ Court in Saffron Road, which has been restored and refurbished to house an impressive Council chamber and office accommodation.

Biggleswade Town Council comprises 15 elected Councillors, who represent three different wards in the town, Stratton, Holme and Ivel. Each Councillor remains in office for 4 years from the date of the last ordinary election. The next major elections are to be held in May 2019. Each year Councillors elect a Town Mayor, who also holds the statutory position of chairman. The Council has four committees with separate responsibilities, each with its own responsibilities. These are: Public Land & Open Spaces, Finance & General Purpose, Personnel and Town Centre Management.

The Town Council employs a number of staff; Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Office Manager, Administrators, Working Foreman, several ground staff and the Market Superintendent.

The Town Council is responsible for a number of community facilities throughout the town, including the ancient Charter Market (held every Saturday & Tuesday in the Market Square), the Farmers’ Market (held on the third Wednesday of every month from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. in the Market Square), two Cemeteries (Drove Road and Stratton Way), an allotment site at Kennel Farm Road, a number of car parks throughout the town and a variety of parks, play areas and recreation grounds. The Council is also responsible for a number of street lighting columns, with Central Bedfordshire Council owning the remainder.

The Council recently commissioned an independent review of how it compared with best practice. The headline conclusion was of “a service oriented authority, ambitious but realistic Councillors and a motivated workforce”. The Council is well managed and services are continually evolving to meet needs. It was decided that governance had fallen a little behind the best and that a review of strategic direction would now be timely. Ideas and commitment to developing the Council for the good of the town come from both Councillors and officers, and are not driven solely by one or the other. This “shared vision” avoids major internal conflict and leads to a balanced and stable Council.

The Council has responded to this by undertaking facilitated strategic planning and producing this, its first Corporate Strategy and associated Business Plan. It has set in train a comprehensive review of its governance which will be completed within the first year of this strategy.

FUTURE DIRECTION

The Biggleswade Corporate Strategy sets out a four-year target to develop a strong Biggleswade community, with the common purpose of developing the best for Biggleswade. The town centre will be improved, car parking increased and services and facilities provided, including leisure facilities which meet the needs and wishes of the community. The developing strategy will underpin a new confidence in the town to become more powerful and enterprising, controlling its own destiny to deliver relevant and sustainable local services. Also to develop community cohesion and create a happier Biggleswade.

The Town Council intends to do this through three outward facing priority areas.

Priority 1. Stimulating new growth within the town, whilst developing and protecting amenities.

Priority 2. Building the success of a sustainable Biggleswade.

Priority 3. Creation of a single Biggleswade community.

In addition, we have identified an inward facing priority to ensure we are fit for purpose:

Priority 4. Developing the potential of the Council to tackle local issues, deliver better services and effective leadership.

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

PRIORITY 1: STIMULATING NEW GROWTH WITHIN THE TOWN WHILST PROTECTING AMENITIES

1. Engage with trade groups, local businesses and others to develop the town with a focus on bringing empty shops back into use.
2. Create more parking facilities for the town by enhancing existing car parks and investigating the purchase of land for the provision of additional ones.
3. Investigate and encourage options for attracting commercial leisure facilities into the town.
4. Prepare a guide to recreation and leisure facilities within the town, promoting the information on the Town Council website.
5. Use Biggleswade leisure facilities flexibly, to meet the needs of the community.
6. Protect, maintain and enhance open spaces.
7. Produce a design guide for the town.

PRIORITY 2: BUILDING THE SUCCESS OF A SUSTAINABLE BIGGLESWADE

1. To become an influential participant in dealing with others, working with partners to manage and improve local services. Develop the ethos of partnership working whilst aligning all activities with the Corporate Strategy.
2. Focus on gaining the powers important to the people of Biggleswade by working with the principal authority on devolution of services to the Town Council.
3. Develop a Neighbourhood Plan, seeking more control over local planning issues and providing an effective voice for the Council in planning decisions.
4. Use the planning system to the benefit of the local community by commenting on applications and lobbying for amenities and funding.
5. Encourage the principle authority to develop a Biggleswade sustainable transport strategy which ensures all communities and facilities are linked to the town.

6. Protect and enhance the heritage of the town by supporting organisations which develop the knowledge of local history and take a proactive role in managing the conservation area and listed buildings.
7. Protect and enhance our local environment by preserving the natural environment, biodiversity and important landscapes.
8. Develop the longer term sustainability of the town by setting ourselves high environmental standards and working with others to address wider environmental issues and concerns.

PRIORITY 3: CREATION OF A SINGLE BIGGLESWADE COMMUNITY

1. Enable the setting up of a Biggleswade Community Forum to coordinate community effort towards delivering priority projects.
2. Facilitate and support the community to work better together with the Council and partners.
3. Encourage more people to take an active interest in the town, its local Council and voluntary sector.
4. Develop a communication strategy ensuring the Council develops efficient and effective communication with the local population and partners.
5. Engage with Central Bedfordshire Council to help it understand local needs with the aim of providing improved services and facilities.
6. Work to make our communities as inclusive as possible.
7. Recognise the diversity of the Town's communities.
8. Facilitate and support community events which build community cohesiveness or promote the town.
9. Work with others to ensure we have a healthy community.
10. Strive to make our town safer.

PRIORITY 4: DEVELOP THE POTENTIAL OF THE COUNCIL TO TACKLE LOCAL ISSUES, DELIVER BETTER SERVICES AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

1. Develop the capacity and diverse skill base within the Council.
2. Continue to deliver excellent services according to both need and consumer choice.
3. Take on new services where there is an identifiable community need.
4. Take a more integrated approach to management and be more transparent in our governance and dealings with people.

HOW IT WILL BE DELIVERED

Biggleswade Town Council recognises that it does not have 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 goals. It will provide a voice for the town and argue strongly for others to contribute towards its vision for Biggleswade.

The Town Council will help fill gaps in provision, using its unique position.

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, together with financial management information.

The Council will tackle enthusiastically the challenges which lie ahead.