

## **Harpenden Town Council**

### **Business Plan 2017 -2020**

#### **What is the Town Council Business Plan?**

This Business Plan is the Town Council's blueprint for what it will focus on over the next 3 years. It aims to give a clear picture to residents, stakeholders and partners as to what the Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to go about it.

At the heart of the Business Plan is a focus on working in collaboration with local people to make Harpenden an even better place to live, work or visit.

This Plan sets out the Council's vision, objectives and key priorities that it will deliver either directly or by trying to increase its influence on the relevant third party, such as St Albans City & District Council or Hertfordshire County Council.

The Plan will help drive and determine the direction and content of all other internal strategies and resources of the Council and will be used to plan activities and set the budget for each year.

#### **Why have we produced a Business Plan?**

It is important that the Town Council has an agreed framework to work within to ensure that it operates efficiently and consistently. In addition, by having a business plan in place, we hope that the local community will have a better understanding as to what the Town Council does and doesn't do.

This Business Plan will be a flexible document that can be updated regularly to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of the Town Council. It will be publicly available and progress will be reported and monitored through our governance structure.

#### **Harpenden Town Council – an overview**

There are three tiers of local government locally, each with different responsibilities. Harpenden Town Council is the first and most local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the town, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

St Albans City & District Council is the second tier and is responsible for services including car parking, waste management, housing and street cleaning.

Finally, Hertfordshire County Council's responsibilities include highways (relating to both roads and pavements), education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

Harpenden Town Council was created in 1974 following local government re-organisation. Harpenden is the largest parish in the St Albans District with a population of approximately 30,000.

There are sixteen Town Councillors, representing four Wards – North, South, East and West, who are elected to serve a four-year term. The new four-year term commenced in May 2015.

Each year, the Council elects from amongst its members the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor.

### **Functions and structure of the Town Council**

The work of the Town Council is split into three functions, details of which are set out below.



The Town Clerk, Carl Cheevers, is the Council's Chief Officer and is responsible for delivering the Town Council's services, implementing its policies and ensuring it complies with government legislation.

The Town Clerk is supported by 17 officers, ten of whom are full-time and seven part-time. Town Council officers deliver a range of responsibilities including:

- Harpenden Common and Greens
- Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve
- Allotments
- Lydekker Park and Car Park
- Recreation and Play Areas
- Planning and Development Management
- Land Assets
- Town Hall Information Point
- Park Hall Community Building

- Harpenden in Bloom
- Farmers' Market
- Large scale Community Events
- Christmas Lights
- Public Toilets
- Street Furniture
- Democratic and Civic Representation
- Town Twinning
- Initiatives for Young People
- Community Grants

### **Vision, Objectives and Key Priority Themes**

The Town Council's vision for Harpenden is:

'A vibrant and successful town where people want to live, to work, to invest and to visit'

#### Corporate Objectives

- To serve those who live in the Town, work in the Town or visit the Town
- To strive to improve the quality of life for all residents of the Town
- To promote and represent the community's views and aspirations at local, county, regional and national level
- To promote the devolution of services where they can be delivered more effectively and efficiently
- To work in partnership at local, county, regional and national level to promote and provide for the wellbeing of the Town's community.

### **Key Priority themes for 2017-2020**

The Town Council has identified six key priority themes that will form the focus of our work over the next three years. The themes are:

1. High quality Governance
2. Investing in our assets
3. Modernisation of the Town Council
4. Maximising our commercial opportunities
5. Outstanding commons and green spaces
6. Vibrant and active communities

Further details on each of the themes is set out in the sections below. Each theme includes an aspiration and a set of projects and activities that will help us to get there.

## **High Quality Governance**

We will be a professional, open and accountable organisation with sound financial management practices.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives:

1. Realign the governance committee structure so that it reflects accurately the functions and responsibilities of the Town Council
2. Put in place a community led Neighbourhood Plan that provides a vision for future development and growth in Harpenden
3. Deliver an effective planning function to consider local applications
4. Develop a new communications and engagement strategy for the Town Council
5. Make improvements to our website to ensure information is accessible and clear
6. Develop a Councillor training and development programme to ensure that they have the support, knowledge and skills needed for their role
7. Undertake a review of training and development needs for staff
8. Monitor and report on performance indicators at Council meetings
9. Submit an application to the Local Council Award Scheme for Gold accreditation
10. Invite key partners to address the Council on key matters of interest
11. Build positive relationships with partner organisations and encourage collaboration across the Town
12. Undertake an annual budget setting process and monitor finances closely throughout the year
13. Deliver a programme of Risk management activities

## **Investing in our assets**

We will be a Town Council that proactively invests and manages its own assets and supports key partners and community groups to invest in their own.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives:

14. Develop a three year programme of play area developments
15. Establish a three year programme of Town Centre improvements including paths and street furniture
16. Redevelop the former Westfield Allotment sites into affordable housing

17. Improve and upgrade Park Hall Community building so that it continues to meet the needs of the community
18. Support the Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust to secure the redevelopment of the Red House Memorial Hospital
19. Work with St Albans City & District Council to establish new leisure and cultural facilities in the Town
20. Support Harpenden Cricket Club with their plans to introduce a new pavilion
21. Provide a new storage depot for our maintenance team
22. Consider opportunities for the Town Council to devolve of land and assets from other bodies

### **Modernisation of the Town Council**

We will transform the internal workings of the Town Council to become a more modern, innovative and forward thinking organisation with working practices that complement our priorities and benefit staff, partners and residents.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives:

23. Review current staff working practices including core hours and flexible working
24. Develop an action plan to halve paper consumption by 2020
25. Refresh our approach to archiving and file management
26. Introduce a BACS payment for suppliers
27. Review our financial management system
28. Refresh our report management system
29. Introduce greater focus on project management across all functions
30. Review IT system to improve business continuity and flexible working arrangements for staff.
31. Establish a new approach to staff appraisals that more accurately reflects the priorities of the Council

### **Maximising our commercial opportunities**

We will have a greater focus on commercial activity to further diversify our income streams.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives:

32. Review the management and administrative arrangements at Lydekker Car Park including fees, charges and security
33. Maximise the usage and income capability of Park Hall

34. Undertake a review of all our current licences to ensure we are getting the maximum return from them
35. Identify Council assets that are not currently used for commercial activities but could be in the future
36. Be flexible in responding to other commercial opportunities as they arise.

### **Outstanding Commons and Green Spaces**

We will have first class, award winning, commons and green spaces that are accessed and enjoyed by both residents and visitors.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives

37. Deliver the Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve Management Plan
38. Ensure our Allotment Sites are managed and maintained to a high standard through our devolved management arrangements
39. Deliver a three year commons and greens educational programme
40. Introduce new digital management and monitoring system for our tree stock
41. Oversee a positive relationship with Harpenden Common Sports Clubs and take forward key development areas
42. Deliver the Lydekker Park Management Plan
43. Refresh and deliver the Harpenden Common Management Plan
44. Deliver a maintenance programme for Town Council owned assets

### **Vibrant and active communities**

We will have encouraged the development of active and engaged communities that have a strong sense of local pride and belonging.

To achieve this we will carry out the following activities and initiatives:

45. Deliver our own high quality, well-managed events and festivals in the town
46. Provide advice and guidance to groups wishing to run events on our land
47. Promote the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, Southdown and Batford retail areas
48. Deliver Farmers' markets and other themed markets
49. Provide advice, guidance and grants to voluntary & community organisations
50. Engage young people in local democracy.

### **Performance indicators**

- A. Planning applications considered

- B. Visitors to HTC website
- C. Councillor training and development sessions attended
- D. Key project work programme
- E. Income from Lydekker Car Park
- F. Visitors to Information Point
- G. Income transactions taken on behalf of SADC
- H. Complaints received
- I. Income and bookings capacity for Park Hall
- J. Farmers' Market bookings
- K. Street Furniture and Play Area faults
- L. Processing of Finance invoices
- M. Forum Magazine income
- N. Engagement in Commons and Greens educational offer