



HARPENDEN TOWN COUNCIL

CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY

POLICY STATEMENT

2015/2016

Dated: July 2015



POLICY STATEMENT 2015/2016

THE COUNCIL

Mission Statement:

To promote the area as a place to live, to work, to invest and to visit.

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Corporate Objectives

PF 1. The Council's Corporate Objectives are:

- 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 well-being of the Town's community.

PF 2. The Town Council is committed to continuous improvement through, consultation, implementation and review across the range of services and functions that the Council delivers.

PF 3. The Town Council will continue to strive to improve the cost effectiveness of services it delivers.

PF 4. The Town Council will continue the prudent stewardship of the budget, working within set guidelines and ensuring value for money.

PF 5. A stable and robust reserve will be maintained to protect the Council's assets against unexpected liabilities.

Communication and Consultation

PF 6. The Town Council will ensure all business transacted will, as far as possible, be open and transparent and easily accessible to residents. Agendas, Reports and Minutes will be available on the Council's website and from the Town Hall.

PF 7. The Town Council will consult regularly with residents and undertake surveys using Issue Response.

- PF 8. The Town Council will maintain an independent website and employ social media to ensure the Town has a high profile on the internet. The information contained will be relevant, up to date, informative and the site easy to navigate.
- PF 9. The Town Council will seek to introduce Smart Phone technology through the use of apps for areas of interest to provide greater information and links to additional references for the public to pursue.
- PF 10. The Town Council will produce a quarterly newsletter (Forum). The publication will provide information of value to residents including information on the activities and events in the Town as well as local advertisements. It will be delivered to all residential and business properties in the Town.
- PF 11. The Town Council will engage with external bodies on issues that affect the town.
- PF 12. The Town Council will use Social Media as a means of keeping residents informed of the activities of the Council.

Land and Estate Management

- PF 13. The Town Council will pursue its goal of facilitating the provision of affordable housing for key local workers.
- PF 14. The Town Council will consider opportunities for the devolution of land and estate management from other tiers of Local Government, referring all recommendations to Council for final consideration
- PF 15. The Town Council will keep its estate under review, identifying opportunities for acquisitions or disposals to optimise its holdings.

Community Safety

- PF 16. The Town Council will work with the St Albans Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Neighbourhood Police Team Priority Setting Forum, the Joint Agency Group (JAG), Herts County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel to promote safer communities and keep Harpenden a safe place to live.
- PF 17. The Town Council recognises the valuable contribution to the community by Neighbourhood Watch.
- PF 18. The Town Council supports the provision of CCTV cameras in Harpenden Town Centre, Southdown and Batford as an aid to deter and solve crime, anti-social behaviour and encourage a safer community.
- PF 19. The Town Council supports the Restricted Alcohol Zone (Designated Public Place Order – DPPO) and will work with the Police Authority to review the area as appropriate and necessary.

Community and Retail Partnerships

- PF 20. The Town Council will continue to support and develop local community projects.
- PF 21. The Town Council will support initiatives to maintain the vitality, vibrancy and viability of the shopping centres in the High Street, Southdown and Batford.

The Youth Town Council

- PF 22. The Town Council will support a Youth Town Council, working in partnership with Youth Connexions, to promote the ideas and ambitions of the youth resident in the Town.

Grants

- PF 23. General Grants will be awarded throughout the year by the Policy and Finance Committee.
- PF 24. The Town Council will promote awareness across the community of the facility to apply for general grant funding.
- PF 25. The Town Council will allocate General Grants in accordance with agreed criteria reviewed by the Policy and Finance Committee from time to time.
- PF 26. The Town Council will develop a strong audit trail to monitor Grant money.
- PF 27. Service Funding Agreements will be provided where appropriate to assist groups and organisations with sustainable service provision. Service Level Agreements in place will be monitored and reviewed.
- PF 28. The Town Council will actively seek other possible sources of grant funding which might be attracted through 'pump priming'.

Volunteers

- PF 29. The Town Council will engage the support of volunteers ensuring their safety and wellbeing at all times, that they are fully supported and they feel appreciated.

Fairtrade

- PF 30. The Town Council supports the principles of Fairtrade and thus:
- Promotes the awareness of Fairtrade issues amongst its employees and the residents of Harpenden.
 - Uses Fairtrade goods whenever possible at Town Council meetings and events.

Information Point

- PF 31. The Town Council will continue to provide and develop a 'one-stop-shop' to deliver a range of services to residents and visitors.

- PF 32. The Town Council will work with the District and County Councils to identify services that can be delivered effectively on behalf of all three tiers of Local Government.
- PF 33. The Town Council will investigate commercial opportunities in order to provide additional services to residents and visitors.
- PF 34. The Town Council will provide a facility for residents to view planning applications and plans relating to properties/developments within the Town.

Park Hall

- PF 35. The Town Council will promote and market the use of Park Hall as a function room in order to:
- Provide a facility at a competitive hire charge for use by residents.
 - Attract business to the Town.
 - Maximise income generation through the hire.

Christmas Carnival and Food and Drink Festival

- PF 36. The Town Council will promote and provide an annual Christmas Carnival event in conjunction with the Christmas Light switch-on.
- PF 37. The Town Council will promote and assist local groups with the annual Christmas Lights switch-on held at Southdown and Batford.
- PF 38. The Town Council will provide an annual Food and Drink Festival in conjunction with the Town's Food and Drink retailers in association with the Farmers Market and, at this time, in collaboration with the District Council.

Rothamsted Research

- PF 39. The Town Council is committed to supporting the development of Rothamsted Research, the largest agricultural research centre in the UK and a strategic employer in the Town.

London Luton Airport

- PF 40. The Town Council will seek to influence the expansion and operations of the airport reflecting the concerns and aspirations of residents. Through direct representations and working with the District and County Council's representatives on the London Luton Airport Consultative Committee, the Council's focus will be the impact of aircraft noise, night flights and pressures on the capacity of surface transport.

Harpenden Memorial Hospital

- PF 41. The Town Council is committed to seeking solutions to retain the Memorial Hospital as a local health and wellbeing facility.

Development of Local Government

- PF 42. The Town Council recognises there is continuing change in Local Government processes and powers. It will investigate enthusiastically any opportunities that the Localism Act may have for Harpenden.
- PF 43. As the first tier of local government, the Town Council will pursue the extension of its powers, to allow for the delivery of services and activities which can be best dealt with at a local level. The Town Council will seek to work in partnership with other Councils in order to achieve this objective being mindful not to disadvantage local residents and avoid double taxation i.e. incurring local costs to deliver services currently funded through the income of the District Council, County Council or the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel
- PF 44. The Town Council will work towards obtaining Quality Gold in the Local Council Award Scheme.
- PF 45. The Town Council will ensure that its procedures provide the environment for effective decision making on all activities of the Council and can respond to new initiatives and legislation introduced by the Government.
- PF 46. The Town Council will always take a position representing the best interests of residents and the broader community the Council, as a corporate body, will seek an equal working partnership with all other agencies without compromising the values and ambitions of the Council.
- PF 47. The Town Council will continue to lobby the County Council's Highways Services, to address shortcomings and make improvements to roads in the Town.
- PF 48. The Town Council will consider all consultation documents upon which it is invited to comment and seek a consensus amongst elected Members, inviting views of residents, as to the best response. In particular the Council will:
- Seek to protect the Green Belt around the Town.
 - Seek to influence plans to expand Luton Airport, reflecting the concerns and aspirations of residents.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Commons and Green Spaces

- EC 1. The Town Council recognises that the commons and green spaces will come to have increasing importance to Harpenden's residents and to local wildlife as demographic and development pressures increase in the years ahead. As such the Council is committed to promoting sustainable policies that strive to improve and make a safer environment for the community and visitors of Harpenden. These will meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations.

- EC 2. The Town Council will protect, preserve and maintain the Common and Green Spaces in the Town to the highest standards, the purpose of which is:
- To provide an amenity open space that can be enjoyed by the community and visitors for 'air and exercise', and ensure the Common is a living part of our community.
 - To preserve the character of the Common.
 - To implement as far as possible, maintenance and planting programmes.
 - To maintain public footpaths.
 - To sustain and where possible enhance the ecological value of the Common and other important habitats.
- EC 3. The Town Council will seek grant funding and subsidies from national and local organisations as appropriate and necessary, such as Groundwork Hertfordshire, DEFRA, the Forestry Commission, Natural England and other sources.
- EC 4. The Town Council will consider the management of all parks and green spaces within the parish boundary and will recommend for Council's deliberation the appropriate acquisition of green space, with management proposals and uses, for consideration.
- EC 5. The Town Council is committed to improving the quality of the environment within the commons and green spaces. Drawing on key features of the Harpenden Common Management Plan the Environment Committee an Action Tracker and associated Monitoring Report will be presented to each committee. The Action Tracker will detail activities, and monitor progress.
- EC 6. The Town Council will develop a tree policy to manage trees effectively in the Town identifying good maintenance and management practices.
- EC 7. The Town Council will investigate options and locations to provide a secure storage area for small items of plant, machinery and equipment, plus the Council's vehicle and trailer, by the end of the next financial year.

Southdown Ponds

- EC 8. The Town Council will manage the Ponds and surrounding area and implement maintenance and planting programmes that will promote a sustainable habitat for wildlife and biodiversity in the area.

Allotments

- EC 9. The Town Council wants to promote the widest possible use of allotments by residents. In so doing it will:
- Facilitate, assist and provide support for allotment holders.
 - Strengthen links and work in partnership with the Allotment Clubs (South Harpenden Allotment and Garden Society – SHAGS and East Harpenden Gardening Club – EHGC) in such ways as to

improve site security, ensuring sites are maintained to a high standard and support Allotment Competitions.

- Work with the Allotment organisations to keep vacant plots tidy and the surrounding areas in good order to attract new plot holders.
- Continue to lobby the District Council on the devolvement on the two allotment sites currently leased to the Town Council.
- To register all allotment sites as Statutory Allotment Land upon the transfer of all sites.

Lydekker Park and Car Park

- EC 10. The Town Council will develop a Management Plan.
- EC 11. The Town Council will maintain and manage Lydekker Park and Car Park to a high standard.
- EC 12. The Town Council will provide and promote the use of the area as a formal Park and accessible open space and look to increase awareness of its location.
- EC 13. The Town Council will manage the Pond and surrounding area and implement maintenance and planting programmes.
- EC 14. The Town Council will promote and organise the Teddy Bears' Picnic in order to make use of the facilities.

Recreation and Play Areas (Porters Hill, Marquis Lane, Westfield)

- EC 15. The Town Council will maintain and manage all playground areas and associated play equipment to a high standard. It will ensure all equipment meets the regulatory health and safety requirements and is regularly inspected.
- EC 16. Through consultation with residents groups and other interested organisations explore opportunities to improve or develop leisure and recreation at these parks and open spaces.
- EC 17. The Town Council will seek to continue to work in partnership local residents groups to achieve the best recreational and leisure facilities at Council owned Recreation and Play Areas for the benefit of local residents.

Nickey Line

- EC 18. The Town Council will maintain and manage the cycle and footpath in a manner which is sustainable and promotes wildlife and biodiversity, subject to funding and agreement by the District Council.
- EC 19. The Town Council will promote awareness of the Nickey Line, its heritage and its use as a cycle way and footpath.

Batford Spring Nature Reserve

- EC 20. The Town Council will maintain and manage the Local Nature Reserve working in partnership with the Batford Springs Volunteers, in line with an agreed Management Plan.
- EC 21. The Town Council will seek to redevelop the former site of the Batford Springs HQ, providing a resource for community use and storage associated with the Local Nature Reserve.
- EC 22. The Town Council will seek to incorporate Marquis Lane Meadow into the Nature Reserve, working with the Volunteers to understand and promote options ensuring the Meadow is accessible to the public for leisure and recreational use.

Harpenden in Bloom

- EC 23. The Town Council will enhance the appearance of the Town throughout the year with the intention of promoting civic pride, engaging the community and enhancing the environment through colourful floral displays.
- EC 24. The Town Council will seek further opportunities to provide floral displays and explore funding from local sponsors to support new initiatives.

Public Toilets

- EC 25. The Town Council will continue to provide and maintain the public conveniences in Leyton Road to a high standard, ensuring compliance with Health and Safety Regulations.
- EC 26. The Town Council will continue to lobby the District Council to provide Public Toilets in Rothamsted Park.

Town Gateways

- EC 27. The Town Council will maintain the Gateways to the Town; Harpenden Road, Luton Road, Lower Luton Road, Redbourn Lane; identifying distinctive and attractive features. It will also provide information such as the Town Twinning, Fairtrade and safety messages.
- EC 28. The Town Council will provide planting to enhance the impact at the gateways to the Town.

Tourism

- EC 29. The Town Council will promote the Town as a place to visit and enjoy providing information for visitors and residents through published material as well as through the Information Point.

Farmers' Market *and* Town Events

- EC 30. The Town Council will operate a monthly Farmers Market in the High Street to provide an enjoyable and varied shopping experience to attract visitors to the Town.

- EC 31. The Town Council will monitor the success of the monthly Farmers Market and consider ways of making the event more accessible, interesting and attractive to residents and visitors. In so doing the Council will consult with local residents, retailers and traders.
- EC 32. The Town Council will seek to provide a series of events in the Town, which might be associated with National celebrations, either in partnership with other organisations or independently.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- PL 1. The Town Council will be responsive to community aspirations.
- PL 2. The Town Council will promote good design and sustainable development in all aspects of planning and development management in Harpenden. The Town Council note Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- PL 3. The Town Council will encourage all future developments to be sustainable within the Harpenden environment and the surrounding community including an appropriate mix of uses and support for local facilities and transport networks.
- PL 4. The Town Council will provide access for residents to the St Albans District Council online planning database to view planning applications.
- PL 5. The Town Council will provide an efficient and informed service to residents on the status of all applications to the District Council and will offer impartial advice on all planning matters.
- PL 6. The Town Council will provide an open forum for residents to come and speak for or against applications at Town Council Planning meetings, ensuring responses are forwarded to the District Council within the designated consultation periods.
- PL 7. The Town Council will monitor all Planning Appeals, Tree Application Licences and Decisions.
- PL 8. The Town Council will represent the Town at the St Albans District Council Planning (Development Control) North Committee.
- PL 9. The Town Council will continue the development of a Plans database, which will assist with the efficiency of the planning service.
- PL 10. The Town Council will benchmark their recommendation performance against decisions taken by St Albans District Council and explore the opportunity for greater delegated function in the decision making process.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

- SP 1. The Town Council will monitor closely the preparation of policies of the Government, Local Enterprise Partnership, District and County Councils and respond accordingly.

- SP 2. The Town Council will seek to protect the interests of the Town and its distinctiveness through vigorous engagement with the District Council's Strategic and Detailed Local Plan making initiative.
- SP 3. The Town Council will work with partners and local groups to reinforce its participation in the plan making process, identify implications for the Town and raise residents' awareness.
- SP 4. The Town Council will consider and promulgate supplementary planning policies for Harpenden, including potentially a Neighbourhood Plan, and ensure that the aspirations of our community are reflected as planning policies.
- SP 5. The Town Council will defend and promote the character of the Town and its Conservation Area as a unique community within the setting of the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- SP 6. The Town Council will work within parameters of a strategy for the Town's environment.
- SP 7. The Town Council will oppose inappropriate developments.
- SP 8. The Town Council will promote the provision of Affordable, Social Rented Needs and Flexi Care, Assisted Living Accommodation.
- SP 9. The Town Council will respond to consultations (e.g. Government Planning Policy Guidance and local proposals relating to the Green Belt around the Town).

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Employment Policies and Procedures

- HR 1. The Town Council values its staff and will review regularly all Employment Policies and Procedures and ensure that they are current with all legislative requirements, are timely and appropriate.
- HR 2. The Town Council will review annually its staffing levels and ensure that these are appropriate to the level of function and duty required of the Council's administration.
- HR 3. The Town Council will give sympathetic consideration where employees have genuine medical problems and will provide support and security of employment during such periods of absence. However, the Town Council needs and expects regular attendance from all employees for the delivery of services to the community and visitors and will monitor absences.

Equality and Diversity Policy

- HR 4. The Town Council will maintain an Equality and Diversity Policy which will regularly be reviewed.

Employee Development

HR 5. The Town Council is committed to providing continual professional development for all its employees and to this end, through the Staff Appraisal process will prepare an annual workforce training and skills improvement schedule.

HR 6. All staff will have an annual appraisal.

Health and Safety

HR 7. The Town Council will maintain a Health and Safety Policy and Accident Reporting Procedure. These documents will be reviewed and updated regularly.