



# Chard Town Council

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## Shaping Our Future



## A 3 Year Council plan 2012 - 2015

# **Chard Town Council**

## **Shaping our Future**

### **Foreword by Sarah Robson – Town Clerk**

In May 2011 following an election a new Town Council came into being. Of the 15 members elected to the council, there were 6 new members.

The new council maintained its structure of committees namely; Amenities, Finance & Guildhall and Planning & Highways.

The aims and objectives of the Town Council demonstrate that it will commit to work in an accountable, efficient and effective way for the benefit of the community of the town.

This Council is committed to encouraging and fostering positive working relationships between the council and other organisations and individuals working and living in the community. As a council we are committed to recognising the value of voluntary work within the community and will continue to provide community grants to groups and organisations who meet the required criteria.

The Council through its Amenities Committee will endeavour to work with others to maintain and improve the cleanliness of the town and its open spaces and to try and make Chard a sustainable and environmentally friendly place to live and work.

We are also conscious of the town's unique character and history, and through the Planning & Highways Committee will seek to protect its heritage, whilst encouraging sympathetic development that will enhance the environment and the prosperity of the town.

The Members of the Council who are all volunteers have committed themselves to achieving the aims and objectives set out in this document.

There are many challenges, but I am sure that the Members will meet and resolve these challenges for the benefit of Chard over the next three years in their aim to serve the town to the best of their ability.

## **The Council's vision for Chard**

It will be a desirable place to live work and visit and will have real and accessible transport links, decent housing provision for all, excellent employment and business opportunities and a vibrant community life. It will be clean, green, safe, active and prosperous and a place to be proud of.

## **Our role as a Town Council**

As the elected Council for the town we must work with others and our communities to achieve this plan for Chard.

We will use our resources to deliver improvements wherever possible, and we will help shape policy and influence other policy makers. When necessary we will campaign for the changes and improvements that will make a positive difference in the social, economic and environmental well being of the town.

We will respect each other and value differences that exist between us and within our communities. We will seek to represent the needs, interests and aspirations of the town and its many communities and develop our role as genuine community leaders. We will be the voice of Chard.

In our work we will cherish the unique heritage of our town and endeavour to protect it from unnecessary development and harm. We will embrace positive changes in an increasingly fast changing world and seize the opportunities they present. We will work to shape the future for our town.

We will be a council of which the people of the town can be proud.

## **Our key objectives**

- To ensure that the organisation and finances of the Town Council are efficient, effective, open, transparent and accountable to the Council and the wider public.
- To ensure that planning recommendations are exercised in accordance with the legislative and policy requirement of the Council with due regard for the individuals and communities affected, the economic effects and environmental impacts.
- To ensure the Council plays its full role in promoting the cleanliness and safety of the town and its open spaces.
- To support and strengthen community activities, participation and events.
- Develop protocols for relationships with other local authorities and the role of the town councillor in dealing with issues and individual cases.
- Develop and oversee relationships with outside organisations and partnerships.

## Setting our priorities - Our 3 year plan

The Council will adopt this plan to guide its work for the life of the present Council. The plan highlights the issues that are facing the town and the tasks that we need to undertake to resolve them and make a positive difference.

The Council has set 5 priorities for its work to achieve our objectives and its activities will be geared toward tackling these priorities.

- **To seek ways of devolving influence and control over Chard based facilities and decisions to local organisations including the Town Council**

We will review current levels of activity of local authority functions and propose a series of measures designed to achieve our objectives. This may include local management of public space or taking responsibility for other services. This will reflect the aims of the government's legislation laid down in the Localism Act 2011.

- **To promote cultural, earning and learning opportunities for the people of Chard**

We will support and encourage the projects brought forward by the 'Town Team' that seek to consolidate and build upon the improving performance and prosperity of the town. We will work with South Somerset District Council towards the successful delivery of the regeneration project.

- **To work with partner organisations to ensure the Guildhall is returned to its status as the premier civic/historical building in the town and work to promote it as a community asset.**

- **To improve community facilities, involvement and events**

We will lobby to ensure that local services and access to them are improved and made fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will promote the use of new technologies and new ways of communicating like social networking sites, websites and local press where appropriate.

- **To improve the cleanliness and safety of town and its open spaces**

We will review our approach to local community safety and seek to bring all interested organisations together to agree how we keep the town safe over the next three years. We will maintain and improve the cleanliness of the town and its open spaces.

## **Better services, Better value - Our budget strategy**

The budget is the responsibility of the Council as a whole with delegated responsibility to each of the committees to recommend their budgets.

The Finance & Guildhall Committee will be charged with the task of empowering our committee and staff to manage and spend the budgets, at the same time ensuring proper control and accountability. The Clerk, as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer will be charged with developing adequate controls and overseeing expenditure on a day to day basis in line with the Council's policies.

The key themes of our budget strategy over the life of this Council will be

- Providing Guildhall and Amenity services economically, efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the town and its environment
- Investing in our communities
- Investing in our organisation and maximising its effectiveness
- Providing an effective management team
- Purchasing goods and services locally when economical to do so
- Keeping the level of Council Tax under review

The Headlines of the budget are

### **Improve the economy and environment by**

- Develop a sustainable planting scheme in and around town
- Support the work of the Town Team in regenerating our town centre
- Improve cleanliness for a greener environment

### **Invest in our communities by**

- Assisting with events such as the Christmas Lights switch on and Carnival
- Developing the Community Development Fund to support community projects and initiatives
- Contributing funds towards organisations such as the Museum, Crowshute House and Chard Young People's Centre

### **Investing in our effectiveness by**

- Investing in training and using smarter ways of working
- Improved performance management

## **Managing our Assets by**

- Ensuring the Guildhall is retained as a historic and cultural hub of community life through careful and sensitive management of this Grade II\* listed building
- Regalia – to preserve Chard’s heritage and ensure appropriate and adequate insurance and arrangements for any necessary repairs and maintenance

The Full Council retains its overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of our work and overseeing the work of the committees. The terms of reference for our committees is summarised overleaf;

## **Finance & Guildhall Committee**

The committee meets bi monthly. If the chairperson is unavailable the Deputy Chairperson will chair the meeting.

### **Aim**

To ensure that the organisation and finances of the Town Council are efficient, effective, open and transparent and accountable to the council and the wider public.

Its priority tasks will be to;

- Develop good communication channels for the council.
- Develop and recommend policies and procedures
- Seek ways of developing councillors' skills and knowledge
- Actively continue to promote use of the Guildhall to maximise its potential as a community asset

### **Objectives**

- Develop the budget and propose the annual budget and precept to the Full Council
- Set the policy framework for the committee's work across all areas.
- Review standing orders and financial regulations and make recommendations to Full Council
- Manage budgetary and financial affairs, including reserves and assets
- Allocate spending authority to the council's committees and its officers and agents.
- Develop and recommend procedures and protocols for the smooth running of the council
- Act as the body to resolve grievance and disciplinary matters of staff
- Resolve disputes between councillors and complaints about conduct of council affairs.
- Maximise funding from elsewhere for the Council's projects, by obtaining match funding or income from other sources.
- Develop and support appropriate Tourism projects
- Manage, maintain and enhance opportunities that facilitate continued use of the Guildhall
- Review and monitor the committee's work as listed in the Forward Plan (Appendix 1)

## **Planning & Highways Committee**

The Committee meets monthly

### **Aim:**

To ensure that planning matters are exercised in accordance with the legislative and policy requirements of the council with due regard for the individuals and communities affected, the economic effects, sustainable and environmental impacts. To actively respond and participate in matters of consultation regarding planning and highways issues. To work with SSDC and other authorities and agencies in considering planning policies and applications within the provisions of the Local Plan for Chard and the Chard Regeneration Plan.

### **Objectives**

- Identify development opportunities for brown field sites
- Develop 'statement' protecting heritage of town and its communities
- Develop policies and practical applications to 'green' both existing and proposed developments
- Organise planning training for council members
- Be aware when developing land which would normally absorb run off taking into account the potential effects of climate change
- Give due consideration to the importance of archaeology in sensitive areas
- Review highway and parking issues and make representations to the relevant principal authorities
- Continue to play an active part in considering and proposing appropriate names for new roads



## **Amenities Committee**

The Committee meets quarterly.

**Aim:** To ensure the Town Council plays its full role in promoting the cleanliness, safety and development of the town and its open spaces

It's main priorities are to ensure that the current high standard of community services and facilities which are crucial to the resident's well-being and the future of the town are maintained and to introduce improvements where possible.

### **Objectives:**

- Ensure that the work schedule for the Amenities Team is fit for purpose and is sufficiently pro-active to accommodate required changes
- Identify and procure new land/locations for Leisure/Allotments/Cemetery purposes
- Achieve and exceed where possible the legislative requirements for access to all leisure facilities on all equality and diversity grounds
- Identify the needs of the community and provide suitable services and facilities to meet those needs where possible
- Encourage a consistent take-up of the allotment provision, instilling a strong sense of ownership and pride in allotment holders
- Design and implement improvements to all leisure and horticultural facilities
- Keep under review all existing contracts and business arrangements and to seek new business
- Maintain and improve existing partnership working with external organisations and be open to new ventures
- Review and monitor the committee's work as listed in the Forward Plan (Appendix 2)

## **Conclusion**

This policy sets out the Town Council's vision, aims and objectives for the life of this Council. It provides a framework within which the Council will operate and will be reviewed annually to monitor progress and mark achievements.

We are committed to delivering better results and value for money and will deliver this through the way we work with openness and accountability.

We believe that this document sets out realistic, achievable and desirable targets by us for our town. We will be judged by the results of this plan and are committed to making a positive difference to the quality of life in Chard and taking action to ensure that difference. We will play a lead role in 'Shaping Our Future'

**Working parties**

Each committee shall be empowered to establish whatever working parties it thinks necessary to carry out its tasks. The working parties will be subsidiary to the main committee and will report back to that committee to make any recommendations. It will work on a task and finish basis. They will work within strict terms of reference to be agreed by the members of the committee.

**Joint committees**

If joint committees are established this shall be on a task and finish basis and shall not be standing committees of the Council. In the event of such committees being established there shall be one vote per member with the chair having a casting vote only.

## **Selection of committees**

Committees will be elected at the Annual Meeting.

1. All committees will be subordinate to the Full council and will act within clear terms of reference and delegated authority and budgets set by council and incorporated into the council's standing orders.
2. The democratic scrutiny and overall responsibility rests with the Full Council notwithstanding the legal obligations of the Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer.
3. Committees will be elected at the Annual Council meeting at which time chairs and, if necessary, deputies will be elected.
4. No councillor can be chair of more than one committee.

## **Desired Outcomes**

- To ensure that every Councillor serves at least one committee.
- To ensure that Councillors elected to be chair or deputy chair receive appropriate training

**January**

**Internal Audit-** to review Internal Audit procedures and confirm terms of engagement

**CCTV Policy** – to review protocols for the use of the Guildhall CCTV system

**Guildhall Charges** – Members to set Guildhall hire charges for year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April

**Newsletter** – to review effectiveness and costs to provide Streamline

**March**

**Bad Debts** – to consider making provision for bad debts and consider write offs

**Grant Making Policy and Procedure** – Review 'Grant Making Policy and Procedure' document and a proposed 'Community Development Fund Grant Application Pack

**Treasury Management Policy** - to review internal document

**Community Infrastructure Levy** – review policy and agree priority areas for budget allocation

**May**

**Financial Regulations** – to review internal document

**Standing Orders** – to review internal document

**Direct Debits** – to review and approve the use of variable direct debits

**July**

**Purchasing Delegation Limits & Active Purchasing Policies** – to review internal policy

**Contracts** – to review contracts or agreements with outside contractors, agencies or professional bodies

**Franchise** – to review agreements for bar and café

**September**

**Review of the Annual Return** - to review the comments of the External Auditor

**Financial Risk Assessments** - to review internal document

**Insurance** – to review provisions and terms of policy

**Guildhall Quinquennial Report** – review arrangements and receive update on recommendations

**November**

**Internal Audit** – to receive report and recommendations from Internal Auditor

**Staff** – to review pay, pension and conditions

**Budget** – to approve draft budget for recommendation to Full Council

**Assets** - to review Council's assets and consider if necessary valuations and cost of replacement

**Reserves** – to review Council's reserves to ensure adequate provision

**Play Areas**

| ITEM | TITLE                  | DESCRIPTION   | TIMESCALE | COMPLETED |
|------|------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1    | New play/leisure areas | Purchase/rent additional land for leisure and/or play                   |           |           |
| 2    | Access                 | Ensure access to existing areas suitable for all. Implement or improve  |           |           |
| 3    | Community use          | To ensure existing play areas meet the needs of the community           |           |           |
| 4    | Promote                | Encourage use of areas by all ages                                      |           |           |
| 5    | New areas              | Consider outdoor gyms   |           |           |
| 6    | Improved access        | Design, cost and implement improved access for Bampton Avenue play area |           |           |
| 7    | Improved access        | Review signage in all play areas to ensure inclusivity for all          |           |           |

**Allotments**

| ITEM | TITLE              | DESCRIPTION   | TIMESCALE | COMPLETED |
|------|--------------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1    | New allotment land | Purchase/rent additional land to supplement/replace existing site |           |           |
| 2    | Encourage          | Increase usage and instil pride/ownership of allotment            |           |           |
| 3    | Rent review        | Rents to be reviewed annually                                     |           |           |

## Cemetery

| ITEM | TITLE               | DESCRIPTION   | TIMESCALE | COMPLETED |
|------|---------------------|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1    | Future              | Actively seek additional land for cemetery use      |           |           |
| 2    | Chapel              | Refurbish chapel to encourage more use              |           |           |
| 3    | Low cost memorial   | Consider provision of low cost memorial             |           |           |
| 4    | Flower beds         | Improvements to Memorial Garden & other flower beds |           |           |
| 5    | Ongoing maintenance | Maintain existing high standard                     |           |           |
| 6    | Charges & Fees      | Review charges & fees annually                      |           |           |

## Business

| ITEM | TITLE               | DESCRIPTION  | TIMESCALE          | COMPLETED   |
|------|---------------------|--|--------------------|-------------|
| 1    | Review of Contract  | Complete review and agree contract with District                             | By end Nov 2012    |             |
| 2    | Monitoring          | Implement quarterly monitoring of District Contract                          | By end August 2012 | August 2012 |
| 3    | Contract compliance | Ensure work carried out is in keeping requirements of contract with District | ongoing            |             |
| 4    | New opportunities   | Actively seek new business opportunities                                     |                    |             |
| 5    | South-West in Bloom | Consider entry into South-West in Bloom competition                          |                    |             |



## General

| ITEM | TITLE                  | DESCRIPTION   | TIMESCALE    | COMPLETED      |
|------|------------------------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1    | Gateways               | Review/redesign gateways                                      |              |                |
| 2    | Chard in Bloom         | Continue working with Chard in Bloom and explore new projects |              |                |
| 3    | Horticultural contract | Tendering exercise for supply of plants etc                   | By July 2013 |                |
| 4    | Beacon                 | Consider use and location of beacon                           |              |                |
| 5    | Market                 | Adoption, promotion and operation of Saturday Market          |              | September 2012 |