



Devizes

Town Council

Strategic Business Plan

September 2015 – December 2018

About Devizes Town Council and the Strategic Business Plan

The Strategic Business Plan illustrates how Devizes Town Council will help to create the conditions to support developing Devizes as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

All councils face tough challenges over the next three years but notwithstanding this, Devizes Town Council believes that it must promote and encourage improvements to the economy and environment of Devizes whilst respecting the heritage that is the hallmark of our historic town.

Following public consultation, it is clear that local people value a vibrant, clean and safe town which makes Devizes a highly desirable place in which to live, work and visit. However, Devizes Town Council recognises that it cannot be complacent understanding that many of the “public realm” services, which are currently delivered by Wiltshire Council will be reduced in the face of funding constraints.

As such, one of the key priorities for Devizes Town Council is working with other organisations to create a sustainable framework in which high standard services can continue to be delivered.

This plan is a working document and will be updated annually in January of each year in order to reflect the priorities of the Council following the setting of the budget and future forecast.

Vision, Mission & Objectives

Our Vision

To maintain and improve the character of the town for residents and visitors

Our Mission

To work in partnership with statutory and voluntary bodies, groups, agencies and individuals in order to fulfil its objectives

Objectives

- Promoting and encouraging improvements to the town's environment & economy
- Supporting the delivery of accessible health and fitness opportunities for the community
- Providing high quality, cost effective services that support the Council's Mission
- Ensuring our public services are equally accessible to everyone in the community
- Providing a focus for the cultural and civic traditions which contribute to the unique identity of Devizes

Promoting and encouraging improvements to the town's environment & economy

Planning for the Future

Given that it is becoming increasingly clear that Wiltshire Council will not be able to continue to deliver local services in the way that it has in the past, a key priority for Devizes Town Council is working with other organisations to create a sustainable framework and governance mechanism through which high standard services can continue to be delivered. Work is continuing through the Community Governance Review being undertaken by Wiltshire Council for the merger of Devizes and Roundway Councils to become a single entity.

Devizes Town Council and its neighbouring Parish Councils, Roundway and Bishop Cannings have jointly led on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan to encompass the three parishes. This was successfully adopted through referendum in September 2015. However, there is still work to do to ensure that the plan is deliverable in terms of available housing sites, and also to further plan the environmental and economic development of the town in a controlled way

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Work closely with Roundway Parish Council to develop the consensus already achieved with the ambition of becoming a single council through the Community Governance Review	Devizes and Roundway Joint Governance Committee	From the anticipated formation of the Joint Committee in December 2015 to the ordinary elections in 2017	Successfully achieving the ambition to become a single council and agree a harmonisation of existing services plus a package of additional services and assets devolved and transferred from Wiltshire Council	Negotiation over the terms of asset transfer will be critical to ensure that any new council is not burdened with an unsustainable cost of delivery.
Continue to manage the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure the delivery of the required housing allocations plus continue to develop the green space strategy and economic sustainability	Neighbourhood Plan Joint Steering Group	6 to 12 months	Successful delivery of required housing allocation and development through to adoption of the economic and greenspace strands of the plan.	Officer time Allocated budget & earmarked reserves

Venues

The Town Council is custodian of The Town Hall and Corn Exchange which are significant historic buildings. They are operated as hireable venues in order that they serve a valuable purpose and play a meaningful part in the vibrancy of the town.

The Corn Exchange is run on a commercial basis, whilst the Town Hall has a more community role whereby local not for profit organisations can request a free use.

A recently developed marketing strategy is now operational and the venues will be monitored to establish trends and hopefully increased revenue

Additionally, the Hillworth Park Café is provides a service to the community whilst generating an income to help meet costs. The Café is in the first few months of being operated directly by the Town Council and this operation will be reviewed at the end of summer 2016

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Full deployment of the marketing strategy	Recreation & Properties Committee	3 months	Revenue uplift	Officer time Allocated budget
Review of Hillworth Park Café operation	Recreation & Properties Committee	12 months	Revenue income	Officer Time Assume cost neutral

Waste management

The Town Council currently collects litter from the parks and urban areas in its ownership as such there is a considerable amount of unavoidable waste collected which needs to be disposed of. Waste management contracts are reviewed annually to ensure best value for money, but also to ensure the best environmental outcomes.

It is also recognised that over the next few years there will be increasing challenges resulting from the withdrawal of “Public Realm” services by Wiltshire Council. It is becoming increasingly apparent that if Devizes Town Council wishes its town centre to be of the highest cleanliness, then it will need to consider how this can be achieved.

Managing waste at point of origin is also a priority – if the amount of waste can be reduced then the costs of collection and disposal are reduced delivering positive environmental outcomes.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Continue to seek the best value for waste disposal contracts both financially and environmentally	Admin & Finance Manager	January annually	Price and environmental considerations	Officer time Allocated budget for waste disposal
Consider the future of town centre street cleaning & grounds maintenance and whether this is a service that the Town Council might consider delivering directly	Devizes and Roundway Joint Governance Committee	From December 2015	Decision regarding a package of services and assets that the two councils may wish to deliver jointly as a direct service	Officer time Provisional sum included in draft budgets of £52K as at September 2015
Waste awareness Campaign	Recreation & Properties Committee to lead project for an awareness campaign Delivered in conjunction with “In Bloom”	January 2016	Devizes Town Council to monitor waste collected through waste contract statistics	Officer time

Benchmarking

In partnership with the Devizes Community Area Partnership and Devizes Chamber of Commerce, the Town Council has formed a Steering Group that has undertaken an annual benchmarking exercise of the town centre for the last 4years. This has provided invaluable empirical evidence to target resources for support and improvement. Outcomes have delivered a positive dialogue with town centre businesses and the development of the Sidmouth Street Traders Group.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Continue to undertake the Town Benchmarking Exercise	Devizes Benchmarking Steering Group	Annually Sept to Dec	Number of business confidence surveys and town centre user surveys returned	Officer time Photocopying & Stationery Costs
Annual business reception to share benchmarking report	Devizes Benchmarking Steering Group	Annual ongoing	Number of attendees	Officer time Room
Development of a retailers group to represent local retailers	Devizes Benchmarking Steering Group & Devizes Development Partnership	12 to 18 months	Whether a sustainable group is in place by December 2016	Officer time Room
Develop a stock of resources for communal use	Devizes Benchmarking Steering Group and Retailers group	12 to 18 months	Whether a sustainable stock of resources has been pooled for communal use by December 2016	Officer time Possible storage room

In Bloom

Devizes & Roundway In Bloom is a collaborative partnership between Devizes & Roundway Councils with local community groups and volunteers to engineer a sense of civic pride and ownership of the town. Over the last few years, Devizes has fared well achieving at least Silver Gilt in the regional competition, and on occasions, gold. Most importantly it provides the opportunities to encourage participation and pride in the local environment.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
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Continue to develop the programme locally to increase participation	In Bloom Steering Group	Ongoing	Number of entries into the local scheme	Officer time Allocated budget for presentation evening
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CCTV

Ensuring that people feel safe in their environment and encouraging people and businesses to use the town is very important to the economic and environmental wellbeing of Devizes. The CCTV system helps to support this sense of wellbeing and is currently run under the auspices of the Devizes Development Partnership with the a three year funding commitment from Devizes Town Council which is due to end 31 March 2018

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Review delivery of the CCTV to agree future	Community & Civic Resources Committee with Devizes Development Partnership	January 2017	Decision with regard to future of CCTV and a plan for continued delivery or decommission identifying resources required	Officer time May require future allocated budget

Council Policies

Delivering positive environmental outcomes are enshrined within Council policies to ensure good governance. Documents such as the Environmental Procurement and the Parks & Open Spaces Management Plans set out the environmental parameters for operational activity.

The prestigious Green Flag Award for Hillworth Park requires a high standard of environmental consideration including the promotion of biodiversity which is a duty of local council's to consider.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
All policies have a review date and at review the environmental and economic implications should be considered	Relevant Committees	On review dates	That all policies are regularly reviewed to include any environmental or economic considerations	Officer time

Supporting the delivery of accessible health and fitness opportunities for the community

Delivery of Open Spaces, Recreational, play and sporting facilities

The Town Council delivers a range of facilities that provide opportunities for health and fitness including

Hillworth Park – restored supported by £1.5 million lottery funded grant

Avon Road Playing Field & Play Area

Greens and Crammer including Play Area

Green Lane Recreation Ground including BMX and Skate Park

Town Heritage Gardens – Penny Bank, Albion Place & The Chequers

A programme of improvements in terms of maintenance and delivery continues to take place to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and meeting the needs of the community

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Hillworth Park – Parks for People final draw down	Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk	By 31 March 2016	Receipt of final draw down payment	Officer time
Hillworth Park – events programme	Direct Services Manager	31 December 2015	Successful delivery of programme with increase in audience & Increase in satisfaction	Officer time Allocated events budget
Green Lane Development Project Plan and funding applications	DTC officers & other partners	By 31 March 2016	Completion of development plan with funding bids prepared for submission	Officer time Additional funding will be required in future budgets to be agreed

Allotments

Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in interest by the community in where food is sourced and the opportunity to “grow your own”. Devizes Town Council delivers two allotment sites in the town which represent some 200 plots – one of the sites includes a community building. The popularity of the sites has encouraged neighbouring Roundway Parish Council to also provide a site.

As part of the closer working arrangement, Devizes & Roundway residents may be eligible for any of the sites when plots become available.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Continue to promote interest in allotment holding	DTC & RPC Officers	Ongoing	Full, well maintained allotment sites	Officer time Operational budget for maintenance allocated

Cemetery

Devizes Town Council jointly runs Devizes Cemetery with neighbours, Roundway Parish Council. The Cemetery serves a number of purposes – most obviously as a burial ground, but also as an important resource for family history and a quiet green space providing natural habitats encouraging biodiversity.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Development of the Children’s Burial Area	Joint Burial Committee – delivered by DTC through SLA	12 to 18 months	Completion of the area and in use	Joint resources from Joint Burial Committee Officer time

Leisure Centre

Devizes Town Council makes a revenue contribution to Wiltshire Council in respect of Devizes Leisure Centre as part of a 60 year agreement. On setting up the agreement, Devizes Town Council, over a period of 10 years, contributed £600,000 of sunk costs to the facility. The facility is managed and run by Wiltshire Council

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
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Consideration as to how the Council could achieve greater influence over the operation of the facility	Devizes Town Council	By May 2017	A position statement on the relationship between the Town and Unitary Authority	Officer time
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Providing high quality, cost effective services that support the Council's Vision & Mission

Governance & Financial Management

Devizes Town Council delivers services within a robust and challenging governance and financial management framework. The Council has held Quality Council Status since 2005 and is about to make its submission under the successor scheme – Local Council Award Scheme. These quality marks set the standards of governance and accountability that is expected of a well-run organisation

The Council has an internal auditor who attends quarterly and is examined by an external auditor annually. The Council has not received a qualified audit. Each year the Council reviews its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

Procurement is undertaken within clear guidelines and delegated authority to ensure that best value is achieved – which does not necessarily mean the cheapest

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Local Council Award Scheme	Devizes Town Council	By 31 October 2015	Successful accreditation to Local Council Award Scheme	Officer time

Personnel Practices

Staffing is the single most important resource that the Council deploys – as well as being the most expensive. It is essential, therefore, that the workforce are motivated, versatile, well trained and feel an ownership of the services that they help to deliver.

Good personnel practices support a “can do” ethos whereby staff feel valued and invested in. Appraisals take place twice a year through which expectations, training needs and development opportunities are explored to form a work plan

A number of major changes have recently taken place in terms of personnel, staffing structures and new functions. In order to embed the new arrangements and new staff a full organisation team meeting will be organised to establish values and ethos

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Arrange organisation wide team meeting with external facilitator	Senior Management Team	Early in January 2016	Successful meeting with delivery of values and ethos that all staff sign up to	Officer time Allocated training budget

Budgetary Cycle and Service Delivery

The delivery of an appropriate budget is driven by decisions regarding service delivery – what to deliver and the standard at which it should be delivered. As already indicated, given that it is becoming increasingly clear that Wiltshire Council will not be able to continue to deliver local services in the way that it has in the past, a key priority for Devizes Town Council is working with other organisations to create a sustainable framework and governance mechanism through which high standard services can continue to be delivered.

Decisions will be required on what services and assets are priorities for the town in order to inform the process of negotiating any transfer of assets or devolution of services

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Agreement of priorities with regard to assets to be transferred and services devolved from the unitary authority	Devizes Town Council & Roundway Parish Council	From December 2015	Decision regarding a package of services and assets that the two councils may wish to deliver jointly as a direct service	Officer time May require additional funding dependent on the outcomes

Ensuring our public services are equally accessible to everyone in the community

Barriers to access are not just physical – they can be manifest in many forms. Lack of Information, financial barriers, cultural barriers for example.

The Council has a policy on equality of opportunity which identifies the different ways in which the Council will seek to achieve this priority.

Most Council services are free at the point of use including the parks and open spaces, cemetery and play areas. Where services are chargeable (venues, sports pitches, burial plots) review of fees and charges takes place on an annual basis to ensure that local services can be accessed by local people.

All Council buildings are DDP compliant with access lifts and disabled toilets provided in both the Town Hall and Corn Exchange as well a Changing Places facility in the Park Centre.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
In the event new build takes place at Green Lane, this will comply with Approved Document M – Access to and Use of Buildings	Recreation & Properties Committee	Should a successful plan be brought to delivery 12 months to 3 years	Delivery of an accessible building that complies with Approved Document M	Officer time Funding for this project will involve a number of partners
Review The Messenger Town Council Newsletter in terms of accessibility – content, typeface and format	Devizes Town Council & Roundway Parish Council	6 to 12 months	A fully accessible Newsletter delivered in a range of media including hard copy and electronic	Officer time

Providing a focus for the cultural and civic traditions which contribute to the unique identity of Devizes

Civic Traditions and Events

The Town Council is proud of its heritage and civic traditions and seeks to ensure that these traditions are continued. The Mayor's inaugural service and Remembrance Sunday are the two main occasions when the Council processes to church in its finery. Mayor Making, Civic Awards which recognises local unsung heroes, and the Mayor's Carol Concert are all traditional annual events which are enjoyed by the community. The Insignia and Plate are displayed in the Town Hall and add to the spectacle of civic events

The Mayor's Officer has traditionally had the dual role of Town Crier, however, work commitments make it difficult for the Town Crier role to be fulfilled.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Explore opportunities to split the role and recruit new Town Crier	Personnel & Civic Administrator	6 to 12 months	Successful solution to provide a Town Crier	Officer time Budget from civic events to cover alterations to uniform

Festivals

Devizes has a rich tradition of outdoor and indoor arts and entertainment – much of which is free at the point of use. The Arts Festival takes place during the month of June to which the Town Council gives significant support by way of fee use of both the Town Hall and the Corn Exchange. The Devizes Eisteddfod, likewise, receives free use of venues, as does the Food Festival. The Devizes International Street Festival and Carnival is a three week extravaganza of free outdoor events run by Devizes Outdoor Celebratory Arts with financial support from the Town Council. DOCA also supports the Town Council in delivering the annual Christmas Festival which culminates in the Christmas Lights being switched on by Father Christmas. Not only do these events provide community entertainment but also have an economic impact on the town.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Establish the value of events by increase in footfall in the town as a result of the festival events	Community & Civic resources Committee	Annual programme	Increased footfall in the town measured by each event through footfall counting	Officer and volunteer time

			techniques used in benchmarking	
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The Built Heritage

Devizes Town Council has a role as the custodian of heritage owning and managing listed buildings and monuments. The Town Hall, Corn Exchange, Estcourt Fountain, Market Cross and War Memorial are all listed buildings and monuments. In addition the town heritage gardens of the Chequers, Penny Bank and Albion Place are special places.

The Town Council is committed to keeping all of these precious assets in good order for future generations and programmes of condition surveys and maintenance are in place.

Albion Place was recently the subject of a major restoration which has lifted the area from a rather dark corner to a light bright open area offering opportunities for performance space as well as community events. Plans are in place to progress work on the Chequers Garden which is funded but requires officer resource to deliver.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Planting of Tree in Albion Place	Albion Place & Chequers Working Party	November 2015	Successful planting event and maintenance	Officer time Funding for tree in original budget
Restoration of The Chequers Garden	Albion Place & Chequers Working Party	12 to 18 months	Successful plan and deliver of restoration	Officer time Budget allocated

Twinning

The Town of Devizes is twinned with Mayenne in France, Waiblingen in Germany, Tornio in Finland and Oamaru in New Zealand.

Mayenne and Waiblingen are a joint twin with Devizes and every three years in rotation towns take turns to host a “Meeting of Citizens”. Tornio and Devizes have reciprocal visits on a biennial basis.

Hosting a visit is a substantial project, however the visits, which are staged over a weekend, are developed to ensure that they are true community events in which local people can take part – it is not limited to those involved directly in the twinning organisations. The Town Council support the Twinning Association in delivering an event which is a celebration of Devizes including events in the Market Place, Corn Exchange, Green, Wyvern Club and Hillworth Park. A festival built around the relationships with other towns for all to enjoy.

What Next	By Whom	When	Measured By	Resources required from the Town Council
Promote Twinning events more effectively for increased participation.	Community & Civic Resources Committee & District Twinning Association	Cycle of twinning visits	Increased footfall in the town measured by each event through footfall counting techniques used in benchmarking	Officer time
Explore European Funding opportunities	Senior Management Team	Immediately to ensure compliance with any deadlines	Successful funding bid	Officer time Budget allocation

Appended to this Strategic Business Plan is the draft 2016/17 estimates with a further two year forecast

In future this Strategic Business Plan will be reviewed annually in January of each year, following the setting of the budget in December.