



Stowmarket Town Council

Corporate Plan 2017 to 2022

Date updated:	May 2017
Date of next review:	May 2018

Contents

	Page Nos
Background	
1 Introduction	3
2 Our Mission, Vision and Values	4
3 Our Main Priorities for the Town	5
4 Our Town Council	6
5 Our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats	7
Service Priorities	
6 Our Key Priorities	8
7 Our Community Objectives	9
8 Our Economic Objectives	10
9 Our Environmental Objectives	11
Internal Capacity	
10 Our Financial Objectives	12
11 Our Performance Objectives	13
12 Audit and Governance Objectives	14
Local Government Roles	
13 Our Roles	15
14 Our Contact Details	16

Introduction

Town Mayor Elect – Councillor Dave Muller

During recent times, Members and staff of Stowmarket Town Council have been able to deliver and facilitate some positive outcomes that have helped to make Stowmarket an even better, and more attractive place, to live, work and visit. The Town Council takes great pride in the difference it is able to make to everyday lives by working with local people to deliver projects and services, which are of benefit to the whole of the community.

The operation of the Town Council and the delivery of services are brought about by proper planning. This is why the development of a new Corporate Plan is essential in taking us through the next five years from 2017 to 2022. The document seeks to provide a clear insight into the vision and priorities of the Town Council which we hope local stakeholders and residents will find informative. It will also enable Members and staff, all of whom have a great understanding as well as love of the town, to build upon past successes by working for and on behalf of the people of Stowmarket, as we face the challenges, growth and expected prosperity of the years that lie ahead.

Councillor D. Muller

Town Mayor Elect of Stowmarket 2017/18

Town Clerk – David Blackburn

Stowmarket is one of the fastest growing market towns within the country with many new people coming to live here each year. Such rapid expansion provides a wide range of new opportunities and challenges. Stowmarket Town Council believes that it has an important role to play as the voice of local people in seeking to influence the changes that are taking place. We are proud of our town and we wish to see a range of economic, environmental and social initiatives alongside the large scale residential development that is taking place. It is the view of the Town Council, that only through a balanced approach to growth, we can develop a sustainable town that has appropriate infrastructure and amenities for those who live and work here.

At an operational level, we value our role in working with local groups, bodies and organisations, local businesses and local people. The Town Council prides itself in being at the heart of the local community and doing things that matter to local people – be this providing wonderful hanging baskets in the town centre, operating the highly successful Regal Theatre or celebrating local success through the prestigious Town Awards. The production of this Corporate Plan seeks to provide greater transparency and accountability about what we do. It has been developed in consultation with local stakeholders and local people and we hope that readers of the document will find it useful.

David Blackburn

Town Clerk

Mission Statement

To serve the people of Stowmarket

Our Vision

To work with local organisations and local people to create a clean, safe, healthy and prosperous town

Our Values

- We will promote strong corporate governance, safeguarding public funds and deploying them in an effective way on behalf of the local community
- We will demonstrate high standards of conduct and treat people fairly and with respect
- We will be approachable and willing to help people seek solutions to the issues that concern them, working for the greater good of the town
- We will work positively with partners and local communities to develop the town's services and amenities
- We will be an innovative and forward-thinking organisation that supports positive change in the town

Our Main Priorities for the Town

- 1. Encouraging Economic Development:** We believe that the town requires a clearer offer and identity so that we encourage a grouping of businesses working in related sectors and/or use connections with other commercial centres in, and around, the A14 corridor to stimulate growth. We believe that there is a need to support new and existing businesses in the town by encouraging investment in education, training and skills. We have some excellent employers in the town and we believe that by building stronger working relationships with them, we can develop a prosperous local economy. The town centre is likely to come under increasing pressure from the retail revolution and we need to work with partners to support it in the face of internet shopping and ensure that it evolves during the 21st century so that it is relevant and valued by the local community.
- 2. Creating a Sustainable Community:** Stowmarket is a growing town of nearly 20,000 people. With growth, comes greater public needs and expectations that appropriate infrastructure and amenities will be provided in the town. We believe that there is a need to plan the town's future through a Place Shaping initiative. In particular, alongside major housing development, we wish to see the provision of high quality leisure and entertainment facilities. This requires higher ambitions as we work with others to provide "flagship" projects in the town that will change perceptions of Stowmarket.
- 3. Providing Opportunities for Everyone:** We believe that we have an important role to play in working to increase civic and community pride in Stowmarket so that current and new residents identify with the town and its amenities and choose to work, shop and play locally. We believe that there should be something for everyone in the town regardless of their age, so that people do not become isolated, marginalised or disaffected. We have some excellent people in the town who volunteer to help others. We believe that they deserve and recognition for their endeavours.
- 4. Safeguarding the Environment:** We believe that we have a role to play in influencing appropriate development of the built environment and preservation of the natural environment, insofar as the two are reconcilable. We believe that we need to create greater enthusiasm within the community to participate in environmental projects that help to create a clean and green town. We believe that there are opportunities for community groups and local businesses to become more involved in work that will safeguard the natural environment. We also believe that the statutory bodies, land owners and developers working in the town have a joint responsibility to find ways to work collaboratively to ensure that the town continues to be an attractive place to live and work.

Our Town Council

Stowmarket Town Council comprises 16 elected Councillors who represent the local community without receiving any payment for performing their duties. Elections to the Town Council are held every four years with the next full Council elections due to be held in May 2019. Councillors represent four wards. Although the Town Councillors represent a number of different political views, there is a joint recognition that Town Councillors have an over-riding duty to serve the best interests of the town as a whole. The fact that all Town Councillors live within or close to the town means that Town Councillors have a good grasp of local issues at “grassroots level” which helps them address local issues on behalf of local residents. Therefore, debates and voting at Town Council meetings are rarely conducted on political lines.

The strategic direction of the Town Council is determined by the full Council which meets once a month. They are chaired by the Town Mayor. Key operational decisions are taken by the Service Delivery Committee and planning issues are dealt with by the Planning, Consultation and Strategy Committee. The Audit & Governance Committee oversees governance and internal control arrangements and the Personnel Committee oversees staffing issues. The Business Improvement Committee promotes innovation and efficiency within the Town Council. All Council, committee and sub-committee meetings are open to the public. In addition, the Town Council appoints panels and task and finish groups, from time to time, to fulfil specific purposes.

The Town Council has approximately 15 full-time members of staff, with six of these being employed within the Council’s Operations Team. It also has approximately 20 part-time staff who are mostly employed as box office attendants, cleaners and keyholders. The Town Clerk has overall responsibility for the management and performance of the organisation within the strategic and policy framework determined by the full Council.

The Town Council prepares an Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement which are subject to external audit each year. The external auditor is appointed by the government. The Town Council also engages an internal auditor who conducts two interim audits and a final audit inspection each year. Therefore, there is independent scrutiny of the Town Council’s financial and governance arrangements. Local electors have the right, upon request, to inspect the Town Council’s accounts. They may also submit questions to meetings of the full Council and seek information either, informally, or more formally through the Council’s customer comments procedure or in accordance with the provisions contained within the Freedom of Information Act.

The Town Council works with a large number of stakeholders across the town. The breadth of engagement extends from discussions with other tiers of local government and statutory agencies over place-shaping and infrastructure arrangements, to advocacy on behalf of individual members of the community in helping them to access the support that they require.

Our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Accessibility: The Town Council prides itself on being the local and friendly face of local government seeking, wherever possible, to help local people</p> <p>Business Continuity: The Town Council has legal powers to act and is a corporate body providing confidence for partners in terms of future planning</p> <p>Expertise: Councillors and staff possess an excellent range of skills and experience</p> <p>Focus upon Action: Managers focus upon finding positive solutions to problems</p> <p>Internal Controls: Strong corporate governance arrangements are in place</p> <p>Leadership: Councillors and senior managers are committed to making the Town Council a progressive organisation that is ambitious to serve the local community</p> <p>Money: Effective financial management arrangements are in place to plan and manage corporate resources</p> <p>Service Provision: The Town Council has a growing reputation for providing good services through the provision of the Regal Theatre, Community Centre, community events, civic events, town centre attractions and events</p>	<p>Building Consensus: Achieving a sense of common purpose between 16 elected Councillors from different political backgrounds may not always be possible</p> <p>Public Relations: The opportunities to promote the successes of the Town Council in the local media are not always fulfilled</p> <p>Resilience: The Town Council has a small number of key staff and their absence for any prolonged period could de-stabilise the organisation, reduce its capacity and inhibit its performance</p> <p>Starting Point: Stowmarket has traditionally been a small market town, and consequently, the size of its town centre, local infrastructure and business community reflect that past rather than its future requirements</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Community Engagement: Positive relationship building with neighbourhoods and a wider group of local stakeholders could provide access to additional capacity that may develop the town and its communities in the future</p> <p>General Power of Competence: The Town Council may rely in the future upon this general power to do anything that serves the local community rather than relying upon traditional legislative powers which could restrict what it could do</p> <p>Growth of Town: The expansion of Stowmarket will increase its status and profile providing greater opportunities for attracting business enterprise and the economic regeneration of the town</p> <p>Organisational Development: The willingness of the Town Council to work with others and be innovative in its approach, provides opportunities for improving our contribution to town life which may include the development of new relationships and the delivery of new services</p>	<p>External Risks: Changes to public sector funding arrangements threaten the future effectiveness of the Town Council in future years</p> <p>Future Sustainability: The desire to do more and take over services traditionally provided by others may over-stretch the Town Council if they become an ongoing commitment</p> <p>Local Press Coverage: The requirements for reporters to provide headline stories in the local press means that press coverage may sometimes be inaccurate and unsupportive of the town</p> <p>Reductions in Funding: The District and County Council are likely to have fewer resources to support the provision of amenities and services in Stowmarket.</p> <p>Ineffective Partnership Arrangements: Partnerships with other bodies fail to deliver positive outcomes for the local community because of differing objectives and priorities of partner organisations.</p>

Our Key Priorities

	<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How will it be implemented?</i>
KP1	<i>To undertake engagement at a strategic level with the Planning Authority and key stakeholders over place shaping for Stowmarket</i>	<i>Engage with key stakeholders over place-shaping, lobby for appropriate use of Section 106 funding and the Community Infrastructure Levy and work with partners to provide a first class “flagship” sports facility in Stowmarket.</i>
KP2	<i>To deliver a project that will increase the capacity of the Regal Theatre and enhance its frontage</i>	<i>Work with partners to re-develop the Regal Theatre to provide a first class entertainment venue and improve the urban design of the nearby area to form an attractive gateway to the town centre.</i>
KP3	<i>To support the promotion of the town through improved identity, branding and provision of attractions</i>	<i>Work with partners to develop an attractive street scene in the town centre that supports local businesses and attractions such as the Museum of East Anglian Life and the John Peel Centre for Creative Arts.</i>
KP4	<i>To engage more effectively with local communities and local businesses</i>	<i>Continue to improve the Town Council’s profile in the town through positive communications with the local community and by working with local groups and businesses.</i>
KP5	<i>To provide a balanced portfolio of services that recognises the needs of all demographic groups</i>	<i>Ensure that a ‘cradle to the grave’ approach is adopted in providing services to all demographic groups within the town.</i>

Our Community Objectives

	What is the objective?	How will it be implemented?
CO1	<i>To promote civic pride and community development in the town</i>	<i>Organise a range of civic events including Remembrance, the Civic Service, and also First World War commemorative events. Organise a range of community events such as the Stowmarket Beach Party/Stowmarket Golden Mile and StowFiesta annually and the Stowmarket Town Awards on a biennial (every second year) basis.</i>
CO2	<i>To support community safety and safer neighbourhoods, working in partnership with the Police and other agencies</i>	<i>Engage with the Police over Crime and Disorder issues in the town and coordinate arrangements with partners for CCTV coverage in the town.</i>
CO3	<i>To work with neighbourhood groups and local people to tackle their problems involving, as appropriate, lobbying of government bodies and other agencies</i>	<i>Offer grant funding to local clubs and societies, community and environmental projects through the annual grants round and StowFund.</i>
CO4	<i>To provide community assets and services in the town, that are not provided by the private sector and invest in their delivery so that they meet the expectations of our customers</i>	<i>Manage and operate the Regal Theatre, the Stowmarket Community Centre and Milton House and invest in their development.</i>
CO5	<i>To promote the health, safety and well-being of local residents and support lifelong learning opportunities for all sectors of the local community, including marginalised groups</i>	<i>Support the work of health agencies in the town and disability groups.</i>

Our Economic Objectives

	<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How will it be implemented?</i>
EC1	<i>To support the town centre</i>	<p><i>Offer support to the town centre and promote the town's market and street trading to increase the appeal of the town centre including the provision of town centre Wi-Fi.</i></p> <p><i>Coordinate town centre events such as the Christmas Lights Switch-On and Christmas Market Fayre annually</i></p> <p><i>Take effective measures to improve the street scene in the town centre such as the display of hanging baskets and provision of planters, maintenance of street furniture etc.</i></p>
EC2	<i>To lobby for economic development in the town</i>	<i>Lobby for, and support, inward investment into the town.</i>
EC3	<i>To lobby for appropriate improvements to highways and local infrastructure</i>	<p><i>Host meetings of the Stowmarket & District Road Safety Committee and liaise with the Highways Authority and Police regarding traffic management and road safety issues</i></p> <p><i>Lobby service providers to maintain effective bus and rail services locally.</i></p>
EC4	<i>To encourage training and skills development for local people</i>	<i>Lobby for improved access to education, training and skills development in the town</i>
EC5	<i>To participate in collaborative working with stakeholders on measures that promote the town and its attractions</i>	<i>Engage with local business networks and develop positive relationships with major local employers.</i>

Our Environmental Objectives

	What is the objective?	How will it be implemented?
EN1	<i>To lobby for appropriate spatial development of the town and make representations on planning proposals that balance the need for development with the need to apply reasonable conditions upon such development</i>	<i>Maintain under review proposals for new housing developments and seek the integration of environmental landscaping within all new residential developments.</i>
EN2	<i>To contribute positively towards achieving a clean town environment and encourage recycling within the town</i>	<i>Undertake daily litter picks of the Recreation Ground and weekly litter picks of prescribed routes in liaison with Mid-Suffolk District Council. Also lead and coordinate a community litter picking project in liaison with local stakeholders.</i> <i>Ensure that opportunities are taken within the Operations Team to recycle materials and ensure that all Town Council waste is sorted and minimise the amount of waste that goes to landfill sites.</i>
EN3	<i>To support enhancements to the natural environment and wildlife habitats</i>	<i>Develop natural habitats in the town such as the old cemetery, River Gipping Corridor, Pikes Meadow etc.</i>
EN4	<i>To undertake the maintenance of open spaces, flower borders and hanging baskets in the town</i>	<i>Maintain land owned by the Town Council and open spaces maintained under contract with other bodies.</i> <i>Develop working with other commercial and local bodies to improve the natural landscape within the town particularly with respect to high profile locations and the gateways to the town with priorities to be agreed with stakeholders</i>
EN5	<i>To support the work of local environmental groups and their contributions to making Stowmarket a clean, green and sustainable town</i>	<i>Host meetings of the Stowmarket Environment Forum and the Pickerel Project and help them seek access to resources.</i>

Our Financial Objectives

	<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How will it be implemented?</i>
FN1	<i>To ensure that the preparation of the Annual Budget is robust and effective budgetary control arrangements are in place</i>	<p><i>The Budget shall provide adequate resources for the forthcoming year to deliver the Council's operations and services, provide for capital and grant funding and contribute to reserves as necessary.</i></p> <p><i>The Budget shall be monitored throughout the year by the Council and corrective measures shall be undertaken to ensure that net expenditure is effectively managed and controlled.</i></p>
FN2	<i>To implement a coherent medium term financial strategy</i>	<i>In approving the budget each year, the Council shall focus upon the next financial year and also the following 5 financial years as part of its medium term financial strategy.</i>
FN3	<i>To manage the Council's reserves</i>	<p><i>The Town Council shall ensure that its general reserves are adequate but not excessive in allowing the Town Council to deal with any random shocks that affect the base budget in any one year.</i></p> <p><i>The Town Council shall maintain a number of designated reserves (or earmarked funds) for specific future commitments.</i></p>
FN4	<i>To provide financial support to other bodies</i>	<i>The Town Council may, subject to its financial position, provide financial support to local bodies that work for the benefit of the town.</i>
FN5	<i>To ensure that we consolidate and maintain our asset portfolio unless there is a strong business case presented to accept an asset transfer</i>	<p><i>The Town Council confirms that its headquarters in the medium to long term shall be Milton House as long as this remains viable in achieving a mix of private and public sector tenants.</i></p> <p><i>The acceptance of the transfer of assets to the Town Council should be avoided unless a compelling case is presented, that this is in the best interest of the local community and provides a sustainable arrangement.</i></p>

Our Performance Objectives

	<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How will it be implemented?</i>
PF1	<i>To publish an Annual Report on the Town Council's performance</i>	<i>The Town Council will report in plain English what it has done each year for the local community within its Annual Report.</i>
PF2	<i>To engage positively with the local community and respond in a timely manner to customer comments</i>	<i>All customers who contact the Town Council shall receive a response, where requested, by phone, e-mail or in person as determined most appropriate by the Council having regard to the views expressed by the customer.</i> <i>A customer comments procedure shall be in place to consider positive feedback and complaints received from the public.</i>
PF3	<i>To ensure that all our property is open and accessible to the public in accordance with the advertised opening times</i>	<i>Duty rosters will be in place for all amenities to ensure that an effective service is provided to the public.</i>
PF4	<i>To be a good organisation to work for</i>	<i>The Town Council shall ensure that it has good HR policies in place and that staff are encouraged to fulfil their potential through appropriate training and development.</i>
PF5	<i>To provide public information via our customer interfaces, website and social media</i>	<i>The Town Council shall serve the local community by providing excellent customer service and disseminating useful information.</i> <i>The work of the Town Council shall be promoted through the local media, local community and through the local government network at County and Regional levels.</i>

Audit and Governance Objectives

	<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How will it be implemented?</i>
AG1	<i>To ensure that the full Council has oversight of the risk management and internal control measures in place</i>	<i>The Audit and Governance Committee shall report regularly throughout the year to the full Council upon the adequacy of the organisation's internal control and risk management arrangements.</i>
AG2	<i>To have a planned and effective approach to risk management</i>	<i>An Annual Governance Programme shall be implemented.</i> <i>The Town Council shall adopt a proactive approach to the identification and management of strategic and operational risks with all key risks being logged on its Risk Register and with risk management actions taken to mitigate the risks identified.</i>
AG3	<i>To identify the risks relating to the Town Council's financial capacity</i>	<i>The Audit and Governance Committee shall review and report to the full Council on any financial risks relating to projects or services that it has identified.</i>
AG4	<i>To ensure independent scrutiny of the Council's internal control arrangements</i>	<i>An Annual Return of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement shall be submitted to the internal and external auditors each year and the Town Council shall respond to the reports issued by them.</i>
AG5	<i>To adopt appropriate policies and procedures to safeguard public funds</i>	<i>All items of expenditure shall be reported to the full Council.</i>

Our Roles

<i>Stowmarket Town Council</i>	<i>Mid Suffolk District Council</i>	<i>Suffolk County Council</i>
<p>Allotments</p> <p>Armed Forces Day</p> <p>Burials and Cemeteries</p> <p>Christmas Lights</p> <p>Churchyard Maintenance</p> <p>Community Centre at Hillside</p> <p>Community Engagement and Events</p> <p>Crime Prevention and Policing Priority Setting</p> <p>CCTV System Monitoring</p> <p>Dog, Litter and Grit Bins</p> <p>Entertainment and Events</p> <p>Grant Funding and Community Support Funding</p> <p>Grounds Maintenance</p> <p>Hanging Baskets and Planters</p> <p>Litter Picking</p> <p>Lobbying on behalf of Stowmarket</p> <p>Market</p> <p>Market Place</p> <p>Mayoralty and Civic Events</p> <p>Place Shaping</p> <p>Planning Consultation</p> <p>Play Areas (x 6)</p> <p>Premises Maintenance</p> <p>Public Conveniences</p> <p>Recreation Ground and Skate Park</p> <p>Regal Theatre Management</p> <p>Remembrance</p> <p>Snow Clearance Scheme</p> <p>Town Centre Support</p> <p>War Memorial Gates</p>	<p>Benefits Administration</p> <p>Business: Licensing, business continuity, environmental health, business rates, health and safety at work, economic development</p> <p>Council Tax</p> <p>Environmental: Grass cutting, street care and cleansing, trees and hedges, countryside sites, environmental protection, energy and climate change</p> <p>Housing & Homelessness: Affordable housing and development, council housing, homelessness and housing advice, landlords and private sector housing, repairs and maintenance, sheltered housing and other support, tenant involvement</p> <p>Leisure & Culture: Countryside, playgrounds and playing fields, tourism, community development, sports & leisure, Suffolk's Active Community Scheme</p> <p>Planning & Building: Planning, planning policy, building control, conservation and listed buildings, street naming & numbering, planning enforcement</p> <p>Waste Services: Household waste and recycling, garden waste, trade waste, nuisance and abandoned vehicles, Household Waste Recycling Centres</p> <p>Your Community: Allotments, emergency planning, parking, community safety, community development</p>	<p>Adult and Community Services: Access to care services, accommodation for vulnerable people, adult learning and skills, employment and economic well-being, libraries, archives, museums and the arts, safeguarding of vulnerable adults and specialist support for people at home</p> <p>Children and Young People's Services: Education – admissions, transport, early years support, children's social care, youth support, community health and wider services to support children and families.</p> <p>Economy, Skills and Environment: Promotion of prosperity and development and protection and improvement of natural and historic environment</p> <p>Public Protection: Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards Service, Joint Emergency Planning Unit and community safety</p> <p>Other Services: Grass cutting and highways</p>

Our Contact Details

For further information about the contents of our Corporate Plan, please contact David Blackburn, Town Clerk.

Paper copies can be supplied, upon request, from Sarah Parramint, Business Support Officer. Large print versions are also available upon request.

Address:

Stowmarket Town Council
Milton House
Milton Road South
Stowmarket
Suffolk
IP14 1EZ

Telephone: 01449 612060

Fax: 01449 775103

email: info@stowmarket.org;

Our office opening hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm, Wednesday 9.00am to 10.00am and Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm.