



**Burnham on sea and Highbridge Town Council  
Strategic Plan  
2023-2027**



## **Introduction**

This Strategic plan takes as its starting point documents produced by the Town Council in recent years. The Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2018. The Burnham Evolution Bid was partially successful and contains ideas that can be taken forward this year by the Burnham High St Task Force Group utilising the £50,000 put aside for this purpose by Sedgemoor DC. The Highbridge Regeneration Bid to the Levelling Up Fund, written by Sedgemoor District Council, was sadly unsuccessful in 2022 but was part of the wider Regeneration Framework for the development of Highbridge which was adopted by Sedgemoor DC as a planning document and will be taken up by Somerset Council.

In addition, it takes note of relevant SDC documents such as the Local Plan and supporting background material where these are relevant to the two towns. However, it is not intended that this plan should be limited to what is in these documents but represents a 4-year programme of actions to be taken by the Town Council, which as well as taking forward ideas in these documents, also include others which have been discussed.

Local Government is undergoing change as we move towards a unitary authority, the new Somerset Council. It is still not clear how this will impact on the work of the Town Council. This Town Council will continue to put itself at the heart of our community and respond to the needs of our residents. We will continue to focus our work around the Vision and Mission Statement.

## **Vision**

**'At the heart of our community'**

### **Mission Statement:**

We will:

- Celebrate our uniqueness.
- Optimise the economic performance of our towns
- Create a sense of place: a place where people want to live and choose to spend their time.
- Maximise the potential of existing assets and resources.
- Become a vibrant coastal destination.
- Promote a more sustainable and greener lifestyle for all



Reviewed and updated at Council on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 & 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## **Strategic Aims for 2023-27**

### **We will aim to:**

#### **1. Develop an efficient, transparent council at the heart of our community representing the needs of our residents and improving access to services**

##### Success criteria:

- The staff team and councillors have the right IT and other tools to work effectively
- There is improved communication across the council and towns
- Committee structures and meeting diaries are appropriate to the council's priorities
- The public are able to raise concerns with councillors in suitable forums
- Information about the council and its activities is available both online and in print to maximise reach
- Good governance, fiscal responsibility and the habits of a good employer are embedded in the council
- The council is positively engaged in LCNs in the new Unitary authority

#### **2. Develop the cultural and economic well-being of our towns by drawing on the Highbridge Regeneration Plan, the Burnham High St Task Force involving other stakeholders.**

##### Success criteria:

- The increased number of local residents are using local businesses day to day
- The towns are connected to sources of employment and business opportunity
- Open public spaces in the town centres provide a place for people to enjoy
- Community facilities and events are used to their maximum potential
- There is good public and active transport connections which allow people to reach places for work and leisure
- The town centres continue to be full of independent shops where people spend money in local businesses
- a Strategic Plan is in place for the development of the Princess Theatre and surrounding area
- Princess St is a cultural and civic hub attracting residents and visitors alike

### **3. Create a greener and sustainable future for our towns by delivering our Climate and Ecology Action Plan**

Success criteria:

The Council has:

- enabled the community to work towards a net-zero target for 2030
- ensured its operations are on the route to becoming net zero by 2030
- a plan to help adapt to the worst impacts of climate changes
- encouraged a healthy life-style that makes the most of natural assets
- The community benefits from locally sourced food and renewable energy
- There is increased biodiversity in our green and blue (water) spaces
- The sea front has several activities and attractions to make it a destination for visitors

### **4. Enhance the well-being of our residents**

Success criteria:

- Both towns provide a wide variety of opportunities for sport, leisure and cultural activities for all ages
- There is a well-informed directory of support groups available in the towns both on-line and in print.
- Community groups are encouraged to identify need and find creative ways to support people

Strategic Aim 1: To develop an efficient, transparent council at the heart of our community, representing the needs of our residents and improving access to services.

Action	Lead Councillor/ Officer/ Committee	Timescale Year 1/2/3/4	Review of action taken
Review the IT systems including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better website platform</li> <li>• Web access for meeting papers</li> <li>• Improve email/ Office systems</li> <li>• Bring your own device policy for councillors</li> </ul>	Cllr Baker/ Town Clerk/ Deputy Town Clerk	By the end of Year 1 (April 2024)	Some improvements have been made to the website and all meeting papers are available on the website.  A VSM Portal is being used for Councillor access to meeting papers.  Councillors are all issued with Tablets for accessing meeting papers.  Ongoing.
Improve communication of meetings and consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better website platform</li> <li>• Review the visibility and use of noticeboards</li> <li>• Distribute information to the library and community hubs</li> <li>• Continue Drop-in sessions before each Town Council meeting</li> <li>• Ensure residents know the pathways for raising their concerns</li> </ul>	Chair/ Town Clerk/ Cllr Perry	By the end of Year 2 (April 2025)	Drop in sessions are held before each Council meeting.  A Community Link drop in has also be set up with the Police.  Information regarding <b>Council</b> activities and events are being distributed to more outlets e.g. Morland Hub, The Waffle Hub, Tesco's etc  The Council's Facebook page was relaunched in February 24.

<p>Ensure the financial reporting system is delivering transparency and control. Continuously review procurement practices to ensure value for money as per audit regulations.</p>	<p>Chair of Finance/ RFO/ Town Clerk</p>	<p>By the end of Year 1 then continuously until the end of Year 4</p>	<p>Relaunch of the accounting system for 2024/25 ensures the accounts are easier for councilors and the public to understand.</p> <p>More financial information is provided at Council and Committee meetings.</p> <p>Improved financial processes have been established.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Investigate moving the Town Council offices to the old SS&amp; L building in Princess St. Create a report to bring to TC with recommendations. Improve current accommodation for staff in the short term. Review accessibility of all Town Council buildings for the public.</p>	<p>Accommodation Working Party (Cllrs Millard, Clayton, Gudka, Murphy) / Town Clerk</p>	<p>By the end of Year 2</p>	<p>Negotiations are ongoing with Somerset Council.</p> <p>Buildings have been valued.</p> <p>A conditional survey of the former SS&amp;L building was undertaken in January. A full report will be considered by Council before May 2024.</p>
<p>Review committee structures annually and have a rolling programme of policy review to ensure the fiscal duties of the council are fulfilled</p>	<p>Working Party (2023) to review Policies and Standing Orders (Cllrs Millard, Gudka, Clayton, Perry, Murphy) + Town Clerk</p>	<p>By the end of Year 1 and then continuously</p>	<p>Committee structure review is undertaken annually and is currently being reviewed for consideration by Council in February 24.</p> <p>Core governance documents are reviewed annually and considered at Council in May. ongoing annually. Other policies are being updated on a rolling programme.</p>

Achieve the Local Council Award run by NALC. (Foundation, Quality then Gold)	Chair of Council and Town Clerk	Achieve the Foundation Award by the end of Year 1 then Quality by Year 3 and be working towards Gold by Year 4.	
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Strategic Aim 2: To develop the cultural and economic well-being of our towns by drawing on the Highbridge Regeneration Plan and the High St Taskforce, including other stakeholders

Action	Lead Councillor/ Officer/ Committee	Timescale Year 1/2/3/4	Review of action taken
<p>Develop a sustainable business plan for the Princess Theatre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the independent advisors report to explore options available</li> <li>• Consult with the community on future plans</li> <li>• Present a report to the Town Council with fully costed recommendations for the future of the theatre.</li> </ul>	<p>The Princess Management Committee/ Officers</p>	<p>Year 1 By the end of July 23</p> <p>TC to decide future plans by September 23</p>	<p>New Theatre Manager recruited in September.</p> <p>Working Group now established and setting out an Action Plan.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Resolve the play park situation and then explore other ideas to enhance the sea front. Present a report to TC with recommendations that are costed. Seek funding to complete the project.</p>	<p>Working party (Cllrs Vickers, Murphy, Clayton), Town Clerk and Somerset Council</p>	<p>Resolve play park by September 23</p> <p>Report to council by April 24</p>	<p>Permission for the play area to be installed on the sea front was not granted by Somerset Council.</p> <p>The project is now closed.</p>



<p>Reform the working group to develop plans for Burnham Centre using the High St Taskforce initiative Report to be presented to TC with recommendations for further action. Funding to be sought where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore car parking provision / pedestrianisation</li> <li>• Stimulate the High St growth</li> <li>• Review disabled access to the High St</li> <li>• Events to stimulate footfall</li> </ul>	<p>Working group (Cllrs Gudka, Murphy) and Somerset Council and community representatives</p>	<p>Year 1 Report by April 24</p> <p>Working group / TC/ Somerset Council to take action through years 2-4</p>	<p>Town Board has been established and were rebranded as Better BOS. They have set their Terms of Reference and are working on an Action Plan.</p> <p>Better BOS are applying to be established as a CIC.</p>
<p>Reform Highbridge Regeneration Group to rework the levelling up bid plans. Group to include stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highbridge Station travel plan- ensure pedestrian access from the Brue Farm estate. Cycle link from Highbridge to Burnham.</li> <li>• Bank St car park- gather data to enable exploration of car park charging regime and use of space.</li> <li>• Review alternative sources of funding or a renewal bid.</li> </ul>	<p>Working group (to be decided), Somerset Council and community representatives</p>	<p>Year 1 Report by April 24</p> <p>Work to be completed during Year 2-4</p>	<p>Terms of Reference and membership was agreed in November 24.</p> <p>A meeting has taken place with GWR to pursue the development of the station premises and travel plan.</p> <p>The new working group is now established with many representatives from the community involved. They are in the process of creating a 3-year Action Plan. Nick Tait is providing support from Somerset Council. The Action Plan will go to the Town Council for ratification by July 24.</p>

Strategic Aim 4: To enhance the well-being of our residents.

Action	Lead Councillor/ Officer/ Committee	Timescale Year 1/2/3/4	Review of action taken
<p>To ensure that well-being is kept in mind whilst delivering the Climate and Ecology Action Plan. Use the energy strand to support residents to reduce their energy use.</p> <p>Use the Sustainability strand to encourage reuse, reduce, recycle and repair</p> <p>Use the Transport strand to encourage active transport choice (walking, cycling)</p> <p>Use the Ecology strand to enhance, protect and encourage the active use of our green and blue (water) spaces.</p>	<p>Climate and Ecology Working Group</p>	<p>Years 1-4</p>	<p>The CE Working Group has taken the following action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weston Solar Energy are completing energy audits on private and community buildings.</li> <li>• We now have 2 Repair Cafes, one in each town.</li> <li>• Some businesses have signed up for the City to Sea Refill Scheme to reduce single use plastic.</li> <li>• The Bus Users Group has now met with the new Leadership Team at First Bus and Cllr Mike Rigby of Somerset Council. They have established a communication link with the Operations Manager of Buses of Somerset.</li> <li>• Somerset Wildlife Trust and Our Highbridge continue to develop ideas to enhance the Brue Green Pathway.</li> <li>• The Growing Group is now working with Burnham in Bloom and Clean Surroundings to improve our planting scheme.</li> </ul> <p>The Working Group is now seeking to become a CIC to open up opportunities for applying for grants. The Group will still deliver the Action Plan for the Town Council. There are 4 Town</p>

			Councillors involved in the group.
Maintain a cost of living support tool on the website. Publicise this on all media platforms. Ensure people at the Information Centres for Somerset Council are aware of it and support its use. Use the Energy Information Hubs to give individual face to face support	Cllrs Baker and Vickers/ Officers	Review by April 24	Information provided on website and updated on an ongoing basis.
Create a working group to Identify all support groups in the town, then create a directory. Publicise via social media/ website/ print then circulate to community areas. Also work with Sport Groups to show where they operate and what they offer. Publicise as above. Create a Town Handbook to contain all above information. Encourage new groups to grow and develop by supporting through grant applications.	Working Group (to be decided) and community representatives	By April 25	

Develop the provision of green and blue spaces for public use.	Climate and Ecology Working Group, Town Council, Somerset Council		See above.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguard and enhance recreational opportunities</li> <li>• Explore ways of improving the shopping experience</li> </ul>			
Create a working group to set out a strategy for the enhancement and eventual redevelopment of the Poplar and Morland estates.	Working Group (to be decided) and Somerset Council	Year 2 By April 25	