



**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.

It has become clear that the financial constraints of the new Unitary Authority has resulted in a devolution of services from the Authority to 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, taking the opportunity to ensure devolved services meet the specific needs of our towns. 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, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

## **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 and involving other stakeholders such as Better BOS.**

Success criteria:

- The increased number of local residents 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

**3. Princess St is a cultural and civic hub attracting residents and visitors alike. Create a greener and sustainable future for our towns by working with interested stakeholders**

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 lifestyle 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 online 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.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Councillor/ Officer/ Committee</b>	<b>Timescale Year 1/2/3/4</b>	<b>Review of action taken</b>
<p>Review the IT systems including:</p> <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>	<p>Cllr Baker/ Town Clerk/ Deputy Town Clerk</p>	<p>By the end of Year 1 (April 2024)</p>	<p>Some improvements have been made to the website. Regularly being updated.</p> <p>Microsoft 35 was installed at the end of January 25 and is working well.</p> <p>Councillors have a shared portal for accessing meeting papers.</p> <p>IT, Cyber Security and Email Policy was approved at Council in December 2025.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>

<p>Improve communication of meetings and consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better website platform</li> <li>• Find best practice and explore further use of social media to promote the Town Council</li> <li>• Review the visibility and use of noticeboards</li> <li>• Distribute information to the library and community hubs</li> <li>• Councillor drop-in sessions to be set up twice a year</li> <li>• Ensure residents know the pathways for raising their concerns</li> <li>• Explore ways of increasing community use of our website</li> </ul>	<p>Chair/ Town Clerk/ Cllr Perry</p>	<p>By the end of Year 2 (April 2025)</p>	<p>Meeting dates published in Local Reach in September.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Review of noticeboards is being undertaken.</p> <p>Councillor drop-in session held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the financial reporting system is delivering transparency and control.</li> <li>• Continuously review procurement practices to ensure value for money as per audit regulations</li> </ul>	Chair of Finance/ RFO/ Town Clerk	By the end of Year 1 then continuously until the end of Year 4	<p>Relaunch of the accounting system for 2024/25 ensures the accounts are easier for councillors 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 and recognised by auditors.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
To reconfigure the Old Courthouse to become an effective and useful building for all that use it for now and in the future	Town Clerk/Assets and Amenities	<p>Plan April 2025</p> <p>Changes April 2026</p>	<p>Costings report received January 2026 and is being reviewed for feasibility.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>
Review committee structures annually and have a rolling programme of policy review to ensure the fiscal duties of the council are fulfilled	Town Council	Annually	<p>Core governance documents are reviewed annually and considered at Council in May.</p> <p>Ongoing annually.</p> <p>Other policies are being updated on a rolling programme.</p>

<p>Achieve the Local Council Award run by NALC. Apply for Quality then Gold.</p>	<p>Chair of Council and Town Clerk</p>	<p>Achieve the Quality by Year 3 and be working towards Gold by Year 4.</p>	<p>Registration for silver level has been made (equivalent to previous Quality).  Application is being progressed, although has been delayed due to other priority work commitments.</p>
<p>To continue to work with LCNs</p>	<p>Council Representative and Council</p>		<p>Ongoing  We now have representation on the Highways Task Group and the Youth Focus Group. Both groups are working effectively to network and share knowledge and experience.</p>

Strategic Aim 2: To develop the cultural and economic well-being of our towns by drawing on the Highbridge Regeneration Plan including other stakeholders such as Better BoS

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>Asset &amp; Amenities Committee/ Officers</p>		<p>Business Plan was adopted by Assets &amp; Amenities Committee in August 2025 and actions are being implemented by the Theatre Manager.</p>
<p>Improve our Burnham town centre and as a Town Council we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore car parking provision</li> <li>• Pedestrianisation: Improve the space available for pedestrians</li> <li>• Stimulate the High St growth</li> <li>• Review disabled access to the High St</li> </ul>	<p>Working group continues to work collaboratively with Better BoS which also includes residents and business groups.</p>	<p>Working group to develop plans and take action through years 2-4</p>	<p>The working group received a workshop from the High Street Taskforce which delivered information and background and supported the formation of Better BoS as a placemaking partnership. However Better BoS has struggled to make progress and the council should review</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events to stimulate footfall</li> <li>• Explore other ideas to enhance the seafront</li> </ul>			<p>whether to take more responsibility for the projects it proposed and generate others.</p> <p>Development of plans is ongoing.</p>
<p>Develop Highbridge Town Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ask Somerset Council to trial first hour free parking at Bank street car park</li> <li>• To send a letter to Somerset Council to encourage EV parking facilities at the car park</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of a BT portal-charge points for phones and a payphone for emergencies by contacting BT and ascertain interest</li> <li>• Ask Somerset Council to investigate the development of the derelict houses by the YMCA to see if it could be used as a nursery school/family unit</li> </ul>	<p>Town Council/Somerset</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Council/Somerset</p> <p>Town Council</p>	<p>Year 4</p> <p>Year 4</p> <p>Year 4</p> <p>Year 4</p>	<p>Working Group met in October 2025.</p> <p>Somerset Transport Unit has confirmed in correspondence that Bank Street and Oxford Street car parks have been prioritised for LEVI funded EV charger programme. Working Group set up to nominate streets for EV infrastructure.</p> <p>Email sent to Somerset Council, awaiting response.</p> <p>Somerset Council has now given permission for the cottages to be demolished and plans have been submitted by the YMCA to build 8</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Our Highbridge by giving them advice as they work with Somerset Council on possibility of taking over the lease of St John's Ambulance building</li> <li>• Continue to support Highbridge Community Hall by giving advice</li> <li>• Support the use of the Millennium Green for community use - adverts on our website</li> <li>• Review the feasibility study for repurpose of the old station building</li> <li>• Continue to work with GWR to encourage signage to direct passengers to the east platform and better access for the disabled</li> </ul>	<p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Council</p> <p>Town Council, Somerset Council, Network Rail and GWR</p>	<p>Work to be completed during Year 2-4</p> <p>Work to be completed during Year 2-4</p> <p>Work to be completed during Year 2-4</p> <p>Year 2</p> <p>Work to be completed during Year 2-4</p>	<p>flats and a children's nursery. There will also be parking spaces.</p> <p>Our Highbridge has taken over the lease and will be approaching the Town Council for funding.</p> <p>Support has been provided as needed.</p> <p>Request made to Somerset Council asking for charges to be reduced, which was rejected.</p> <p>GWR Community Fund has been awarded to install improved signing to improve access for all, around the station and streets in Highbridge. This will be installed by June 2026 and is being led by Somerset Council. A Business Plan to seek government support for step free access at the</p>
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<p>Councillors will continue with the walkabouts on Poplar and Moorlands Estates</p> <p>To put in process to develop and review Neighbourhood Plan</p>	<p>Highbridge Councillors</p> <p>Town Council/Community Group</p>	<p>To be arranged</p>	<p>station is being developed.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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Strategic Aim 3: Create a greener and sustainable future for our towns

Action	Lead Councillor/ Officer/ Committee	Timescale Year 1/2/3/4	Review of action taken
<p>To work towards a net zero carbon for 2030</p> <p>To continue to review the TC working practices and contracts to reflect this aim</p>	<p>Town Clerk/ Officers/F&amp;G Committee/Assets and Amenities Committee</p>	<p>1-4</p>	<p>Meeting to move this forward is being arranged and monies included in 2026/27 budget.</p>
<p>Create a plan to adapt to climate change</p> <p>Town Council to work to build climate resilience for both towns</p>	<p>Town Clerk/ Officers/Council</p>	<p>By Year 4</p>	
<p>Encourage a healthy lifestyle that makes the most of natural assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all the towns green spaces are well maintained and encourage residents to make full use of them</li> <li>• Encourage greater wildlife</li> </ul>	<p>Town Clerk and Officers/ Assets and Amenities Committee</p> <p>Town Clerk/Officers/Growing Group</p> <p>Working Group</p>	<p>By Year 3</p>	<p>Growing Group has been very effective in planting and helping to maintain various flowerbeds.</p> <p>Biodiversity policy adopted by the Council in January 2026.</p>

<p>diversity in our green and blue spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To prioritise and implement actions suggested by LCWIP</li> </ul>			<p>Cllr Gudka will now represent the TC and LCN is in discussions about the implementation of the LCWIP.</p>
<p>Encourage the provision of locally sourced food and renewable energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage local producers to give their excess food to the community</li> <li>Provide information about renewable energy on the website and signpost people to providers</li> </ul>	<p>Town Clerk and Officers</p>	<p>By Year 4</p> <p>By Year 3</p>	<p>Forge Rhyne Allotments give their excess food to the foodbank.</p>
<p>Explore ways of ensuring that the seafront has a variety of activities and attractions to attract visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to plant sustainable plants to give all year round displays</li> <li>Explore ways of making the seafront more attractive with a variety of activities, including events such as the fireworks</li> </ul>	<p>Town Clerk and Officers/ Assets and Amenities Committee/ Growing Group</p> <p>Assets and Amenities Committee</p>	<p>Year 1-4</p>	<p>Growing Group continues to assist the Estates Team in maintaining these flower beds.</p> <p>Fireworks event held in November.</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>The Town Council will use the devolution of services to take control of green spaces, play parks and local environment.</p> <p>Will ensure the environment around Burnham and Highbridge is clean, welcoming and a pleasure to walk around</p>	Town Council		<p>TC took over the maintenance of the agreed flowerbeds in 2025.</p> <p>Litter picks have taken place each year and are scheduled quarterly for 2026</p>
<p>To ensure that well-being is kept in mind whilst delivering the Climate and Ecology Action Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Energy strand to support residents to reduce their energy use.</li> <li>• Use the Sustainability strand to encourage reuse, reduce, recycle and repair</li> <li>• Use the Transport strand to encourage</li> </ul>	Climate and Ecology Working Group	Years 1-4	This is now being driven by the Burnham and Highbridge Green Team CIO.

<p>active transport choice (walking, cycling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Ecology strand to enhance, protect and encourage the active use of our green and blue (water) spaces.</li> </ul>			
<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Energy Information Hubs to give individual face to face support</li> </ul>	<p>Cllrs Baker and Vickers/ Officers</p>	<p>Review by April 25</p>	<p>Information provided on website and updated on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Burnham and Weston Energy are continuing to provide individual support to residents to reduce their energy bills.</p>
<p>Create a working group to Identify all support groups in the town, then create a directory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise via social media/website/ print then circulate to community areas.</li> <li>• Also work with Sport Groups to show where they operate and what</li> </ul>	<p>Working Group (to be decided) and Cllr Metcalfe</p>	<p>By April 26</p>	

<p>they offer. Publicise as above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Town Handbook to contain all above information. Encourage new groups to grow and develop by supporting through grant applications.</li> </ul>			
<p>To produce an emergency plan to assist residents during emergencies and to consider further plans e.g. flood plan</p>	<p>Town Clerk/ Officers/Councillors</p>	<p>Year 3</p>	<p>Working Group appointed and plan has been drafted. Letters have been sent to organisations identified for shelters to ask for their permission to be included in the plan.</p>

## Appendix

These were actions that were originally identified in the original Strategic Plan and have now been completed.

<b>Strategic Aim 1:</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>What the Council have done</b>
Review the IT systems including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web access for meeting papers</li> </ul>	A VSM Portal is being used for Councillors' access to meeting papers. Meeting papers are published on the website.
Continue Drop-in sessions before each Town Council meeting	Due to poor attendance, it was agreed at Council in May 2024 to cancel the drop-in sessions.
Improve communication of meetings and consultations:	Information regarding Council 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 2024.
Investigate moving the Town Council offices to the old SS& 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.	Council agreed in April 2024 not to pursue the purchase of the former SS&L building due to the costs.
Review committee structures annually and have a rolling programme of policy review to ensure the fiscal duties of the council are fulfilled	Changes to the Committee structure were approved by Council in May 2024.

<b>Strategic Aim 2:</b>	
<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> </ul> <p>Present a report to the Town Council with fully costed recommendations for the future of the theatre.</p>	<p>New Theatre Manager recruited in September.</p> <p>Working Group now established and setting out an Action Plan.</p>
<p>Resolve the play park situation and then explore other ideas to enhance the sea front.</p> <p>Present a report to TC with recommendations that are costed. Seek funding to complete the project.</p>	<p>Permission for the play area to be installed on the seafront 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.</p> <p>Report to be presented to TC with recommendations for further action.</p> <p>Funding to be sought where necessary.</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> </ul>	<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>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>The Working Group has now completed the Action Plan and will be bringing to the September meeting of the Town Council.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Aim 4:</b></p>	
<p>Develop the provision of green and blue spaces for public use.</p>	<p>Already in another section Group, Town Council, Somerset Council</p>
<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>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.</p> <p>There are 4 Town Councillors involved in the group.</p> <p>The Working Group has now applied to become a CIO. We are awaiting the response.</p>