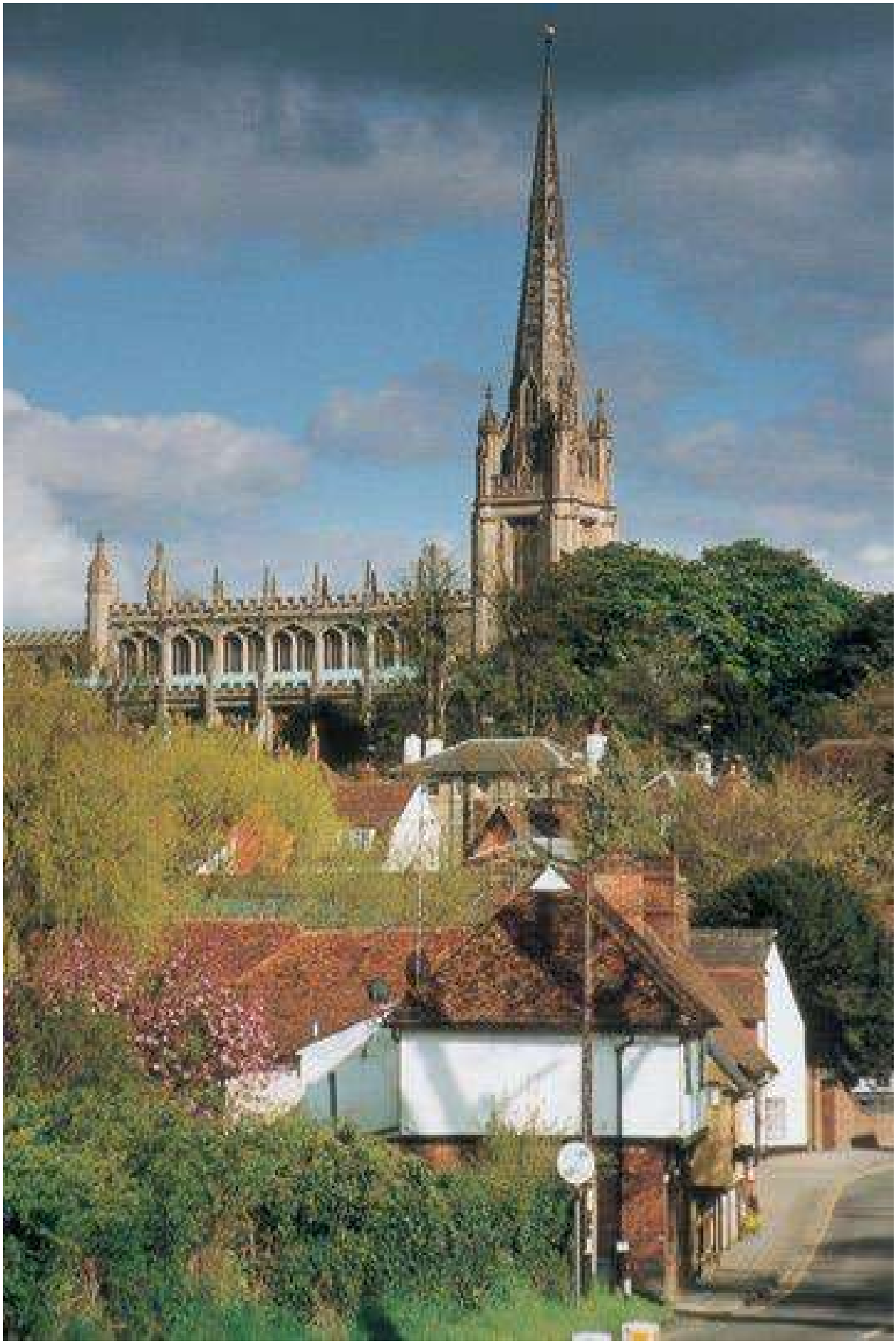
Strategic Plan 2026-2031

SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Date for Review: September 2030



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Foreword from The Town Mayor

As Mayor, I am reminded every day how fortunate we are to call Saffron Walden home. Our town is blessed with a rich history, beautiful green spaces, and a strong sense of community that brings people together in times of celebration and support. From our stunning medieval heritage and vibrant market to the many local organisations, businesses and volunteers who help our town thrive, Saffron Walden offers a wonderful quality of life for residents of all ages. We are incredibly lucky to live in a place that combines the charm of a historic market town with a welcoming, forward-looking spirit, making it a community we can all be proud of and cherish for generations to come.

Looking ahead to the coming years, there will be many opportunities for us to build on all that makes Saffron Walden such a special place. Whether it is supporting local events and festivals, enjoying our parks and open spaces, championing our independent businesses, or getting involved with community groups and volunteering initiatives, each of us can play a part in strengthening the fabric of our town. By continuing to work together, embracing new ideas and celebrating our shared heritage, we can ensure that Saffron Walden remains a thriving, vibrant and welcoming community for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Councillor Jeanette Curtis, Town Mayor Saffron Walden

Foreword from The Town Clerk

I am immensely proud of the range and quality of services delivered by Saffron Walden Town Council and how these have developed and improved through the years. The Town Council operates at the highest of levels, evidenced through the achievement of the National Association of Local Councils' 'Quality Gold Award', demonstrating excellence in governance, community leadership, and council development.

The Council is regularly recognised by both the National and County Association of Local Councils for its leadership, community engagement, and financial acumen through the winning of numerous awards. We do not, however, rest on our laurels, and are always seeking new initiatives and opportunities to improve our service delivery and identify new revenue streams.

I know we have an excellent team of Councillors and Officers who work well together, always willing and able to do the very best for our town. The key priority areas within this Corporate Plan will ensure we respond to the needs of everyone in our community.

Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk
BA (Hons) / FSLCC

Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan 2026-2031 sets out the long-term vision and priorities of Saffron Walden Town Council for the next five years. Its vision is to make Saffron Walden a great place to live, work and visit, supported by a commitment to strong governance, high-quality services and community leadership.

The Plan identifies seven key priorities:

1. Delivering efficient and effective council services.
2. Maintaining excellent governance and transparency.
3. Promoting sustainability and reducing the town's carbon footprint.
4. Improving and maintaining the physical environment.
5. Enhancing recreational facilities and open spaces.
6. Representing and responding to community needs.
7. Supporting the cultural and economic wellbeing of the town.

The Plan also emphasises partnership working, community engagement, support for local businesses, tourism and events, investment in public spaces, and preparation for future opportunities arising from local government devolution. Progress will be monitored through annual reviews and performance indicators.

Overall, the Plan provides a clear strategic framework focused on delivering quality services, supporting residents, protecting the environment and enhancing Saffron Walden as a thriving market town.

Ward Map

Images of Saffron Walden

Introduction

This document sets out the goals, objectives and aspirations of Saffron Walden Town Council. It sets out the long-term priorities from 2026 to 2031, detailing the Council's focus over the strategic plan period.

This document further sets out the Town Council's agreed vision for the future, along with a mission statement and an expression of Council values.

Strategic planning forms an important part of the corporate governance arrangements of the Town Council, providing direction and leadership for the organisational team.

The priorities within this plan will drive the financial decision making of the Council and will be reflected in the medium-term financial plan and annual budget setting process.

The aim of the document is to give Saffron Walden residents a clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver. It sets out what the Council intends to focus on over the next five years; this document also defines what the Council will not necessarily focus on as it may be that other public sector bodies are better placed for other areas of service provision.

Council Overview

Saffron Walden Town Council was established in May 1974 following the 1972 review of local government.

It is a large Town Council, recognised by the National Association of Local Councils as a ‘Super Council’ given its size, population and budget.

There are 18 Town Councillors, and the town is divided into three wards. Elections are held every four years, with the next election due in May 2027.

Decisions are made at public meetings and through three main Committees. The Council is led by the Town Mayor, with strategic directions from the Council Leader and Town Clerk.

Funding comes from generated income (e.g. room hire, weddings, the market, grants) and a Council tax precept. Financial details, including the annual budget are provided on the Council’s website.

Our Services

Your Local Voice, Representing Local Needs

Through listening and democratic representation

Tourist Information Centre

Market Square

Market

Tuesdays and Saturdays

Cultural and Economic Support

Support for the local economy

Civic Events

Military and Mayor Making

Community Grants

Support to grassroots organisations

Community Events

Held across the town

Christmas Lights

Plus Christmas markets and events

Beach

On the Common

Youth Activities

working with schols and youth clubs

Bandstand

Summer programme of live music

Jubilee Hub

Health and Wellbeing Centre

Public Open Spaces

Grass cutting, planting and tree management

Cemetery

Radwinter Road

Bridge End Garden

Victorian Gardens

The Common

Large public open space

Allotments

Two sites

Play Areas

Across the Town

Town Hall

Events, productions, private hire

Weddings

At Town Hall or Bridge End Gardens

Golden Acre

Community Centre

One-Minet Skate Park

Thaxted Road

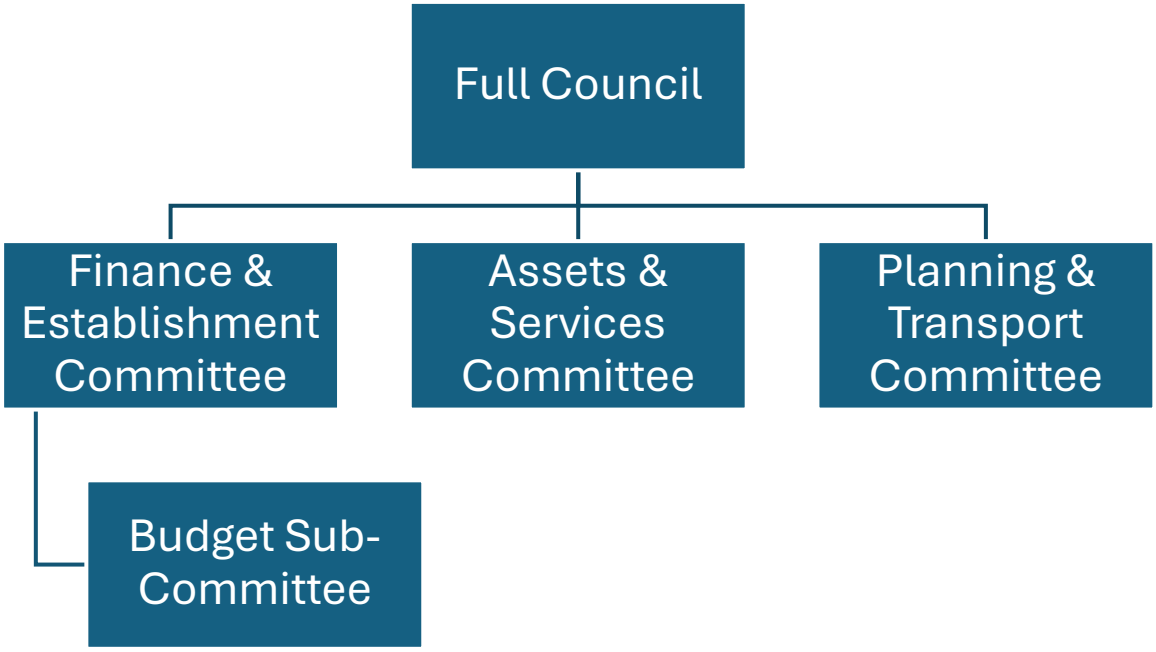
Pride in our Town

Bin emptying and town tidying

Public Toilets

Hill Street

SWTC's Committee Structure



Each (sub) Committee has defined and specific Terms of Reference (ToR) which define the roles and responsibilities of the Committee. These ToR further set out the budgetary limitations of the Committee. Where specified within the ToR, the Committees are authorised to act for, and on behalf of the Council.

The ToR are reviewed annually at the Town Council's Annual Meeting in May of each year.

In addition to the Council and Committee meetings, Council establishes 'Working Groups' for one-off projects, for example in 2026, a Skate Park Working Group was established to oversee the refurbishment of the Skate Park in Thaxted Road. These Groups will also have ToR, specifying any delegated powers or authority to the Group.

Name	Primary Role
Full Council	• To provide a pleasant and safe environment for residents and for visitors to the town • To set the annual budget • To appoint the Town Mayor, Leader, Committees and members of those Committees • To ensure the Council's compliance with the provisions of all necessary legislative requirements • To delegate responsibility to Committees as appropriate • To deal with any business which may not lawfully be delegated to a committee • To borrow money for statutory functions and/or any other activity as deemed necessary and appropriate • To consider expenditure not within previously approved budgets or to delegate this function to the Town Clerk who may act in accordance with the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
Finance and Establishment Committee	• To supervise the financial planning of the Council • To ensure that actions taken by the Council do not contravene financial requirements or regulations • To provide and maintain Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Terms of Reference within which Committees should operate • To oversee the personnel function of the Council, recognising the delegated authority already bestowed on the Town Clerk • Objectives should be achieved within the constraints of an annual budget

Name	Primary Role
Assets and Services Committee	• To be responsible and oversee management of all properties, open spaces and land under the Council's ownership and control • To provide a twice weekly Charter Market • To oversee and be responsible for oversight of the Tourist Information Centre and its services • To oversee and be responsible for all the Town Council's youth engagement and activities • To ensure that all facilities comply with existing and new legislation
Planning & Transport Committee	• To ensure decisions on planning, transport and other matters referred to the committee, balance the wishes of the applicants with those of other interested parties • To take account of the character and amenities of the town and the preservation of the Conservation Area • To oversee the day-to-day implementation of the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan, and to make recommendations to Council to refresh this plan as necessary
Budget Sub-Committee	• To oversee the annual budget process, recommending a final budget to Council

There is opportunity at every public meeting for residents and members of the community to pose questions to the Council or Committee, on any matter referenced within the published agenda.

Town Councillors

Cllr Lucy Abercrombie

Audley Ward

Cllr Lucy Brett

Audley Ward

Cllr Deryk Eke

Audley Ward

Cllr Alex Reeve

Audley Ward

Cllr Heather Asker

Castle & Little Walden Ward

Cllr Jeanette Curtis

Castle & Little Walden Ward

Cllr Richard Freeman

Castle & Little Walden Ward

Cllr Richard Porch

Castle & Little Walden Ward

Cllr Cherry Parker

Castle & Little Walden Ward

Cllr Jubeyuir Ahmed

Shire Ward

Cllr Arthur Coote

Shire Ward

Cllr James de Vries

Shire Ward

Cllr Chloë Fiddy
Shire Ward

Cllr Patrick Hawke-Smith

Shire Ward

Cllr Denise Jones

Shire Ward

Cllr Dan McBirnie

Shire Ward

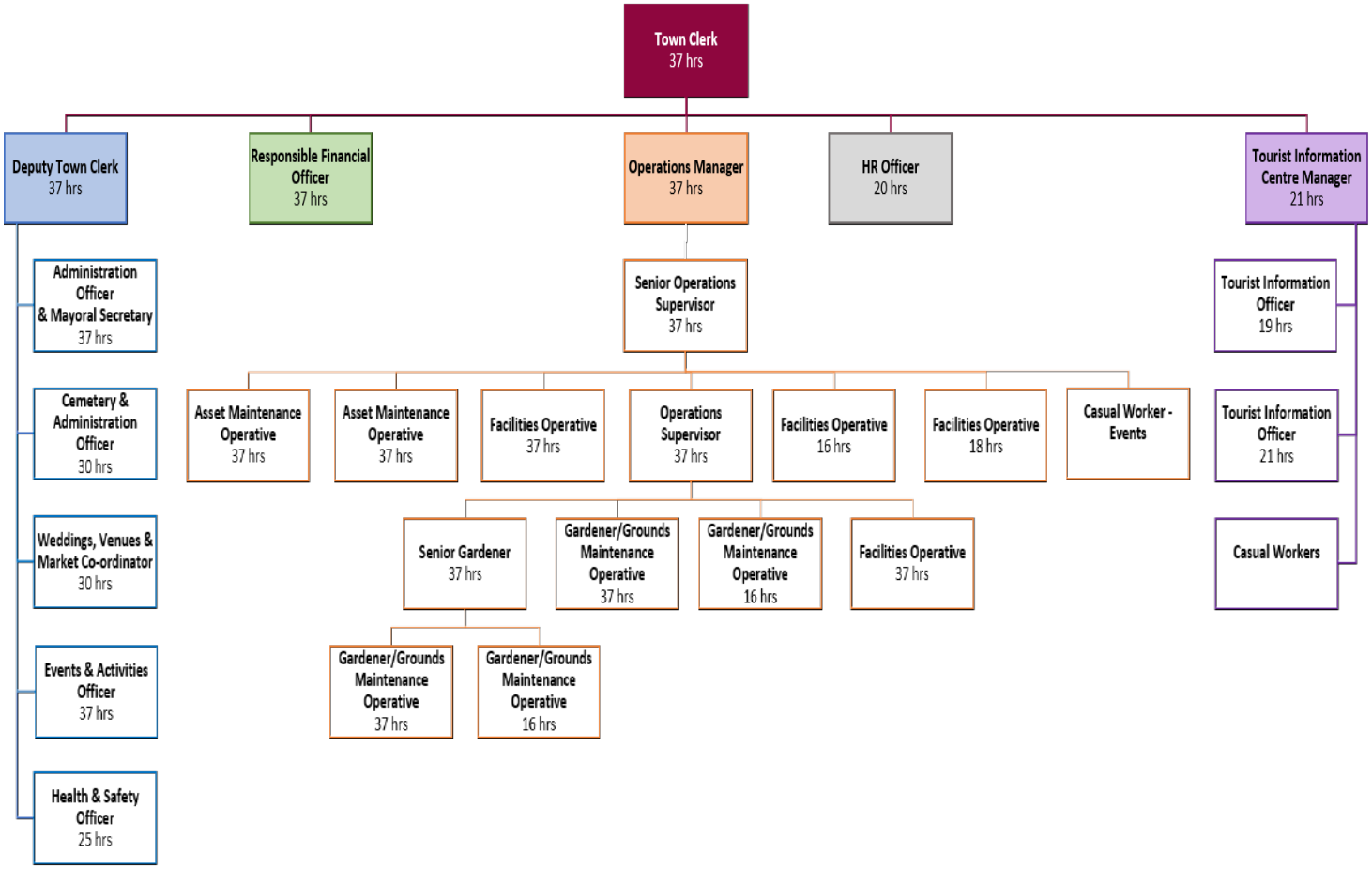
Cllr Dave McLellan

Shire Ward

Cllr Kateryna Shotropa

Shire Ward

Staffing Structure



Our Community at a Glance

Vision, Mission Statement, Values

The Town Council is a service provider for the Saffron Walden community, an influencer and conduit for local views, working effectively and efficiently in partnership with many organisations within the Community it represents.

The Council's vision and mission statement are given below:

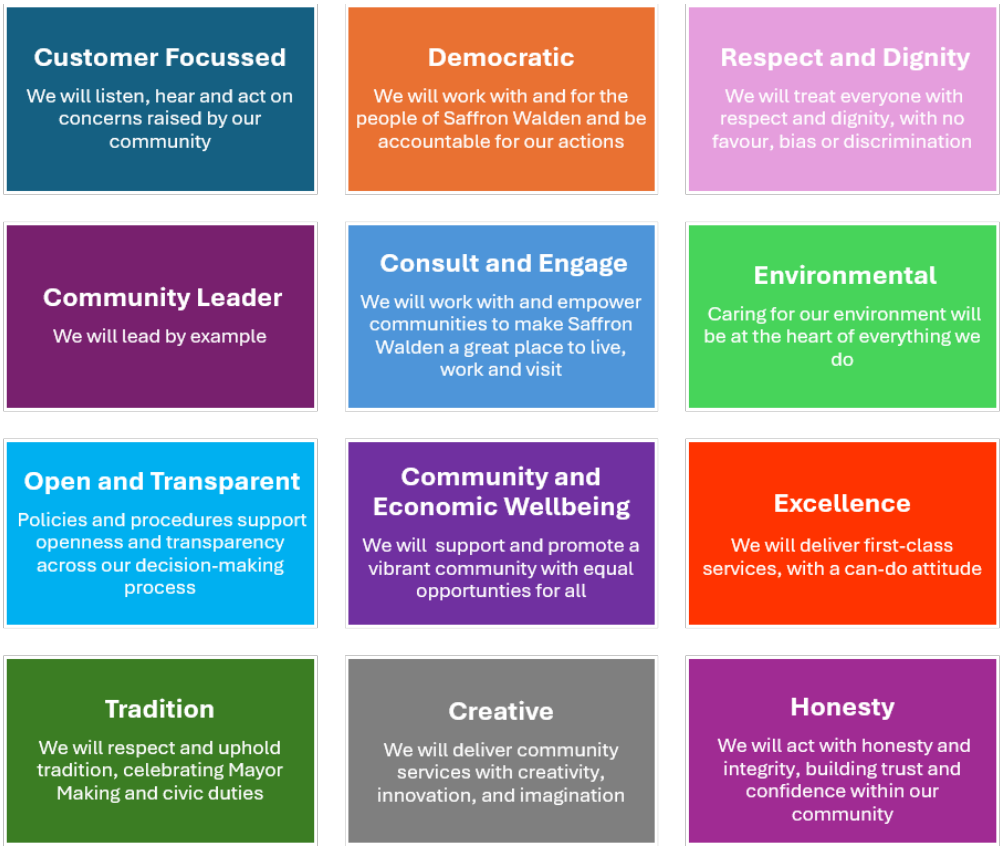
Vision

To make Saffron Walden a great place to live, work and visit.

Mission Statement

Saffron Walden Town Council will work hard to create and sustain a lively and vibrant town. We will promote civic pride, creating a place where people feel safe, respected and proud. We will improve the quality of life for our residents.

Values



Core Priorities and Objectives

1. **To be an efficient and effective Council**

2. **To deliver excellent governance**

3. **To nurture and encourage a green town that reduces its carbon footprint year on year and seeks to protect nature**

4. **To improve the physical environment**

5. **To raise the standards of recreational facilities**

6. **To help represent the needs of the community**

7. **To promote the cultural and economic well-being of Saffron Walden**

In supporting our vision, mission statement and values the Council delivers a wide range of services and functions. The Council has adopted the General Power of Competence (legislation provided through the Localism Act 2011) which gives it the "*power to do anything that individuals generally may do*".

The following pages set out how we will deliver our core priorities and objectives.

Town Council Corporate Priorities

Priority One:

To be an efficient & effective Council

We will be a disciplined, organised and future-focused Council.

We will develop the capacity and skills within the Council, enabling delivery of its aims and services efficiently, effectively, imaginatively, and collaboratively.

What will we do?

1. Deliver high-quality services to our community
2. Make the best and most effective use of our resources
3. Ensure public funds are spent wisely and in line with local needs
4. Make the best use of technology, streamlining processes and practices
5. Respond quickly to challenges and improve service delivery
6. Endorse strong collaboration among staff, Councillors, and stakeholders
7. Maintain a clear focus on achieving positive outcomes
8. Have regard to outside challenges and mitigate against these
9. Support training and personal development for staff and Councillors
10. Be a Quality Council to demonstrate we are at the forefront of best practice and achieving excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.
11. Work with the District and County Councils on devolution issues to understand what responsibilities and services may be more beneficially delivered at the Town level

Town Council Corporate Priorities

Priority Two:

To Deliver Excellent Governance

We will ensure that decisions are made lawfully, transparently, ethically, and in the best interests of the community.

We will build public trust, deliver effective services, and demonstrate accountability for the use of public funds.

What will we do?

1. Invest in training and capacity building
2. Conduct regular audits and reviews of policies and practices
3. Establish strong Leadership with clear goals and responsibilities
4. Maintain a clear scheme of delegation
5. Be held accountable
6. Uphold legal compliance and standards, especially regarding heath and safety and employment matters
7. Ensure decisions are properly recorded and legally sound
8. Embed transparency and openness through the publication of agendas, minutes and reports
9. Comply with overarching legislation and audit requirements
10. Publish financial data and spending
11. Hold meetings in public (except where confidential)
12. Provide clear reasoning for decisions
13. Maintain strong financial management and effective risk management
14. Develop balanced budgets
15. Be responsive to needs
16. Continuously improve
17. Prioritise clear decision-making, transparency and accountability

Priority Three:

Nurture and Encourage a Green Town

Sustainability will be at the heart of our planning and decision-making. We will encourage others to be more sustainable through education campaigns, initiatives and support. We will be the environmental custodians of Saffron Walden

What will we do?

1. Put climate change at the heart of our decision-making process
2. Regularly review our Climate Change Action Plan to ensure it meets current and changing needs
3. Protect, enhance and create green spaces, supporting biodiversity
4. Ensure our Climate Change Action Plan includes measurable targets for reducing carbon emissions
5. Reduce, reuse and seek to eliminate plastic from Saffron Walden
6. Offer free water refill points across the town, reducing single use plastics
7. Support public campaigns to raise awareness of climate change
8. Reduce our carbon footprint year on year
9. Encourage and improve pedestrian and cycling accessibility
10. Install solar panels at council buildings, community centres, and public facilities (where practical to do so)
11. Support community initiatives to reduce use of non-recyclable materials
12. Replace petrol gardening tools and equipment with battery operated ones
13. Replace our fleet of petrol or diesel vans with electric vehicles
14. Promote, support and encourage the use of public transport, walking, cycling and energy efficient vehicles

Town Council Corporate Priorities

Priority Four:

Improve the Physical Environment

We will improve the physical environment by focusing on the quality, safety, attractiveness, and sustainability of public spaces. We will combine maintenance, investment, community engagement, and environmental initiatives.

What will we do?

1. Maintain our public assets to high standards
2. Keep the town centre tidy
3. Provide waste bins and empty them on a regular basis
4. Provide flower planters and seasonal planting
5. Repaint and maintain street furniture
6. Support protection of heritage buildings and local character
7. Encourage high-quality design in public spaces
8. Encourage high design standards for new developments
9. Encourage mixed-use developments
10. Work with and lobby the highway authority to expand cycling and walking infrastructure
11. Implement sustainable policies that prioritise environmentally friendly initiatives and activities

Town Council Corporate Priorities

Priority Five:

Raise Standards of Recreational Facilities

We will invest in ongoing maintenance and development of recreational facilities, providing high-quality recreational opportunities that promote health, wellbeing, social interaction, and community pride.

What will we do?

1. Protect and enhance green spaces and biodiversity
2. Have a scheduled repair and replacement policy for recreational equipment
3. Conduct regular maintenance checks of existing equipment
4. Ensure facilities remain clean, safe and attractive
5. Involve residents and partners in designing and planning new sites
6. Ensure compliance with accessibility standards
7. Provide inclusive play equipment
8. Use eco-friendly materials and construction methods
9. Install energy-efficient lighting and water-saving systems
10. Leverage partnerships and funding, working with sport governing bodies, charities and community groups and private sector partners
11. Seek funding from Government grants, National Lottery / Sport England, Developer contributions (e.g. Section 106, CIL)
12. Work with and support tenants who occupy space/buildings owned by SWTC

Town Council Corporate Priorities

Priority Six:

Represent Needs of the Community

We will develop a greater sense of civic pride in the Town across all age groups, improving the level of public engagement and working towards strengthening and supporting our community's wellbeing.

We will positively ensure Your Voice is heard throughout everything we do.

What will we do?

1. Engage and consult with residents through a variety of communication channels
2. Listen and understand community needs
3. Elected Councillors will represent the community
4. Use data and evidence to analyse current and future needs
5. Hold public meetings and publish decisions
6. Turn community needs into action by setting budgets and priorities
7. Produce a Neighbourhood Plan to meet community needs and aspirations through the planning process
8. Balance limited resources with competing needs
9. Support inclusion and fairness
10. Work with partners and organisations to ensure full representation of our residents
11. Provide a front of desk space at the Tourist Information Centre, offering help, advice and guidance for residents and visitors

Priority Seven:

Promote the Cultural and Economic Wellbeing of SW

We will help shape and influence the **local economy** and **local culture** by acting as a convenor, promoter, facilitator and investor. We recognise the most successful places combine economic development with cultural activity, attracting visitors, supporting local businesses and strengthening community identity

What will we do?

1. Through the Tourist Information Centre, promote Saffron Walden as a destination town
2. Build a strong cultural programme, through community, commercial and partner-led events and through our services at Jubilee Hub
3. Support children and young people in our community through events, activities and the delivery of youth services
4. Strengthen the market town identity through continued promotion and management of the twice-weekly market
5. Build strong local partnerships through the Tourism Network
6. Support grass-roots groups and clubs with their event management through grants and partnership activities
7. Regularly assess the success of our events and gather feedback
8. Enhance public spaces and experience by developing opportunities at SWTC owned venues and buildings
9. Engage with Police and Partners to tackle anti-social behaviour and effectively maintain the existing CCTV system
10. Organise and support civic events such as Remembrance Day Parade, Freedom Parade and Mayor Making

Related Documents

SWTC has a range of governing policies and procedures, many of which relate directly to this strategic plan. Those of particular importance which should be read alongside our core priorities are:

(a) Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (NP) (made October 2022)
(b) Developer Contributions and Requirements Policy

Rather than duplicating the detail contained within the documents listed above, this Strategic Plan highlights the principal projects and activities that it aims to advance. The Town Council will work proactively to support and advocate for planning contributions that help deliver priorities as contained within the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan and the SWTC Developer Contributions and Requirements Policy.

SW Neighbourhood Plan 2022

The NP contains the following policies:

SW1	Housing mix on new developments
SW2	Affordable Housing
SW3	Design (of housing)
SW4	Parking on new developments
SW5	Convenience stores in residential neighbourhoods
SW6	17 Market Hill and 29-31 Church Street
SW7	Shopfront design
SW8	Regeneration of George Street
SW9	Development of new and existing commercial spaces
SW10	High-quality communications infrastructure
SW11	Ecological requirements for all new domestic and commercial developments
SW12	Promoting walking and cycling
SW13	Travel Planning
SW14	Improving provision of public transport
SW15	Vehicular transport
SW16	Playing fields and sports halls
SW17	Open space for informal recreation
SW18	Public rights of way
SW19	Land of value to the natural environment
SW20	Arts and cultural facilities
SW21	Healthcare

The full list of NP policies can be found online at Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan - Uttlesford District Council

Several of the Neighbourhood Plan policies concern areas for which the Town Council is not the decision-making authority. For instance, planning matters are managed by Uttlesford District Council as the local planning authority, while transport-related matters are the responsibility of Essex County Council as the highway authority. While the delivery of many of these policies rests with those organisations, the Town Council will work collaboratively with them to ensure that the interests and priorities of the local community are effectively represented and promoted in accordance with the NP policies.

SWTC Developer Contributions and Requirements Policy

In addition to the Council's core priorities, the Town Council supports the contribution of S106 and or CIL monies towards the following activities:

1. Biodiversity and Climate Change
2. Community and Recreation
3. Culture and Tourism
4. Public Open Spaces and Play Areas
5. Sporting Activities
6. Greenspaces
7. Transport

A full copy of the Developer Contributions and Requirements Policy can be found online at Policies - Saffron Walden Town Council providing further details of the activities supported by SWTC through developer contributions.

This strategic plan further supports the principles of the Council's 'Written Statements' provided as an integral part of the Local Councils' Award Scheme.

Review and Monitoring

This strategic plan will be reviewed at least annually by the Town Council with a progress report forming part of the Council's Annual Report, at the Annual Meeting, ordinarily held in May of each year.

The Council has developed a series of key performance indicators (KPIs), designed to provide evidence of the Council's overall performance in its day-to-day management and service delivery. The KPIs are a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this Strategic Plan. The KPIs will be reviewed and reported annually, in conjunction with the Strategic Plan.

Contact us

Saffron Walden Town Council welcomes feedback on its Strategic Plan.

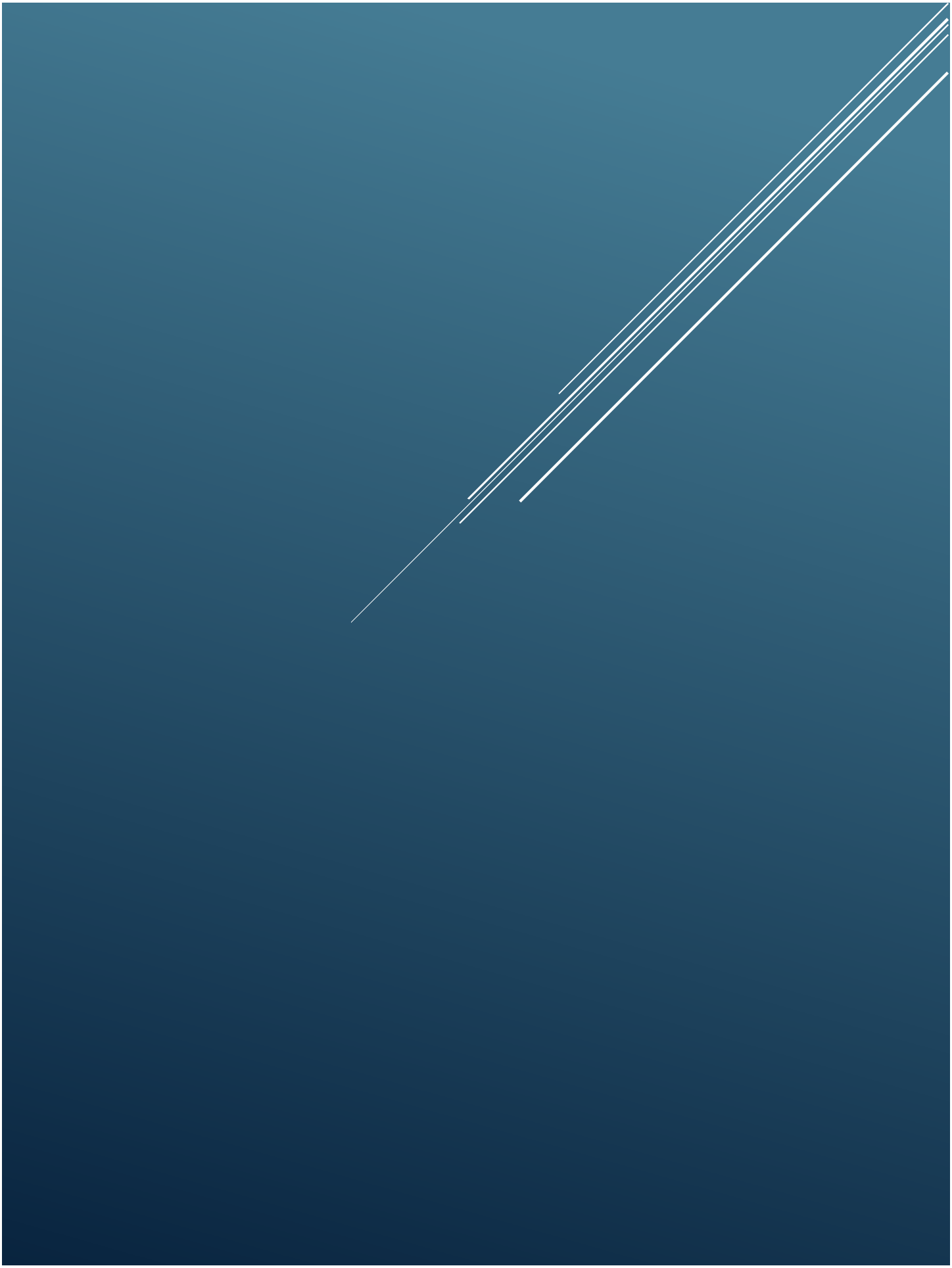
The Council welcomes residents' views on its services, as well as suggestions for service improvements and other matters of importance to the town where the Council can make a positive contribution.

You can contact us as follows:

Email: enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk

Tel: 01799 516501

In writing: Saffron Walden Town Council, Market Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR

In person: Tourist Information Centre, 1 Market Place, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR

A full copy of this document can be downloaded from the Council's website: www.saffronwalden.gov.uk