



WALTHAM ABBEY

TOWN COUNCIL

BUSINESS PLAN

2020 - 2025



# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Setting the Scene	4
The Town Council	4
Corporate Vision	6
Financial Information	7
The Council Functions	9
Policy & Resources Committee	9
Leisure & Community Committee	12
Development & Environment Committee	19

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of Business Plan**

This Business Plan is the identification and method for Waltham Abbey Town Council to work in a co-ordinated way in the best interests of all who live, work and use the Town Council's services. It is a statement of the Town Council's vision, purpose, aims, objectives and values.

The purpose of the document is to provide an overview of the Council's plans to improve the quality of life for all the town's residents, businesses, and visitors. The plan will set out the aims and objectives of the Town Council for a five-year period. The plan will be regularly reviewed to monitor progress and to update the plan.

The Plan will influence the direction and content of all other internal strategies and resources of the Council particularly through the budget process. There will be internal pressure arising from plans to improve service quality and the availability of resources. External pressure will arise from government legislation, strategic plans and partnerships.

### **Need For a Business Plan**

A Plan ensures that the Council can take a planned and consistent approach to:

- The design and delivery of existing services
- The identification of improved facilities and services
- The prioritisation and allocation of resources
- The achievement of Value for Money and best practice

### **Community Involvement**

The Council has published a Community Engagement Statement of Intent and has, through various initiatives in the last few years, improved its communication with local communities. The community is now in the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan, which will be influenced by, and influence, the Local Plan, which will need to be considered carefully by the Council and reflected in this Plan.

### **Summary**

This new Business Plan sets out for Councillors, staff and the community our mission, purpose and priorities for the next five years.

## **WALTHAM ABBEY**

### **Setting the Scene**

Waltham Abbey, one of the most westerly towns in Essex, stands on that county's boundary with Hertfordshire – a boundary formed by the River Lee, one of the tributaries of the Thames. Within its sixteen square miles, the civil parish includes part of Epping Forest, and the villages of Holyfield, Upshire, High Beech and Sewardstone. Most of this area remains as open country.

The long history of the town has been interwoven with the great abbey and church from which it takes its name. Located at the centre of the Lee Valley Regional Park, there are a number of listed buildings around the town. Until its closure and transformation into a visitor attraction, the Royal Gunpowder Mills was a major employer in the area; now it chronicles the history of gunpowder manufacture.

With the awarding of the 2012 Olympic Games to London, Waltham Abbey now has on its border the venue for the White Water Canoe Course. Managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the White Water Course has become another visitor attraction for the area and with appropriate marketing it should attract more visitors into the Town.

### **THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Council is made up of 11 Councillors who are elected every four years. The last elections were held in May 2019, with the next elections due in May 2023.

The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected annually at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May.

There are three main committees, each having several sub-committees:<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ Policy & Resources
- ❖ Leisure & Community
- ❖ Development & Environment

---

<sup>1</sup> See Diagram 1 attached

Town Council meetings, main committee and sub-committee meetings are held every other month, with the Plans Sub-committee meeting every two weeks.

All meetings are held at the Town Hall and are open to the public with a period of time set aside for members of the public to question Council. The opportunity is also provided for the public to talk with councillors and raise concerns at regular "surgeries" at the market and/or public events.

The Town Council has been re-accredited with the Quality Gold Status under the Local Council Award Scheme. The Council also meets the eligibility criteria and passed the resolution for the use of the Power of General Competence, which was confirmed after the 2019 elections

The Town has an electorate of 16,974 (as at August 2019)

## **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by the qualified Town Clerk who is appointed by the corporate body of the Town Council. The Town Clerk is required to carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's proper officer and to issue all statutory notifications. The Town Clerk is also the appointed Responsible Financial Officer.

The Town Clerk is supported by her Senior Assistant, the Parks Manager, the Buildings Manager, the Office Manager, the TIC Manager, and the Bars Manager.

The Council currently employs a total of 13 full time staff, 2 part-time and 11 temporary/casual staff.

Staff work in administration, grounds maintenance, tourism and facilities.



## **CORPORATE VISION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Vision for Waltham Abbey**

The Town Council is committed to examining and reviewing its responsibilities and settling a viable development plan for the future.

The Council will continue to work towards making significant improvements within the local community, in particular the Town Centre and the environment by working closely and where appropriate in partnership with other organisations.

The vision is to be associated with the creation of a successful town, where people want to live, work, play and visit, with all residents having access to a high quality of life both now and in the future.

In order to achieve this vision, the Council will:

- Engage in an open dialogue with the residents to understand their needs, and in turn explain how we will address these needs within the resources and powers available to the Town Council.
- Provide high standard, cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of residents.
- Assist and encourage other bodies to provide such services.
- Promote the best interests of the town for the betterment of the local community.

The Council's corporate objectives are:

- To enable residents to enjoy high-quality social, recreational and cultural facilities within the town and to seek the continuing improvement and development of these facilities in accordance with the desires expressed by residents.
- To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the town
- To support cultural and leisure needs of the community and continue the work to make Waltham Abbey a "festival town".

- To consult with and take due regard of all comments received from other statutory bodies, voluntary organisation and individuals to ensure improving standards of service that meet with local needs.
- To help create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents (irrespective of their sex, marital status, ethnicity, colour or nationality, disablement, age, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliations) and seek to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and mutual co-operation.
- To safeguard the environment in and around Waltham Abbey from inappropriate development and to maintain it for the future, and to aspire to be a carbon neutral town by 2030.
- To endeavour to respond to all correspondence within seven working days unless further information is required, in which case an acknowledgement will be sent.
- To ensure compliance with financial and data protection policies
- In trying to ensure that it is able to represent and promote these objectives, the Town Council accepts that it has financial responsibilities
- In all its deliberations the Council will take into consideration environmental, sustainable and ethical issues.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **General**

The budgeted expenditure for the Council in 2020/21 is £1,286,358, which is a 5.39% increase on the budgeted 2019/20 spend. This is funded from the Council's trading activities and the precept. The precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council which is collected on our behalf by Epping Forest District Council as the billing authority.

The Town Council's Five Year Business Plan will seek to provide details of its planned spending in order that residents can receive an indication of what the precept will be in the future.

- The Council has set a precept of £871,000 for 2020/21. This represents a 1.71% increase in the Town's element of the council tax, Band D equivalent. This increase reflects the effects of inflation.
- The Council's trading activities income, including rental income, for 2020/21 is forecast at £497,483.
- Council Tax Band D for 2020/21 is £111.49
- Tax Base is 7820.5

### **Capital Expenditure & Financing**

The Council has adopted a Rolling Capital Fund, some of which may be earmarked for specific projects, into which it makes an annual contribution from its revenues. This greatly assists its ability to provide a balanced approach to its capital expenditure in respect of the procurement of new assets and the maintenance of its existing assets. The priority will be to develop and maintain existing assets to produce achievable additional benefits.

The Council will seek to maximise capital receipts from the sale of assets that are deemed surplus to requirements. No targets for capital receipts have been set at this point. Additional income may also be generated, where appropriate, through renting, leasing etc of the Town Council's assets and/or through partnership working and planning gains.

### **Reserves**

The Council has adopted a risk based approach to its levels of reserves which will be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary. The ultimate aim is to increase the revenue reserves to a minimum level that would be set at approximately three months operating costs. This minimum level has now been achieved so a Policy has been set and a report has been put to council regarding investment, with a view to investing some of our reserves to achieve maximum interest whilst at or under the FSCS limit. These investments will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Capital reserves are held in the Rolling Capital Fund and built up for specific projects identified through consultation with the community, and the budgeting process.

### **Allowances**



Councillors are able to claim an allowance for their duties, but members felt that the allowance should not be taken up. There is, however, a separate budget given to the Mayor so that Mayoral duties may be performed. The agreed amount for 2019/20 is £3000. This amount is decided at the Annual Town Council Meeting held in May.

## THE COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

For the purposes of the accounts, the Council functions are divided into budget heads, through the Omega Accounting System. Council services provide the following:

- Cemeteries and Garden of Rest
- Retail Markets and Speciality Markets
- Allotments
- Public Rights of Way Maintenance
- Leisure Parks (children's play areas, sports and green spaces)
- Town Mead Sports & Social Club (Mead Suite)
- Town Hall (Cornmill Suite)
- Tourist Information Centre

## Policy & Resources Committee

The Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for:

- Setting Council policy
- Preparing, control and supervision of the budget
- Setting Fees & Charges
- Information technology
- Audit (external & internal)
- Council staff and establishment<sup>2</sup>
- Task procedures
- Complaints
- Risk Management
- Data Protection
- Strategic Plan (five-year plan)
- Town Hall (building and function room)
- Licensed bars<sup>3</sup>
- Grants
- Neighbourhood Plan
- CCTV

<sup>2</sup> See Establishment Review Subcommittee

<sup>3</sup> See Licensed Bars and Catering Subcommittee

- Website

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Continue to review its policies and procedures to ensure that the Council is run in a legal and business-like manner
- Continue to improve the budget setting and monitoring process and to identify efficiencies.
- Continue to review the Council's Information and Communication needs
- Ensure accounting and audit procedures are completed in a timely manner.
- Review and maintain a risk management strategy as a standing item of Committee business
- Review and update the Strategic Plan on a regular basis
- To achieve, maintain and manage the Council's administration procedures in light of the General Data Protection Regulation 2017.
- Continue to support local non-profit organisations by providing grants and discounted venue hire
- To review and upgrade as necessary the Town Council's telecommunications systems and website to provide effective communication facilities
- Maintain and enhance the quality of the Town Crier newsletter
- Build up the numbers of civil ceremonies taking place within the Town Hall building including the Community Room
- Maintain and refurbish all of its properties and ensure that all statutory testing is carried out on a regular and timely basis.
- Consider the replacement/refurbishment of the Cornmill Suite curtains.
- Look to refurbish the changing rooms at Town Mead.

- Ensure that regular maintenance is carried out of the boilers that serve our changing rooms.
- Look to use any potential planning gain funds to enhance the facilities within the Town.
- To receive reports from the Waltham Abbey Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee and to act upon the requirements therein.
- Look to maintain the upgraded CCTV system for the Town Centre, Town Mead Club House and Leisure Park, and the Cemetery
- Look to upgrade the fleet of council work vehicles.
- Consider greater use of digital means of communications within the Council to work more cost effectively, and to update the Council's computer systems as necessary.
- Maintain and encourage the use of the Town Council's website
- In view of residents' continued concerns regarding safety at night areas of the Town, the option to pay for the lights to be turned on for specific areas will be reviewed.
- To complete the changeover to Internet Banking
- To move towards paperless meetings
- To replace existing vehicle stock with new electric vehicles
- To consider arrangements for the 50 year anniversary of the first Waltham Abbey Town Council

### **Establishment Review Subcommittee**

This subcommittee of the Policy & Resources Committee is responsible for all staffing matters.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Continuously review the management structure and staffing levels to better reflect the changing demands of services and the needs of residents and customers
- Continue to improve staff care through induction, appraisals and the review of policies
- Encourage further staff training
- Work with partners to provide apprenticeships for local people

### **Licensed Bars & Catering Subcommittee**

This Subcommittee is responsible for the bars and catering facilities in the Cornmill Suite of the Town Hall and the Town Mead Sports & Social Club and Mead Function Suite

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Continue to closely monitor the operation of the Town Mead Sports & Social Club and endeavour to run that and the Town Hall Bar facilities in the most cost-effective manner for the benefit of local residents
- Encourage, through promotion and advertising both locally and regionally, the usage of the function suites
- Organise events at the two Suites in conjunction with other local organisations and the Town Promotions Subcommittee

### **LEISURE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

The Leisure and Community Committee is responsible for, and/or supports:

- Recreation grounds
- Tennis<sup>4</sup>
- Cemeteries & gardens of rest
- Allotments
- Markets
- Public conveniences

---

<sup>4</sup> See Tennis Management Subcommittee

- Festive lights
- Christmas Celebrations
- Town Show<sup>5</sup>
- Waltham Abbey in Bloom<sup>6</sup>
- Town Crier Magazine
- Town Centre Partnership
- Tourism<sup>7</sup>
- Town Twinning<sup>8</sup>

### **Recreation Grounds**

The Council is responsible for several recreation grounds, including Town Mead, Larsens, and Lodge Lane.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Continue to maintain and improve all its green space facilities
- Work with partners to improve existing sports facilities, such as the baseball diamond and the quality of the football pitches
- Work with partners to ensure that the artificial pitch on Town Mead provides a healthy and safe environment for users and local residents, and is well-used by both community and commercial organisations
- Work with partners to establish a thriving golf driving range
- Work with partners to increase and improve tennis facilities at Larsens and Town Mead.
- Encourage play schemes and coaching schemes on all our sites
- Promote special high-profile events, including Baseball finals etc
- Aim to increase public participation in outdoor activities
- Improve play areas, replace or upgrade equipment as and when necessary.

<sup>5</sup> See Town Promotions Subcommittee

<sup>6</sup> See Town Promotions Subcommittee

<sup>7</sup> See Tourist Information Centre Management Committee

<sup>8</sup> See Town Twinning Subcommittee

- Look to develop any redundant and/or little used facilities within the parks, including alternative uses for the MUGA/Tennis Court at Town Mead
- Provision of a Splash Zone
- A tree nursery and a program of tree planting
- Extend the community orchard at Town Mead
- Filling in of the Larsen's paddling pool and opening the area to the park
- Installing a 3G pitch/training area at Larsens
- Improve the external facilities at Rochford Pavilion

### **Cemeteries**

The Council is the burial authority and has two cemeteries, one on Sewardstone Road, and the other in the Churchyard.

Within the period of this Plan. the Council will:

- Maintain and improve site maintenance on the two sites
- Seek to obtain permission, plan and develop the cemetery extension at Sewardstone Road
- Continue the digitisation the cemetery records
- Monitor the tenancy at the Cemetery Lodge
- Consider the restoration of the Chapel and the provision of visitor facilities
- Re-surface/replace the road at the old Cemetery
- Promote the Columbaria as an alternative to the Garden of Rest

### **Allotments**

The Council has three allotment sites, at Capershotts, Longfields and Denny Avenue. Currently they are all let, and there is a waiting list

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Maintain and improve the current sites, including reviewing the requirement for additional troughs
- Maintain and refurbish/replace fencing and gates to the allotment sites as necessary
- Encourage the Allotment Association and work with them to improve the facilities
- Support and encourage the Association in the introduction of bees to the sites
- Consider the provision of more sites and troughs, including Longfields site.
- Clear ditches as necessary to ensure adequate drainage on all sites.
- Seek to obtain further allotment provision through working with the District Council.

### **Markets**

Waltham Abbey is a charter market town, which enables the holding of a market in Market Square every Tuesday. An additional authorised market is held each Saturday and there is the occasional specialist market.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Support and encourage the Saturday and Tuesday Markets with the aim of reversing the current trend of reducing stalls
- Encourage improvement in the aesthetics and effectiveness of the market by requiring the use of the striped stall covers etc and maintaining tidy stalls
- Improve stallholder/market management communication by holding regular liaison meetings
- Encourage and facilitate specialty markets
- Consider a greater emphasis on supporting the markets

### **Public Conveniences**

As a primary aim of the Council is to encourage tourism, having sufficient and clean facilities is essential.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Maintain a high standard of cleaning and maintenance, including a regular check throughout the day

### **Festive Lights**

The festive lighting, installed and maintained by the Council is a major feature of the festivities in December.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Obtain all permissions and licences in good time
- Provide a budget to enable the purchase of additional LED lights to realise efficiencies and the extension of the lighted area

### **Christmas Celebrations**

On the last Friday of November, there has been for many years a parade of festive floats through the town centre, known as the Cavalcade of Lights, to celebrate the ceremonial switch on of the festive lighting. Although cancelled in 2010 for security reasons it was reintroduced in 2011 and it continues to be a highlight in the Council's calendar of events.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Look to continue the celebrations with a safe and successful event
- Obtain all permissions and licenses in good time
- Encourage participation by local organisations and businesses
- Promote events through all means available



### **Town Crier Magazine**

Published quarterly, the Council's newsletter is distributed to all households, residential homes, schools and community groups

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Endeavour to maintain the current frequency and standard of the newsletter
- Keep up a dialogue with local groups/associations/residents to obtain interesting and relevant articles for publication
- Use the publication as a consultative document for any issues the Council wish to canvass opinion on

### **Town Centre Partnership**

The Partnership works for the betterment of the Town's businesses and its residents. It is a non-statutory organisation run by volunteers.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Work closely with the Partnership and any other representative body to improve access to external funding
- Encourage partnership working to enhance the economy of the town, and to address issues of anti-social behaviour

### **Town Promotions Subcommittee**

Events which promote the town, and raise the profile of the town are within the remit of the Town Promotions Subcommittee. These events include the Town Show and the Waltham Abbey In Bloom Competition as well as other one-off events.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Encourage participation in the Town Show by local groups
- Promote, organise and manage the Town Show as a community event
- Endeavour to improve the quality and range of the participants in the Town Show

- Promote the In Bloom concept and encourage a greater number of entries, and consequently a well-attended prize-awarding event
- Promote the Waltham Abbey Horticultural Show as a fun community event to realise a high participation level and a well-attended show
- Encourage local groups to work on and improve community areas
- Consider participating in Anglia In Bloom
- Promote film showings in the cinema facility and look to market this facility to attract additional bookings in the Cornmill Suite; such as weddings; exhibitions and conferences.
- Participate in national commemorative and celebratory events.

### **Tourist Information Centre Joint Management Committee**

Working In partnership with Epping Forest District Council, Waltham Abbey Town Council has the management function for the Tourist Information Centre.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Work closely with neighbouring bodies and organisations to promote the town and area as an exciting visitor attraction. e.g. Lee Valley Park; Royal Gunpowder Mills
- Encourage an increase in the numbers of bed and breakfast accommodation available and provide an advertising service
- Update and improve the range of souvenirs
- Become a "What's On Hub" for the town
- Encourage the use of the TIC as a box office for the cinema, various shows, concerts, trips and events

### **Olympic Legacy**

The Council pledges to work with partners and other bodies to promote Waltham Abbey as the leading international White Water Canoeing Centre and to realise a productive legacy for the Town.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Work with neighbouring authorities and other interested organisations to promote the area and Town as a centre for sporting excellence and historical interest.
- Seek to promote the Council as a deserving authority for the investment and/or distribution of any available funds from Government or any other funding body
- Work with local businesses and the community to ensure that the Town benefits financially from the legacy of the Games by welcoming and encouraging an influx of visitors to the locale

### **War Memorial**

The Council is responsible for the War Memorial on Farm Hill Road.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Maintain and clean the memorial in an appropriate manner
- Ensure the continued remembrance for all those who give their life in active service

### **Town Twinning Committee**

The Town has been twinned with Hörstel in Germany for many years. There are close links with the town, and regular visits are made both to and from Hörstel.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will

- Continue to work with the Town Twinning Association
- Maintain and enhance current relationships between the two towns, and to celebrate the 25-year anniversary.
- Encourage cultural/school/educational/sporting links by local organisations and individuals

## DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

This Committee is responsible for:

- Planning Applications<sup>9</sup>
- Highways
- Public Footpaths
- Bus Services

### Planning Applications

Epping Forest District Council is the local planning authority, with the Town Council being a statutory consultee. The Town Council's Planning Committee meet every two weeks to consider the local planning applications.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Will meet every two weeks to make recommendations to the local planning authority in a timely manner
- Staff and Councillors to undertake regular training and updates to maintain and increase knowledge base.
- Encourage the District Council representatives to request the Town Council's participation in any relevant S106 agreements.
- Include the provision of vehicle charging points
- Encourage the use of permeable material rather than hard standing
- 

### Highways

Essex County Council is the highways authority for Waltham Abbey.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Work with the Highways Authority to improve the quality of the existing road infrastructure

---

<sup>9</sup> See Plans Subcommittee

- Consider measures to improve pedestrian safety and work with the highways authorities to deliver those measures
- Liaise with the Local Highways Panel to introduce road and pedestrian safety schemes
- Identify areas where improvement of street lighting is necessary and liaise with Essex County Council to provide this
- Look at the energy efficiency measures for existing street lighting and consider alternatives
- Liaise with The Parking Authority in order to obtain a reduction in parking fees, and/or to assume responsibility for the maintenance and management of the car parks.
- Endeavour to obtain the ownership and management of the car parks within the town
- Install a vehicle charging point at Town Mead

### **Public Footpaths**

These are public rights of way covering the civil parish of Waltham Abbey.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Liaise with suitable partners, such as Essex County Council to improve the quality of the service provided

### **Public Transport**

The Town Council is a consultee on Public Transport issues and currently has no functions as such.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Liaise with suitable partners, such as Essex County Council and the bus operators to maintain and improve services
- Consider the provision of bus shelters if a need is identified
- Encourage the introduction of a formal taxi rank in the town centre

### **Minibuses**

The Council own two minibuses for use by local organisations. They are available to book by any group, and because there is no charge for the hire of the buses there is no requirement for the drivers to hold a PSV licence. The buses have to be returned with a full tank of fuel.

Within the period of this Plan, the Council will:

- Maintain the buses to a high standard and endeavour to ensure that access is open to all groups
- Encourage the use of the buses by local groups
- To consider the replacement with electric vehicles.

