

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL CORPORATE STRATEGY 2022 – 2027



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THE TOWN COUNCIL

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Introduction

An overview of Alton and the Town Council

Alton is a warm and welcoming vibrant historic market town which truly has a community spirit at its heart. Situated at the source of the River Wey and enjoying a rural backdrop as a gateway to the South Downs National Park, Alton is known by many as “Jane Austen Country” with its close ties with neighbouring Chawton. The largest settlement in East Hampshire, the Town also has its own heritage attraction in the shape of the Watercress Line as well as being well known for the civil war Battle of Alton in 1643, the murder of Fanny Adams in 1867 and home to the Allen Gallery and Curtis Museum.

Alton Town Council was created on 1 April 1974 as a result of local government re-organisation and has the status and powers of a Parish Council. The council consists of 13 councillors, elected for a four-year term. The next elections will be held in May 2023. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are appointed annually at the Annual General Meeting in May each year. Councillors represent an electorate of over 14,000, which includes the village of Holybourne as well as the town itself. The population of the parish itself is estimated at nearly 21,000 although many residents of the surrounding villages also rely on Alton for many of their local services.

Alton Town Council owns most of the parks and open spaces in the town, which currently amounts to around 74 Hectares of land. Much of it is devoted to sport or informal recreation, although some of the Council’s land is leased to local organisations who maintain their own premises. The Council also owns the Alton Assembly Rooms, which provides a venue for a wide range of events. In addition, the council is involved in providing allotments, play areas, skateparks, sports pitches, Christmas lights, floral displays, public seats, bus shelters and street furniture as well as organising a full events programme each year including theme markets and fairs, a month-long Walking Festival, Fun Fridays for young residents, Yuletide celebrations, music and literary events.

Alton has been twinned with the commune of Montecchio Maggiore in the province of Veneto in northern Italy since 1998. In 2006 Alton also signed a twinning agreement with the town of Pertuis in the Luberon region of Provence in the south of France.

In November 2021 the revised Neighbourhood Plan for Alton was adopted following independent examination. The Town Council also engages closely with East Hampshire District Council over the emerging Local Plan which is due to be consulted upon in November 2022.

This Corporate Strategy sets out the council’s values, position and priorities over the next five years. It is apolitical and intended as a guide for residents, local businesses and visitors, providing an overview of the council’s current ethos and ways of working. It is a framework which reflects the Town Council’s proactive approach as a forward-thinking professional local authority acting as custodians of the town, representing all those who live, work and visit.

Councillor Pam Jones
Town Mayor

Why has the Town Council decided to produce a Corporate Strategy?

The Council has produced two Corporate Strategies for the Council, one for 2010–2015 and a second covering 2016 -2020. This third iteration of the Corporate Strategy was postponed during the Covid 19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021. Having an agreed strategy provides a framework for the Town Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a consistent and coordinated way.

The Corporate Strategy itself will help inform the local community so Altonians have a good understanding of what the Town Council does. The document also identifies the remit and responsibilities of other delivery bodies such as East Hampshire District Council, Hampshire County Council or other stakeholders.

It is a 'live' document which the Town Council updates regularly, enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. As the Corporate Strategy is publicly available, Altonians will also be able to monitor progress.

Alton in 2022 – The Picture Today.

Alton today continues to see the expansion of the town through significant development. We are in the middle of a period of considerable growth in the town with planning consent in place for over 800 new homes with another 500 already built over the last three years. With the redevelopment of the brewery site approved by planning last year there will be 200 new homes, a care facility, an extension to the Wey Walk and the opening up of the river corridor and a new community hub built on this previously redundant site, now known by the developers CALA Homes, as Rivermead Gardens. The first show homes are now ready for viewings. The redevelopment of the former Magistrates Court and Police Station, another brownfield site within the town, is also well underway, with this prominent location being converted into a later living complex by McCarthy Stone.

The housing developments at Cadnam Farm and Will Hall Farm have now been virtually completed. The land transfer of the public open space named Will Hall Meadow near the latter development and home to the source of the River Wey has also been undertaken and now the site is in Town Council ownership a management plan has been drafted ready to improve this newly acquired public open space.

Crest Nicolson have continued their development of the hybrid South Alton plan taking forward the Treloar Hospital site, with the first phase of the development now occupied. Discussions remain on going as to whether the "Country Park" open space which forms part of the development, will be passed to the Town Council in the next few years to secure its use as a public open space in perpetuity. On the other site within this hybrid scheme, the Borovere development is also progressing at pace, with this gateway into the town from the Selborne Road much altered, with the replacement Butts Bridge a standout feature.

In respect of commercial development outline planning permission was given on the Lynch Hill site for 7 hectares of mixed industrial use more than two years ago but is still to be progressed and the former "Tesco" site in Mill Lane now has full planning permission; this site will house a supermarket, interiors superstore and potentially a drive through fast food outlet and development is now progressing well on this site.

The approval of the modified Alton Neighbourhood Plan in November 2021 was a major achievement; whilst work continues on many of the actions contained within the original plan, the modification ensures that whilst awaiting the emergence of a new Local Plan, Alton has an identified and agreed strategy for housing to enable a robust rejection of any inappropriate development coming forward in the short term.

The Local Plan has still to be finalised and the Regulation 19 public consultation has been further delayed and is now due to take place in November 2022. The preferred option of the District Council has not been agreed upon but there are two major sites at Neatham Farm and Chawton Park Farm under consideration for inclusion in the final plan as well as an extension of the Will Hall Farm development (Hopfield Place)

The new emerging Local Plan will impact the status of some of the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan and 2023/4 will see the Council needing to determine the extent of any review of Neighbourhood Plan arising as a result.

Work continues to develop Alton as a destination town for walking and cycling as well as developing our sustainable tourism agenda with the South Downs National Park, with the town acting as a gateway to access the Park. We continue to attract new visitors to the town through a recent partnership agreement with South Western Railways, our continued relationship with Walk Alton, our reaccreditation as a Walkers are Welcome town and our credentials as a key location for a wide variety of routes for all ages and abilities. With the Town Council extended Annual Walking Festival spanning the whole month of May for a fifth year in 2022 and featuring over 100 walks, we will be pleased to welcome around 1500 walkers from near and far as they enjoy the beautiful countryside surrounding us as well as learning more about good health and wellbeing and sampling the wide variety of tea and cake available throughout the Town! Work is also in the planning stages with Cycle Alton representatives to develop a Festival of Cycling in 2023 which will help our responsible tourism agenda still further as we seek to attract new audiences to the town.



The remit of Alton Town Council and other Local Authorities

There are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Alton Town Council is the first and most local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the town, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community. East Hampshire District Council is the second tier and is responsible for services including car parking, housing and street cleaning. Finally, Hampshire County Council's responsibilities include highways (relating to both roads and pavements), education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

The Town Council has responsibility for:

- The management, maintenance and development of open spaces in the Public Gardens, Anstey Park, Jubilee Playing Fields, King's Pond, Greenfields, Holybourne (leased) Windmill Hill, Flood Meadows, the Butts, Barley Fields, Treloar Heights and Will Hall Meadow.
- The provision of sports pitches at Anstey Park and Jubilee Playing Fields
- Facilitating the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Action Plan contained within it
- The provision of Allotments
- The provision of Christmas lighting.
- The provision and maintenance of public play areas and the skate parks and Anstey Park and Jubilee Fields.
- The provision and management of bus shelter advertising, notice boards and street furniture in the Town Centre.
- The provision of floral displays for Alton in Bloom
- The upkeep of the War Memorials
- The management of the Town Council's assets and property portfolio.
- Monitoring and reporting footpath issues
- The emptying of bins in public parks
- The management of the Assembly Rooms, the Finnimore Pavilion, Charles Reed and Harry Baker Pavilions at Jubilee Fields
- The provision of CCTV hardware.
- The funding and delivery of a number of town events (and support and facilitation of groups providing other town events).
- The provision of grants to Community Organisations.
- Submitting comments on planning, change of use and licensing applications in Alton as a statutory consultee of the Planning Authority.
- Production and distribution of the Altonian Newsletter and a number of social media platforms
- Provision of the weekly High Street Market

The Full Council meets five times a year, but much of its business is conducted by committees; Policy & Resources, Open Spaces, Allotments Sub-Committee, Community Committee, Climate Change Sub Committee, Staffing Sub Committee and Planning & Transport. These operate under delegated powers from the council, which retains ultimate authority. The council currently employs fourteen staff to manage and deliver its services. With a budgeted expenditure of just under £1.3m in 2022/23 on service provision and delivery of community projects, with £781,195 of this coming from the council taxpayer and the remainder being met by income from rents, leases, grants and services.

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by a qualified Town Clerk (Mrs. Leah Coney) who is appointed by the Council and who is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). The Town Clerk must carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's Proper Officer and issue all statutory notifications. She is supported by the Finance and Administration Manager (Patricia Harris), who is responsible for general and financial administration of the Council. The Town Hall also employs three officers who are responsible for delivering the Council events programme, marketing and promotions strategy and community work. The team is ably supported by the Assistant to the Clerk and the Office Administrator, who also manages the Mayor's diary. The Grounds Maintenance Team is headed by Martin Whapshott who leads a team of seven full time staff.

Please contact the Town Hall if you have any issues or comments in relation to the Town Council's areas of responsibility. The Town Hall is located in Market Square and is open from Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 4.30pm. You may also contact us via telephone on 01420 83986 or via e-mail at info@alton.gov.uk. We aim to respond to any e-mail requests within 2 working days. You can also visit our website at www.alton.gov.uk for further information on the council and its service provision.

Other Authorities

East Hampshire District Council is responsible for environmental services (litter, street cleaning, refuse and recycling, including dog fouling), operating the majority of the town's car parks, the maintenance and upkeep of the Alton Burial Ground, public convenience provision, business support and the provision of housing services (along with Housing Associations). They are also the local Planning Authority and are responsible for development consent, enforcement, applications for works to trees, advertising consent and licencing. They can be contacted at www.easthants.gov.uk or 01730 266551

Hampshire County Council is responsible for on-street parking, highways issues, signage, lighting and coordinating public transport (along with service providers). The County Council is also responsible for health and social care, library services and education. They can be contacted at www.hants.gov.uk or 0300 555 1375

Hampshire Police is responsible for addressing crime and anti-social behaviour in Alton. Go to <http://www.hampshire.police.uk/internet/my-neighbourhood/east-hants/alton/alton-rural> for more information. In the event of an emergency please dial 999 or 101 for non-emergency Police matters



Beyond 2022 – the Ultra Localism Agenda – At the heart of the Community.

Nationally, the remit of Town and Parish Councils has changed; there is a shift from merely providing traditional services such as play areas and allotments to being more proactive, interacting with the community in service provision and engaging in a community facing agenda. This can also involve extending service provision to take responsibility for those non-statutory services which have been removed or cut by higher tiers of local authority. This is not straight devolution but a shift change to giving a greater emphasis to putting the community at the heart of decision making, with the Council working as a connector to put people together to enable them to develop their own community projects; one of the original aspirations of the Localism agenda back in 2011. The recent Coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated more than ever the need for the community to come together, so we can help ourselves and our neighbours; to give support and strength to those in need and to recognise and appreciate who embrace this ethos.

Using the General Power of Competence legislation, Town Councils can now fully expand their ability to fund projects outside of the constraints previously laid down and imposed by statute and think more “outside of the box”. This gives a great opportunity not only to promote grass roots democracy but to truly create a connected community; for Alton Town Council that has already resulted in the provision of a sustainable youth service for Alton, through our work with the King’s Arms and the purchase of a building in the town centre as their base.

Councils are also being encouraged to take a lead in the development of health and wellbeing agendas. *“Healthier communities are more prosperous communities”* (Tracey Crouch MP – NALC Spring Conference February 2019) This is primarily through helping residents to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or by local groups and organisations, from signposting to the staging of events.

“There is good evidence that getting people involved in community life, keeping them active and improving social connections – all of which are hallmarks of social prescribing – is good for both health and wellbeing” (Just what the doctor ordered. Social prescribing – a guide for local authorities (Local Government Association))

It is a very challenging yet very exciting time for the sector!

Residents love the community spirit and place in Alton; the generous nature of its people, particularly those volunteering, fundraising, running and participating in the myriad clubs and local organisations. The response by Altonians to the Covid 19 pandemic and more recently the situation in Ukraine, has demonstrated, once again, how the local community is so generous with its time and passion to help; the sense of social responsibility for those struggling in the face of adversity is acutely seen in every direction.



ALTON & DISTRICT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FUND

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL PEOPLE



Funding available for goods and services up to a value of £500 for:

Individuals and families, as well as project funding for
local community groups, charities, and organisations.

For more information go to:

www.alton.gov.uk or
[email community@alton.gov.uk](mailto:community@alton.gov.uk)

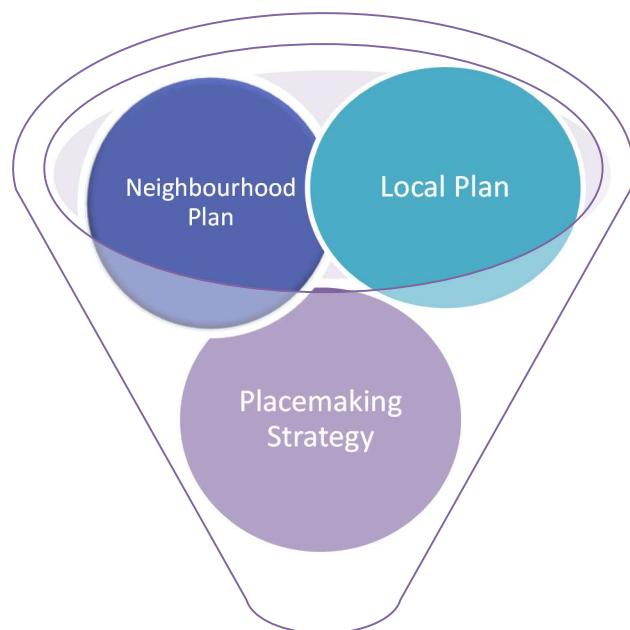


Corporate Vision and Objectives

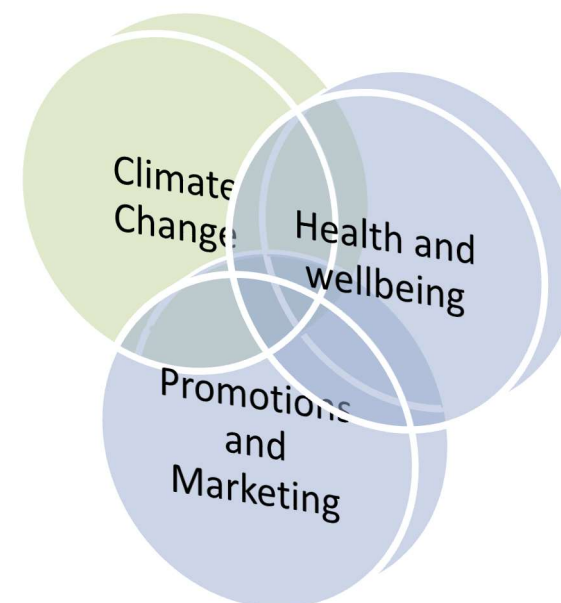
The Town Council's has five key priorities over the next four years:

- ***To be an exemplar town in the advancement of sustainable living and to make a positive impact on our local environment***
- ***Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of Altonians including promoting an inclusive range of projects and activities.***
- ***Encouraging community cohesion.***
- ***Enhancing the public realm for residents, businesses and visitors, promoting the town locally and beyond***
- ***To advocate, representing our community in the best interests of the town and specifically in relation to new development.***

The Council's current suite of three in-house strategy documents expand upon the five key priorities in this vision; their accompanying detailed action plans provide a framework for the Council's projects and service delivery



The Corporate Strategy is also informed by three strategic documents produced by Alton Town Council and East Hampshire District Council



Alton Town Council's strategic documents

The Corporate Strategy is one of the main ways of telling you what we are doing to meet the needs of the community. It's a two-way conversation.

Please tell us what you think about it. We welcome your comments. If you require any further information that would help you understand what we are trying to achieve, please let us know. We can also provide additional information on the issues raised in this document

It is our intention to review the Corporate Strategy regularly, publish progress and make any changes considered necessary as a result.

Please respond to: Mrs Leah Coney, Town Clerk
Alton Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square,
Alton. Hampshire GU34 1HD Tel: 01420 83986.

townclerk@alton.gov.uk



OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

2022 Priorities.

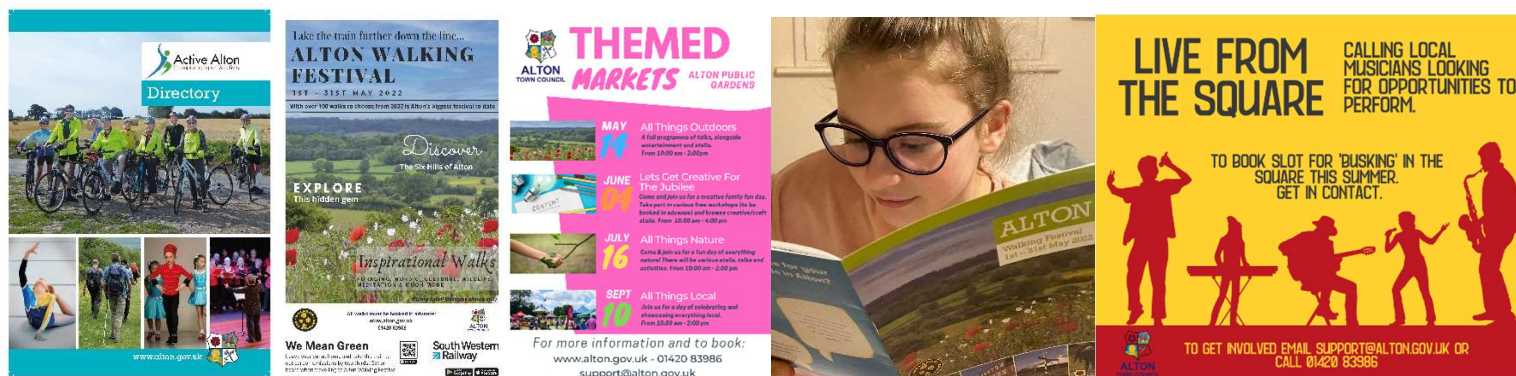
- Progression of plans to create a replacement pavilion at Jubilee Fields (on-going)
- Carry out the current year objectives contained within the Management Plans
- Promotion of open spaces in relation to the health and wellbeing of the town
- To work in a proactive partnership with local volunteers, Friends Groups and working parties.
- To continue to develop our sporting provision for both junior and senior players
- To prioritise conservation and ecology work within the towns natural, informal open spaces
- To continue to develop and improve provisions for young people
- Maintain dialogue with Crest Nicolson over the development of the Open Space at the former Treloar Hospital site (on-going)
- The create a high quality and inclusive town park at the Public Gardens.



COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

2022 Priorities

- Continue to develop the delivery of long term, sustainable youth projects for Alton
- Extending promotion of volunteering opportunities across the town and engaging more people in community led events.
- To improve Health and Wellbeing Support for the local community
- Encouraging community groups such as Alton and District Residents Association to work as connectors in their communities and neighbourhoods.
- Enriching the High Street offering to ensure a socially vibrant and commercially vital place.
- Continuing to deliver the Walking Festivals and improving Alton as a “Destination” location for walkers and cyclists
- Maintaining our links as a town associated with figures including Jane Austen and Gilbert White and seeking to attract new visitors to the Town to boost the local economy.
- Continuing to develop both the Council’s social media platforms and a communications plan which is inclusive in its reach
- The successful delivery of an innovative and diverse calendar of free to attend events, highlighting and celebrating our heritage and links with the creative arts.



PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

2022 Priorities.

- Local Plan Review. To work proactively work with EHDC to ensure that the views of Altonians are clearly conveyed during the consultation process – with a focus on infrastructure improvements, appropriate site allocations for housing and employment and creating greater flexibility in town centre use classes.
- To consistently apply the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan for all new full, outline and reserved matters applications.
- To continue to be proactive at the pre-application stage of planning, encouraging potential developers to engage in a dialogue with the Town Council to ensure the most appropriate schemes (on-going)
- Reducing the need for mitigation through promotion of positive enhancement of natural assets and environmental sustainability in development.
- To champion sustainable development and encourage the achievement of zero carbon.
- Lobby the planning authority to ensure outstanding legal agreements are delivered in full in a timely manner, particularly in respect of Highways schemes.
- Working to facilitate improvements for Active Travel in Alton to include cycling and walking infrastructure.



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

incorporating the work of the Staffing Sub Committee and the Climate Change Sub Committee

2022 Priorities.

- Producing a budget which futureproofs the Council through increasing Ear Marked Reserves (EMRs), optimising the ability of the Council to react to the potential changes in government funding and service provision levels.
- The continuation of a performance management based appraisal regime and encouragement of the pursuit of career development and training. To continue to invest in the development of our staff to enable them to meet the strategic objectives of the council whilst meeting their career and developmental aspirations;
- To continue to review and update the Council's asset register, timetabling a rolling 5-year capital and renewals programme for replacement of equipment, machinery and property upgrades.
- To develop opportunities to increase council revenue and funding streams to minimise the burden on the taxpayer in the provision of public services.
- As a part of the wider government driven "Levelling Up" and "Devolution" agendas, to continue to review the feasibility as to whether Alton Town Council should seek to take on additional service provision in the Town on a case-by-case basis.
- Working with colleagues at Alton Climate Action Network and Energy Alton to deliver the five key principles in the Town Council Climate Change Strategy; reducing the Council's carbon footprint, adopting and advocating behaviour change in the consumption of resources and promoting sustainable energy efficient solutions.



Reports compiled April 2022 by the Town Clerk.