

# ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL



## BUSINESS PLAN

including the Medium-term Financial Plan

# 2023-2027

Adopted by Full Council – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Review date – December 2024

## **1. DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS**

Parish and Town Councils are democratically elected local authorities with duties and privileges conferred by Act of Parliament. Alcester Town Council came into being in April 1974 and adopted Section 245(6) of the Local Government Act 1972 which gives Parish and Town Councils the power by resolution to allow themselves the title of Town Council and the Chair of a Town Council be entitled to be known as the 'Town Mayor'.

By virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 s.14 (2) the Council is a corporate body with perpetual succession. Decisions made by the Council are the responsibility of the Council as a whole.

Alcester Town Council has the General Power of Competence (GPC). The Town Council resolved from May 2023 until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council, that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965, The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, to adopt the General Power of Competence which gives Local Authorities "the power to do anything that individuals generally may do as long as they do not break any other laws". It is a power of first resort.

The Town Council holds sole responsibility for the services it provides. It formulates policies for action and decides how to raise and spend money on behalf of the local community.

The Town Council is the first tier of local government closest to the people and consists of individual councillors who contribute to the work of the whole Town Council.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE BUSINESS PLAN**

This Business Plan sets out how Alcester Town Council will work for the people of Alcester. It sets out our mission, objectives and key priorities. It is our action plan for the next four years but sets out ambitions over a longer period.

The Business Plan sets the direction and all Town Council strategies, policies and procedures will be guided by the plan. It is a rolling four-year plan that allows the Council to adapt and change in a controlled and systematic way, growing to meet the changing needs of the Community, the changing pressures from other strategic plans and Government legislation.

It will influence how we design and deliver services, allocate our resources and achieve value for money. The plan sets out how we propose to achieve our longer- term vision and outcomes and specifies the priorities and actions to be delivered during the next four years. In developing this Plan, the views of the local community have been taken into account via a survey, together with priorities set elsewhere in local and national context.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

The Council is made up of 16 Councillors who are elected every four years, with the next planned elections due in May 2027. Its offices are located at Globe House, Priory Road, Alcester, B49 5DZ.

The Council has a Town Mayor (in the role of Chairman of the Council) and a Deputy Mayor. The holders of these positions are elected each year at the Annual Council Meeting held in May.

The Council has three standing committees – Planning, Finance & General Purposes and Staffing. Each Councillor is appointed annually as a Lead Councillor for an area of the Town Council’s operations. Working Groups are set up as required.

The Full Council meets at 7 pm on the first Tuesday of each month (except for occasional months when Bank Holidays fall close to the beginning of the month).

Full Council meetings are widely advertised on the Council website and notice boards.

All Council meetings are open to the public and time is set aside at each meeting for members of the public to speak.

### **4. ASSETS**

The Town Council maintains an Asset Register which lists all the assets owned by the Town Council.

The most significant asset is the Eric Payne Community Centre, a modern and well-equipped community building which is run by the Town Council and is hired out to many local groups and societies and also to individuals wishing to hold events.

In April 2021, the Town Council took a 125-year lease of The Greig Hall. The Hall was a former community building which had been closed by the previous owners and had been boarded up for 11 years. The Town Council undertook an extensive renovation project which was completed in February 2023 when the Hall was sub-let to The Greig Hall CIO, a newly formed charity who now run the Hall.

The Town Council are the burial authority and own and manage the Cemetery on Birmingham Road in Alcester.

The Town Council also manage four play areas, four sets of allotments and various open spaces which are available for community use.

## **5. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The administration of the Town Council is managed by a qualified Town Clerk who is appointed by the 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 designated Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and advises the Council on legal, financial and policy matters.

The Town Clerk is the Chief Officer of the Council supported by a small team of 8 staff.

The part-time Deputy Clerk has delegated authority when the Town Clerk is absent. The Deputy Town Clerk is responsible for the Planning Committee, external communications including the website and social media and also acts as the Mayor's secretary.

The Facilities Manager has day-to-day operational responsibility for the Cemetery, the Eric Payne Community Centre, the four play areas, the four allotment sites and the Council's other public open space.

The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator is responsible for running the numerous health and wellbeing initiatives set up by the Council.

There is also a small team of grounds staff who maintain the Cemetery and carry out litter picking and empty the bins on Town Council property. They also carry out miscellaneous maintenance and inspection tasks. A cleaner is employed at the Eric Payne Community Centre and a Youth Club Leader is employed to run the Depot Youth Club.

## **6. STRATEGIC VISION, AND OBJECTIVES**

The Town Council adopted a Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 in June 2023 following public consultation.

The Plan states that the Mission for the Town Council is as follows:

**“Alcester Town Council will seek to improve the quality of life for present and future generations putting the priorities of our residents at the heart of everything we do.”**

The Plan sets out the Town Council’s Objectives as follows:

- 1. Protect, enhance and improve the local environment**
- 2. Play an active role in the promotion and future development of the town**
- 3. Support and promote the health and wellbeing of our community**
- 4. Improve the resilience of the area and strengthen our community**
- 5. Maintain effective and efficient governance and management of resources**
- 6. Improve community engagement**
- 7. Help to create a future that is resilient to the impact of climate change**

The Town Council has adopted an Action Plan for 2023-24 to achieve these Objectives.

## **7. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **General**

The budgeted annual revenue expenditure for the Council in 2023-24 is £367,571. This will be funded from the Council’s precept, cemetery fees, hire fees from the Eric Payne Community Centre and miscellaneous other income.

The precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council which is collected on our behalf by Stratford on Avon District Council as the rating authority. The Town Council’s four-year Business Plan seeks to provide details of its future spending in order that residents can receive an indication of what the precept will be in future years.

- The Council set a precept of £306,536 in 2022/2023 and a precept of £329,813 for 2023/2024.
- There was a small increase in the tax base so this represented a 5% rise in the Town Council element of residents Council Tax.

- The Council's income for 2023/2024, other than the precept, is expected to be £37,758, made up almost equally of cemetery fees and hire fees for the Eric Payne Community Centre.
- As in previous years, it is intended that additional income will be sourced to fund approved projects.
- A Band D Council Taxpayer will pay £144.57 per annum for Town Council Services in 2023/2024. This compares to £137.69 in 2022/2023.

### **Capital Expenditure and Finance**

Capital expenditure will be balanced between the sustainability and development of existing assets and the provision of new assets to meet the Council's objectives.

Capital expenditure will be financed where possible using specific earmarked reserves or revenue contributions. Decisions will be taken at the appropriate time to ensure that the most appropriate and cost-efficient financing options are considered and taken.

The Town Council receives modest amounts of Community Infrastructure Levy funding as new developments are built in Alcester. Funds have been used to pay for new play equipment. No significant funds are, however, expected from this source.

The Town Council received s106 funding from the northern section of the Bloor Homes Allimore Lane development. This related to Built Contribution payments which were allocated to the renovation of the Greig Hall. s106 funds were also received for Public Open Space improvements which were used to resurface footpaths in Jubilee Fields.

A second tranche of s106 funds allocated to the Greig Hall are expected from the southern section of the development. A sum equivalent to the funds allocated for The Greig Hall was spent from General Reserves in 2022-2023 to complete the renovation of the Hall. The s106 funds on receipt will therefore be paid into General Reserves. The funds due for Public Open Space are yet to be allocated but it is expected that they will be used for improvements at Jubilee Fields being the closest public open space to the new housing development.

## Reserves

The Council adopts a risk-based approach to its levels of reserves which are reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary. The Council has reserves which meet the recommended level of General Reserves. When considering the medium-term financial position over four years, the Council will aim to increase the General Reserves over this period and progress towards achieving this will be reviewed each year at budget setting time.

The Town Council adopted an updated Reserves Policy in July 2023 which is reviewed annually.

## Investments

The Town Council has historically kept its funds entirely in one High Street bank. The Town Council is classified as a “small local authority” by the Financial Services Compensation Fund so up to £85,000 of investment is protected in each financial institution.

In order to reduce risk, the Town Council now seeks to invest in other institutions in accordance with its Investment Strategy which is reviewed annually. The main investment currently is in the Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) managed by CCLA Investment Management Limited. The PSDF has been identified as a low risk, high liquidity option (funds can be moved in or out in the same day).

## Borrowing

The Town Council has used the facility to borrow funds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to raise funds. It borrowed from the PWLB to support the Greig Hall in 2008 and in 2009 to acquire land on Stratford Road. In 2022, the Town Council borrowed £100,000 to finance the new heating system for The Greig Hall.

The total borrowings as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 were £134,564.

This is made up of the three separate loans as follows:

Loan number	Principal outstanding at 31/03/2023	Interest rate	End of term
PW490406	£26,701.62	4.45%	April 2025

PW495558	£16,712.02	4.13%	April 2029
510434	£91,150.78	2.67%	March 2032

The Town Council intends to seek opportunities to repay the first two loans early from reserves when funds allow.

### **Grant funding**

The Town Council has had considerable success in securing grants and donations from outside sources.

Significant grants were obtained from Church Street Property Trust and Warwickshire County Council (Green Shoots Fund) for the renovation of The Greig Hall. A donation of £100,000 from The Friends of the Greig Hall was also used for the refurbishment.

All health and wellbeing projects are funded from external sources most notably a grant of £40,000 from Warwickshire County Council Social Impact Fund was used to fund the running of The Crafty Lunch Club for 12 months.

Recently a proposal to purchase new play equipment to mark HM The Kings Coronation and for a new bench to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day in 2024 have been well supported by donations.



## Medium Term Financial Plan

### ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL MEDIUM FINANCIAL PLAN

	2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	2026/27 £000's	2027/28 £000's
PAYROLL	209	219	228	237	246
OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE	158	237	296	326	342
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	367	456	524	563	588
INCOME	37	39	41	43	45
NET EXPENDITURE	330	417	483	520	543
<b>PRECEPT</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>543</b>
COUNCIL TAX BASE	2.281	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.5
<b>BAND D COUNCIL TAX CHARGE</b>	<b>144.67</b>	<b>181.3</b>	<b>201.25</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>217.2</b>

## 8. MONITORING THE BUSINESS PLAN

The Business Plan will be monitored at the Finance and General Purposes Committee as part of the budget setting process and reported to Full Council.