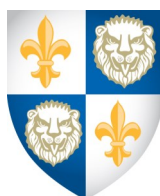


Strategic Plan

Adopted 18 April 2023



**SHAFTESBURY
TOWN
COUNCIL**

Section 1: Introduction

Shaftesbury is a town and civil parish in Dorset, England. It is situated on the A30 road near to the border with Wiltshire, around 20 miles west of Salisbury and Stonehenge and less than 30 miles from the county town of Dorchester and Poole Harbour. It is the only significant hilltop settlement in Dorset with outstanding views of beautiful countryside, being built about 215 metres (705ft) above sea level on a greensand hill on the edge of Cranborne Chase.

Shaftesbury has had a long and influential history spanning over 2000 years. Its elevated location made it a natural place for the Saxon King Alfred the Great to build a fortified settlement in the 9th century AD. He also founded an influential nunnery. Shaftesbury also has links to other notable historic figures. In 978 the Saxon king Edward, was murdered at Corfe and in 979 he was buried in Shaftesbury Abbey. Known as Edward the Martyr he was canonised in 1001. Henry VIII dissolved Shaftesbury Abbey in 1539. Nothing now remains of the original nunnery and only the foundations of the 11th century Abbey Church of St. Mary and St. Edward built on the site remain. The site is now open as Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Gardens.

The Saxon borough lay on the west of the abbey, where gardens and scattered houses now flank the street called Bimport. King Canute died in Shaftesbury in 1035. In common with many towns Shaftesbury has been known as a market town since the 10th century. There have also been royal mints (10th century), maltings and breweries. Less common from the late 17th to 19th century the main industry in Shaftesbury was making buttons. In 1973 the iconic TV advert for Hovis bread directed by Ridley Scott was filmed on Gold Hill. Westminster Memorial Hospital was founded in 1871.

One of the limiting factors in Shaftesbury's growth has been the lack of a railway link. Currently the nearest railway station is located in neighbouring Gillingham. Shaftesbury has an active cultural offer. It has two museums: Gold Hill Museum (opened 1946) and Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Gardens. Shaftsbury Arts Centre (opened 1957).

Shaftesbury is in the North Dorset parliamentary constituency. Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) is the most local tier of local government in Dorset, separate from but alongside Dorset Council, the Unitary Authority. We are a town council with a long and illustrious history of working within a considered, democratic, framework which is prudent, transparent and respectful of the local community. The role of the Town Council is to ensure Shaftesbury is a thriving community and a healthy, vibrant and attractive place in which to work, live and visit.

Founded in 1977 Shaftesbury Town Council is based in the Town Hall built in 1827 which has one of the most majestic views of any town hall in the country. The main services provided by the Town Council are as follows:

- Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas
- Recreation and Recreational Facilities
- Swimming Pool: Shaftesbury Lido is a community run swimming pool, run by Shaftesbury Town Council and staffed by fully paid qualified lifeguards.

- Planning matters (acting as a consultee on planning applications to the planning authority)
- Grants to Voluntary Organizations
- Allotments at St James, Mampitts, A30 and Bray
- Provision of Cemetery at Mampitts
- Litter collection and Litter Receptacles
- The Town Hall: Apart from Council meetings the building is available for hire and is a popular wedding venue. The rooms downstairs are used for a variety of markets and community activities.
- Bus Shelters
- Public Conveniences (Bell Street)
- Street Markets
- Civic events promoted by the Town Mayor
- Crime Prevention Initiatives
- War memorial

Councillors

There are twelve councillors, with a Mayor and Deputy Mayor representing two wards Shaftesbury West which elects six councillors and Shaftesbury East which elects six with a further one with effect from the 2024 elections. Therefore, from May 2024 there will be fifteen councillors.

General Power of Competence

The council holds the General Power of Competence with all councillors having been elected and the Town Clerk CiLCA qualified.

Strategic Plan

Running alongside the Strategic Plan is the STC work programme which focuses on bringing people together, enabling and supporting a strong resilient community. We will continue to support local community groups and neighbourhoods. We will work to improve the quality of our green environment and continue to work to reduce the impact of climate change. Our 2023/2024 programme is ambitious, and you can see the combined Work Programme linked to the Budget.

The Council has devised ‘four pillars’ or themes that will be referred to later in this document, these ‘pillars’ will form the basis of its strategic aims. This is the Town Council’s statement of what it aims to achieve within the next 3 years 2023–2026 (short term) whilst also recognising longer-term ambitions (e.g. climate change) over 10 years. Whilst not exclusive the projects included have been agreed in principle as areas to support and resource. All projects will be kept under review and may be amended or added to as circumstances change within the duration of the plan.

The **STC Strategic Plan** is made up of 4 key pillars:

- 1. Environment Work Programme**
- 2. Communities Development Work Programme**
- 3. Resilience Work Programme**
- 4. Prosperity & Economic Regeneration Work Programme**

These pillars are featured within the STC Work Programme together with the following:

- Marketing & Communications Work Programme
- General Work Programme

The Council believes it is important to establish a core set of organisational values that determine the way we operate and conduct business. These three core values are:

- To conduct its business with integrity, impartiality, and transparency in the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act.
- Be a listening and caring Council that treats all views with courtesy and respect.
- To have a positive ‘can do’ attitude in which we believe in the people, businesses and communities of Shaftesbury and strive to support them to flourish. Ambitions involve the Town Council being actively engaged to find solutions which best meet local needs and priorities in respect of significant choices to be made affecting the town’s future.

The strategy, originally written in May 2017 and reviewed and amended in June 2021, aims to scope out the vision, principles and detail of what the current Shaftesbury Town Council wants to achieve and how it proposes to do that. The strategy provides enough detail to prepare the annual work plans and budgets whilst being flexible enough to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise. It also provides the framework within which the community, other councils, the voluntary sector and businesses can engage with Shaftesbury Town Council over the coming years.

This is a living document which will be reviewed and evolve according to changing circumstances.

Section 2: Vision

Shaftesbury is a town which looks for and tries out new ideas and ways of doing things. It is a place that is proudly independent and puts local solutions first, but is also outward looking, building and maintaining connections both locally and across Dorset.

From these solid foundations, we want to build:

- A positive and inclusive town where no-one gets left behind
- A clean, healthy and happy town
- A thriving and resilient community and local economy

- A town that actively encourages local people to participate in and feel ownership over ideas, spaces and assets
- A town which embraces innovation, takes risks, celebrates its successes and learns from its experiences

Section 3: The wider and the local contexts for that vision

The Wider Picture

We are living in changeable and unpredictable times characterised by deep divisions in society, exemplified by the unfolding consequences of the Covid pandemic, an increasing poverty gap, Brexit and the climate and ecological crisis.

For all our independent spirit, Shaftesbury is intimately connected to and influenced by wider national and international developments that inevitably affect the wellbeing and confidence of Shaftesbury's residents and businesses.

The National Government has set legally binding targets for net zero emissions by 2050. Parliament and all tiers of local government in Dorset, including Shaftesbury Town Council in December 2018, have declared a Climate Emergency, and Shaftesbury Town Council has pledged to make Shaftesbury carbon neutral by 2030.

The impact of cuts to public services—health, social care, education and emergency services included—will continue to dominate this strategic period as it did the last. Cuts in services have affected all aspects of society and especially the more vulnerable people in our community.

The Local Picture

Working with the community, we have already started to take action in relation to climate change and accompanying biodiversity loss, austerity and severe reductions in public sector funding.

During 2020–21, we saw first-hand the value of community resilience in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We will need to continue to develop ways to increase local resilience across a wide variety of community fronts in order to respond creatively to whatever the future holds.

The Neighbourhood Plan review/update process will begin during this period and will help to reinforce key themes in this strategy. The revised National Planning Policy Framework creates more opportunity for policy that addresses climate and ecological change but may also reduce the power of local voices to respond to developments in their communities.

Our local environment strongly affects our experience of the town, ranging from the many things that make Shaftesbury a very special place to live, such as a thriving local economy with regular markets and the enjoyment of our recreational spaces to all the factors limiting or threatening that enjoyment, including availability of parking, ease of access to key

services, the cleanliness of our streets, the confidence with which we can enjoy “active travel” e.g. cycling and walking in the town, increasing numbers of houses being built, and increased traffic congestion with the associated health hazards of speeding, air pollution and noise.

Shaftesbury’s location, its hills and the placement of key services and facilities around town mean that many people living and working in the town rely on cars for their day-to-day travel both within the town and to go to larger shopping centres. Shaftesbury is also a key hub for many small villages and communities, enabling people to access health services, education, post office services and shops.

We understand that Shaftesbury, through its cultural, heritage, arts and tourism services is integral to the town’s future identity. We believe that in these uncertain times with town centre banks closing, challenges to the climate/environment, town councils like ours must play an increasingly important role in helping to maintain and improve local quality of life.

Through our assets, we are aspiring to create a cleaner, greener, safer, more vibrant place to enjoy and where everyone is proud to live and work. Putting a strong emphasis on community benefit, enhancing civic pride, boosting health and wellbeing and developing our visitor experience to keep our High Street vibrant area all key priorities. We also want to recognise the town’s unique, rich history as a Saxon market town and embracing the traditions of being a Town council since 1313. We believe it is important to engage with our local community.

We will continue to listen to ensure that the people of our community are at the forefront of how we shape the outcomes we strive to achieve. The Town Council uses a range of channels for communication to connect with people, including social media alongside the more traditional methods. We will continue to develop community engagement to make sure even the harder to reach community demographics get their voice heard. We are strongly influenced by what local people have to say about Shaftesbury. We are keen to maintain an open dialogue and will listen and respond to suggestions and concerns which are brought to our attention.

This Strategy provides a comprehensive framework to guide future activities and help us ensure we realise our ambitions for the town. It is a ‘living document’ and will be developed and referred to as we move forward with our plans. The Town Council understands that not everything will be possible in a shorter time frame and there are many factors outside our control. However, by being clear in our intentions and direct in our efforts, we should ensure we will be more effective in influencing key decisions which affect all aspects of the town and in taking direct action where appropriate to maintain or improve services.

The Council’s main funding comes via its precept—this is a levy made and collected via the council tax charge payable by Shaftesbury residents. The 2023/2024 expenditure budget is £741,671 of which £560,156 will be collected via the precept. This equates to £169.15 per year on an average, Band D, household.

Within this overall budget, the council has allocated resources to fund projects identified within the strategic plan for this year. Within its financial management, the council will maintain adequate levels of general reserves in line with its financial regulations and will

where appropriate maintain earmarked reserves which can be used as required to help fund the key strategies and any future major projects identified in this plan.

Staff

- To deliver this extensive programme we have 2 full-time and 3 part-time office staff. We also have 3 members of the grounds team plus a caretaker who takes care of the Town Hall and Town Centre standards. We have seasonal lifeguards who are employed on an annual basis from May to August.
- We want to retain the quality in everything we do—from how we communicate with each other through to how we manage our open spaces and work with businesses and communities.

Shaftesbury Town Council Staff Structure August 2023



The structure is headed by a Town Clerk. The officer structure is reviewed annually to ensure that it is able to deliver the broad spectrum of planned activities. We recognise that the core staff number remains relatively small in number and this will be supplemented as necessary by procuring expertise or services externally in order to ensure there is the capacity to deliver, whilst remaining flexible. The Council is committed to the development of an efficient and innovative operating model in order to achieve its strategic objectives.

The Town Council will adhere to good governance best practice via its adopted and published policies and procedures. The Town Council will act in the best interests of local people.

Section 4 sets out the **Council's philosophy** at the heart of our strategy and how we envisage bringing this to life in the way that we work.

- This section sets out the main pillars of our strategy; the key areas of our work for the next four years.
- The central theme underpinning the Council's approach will be supporting a town that is ambitious, inclusive and socially, economically and environmentally resilient
- We will continue to increase participation and build engaged and active communities that are stronger, better equipped to address local challenges and better able to thrive
- We will create an environment in which people can thrive. We will work to build a cohesive community that brings people of different generations and backgrounds together
- We will work with the community to enhance our shared local environment, including local green spaces; to improve air quality; and to make Shaftesbury clean and welcoming
- In the face of a climate emergency, we will strive to make Shaftesbury carbon neutral by 2030 by implementing a robust Action Plan. To do this, we will continue to lead the community and inform the public on the facts and encouraging debate on the issues and choices that face us all. We will seek to increase renewable energy supply and energy efficiency, reduce waste, and address transport congestion and pollution

Environment

The Council looks after over 50 acres of parks and green spaces across the town, from recreation areas and woods to play areas. Managing and looking after these spaces to the high standards set by us (and expected by the town) is a unique and pressured challenge. The Grounds team are very visible in the town and represent the public face of the Council in relation to our parks and green spaces. They are supported by an external contractor who assists in the more complex and diverse management of some of our open spaces.

We will explore opportunities to take on more green spaces and more public places; and we will provide the support necessary to ensure that the team and the community can carry on making Shaftesbury a better place and a cleaner, greener town. We will strengthen our partnerships with community groups and neighbourhood networks to seek opportunities for community stewardship of Shaftesbury's green spaces and for allotment provision and community growing. We will set up an Allotments Association to help manage waiting lists and to find ways to meet the growing and changing demands for future allotment space.

We will continue to plan how we create and manage open spaces in Shaftesbury, focusing on the people that visit and enjoy them but equally balancing the need to conserve and enhance their landscape value and their biodiversity. We want to build on the success of our initial work with the community to plant a large number of trees in open spaces, streets and gardens across Shaftesbury.

We will work with organisations such as SOSG/STG/Friends of Breach Common and to incorporate their viewpoints where appropriate into the revised Neighbourhood Plan.

Environment

STC looks after 48 acres of land including Allotments, Cemetery, Pathways, Open Spaces, Gardens, Play Areas, including the Skatepark plus the verges in and around the town

We planted 231 trees/hedges in 2022 and importantly we work with the Shaftesbury Tree Group to support them to plant and maintain more trees in line with the Town Tree Plan

Planning – the Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications and has developed a Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Play Areas – The Town Council maintains seven play areas across the town and has a Play Masterplan which will be delivered on a phased-programme of works up to and including 2026

Market – we will continue to improve the resident and visitor experience and encourage our community to shop local

Town Hall – We are working with a local Architect to invest in important renovation works as our responsibility to manage and maintain this grade 2 listed building

Community Development

Grants – the Town Council awards over £20,000 a year in grant support to community organisations and inform our residents through our websites and noticeboards

We will continue to involve residents and businesses in the Council Working Groups (WG), namely; High Street WG, Sustainable Shaftesbury, King's Coronation

We aim to support community-based organisations in all that they do

We continue with delivering the free Shaftesbury Wellness events in collaboration with the Blackmore Vale Partnership (GP surgery)

Youth Council – the Town Council collaborates with pupil representatives four times per year and the young people have a voice in many of the council's projects.

Resilience including Sustainable Shaftesbury

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to make Shaftesbury carbon neutral by 2030. We cannot achieve this goal alone. The Council's actions will aim to substantially strengthen the town's resilience with respect to the impacts of anticipated climate and ecological changes and the risks these pose.

The Council **resolved** to establish a **Sustainable Shaftesbury Working Group** that: a) provides an overarching and cross-cutting framework for the Council's work addressing climate change and environmental issues, mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity and ecological concerns; b) explores new initiatives to be pursued; c) ensures that environmental resilience is taken into account in everything that we do as a Council; d) identifies appropriate methods of monitoring and evaluation.

Our Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (*under development*) will be regularly reviewed. We will explore possibilities inherent within comprehensive community modelling, such as in the One Planet Living Framework, or Doughnut Economics, to ensure a truly sustainable and resilient future.

Given the critical importance of National Government policy, legislation and funding in achieving our local targets, we will continue to support efforts to accelerate positive and radical changes at the national level.

Our emerging Sustainable Shaftesbury Strategy and Action plan will continue to be informed by the Sustainable Shaftesbury Working Group, held regularly to ensure the opportunity for local participation. At the same time, we will continue to use our media platforms to provide reliable and easily accessible information, such as the science behind the rationale for declaring a CEE and providing a variety of options for individual and collective action to address reducing personal carbon footprints. We will also provide information about how residents can work collectively as a community to not just achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 but also build genuinely more resilient and sustainable neighbourhoods and local economy.

The plan will focus on projects that not only reduce emissions but also maximise benefits to the local community. These benefits include reducing air pollution and improving health and wellbeing. The plan will especially focus on 1) Transforming our nature 2) reducing energy demand and producing smarter energy 3) reducing consumption and waste 4) changing the way we move around 5) supporting sustainable food all underpinned by enabling and engaging our community.

We will encourage schemes to reduce waste through sharing, repairing and recycling, supporting more businesses to work towards being plastic free and promoting other community and Council activities to encourage reduction of resource use. The plan will also explore resilience in the face of strains on food supplies due to weather extremes, both locally and further afield.

We will explore opportunities to improve land use for a wide range of environmental benefits. Where carbon sequestration via an ambitious tree planting programme is insufficient, we will connect with other organisations and businesses to work collectively to reduce the town's carbon footprint.

Resilience

We take the lead on mitigating the impacts of the climate change emergency and will continue to work on a Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan, made up of six pillars, to ensure Shaftesbury is carbon neutral by 2030

We are working towards managing our parks, open spaces and verges with biodiversity and ecology as a top priority

We will deliver a series of projects that are designed to improve health and wellbeing including Shaftesbury Wellness and the Shaftesbury Loop

We will continue to look for ways to make the Lido more energy efficient and reduce the operating costs to make this facility more sustainable for the future

Prosperity and Development

We provided comments on 79 planning applications last year in our role as statutory consultee and will continue to collaborate with Planning Officers at Dorset Council

We will develop a wish list aimed at developers that sets out our sustainability and other ambitions drawing on the Neighbourhood Plan and Town Design Statement

Where strategic opportunities arise and subject to viability, we will work to bring forward new regeneration projects e.g. Permanent 'managed Traffic scheme' and a monthly market type event

We will seek ways to improve the Visitor Experience by increasing the dwell time and improving the signage in and around the town.

We support and advise local businesses and develop our visitor offer through Discover Shaftesbury – the High Point of Dorset

Capital Projects – we deliver and support projects for community benefit. Recent examples include St James Park, the Lido and the Playground Masterplan.

Marketing and Communication

We strive to raise the profile of Shaftesbury as a great place to work live and visit

We work in collaboration with others i.e. the Chamber of Commerce, the Fringe and other events

We aim to keep our residents up to date with latest council communications and we have plans in place to reach out to more people

General

We work hard to retain and increase pride in our town and the reputation of the Town Council

Look after the Town Hall making it welcome, open and accessible for all and provide meeting places for numerous local organisations like Shaftesbury in Bloom, Carnival, Transport Forum

In 2022/2023 we received 268 items of correspondence and aim to respond to all resident queries within 48 hours

The Town Council manages Shaftesbury Cemetery, which is such an important and highly regarded asset for the town.

We are an established and popular wedding venue and manage on average around 20 weddings per year

We administer and provide content for our websites, social media, the press, so that the town can find out what the council is doing easily and conveniently and be more engaged

Allotments—we provide and manage 120 allotment plots across Shaftesbury

Markets—we manage the weekly Shaftesbury Charter Market

We facilitate engagement via 25 public meetings a year

Civic and Ceremonial—the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected from Shaftesbury's Town Councillors, and they attend a wide range of events and functions as the town's representatives

We demonstrate prudence and sound financial governance

The Strategic Plan promotes transparency

- Being clear what the Town Council priorities are and what actions will be delivered over the plan period 2023 to 2026
- Sets the functions of the Town Council in a strategic context
- Provides a basis for securing funding – whether through the local precept, revenue generation or funding bids
- Co-ordinates the Town Council’s work with others, and generate productive collaboration with partners
- Provides the basis for oversight by councillors and others, and ensures best value
- All major projects led by the Town Council will include a community engagement phase, drawing in representatives residents and voluntary groups impacted by any project to ensure local awareness is raised and local know-how mobilised.
- Our Community Engagement Strategy will be reviewed and published as part of the first review of this plan.

We will continue to be an effective council by:

- Engaging with our community
- Delivering quality and value for money services
- Being open and accountable
- Delivering improvements across the town Monitoring & Review of this Plan

The Town Council will deliver the projects/actions identified in this plan. Inevitably new and unplanned demands will be made on the Town Council during the plan period. The list of projects will be monitored on a quarterly basis and the Plan will be reviewed in full each year. The requirement to respond to new demands will need to be balanced with available resources and approval of new projects will inevitably require the displacement of agreed actions unless resources are increased.

Twinning We will continue to work with the Shaftesbury Town Twinning Association, and with our twin towns in Brionne and Lindlar to engage in a shared understanding of how our towns work.

Section 5 describes our plans in more detail, spelling out how the strategy is to be achieved and how we will keep track of how we are doing

The Work programme will be presented to the council to review twice per annum. A progress report will be provided on projects linked to funds held in Ear Marked Reserves.

Projects delivered in 2022/2023

2022 Shaftesbury Wellness (1,586 participants)

Coppice Street Car Park—progressed in 2022/2023 however will go live in 2023

Playground Strategy—Masterplan (phased rollout)

Vehicle/equipment replacement

Development of Management Plans for Open Spaces (ongoing)

New branded picnic benches at Castle Hill

St James Park improvements to the play facility, improved accessibility and landscape works

Lido improvements—building works to improve accessibility, Electro-chlorination and replacement of three boilers (Showers and Plant room)

Christmas Lighting Scheme

Queen’s Jubilee celebration event

The setting up of Working Groups—driving a collaborative approach and encouraging more residents to get involved in shaping Shaftesbury.

Projects for delivery in 2023/24

Shaftesbury Wellness – enhanced leisure – Jazzercise and Aquafit in collaboration with the Blackmore Vale surgery, Active Dorset and Live Well Dorset

Park Run in collaboration with the Dorset Centre of Excellence and Active Dorset

St James Park slopes enhancement – ongoing (continuation of work from the Spring)

Clearance works and Management Plan for Bury Litton – improving accessibility for all and removal of this Scheduled Monument from ‘At Risk’ register

The Mound at Castle Hill – pathway (pending Historic England permission)

Neighbourhood Plan review

Climate Change related projects – ongoing

Development of Management Plans for Open Spaces (ongoing) – working towards Green Flag status

Town Hall Roof/Maintenance/refurbishment (will carry forward to 2024/2025)

Development of new monthly Artisan Market for 2023

Mampitts Community facilities development (will carry forward to 2024/2025)

Jubilee Steps – phase 2 St James Park

Playground Strategy – Masterplan (phased rollout)

- a) Wincombe Masterplan
- b) Ash Close and Gower Road

Shaftesbury Markets review – making better use of empty shops + footfall generators to High Street

Coppice Street Car Park – long stay visitors

Coppice Street Car Park 2 – long stay provision for residents and workers (permit system)

Lido – phase 2 – improved filtration system (may carry forward to 2024/2025)

King’s Coronation event plans

Park Walk – short term repairs and renovation of the Bandstand

Electrical Infrastructure rollout to support Christmas Light scheme

Projects for delivery in 2024/2025/2026

Energy Hub/Car charger points at Coppice Street
New – Phase 3 – St James Park – removal of the ski slope
New – Barton Hill Car Park
Marketing Strategy for tourism
Playground Strategy – Masterplan (phased rollout) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cockram's a) Barton Hill b) Enmore Green
MUGA provision at Cockram's
Phase 3 Lido plan (based on funding/feasibility)
Phase 2 – Town Hall – internal modifications to maximise the space more effectively
Phase 2 – Park Walk – longer term re-surfacing and drainage solutions
Youth Club building renovations

The status of each project will be reported into Shaftesbury Town Council twice per annum alongside the Work Programme.