



# Strategic Plan

April 2025



**SHAFTESBURY  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## Section 1: Introduction

Shaftesbury, a town and civil parish in Dorset, England, is a unique hilltop settlement situated along the A30, near the Wiltshire border. It is located approximately 20 miles west of Salisbury and Stonehenge, and less than 30 miles from Dorchester and Poole Harbour. Its elevated position, around 215 metres (705 feet) above sea level on a greensand hill, offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside and the picturesque Cranborne Chase.

With a rich history spanning over 2,000 years, Shaftesbury has long been a place of significance. Its location made it an ideal site for King Alfred the Great, who established a fortified settlement here in the 9th century AD and founded an influential nunnery. Shaftesbury's historical connections extend further, including the burial of King Edward the Martyr in 979 after his murder in Corfe. Henry VIII's dissolution of Shaftesbury Abbey in 1539 marked a significant change, leaving only the foundation remains of the Abbey Church of St. Mary and St. Edward, which are now part of the Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Gardens.

The town's Saxon borough developed west of the abbey, along the present-day Bimport Street, where gardens and homes now stand. Notably, King Canute passed away in Shaftesbury in 1035. As with many historic towns, Shaftesbury has been a market town since the 10th century and was once known for its royal mints, maltings, and breweries. From the late 17th to 19th century, button-making became a notable industry. In modern culture, the town is perhaps best known for its iconic appearance in the 1973 Hovis bread commercial, directed by Ridley Scott, which was filmed on the town's famous Gold Hill.

Shaftesbury's growth has been somewhat limited by the absence of a direct railway link; the nearest station is in Gillingham. Nonetheless, the town maintains a vibrant cultural scene, with two museums—Gold Hill Museum (opened in 1946) and Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Gardens—and the Shaftesbury Arts Centre, established in 1957.

The town is part of the North Dorset parliamentary constituency. Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) is the local tier of government, distinct from the Dorset Council Unitary Authority. The Town Council operates within a democratic framework, guided by values of prudence, transparency, and respect for the local community. Its mission is to ensure Shaftesbury remains a thriving community and a healthy, welcoming place to live, work, and visit.

Founded in 1977, Shaftesbury Town Council is based in the historic Town Hall, built in 1827, with one of the most striking views of any town hall in the country. The Town Council provides the following key services:

- Parks, Open Spaces, and Play Areas
- Recreational Facilities
- Shaftesbury Lido: A swimming pool managed by the Town Council, staffed by qualified lifeguards opens 52 weeks of the year
- Planning Matters (consulting on planning applications to the planning authority)
- Grants to Voluntary Organisations
- Allotments (St James, Mampitts, A30, and Bray)

- Cemetery Provision (Mampitts)
- Litter and management of Litter bins
- Town Hall: Available for hire, popular as a wedding venue, and used for markets and community activities
- Bus Shelters
- Public Conveniences (Bell Street)
- Street Markets
- Civic Events led by the Town Mayor
- Crime Prevention Initiatives
- War Memorial

### Council Representation

The council consists of fifteen councillors, including a Mayor and Deputy Mayor, representing two wards. Shaftesbury West elects seven councillors, while Shaftesbury East elects eight councillors. Together, they work to serve and represent the community, ensuring that Shaftesbury continues to thrive.

### General Power of Competence

The council holds the General Power of Competence, with all councillors elected and the Town Clerk having achieved CiLCA qualification, as resolved by the Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) at its first annual meeting in May 2024, following the election.

### Strategic Plan

The STC Strategic Plan aims to foster a strong, resilient community by bringing people together and providing support to local groups and residents. The Council is committed to improving the quality of Shaftesbury's green spaces and reducing the town's impact on climate change. Our ambitious 2025/2026 programme aligns with the Work Programme, which is closely linked to the Budget.

The Council has developed four strategic pillars, which serve as the foundation of its goals. These pillars shape the strategic aims for the next five years (2025–2029) while acknowledging longer-term goals, such as addressing climate change over the next decade. Though specific projects are highlighted, the plan remains flexible, allowing for changes and new initiatives as needed.

### The STC Strategic Plan's Four Key Pillars:

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

These pillars are integral to the STC Work Programme, complemented by:

- Marketing & Communications Work Programme
- General Work Programme
- Core Values

The Council upholds three core values, guiding its operations and interactions:

**Integrity, Impartiality, and Transparency:** Conducting all council activities with honesty and openness, in line with the principles of the Freedom of Information Act.

**Civility and Respect:** Listening to and valuing all perspectives, fostering a welcoming and considerate environment.

**Positive Attitude:** Maintaining a ‘can do’ approach, supporting the people, businesses, and communities of Shaftesbury, and actively seeking solutions that address local needs and priorities.

The strategy, originally drafted in May 2017 and reviewed in 2021 and 2023, sets out the vision, principles, and goals that the current Town Council aims to achieve. It is designed to guide the preparation of annual work plans and budgets while remaining adaptable to new opportunities. The framework encourages collaboration with the community, other councils, the voluntary sector, and local businesses, ensuring a bright future for Shaftesbury.

This is a living document that will be continuously reviewed and adapted to meet evolving needs and circumstances.

## Section 2: Vision

Shaftesbury is a forward-thinking town that continuously explores new ideas and innovative methods. It is a community that values its independence and prioritises local solutions, while maintaining a strong network of connections across Dorset and beyond. Building on these solid foundations, our aim is to create:

- A vibrant and inclusive community where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.
- A sustainable, clean, and thriving environment that supports physical and mental well-being.
- A robust local economy, resilient in the face of change, and built on the strength of local enterprise.
- A town where residents are empowered to shape their community, contributing to and taking pride in shared spaces and initiatives.
- A hub for arts and culture that celebrates creativity, nurtures talent, and offers diverse cultural experiences to enrich the lives of all.
- A culture of innovation that embraces new ideas, takes calculated risks, and celebrates

both achievements and valuable lessons learned.

- Mindful of our historic heritage while simultaneously embracing and encouraging future generations to build on the achievements of the last thousand years

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

### The Wider Picture

We are navigating a time of significant change and unpredictability, the ongoing repercussions of events such as the COVID pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and the climate and ecological crisis.

Despite Shaftesbury's strong independent spirit, it remains closely connected to broader county-wide, national and international developments that impact the well-being and confidence of its residents and businesses.

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

Moreover, cuts to public services—including health, social care, education, and emergency services—will continue to pose challenges during this strategic period, as they have in the past.

### The Local Picture

In collaboration with the community, we have already begun addressing issues related to climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as responding to austerity and significant cuts in public sector funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of community resilience, and we must continue to cultivate local strength across various fronts to creatively meet future challenges.

The Neighbourhood Plan review process commenced in 2023, reinforcing key themes outlined in this strategy. The updated National Planning Policy Framework offers more opportunities for policies that tackle climate and ecological change, though it may also limit local voices in responding to community developments.

Shaftesbury's local environment greatly influences residents' experiences. The town boasts a thriving local economy supported by regular markets and recreational spaces, but faces challenges such as limited parking, accessibility to essential services and the ability to engage in active travel, such as cycling and walking. Increasing housing developments and traffic congestion pose additional concerns, including health risks associated with speeding, air pollution, and noise.

Given Shaftesbury's geographic layout, many residents and workers rely on cars for daily travel, both within the town and beyond. Shaftesbury serves as a vital hub for surrounding villages, facilitating access to health services, education and shops.

We recognise that Shaftesbury's cultural, heritage, arts, and tourism sectors are essential to its future identity. In these uncertain times—characterised by town centre bank closures and environmental challenges—town councils must play an increasingly significant role in enhancing local quality of life.

We recognise the crucial role that culture, heritage and the arts play, not only by bringing visitors to the town and enhancing Shaftesbury's economy, but also in the wider sense of wellbeing and social integration. We also recognise the role that events play in the fabric of the town and seek to strengthen and support them through good communication and engagement with the arts and culture sector in Shaftesbury.

Through our resources, we aspire to create a cleaner, greener, safer, and more vibrant community where everyone takes pride in living and working. Our priorities include fostering community benefits, enhancing civic pride, promoting health and well-being, and developing our visitor experience to keep the High Street thriving and sustainable for the future. Additionally, we aim to honour the town's unique heritage as a Saxon market town while embracing the traditions of having a Town Council since 1313.

Engagement with our local community is paramount. We commit to listening and ensuring that residents are at the forefront of shaping our objectives. The Town Council utilises various communication channels, including social media and traditional methods, to connect with the community. We will continue to enhance community engagement to ensure that even the harder-to-reach demographics have their voices heard. Local input significantly influences our decision-making, and we maintain an open dialogue, listening and responding to suggestions and concerns brought to our attention.

This strategy serves as a comprehensive framework to guide our future activities, ensuring we realise our ambitions for the town. It is a living document that will evolve as we implement our plans. The Town Council recognises that not all goals will be achievable in the short term and that many external factors may impact our progress. However, by clarifying our intentions and directing our efforts, we can effectively influence key decisions affecting the town and take necessary actions to maintain or enhance services.

The Council's primary funding comes from its precept, which is a levy collected through the council tax charged to Shaftesbury residents. For the 2025/2026 fiscal year, the expenditure budget totals £834,901, with £764,403 being raised through the precept. This translates to an annual cost of £219.67 for the average Band D household.

Within this overall budget, the council has earmarked resources for projects identified in the strategic plan for the year. In managing its finances, the council will maintain sufficient levels of general reserves in accordance with its financial regulations and, where appropriate, will maintain earmarked reserves to support key strategies and future major projects outlined in this plan.

## Staff

To implement our extensive program, the Council employs 2 full-time and 4 part-time office staff. Additionally, caretakers are responsible for maintaining the Town Hall, Town Centre standards, and general maintenance tasks, including oversight of local play parks. We also have a part-time Lido Manager and seasonal lifeguards, the majority of whom are employed annually from May to September.

Our commitment is to maintain quality in all our services—from the management of open spaces and collaborations with businesses and communities underpinned by proactive communication.

The structure of the organisation is led by a Town Clerk, with the officer structure being reviewed annually to ensure it effectively delivers the planned activities. We acknowledge that our core staff numbers are relatively small and will supplement this workforce as necessary by procuring expertise or services externally, ensuring we maintain the capacity to deliver while remaining flexible. The Council is dedicated to developing an efficient and innovative operational model to meet its strategic objectives.

The Town Council adheres to best practices in good governance through its established and published policies and procedures, always acting in the best interests of local residents.

## Shaftesbury Town Council Structure

*April 2024*



## Section 4: Philosophy and Strategy

This section outlines the central philosophy at the heart of our strategy and how we envision bringing it to life through our work.

The key pillars of our strategy encompass the primary areas of our focus over the next five years.

The central theme underpinning our approach will be to support a town that is ambitious, inclusive, and resilient socially, economically, and environmentally.

We will continue to foster participation and build engaged, active communities that are stronger, better equipped to tackle local challenges, and more capable of thriving.

Our aim is to create an environment in which people can flourish, cultivating a cohesive community that unites individuals of different generations and backgrounds.

We will collaborate with the community to enhance our shared local environment, including local green spaces, improving air quality, and ensuring Shaftesbury remains clean and welcoming.

In response to the climate emergency, we strive to make Shaftesbury carbon neutral by 2030, utilising the Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan, as resolved in February 2024.

Our efforts will focus on leading the community in understanding the facts, fostering public debate about the challenges and choices we face, increasing renewable energy supply and energy efficiency, reducing waste, and addressing transport congestion and pollution.

### Environment

The Council is responsible for managing over 48 acres of parks and green spaces throughout the town, which includes recreation areas, woodlands, and play spaces. This management demands high standards set by the Council and expected by the community, presenting a unique and demanding challenge.

The Grounds Contractor team serves as a visible representation of the Council regarding the management of our parks and green spaces. We aim to explore opportunities to take on additional green spaces and public areas, providing necessary support to ensure that both the team and the community can continue enhancing Shaftesbury into a cleaner, greener town. Strengthening partnerships with community groups and neighbourhood networks will be key to promoting stewardship of Shaftesbury's green spaces, allotment provision, and community growing initiatives.

We will continue to plan for the creation and management of open spaces in Shaftesbury, focusing on visitor experience while balancing the need to conserve and enhance landscape value and biodiversity. Building upon our initial community efforts to plant trees in open spaces, streets, and gardens across Shaftesbury will be a priority.

Collaboration with organisations such as Shaftesbury Tree group, Planet Shaftesbury and Friends of Breach Common will be encouraged to incorporate their feedback into the revised Neighbourhood Plan where appropriate.

### Resilience, Including Sustainable Shaftesbury

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to making Shaftesbury carbon neutral by 2030. This ambitious goal cannot be achieved in isolation. Our actions aim to significantly bolster the town's resilience against anticipated climate and ecological changes and the associated risks.

The Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee serves several functions:

- It provides an overarching framework for the Council's work on climate change and environmental issues, including mitigation, adaptation, and biodiversity concerns.
- It explores new initiatives to pursue.
- It ensures that environmental resilience is considered in all Council activities.
- It identifies appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluation.
- The Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan will investigate community modelling possibilities, such as the One Planet Living Framework to ensure a truly sustainable and resilient future.

Given the crucial role of national policy, legislation, and funding in achieving local targets, we will support efforts to accelerate positive and radical changes at the national level. The Sustainable Shaftesbury Strategy and Action Plan will remain informed by the Sustainable Shaftesbury Advisory Committee, which meets regularly to facilitate local participation.

We will utilise our media platforms to disseminate reliable and accessible information, explaining the rationale for declaring a climate emergency and offering various options for individual and collective action to reduce personal carbon footprints. We will also inform residents on how they can collectively work towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 while building more resilient and sustainable community and a local economy.

The plan emphasises projects that reduce emissions while maximising benefits to the local community, including reducing air pollution and enhancing health and well-being. Our key focus areas will include:

- Transforming our natural environment
- Reducing energy demand and producing smarter energy
- Minimising consumption and waste
- Changing transportation habits
- Supporting sustainable food practices
- These initiatives will be underpinned by engaging and enabling our community.

We will promote schemes aimed at reducing waste through sharing, repairing, and

recycling, encouraging businesses to pursue plastic-free practices, and supporting other community and Council activities that advocate for resource conservation. The plan will also examine resilience against food supply strains due to extreme weather conditions, both locally and beyond.

We will explore opportunities to improve land use for diverse environmental benefits. If our ambitious tree-planting program for carbon sequestration proves insufficient, we will connect with other organisations and businesses to collectively reduce the town's carbon footprint.

### Promoting Transparency

The Strategic Plan emphasises transparency by:

- Clearly outlining the Town Council's priorities and actions to be executed during the plan period from 2024 to 2029.
- Contextualising the functions of the Town Council within a strategic framework.
- Establishing a basis for securing funding through local precepts, revenue generation, and funding bids.
- Coordinating the Town Council's work with others to foster productive partnerships.
- Providing oversight for councillors and ensuring best value.
- Mandating that all major projects led by the Town Council include a community engagement phase, involving representatives from residents and voluntary groups impacted by any project to raise local awareness and mobilise local expertise.
- Reviewing and publishing our Community Engagement Strategy as part of the initial plan review.

We aim to remain an effective council by:

- Engaging with our community
- Delivering quality services that provide value for money
- Maintaining openness and accountability
- Implementing improvements throughout the town
- Monitoring & Review of This Plan

The Town Council is committed to delivering the projects and actions identified in this plan. We recognise that new and unplanned demands will inevitably arise during the plan period. Consequently, we will monitor the project list twice per annum and conduct a full review of the Plan each year. New demands will need to be balanced with available resources; approval of new projects may require displacing previously agreed actions unless resources are augmented.

## Twinning

We will continue our collaboration with the Shaftesbury Town Twinning Association and our twin towns in Brionne and Lindlar to foster a shared understanding of how our towns function.

## Project Reporting

The status of each project will be reported to Shaftesbury Town Council twice a year.

### Environment

Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) owns and manages 48 acres of land, including allotments, the cemetery, pathways, open spaces, gardens, and play areas, as well as the skatepark and town roundabouts/ verges under a service agreement with Dorset Council highways

Collaborate with the Shaftesbury Tree Group to plant and nurture more trees, in line with the Town Tree Plan and Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan.

Act as a statutory consultee on planning applications, having developed and currently reviewing the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan (as of 2024).

Maintain seven play areas across the town, guided by a Play Masterplan delivering a phased programme up to 2029.

Enhance the resident and visitor experience at the market, encouraging local shopping.

Undertake necessary internal renovations for the Town Hall, a Grade II listed building.

### Community Development—*Key Initiatives summary*

The Town Council awards grant support to community organisations using funds generated from the Coppice Street car park to support good causes.

Involve residents and businesses in Council Working Groups (WG) on various topics, including High Street/Economic Development and Future Youth Provision.

Deliver Shaftesbury Wellness events in collaboration with the Blackmore Vale Partnership (GP surgery).

Collaborate with pupil representatives from the Shaftesbury School Youth Council four times a year, ensuring young voices are included in council projects.

### Resilience—*Key initiatives/Sustainable Practices*

Take the lead on mitigating the impacts of climate change, working towards carbon neutrality by 2030 through the Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan, structured around six key pillars.

Manage parks, open spaces, and verges with biodiversity and ecology as a priority, re-inforcing our commitment to sustainability.

Deliver projects that enhance health and well-being, such as Shaftesbury Wellness and the Shaftesbury Loop.

Continue to seek ways to make the Lido more energy-efficient and sustainable.

### Prosperity and Development

Provide comments on 79 planning applications last year, collaborating with Planning Officers at Dorset Council.

Develop a wish list for developers outlining sustainability ambitions based on the Neighbourhood Plan and Town Design Statement.

Explore strategic opportunities for regeneration projects, such as a permanent managed traffic scheme and a monthly market.

Improve the visitor experience by enhancing signage and increasing dwell time in the town.

Support and advise local businesses while developing the visitor offer through the Discover Shaftesbury (the High Point of Dorset) initiative.

Enhance the arts, events, and cultural offerings in Shaftesbury through council projects and support for others.

### Marketing and Communication

Promote Shaftesbury as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Collaborate with partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Fringe and other event organisers.

Keep residents informed with timely proactive council communications and expand outreach efforts.

### General Operations

Foster pride in the town and maintain the Town Council's reputation.

Ensure the Town Hall remains welcoming, accessible, and serves as a meeting place for local organisations like Shaftesbury in Bloom and the Carnival.

Respond to all correspondence including resident queries within 48 hours.

Manage Shaftesbury Cemetery, a valued asset in the community.

Serve as a popular wedding venue, hosting an average of 20 weddings annually.

Maintain council websites and social media platforms to enhance community engagement.

Provide and manage 120 allotment plots across Shaftesbury.

Oversee the weekly Shaftesbury Charter Market and outsource management of the monthly Artisan Market to an experienced professional organisation.

Facilitate 25 public meetings each year.

### Civic and Ceremonial Functions

The Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor, elected from among the councillors, represent Shaftesbury at various events and functions.

### Financial Governance

Demonstrate prudence and sound financial governance.

## Project Overview *(since last review)*

Completed Projects (2022/2023)
Shaftesbury Wellness — 1,586 participants
Coppice Street Car Park — Progressed in 2022/2023, launched in 2023
Playground Strategy — Masterplan developed (phased rollout)
Vehicle/Equipment Replacement — Ongoing
Management Plans for Open Spaces — In development
St James Park Improvements — Enhanced play facilities and accessibility
Lido Upgrades — Accessibility improvements and replacement of boilers
Christmas Lighting Scheme — Implemented
Queen’s Jubilee Celebration Event — Successfully executed
Establishment of Working Groups — Fostered collaboration and resident involvement



*Christmas lights*



*St James Park*

**Projects Delivered (2023/2024)**

**Shaftesbury Wellness** — Enhanced leisure initiatives, including Jazzercise and Aquafit

**St James Park Slopes Enhancement** — Ongoing

**Clearance Works for Bury Litton** — Improved accessibility and removed from 'At Risk' register

**Town Hall External renovations** — Ongoing

**Maces at British Museum** — Complete

**Outsourcing of Grounds operation** — Complete

**Cold water swimming experience** — Complete

**Coppice Street car park: long stay provision** — Complete

**The monthly Shaftesbury Artisan Market launched** — Ongoing



*Cold Water Swimming*



*Bury Litton*



*Shaftesbury Wellness*



*Maces at the British Museum*



*Coppice Street Car Park*

**Projects Delivered in 2024/2025**

**Jubilee Steps – Complete**

**Wincombe Masterplan – Complete**

**Town Hall External renovations – Complete**

**Play improvements at Ash Close, Gower Road and Enmore Green – Complete**

**Queen Mother Garden – Reconnecting with Nature project complete**

**Neighbourhood Plan Review — Ongoing**

**Climate Change Projects — Ongoing, monthly review of the Sustainable Shaftesbury Action Plan**

**Lido 52-week operation – Complete**

**Skare Park refurbishment – Complete**



*Queen Mother Garden relaunch*



*Skate Park refurbishment*



*Play park improvements*



*Jubilee Steps railings*



*Town Hall refurbishment*

## Projects planned for 2025/2026 to 2028/2029

	Year end March 2025	2025 to 2026	2026 to 2027	2027 to 2028	2028 to 2029
Town Signage	£45,857				
Pool Capital Expenditure**	£27,503	£75,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Pool Cap ex Grant	£25,000				
Shaftesbury Wellness	£8,300				
Street Furniture	£6,998	£0	£10,000	£15,000	£15,000
War Memorials	£6,210				
Footpath network	£4,287				
Economic Development	£15,609				
Youth Club	Section 106	£5,000	£0	£60,000	£67,568
Play experience	£50,901	£35,266	£80,000	£100,000	£150,000
Town Hall renovation			£16,704	£50,705	£25,000
Mampitts Hub	£15,755	£20,805	£20,000		
VE Day		£6,000			
Barton Hill Car Park		£5,000	£5,000	£10,000	£10,000
Sustainable Shaftesbury		£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Park Walk surface					£10,000
Castle Hill steps			£10,000	£10,000	
Community Workshed					
Permanent Managed Traffic/pedestrianisation			£35,000		
Neighbourhood Plan	£3,422			£12,000	
Town of Culture 2027			£30,000		
Park Run	£2,150				
FOSS Fundraising	£106				
Coppice St. Car Park – grants	£11,000				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£ 223,185</b>	<b>£ 151,539</b>	<b>£ 221,704</b>	<b>£ 272,705</b>	<b>£ 292,568</b>

### Projects planned for 2025/2026 to 2028/2029

<b>Zero cost</b>
East Shaftesbury Open Spaces
Green Flag status
SLCC Gold Standard council

**Strategic Plan Adoption:** To be considered by STC for adoption post the 2025/2026 budget setting process in February 2025.