

Haslemere Town Council Council Strategy 20213-27 – Working Party initial ideas for Council.

Housing and planning

Haslemere and the surrounding area is a wonderful place to live, and the members of the Council feel privileged to do so. We are blessed with attractive natural surroundings, and a built environment with a distinctive historical character. Both need protection, but we also have a need, indeed a legal obligation, to make provision for new housing.

We now have in place a Neighborhood Plan, overwhelmingly approved by residents in a 2021 referendum which recognizes both these aims. In our responses to planning applications, the town council will be guided by the terms of the plan.

However, there are challenges and constraints. Because most of the land outside the existing settlement area is designated as an “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” (AONB), an “Area of Great Landscape Value” (ALGV) or Greenbelt, the land available for the much-needed housing is extremely limited. For this reason, the priority for the council in responding to planning applications must be for approval for infilling proposals and developments on brownfield sites.

A further difficulty is that because it is such an attractive place to live, housing prices are extremely high: one analysis found that the median house price is nineteen times the median income. At that level the risk is that new housing will be bought not by local people or local workers, but by families moving out of London. Hence, the most pressing housing need is for genuinely affordable housing on the one hand, and for smaller dwellings suitable for young couples and downsizing older people. The town council does not have any direct role in housing provision, but given the importance of the need, the council will look for ways to co-operate with Waverley Borough Council and other stakeholders.

The Town Council will consult, and work with Waverley and others to implement the housing plans at the old fairground site, and the current youth facilities site.

Partnership and community

The town council is part of a network of providers of services and stakeholder to Haslemere and its residents. This network includes major organisations such as Waverley Borough Council and Surrey Country Council, National Trust, South West railways, Schools, as well as local businesses, health care providers, charities and individuals. To provide a high level of service, the Town Council will work in partnership with the range of providers, by building on established links and advocate for Haslemere. We will also support local community organisations financially, where appropriate, that enhance the quality of life for local residents, their well being and that of the local environment. We will continue to support Initiatives that arose from the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Actions;

Set up regular liaison with local stakeholder to support partnership working Network with local community groups such as youth, leisure, sport, exercise, arts, social , to advocate for their needs as issues arise Enter in to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Haslemere Biodiversity Group to support the council and residents in their desire to address the need for action on nature recovery Look to improve provision of seating around the town and villages to support the wellbeing of residents, encourage people to use local facilities and improve access and inclusion to the public realm Identify and fund a proposal from Haslemere's LCwip inventory of improvements for active travel, health and well being of local residents Review and update CIL strategy as necessary and to be in line with this updated HTC strategy

Equality, diversity and inclusivity

Haslemere is a diverse town with residents of all ages, sexes, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexuality, financial circumstances, and health conditions. The council recognises that residents have a wide and diverse range of needs. As well as our legal obligations in respect of equality our decision-making will take an intersectional approach and aim to foster equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging within the community.

Local environment and amenities

The Council believes that good quality amenities enhance the quality of life for those living, working, and visiting Haslemere.

To that end, Haslemere Town Council currently administers a range of local amenities (primarily open spaces) and will continue to do so. We continue to identify opportunities to take over the management of additional green spaces or other community assets from Waverley Borough Council where possible. We will also consider supporting other services which meet the needs of vulnerable and underserved groups where they would otherwise be withdrawn or unavailable.

The Council continues to operate the public toilets in the Waitrose car park, having taken these over from Waverley Borough Council previously. Additionally, to support local businesses in Wey Hill, the council is in the process of installing a set of public toilets near Lion's Green.

Haslemere has historically been a low crime area, but instances of burglary and theft have risen over the last year, impacting residents' enjoyment, security, and livelihood. Residents complain of low police visibility and effectiveness in remediating issues. The council will continue to encourage Surrey PD to be more visible and work to understand the challenges associated with policing this area. The council will work with interested local residents to identify what, if any, community driven solutions could be established. Finally, the council will continue to focus on ensuring adequate CCTV coverage where necessary, and ensure these systems are sufficient to facilitate the police in their work.

Efficient delivery of responsibilities

The provision of services is costly, and this cost inevitably falls upon the tax-paying residents of Haslemere. The council acknowledges its responsibility to use tax-payer's money in a fiscally prudent manner and will ensure that money is allocated and spent in accordance with principles of good governance. The precept will be raised only if it is considered appropriate and necessary to do so. The council will plan, allocate and spend funds in a prudent and transparent manner, being clear on impact on budgets and staff numbers so that we can be held to account. We will hold others (e.g. borough and county

council) to account for services they should provide and will provide services locally where it is efficient to do so. We will be transparent as to who provides which services.

We will make use of, and be clear in our support for, voluntary and private sector contributions. We will put in place the staff, governance and processes required to

deliver what we promise.

Local business and transport

The Council will continue to promote Haslemere as a visitor attraction using the social media to highlight places and events and as a gateway to the South Downs and National Trust sites. Also information, support and signposting to sustainable business networks, working with, and supporting the local chamber of commerce that is at present updating its website to bring in new ideas. Highlighting and lobbying car park owners for parking for the retail trade owners and workers.

Liaise with the bus and other transport providers to promote better use of public transport.

To support implementation of the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan within Haslemere and the villages, and develop with partners mapping of the footpaths and cycle routes. To identify and promote connecting strategic footpaths and cycle routes. To report any footpaths that need clearing or repair.

To promote and assist in the implementation of a 20mph zone where suitable.

FARMERS MARKET. Chris Burton, the honey man, who also runs the Haslemere Farmers Market approached me at May's Farmers Market. He has a new web manager and they've had this idea of making a social media short that includes the Mayor and also local businesses and will aim to show how the town is good for the market and the market good for the town and the community, the visitor economy etc. Jerome has already confirmed in principle that he would be happy to do a short piece to camera and Narn, my contact with the Chamber of Commerce has said they'd be happy to hear more. I'd like to think that working positively with such stakeholders was in built with the Town Strategy. For more info about his plans, contact admin@surreyfarmersmarkets.org.

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS. Information, support and signposting to Sustainable Business Networks and/or initiatives, working in association with the Chamber of Commerce, Waverley Business Support and Zero

Carbon Guildford (who have a Sustainable Business Network and therefore resources, contacts, training and funding support we might be able to tap into) etc

TRANSPORT – Active Travel. Commit to continue to support Active Travel Haslemere and other appropriate initiatives to improve access to active travel opportunities in Haslemere and Hindhead. Support and where opportunities arise, implement the policies in the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan in, for example, Planning and proactively link up funding opportunities (like CIL) to projects (LCWIP).

Work with the other tiers of local government to achieve this.

Climate and Biodiversity

Haslemere Town Council reaffirms its commitment to the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency first declared in 2019, with the continuing need to meet our obligations, assess and adjust our current activities and commitment to lead by example.

In 2019, the Town Council committed to becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030, with an earlier target of 2025 for all direct emissions and has made significant steps towards this goal. We will continue to update and report on the roadmap for achieving this aim, including an annual carbon audit, as well as seeking other methods to report on and demonstrate progress in this area.

To encourage and enable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and promote enhancements to biodiversity within Haslemere we will continue to offer and promote a ring-fenced environmental grants fund, currently set at £7,500 for the 2023-24 financial year.

The Council will continue work to develop a vision of what climate change and biodiversity erosion means in practice for Haslemere, and review this regularly. We will also seek further ways to help residents improve local resilience to the changing climate and biodiversity loss and reduce Haslemere's contribution to it.

To enable the above to take place for the benefit of the local environment and residents., Haslemere Town Council will acknowledge, collaborate and partner with other local groups and organisations who demonstrate knowledge and expertise in the fields of local climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. This should include, but not be limited to the following local groups and organisations that are working in the areas of:

Community energy

Biodiversity

Nature recovery

Tree planting and aftercare

Sustainable active travel

Waste reduction

Where necessary and opportune Haslemere Town Council will work with neighbouring parishes and other tiers of local government to achieve mutual aims.