

Haslemere Town Council: Strategic plan 2019 – 2023

This document sets out Haslemere Town Council’s strategic objectives, the associated actions and budgetary implications. The strategic objectives cover the entire period until the next council elections. The actions and budget are for the immediate future, i.e. the next council year.

Strategic objectives

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. The Council wants Haslemere to retain its beautiful rural character, its existing green spaces, and meet its housing targets without sacrificing its famously beautiful setting and the intrinsic natural value of its surroundings. We share with residents the desire to have a real say in the way our town is developed.

To do so we will actively pursue the adoption of the Neighbourhood plan, which is the main route we have to controlling development. A revised Neighbourhood plan has been agreed by the Town Council and we will make sure that it is put to residents for consultation without delay. Following this consultation, we will ensure that the plan (with any revisions arising from the consultation) is adopted to protect our Town.

As well as giving the Town more control over planning and development, adopting the neighbourhood plan will make the Council eligible for a greater proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is levied when permission is given for certain developments. This levy will allow the Council to spend more on necessary infrastructure within Haslemere. The Council will set up proper procedures to make sure that this money is spent appropriately.

Outside of the Neighbourhood plan, the Town Council will continue to review all planning applications and put our recommendations to Waverly Borough Council, the planning authority for Haslemere. Councillors are best placed to understand the local impacts of planning and will take an active interest in proposed development. In doing so, we will focus on the sustainable, green development, and by supporting the development of social and affordable housing.

Climate change and biodiversity

Haslemere Town Council has adopted a motion recognising a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. The Council acknowledges that ‘business as usual’ is not an option in the face of this Emergency. To meet our obligations, we will assess and adjust our current activities and undertake to lead by example.

The Town Council commits to becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030, with an earlier target of 2025 for all direct emissions. We will draw up a roadmap for achieving this aim, including an annual carbon audit.

To encourage and enable reduction of greenhouse gas emission within Haslemere we will create a ring-fenced environmental grants fund. The initial budget will be £10,000 per financial year.

The Council will develop a vision of what climate change and biodiversity 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 reduce Haslemere's contribution to it. As part of this we will support the goal of becoming a 'plastic-free community'.

Local environment and amenities

Haslemere Town Council currently administers a range of local amenities (primarily open spaces) and will continue to do so. The Council has also taken on responsibility for provision of the public toilets from Waverley Borough Council to avoid their closure and will also continue to do so.

The Council believes that providing good quality amenities enhances the experience of living, working and visiting Haslemere. We will look to take over the management of further green spaces or other community assets from Waverly Borough Council where possible. We will also consider supporting other services which meet the needs of vulnerable groups where they would otherwise be withdrawn.

Haslemere is, in general, a low crime area and this adds to the positive environment. However, the council will work to install CCTV cameras where appropriate, and also encourage the police to be more visible.

Local business and transport

While Haslemere is fortunate to still have vibrant high streets (Weyhill and the High Street/West Street), they still need support. The council recognises the importance that commuting and visitors to Haslemere play to the local economy, as well as the challenges they bring.

The council will continue to promote Haslemere as a visitor attraction (for example through the walking festival) and particularly as a gateway to the South Downs, through the Haslemere Station Hub.

Parking and transport are important issue for local businesses, commuters, visitors and residents. While Haslemere Town Council does not have any direct say in the parking arrangements or traffic planning in the town, we will actively work to improve them, and to ensure that any changes are in the interests of residents.

For many residents other forms of transport are equally important, and we will encourage the provision of alternative transport, including cycle paths and cycle provision, improved facilities for walking and for the use of public transport. The council will prioritise work to improve amenities in these areas.

Partnership and community

The town council is part of a network of that provides services to Haslemere and its residents. This network includes major organisations such as Waverly Borough Council and Surrey Country Council, the National Trust, South West railways, as well as local businesses, charities and individuals. We recognise that to provide a high level of service we need to work in partnership with other providers.

The town council will do so by building on established links, making sure that we have appropriate contacts with both Councillors and staff. We will ensure that organisations that should provide a service do, and that Haslemere has a say in what is provided.

We will also support local organisations financially where it appropriate, such as the Citizens' advice bureaux, the Community Rail Hub, and other local charities.

Equality, diversity and inclusivity

Haslemere is a diverse town. It has residents of all ages, sexes, ethnic backgrounds, sexuality, financial circumstances and health. The council recognises that residents have a wide range of needs. As well as our legal obligations in respect of equality and diversity, we will take consider all of the above in our decision making.

Efficient delivery of responsibilities

Provision of services is costly, and this cost falls upon the residents of Haslemere. While the council will raise the precept charged for services if it feels that it is appropriate to do so, we will ensure that it spends the money it raises efficiently.

We will be clear what we are planning to do, including its impact on budgets and staff numbers so that we can be held to account. We will hold others (e.g. borough and country council) to account for services they should provide. We 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. And we will put in place the staff, governance and processes required to deliver what we promise.

Actions from strategy

The following actions stem from the strategic objectives set out above.

Action	Status (<i>actual or suggested</i>)
Take Neighbourhood Plan to consultation and adoption	<i>Working Party already set up to progress</i>
Set policy and procedures for spending CIL	Delegate to Finance & Governance Committee with support from Clerk (WBC have issued CIL guidance)
Agree implications/guidance for planning committee, including Cllr training	Delegate to Climate Change working party and Planning Committee with input from Deputy Clerk
Develop roadmap to set in motion initial annual green assessment of HTC	<i>Delegated to Climate Change working party</i>
Assess environmentally sustainable providers and change where needed	Clerk has delegated authority, with input from Climate Change working party
Set up 'green grant' process	Already in budget. Delegate to Grants Committee
Set up communications/nudge approach for environment, including supporting a 'plastic-free community'	Delegate to Climate Change working party (to include community partners)
Work to identify & adopt land held by WBC, and identify implications for council	<i>In progress by HTC Staff</i>
Review organisations supported by HTC and agree if more should be supported. Review grants process to make seeking support less intimidating.	Delegate to Grants Committee, with sign-off by Full Council
Continue to pursue installation of CCTV	<i>In progress by with dedicated working party and budget</i>
Produce proposal as to improving parking	<i>Proposal for off-street parking already exists. Set up parking/transport working party to consider wider issues.</i>
Produce proposal as to improving transport more generally, both incremental, e.g. cycle racks at	Set up parking/transport working party to consider wider issues.

station, and fundamental, e.g. traffic calming.	
Revise equalities policy to reflect any changes required	Delegate to Finance & Governance Committee
Review staffing and roles required to implement policies efficiently. Consider what can be provided locally.	Additional staff in budget – Staffing Committee and Clerk to investigate tasks and roles

Implications for the 2020 budget

The only significant items of confirmed or reasonably known expenditure arising from the actions above are in relation to taking the Neighbourhood Plan to consultation, the green grants, the adoption of land from WBC, and staff increases. These have already been allowed for in the 2020 budget.

Other areas where we have considered but do not believe require an additional increase in the 2020 budget are:

- Setting in motion the annual green assessment and a move to more environmentally sustainable providers, e.g., for heating the town hall. These costs are expected to be smaller – in the order of a few hundred pounds per annum – and an initial provision has been made in the budget.
- Providing support for further organisations where existing provision from elsewhere is reduced. There is currently a general provision in the Grants budget, but as no specific cases have been identified, no additional budget has been set aside.
- Improving transport. No specific provision has been made as there are not yet specific proposals to cost.
- Promoting Haslemere as a visitor attraction. The budget includes a doubling of the support to the Community Station Hub.
- The budget includes an allowance for CCTV