



Church Stretton Town Council

TOWN PLAN

“TOWARDS 2013”



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CHURCH STRETTON - TOWARDS 2013

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Town Plan was approved by Church Stretton Town Council on 21st October 2008.
- 1.3 Local government in Shropshire is changing. District Councils will cease to exist, when a new county-wide unitary Shropshire Council comes into being in April 2009. This is, therefore, a time of opportunity for Church Stretton Town Council, especially since it has recently been accredited as the 500th “Quality Council” in England. So, it is timely for the Council to set out its aims and priorities up to the next election in 2013.
- 1.4 These aims and priorities embrace the “Strettons” as a whole, including Church Stretton, All Stretton and Little Stretton (all subsequently defined as “the town”). All residents were given an opportunity to comment on these aims and priorities, and the Plan has been revised in the light of their feedback. This Strategic Plan will now be translated into a series of annual service plans, with responsibilities and resources allocated out to a revised set of Sub-Committees of the Town Council, together with timescales and desired outcomes. The full Council will oversee and monitor the implementation of these plans, revising them, as necessary, in the light of changing needs and circumstances.
- 1.5 It is important that this Town Plan informs and is informed not only by national, regional and county-wide strategic planning but also by the management plans of the Southern Shropshire Area Partnership and other key local agencies, such as the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, the National Trust and the local Sustainable Tourism Network. The Town Plan provides a holistic set of priorities for the work of the Local Joint Area Committee of the Shropshire Council, serving this area.
- 1.6 The Council recognizes the current limitations on its powers and resources, yet its extensive responsibilities in comparison with other town and parish councils of similar size. Furthermore, the Council is mindful of the high proportion of elderly residents on fixed incomes, who are disproportionately affected by any rise in the local Council precept. So, it is incumbent upon the Council to minimize its financial demands upon such residents.

1.7 Uniquely, the Town Council is in a position to support, facilitate and co-ordinate. The Council will only be able to deliver this programme of action if it draws on the abundant talent and experience of residents in our community. By setting out a vision of what we, as a Council, want to achieve, we are able to invite others, who share those objectives, to help in realising them, be they other councils, businesses, community organizations or individuals. This partnership working also strengthens our ability to attract the necessary inward investment to enable our community to continue to thrive.

1.8 **The Challenges:** In common with all other small rural market towns, Church Stretton faces a number of significant challenges, some more acute than others, over the next five years:

- Energy conservation with rising energy costs
- Lack of affordable housing for local families and key workers
- Ageing population
- Infra-structure and community facilities in need of upgrading
- Under-developed public transport
- Combining environmental conservation with an increasing reliance on tourism as the mainstay of the local economy
- Shopping centre under threat from town-based supermarkets and parking enforcement
- Schools under threat from falling birthrate
- Addressing the need for increased employment opportunities, capitalizing especially on information and communication technologies
- Lack of citizen engagement in local government

1.9 In addressing these challenges, Church Stretton Town Council will always seek to serve the best interests of the community as a whole. It will aim for consensus on how we, as a community, can best evolve and adapt to changing needs, expectations and circumstances, while recognizing that full agreement will not always be possible.

2. Main Priorities

2.1 Over the next five years, Church Stretton Town Council will concentrate on six over-arching priorities, striving, with others, to:

- 1. Put the social and economic well-being of the town on a sustainable footing;**
- 2. Cement the reputation of Church Stretton as the “Heart of the Shropshire Hills”, renowned not only for its walking but the range and quality of its outdoor activities for all ages;**
- 3. Increase the visitor footfall, while reducing the carbon foot-print and conserving our beautiful surroundings;**
- 4. Upgrade the infra-structure (e.g. drainage, traffic lay-out) and community facilities (play, sport, culture and leisure) in the town;**
- 5. Make Church Stretton town centre more pedestrian-friendly, encouraging more residents to shop locally and more visitors to linger and browse;**
- 6. Promote more integrated planning, development and marketing, built on partnership working between the Council, regional and national agencies, the Shropshire Council, surrounding parishes, local businesses, community organizations and an expanding pool of active citizens.**

2.2 These main priorities are underpinned by a range of subsidiary aims that are grouped under the following ten headings, with an overall aim for each :

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| 1. Governance | 6. Housing |
| 2. Planning | 7. Education/Training |
| 3. Economic Well-being | 8. Health and Social Care |
| 4. Tourism | 9. Environment |
| 5. Transport | 10. Culture, Sport & Leisure |

3.1. Governance

Overall Aim: To develop an open and inclusive style of local government that encourages residents of all ages to be active citizens, better informed about where responsibilities lie for different community services.

- 3.1.1 To consult on a vision for the future well-being of the town and to promote two-way communication with residents, local interest-groups and other stake-holders to share ideas and prompt collaborative action;
- 3.1.2 To develop ways of involving young people more in shaping the future of the local community, so that all feel they have a stake in managing the process;
- 3.1.3 To match spending and effort to agreed priorities, ensuring that the local precept is used as cost-effectively as possible, while being pro-active, with others, in seeking external funding to achieve agreed goals;
- 3.1.4 To work in partnership with Shropshire Council and other surrounding parish councils to advance the interests of the area, pressing, as appropriate, for the devolution of powers and resources to generate and deliver local solutions for local issues;
- 3.1.5 To work with the Crime Reduction Partnership and local police to minimise crime and vandalism, in particular, and to promote a collective sense of community responsibility;
- 3.1.6 To encourage feedback on Council performance and to learn from successful council initiatives in other similar areas elsewhere in the country and in Europe.

3.2. Planning

Overall aim: To advocate for developments that promote and enhance the environmental, social and economic sustainability of all the Strettons, encouraging all residents to play an active part in that process.

- 3.2.1 To impress on Shropshire Council the need to synchronise planning for housing, education, employment, leisure & social facilities, utilities, traffic and parking;
- 3.2.2 To integrate the Town Plan into wider strategic planning frameworks and that of the Southern Shropshire Area Partnership and the local Joint area

Committee of Shropshire Council, in particular;

- 3.2.3 To engage with planners, developers and landowners to ensure that any re-developments are compatible with our shared vision of the town and with the Town Design Statement, respecting the natural features of the landscape;
- 3.2.4 To support the newly-formed Tree Group in implementing the Tree Guidelines, undertaking the tree audit and compiling the Opportunity Map for new and replacement tree planting.

3.3 Economic Well-being

Overall Aim: To work, in partnership with the local Chamber of Trade and other local businesses, to strengthen the local economy with a wider range of employment opportunities for local people and the right conditions to attract in small-scale businesses, compatible with the town.

- 3.3.1 To seek to encourage residents to use local businesses and shops, backing the Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme, promoting the principles of sustainability, including the use of local produce;
- 3.3.2 To press Shropshire Council, via the local Joint Area Committee, to make the promotion of rural businesses a priority, recognising the importance of market towns as the cornerstones of local sustainable economies;
- 3.3.3 To promote local business opportunity and enterprise, including the promotion of home working;
- 3.3.4 To encourage local businesses to recruit, train and retain local people;
- 3.3.5 To facilitate business networking, in conjunction with the Chamber of Trade and the Southern Shropshire Partnership (and the Church Stretton Area Partnership, as long as it exists);
- 3.3.6 To advocate for faster broadband services and the expansion of other e-communication networks, with minimal delay in the introduction of digital television for the benefit of both businesses and residents.

3.4 Tourism

Overall Aim: To support and help co-ordinate all who are working to improve the range and quality of visitor experience and thus to strengthen the local economy, while conserving the unique character of the area.

- 3.4.1 To contribute to the implementation of the recently agreed sustainable tourism strategy, in association with the Area Tourism Group, the National Trust, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and local businesses, co-ordinating publicity, developing e-marketing and encouraging businesses to take more responsibility for collective marketing;
- 3.4.2 To give full support to the Walkers are Welcome scheme and the progressive expansion of outdoor activities, appealing to all ages;
- 3.4.3 To rationalise and re-invigorate the local market to become an asset for both visitors and residents;
- 3.4.4 To explore ways of creating an attractive, pedestrian-friendly town centre with a diversity of retail outlets, with more information displayed for visitors about the history and heritage of the area;
- 3.4.5 To support the development of a year-round programme of events and additional visitor attractions, to encourage return visits;
- 3.4.6 To press Shropshire Council for dedicated marketing staff (supported by local community organizations) to promote the town and surrounding area, given its importance to the county's economy.

3.5 Transport

Overall Aim: To advance, through the Traffic Implementation Team, the development of a responsive and integrated transport infra-structure that better meets the evolving needs of both residents and visitors, while reducing the overall carbon foot-print, promoting more cycling, bus, coach and rail travel.

- 3.5.1 To work with the Chamber of Trade and Shropshire Council to adjust on- and off-street parking arrangements and the parking enforcement regime in Church Stretton, the better to meet the differing needs of residents, visitors and traders, as a vital component in promoting the local economy;
- 3.5.2 To work with Shropshire Council to develop public and commercial transport to reduce residents' and visitors' travelling by car for employment, shopping and leisure purposes, with more bus shelters with "real time indicator boards" and proper coach drop-off facilities;
- 3.5.3 To improve, on all roads and in Church Stretton town centre, the welcome and directional signage and press, via the Highways Agency, for improved verge maintenance, with improved safety in accessing Little and All Stretton, keeping the need for additional access to Church Stretton under review;

3.5.4 To explore ways of making Church Stretton town centre more pedestrian-friendly, including the possibilities of one-way traffic and compensatory parking provision.

3.6 Housing

Overall Aim: To advise and back the planning authority in matching housing supply to changing local needs in ways that are acceptable to the local community.

3.6.1 To promote an informed local debate about the place of housing in creating a sustainable community that provides equitably for local housing needs;

3.6.2 To optimise the investment in community gain from new developments, to minimise the disruption to existing residents during construction, and to assist in welcoming and integrating new residents into the community;

3.6.3 To impress upon the planning authority and local developers the need to comply with the guidance contained in the Town Design Statement;

3.6.4 To back the Climate Care Group in promoting energy-saving adaptations to existing and future housing;

3.6.5 To continue to lobby for a housing allocations policy, in relation to affordable housing, that gives priority to local families in most pressing need, as well as key workers required to support the community.

3.7. Education/Training

Overall Aim: To support and assist residents and visitors of all ages to access education and training options of their choice.

3.7.1 To encourage local schools and colleges to offer a diverse range of training opportunities and to assist in promoting them;

3.7.2 To promote initiatives that develop links between local schools and colleges and local employers, aimed at developing the skills required to grow the local economy;

3.7.3 To encourage the development of training events and courses unique to this area that will attract visitors e.g. geology, wild life, art etc.

3.7.4 To assist local schools to be fully involved in local community life and to

celebrate their achievements.

3.8. Health and Social Care

Overall Aim: To ensure the provision of a broad spectrum of opportunities for local residents of all ages to enhance their physical and mental well-being.

3.8.1 To support the local Medical Centre in better matching its resources to demand leading to improved GP and ambulance response times;

3.8.2 To support and encourage the health promotion initiatives of the health authorities, the Mayfair Centre, the new Leisure Centre and other local bodies;

3.8.3 To encourage residents to take part in all forms of voluntary work (for example, Mayfair, Ring and Ride, and Scrappies) for their own well-being and that of the community;

3.8.4 To seek to improve the facilities and support for disabled and elderly residents, including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act;

3.8.5 To support the ongoing provision of information and publicity to discourage alcohol and drug/substance abuse.

3.9. Environment

Overall Aim: To conserve and enhance all aspects of the environment of the Strettons and their surrounding area, together with improved sustainability and increased re-cycling.

3.9.1 To evaluate infrastructure requirements for the area and make recommendations to Shropshire Council, as necessary;

3.9.2 To work for improvements in the visual appearance and cleanliness of the town with the elimination of eyesores and other problem areas;

3.9.3 To press the local Crime Reduction Partnership and local police to take effective action with the local community in eliminating persistent vandalism;

3.9.4 To increase the opportunities for people to recycle materials easily and to improve awareness of ways to reduce waste;

3.9.5 To support organisations and individuals providing information and publicity for reduced carbon footprints and better climate care;

3.9.6 To conserve the rural environment and local wildlife, including the town's nature reserve, by working alongside organisations involved in this field.

3.10. Culture, Sport & Leisure

Overall Aim: To increase the variety, quality and availability of cultural, sporting and leisure opportunities for both residents and visitors.

3.10.1 To work with existing Forums, or create new ones, to strengthen the Council's partnership working with church, community, cultural and sports organizations for the betterment of the spiritual, cultural and sporting life of the community;

3.10.2 To maximise the sense of community ownership of the new Community Leisure Centre, through an advisory committee, so the facilities are used to their full potential;

3.10.3 To explore the upgrading, in partnership with the Pavilion Committee and the Play Area Action Group (PAAG), of the playing fields, with a "Trim-track" to encourage adults to exercise and a new Pavilion, together with the appropriate parking capacity;

3.10.4 To increase the use of the Park's facilities, working in partnership with the Mayfair Youth Club to improve the BMX track, skate park and other possible initiatives e.g. graffiti wall;

3.10.5 To support the development of an all-weather pitch behind the school to facilitate year-round sports training;

3.10.6 To give a higher community profile to the range of sporting events and competitions, with improved spectator facilities and to continue to support the annual Arts Festival and other major events;

3.10.7 To seek out appropriate means to promote local artistic talent with community art projects and competitions for music, drama and other performing arts, including an upgrading of the Silvester Horne Institute for such activities;

3.10.8 To work for the establishment of a museum, art gallery and sculpture park.