

WARMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

“GROWING TOWN, GROWING SERVICES”: STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2021



Foreword

Warminster Town Council’s Strategic Plan sets out the Council’s vision for the future and its aims and priorities over the next five years. It builds on both the Warminster Town Plan, published in April 2012 by Warminster Town Council in coordination with Wiltshire Council and the input of a number of local community groups and key stakeholders, and the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Draft 2015).

In this document we have concentrated on the role of the Town Council in achieving our vision for the town, although we recognise that it will take a strong partnership of a number of organisations to attain these goals. As the local authority closest to people and communities of the town, we are uniquely situated to best represent the views of our communities. We also have a number of statutory duties and services to administer and intend to continue to build quality into our ethos, to ensure we fulfil our role in the most efficient and cost effective way.

“Growing Town, Growing Services” is the recognition of where we are and what needs doing. It is a commitment to tackle the issues identified with vigour, over a realistic period of time. The Council will be careful with public money, but will not be afraid to invest in the future.

Warminster has a number of distinctive features that make it attractive, a strong heritage and most importantly a friendly community that enjoys the benefits the town offers. As outstanding as our town is, there are a number of issues that require attention if it is to cope with an unprecedented rate of growth as well as the change in people’s lifestyles, demands and aspirations. These developments will be co-ordinated and driven by our Service Plan. We will update and report back regularly on progress.

We now feel able to shape Warminster as a place that meets the expectations of its residents, businesses and community organisations.

Councillor Paul Macfarlane
Mayor

Adopted by the Council: 9th May 2016

Our Vision

A sustainable town built on the strong Warminster heritage as a prominent market town and hub for local villages, providing a mix of employment, services and amenities that enable residents to enjoy a happy life.

Our Purpose

To build Warminster into a quality town, sustaining a high level of health, wellbeing, happiness and economic growth across the whole community.

Strategic Priorities

A. For the town

1. A PLACE TO LIVE

Maintaining and enhancing the social wellbeing of the town by providing a variety of leisure facilities and encouraging a sense of civic pride across all age groups, improving the level of public engagement and providing a safe place in which to live.

2. A PLACE TO WORK

Enhancing economic prosperity by supporting a quality retail and service offering, with volunteering opportunities, whilst maintaining the heritage of the town and improving the street scene. Warminster will aim to become a digital town.

3. A PLACE TO ENJOY

Improving the quality of the public realm by recognising that the state of the local environment reflects the quality of the town. The Council will identify actions to improve the local environment for all ages, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, and provide facilities and services for younger people. Warminster will aim to be a vibrant and attractive place for residents and visitors.

B. For the Council

4. A COUNCIL TO DELIVER

Developing the capacity and skills within the Council, both elected members and officers, to equip it for taking on more locally controlled services and to lead Warminster to a better future by listening to and acting upon residents' views and needs.

The Warminster Community Promise

In achieving our vision Warminster Town Council promises to be trustworthy and honest, act with integrity at all times and ensure its decision-making will be transparent and represent the voice of the community it serves.

OUR CORE VALUES

The principles by which we will operate the Council are

- *Equality and respect**
- *Working with others and community spirit**
- *Value for money**

An Overview of the Town

Background

Warminster has a population of 18,800 increasing to 24,700 when including the rural community area. The population breakdown is as follows (2011 Census):

0–14	16%
15–64	59%
65+	25%

The town is an important service centre for a large rural catchment of villages. It is also home to a major military garrison. Its town centre has an aesthetically pleasing mix of Jacobean, Georgian and Victorian architecture. The majority of retailers are based within the centre of the town including major supermarkets. Benchmarking shows footfall compares favourably with other towns and people enjoy the ease of access to all retailers. Some manufacturing still takes place in the town.

Transport

There are good transport links for local travel as well as for accessing the countryside and nearby cities (Bath and Salisbury). There is a regular train service to a variety of popular destinations further afield.

Sport and leisure

The town has facilities to support mainstream sports such as rugby, cricket and football but not enough play pitches. The local leisure centre houses a swimming pool, has a wide range of activities for all age groups and encourages keep fit along with a gym and a variety of exercise classes. The leisure centre is attached to the one comprehensive school in the town. The outdoor pitches that it provides are in use every day until late at night. The park is one of the town's finest beauty spots with traditional facilities for all age groups. This is a large open space with a paddling pool, community centre, scout hut, lake, skate park, tennis courts, putting green and a café. All are fully accessible from the town centre. Active cycling groups and walkers encourage the use of tracks and routes to nearby villages and open countryside.

There are a large number of voluntary groups which cover a very wide range of activities on offer within the town including a well subscribed University of the 3rd Age (U3A) group, theatre, sports clubs and Warminster Community Radio. The town continues to put on an annual carnival with 10,000 spectators, a live music event, a Christmas lights display and a biannual cultural festival. Volunteers run the majority of these events.

Growth and the Neighbourhood Plan

Warminster is entering a period of growth. There are 1920 new homes planned for the town from 2006–2026. This should provide opportunities to boost the local economy, with benefit for local shops and services. However, it will also increase the pressure on existing community and leisure facilities, many of which are operating close to capacity.

The Town Council is currently preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and brought together a steering group of 22 people representing schools, doctors surgeries, churches, community action groups, Civic Trust, police, military, principal authority, sports groups as well as local councillors. Development of the town over the next 15 years will mean that the community has to decide what facilities and services it will need to incorporate the growth of the town and its population into the community. The Plan is currently undergoing independent examination following a period of formal consultation by Wiltshire Council. Through community engagement as part of this process, it was identified that local services would need to be considered to protect the open spaces the town currently has as well as reviewing sports and leisure facilities for the future.

From 1st July the Town Council will take over the management of the town park and public conveniences from the principal authority.

About Warminster Town Council and Local Governance

Warminster has two different tiers of local government, each democratically elected, independent of each other and with very different functions. Wiltshire Council is referred to as the “principal authority” and Warminster Town Council is known as a “smaller authority”.

Warminster Town Council (WTC) was established in April 1974, in the local government reorganisation that brought into being West Wiltshire District Council. The historic town had been at the centre of local government from 1894 to 1974 through the former Warminster Urban District Council. West Wiltshire District Council, along with Wiltshire County Council, was abolished on 1st April 2009 to be replaced by the unitary Wiltshire Council.

Warminster Town Council is the most local level of elected representation. Its aim is to serve as a vehicle of local opinion; to provide an effective link between the local residents and Wiltshire Council; to express local feelings and interests and to keep watch on all developments within the town. It has an opportunity to examine and comment on plans due for consideration by Wiltshire Council as the planning authority and power to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council has adopted a range of governance documents and policies, some of which are statutory whilst others represent good practice. They form part of the Council’s Constitution and are all available on its website, www.warminster-tc.gov.uk.

The Council has a good record of delivering well-respected services and facilities which contribute considerably to Warminster remaining a vibrant and attractive town. It does not try to do everything itself, but takes a “gap filling” approach and supports others, particularly voluntary organisations where they are best able to take the lead.

Warminster Town Council is composed of 13 councillors. The town is divided into four wards: Warminster West, Warminster East and Broadway, each with four councillors, and Copheap with one councillor. The Council is led by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, who are elected each May at the Annual Town Council Meeting. The next all out elections will be held in May 2017.

All councillors meet together as the Full Council. Meetings of the Full Council are open to the public and take place on a two monthly cycle. Here councillors decide the Council’s overall policies, set the budget each year and deal directly with the major issues. The Council currently has a number of committees to undertake detailed work matters not reserved for Full Council.

Town Council meetings and committee meetings are held at the Civic Centre. The public are welcome to attend the majority of meetings, either to listen or to speak in the public session. Occasionally, however, Council or committees may need to consider matters in private. Examples of this are matters involving personal details of staff or where commercially sensitive matters are to be discussed. Minutes from all meetings are public documents and will be available on the website.

Warminster Town Councillors



Paul Batchelor
(Broadway)



Jamie Cullen
(Broadway)



Steve Dancey
(East)



Andrew Davis
(East)



Nick Dombkowski
(East)



Sue Fraser
(West)



Kate Fryer
(Copheap)



Rob Fryer
(West)



Keith Humphries
(Broadway)



George Jolley
(Broadway)



Paul Macdonald
(East)

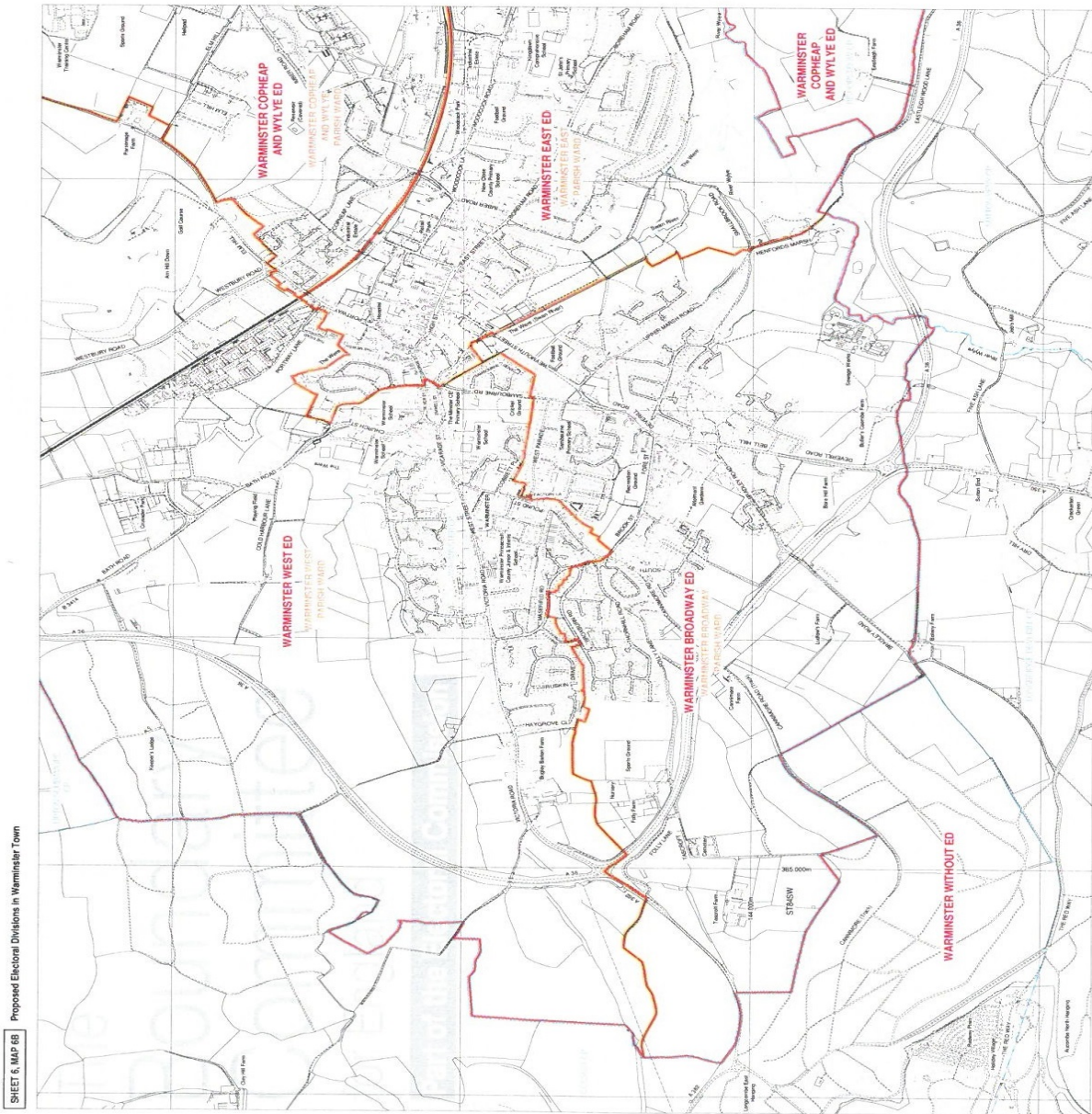


Paul Macfarlane
(West)



Pip Ridout
(West)

Map of Warminster Electoral Wards



The Council provides a range of services and facilities which include:

- The **Civic Centre**, refurbished in November 2011. Flexible rooms for hire with catering facilities, good disabled access and a Changing Places toilet. Well managed with high standard of provision.
- Within the Civic Centre, **information gateway** to Wiltshire Council and hot desking provision for their staff.
- **CCTV** provision for the town, monitoring at Dewey House also for an industrial estate and neighbouring town. Manned by combination of staff and volunteers.
- Provision and maintenance of **bus shelters** and **benches**.
- Running **events** and **festivals**, and providing support and equipment to other event organisers, e.g. World War I exhibition, Christmas lights and the Inspire event.
- **Town Crier**.
- Support for **Warminster Community Radio**.
- Publication and distribution of **Christmas brochure**.
- **Promotion of the town** across various media.
- **Public open space**: areas maintained by contractors include Yeates Field, leased from the National Trust, and Ashley Place field.
- From 1st July management of **town park** and **public conveniences**.
- Provision of **allotments** at Bradley Road.
- Maintenance of three **closed churchyards** – Minster, Boreham and St Lawrence.
- **Civic events**, including Remembrance Service and parade, Civic Service and military parades.
- Provision of **Civic Award** and **Junior Civic Award**.
- Provision of grant support to **information point (tourism)**.
- **Monuments**: Obelisk and War Memorial.
- Working with Wiltshire Council to deliver **town improvements** through the Community Area Transport Group.
- **Neighbourhood Plan**. This draft document has been prepared in-house, with professional advice from a spatial planning officer at Wiltshire Council. It is currently with the independent examiner.
- Support for local organisations through its **annual grants scheme**.
- Support for a **community orchard** at Yeates Field.
- Provision of **Warminster Parking Partnership**.
- **Quarterly newsletters**

The Council is supported by a team of officers who report to the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk's role is to give advice, implement decisions, manage the day-to-day delivery of services and manage finances. Some of these duties are statutory responsibilities.

Each year the Council sets its budget and determines how much money it needs to raise from Council Tax, through its precept. This can be identified clearly from Council Tax bills.

Warminster is in the South West Wiltshire Parliamentary Constituency and the South West England European Parliament Constituency. The current MP is Dr Andrew Murrison.

Future Direction

The Council's three outward-facing strategic priorities mirror closely the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, but develop the themes well beyond planning considerations. Within these strategic priorities are a number of supporting corporate objectives. Each of these are given specific targets in our Service Plan, which also identifies the dates by which they will be delivered, the person(s) responsible for delivery and the outcomes. In addition we have identified an inward-facing priority to develop the potential of the Council – our efficiency, effectiveness and transparency and aims to take on more services necessary to deliver our three outward-facing priorities.

Priority 1: A PLACE TO LIVE

We will develop a strategy for new housing in Warminster that is tailored to the needs and context of the town. We will endeavour to make our community as inclusive as possible while keeping the town safe and healthy.

Priority 2: A PLACE TO WORK

We will develop a strategy to encourage new business and employment prospects in the town, while supporting existing businesses.

Priority 3: A PLACE TO ENJOY

We will develop a community strategy for the whole of the neighbourhood area that meets the aspirations of a growing population.

Priority 4: A COUNCIL TO DELIVER

We will develop capacity and a diverse skill base through the elected members and officers of the Council who will deliver the Strategic Plan through an outcome-focussed detailed Service Plan.

How It Will Be Delivered

Warminster Town Council recognises that it does not have the legal powers or resources to bring about all of its priorities on its own. It will support all organisations and projects which take forward its priorities. It will then put its corporate shoulder behind them and, where possible, help fill gaps in provision using its unique position.

The Council will use its Service Plan to translate its Strategic Plan into actions, providing details of how it will achieve and fund its aims and specify targets against which its progress can be judged. Performance data will be collected each Council cycle and reported to councillors, together with financial management information.

Each of its priorities will be delivered through projects for which action plans will be developed. Implementation of the action plans will be the responsibility of the Town Clerk. Intended actions will be costed and used to inform future budgets.

The elected members of the Council will continuously tackle enthusiastically the challenges which lie ahead.