



Sandy Town Council Strategic plan

This document embodies the vision and aspirations of Sandy Town Council for the community of Sandy (adopted April 2013)

Introduction

The aim of this document is to outline the overarching strategy of Sandy Town Council. As well as providing a public statement of the council's objectives and priorities; this document will help councillors and officers to cross check individual decisions against the cohesive strategic plan.

Sandy Town Council recognises that, in addition to potential changes in the composition of the council at each election, there may be legislative and economic changes which affect this strategy and so it will be subject to further review on an annual basis prior to the budget setting process adopted by the Council.

The strategy has been compiled using input from members, officers and residents (including via consultation for the Sandy Town Plan). Sandy Town Council welcomes all comments on its strategic direction at any time.

About Sandy

Sandy is a small market town in north east Bedfordshire located astride the heavily used Great North Road (A1) in between the growing communities of Biggleswade to the south and St Neots to the north. The surrounding landscape is dominated by a range of hills known as the Sand Hills and Sandy is nestled in the break where the Greensand Ridge meets the Ivel Valley. To the east of the town is the east coast mainline railway used by many commuters. Recent housing development in Sandy has generally taken place to the north of the town centre. To the south of the town the River Ivel meanders through water meadows and fields close to the hamlet of Beeston which is bisected by the A1. The population of Sandy was recorded as 12,600 in the 2011 Census.

The town's proximity to Bedford, Biggleswade and St Neots and the recent and continuing growth of these settlements has meant that many residents travel outside Sandy for shopping, work and entertainment.

Purpose, Vision and Mission

Purpose

Sandy Town Council exists to serve and represent the interests of the whole community of Sandy and to work for provision of services for its residents. Sandy Town Council will work with organisations or people willing to improve the well-being and prospects of the community.

Vision Statement

To make Sandy a town to be proud of and a good place to live.

Mission Statement

Working together to enhance our community

Overall Objectives

Sandy Town Council will

- encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a shared sense of identity and community participation
- develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community
- work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe town centre
- welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area
- work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape
- communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community
- strive to ensure value for money in all its operations
- recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff development and training
- retain its Quality Parish Council status and its General Power of Competence

Values

Sandy Town Council aspires to:

- Work for the community not ourselves
- Be honest and transparent in all our activities
- Do everything we can to provide excellent services and encourage our partners to do the same within a culture of continual improvement
- Treat customers and colleagues with fairness and respect
- Take pride in our community and ourselves
- Make the best possible use of the resources available and empower our staff to be effective
- Focus on outcomes rather than processes
- Engage in real partnership,
- Be open to constructive criticism and change

Strategic Plans

In order to achieve its objectives the Council has divided its activities into four main areas and set out its strategy for each of these. These plans in turn are each supported by a corporate action plan which sets out what the Council aims to do in the near future. The action plans make reference to the relevant overall objectives which affect each area of activity.

1 Community

Most Relevant Objectives:

1.1 encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a shared sense of identity and community participation

1.2 develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community

Sandy Town Council is close to our community and will provide local leadership aimed at improving and enhancing the well-being of all.

The Town Council will endeavour to hear, understand and articulate the needs of all parts of our community from young people to the elderly.

The Town Council will work closely with those voluntary, business and community groups which both directly and indirectly provide support to our community. The Town Council will promote opportunities for volunteering and will encourage the development of a resilient social infrastructure.

The Town Council will work in partnership with the principal authority and other statutory agencies to help the community to secure a better deal on local services and a stronger voice in decision-making. The Town Council will also work with these and other partners to promote community safety in Sandy and the wider area.

The Town Council will provide information and share news about local issues. Information will be provided through the Council's website, annual report, and in other ways.

The Town Council will encourage and support cultural, sporting and other leisure activities which benefit the people of Sandy.

The Town Council will support initiatives which promote the development of healthy lifestyles within the community.

2 Economy

Most Relevant Objectives:

2.1 work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe town centre

2.2 welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area

Sandy Town Council will encourage and seek to secure the economic growth of the town so that future prosperity is assured for residents and businesses.

The three main industries of employment for Sandy residents are:

- Wholesale and retail
- Manufacturing
- Health and social work

(ONS 2011 Census)

The Town Council recognises the need to support these activities whilst encouraging additional economic development.

The Council aims to pursue policies which will encourage inward investment in the town, promotion of local businesses and greater use and range of local facilities.

The Town Council will work with other relevant agencies to promote employment opportunities, growth and sustainable development which benefit the economic health of Sandy. Sandy Town Council will work with those in the community who wish to see a revival of the market town identity of Sandy. The Council also wishes to promote the visitor economy in Sandy

There are pockets of significant economic deprivation within the town of Sandy¹ and the council will work to improve access to benefits, services and amenities for residents in these areas.

3 Environment

Most Relevant Objectives:

3.1 develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and amenity provision to, for and by that community

3.2 work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape

Sandy Town Council seeks to ensure that economic or physical development of Sandy is sympathetic and appropriate to the strong identity and character of the town which is provided by its natural and built heritage.

With this in mind the he council will review and comment on planning applications forwarded to them by the Planning Authorities.

Sandy Town Council will participate in formal consultations which affect the future environment of the town.

The Town Council will seek to preserve Sandy's Walkers are Welcome accreditation and promote walking, cycling and sustainable transport in the area.

The Town Council will promote wider access to and development of public transport provision. The Town Council will support initiatives to reduce traffic congestion and environmental damage in the Town Centre, to reduce on street parking and to improve road safety

The Town Council will work with relevant agencies concerned with improving the physical environment of the town.

The Town Council will maintain an environmental policy for its own activities aimed at reducing any negative impact on the biodiversity of the area.

¹ (including LSOA 433¹ one of the 20%-40% most deprived in the UK)

4 Democracy

Most Relevant Objectives:

4.1 communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community

4.2 strive to ensure value for money in all its operations

4.3 recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff development and training

4.4 retain its Quality Parish Council status and its General Power of Competence

Sandy Town Council consists of an elected body of local people and so provides a strong, local voice on all decisions, services and issues which affect the everyday life of people in this community.

The Council has obtained Quality Council status and will continue to comply with revisions to the Quality Parish Council Scheme in order to meet the highest standards of good practice within the local council sector.

The Council has confirmed its eligibility for the General Power of Competence which gives it the opportunity to provide a wider range of local services. The Council will embrace new opportunities for local service delivery provided by the Localism Act 2011. The balance of cost and benefit in providing any services will be carefully assessed in order to ensure best value to the tax payers of Sandy.

Sandy Town Council will be transparent in all its activities and will publish as much information about its decision making as possible. The Town Council will facilitate the full participation of the community in the decision making process. The Council wants every citizen to believe that their opinion counts.

All members of Sandy Town Council will commit to comply with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and will undertake relevant training in their capacity as councillors.

Action Plans 2013/15

1 Community

1.1 *Encourage more engagement with local people and groups and develop a shared sense of identity and community participation*

- Increase participation in Annual Town Meeting
- Delivery of Christmas lights and community event
- Strengthen partnership working initiatives
- Deliver additional community events Eg Get involved fair
- Sustain aspects of civic life, eg civic service, activities of Town Mayor (subject to clarification of Town Council)
- Support the establishment of a Good Neighbour Scheme
- Maintain website and communication through other media

1.2 *Develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and community provision to, for and by that community*

- Close current allotment site and continue work to secure new site
- Develop cemetery extension project and review management of cemetery and use of chapel
- Improve Stratford Road yard and outbuildings, review vehicle and plant provision
- Review Tourist Information service provision and integrate with council administration
- Review management of Pinnacle and Riddy
- Pursue Community Orchard project, Beeston
- Improvements to Fallowfield Public Open Space
- Review Skate Park management agreement

2 Economy

2.1 *Work with partners to develop a vibrant, economically sustainable and safe town centre*

- Develop communications between Town Team, Chamber of Trade, businesses and councillors
- Review market development
- Monitor changes of occupancy in Town Centre premises and respond appropriately
- Review effectiveness of Closed Circuit Television
- Support Conservation Area Appraisal initiatives
- Support ethical trading initiatives

2.2 *Welcome visitors and promote awareness of the amenities and activities within the area*

- Review Tourist Information Centre provision
- Continue to support Walkers are Welcome steering group
- Improve access to Roman Sandy exhibits and promote Sandy's Roman heritage as a visitor attraction
- Maintain nature reserves and open spaces
- Develop working relationship with RSPB

3 Environment

3.1 *Develop and improve the community of Sandy including service and community provision to, for and by that community*

- Promote access to the countryside by working in partnership with other organisations to develop the Sandy Green Crescent and improvements to footpaths and open spaces
- Secure new allotment site
- Review tree management
- Pursue Community Orchard project, Beeston

- Maintain and improve play facilities
- Review management and use of Beeston Green Common Land
- Review management of Town Centre Car Park
- Improve Fallowfield Public Open Space

3.2 *Work to preserve the distinctive identity and character of Sandy and the surrounding landscape*

- Review environmental policy for all Sandy Town Council operations
- Support Conservation Area Appraisal initiatives

4 Democracy

4.1 *Communicate effectively and strive to represent the whole community*

- Review community engagement strategy, publish and implement
- Maintain website, post weekly news updates
- Publish all financial documents and transactions over £500 on website
- Widen distribution of annual report
- Council representatives on external bodies to provide written and informative reports to council on a regular basis
- Increase attendance at Town Meeting, councillor surgeries and town council meetings
- Improve physical public accessibility to meetings (eg including provision of hearing loop, PA system and appropriate room layout)

4.2 *Strive to ensure value for money in all its operations*

- Review existing council activities and levels of service provision
- Consider opportunities for new and alternative service provision

- Review use of all premises and make 10 Cambridge Road more widely available to the community
- Review staff job descriptions and staff structure
- Strengthen contract and lease monitoring
- Develop and adopt an investment strategy which maximises the Council's resources whilst retaining a prudent level of reserves

4.3 *Recruit and retain a high quality workforce and provide opportunities for staff development and training*

- Review staff job descriptions and staff structure
- Enable Town Clerk to concentrate on management and implementation of council policies
- Provide appropriate training and support for all staff

4.4 *Retain quality Parish Council status and general power of competence*

- Implement Council's statement of intent with regard to training
- Provide appropriate training and support for all councillors and staff
- Facilitate work of councillors by reducing number of meetings and by providing Wi-Fi and accessibility improvements to 10 Cambridge Road
- Actively encourage community wide interest in council elections and provide appropriate information for potential candidates