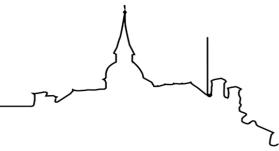


Issue Status

Issue No.	Date Adopted	Details of Amendment
1	5 June 2022	First Draft
2	21 Dec 2022	2 nd Draft
3	24 April 2023	3 rd Draft – Approved
4	18 Feb 2025	Updated organisation chart & precept figures

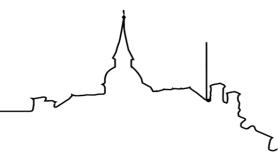




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A Message from The Town Mayor



Towcester is a great place to live. It has excellent schools, parks and green spaces, a range of local services, a leisure centre, community buildings, many active voluntary organisations, and good communication links by road and rail.

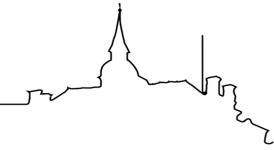
However, there are challenges for our community. We still await the opening of an A5/A43 Link Road, that will enable heavy traffic to be diverted from the town centre. There is increasing pressure on local health care provision, including pharmacies, and a shortage of secondary school places. Public transport is inadequate, and we have a shortage of sports fields and allotments. Many of our town centre's historic buildings need urgent renovation.

This Community Plan sets out how your Town Council plans to keep Towcester being a great place to live and take action to meet the challenges that our community faces over the next five years.

The Plan builds on work led by Cllr Jim Lynch, with the process of developing this new Community Plan due to the work of Cllr Damian Reynolds, to whom on behalf of the Council and town, I wish to express thanks.

Cllr Martin Johns Mayor of Towcester 2022-2023





Introduction

This Community Plan is our blueprint for how Towcester Town Council will work in a co-ordinated way in the best interests of all who live and work in Towcester and use our services. It sets out our key priorities of what we aim to achieve, either directly or by influencing other relevant public and/or voluntary organisations, or private companies.

The aim of the Community Plan is to give Towcester's residents and others a clear understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve and how it proposes to do this. It details what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next five years. The Community Plan will be used each year to plan activities and assist in setting out the Council's budget for the coming year.

To be successful, this plan will need to be owned, not just by the Council, but by all residents of Towcester. We will continue to ask your opinion on how we can best represent you, and we will also seek your help to achieve our goals. Our overall goal being to build a thriving, inclusive community for Towcester.

Why do we need a Community Plan?

The Community Plan will help to ensure that the Council takes a planned and consistent approach to:

- the choice and delivery of services
- the prioritisation and allocation of resources
- the achievement of real value for money

It is a 'live' document which the Town Council will update annually, enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. The Community Plan will be publicly available, enabling Towcester residents to monitor progress and increase engagement.

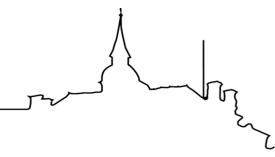
How will the Community Plan be monitored?

The Community Plan will be monitored on a regular basis by Towcester Town Council through its associated committees.

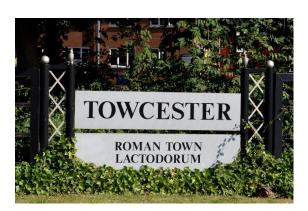
Availability of the Community Plan

Towcester Town Council invited the local community to participate in the development of the Community Plan. It is available on the Council's website (www.towcester-tc.gov.uk), allowing residents to both view the content and suggest improvements and updates.





About Towcester



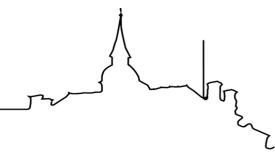
Towcester, surrounded by the beautiful Northamptonshire countryside, has much to offer to both residents and visitors. Towcester is the oldest town in Northamptonshire and has a long, varied and interesting history. Much of Towcester's town centre is within the designated Conservation Area and many of the properties that line Watling Street are Grade II Listed. It is a town of contrasts where the old mixes happily with the new; the lively

Watling Street, the business and commercial lifeline of the town, lie alongside areas of rural tranquillity such as the Watermeadows. Towcester enjoys a strong sense of community, evidenced by the great variety of local clubs and societies that flourish in the town. The town is well-served by road, being in close proximity to the M1 and A43/A5 providing routes north, south, east, and west. Rail links are available at Milton Keynes and Northampton. Towcester has a good range of independent shops and eating places as well as supermarkets and other services to cater for its circa 12,000 inhabitants and those who visit from in nearby villages and further afield.

Towcester continues to grow, with the ongoing construction of new homes, schools and amenities to the south of the town. A new access road linking the A5 to the A43 is due to open in 2024.







Towcester Town Council – About Us

Towcester Town Council is the most local tier of Government here in Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire Council being the principal authority.

Although the Town Council has limited direct powers, it plays an important role in reflecting and communicating the views of residents on matters including planning, highways and social housing. It has an important role to play in promoting the town, representing its interests, and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

The Town Council consists of 16 elected councillors who serve for a four-year term, with the town divided into two electoral wards, Mill Ward and Brook Ward.

All Town Councillors are volunteers and, as such, do not receive an allowance, except for the Town Mayor in lieu of associated expenses.

Meetings of the Full Council are held in the Town Hall on the second Monday of each month and the attendance of members of the public is welcomed. Time is allocated at every meeting for public participation when residents can ask questions or raise an issue. Meetings of the Full Council are chaired by the Town Mayor.

Towcester Town Council currently owns, manages, and maintains:

- Community venues
 - Towcester Town Hall
 - The Sawpits Centre
 - Towcester Youth & Community Centre
- Green Spaces & Play Areas
 - Recreation Ground
 - Belle Baulk
 - The Shires
 - Sandyhome Road

- Riverside Walk
- Saxon Fields
- Tove Wetlands Pocket Park
- Nicholas Hawksmoor Pocket Park
- Malthouse Court allotments
- Burial Authority
 - Brackley Road Cemetery
 - St. Lawrence Closed Churchyard

It also provides litter bins, dog waste bins and regular litter picking for all of its open areas and play areas.

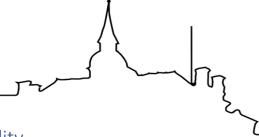
The Town Council is responsible for mowing a large proportion of open areas in the town and the highway verges on behalf of West Northants Council. It is not responsible for areas which form part of the National Highway's Strategic Road Network (A5/A43) or those which remain within the ownership of developers.

Details of meeting dates, agendas and current councillors can be found on the Town Council's website: www.towcester-tc.gov.uk.

The Council is also represented on several external organisations, including:

- Towcester Midsummer Music Festival
- St. Lawrence Church (PCC)
- Nicholas Hawksmoor Pocket Park Committee
- Belle Baulk Pocket Park Committee
- The Sponne & Bickerstaffe Charity
- Towcester Combined Charities
- Towcester Business Club
- Police Liaison Representative
- Neighbourhood Watch and Safer Towcester
- Northants County Association of Local Council





Towcester Town Council – Our Areas of Responsibility

As a Council, we execute our responsibilities through several separate committees which then report to the Full Town Council.

The Resources and Planning Committee

- Submitting comments on all planning applications and change of use applications in Towcester as a statutory consultee of the West Northants Planning Authority
- Financial and budgetary control within the Town Council
- Street lighting and highway matters
- Publishing the Towcester Town Crier and the Town Council website
- Consideration of applications for Community Grant funding

The Recreation and Leisure Committee

- Control of open areas owned by the Town Council
- Purchase and maintenance of play equipment
- Supply and maintenance of seats and bins
- Litter control on open areas owned by the Town Council
- Supply and maintenance of dog waste bins
- Environmental works

The Premises Committee

- Management and maintenance of Town Hall, including Offices
- Management and maintenance of The Sawpits Centre
- Management of Public Conveniences in Sponne Arcade

The Cemetery Committee

- Maintenance and management of the Brackley Road Cemetery, including the Cemetery Chapel and War Memorial
- Management and maintenance of Towcester Cemetery Lodge
- Management and maintenance of Town Council Allotments at Malthouse Court
- Upkeep of St Lawrence closed churchyard

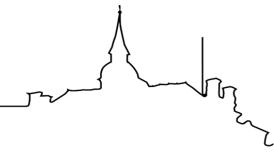
Personnel Committee

Performance Management of Towcester Town Council Employees

Towcester Youth & Community Centre Trust Committee

Management and maintenance of the Towcester Youth & Community Centre (as trustees)





A Vision for Towcester

The Council has developed a long-term vision. This is an ideal aspiration for us to strive for and will inform our decision making on all matters:

A market town known for its successful and varied shopping facilities and excellence in education and commercial opportunities. We want good public transport links, plenty for everyone to do and great living opportunities for our children. We want to offer an attractive and welcoming environment which maintains its own distinctive identity and acts as a hub for surrounding towns and villages.

Town Centre Vision

The Council has also developed a vision specifically for our Town Centre. The Town centre is the heart of our community:

Towcester town centre is the welcoming heart of a developing town. It will become a destination for residents and visitors seeking quality shopping, services, dining, and recreation.

Visitors will be attracted by an accessible, pedestrian friendly and attractive environment that respects Towcester's history.





Understanding Towcester's Priorities

An important role for the Town Council is to reflect the views of residents.

In 2022, the Town Council embarked on a project to understand the priorities of the population as a 'temperature check'.

We understand that everyone's priorities are personal to them and may be informed by many factors such as age or where they lived in Towcester, therefore we designed a project to reflect this.

Three wishes for Towcester

During 2022, we asked residents and visitors to Towcester a simple question via an online and printed questionnaire:

"What are the three most important things that you think would benefit the Town?"

We also asked for age and postcode to be provided to help us understand a little more about the demographic of the respondents.

We made certain that the survey was as accessible as possible by providing an online version and a physical version that was printed in the Town Crier and could be completed and dropped off at the Town Hall.

We reached out to key Towcester stakeholders to gain the best engagement we could (schools, churches and local groups).

The results of the questionnaire were then consolidated and used to identify residents' key priorities:

- 1. Reduce traffic through Towcester town centre and reduce speeding in and around Towcester
- 2. Make Towcester attractive to businesses and preserve the historic centre of the town
- 3. Monitor the increase in commercial and residential development around Towcester
- 4. Improved parking provision in Towcester and public transport to and from Towcester
- 5. Access to Medical and Healthcare provision in Towcester
- 6. Environmental Management of Towcester
- 7. A Safe Sense of Community
- 8. Leisure Facilities for all ages

These priorities are explained in further detail in the next few pages.





Your Priorities:

1. Reduce Traffic Through Towcester Town Centre and reduce speeding in and around Towcester.

The biggest concern facing Towcester is the volume of traffic, and in particular HGVs, that use the A5 through Towcester Town Centre. This has a significant detrimental impact on local environment and often Watling Street can be congested with standing traffic. An 'A5/A43 Link Road' is currently being constructed by housing developers, however this is not due to open until 2024.

Town Council Position:

- To continue to press for the rapid completion of the 'A5/A43 Link Road'.
- To work collaboratively with National Highways on delivery of its proposals to introduce traffic calming initiatives and weight limits through the Town Centre to discourage HGVs.
- To continue to push for the A5 to be 'de-trunked' by National Highways, therefore forcing HGV traffic along the A5/A43 Link Road.
- To support traffic calming schemes and improvements to cycleways and footpaths throughout Towcester and its hinterlands.

2. Make Towcester attractive to Businesses and Preserve the Historic Centre of the Town

As a Town, we are very proud of our Town Centre, and are keen to see it thrive. We are pleased to see new businesses take up residence on the high street and want to protect our Townscape. We have agreed a vision statement which reflects our position on the Town centre. There is a strong preference for a pedestrian-friendly Town Centre.

Town Council Position:

- To ensure we share our Town Centre Vision with all key stakeholders; particularly when it comes to development.
- To ensure that the Conservation Area of the Town is protected in all planning applications.
- To encourage increased footfall to Town Centre businesses, shops and services.
- To continue to improve the Townscape through 'Towcester in Bloom' and Christmas Trees/Lights initiatives.
- To champion a more pedestrian-friendly Market Square in collaboration with National Highways and West Northants Council.
- To identify opportunities to obtain funding for the renovation of our fantastic Town Hall building for the benefit of the whole community.





3. Monitor the increase in Commercial and Residential Development around Towcester

Towcester is a small market town; however, recent planning approvals for significant housing and commercial developments risk swamping Towcester with traffic and potentially impacting detrimentally upon its residents and those in neighbouring villages. The Town Council is extremely concerned that several applications have been approved, with each providing individual traffic impact statements without reference to the cumulative impact. We accept that Towcester is growing and will continue to grow.

Town Council Position:

- To be the voice of the Town and support and ask questions of developers where required.
- To communicate and flag any potential developments at the earliest of stages and communicate to residents.
- To challenge developments with the local planning authority. To mediate for the best outcome for the residents of Towcester.
- To keep aware of potential developments further afield that may adversely affect Towcester and feedback to the appropriate authorities.
- To champion appropriate infrastructure with developers and planning authorities to meet the need of a growing Towcester, for example, sport facilities, retail, healthcare, and education.
- To ensure new residents and new developments are integrated to create a cohesive Towcester community.

4. Parking Provision in Towcester and Public Transport to and from Towcester

Towcester is a small town with the level of traffic increasing in line with development.

Town Council Position:

- To campaign to protect continued free parking in the town's public car parks.
- To report illegal parking within the Town Centre and request more frequent enforcement.
- To campaign for improved real-time sign posting to direct visitors to the nearest available car parking.
- To monitor the parking impact of new residential developments.
- To promote walking and cycling as travel alternatives in and around Towcester.
- Campaign for improved bus services to and from Towcester.





5. Access to Medical and Healthcare Provision in Towcester

We realise that as Towcester grows, healthcare will be stretched if left at its current provision. It is also recognised that, once a prescription has been written, there may be difficulties in arranging for it to be dispensed within a reasonable time by local pharmacies.

Town Council Position:

- To work collaboratively with the NHS, local GP surgeries and WNC to ensure that healthcare provision is adequate for residents of Towcester as it expands.
- To monitor the current pharmacy provision for Towcester and campaign for improvements.
- To challenge applications which do not consider heath care infrastructure.
- To encourage activities and events that promote healthier lifestyles.

6. Environmental Management of Towcester

We are fortunate to have access to many green spaces in and around Towcester, which are important for wellbeing and leisure. Our environmental health and sustainability are also key to a thriving town.

Town Council Position:

- To ensure that any decisions it makes, or is consulted on, consider the environmental impact to our town.
- To encourage the planting and maintenance of appropriate species of trees and shrubs. We will discourage the removal of trees, unless necessary on the grounds of safety.
- To continue to collect litter on our public open spaces and provide dog waste bins and litter bins.
- To support regular street cleansing by WNC, particularly within the town centre.
- To continue to investigate new opportunities for access to green areas in and around Towcester for the public benefit.
- To continue to maintain all public open areas within its responsibility and the pathways within them
- To consider the implications of the carbon footprint and sustainability of all its decisions.





7. A Safe Sense of Community

Towcester is a growing community of over 11,000 inhabitants. It is important that we maintain a sense of inclusive community, especially so after the challenging pandemic years. There is an appetite for more community events and the Town Council should lead in facilitating these.

Town Council Position:

- To recruit additional resource to the Town Council to free up time to organise community events
- To agree which events could take place through engaging with local stakeholders.
- To encourage more volunteering across Towcester.
- To encourage uptake of Towcester Foodbank, Towcester Community Larder and Towcester Fridge projects.
- To work with the South Northants Policing Team to ensure a more visible presence within Towcester.
- To reduce vandalism within Towcester through raising awareness.
- To improve communication from the Town council.
- To continue to support local charities and voluntary groups.
- To ensure the priorities and workload of Town Council staff will be informed and prioritised by this document.
- To represent and encourage engagement for all residents of Towcester including new estates.

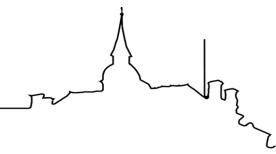
8. Leisure Facilities for all ages

There is a desire for improved leisure provision to suit Towcester as it grows. From dedicated facilities for football, to provision for youth activities, to adoption of new play areas. Towcester Town Council understands the need to guide planning authorities and, where possible, directly provide facilities.

Towcester Town Position:

- To endeavour to expedite the adoption of new play areas and other leisure facilities from developers to enable safe usage and ongoing maintenance.
- To work with local charities and organisations to improve access to a variety youth facilities and service provision.
- To inform planning authorities to provide appropriate leisure resources.





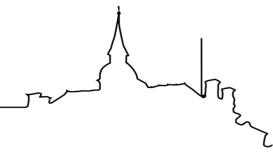
Monitoring and feedback

Each key issue has been allocated to a committee to lead and report on where appropriate. Progress will be proactively reported on at committee meetings and subsequently via media such as the Town Council website, social media, and the Towcester Town Crier.

Community Plan Review

The plan will be reviewed and updated for progress and accuracy annually. It is envisaged that a town survey like the "3 Wishes" will be conducted on a regular basis as a 'temperature check' to ensure our plan remains relevant. It is suggested that a survey is completed after each election.





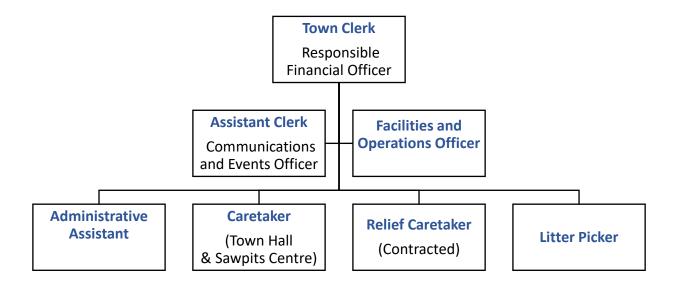
Appendices

Appendix 1 - Town Council Staff and Management

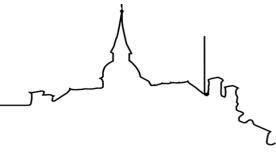
The administration of the Town Council is carried out by a qualified Town Clerk, an Assistant to the Town Clerk and an Administrative Assistant, all of whom are appointed by the Council. The Town Clerk is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

The Town Clerk is responsible for carrying out all the functions required by law and issuing all statutory notifications as the Town Council's Proper Officer.

A diagram of the current management structure is shown below. At the time of publication of this document, the Council currently employs a total of 1 full time staff and 5 part time staff.







Appendix 2 - Financial Information

Financial Control

The Town Council's financial dealings are governed by the Financial Regulations Policy document which is available on the Town Council's website.

Income

The Town Council's income is funded from the Council's precept and trading activities. The precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council and which is collected on its behalf by West Northants Council as the rating authority.

The Town Council's community plan will seek to provide details of its future spending in order that residents can receive an indication of what the precept will be in the future.

The Council set a precept of £679,753.00 for 2024/2025.

The annual Council Tax Band D for 2024/2025 is £2297.35, of which £142.59 (6.2%) is contributed directly to the Town Council.

Expenditure

The main items of expenditure are:

- General Town Council administration and staff wages (approximately 24%)
- Recreation and Leisure (approximately 47%)
- Premises (approximately 20%)

The Town Council sets its budget in November/December for the following financial year. Except for a contingency sum, the budget is fully allocated.

Therefore, unless the Town Council can secure new grant funding, which is only available for certain activities, any new activities or facilities which require additional resources would either replace an existing activity, be funded from reserves, or be funded via an increase in the precept. Any unused contingency or underspend can be allocated to a rolling capital fund and built up for specific purposes.

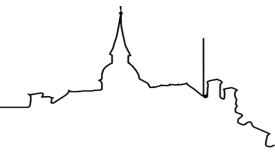
Reserves

Towcester Town Council adopts a risk-based approach to its levels of reserves which is reviewed annually. Currently the minimum level of General Reserves is set at approximately 6 months gross operating costs, within Audit Commission guidelines of 3-12 months costs. Reserves can only be held above this for specific, earmarked purposes. The Council will adopt a risk-based approach to its levels of reserves which will be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary.

Allowances

Councillors are unpaid and receive no allowance for their duties. There is, however, an allowance given to the Mayor to meet any expenses involved in fulfilling the Mayoral duties. The agreed amount for 2024/2025 is £2,300.00.



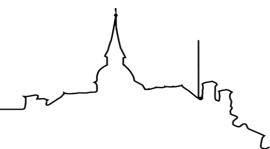


Appendix 3 - Towcester Town Council Governance

The Council will:

- Maintain the Town Council website providing information about the Town Council and to signpost residents, businesses and visitors to other service providers.
- Post regular news of Town Council initiatives on the website and via the Towcester Town Crier.
- Review and improve other methods of distribution for Town Council news.
- Continue to provide an opportunity at each Town Council meeting for public questions and comments.
- Make updated versions of the Town Council Community Plan available on the Town Council website.
- Continue to share reports covering Town Council activities during the previous twelve months at the Annual Meeting of the town.
- Conduct a review of the training needs for both Councillors and staff following any Governance changes and then review annually.
- Conduct annual appraisals of all Town Council staff.
- Invite representatives of outside agencies to address the Council on key matters of interest to the Town Council and the town.
- Engage with working groups, statutory and voluntary organisations, businesses, residents, and other stakeholders as appropriate, in order to facilitate coordinated efforts.
- Appoint representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees.
- Attend relevant conferences and meetings.





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