



DRAFT: V6

**St Stephen Parish Council: Corporate Plan  
2021 – 2026**

## **Contents**

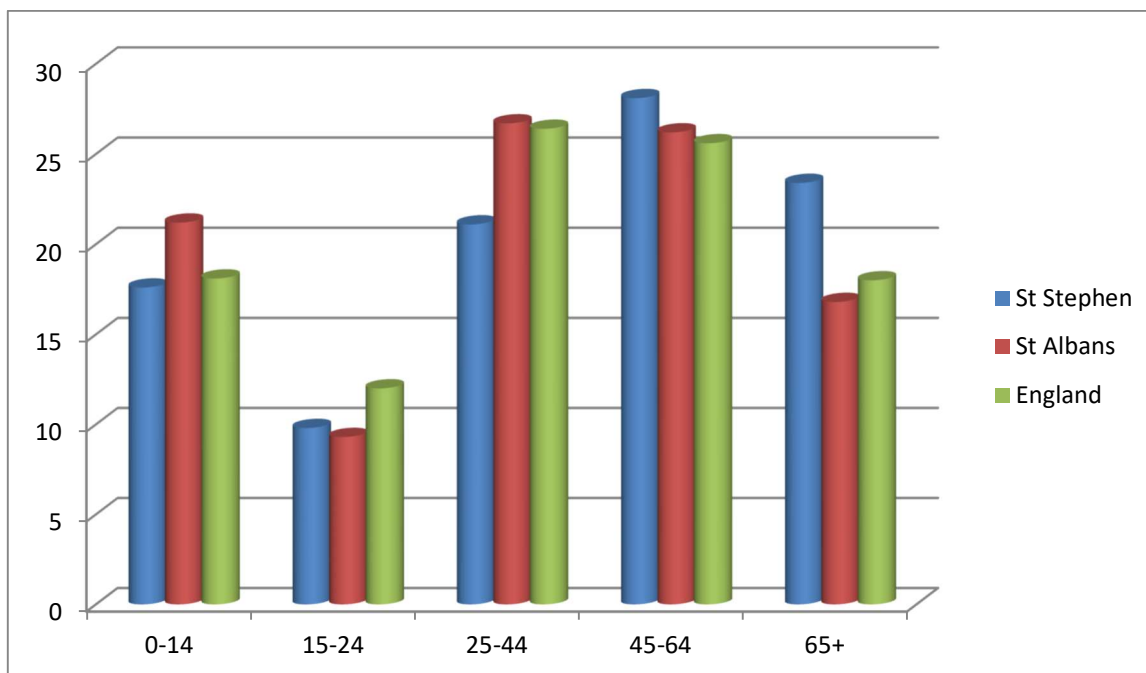
1. Profile of St Stephen Parish
2. Executive summary
3. An overview of St Stephen Parish Council
4. Ongoing plan to deliver the Corporate objectives

## Profile of the Parish

The Parish consists of three main villages Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street, with the latter incorporating the areas of How Wood, Frogmore and Colney Street. The dissection of the Parish by the M1 (running north to south) and the M25 (running east to west) means that community identity is much focussed on the three individual main villages rather than the Parish as a whole. The Parish recognises that while each village flourishes independently, it looks to support and provide services for the community as a whole.

The most recent (2011) Census recorded that the population of the Parish was 13,865 persons, approximately 10% of the local authority area, living in 5,815 households. In 2017, the population was estimated to be 14,177, which represents a 2.2% growth over the period. This is expected to increase significantly given the three housing developments of Harperbury Park (232 dwellings) Hanstead Park (138 dwellings) and Lancaster Gate (100 dwellings), which are already under construction, plus the target of an additional 90 units per year for the next decade as proposed by the recent Housing Needs Assessment, prepared for the Council by AECOM in August 2017. Latest Government advice, which is informing the St Albans Emerging Local Plan, suggests that the target for the District may be 913 homes per year between 2020 and 2032, with a significant proportion likely to be identified as within the Parish.

Compared to the District, the Parish has a high percentage of residents aged 65+, which account for nearly one quarter of its population. Equally, there is a high proportion of adults aged between 45 and 65 years. By implication the proportion of younger adults (aged 25 to 44 years) is much lower than District and has fallen significantly since the beginning of the millennium.



## **Executive Summary**

The nature of local government has changed significantly over the last decade and it is likely that parish councils will continue to take on more responsibilities in the future.

This plan sets out the priorities the Council has set itself for the next five years (2020–2025), in order to ensure that it is best placed to meet those challenges. The aim of the Plan is to give the community an understanding of what the Parish Council is working on and what it aims to achieve. It is intended to be a working document which the Council will update regularly.

The four Corporate priorities for the Council are detailed below:

- ❖ **To ensure equality and diversity in improving the quality of life for all residents,**
  
- ❖ **To encourage a sense of an inclusive community and develop greater community involvement**
  
- ❖ **To lead the community in becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly environment.**
  
- ❖ **To ensure the Council operates efficiently and improves the services provided to the community**

## **An Overview of St Stephen Parish Council**

The Council consists of 12 representatives that are democratically elected every four years (or co-opted to vacancies). The Parish is divided into 4 political wards that have the following number of representatives.

Bricket Wood East	1 Council Member
Bricket Wood West	3 Council Members
Chiswell Green	3 Council Members
Park Street	5 Council Members

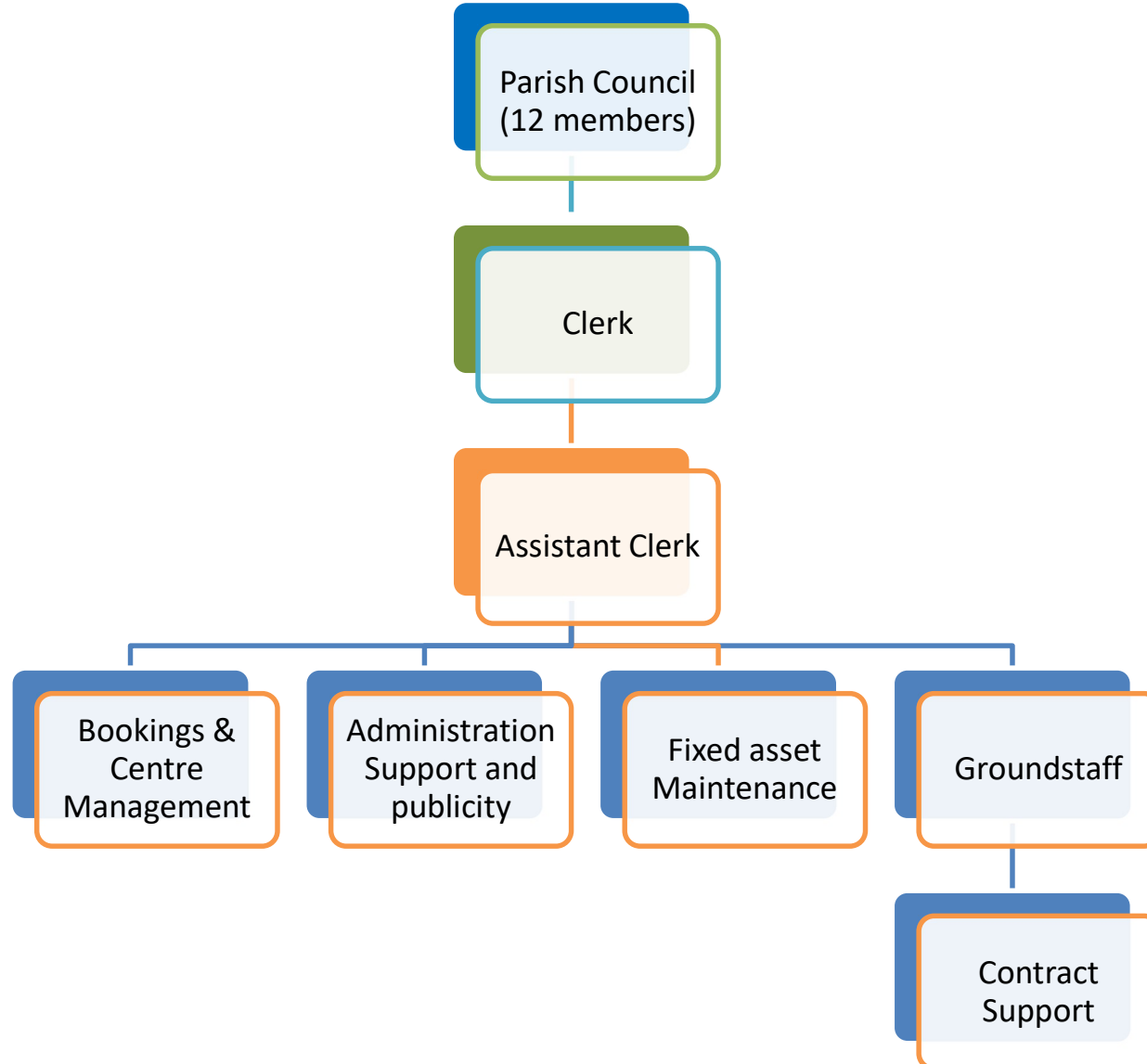
Each year a Chair is elected from within the sitting Members.

The Council makes decisions through committees and working parties that have delegated authority in line with the Councils Standing Orders. The Council has five Committees that decide (to varying extents) the strategic direction and organise much of the day to day business of the Council.

The Council is funded by generating income through services delivered and through raising a precept on the council tax charge. The 2019/2020 Council budget set a precept of £478,000 which equates to a council tax charge of £75.30 p.a. per council tax band D household. The Councils net expenditure for 2019/2020 is budgeted to be £658,832.

Supporting the Council is an officer structure to deliver services and to ensure that all decisions are made appropriately. The structure is headed by the Clerk, who is also the Council's statutory Responsible Financial Officer. The Clerk in turn is supported by a number of staff as shown below.

# St Stephen Parish Council – Organisation Structure



The Council also employs external support services to assist in the key areas of Information Technology, Human Resources and Health & Safety.

The Council owns and manages a considerable range of assets, as summarised below

### **Community buildings**

Greenwood Park Community Centre  
Greenwood Park Pavilion  
Park Street Pavilion  
Parish Centre  
Parish Centre Barn

### **Parks and open spaces**

Greenwood Park  
Park Street Recreation Ground  
Parish Centre field  
Woodbury Field  
North Close  
Mayflower Road  
Cherry Hill

### **Woodland**

Blackgreen Wood  
St Juliens Wood

### **Sports pitches**

#### **Greenwood Park**

1 Cricket Square  
3 Senior Football Pitches  
1 Junior / 9v9 Football Pitch  
1 Mini / 5v5 Football Pitch

#### **Park Street**

1 Cricket Square  
1 Senior Football Pitch  
1 9v9 Football Pitch

### **Allotments**

Park Street Lane - 5 full plots (4 split)  
Watford Road - 25 full plots (6 split)  
Tippendell Lane - 44 full plots (9 split)

### **Children's Play Areas**

Cherry Hill  
Greenwood Park  
Mayflower Road  
Park Street  
Woodbury Field  
North Close

The Parish Council has responsibility for and undertakes

- ✓ Management, maintenance and development of its parks, including play areas and sports pitches
- ✓ Provision of a sports hall, pavilions and rooms for hire
- ✓ Upkeep of bus shelters
- ✓ Organisation and running of community events and activities, namely
  - Arts Festival and Fête
  - Armed Forces Day Parade
  - Crafts in the Park
  - Parish in Bloom
  - Christmas Carol Concert
  - Remembrance Sunday Memorial Parade and Service
- ✓ Provision of grants to support charities and local organisations
- ✓ Monitoring of planning applications and providing comment to District Council
- ✓ Making applications for Section 106 monies available as a consequence of local development, in which context the following have been identified as priority projects:
  - Solar panels at Greenwood Park Community Centre and Pavilion
  - Electric car charging points at Greenwood Park and the Parish Centre
  - Grey water harvesting for Greenwood Park and the Parish Centre
  - Energy efficient boilers at Greenwood Park and Park Street Pavilion
  - Expansion of Greenwood Park Community Centre to provide additional community space with specific focus on facilities for dementia sufferers
  - Upgraded playground and leisure facilities at Woodbury Field
  - Fitness trail in Black Green Wood
  - Community orchard at North Close open space
  - Habitat management, tree planting and boundary planting at Greenwood Park
  - Disabled access improvements, fire escape routes, toilets, shower & changing at facilities Greenwood Park Community Centre and Pavilion

The Council is in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan, which is well advanced and nearing the final community consultation stage.

The Council maintains its own website and publishes up to 4 newsletters a year to inform the community of developments and upcoming activities. It also has its own Twitter account and manages a Greenwood Park Community Centre Facebook [page](#).

While organised Parish events are attended by a broad spectrum of the community their involvement in Parish business is biased very much to older age groups. There is an increasing tendency for candidates not to put themselves forward for election but an increasing interest in Parish council vacancies when advertised for co-option. This could contribute to limiting the Councils effectiveness at representing the entire community. Each of the villages has its own resident association and interaction and involvement with them is good. However, given the most active members of these associations also tend to be older they are not ideal channels for enabling wider community exposure and engagement.



# **Ongoing Action Plan to Deliver the Corporate Objectives**

## **To ensure equality and diversity in improving the quality of life for all residents**

Ensuring St Stephen Parish is a desirable, thriving and welcoming place to live by

- ✓ Seeking to safeguard the separate identities of the 3 villages and their environs.
  - Protecting green corridors to prevent coalescence
  - Promoting distinctive characteristics and features
- ✓ Promoting positive planning and influencing local development
  - Delivering the Neighbourhood Plan
  - Proactive engagement with major planning applications
  - Promoting the Parish in the Local Plan development
- ✓ Promoting diverse and inclusive leisure provision to meets the needs of the community as whole.
- ✓ Identifying and supporting social needs within the whole community

## **To help create a cohesive and inclusive Parish and promote wider community involvement**

Providing opportunities for the community to come together, seeking to ensure the Council is a representative voice of the whole community by

- ✓ Supporting the widest possible a range of community events
  - Reviewing the type and frequency of the Parish Council events programme
  - Supporting and encouraging local organisations to adopt and run community events
- ✓ Identifying new opportunities for community engagement
  - Establishing a Youth Council
  - Involving the wider community in the Parish council (Res Assn reps on some committees)
  - Improving the community awards scheme with greater public input to awards
  - Investigating better use of varied communication channels
  - Reviewing the current website to ensure its continued accessibility, relevance, ease of use and immediacy
  - Adapting information to suit Facebook, Instagram etc.
- ✓ Seeking to gain more involvement through the local schools
- ✓ Promoting and supporting local voluntary groups
- ✓ Create and Maintain Database of Contacts throught Parish

## **To lead the community in becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly environment**

- ✓ Promoting and providing opportunities for the reduction of waste and more recycling
  - Encourage 'Paperless' office and digital communication.
  - Installing recycling bins
- ✓ Raising environmental awareness amongst employees and the community
  - Supporting events and organisations such as; Sustainable St Albans, Ver Valley Soc. Etc.
- ✓ Reviewing and reducing energy costs and associated emissions Council wide

- Considering options for purchasing fuel efficient/electric/hybrid vehicles when replacing fleet
- Installing solar panels at at Parish facilities
- Installing electric car charging points
- ✓ Promote and support Community Energy Scheme
- ✓ Investigating grey water harvesting
- ✓ Protect Green Spaces, promote and instigate environmental enhancement schemes
  - New Tree and Shrub planting
  - New ponds and water environments
  - Environmental and habitat management

## **To ensure the Council operates efficiently and improves the services provided to the community**

Ensuring that the Council continues to provide affordable, relevant facilities for the community by

- ✓ Working with local sports groups, clubs and residents groups to maximise the range and quality of facilities wanted by residents
- ✓ Monitoring the competitiveness of hire charges
- ✓ Undertaking cost v benefit analyses associated with the provision of playgrounds, parks and sports pitches
- ✓ Evaluating the viability of the Parish centre as a community and officer space in the short, medium and long term
- ✓ Exploring the opportunities for expansion at Greenwood Park community centre

Seeking to ensure the Council operates in an efficient and cost effective way by

- ✓ Improving the organisational management and efficiency of the Council
  - Reviewing the staffing structure and objectives to ensure they meet with changing legislative and community needs
  - Developing a green spaces works programme
  - Developing a fixed assets maintenance programme
  - Providing training for staff and members
    - Ensuring on election/co-option, Councillors to receive an info pack to include information on compliance with statutory procedures and financial regulations
  - Building for succession planning and flexibility in staff and members
- ✓ Improving financial control
  - Reviewing Actual v Budget v Forecast reconciliations by the Finance Committee and presented to Full Council
  - Developing an investment strategy and undertaking ongoing management of investments
  - Reviewing supplier performance to ensure continued value for money
- ✓ Actively investigate all possible appropriate forms of alternative revenue and funding, including maximising Section 106 (or CIL) monies available
  - Formalising a process to identify suitable projects
  - Liaising with District Councillors to share strategy
  - Advancing project planning to facilitate swift and easy release of funds

# Committee Structure

## Overview

	<u>Reports to</u>
<b>Full Council</b>	
<b>Finance</b>	Full Council
<b>Human Resources</b>	Finance/Full Council
<b>Community &amp; Leisure</b>	Full Council
<b>Planning &amp; Environment</b>	Full Council
<b>Neighbourhood Planning</b>	P & E / Full Council
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	Full Council
<b>Forward Planning Working Party</b>	Fixed Assets/Full Council

**Other working parties to be agreed from time to time by Full Council – to be set with fixed time limit, only extended by resolution of Full Council.**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Committee/Officer</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timescale/Priority</b>
	<b>To ensure equality and diversity in improving the quality of life for all residents</b>			
	Seeking to safeguard the separate identities of the 3 villages and their environs	Planning & Environment	Scrutiny and comment on major planning applications	Ongoing
		Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Public acceptance of plan	Summer 2021
	Protecting green corridors to prevent coalescence	Planning & Environment	Scrutiny and comment on planning major applications	Ongoing
		Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Public acceptance of plan	Summer 2021
	Promoting distinctive characteristics and features	Planning & Environment	Input into District Local Plan Process	Ongoing to 2025?
	Promoting positive planning and influencing local development	Planning & environment		
	Delivering the Neighbourhood Plan	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Adapting to ensure public acceptance of plan	Summer2021
	Proactive engagement with major planning applications	Planning & Environment	Working with applicants residents and the District	Ongoing
	Promoting the Parish in the Local Plan development	Planning & Environment	Input into District Local Plan Process	Ongoing to 2025?
	Promoting diverse and inclusive leisure provision to meet the needs of the community as whole	Community & Leisure	Listing existing provision and developing a programme of improvement and diversification	Summer 2021
		Community & Leisure	Initial Projects:- Woodbury Field ????	Dependent on S106 monies

Identifying and supporting social needs within the whole community	Full Council & All Committees	Hold Discussions with Residents Groups and local organisations – possibly set up working party to identify needs	By end of 2021
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Committee/Officer</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timescale/Priority</b>
<b>To help create a cohesive and inclusive Parish and develop promote-wider community involvement</b>			
Supporting the widest possible range of community events	Community & Leisure	Working with Residents Assns and other organisations	Ongoing
Reviewing the type and frequency of the Parish Council events programme	Community & Leisure	Review Exercise	Spring 2021
Supporting and encouraging local organisations to adopt and run community events	Community & Leisure	Including Residents Assns and other organisation reps to committee	Spring 2021
Identifying new opportunities for community engagement	Full Council / Community & Leisure / Planning & Environment		
Establishing a Youth Council	Full Council / Community & Leisure	Work with Existing youth organisations and residents groups	Autumn 2021
Involving the wider community in the Parish council (Res Assn reps on some committees)	Full Council	Create a scheme of Engagement on Community & Leisure (and poss Planning & Environment?)	Spring 2021
Improving the community awards scheme with greater public input to awards	Full Council	In conjunction with revised committees	By 2022

Investigating additional communication channels	Full Council / Clerk		
Reviewing the current website to ensure its continued accessibility, relevance, ease of use and immediacy	Full Council / Admin team	Training & recruitment	Ongoing - Initial Review Spring 2021
Adapting information to suit Facebook, Instagram etc.	All Committees / Admin Team	Develop 'Journalist copy' approach to information	Ongoing
Seeking to gain more involvement through the local schools	All Committees / Councillors	Inclusion in information / surveying opinions etc.	Ongoing
Promoting and supporting local voluntary groups	All Committees / Councillors	Inclusion in information / surveying opinions etc.	Ongoing
Create and Maintain Database of Contacts through Parish	Admin team / Councillors	Put together definitive digital list -circulate and update every 6 months	Initial List Summer 2021 - Ongoing
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Committee/Officer</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timescale/Priority</b>
<b>To lead the community in becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly environment</b>			
Promoting and providing opportunities for recycling and the reduction of waste	Full Council / All committees & Employees	Every Council decision to have brief environmental assessment	Ongoing, from 2021
Encourage paperless office and digital communication	Clerk & admin staff	Monitor expenditure on paper etc.	Ongoing
Installing Recycling bins	Community & Leisure	Rolling Programme	Ongoing
Raising environmental awareness amongst employees and the community	Community & Leisure / Clerk	Agenda items and staff briefing / training	Ongoing
Supporting events & local organisations such as: Sustainable	Community &	Input from Councillors & Admin	Ongoing

St Albans, Ver Valley Soc. Etc.	Leisure		
Reviewing and reducing energy costs and associated emissions Council wide	All Committees & employees		
Considering options for purchasing fuel efficient/electric/hybrid vehicles when replacing fleet	Fixed assets	Initial Apraisal and rolling programme	Initial Appraisal Spring 2021 - Ongoing
Installing solar panels at Parish Facilities	Fixed Assets / Finance	Assessment and implementation - Start with Greenwood Park community centre	Assessment by Spring 2021 – implementation 2022 or earlier if s106/other finance
Installing electric car charging points	Fixed Assets / Finance	Assess locations & cost	Install Summer 2021
Promote and support Community Energy Scheme	Full Council	Research schemes	2022-2024
Investigating grey water harvesting	Fixed Assets	Formulate plan and costings	2023 unless other funding becomes available beforehand
Protect Green Spaces, promote and instigate environmental enhancement schemes	Planning & Environment / Full Council		
Tree & Shrub Planting	Planning & Environment	Liaise with Community & Leisure on proposals	Ongoing John Bell Wood – Winter/Spring 2021
New ponds & water environments	Planning & Environment	Liaise with Community & Leisure on proposals	Ongoing Woodbury Field – Autumn 2021
Environmental and habitat management	Planning & Environment	Develop rolling programme	Summer 2021

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Committee/Officer</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Timescale/Priority</b>
	<b>To ensure the Council operates efficiently and improves the services provided to the community</b>			
	Ensuring that the Council continues to provide affordable, relevant facilities for the community by			
	Working with local sports groups, clubs and residents groups to maximise the range and quality of facilities wanted by residents	Full Council / Community & Leisure	Introduction of External Reps and regular consultation exercises	Initial Plan – spring 2021 - Ongoing
	Monitoring the competitiveness of hire charges	Finance	Regular monitoring	Ongoing
	Undertaking cost v benefit analyses associated with the provision of playgrounds, parks and sports pitches	Finance / Community & Leisure	Initial report – regular updating	Initial report Autumn 2021
	Evaluating the viability of the Parish centre as a community and officer space in the short, medium and long term	Forward Planning / Fixed Assets	Working with external Consultants	Report by Spring 2022
	Exploring the opportunities for expansion at Greenwood Park Community centre	Forward Planning / Fixed Assets	Input from communities & Leisure	Report by Spring 2022
	Seeking to ensure the Council operates in an efficient and cost effective way by	Finance		
	Improving the organisational management and efficiency of the Council	Finance / HR	Receive regular monitoring reports	Ongoing
	Reviewing the staffing structure and objectives to ensure they meet with changing legislative and community needs	HR / Clerk	Receive regular monitoring reports	Ongoing
	Developing a green spaces works programme	Planning & Environment / Finance	Initial Programme + 3 monthly review	Ongoing – Update existing by Spring 2021
	Developing a fixed assets maintenance programme	Fixed Assets / Community & Leisure / Finance	Initial Programme + 6 monthly review	Ongoing – Update existing by Spummer 2021
	Providing training for staff and members	HR / Full Council	Annual Update	Ongoing
	Ensuring on election/co-option, Councillors to receive an info pack to ensure compliance with statutory procedures and	Clerk	Prepare intro pack from previous info in conjunction	By May2021



	financial regulations		with HR committee	
	Building for succession planning and flexibility in staff and members	HR	Training and looking at new and Existing Job descriptions	Ongoing
	Improving financial control	Finance / Full Council		
	Reviewing Actual v Budget v Forecast reconciliations by the Finance Committee and presented to Full Council	Finance / Clerk	Quarterly reports	Ongoing
	Developing an investment strategy and undertaking ongoing management of investments	Finance	Develop initial plan and update process	Autumn 2021
	Reviewing supplier performance to ensure continued value for money	Clerk / Finance	Annual Report	Ongoing
	Actively investigate all possible appropriate forms of alternative revenue and funding, including maximising Section 106 (or CIL) monies available	Finance / Full Council		
	Formalising a process to identify suitable projects	All Committees	Create lists of proposals to put forward if external funding is available	All Committees to produce lists by Spring 2021
	Liaising with District Councillors to share strategy	Full Council	Regular communication	Ongoing
	Advancing project planning to facilitate swift and easy release of funds	All Committees	Add to list table info on Admin req (eg planning), timescale, cost estimate.	Ongoing from Spring 2021

END