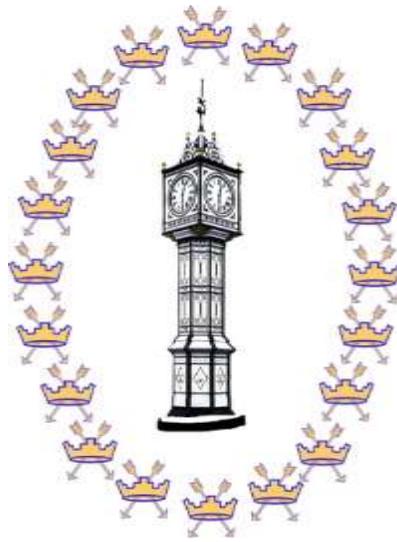


Downham Market Town Council



Business Plan 2014 – 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and need for a Business Plan

This Business Plan contains guiding principles for Downham Market Town Council to enable it to work in a coordinated way in the best interests of all who live and work in Downham Market. It is a statement of the Town Council's vision, purpose, aims, objectives and values.

The purpose of the document is to provide an overview of the Town Council's plans to maintain quality of life for all the town's residents, businesses, and visitors and to protect and promote Downham Market's history and attractions.

The plan will set out the aims and objectives of the Town Council initially for a three-year period, commencing in 2014. The plan will be regularly monitored, reviewed and updated.

The Business Plan will influence the direction and content of all other internal strategies and Committees of the Town Council and ensures that the Town Council can take a planned and consistent approach to:

- The design and delivery of services
- The identification of improved facilities and services
- The prioritisation and allocation of resources
- The achievement of value for money and best practice
- Financial control
- Ensuring statutory obligations are met

Summary

This Business Plan sets out the Town Council's goals, purpose and priorities for Councillors, staff and the community for the next three years.

Downham Market – Setting the Scene

Downham Market is a small market town with a population of approximately 12,000. It is located in West Norfolk. The community of Downham Market is vibrant and supports a wealth of community groups and activities.

Downham Market's population profile shows a higher proportion aged 65+ than the Norfolk average (33.4% compared with 21.4%), but in all other age groups the proportions are lower (Source – NCC Health and Wellbeing profile July 2012).

The rate of Job Seeker Allowance claimants in Downham Market is above average (4.5% of working age population) compared with 3.6% for Norfolk (May 2012). The number of claimants has increased by 11.2% over the last year, compared with 7.2% for Norfolk (Source – NCC Health and Wellbeing profile July 2012).

Downham Market benefits from hosting a number of civic events and **free** community events. Good transport routes, including a mainline rail service and ample free car parking encourage visitors to the town.

Downham Market has been twinned with Civray, France since 1976 and the Downham Market Twinning Club organise regular exchange visits and events with a focus on culture, education and friendship.

THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Council consists of 20 Councillors who are normally elected every four years. The next scheduled elections are to be held in May 2015. The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected annually at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May.

There are six Standing Committees, some having Sub-Committees and working parties:

- Community Development
- Finance
- Planning & Environmental
- Property
- Town Hall
- Human Resources

Standing Committee meetings are held monthly at the Town Council Offices at 15 Paradise Road, Downham Market and are open to the public, except for Human Resources, with a period of time set aside for members of the public to address the Town Council or Committee.

Sub-Committees and working parties can include non-council members. Examples are:

- Christmas Lights Switch On
- Downham Market In Bloom
- Environmental
- Events
- Local Development Framework/Spatial Strategy
- Markets
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Sustainable development
- Water Festival

Additional Sub-Committees and working parties are formed as and when required.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by the qualified Town Clerk who is appointed by the Town Council. The Town Clerk is required to carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's proper officer and to issue all statutory notifications. The Town Clerk is also the appointed Responsible Financial Officer. The

Town Clerk is supported by the Deputy Town Clerk, the Senior Administrator and the Receptionist/Administrator.

The Town Council also employs four other staff; a General Maintenance Officer, a Town Hall Caretaker, a Market Manager and a Cleaner.

SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Town Council owns and is responsible for:

- The Town Hall and car park
- The Jubilee Community Centre (Downham Market Town Council is the Sole Corporate Trustee)
- The Old Fire Station and car park
- The MIND building in Paradise Road
- The Paradise Garage building
- The Town Council office and Registrar office in Paradise Road
- The Hollies nos 1 and 2 car parks
- The Paradise Road car park
- The town clock, sign and war memorial
- The Town Square
- Public seats, litter bins, grit bins, dog bins and planters
- Specific street lights

The services which the Town Council currently provides for the residents of Downham Market are:

- Town Hall and its facilities
- Jubilee Community Centre and its facilities
- Friday and Saturday markets
- Town Council owned car parks (see above)
- Planning consultee - planning decisions are ultimately made by the Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk (BCKL&WN)
- Downham Market In Bloom
- Community events

VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Town Council is committed to continually examining and reviewing its responsibilities.

Downham Market Town Council's vision is to provide value for money to the people of Downham Market by proactively supporting a safe, friendly and attractive town, where people want to live, work and visit, with all residents having access to a high quality of life both now and in the future.

In order to achieve this vision, the Town Council aims to:

- provide high quality, cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of residents and assist and encourage other bodies to provide such services.
- work in a transparent and open manner.
- provide public venues for Downham Market people to utilise for business and pleasure.
- regularly review the activities of the Town Council to ensure that it is best placed to meet the needs of the local people.

The **Council's objectives** are:

Community Development

- To continue to strive to maintain strong and successful links with the police, the BCKL&WN, Norfolk County Council, local businesses, voluntary groups and community organisations to ensure a cohesive approach to wellbeing in the town.
- To continue to organise and promote the annual Downham Market Water Festival, the Christmas Lights Switch On and various other **free** events for the benefit of Downham Market.
- To facilitate the creation of a Town Team.
- **To seek funding opportunities to support and develop projects which will bring sustainable benefit to the community and Town.**

Finance

- Annually setting a fair and legal precept, to allow for contingency and to maintain reserves according to legal obligations.
- Continue to improve the budget setting and monitoring process and to identify efficiencies.
- Continue to ensure accounting and audit procedures are completed in a timely manner.
- Continue to support local non-profit organisations by providing grants.

Planning & Environmental

- To consider planning applications submitted by the planning authorities as part of the consultation process.
- To safeguard and enhance the environment in and around Downham Market.
- To consider initiatives such as developing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide appropriate BCKL&WN planning decisions.

Property

- Develop and maintain existing assets, and produce additional benefits where possible.
- To ensure that the markets are suitable for traders and shoppers alike.

- To ensure that the outdoor Friday and Saturday markets are widely publicised.

Town Hall

- To ensure that this historic Grade II listed building is continually maintained and developed to a good standard.
- To enable the Town Hall to be enjoyed by as many residents, local groups and businesses as possible by keeping hire rates competitive.

Councillors and staff

Councillors are held to account by the electorate. In addition they are bound by the Members' Code of Conduct detailed in Annex A of the Town Council's Standing Orders (pages A1 to A11) which have been adopted to ensure excellent conduct and behaviour. Downham Market Town Councillors, commit to:

- The highest standards of respect towards each other and towards all those they come into contact with during the course of Town Council business.
- Providing and undertaking relevant training.
- Networking with other Town/Parish Councils.
- Maintaining adequate staffing levels.
- Ensuring that the objectives and priorities of the Town Council are published for the benefit of staff and to inform local people.

Communication

The Town Council commits to using its website and notice boards as a communication stream for any relevant communications and to ensure that:

- Agendas are published at least three working days before a Town Council Standing Committee meeting.
- Minutes of Town Council meetings are available in good time and once agreed by the relevant Committee.
- Forthcoming events under control of the Town Council are regularly posted and in good time.
- It recognises that not all residents have internet access and therefore Agendas and Minutes will remain available in hard copy at the Town Council office for residents to view on request.
- It maintains a newsletter, which is currently published in Downham Market Life magazine.
- To promote events through social networks, where possible.

General

- To endeavour to respond to all correspondence within seven working days unless further information is required, in which case an acknowledgement will be sent.
- To investigate the availability of grant funding for appropriate projects.

- In all its deliberations the Town Council will take into consideration Sustainable Development matters including environment, socio-economic and ethical issues.

Financial Planning

Historically, Downham Market Town Council has planned ahead one year at a time, in line with the setting of the precept.

As forecasting is difficult, this first attempt will only cover the next three years. In due course, it may be possible to develop a five year plan. The next three years should see steady progress at the Town Council, approximately as follows:

Committee	2014/15			2015/16			2016/17		
	Expenditure	Income	Net	Expenditure	Income	Net	Expenditure	Income	Net
Finance	229	60	169	232	62	170	240	65	175
Property	51	9	42	52	10	42	55	12	43
Development	17	7	10	15	8	7	18	8	10
Planning	17	2	15	18	2	16	19	3	16
Markets	4	38	-34	5	40	-35	5	42	-37
Jubilee	5	0	5	10	0	10	10	0	10
Town Hall	98	42	56	100	45	55	110	50	60
Special Projects	29	0	29	20	0	20	25	0	25
TOTAL	450	158	292	452	167	285	482	180	302

The Town Council will continue to seek further economies in its running costs while, at the same time, looking to improve its return on its main assets, the Town Hall and car parks. Examples of possible economies could include property and maintenance costs. Once a detailed breakdown of this cost has been received, it may be possible to achieve some economies.

The Town Council is elected every four years and future Town Councils may develop more ambitious projects, but the Finance Committee does not anticipate dramatic increases in expenditure in the time scale forecast above, beyond the tentative forecasts given above for the period up to 2017. It is suggested that this forecast is reviewed annually against the actual figures, and updated where appropriate.

***This document will be reviewed on an annual basis.
Last reviewed: September 2014***