



**The Town Council will work with the people of Iminster to make the town a place in which people want to work, live and visit.**

### **Introduction**

Iminster Town Council is the local council for the parish of Iminster, it is the second tier of local government - Somerset Council being the first tier.

The town of Iminster has a population of approximately 6,000 of whom approx. 4,700 are aged over 16 years. There are approx. 2,700 dwellings.

The Town Council's responsibilities include the cemetery, three play areas, approx. 55 acres of amenity land / recreational space, the Market House and the weekly market.

The civic year runs from May and starts with the election of the Mayor, appointment of the Deputy Mayor and election of the Committee Chairs at the Annual Town Council meeting.

There are 15 Town Councillors who serve the whole of the town (the town is not divided into wards) and elections to the Town Council are held every 4 years.

### **Context of the Strategic Plan**

This 5-year Strategic Plan (2022/23 – 2027/28) is the Council's fourth rolling Strategic Plan. The first plan, which started development in late 2016, followed by implementation from April 2017 was the foundation for this document; since the inception of the Strategic Plan, annual reporting has been implemented and linked to risk management. This year the programme is being presented to Council as part of the 2025/2026 budget and financial plan for future years. This means that the Town Council will continue to link the core strategic activities of financial planning, project planning and risk management.

Iminster is set to experience a high level of growth with at least 1 major housing development (outline planning permission has been granted for up to 400 dwellings). Another prospective planning application for 140 houses and a business park are also in the pipeline.

The major roads passing close to the town are the A358 (leading to the M5) and the A303 / A30. The A303 is a major route from London to the West Country. The A303 and the A358 have been identified for improvement; however, at the time of drafting this Strategic Plan, it is understood that Highways England have now removed it from their website which is an indication that it has been cancelled.

The Town Council's resourcing levels (time and money) are finite and constrained by a number of factors, including some beyond the Town Council's control such as the impact of new legislation.

The development of a 5-year rolling Strategic Plan and complementary medium term budget is intended to focus activity and decision making, help prioritise projects and resourcing, and provide a baseline against which progress can be measured.

## Iminster Town Council SWOT Analysis

Town Councillors reviewed and updated the SWOT analysis in November 2024 to help identify areas of performance that could be improved and may be addressed when undertaking activities and projects.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People (Councillors)</li> <li>Non-political council</li> <li>Friendly</li> <li>Diversity of experience and knowledge</li> <li>Cautious and balanced approach</li> <li>Community involvement of councillors</li> <li>Size of the council</li> <li>Community knowledge</li> <li>Knowledge of the area</li> <li>Community spirit</li> <li>Thrifty and prudent</li> <li>Open Spaces portfolio</li> <li>Communication (e.g. Annual Report, agendas, reports)</li> <li>Governance</li> <li>Collaborative working</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication (proactive / reactive)</li> <li>Structure needs review</li> <li>Time (lots would like to do but limited resources)</li> <li>Generation of income</li> <li>Restricted budget</li> <li>Ability to do nothing (procrastination)</li> <li>Constraints and restrictions (legal, best working practice)</li> <li>Risk averse</li> <li>Staff (gaps in knowledge)</li> <li>Lack of Wi-fi and mobile connectivity in the town centre</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Spaces portfolio</li> <li>Income generation</li> <li>Grant funding</li> <li>Better communications (especially electronic)</li> <li>Development of Town</li> <li>Local community / people</li> <li>Financial Planning</li> <li>Skills and knowledge of people new to the town</li> <li>A303 &amp; A358 Dualling – potential for more employment</li> <li>Neighbourhood Plan</li> <li>Public transport (enabling provision)</li> <li>Doing something new</li> <li>Change of governance (unitary authority)</li> <li>Youth worker (moving towards Youth Committee)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of grants</li> <li>Unidentified risks</li> <li>Time constraints</li> <li>Development of town</li> <li>Finance</li> <li>Ability to do nothing (due to legal etc. constraints)</li> <li>Government policy / cuts, anti-social behaviour (e.g. vandalism)</li> <li>Communication (management of electronic comms)</li> <li>Public transport (lack of provision)</li> <li>A303 &amp; A358 (road improvements taking people/traffic away from the town)</li> <li>Risk averse</li> <li>Staff (gaps in knowledge)</li> <li>Change of governance (unitary authority)</li> <li>Lack of Wi-fi and mobile connectivity in the town centre</li> </ul>

## **Strategic Themes**

The Town Council's resources will continue to be focused on 3 strategic themes:

- The Ilminster Economy,
- The Ilminster Environment
- Community Engagement and Governance

For the duration of this Strategic Plan any project or activity must either be a legal / best practice requirement and / or fit within at least 1 of the strategic themes. It is recognised that within projects and activities the principles of accessibility and sustainability must be embedded.

## **The Work Plan**

The workplan will indicate: the project / activity, the link between the activity and the strategic theme, the funding source, when the item was first added to the workplan and the likely year on which work will be started.

## **Monitoring Progress**

A status report will be presented to the Town Council annually. There will be a report page for each strategic theme, the workplan items for the theme will be listed together with the progress made in the reporting period and the planned work for the next reporting period. There will also be a risk assessment for the theme and information on current risks and mitigations.

## 2022/23-2027/28 Workplan

Note: the list is not in any priority order

Strategic Theme	Funded by:	Date added to workplan	Possible Start Date
<b>THE ILMINSTER ECONOMY</b>			
Weekly Market Note: approval to use the Market House on other days has increased income.	Budget	2018/19	Completed
Local Information Centre - closer collaboration Note: The Ilminster Information Centre has been managed by Ilminster Town Council since 2023.	EMR	2018/19	Completed
Upgrading the public conveniences	EMR	2024/25	
Leasing out the kiosk (tuck shop)	EMR	2024/25	2025/26
Provision of electric charging points in more areas of Ilminster Note: SSDC supplied and fitted an electric charging point in West Street car park and Orchard Vale car park	n/a	2020/21	Completed
<b>THE ILMINSTER ENVIRONMENT</b>			
Open spaces – implementing masterplan for Wharf lane Rec & Britten’s Field (paths & Play area) <i>Note: There are plans for paths around the Rec and a funding source identified, however this is likely to take a number of years to come to fruition. The play park was completed in April 2021. A Fitness Station was installed in April 2024.</i>	Grants	2017/18	2017/18
Acquire Blackdown Play Park – update play equipment and tree management, and Greenfylde Play Park – tree management	Grants	2024/25	2025/26
Drainage works on the recreation ground	EMR	2024/25	
Cemetery – researching future need, the availability of suitable land and the feasibility of developing a new cemetery, acquiring suitable land and designing a new facility; “green” burials Note: The ICCM recommendation to consider a new cemetery is when there is 5 years or less of space.	EMR	2017/18	
Cemetery - enhancing current facility: above ground space for ashes interment; cemetery “wall” for memorial plaques <a href="#">Note: ICCM have stated that above ground ashes can only have an ERB for 10 years, and then ongoing</a>	Budget	2020/21	

renewals are required. There are issues with disturbing the ashes if a relative wishes their ashes to be interred alongside the existing one. The ICCM would only recommend a cemetery wall for memorial plaques.			
Cemetery Wall and Railings at the bottom of the cemetery require rebuilding	EMR	2024/25	
Neighbourhood Plan Note: Regulation 14 and Regulation 15 completed.	Grants	2017/18	
Improve the visual impact of the approach roads to the town	Budget	2018/19	2021/2022
Increasing the leisure and recreation provision for 5-25 year olds within Ilminster	Grants	2024/25	
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and GOVERNANCE</b>			
Town Council accommodation: includes having accessible offices; possibility of developing land / buildings for own and others' use. Note: The Town Council acquired the Old Magistrates Court in August 2021, which has an accessible reception area for visitors.	EMR	2017/18	2021/22 Completed
Protecting the burial / cemetery records whilst maintaining accessibility. Note: The burial books were scanned (December 2023) and are now available on Sharepoint (April 2024). The actual books are now held by Somerset Archives.	EMR	2017/18	2023/24 Completed
Instigate the set-up of a Community Land Trust for the proposed land below Herne Hill Note: This is part of the S106 agreement with Persimmon Homes	n/a	2018/19	
Set up a Youth Council	n/a	2020/21	
Increase promotion of sports and activities available within Ilminster Note: via a directory created on the new website	Budget	2024/25	
Increase promotion of social opportunities and activities for the older groups of adults within Ilminster Note: via a directory created on the new website	Budget	2024/25	

## Ilminster In The Future

The emerging Neighbourhood Plan will help to identify and control appropriate building and development keeping it in the context of a historic market town. The town will need to grow and change in order to build on its existing good reputation. Future opportunities may include:

- Attracting larger employers
- Provide opportunities for young people living in the town to work in the town
- Expand the support for small businesses and people working from home
- More training opportunities e.g. apprenticeships, short courses for up skilling, available in the town
- Improving public transport links
- Offering more vehicle re-charging points – possibly in conjunction with larger employers
- Rental of electric cars and bikes
- Good walking and cycle routes in and around the town, including links associated with current A358 proposals
- Water fountains / top up points throughout the town
- The Ilminster community engaged with initiatives such as Repair Café, Mens' Shed
- Specialist Markets in addition to a thriving weekly general market. E.g. eco market, antiques market

