

Iminster Town Council
Strategic Plan 2020/21-2022/23
(approved by Town Council 21 January 2020)



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 third tier of local government - Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council being the other tiers.

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, 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 3 year Strategic Plan (2020/21-2022/23) is the Council's third 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 quarterly reporting has been implemented and linked to risk management. This year the capital programme is being presented to Council as part of the "2020/21 Budget and Financial Plan for Future Years". This means that the Town Council to 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) 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; at the time of drafting this strategic plan it is understood that Highways England will be consulting again on the route options – the first consultation having been beset with adverse criticism.

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 3 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 2019 to help identify areas of performance that could be improved and may be addressed when undertaking activities and projects.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p>People (Staff and Councillors) Non-political council Friendly Diversity of experience and knowledge Cautious and balanced approach Community involvement of councillors Size of the council Community knowledge Knowledge of the area Community spirit Thrifty and prudent Open Spaces portfolio Communication (e.g. Annual Report, agendas, reports) Governance Collaborative working</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>Communication (proactive / reactive) Structure needs review Time (lots would like to do but limited resources) Generation of income Restricted budget Office accommodation / Council Chamber (accessibility) Ability to do nothing (procrastination) Constraints and restrictions (legal, best working practice) Risk averse</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>Income generation Grant funding Better communications (especially electronic) Development of Town Local community / people Financial Planning Skills and knowledge of people new to the town A303 & A358 Dualling – potential for more employment Neighbourhood Plan Public transport (enabling provision) ITC accommodation Doing something new</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p>Loss of grants Unidentified risks Time constraints Development of town Finance Ability to do nothing (due to legal etc constraints) Government policy / cuts Anti social behaviour (e.g. vandalism) Communication (management of electronic comms) Public transport (lack of provision) A303 & A358 (road improvements taking people/traffic away from the town)</p>

Strategic Themes

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

- The Iminster Economy,
- The Iminster 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, 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 at least quarterly. 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.

2020/21–2022/23 workplan

Note: the list is not in any priority order

Project / Topic	Date first put on workplan	(Anticipated) Start Date
Open spaces – implementing masterplan for Wharf lane Rec & Britten’s Field (paths & Play area) <i>Note: the play area is scheduled for completion by the end of November 2020. There are plans for paths around the Rec and Britten’s Field and a funding source identified however this is likely to take a number of years to come to fruition.</i>	2017/2018	2017/2018
Canal dredging and enhancement	2020/21	
Cemetery – researching future need, the availability of suitable land and the feasibility of developing a new cemetery, acquiring suitable land and designing new facility; “green” burials	2017/18	
Cemetery - enhancing current facility: Columbaria – above ground space for ashes interment; cemetery “wall” for memorial plaques	2020/21	
Protecting Herne Hill from the impact of nearby development – including obtaining designation as a local nature reserve and acquisition of additional land <i>Note: Herne Hill was designated as a Local Nature reserve in 2019</i>	2017/2018	2017/18
Herne Hill – encourage use by providing route signage and information boards <i>Note: route signage has been installed and three information boards will be erected by 31.03.20, in 2019/20 there will be site specific notices to be displayed</i>	2017/2018	2017/2018
Town Council accommodation: includes having accessible offices; possibility of developing land / buildings for own and others’ use	2017/18	
Community Hub, including repair café, mens’ shed, museum, tourist information, adult learning	2020/21	
Neighbourhood Plan	2017/18	2017/2018
Protecting the burial / cemetery records whilst maintaining accessibility	2017/18	2017/18
Public Transport – investigate the possibility of enabling service provision	2018/19	
Provision of electric charging points	2020/21	
Instigate the set-up of a Community Land Trust	2018/19	
Coach parking / Service Station to bring people into the town	2018/19	
Improve the visual impact of the approach roads to the town	2018/19	
Weekly Market	2018/19	
Local Information Centre - closer collaboration	2018/19	
Provision of Bus shelters <i>Note: a new bus shelter is due to be installed in Orchard Vale in January 2020, funded by an anonymous donation</i>	2019/20	2019/20

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

