

Loughton Town Council FORWARD PLAN 2014 - 17



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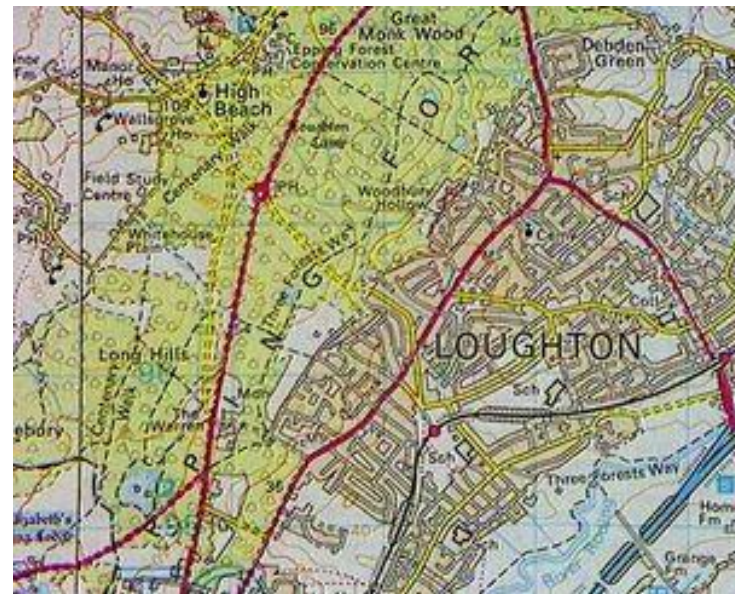
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Introduction

This Forward Plan aims to provide Loughton's residents with a clear understanding of the Council's priorities and objectives over the next three years. Whilst some of the key issues facing the town are areas not directly under the control of the Council, we will seek to use our influence to ensure that other service providers also respond to the needs and aspirations of our residents.

The document will be reviewed on an annual basis and we will continue to provide regular updates on achievements through our quarterly newsletter, Think Loughton and our annual report.



The Town and its Council

Set in the heart of Epping Forest yet just 12 miles from the centre of London, Loughton has a secluded, self-contained quality, whilst also maintaining excellent transport links with the capital and surrounding countryside.

The town is set in 3,750 acres in the south-west of the county of Essex; approximately 1,500 acres are forest, 600 acres are green-belt meadows and fields, and 1,600 acres the town, town open spaces, and private gardens.

Loughton has a population of 31,106 (2011 census), and an electorate of 24,185 (Dec 2014).

There are 2 town centres, 3 secondary schools, 12 main places of worship and an industrial area to the east of the town. One of the main employers is the Bank of England Printing Works (where all English paper money is made). Retailing is a major activity.

Loughton now includes three conservation areas on the forest edge to the west of the town. There are 58 listed buildings, many of Essex weatherboard. To the south east of the town lies the beautiful Roding Valley Meadows, the largest surviving area of traditionally managed river-valley habitat in Essex, managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

Loughton often features in the popular TV series *The Only Way is Essex*, a BAFTA award-winning semi-reality show. Known as *Towie* to its fans, the reality show is entering its thirteenth series and two of its stars have opened shops in the town yet, despite an abundance of local wine bars and beauty parlours, most residents prefer to relish Loughton's community spirit and artistic and radical past rather than its celebrity-strewn present.

The Town Council was established in its present form on the 1st April 1996 and since its inception has taken over a number of functions from Epping Forest District Council but also developed its own activities. The Town Council has premises in Loughton which house the offices and Council Chamber, and also has various other properties throughout the town for which it is responsible. The Council became one of the first accredited "Quality Councils" in 2003 and secured reaccreditation in 2008.

Corporate Vision

We see our role as:

- Representing Loughton by liaising with other authorities on key strategic issues to ensure the best outcome for our residents;
- Maintaining, improving and extending our services and facilities for all sections of the community;
- Preserving and enhancing the history and environment of the town; and
- Supporting the many local organisations and clubs to continue their vital work in the town.

We strive to ensure Loughton continues to be a popular place to live, work and visit.

Structure of the Town Council

The Council consists of 22 councillors representing the seven wards of Loughton, and employs 7 full-time and 8 part-time members of staff.

The councillors are elected every 4 years, the next election being in 2016.

A committee structure deals with much of the Council's business. Under the Council's Standing Orders, the committees have delegated powers to act.

The 4 committees are:

- Environment and Heritage;
- Planning and Licensing;
- Recreation; and
- Resources and General Services.

Finances

Recognising that the precept – that part of the council tax which is allocated to Loughton Town Council – is public money, it is the Council's highest priority to make sure that it is spent effectively and wisely.

We scrutinise every penny, looking for value for money and the elimination of waste while still delivering the high quality services and projects which residents have come to expect from us. We have insisted on the most robust and scrupulous controls to ensure that we meet the highest standards of accountability, and all our procedures and activities are fully transparent.

This approach has enabled the Town Council to keep the precept at the same low level – less than £1 a week for Band D council tax payers for five years without an increase. We recognise that many hard-working families in Loughton are still struggling to make ends meet as we emerge from the recession. Our aim is to keep Loughton a low-tax town which is open for business. We believe we are continuing to deliver on that goal.

It is our intention that we will continue to be a low tax area offering excellent value for money and so our financial requirements for the next 3 years will remain at the same level. In order to achieve our goals we will rely heavily on grant funding to support the money already secured in earmarked reserves for our major projects.

Key Objectives

As part of its overall strategic plan and to complement the budget-making process, the Council and its Committees review their priority lists annually. The detailed list of each committee's priorities are to found at in the Council Action Plan at <http://www.loughton-tc.gov.uk/2sdaps.htm>. The table below shows the Council-wide priorities for the coming 3 years. This information is followed by the financial expenditure plans for each committee which also include details of their activities as agreed in November/December 2014.

Action	Committee	Time scale	Comments
New council accommodation	Resources and General Services	2015	We are in discussion with Essex County Council to secure benefits from sharing accommodation in the town. This will reduce overheads for both authorities and provide a one-stop-shop for residents to access services and information.
Roding Valley Recreation Ground – major improvements to the football changing rooms & surrounding area to include a refreshment facility and toilets	Recreation	2015 - 16	Following public consultation a planning application is to be submitted. Grant funding will be secured during 2015 to enable works to proceed in 2016 minimising disruption to users.
Skate park facility	Recreation	2015 – 17	We will continue to seek a permanent site whilst supporting Skate Loughton in providing regular activities for this popular sport.
Neighbourhood Plan	Planning and Licensing Environment and Heritage	2015 – 17	The first stage, designating the civil parish of Loughton as a Neighbourhood Area is scheduled for January 2015. We are awaiting the publication of the draft Local Plan by Epping Forest District Council as the Neighbourhood Plan will need to complement this.
Playgrounds	Recreation	2015 – 17	Maintenance and ongoing improvements to the eight play areas remain a key priority to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the users.
War memorials	Environment and Heritage	2015	As part of the World War I centenary commemorations missing names will be added to the memorials.

Recreation Committee Rolling Programme Expenditure		2015/16			2016/17			2017/18		
		Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)
Function	Activity									
Kingsley Hall	Operate small hall as community facility; basic standard but maintained in good condition	14,800	2,500							
	Replacement windows and doors		12,500							
	Energy efficiency measures					TBC				
Murray Hall	Operate and maintain quality community venue	58,800								
	Loan repayments	72,300			72,300		72,300			
	Energy efficiency measures			7,500		TBC				
Other services	Contingency	1,000			1,000		1,000			
	Community events		6,000			TBC			TBC	
	Defibrillators			1,200						
Roding Valley Rec. Gd.	To manage a recreation ground and its associated sporting activities	135,600	2,000							
	Major improvements (grant funding required)*		88,000	12,000						
	Charlie Moules Bridge repair fund*		20,000							
Open Spaces	Maintenance of various grassed areas in the town including land adj to WRd Allotments	19,300								
	Land adj to WRd Allotments		1,000							
	Memorial Rose Garden		1,300							
Playgrounds	Maintenance and rolling programme of improvements of 8 playgrounds	18,350								
	Upgrading works (Traps Hill 15/16)		12,000			TBC			TBC	
	Safety surfacing RVRG play area		5,000							
Skateboarding facility - Capital	To provide a skateboarding facility*		39,700							
Skateboarding facility - Revenue	To provide skateboarding events		3,300							
Willingale Road Playing Field	To operate and maintain a playing field offering informal public leisure and football pitches	12,800								
	Tree inspection and works	3,000								
	New bridge access					TBC			TBC	
Vehicle replacement			2,000			2,000		2,000		
	TOTALS	335,950	195,300	20,700						
* Money from earmarked reserves	Grand total		551,950							

Environment & Heritage Committee Rolling Programme		2015/16			2016/17			2017/18		
Expenditure	Activity	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)
Christmas BDW competitions	Christmas windows		375			375			375	
Cemetery-Church Lane	General maintenance and running costs	47,480			48,430			49,400		
	*£6,000 from ER (memorial fund)									
	Boundary wall repairs*		15,000							
	Path repairs		3,000			3,000			3,000	
	Digitisation of cemetery registers		3,020							
Lady Whitakers Mead/new cemetery	Development of new cemetery*/maintenance	600	10,000		610	TBC		620	TBC	
Street furniture	Other misc. street furniture	608			626			645		
	Christmas lights - tree on King's Green		800			825			850	
	Christmas lights shopping centres		8,000			TBC			TBC	
	Bus shelters*	1,000			1,000			1,000		
	Installation/maintenance of seats & benches	500	500		600			650		
	Lopping Hall Clock maintenance	180			186			192		
	Operation of Broadway toilet		-							
	Community toilet scheme*		1,000			1,200			1,200	
	Heritage plaques &/or panels		1,000			500			500	
	Alleyway names		600			600			600	
	Salt & grit bins replacement*		400			400			400	
	Flower baskets		7,500	1,000		7,725	TBC		7,960	TBC
	War memorial insurance & maintenance*	612			615			620		
	Drinking fountain		1,000				TBC			
	Heritage street lighting (CAs)									
	Oakwood Hill Estate improvements		2,000			2,000				
	Alleyway lighting						TBC			TBC
Allotments	3 sites, 1 directly managed	3,000			3,100		TBC	3,200		TBC
	Pyrls Lane project*		2,000							
Other services	Village Greens - legal expenses reserve*					TBC			TBC	
	First World War Centenary 2014*		400							
	Community Tree Strategy			500						
	Contingency	1,000			1,000			1,000		
	* Money from earmarked reserves									
TOTALS		54,980	56,595	1,500	56,167	16,625	-	57,327	14,885	-
	Grand total		113,075			72,792		72,212		

Resources and General Services Rolling Programme		2015/16			2016/17			2017/18		
Expenditure		Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)
Function	Activity	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Communications	Phone, internet, postage	4,079			4,160			4,244		
	Production & distribution of annual report	891			916			940		
	Newsletter - Deliver good quality quarterly newsletter to homes and businesses in Loughton, via Royal Mail	6,530	5,600		6,660	5,712		6,790	5,826	
	Noticeboards - Minor repairs to existing*	1,000			1,000			1,000		
	Website improvements*	1,300	1,000		1,300			1,300		
Office expenses	Stationery, office equipment & maintenance etc*	12,250			12,500			12,750		
Audit & accounts	Internal & external audit	2,900			3,000			3,100		
Central personnel	*(£5,000 from ER)	282,300		6,500	289,000			295,000		
Council expenses	Press and advertising	450			500			500		
	Subscriptions	3,400			3,500			3,600		
	Insurance	4,300			4,430			4,520		
	Training, conferences etc	1,600			2,000			1,600		
	Legal	1,000			1,000			1,000		
	Town Mayor's expenses	750			750			750		
	Christmas cards competitions - 4 classes, £25 prizes		100			100			100	
Other services	Election expenses* (£22,000 from ER)	9,000			29,000			10,000		
	Contingency	1,000			1,000			1,000		
	Future accommodation (£15,000 in ER)									
	Loughton Citizenship awards		1,000			1,000			1,000	
	Civic Service		250			250			250	
	Honours board*		700							
Members' expenses	PBA @ £108 for 22 members + travel & subsistence	2,900			2,900			2,900		
Buckingham Court	Running costs (inc Public Works Loan)	53,800			54,500			55,000		
Grants	Support of local groups & orgs inc youth projects		25,000	5,000		30,000			30,000	
	Support of local CAB branch		6,000	2,000		8,000			8,000	
TOTALS		389,450	39,650	13,500	418,116	45,062	0	405,994	45,176	-
	* Money from earmarked reserves									
	Grand total		442,600			463,178			451,170	

Planning & Licensing Rolling Programme		2015/16			2016/17			2017/18		
Expenditure		Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)	Core running costs	Enhanced services	Additional items (desired)
Function	Activity									
Neighbourhood Plans * (£20,000 from reserves)			20,000							
Design Award Scheme			500			500			500	
TOTALS		-	20,500	-	-	500	-	-	500	-
* Money from earmarked reserves										
Grand total			20,500			500			500	