

# Corporate Strategic Plan

Stotfold Town Council



2019 to 2023



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# ‘To enhance the sense of community within the town of Stotfold’

This Corporate Strategic Plan is a statement of Stotfold Town Council’s objectives for the period 2019 to 2023. It sets out the council’s plans to improve the quality of life for Stotfold’s residents, businesses and visitors over the next four years.

It does not replace the 2009 adopted Town Plan which expresses the aims and ambitions of our community; indeed, the Town Plan should be read in conjunction with this Corporate Strategic Plan, together with the council’s current 1-year Action Plan.

This is a working document that will be reviewed annually.

Our Mission Statement is:

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*‘Enhancing the community of Stotfold will be achieved by effective use of our assets and managing Council Tax received from our residents, in the most appropriate way. The Council will give our staff clear objectives and decisions to implement actions that maintain and improve our assets to the benefit of Stotfold’*

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## **About Stotfold**

Stotfold is a small, but growing town in the north-east of Bedfordshire, on the border with Hertfordshire, falling within the unitary authority area of Central Bedfordshire. Over the years it has seen many changes, with businesses coming and going and significant housing development.

Stotfold can trace its history back to the stone age, with archaeological teams discovering long forgotten settlements on the outskirts of the town. The River Ivel, which runs through the town, was probably a great factor in the decision to settle and in later years the Great North Road linking the south with the north insured continuing habitation. The name Stotfold is thought to have been derived from the practice of northern cattle drovers breaking their journey at this point along the A1 Great North Road, now the A1/A1M, and penning their cattle (stots) in enclosures (folds) before continuing their journeys southwards. The Domesday Book of 1086 records ‘Stotfalt’ as having a population of 200.

The Stotfold of today is a growing town, covering an area of 2207 acres, making this a large parish. The present population is approximately 9,000 and this number is increasing as new, large developments are completed.

Stotfold is proud of its heritage and rural nature. It still has an historic working Mill which is now an attraction, together with a Nature Reserve which has received national awards and many public open spaces. There is a wide choice of clubs, organisations and volunteering opportunities within the town, and community spirit is very evident.

## About Stotfold Town Council

Stotfold Town Council is the first tier of local government, being the closest to the community we represent. The council has 15 elected, and unpaid, council members who work to represent their community and provide facilities and services to improve the lives of residents and visitors to Stotfold, such as recreational facilities, street lighting, allotments, car parking and events throughout the year.

Councillors are elected for a four year term, with latest elections taking place in 2019. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are appointed annually at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

The council employs a Town Clerk who heads a team of office staff, keyholders, caretakers and contractors who manage the council’s facilities and action the decisions taken by council.

The council owns (or leases) and manages 7 recreation grounds, equipped play areas and public open spaces, which includes a centenary wood. Three council owned buildings are either leased out to the local library and businesses, or rooms made available for hire to the public. Other assets include a public car park and conveniences, street lights and two allotment sites (one is owned by a local charity but managed by the Town Council). The council is also a burial authority and provides and manages burial space at its cemetery.

The council is based at The Greenacre Centre, Valerian Way and its office is open to help with public enquiries, facilities bookings, etc Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

## Strategic objectives

Our Corporate Strategic Plan focuses on four objectives:



Democracy



Environment



Community



Economy



## DEMOCRACY

### COMMUNICATION

The council's Community Engagement Strategy was adopted in 2014 and outlines our aims to represent, involve, promote, support, enhance and engage with our community, and we will continue to do this.

Council will continue to develop communications with local residents with regular articles in the Stotfold News and by disseminating information through its website and on its Facebook page.

Contact details for our councillors and our office can be found on the Town Council website ([www.stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk)) and also published in the Stotfold News, a free news magazine delivered monthly to every house in Stotfold.

Council will publish an Annual Report, in June, summarising its activities over the previous year, together with a brief financial report. This will be published online and will be available at key points in the town. A more detailed report on council's activities and finances will be presented by the Mayor at the Annual Town Meeting held in March.

Council will continue to ask residents for their views on the services it provides, such as consultation exercises to establish types of play equipment to provide. When felt necessary, leaflet drops will be carried out to ensure all households are consulted.

All meetings of the council and its committees are open to the public, and provision is made during the meeting for public questions. The council may also call public meetings to gauge opinion from residents on specific matters, such as major planning applications.

Town Councillor Surgeries are held at least 6 times a year at a variety of locations and events throughout the year. Residents have an opportunity to engage with their councillors, find out what the council is currently doing and our future plans, take part in consultations and surveys and report issues and concerns.

We will use questionnaires and carry out surveys to establish opinion through regular stands at the Co-op supermarket, community events throughout the year, articles in the Stotfold News, Facebook and our website, and will make use of its noticeboards located throughout the town.

### DATA PROTECTION

Stotfold Town Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. Council takes the care of personal data very seriously and is committed to take all steps necessary to keep it safe, secure, up to date and to collect no more than is necessary for the function we have collected it for. We will follow procedures to ensure that all employees, elected members, contractors, consultants, partners or other servants or agents of the council (collectively known as data users) who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the council are fully aware of and abide by their duties under the General Data Protection Regulation. We will destroy personal data once there is no longer an administrative reason to keep it. We will use personal information only in connection with the services we provide.

### **GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE**

The General Power of Competence (GPC) is a statutory power (Localism Act 2011 sections 1 – 8) enabling local councils to do anything that an individual may do, without breaking the law.

To be eligible, a council must meet criteria set out in the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012:

- Two thirds of all seats must be filled by councillors who have stood for election
- The council must have a qualified clerk

Stotfold Town Council has confirmed by resolution that it has met the above criteria and is eligible to use the General Power of Competence. Eligibility lasts until the Annual Meeting of the Council in the next ordinary election year and must be reaffirmed at each Annual Meeting thereafter to enable continued use of the power.

### **LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME**

The Local Council Award Scheme, accredited through NALC<sup>1</sup>, provides assurance to the council and the community it serves that it is up to date, and progressive. It helps the council improve its performance and demonstrates the commitment and hard work of its councillors and officers and is a nationally recognised tool used when working with the local community or other local partners. Stotfold Town Council has previously held the Foundation level and is looking to be accredited with Quality Status in the immediate future, with a long-term aim to achieving Gold Status.

### **STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

To ensure council acts according to relevant legislation and is efficient in its working, procedures and policies have been adopted, which include:

Standing Orders	Financial Regulations	Council Code of Conduct
Equal Opportunities Policy	Complaints Procedure	Health, Safety & Welfare Policy
Freedom of Information Policy	Press Policy	Social Media Policy (for Councillors)
Training Policy	Reserves Strategy	Guidelines for broadcasting at meetings
Risk Management Strategy	Community Engagement	Protocol on bullying & harassment
Grievance procedure	Disciplinary procedure	Protocol on member/officer relations
Credit Control & Bad Debt Policy	Privacy Notice	Subject Access Request Procedure
Privacy – Consent Form	Document Retention Policy	Information & Data Protection Policy
Information Security Policy	Data Breach Policy	Information Security Asset Inventory

These documents are available on our website [www.stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk) or in hard copy by request. They are reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date and comply with current legislation or working requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Local Councils

## **SERVICE PROVISION - REVIEW**

The council provides a number of services to the local population. It will seek to ensure that these services represent value for money and meet the needs of the local population, and will regularly review the need, their purpose and efficiency.

Council has 6 committees who have separate responsibilities for various services:

### Planning Management Committee

As a consultee to Central Bedfordshire Council on planning applications relating to Stotfold. The committee also responds to local planning consultations relating to the wider Central Bedfordshire area.

### Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee

Manages the following council owned or leased assets - 220 street lights, four recreation grounds/parks, Centenary Wood, four equipped play areas, Millennium Green, Norton Road Allotments and the MUGA facility. The committee also manages the Common Road Allotments on behalf of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field.

### Cemetery Management Committee

Manages and maintains Stotfold Cemetery.

### Buildings Management Committee

Manages and maintains the Memorial Hall, Greenacre Centre and Simpson Centre, making them available for residents and organisations to hire. The Council's offices are located within the Greenacre Centre building.

### Establishment Committee

Prepares Precept recommendation, deals with staffing matters, reviews policies and procedures.

### Town Strategy Committee

Considers the long-term strategic planning of Stotfold.

Each committee has determined delegated responsibilities to manage certain services. These powers are set out in Committee Terms of Reference. Together with reviewing the services the council provides, committee delegated responsibilities will also be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and enable each committee to fulfil its role efficiently.

## **STAFF**

The clerk will carry out regular reviews of office procedures to ensure efficiency and productiveness, whilst adhering to council policy and carrying out the decisions of council.

Staff job descriptions will be reviewed by the clerk on an annual basis, usually during the appraisals process, to ensure that they are current and accurate, together with monitoring the staff structure to ensure that it is appropriate.

Annual appraisals of office staff will be carried out by the clerk – the clerk's appraisal is to be carried out by the Chairman of the Council. Appraisals will follow the council's appraisal procedures, ensuring that the council's Training Policy is used as guidance during the process.

D R A F T 26/09/19

Council staff will maximise the use of IT resources, increase use of email and further develop the website. Staff will continue to reduce the volume of paper produced and will maintain an efficient filing system.

In response to queries from residents, council staff will continue to respond in a timely manner. When by email, ideally within five working days. If telephone or face to face, as appropriate according to query.

Weekly meetings of office staff will be held to discuss forthcoming events, plan workloads and discuss a scheme of delegation where appropriate. It will be an opportunity for staff to communicate concerns or ideas for improvements.

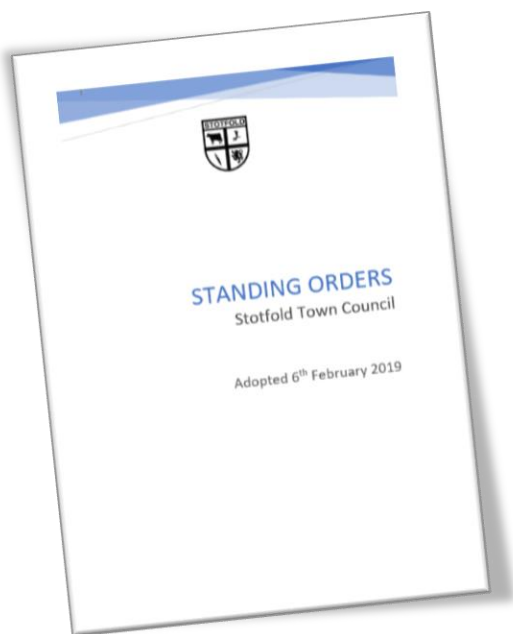
Communication with other staff members, such as facility keyholders and council contractors will be maintained on a regular basis, ideally weekly, to ensure reports on facilities and concerns are followed up.

**COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

Council welcomes new members, and at election time or when a casual vacancy occurs, the role of Town Councillor and the council within the community will be widely promoted at events, posters/displays, online and via social media.

Effective decision making by council requires well-informed councillors, and this will be addressed by training following the council’s Statement of Training Policy. Training may be given in-house or through external training organisations. Cluster town and parish council training will be encouraged to make use of economies of scale, and council will seek to host such events.

New council members will undertake induction training provided by the Town Clerk, to be held within one month of start of office. Further induction training will be provided through Bedfordshire Association of Local Councils via their training programme.





## ENVIRONMENT

### **OPEN SPACES – CLEAN, SAFE & ENJOYABLE**

Council is committed to encouraging healthy lifestyles and the wellbeing of its residents.

We will look to increase recreational activities for all age groups and in particular, activities for teenagers.

Council will seek to replace and update equipment when finances permit, and to enhance existing, good quality equipment where possible to provide maximum play value to its younger residents. A programme of refurbishment/replacement will be developed by the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee. Council will take advantage of available funding opportunities to meet this aim.

Council is aware of pressures being placed on open spaces and will therefore endeavour to protect existing green space for future generations. Council is aware that demand for football pitches outstrips supply and will look to provide space for pitches where possible, focusing on the Arlese Road site.

Council is also aware that parkland open space designed for general community use is limited in the town, and so will continue to work with all developers to provide further general community use parkland.

### **SUPPORT LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE GROUPS**

Council will continue to support local environmental groups such as Teasel in their work to protect wildlife and enhance our local green spaces - council owned spaces such as Centenary Wood and other areas in the town such as Mill Meadows.

The council will continue to support the work of Etonbury Green Wheel, a partnership of local councils and voluntary groups, to create a network of bridleways, cycleways and footpaths linking green areas of Stotfold and neighbouring towns and villages.



### **VERGE CUTTING**

Council will continue to maintain a high standard of verge cutting on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council.

### **BIODIVERSITY & CONSERVATION**

Whilst maintaining verges and open spaces and conducting other environmental work throughout the town, council will have due regard to biodiversity and conservation of areas of environmental significance and will seek support from Central Bedfordshire Council's Ecologist.

A regular programme of grass cutting will be maintained for council owned/managed public open space, and around our built assets. A tree management programme will be followed, and shrubs and planted areas will be maintained to a good standard, inspected and planting schemes will be followed.

The council will regularly review Stotfold's Green Infrastructure Plan, in conjunction with Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.



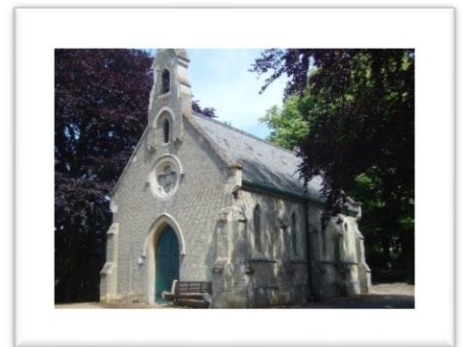
**COMMUNITY ASSETS**

Council acknowledges the shortage of some infrastructure items and community assets within the town and will work with relevant organisations to try and address those. For example, council will support the provision of sheltered accommodation for the elderly within the town and will continue to press our local education authority to ensure that sufficient and appropriate school places are provided for our young residents.

The council is committed to providing an extension to the existing Stotfold Cemetery and will seek to provide a choice of options. It will also seek to provide more space for ashes interment within the current Cemetery layout.

Council will ensure that its fixed assets – land and property, are maintained to a good standard and that access is retained for the community.

We will work to ensure that all our assets are registered with the Land Registry.



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## COMMUNITY

**EVENTS**

Council acknowledges the benefit that community activities and events bring to a community, bringing people together and enhancing well-being. We will therefore continue to promote council’s current community activities and will seek to increase the range of those activities. Where events are taking place in the community, organised by other groups/organisations, we will promote those activities.

**GRANTS**

The council will continue to consider grant applications which will directly benefit Stotfold, or part of it, or all or some of its inhabitants, through its grant giving policy. We will support organisations, not individuals, if they provide a social, welfare or educational benefit, and have an active local branch or committee. We will continue to consider grant applications twice yearly and will ensure that each round of grants is widely advertised to encourage applications from the community.

**VOLUNTEERING**

The council acknowledges the importance of the community’s social capital, its human assets, i.e. the skills, knowledge, abilities and willingness to better their community through active citizenship. This is making a positive contribution to society, which includes taking part in volunteering. The council will continue to support and work with wider community voluntary schemes to benefit the town, such as the local volunteer environmental group, Teasel, and the Stotfold Good Neighbour Group. We will actively promote volunteer group vacancies and will encourage general volunteering opportunities within the town. Through promotion of volunteering opportunities, we are looking to encourage pride and civic responsibility in our town.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The council will work with the Police and other agencies to reduce vandalism and criminal activity within the town. Particular emphasis will be given to addressing problems on property and land owned by the council, such as the car park at Riverside Playing Field.

Council will continue to be represented at the Bedfordshire Police Priority Setting meetings, ensuring our current community safety concerns are highlighted.

Council will maintain its good relations with the local youth provision team and the unitary authority Safer Communities team.

We will encourage our residents and support them in forming Streetwatch, Speedwatch and other similar community safety schemes, and will consider hosting community safety events.

## **OUTSIDE BODIES**

Council will annually nominate representatives to Outside Bodies to maintain effective partnerships. Outside Bodies are independent of the council, and can include external organisations such as uniformed groups, charities, educational establishments.

## **REPRESENTATION**

In order to represent the views of its residents, for example on planning applications, attendance at appeals or consultations, council will continue to encourage residents to give their views.

Through our membership on outside bodies policy, we will represent our community by attendance at Police Priority Setting meetings, ensuring that areas of local concern regarding antisocial behaviour, criminal activities, etc are highlighted to Bedfordshire Police. Council will continue to engage with our Unitary Authority, representing the community of Stotfold at Town and Parish Council Conferences, sharing views of our residents on topics of local concern or interest.

## **MAINTAIN COUNCIL ASSETS**

Council will keep an up to date register of its assets, reviewed annually, and will ensure those assets are maintained for the benefit of the community.

## **INTEGRATING NEW COMMUNITY**

With the increased growth of the town, council welcomes new residents to our community. To assist in their integration with the community, we will continue to provide and update our Residents Handbook, which will be available in locations including the Town Council offices, the Library and made available to housing developers and estate agents to distribute to their new purchasers/tenants. To bring all areas of the community together, we will consider holding Community Open Days, inviting organisations, charities, clubs, police, etc to show-case what Stotfold has to offer to its residents.

## **ENHANCE LIAISON WITH NEIGHBOURING TOWNS AND PARISHES**

The council will liaise/meet with neighbouring towns and parish councils on matters of mutual interest/concern when necessary. Town and parish council cluster meetings will be encouraged, and the council will seek to host such meetings.

### **FACILITATE PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSIONS**

The council wishes to make best use of its facilities and engagement methods to facilitate public information sessions. These may be hosted by the council, or by encouraging external organisations to use our facilities.

We will also encourage local area consultation events and will seek to provide facilities for such events.

### **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

Benefits of partnership working are numerous and include sharing resources, building good relationships within the community, avoiding duplication and waste and collaborating to work towards a common goal. The council currently works in partnership with many bodies, such as the Police, local environmental group, businesses in the town. We will seek to maintain and enhance those existing partnerships and welcome the opportunity for further partnership working.

### **INCREASE AWARENESS OF STOTFOLD AND ITS FACILITIES**

The council wishes to raise the profile of the town but is aware that this task is difficult with a limited range of facilities. Individual council organised events, such as the switching on of the Christmas lights and the Big Tidy Up will be publicised widely. The Town Council will continue to support and have a presence at other local events such as Stotfold Mill weekends and Stotfold Festival Fete.

Appropriate press releases will be issued in local and wider area news media, highlighting council's activities of interest, forthcoming or completed projects.





## ECONOMY

### **SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

The council wishes to increase the number and range of employment opportunities within the town. It will continue to have a presence on the Chamber of Trade and will work to encourage more communication within the group and businesses of the town.

Where appropriate, the council will:

- Assist with funding applications to other bodies
- Assist with office/meeting space provision, for small businesses
- Identify appropriate sites to encourage new retail and employment opportunities

### **INVESTMENT & RESERVES STRATEGY**

Stotfold Town Council acknowledges the importance of prudently investing funds held on behalf of the community by the council.

When investing, the council will have a mind to consider the following:

1. Security of capital
2. Liquidity
3. Yield

The risk level will be determined from time to time using an appropriate attitude to risk questionnaire.

The Town Council will maintain reserves to protect against future risk, ensure contingencies are in place and to support investment in future projects which are beneficial to the town.

### **BEST VALUE**

Although Town Councils are not bound by 'Best Value', as higher authorities are, this council seeks to follow the principles:

Challenge – question why, how and by whom activities are carried out

Compare – performance of this council with national standards and good practice

Consult – with the community, partners and other relevant bodies on key issues

Compete – using competition as a means of securing more efficient and effective services

We will seek to *“make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”*<sup>2</sup>.

We will seek to be cost effective, considering overall value – economic, environmental and social value to maximise the benefit by procuring or commissioning goods or services.

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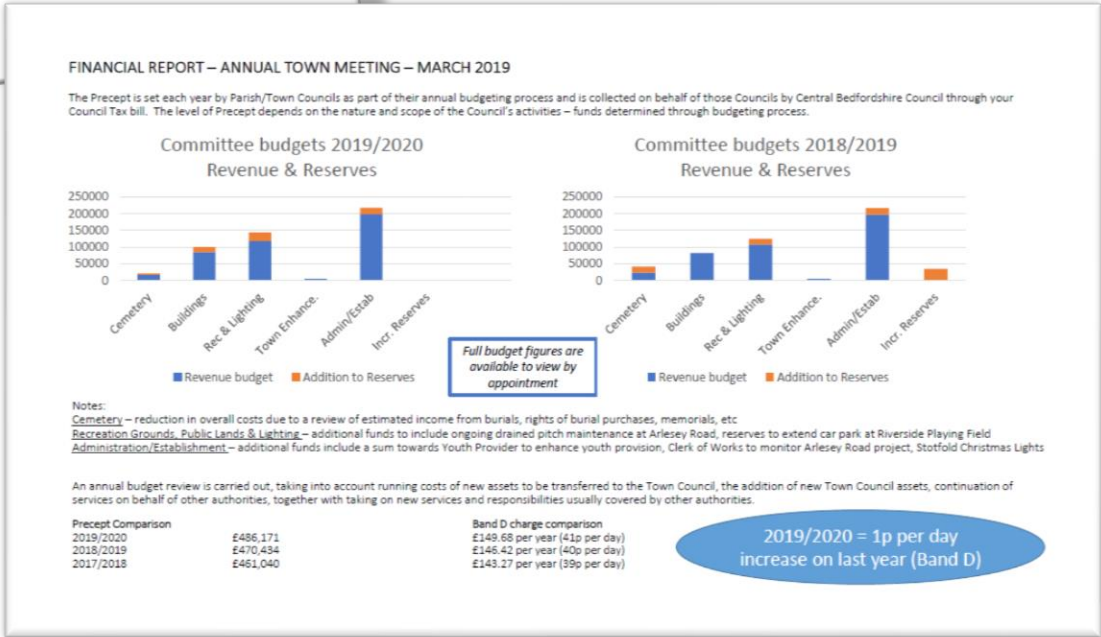
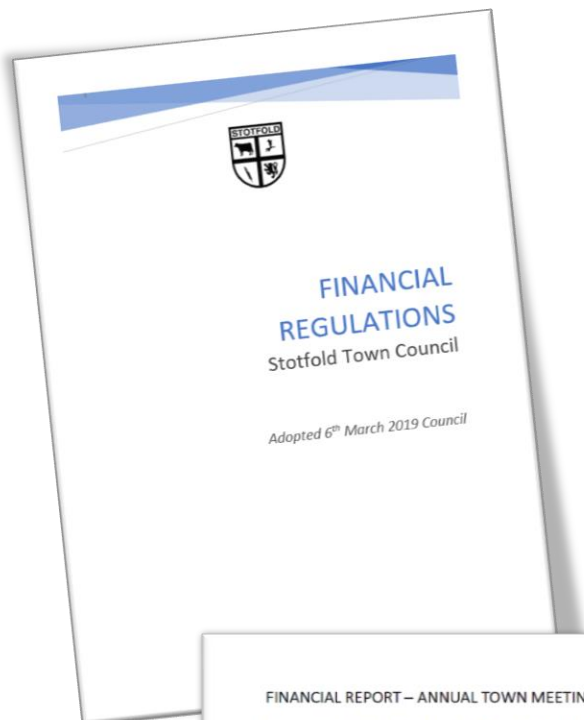
<sup>2</sup> DCLG Revised Best Value Statutory Guidance – March 2015

**INCOME GENERATION**

The council’s main source of income is through the annual precept, collected by the local authority through Council Tax. It also raises income through lettings of its facilities, such as hall hire, and through cemetery fees. The council will manage its assets to continue to provide income streams to support the wider council objectives.

**PRUDENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The council will endeavour to maintain appropriate levels of reserves – general and earmarked. We will ensure sufficient financial controls are in place, to include internal/external audits, and carry out due diligence on all projects to ensure they are affordable, deliverable, sustainable and appropriate.



**FORWARD PLAN 2019 - 2023**

No	Title	Description	Time scale	Priority
1.	Local Council Award Scheme	Achieve Quality Status accreditation	July 2019 to March 2020	High
2.	Administration	Maximise use of IT, increasing use of electronic communications and reduce use of paper	April 2020 to March 2021	Medium
3.	Investment	Make use of investment opportunities for funds held, such as Section 106	January 2020 to January 2021	Medium/High
4.	Engagement	Complete upgrade of Council's website	July 2019 to December 2019	High
5.	Promotion of town	Re-introduce updated residents handbook	September 2019 to March 2020	Medium/High
6.	Cemetery	Continue to save funds to extend the Cemetery, providing a range of interment options	July 2019 to March 2023	Low
7.	Cemetery	Increase space for interment of ashes within current Cemetery layout	April 2022 to March 2023	Low
8.	Cemetery	Produce a Cemetery handbook, outlining history, charges, plans of site	July 2019 to December 2019	High
9.	Cemetery	Refurbish Beacon Garden of Rest	April 2020 to March 2021	High
10.	Memorial Hall	Refurbishment project to include updated kitchen, replacement front doors, induction loop system for main hall, new flooring to bar extension	July 2019 to March 2021	Medium/High
11.	Library	Retain library facility through partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council	July 2019 to March 2023	Medium
12.	Simpson Centre	Determine future use of the vacated (and rolling lease section) of the Simpson Centre	July 2019 to March 2020	Medium
13.	MUGA, Riverside	Ascertain future of MUGA	April 2020 to March 2021	Medium
14.	Riverside Playing Field	Extend car park	April 2020 to March 2021	Low
15.	Outdoor fitness	Provision of MUGA and outdoor fitness equipment at Arlesey Road	March 2022 to April 2023	Low

16.	Equipped play areas	Produce a programme of refurbishment/replacement of older play equipment	July 2019 to March 2023	High
17.	Transfer of assets to Town Council	Complete transfer of Prince Charles Avenue play area and open space	July 2019 to March 2021	High
18.	Transfer of assets to Town Council	Complete transfer of Greenacre Park public open space and equipped play area	April 2020 to March 2021	High
19.	Transfer of assets to Town Council	Complete transfer of open space associated with Taylor's Road development	April 2022 to March 2023	Low
20.	Public Rights of Way	Successfully complete application to add Brewery Lane footpath to the Public Rights of Way Definitive Map	April 2021 to March 2022	Medium
21.	Emergency Plan	Produce Emergency Plan for Stotfold	September 2019 to March 2021	Medium
22.	Community Safety	Host community safety event and encourage Streetwatch, Speedwatch and other community safety schemes	September 2019 to March 2023	Medium
23.	Christmas Lights	Continue to increase lights display and seek to improve switch on event annually	September 2019 to March 2023	Medium