Aylsham Town Council

Business Plan

2016-2019
INTRODUCTION

This is the first Aylsham Town Council Business Plan and it sets out the vision and priorities of the Town Council over the next three years.

WHAT IS A TOWN COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN?

It is a statement of the Town Council’s vision for the town; its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities.

Many of you, especially those who have previous experience of living in a small village, may have seen a traditional ‘Parish or Village Plan’ that sets out aims and ambitions that are delivered by the community and partners as a whole. This is not intended to be that type of plan. This is a document that sets out what Aylsham Town Council itself can achieve either directly or by working with the relevant delivery body such as Broadland District Council or Norfolk County Council.

The aim of the Business Plan is to give the residents of Aylsham a clear understanding of what the Town Council already does and what it is trying to achieve. It details the areas that have been identified as a priority over the next three years but also does not forget long term ambitions. The Business Plan is a live document that we will, and you can, review annually.

It will be used to:

• steer the budgeting process
• plan activities for the coming year
• enable the Town Council to monitor its progress against key priorities

WHY HAS THE TOWN COUNCIL DECIDED TO PRODUCE A BUSINESS PLAN?

The Town Council is a decision making body and it works best when it has goals to work to and an agreed course of action. The Business Plan provides a framework for the Town Council to achieve their desired goals; enabling it to operate in a more consistent and co-ordinated way, and, in the long-term, to be proactive rather than reactive in its decision-making.

The Town Council has drawn up this plan based on its understanding of our community’s needs gathered from our day-to-day involvement with residents and the business community and its observations around the town. The Business Plan, together with the Neighbourhood Plan sets out the council’s vision for Aylsham.
At the same time, the Business Plan will help you to have a better understanding of what the Town Council does and to clarify what it doesn’t do; in other words to explain what issues fall under the responsibility of other delivery bodies such as Broadland District Council or Norfolk County Council.

The Plan is a statement of intent. However, Council may have to make decisions contrary to its stated commitments if events such as budget constraints, new legislation or changes in policies make that necessary. Any changes will, however, be reflected in an updated Plan.

**COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLAN**

To ensure this Business Plan is consistent with residents’ wishes, the Council will consult on its contents through as many channels as possible. It will promote its availability through Just Aylsham, and request feedback to modify each version in the light of that feedback.

The Council is very aware of the importance of the business community in the town and it will ensure that the Aylsham Business and Enterprise Forum (ABEF) is fully consulted and have the opportunity to feedback into the plan.

The Council will include both Broadland District Council and Norfolk County Council in the consultation to ensure the plan is consistent with district and county goals and aspirations.

**THE TIME SCALE FOR THE PLAN IS AS FOLLOWS**

- The first meeting of the working party took place before 1st August 2015
  First Meeting held 21st July 2015
- A first draft Business Plan was prepared prior to January 2016
  Approved at the Town Council Meeting held 14th January 2016
- Feedback on the first draft was available during the entire month of February 2016
- A meeting to present the plan to ABEF took place before March 15th
  ABEF Members updated at meeting held 7th March 2016
- A final draft Business Plan will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting 2016
  Summary action plan provided to all attendees at meeting held 27th April 2016
- The final document should be adopted at the May 2016 Town Council meeting
THE TOWN COUNCIL

OVERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL
There are currently three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Aylsham Town Council is the first and local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the town and outlying settlements, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

The next tier is Broadland District Council and they are responsible for services including housing and environmental services. Broadland District Council is also responsible for strategic planning policies for all development (including housing and employment sites) via its Local Plan. Finally, Norfolk County Council’s responsibilities include highways, relating to both roads and footways (pavements), education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

Residents elect thirteen Town Councillors every four years. The Council elects a Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May, where the Council also reports to the electorate at the Annual Town Meeting. Councillors are unpaid, they commit their time to improving Aylsham and maintaining it as an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, visit and do business. Elections were last held in May 2015, the next election will be in May 2019. A list of the current councillors can be found below.

The Town Council owns property and land in the town and gains income from some of it. It holds these assets on behalf of the community and is responsible for maintaining their value.

The full Council meets monthly on the second Thursday in the month in the Town Hall. All meetings are open to the public, with a period set aside for members of the public to address Council.

The Town Council runs its business through this meeting rather than through a committee system. Working groups comprising councillors and sometimes members of the public support the work of Town council. The Council does have one committee – the Cittàslow Committee which in turn has a sub-committee, the Cittàslow Events Committee. Details of Cittàslow are available below.

The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, these lay down the rules by which we operate and conduct our business. The Standing Orders are based on a model prepared by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). We also expect Town Councillors to adhere to the Council’s Code of Conduct adopted from the Broadland code. Working groups work to terms of reference agreed by the Town Council.

The Council has qualified for and has gained the ‘General Power of Competence’ which gives town and parish councils more ‘power to act’ – this means that councils have the power to do anything that individuals generally may do, such as trading or setting up a company to provide a service. This brings new opportunities for Aylsham Town Council in terms of providing cost-effective services and facilities to meet the needs of local people. This means
the Council only needs to agree whether they wish to do something as opposed to whether
they wish to do something and then whether they are legally able to do something.
The Town has 7374 residents (as at the 2011 census).

COUNCILLORS AS AT 12TH MAY 2016
Ellie Baker          Lloyd Mills
Trevor Bennett      Annette Overton
Ros Calvert         Val Shaw
Dave Curtis         Eileen Springall
David Harrison      Chris Yeomans
Barry Lancaster     One Vacancy
William Mackie

THE COUNCIL STAFF
The Council currently has seven employees

Clerk to the Council - Sue Lake
The Clerk administers the Council and must carry out all the functions required by law. She
is the Town Council’s “Proper Officer” and only the Clerk can sign official documents on
behalf of the Council.

Assistant Town Clerk – Annette Palmer
The Assistant Town Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). She undertakes the
town’s financial affairs and also administers the allotment sites.

Administrator – Natasha Carver
The administrator is the first point of contact when visiting or telephoning the Council. She
administers the Town Hall bookings and deals with burial matters. Hilary will be retiring
from the Town Council at the end of June 2016.

Events and Farmers Market Officer – Paul 'Smudge' Smith
The events officer is responsible for all large events in the town, co-ordinates our health and
safety requirements and oversees the work of the facilities staff.

Facilities Staff - Ryan Jeckell, Robert Grey and Stephen Newstead
The facilities staff takes care of the Town Hall, toilets, Market Place and all other areas
owned or managed by the Town Council.
VISION
The Town Council’s vision is to put in place policies and initiatives which will help to improve Aylsham, encourage a greater sense of involvement and pride in the community, and promote sustainable and vibrant economic activity in the town. The Council will look to ensure the new developments currently under construction integrate with and feel part of the existing town.
The Town Council does and will continue to conduct its business by means which are transparent, sustainable, environmentally friendly, and that present the best value in achieving the actions laid out in this Plan.

OBJECTIVES

The Town Council’s vision for Aylsham is for it to be a successful, vibrant, attractive place, where people want to live, work and visit. They will look to do this in a number of ways:

- Providing a democratic and representative voice for the community
- Where it provides services, it manages them to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost
- Where others provide services, the Town Council endeavours to ensure that they deal with them effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community
- Promote and represent the community's views and aspirations at local, district, county and national level
- It will co-operate and liaise, where appropriate, with residents and existing town organisations for the general wellbeing of Aylsham.

The Town Council will endeavour to:
- Enhance its role within the community and improve its communication with the community
- Improve and upgrade the Town Council website
- Enhance the facilities available to the community
- Further promote local democracy by encouraging more residents to stand for election to the Town Council
- Work closely with local schools and other local youth organisations to ensure that the needs of young people are adequately addressed
- Maintain continuing professional development for staff and Town Councillors
- To encourage the devolution of services to the Town Council where it can deliver them more effectively and efficiently, and ideally with no additional cost to the taxpayer
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The residents of Aylsham (mainly through the ‘precept’) fund the Town Council. The precept is the local tax levied by the Town Council that Broadland District Council collects on our behalf as part of the Council Tax bill. On average, £147.80 per year (band D property) of Aylsham’s residents’ total Council Tax (i.e. £2.84 per week) contributes to the Town Council precept.

The expenditure for the Council in 2015/16 was £389,196. This money is obtained from the following main sources:
- £310,117 from Aylsham council taxpayers
- £9,989 from property rents
- £44,795 from fees and charges
- £32,323 from Transitional Grant and New Homes Bonus

Expenditure

The main items of expenditure are:
- Office Administration, salaries, contractors and on-going expenditure (e.g. Christmas Lights, Road Closures, etc.) – 49%
- Allotments – 2%
- Aylsham Recreation Ground – 12%
- Open Spaces – 8%
- Town Hall – 11%
- Street Lighting – 7%
- Cemetery & Churchyard – 3%
- Public Toilets – 2%

The total budget for 2016/17 was set at £420,919. The Council has fully allocated the budget for this year and therefore, unless it is able to secure new grant funding, any new activities or facilities that require additional resources would either have to replace an existing activity or be funded from reserves or via an increase in the precept.

The Town Council endeavours to ensure their financial affairs are as transparent as possible. As required by law all payments over £500 are listed on our website together with expenditure relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus.

The council publishes the budget and accounts in full and there is the opportunity to inspect the accounts as part of electors rights with regard to audit.

All meetings are open to the public and each meeting includes a section for public questions. Visitors to the office are always welcome but please bear in mind that if you require specific information it is best to make an appointment.
AYLSHAM – A CITTÀSLOW TOWN
Since November 2004 Aylsham has been a Cittàslow Town. So what does that mean? “Cittàslow” is Italian for “Slow Town or City”. The Cittàslow Movement was founded in 1999 in four Italian towns. It grew from the Slow Food Movement an idea to combat the growing globalisation of food. Cittàslow is now a fast growing international network of nearly 150 towns in 25 countries, with more showing interest all the time.

In Aylsham the Cittàslow Committee has met with delegates from Taiwan, Japan and Bermuda all looking to see how Cittàslow would meet their needs. In the UK the following towns are all part of the Cittàslow movement:
- Aylsham
- Mold
- Berwick-upon-Tweed,
- Perth
- Llangollen

WHAT ARE THE CITTÀSLOW GOALS?
- Sustainability not regeneration
- Led by democratically elected Town Council
- Community owned – the Cittàslow Committee, although part of the Town Council, has representation from numerous organisations in the town
- Endorses Broadland Community Plan, County Plan, national Government strategies and policies

Apart from these goals, there is no set rule book – which emphasises that every community has a unique Cittàslow Town.

The Committee provides the following activities in Aylsham:
- Sustainable activities
- Carnival/Christmas
- Arts/Music events
- Specialist Markets
- Links to other authorities/agencies
- Burns Night

What benefits has it had?
- Raising the profile of the town and surrounding area
- Better rapport with Principal Authorities
- Cittàslow ‘umbrella’ brings projects and groups together
- Opportunities from being part of a national and international network
CURRENT AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY
The Town Council is currently responsible for or works in partnership with the following areas.

- 23 Market Place
- A140 Roundabout
- Allotments 2 existing sites 2 proposed sites
- Aylsham Town Archives
- Aylsham Recreation Ground
- Car Park Monitoring
- Cemetery
- Cemetery Cottage
- Christmas Lights
- Church Clock
- Closed Churchyard
- Craft Markets
- Drill Hall
- Farmers Markets
- General Markets
- Greenlanes Gardens
- Highway Verges
- Market Place
- Norfolk Homes Various Sites
- Notice Boards
- Old Station Yard
- Public Toilets
- Recycling
- Sapwell Close
- Soame Pump
- St Michaels Open Spaces
- Street Furniture
- Street Lighting
- The Little Staithe
- The Staithe
- Town Hall
- Town Sign
- Website

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND COMMITMENTS
The next sections explain what the Town Council does and where it’s responsibilities lie. It will also explain what the Council is ready to commit to on a continuing basis, and what it hopes to do in the future.
LEISURE AND COMMUNITY

THE TOWN HALL
The Town Hall is a Grade 2 listed building which dominates the Market Place in Aylsham. As with most buildings of this age the cost of upkeep rises each year and often any work that is undertaken raises another issue. In November 2015 the Town Council held a public meeting regarding the future of the Town Hall. The overwhelming opinion of that meeting was that the Town Hall should be retained as a building available for public use. The Town Council are currently working up a separate Business Plan for the future of the Town Hall to try and fulfil the public need, to increase usage and ensure the Town Hall is not a serious drain on the finances of the town. The first stage of this work is a full structural survey of the building and this should take place in May 2016 allowing an outline plan to be created in the summer.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to provide the Town Hall for public use for hire by organisations and individuals
- To receive and discuss the outcome of the structural survey to be undertaken
- To formulate a Business Plan for the future of the Town Hall
- To ensure it informs the public of the work and decisions made in a timely manner

DRILL HALL
In 2015 Norfolk Property Services closed their offices in the Drill Hall on Cawston Road. This led to speculation that Norfolk County Council were looking to close the hall. The Town Council registered the hall as a Community Asset as designated by the Localism Act 2011. This registration means that should the County Council decide to sell then there is automatically a six month pause allowing the community to put together a bid to purchase the hall. In the meantime the Town Council have started negotiations to purchase the hall from the County Council.

Town Council Commitments
- To preserve the Drill Hall for community use
- To endeavour to keep charges for the community’s use of the hall as low as possible whilst ensuring the facility is cost neutral

ALLOTMENTS
The Town Council currently runs two allotment sites – one on Cromer Road rented from the National Trust and one at the cemetery on Norwich Road. This is a temporary site until the extra land is required for burials. With the two new developments the Town Council will receive two new sites at which point the Town Council will have over 100 allotments available in total. Representatives of the Town Council regularly inspect the allotments and
follow up with letters to the tenants. The Town Council strives to ensure that all tenants keep their allotments in an acceptable state and takes action to ensure this. With the advent of additional allotments, it will look into the possibility of creating a community orchard.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to monitor all allotments to ensure the tenants keep them cultivated
- To continue to run our allotments at a fair rent

AYLSHAM RECREATION GROUND
The Rec covers an area of over 11 acres and is a wonderful amenity for the town. The Recreation Ground is a charity run by a management committee comprised of users of the facilities and includes three members of the council. The Town Council is the Custodian Trustee for the charity and therefore has no direct responsibility for how it is managed. The Town Council does work with the committee and provides advice on health and safety and undertakes weekly inspections. The Town Council also provides a substantial proportion of the money needed to run the Recreation Ground. In 2016 a new agreement will be implemented to clarify the roles of the Town Council and the members of the Recreation Ground Committee.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to inspect the play equipment on a weekly basis
- To work with the Recreation Ground Committee to ensure it offers the best facilities possible
- To continue to assist with funding to help meet the costs of the Recreation Ground on receipt of a detailed budget and authorised request

PLAY AREAS
The Town Council has responsibility for three play areas in the town. These are located on Henry Page Road, off Yaxleys Lane and Howard Way. The play equipment is inspected by its staff on a weekly basis and it will respond to specific complaints immediately they are notified. The Town Council will be adopting two further play areas on St Michaels Avenue during 2016.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to inspect the play equipment on a weekly basis
- To put in place a reserve fund to help replace the equipment when it reaches the end of its useable life
- To make repairs and undertake maintenance in a timely manner
**STREET SCENE**

**BENCHES**
The Town Council recognises that Aylsham fills two roles – a market town for residents and nearby villages and a destination for tourists. To enjoy visiting any town, for whatever purpose, there must be facilities for the visitors. Somewhere to sit and rest or watch the world go by is a necessary requirement for the town. However the council is also mindful of the cost in providing these facilities. There are a great many seats in the town already – many of them dedicated to previous residents – which have been in place for several years. The original ownership in many cases cannot be established. To address this potential problem the Town Council have agreed a policy on memorial benches and the requirements from both the Town Council and the person(s) making the donation. This policy is available from the Town Council and can also be found on our website.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To inspect on at least an annual basis all seats and benches provided in the town
- To remove or repair any found to not meet requirements
- To replace well used seats wherever possible
- To only use high quality equipment in either solid wood, metal or recycled material as is deemed most suitable for the setting

**STREETLIGHTS**
Aylsham Town Council has responsibility for over 400 streetlights in the town. Norfolk County Council is responsible for the streetlights on Bure Meadows, Willow Park, Sir Williams Close and Norwich Road and Red Lion Street. The Town Council relies on residents to advise them should a light be damaged, not working or a day burner. All reports of defects are reported to our contractor and attended to as soon as practical. (Any dangerous light will be attended to immediately.)

Experience has shown that street lighting can be a very divisive issue. There are many who feel they are essential to their wellbeing and others who feel there are too many, they are too bright and they are not required. It is therefore impossible to appease everyone.

In 2013 the Town Council were able to secure a small grant which enabled the replacement of 30 existing lights with LED replacements. Even with this limited conversion the drop in the cost of electricity has been noticeable. Two of the major costs to the Town Council are streetlight replacement and the electricity to run them. It is therefore proposed to undertake a full review of the street lighting provision that the Town Council is responsible for. This will consist of looking at the cost of replacing all lights with LED’s, reducing the hours the lights are on, dimming of the lights and reductions in the number of lights.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To respond to all reports of street lighting faults in a timely manner
- To undertake full research of the current street lighting provision
• To consult with residents regarding any suggested changes
• To complete the review by March 2017
• To undertake any work resulting from the review by March 2018

CAR PARKS
There are currently two car parks available for visitors to the town – Burgh Road and The Buttlands. Both these car parks are the responsibility of Broadland District Council. However, the Town Council has an agreement with the District Council to inspect and report on the condition of the car parks. It is appreciated that the surface of The Buttlands is in need of considerable work and this has been identified by Broadland District Council and work will be undertaken when funding allows.
It is also acknowledged that the car park provision is not always sufficient for the needs of the town, especially the businesses that rely on visitors from outside a reasonable walking distance. There is also some parking in the Market Place which is subject to withdrawal when events, including markets, are held in the town centre.
The Town Council is aware that there is a lack of available parking in the town centre. It is also aware that this is exacerbated by staff of local businesses parking all day and also a growing trend for people to park and use the bus to travel to work in Norwich. Broadland District Council do not police their car parks and there is no mechanism in place to enforce the short term parking designation.

Town Council Commitments
• To continue to monitor the car parks for Broadland District Council and report any issues and effect repairs as appropriate
• To work with the Aylsham Business and Enterprise Forum (ABEF) to encourage staff not to use the short term car park at Burgh Road
• To explore every possible future site for car parking
• To look again at the ‘Park at my House’ scheme

SOAME PUMP
The Soame Pump is located at the junction of Cawston Road and Penfold Street. Until 1938 there was no public water supply in Aylsham, townsfolk drew their water from private wells. In 1911 after John Soame’s death a public well was given to the town by his uncle, a wealthy financier. The artesian well is 52 meters (170 ft) deep and its roof is thatched with Norfolk reed.
In 2013 the Town Council replaced the roof which gave it a much needed facelift.
The Town Council would like to thank Aylsham In Bloom for the colourful displays they provide at the site.

Town Council Commitments
• To ensure the pump is kept in good condition and make annual provision towards the re-
thatching

- To work with Aylsham In Bloom and the Christmas Lights Committee to ensure the pump always looks its best

**BUS SHELTERS**
Currently the Town Council has responsibility for three bus shelters; the brick shelter on Norwich Road and the modern shelters in the Market Place and on Gas House Hill. Prior to the re-generation of the Market Place a brick shelter had served both northbound and southbound passengers. This was removed and the buses re-routed so each direction would require its own shelter. Unfortunately, the southbound shelter that was installed was not really fit for purpose and after two years had to be replaced. This had a delay in the provision of the northbound shelter. There have also been requests for a bus shelter on Norwich Road opposite the doctor’s surgery. There is an issue with this due to the proximity of the gas main and the nearby junction which together with the width of the footway will not make the installation of a bus shelter easy.

**Town Council Commitments**

- To keep all bus shelters as clean as possible and remove any graffiti as soon as practical
- To investigate the provision of a second bus shelter in the Market Place
- To consider the possibility of a bus shelter on Norwich Road

**TOWN SIGN**
The Town Sign is located at the junctions of Norwich Road, Penfold Street, Red Lion Street and Burgh Road. It depicts John O’Gaunt and was last refurbished in 2012.

**Town Council Commitments**

- To ensure the sign is kept in good condition and make provision towards re-painting and other maintenance
OPEN SPACES

GREENLANES GARDENS
Greenlanes Gardens is an area of open space off Holman Road which started life as a play area created when the houses were originally built. After some years the equipment became dilapidated and was removed and the area became very scruffy. A group of residents took over the area and created an impressive garden space. Unfortunately, in 2015 the group of residents had dwindled in number and unable to recruit any new helpers the gardens were returned to the Town Council. The Town Council are looking to work with Aylsham High School to maintain the area at the same standard as has been expected over the last few years.

Town Council Commitments
- To work in partnership with Aylsham High School to create annual gardens of interest
- To maintain the lawn areas to reflect the gardens within them

HIGHWAY VERGES
Cutting of the verges around the town is the responsibility of Norfolk County Council. Under a scheme of delegation the Town Council cuts these on behalf of the County Council for which they receive payment. This payment is linked to the cost the County Council would expend should they undertake the job themselves. At the moment the amount received exceeds the costs to the council for cutting and the balance is retained to meet any unexpected problems such as the need to undertake more cuts than scheduled. The amount of cuts undertaken by the Town Council is greater than the number of cuts that would be made if the County Council were undertaking the service.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to undertake verge cutting whilst funding is received from Norfolk County Council
- To monitor the cuts to ensure the service is appropriate

A140 ROUNDABOUT (S)
Many of the roundabouts in Norfolk are leased out for advertising by Norfolk County Council. The roundabout on the A140 is not part of this contract and therefore no advertising is allowed. A new roundabout is scheduled to be built at the junction of Burgh Road in the next 1-2 years. The Town Council agreed the originally planting scheme for the existing roundabout and this has been updated recently by Aylsham In Bloom. It is anticipated that the new roundabout will be planted in a similar simple style.

Town Council Commitment
- To work with Highways and Aylsham In Bloom on planting schemes
- To maintain the roundabouts as per the planting scheme
**Old Station Yard**

Aylsham used to boast having two stations – creatively called Aylsham South and Aylsham North. Aylsham South is now the home of the Bure Valley Railway whilst Aylsham North station house is a private dwelling. The station yard at Aylsham North is a car park for the Weavers Way. Below the car park is a large area of land owned by the Town Council. The Cittàslow Committee have been looking after this piece of land for several years creating a bee garden and planting bulbs and apple trees. The fencing around the land is the original railway fencing.

**Town Council Commitments**

- To work with Norfolk County Council Trails Team to tidy the car park area and keep it litter free
- To continue to develop the bee garden
- To remove overgrowth to expose the fencing

**The Staithes**

Alongside the river on Mill Road are two areas of open land known as 'The Little Staithe' and 'The Big Staithe'. As its name suggests the Little Staithe is a very small area of land on which there is a life ring and a bench. This area is too small for anything further. On the other side of the road is the Big Staithe. This is an area of land bordered by a waterway, Mill Road, Dunkirk and a small area of woods. It is presently used very little with occasional parking on the grass which is causing damage. Access to the water is blocked by brambles which are steadily encroaching on the grass verge. It is intended to utilise this land better in the future by removing the brambles and creating a picnic area.

**Town Council Commitments**

- To maintain the Little Staithe
- To remove the brambles by the water on the Big Staithe
- To resurface the area exposed by the brambles to create a picnic area
- To create a pedestrian access to the area
- To re-establish the overgrown footpath from Dunkirk
**Spratts Green**
Spratts Green is an area of common land to the east of the A140. The Town Council undertook work to this land in the mid-1990’s. There is some question as to the ownership of the land and the continued common right access which is currently being investigated.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To research the ownership of the land
- To work to retain access to the land

**Small Areas of Open Space**
When development has taken place this has resulted in small areas of open space which are either too small for play equipment or not suitable. These areas have limited use but provide a welcome break within the developments. The Town Council look after these areas cutting the grass regularly and providing an annual maintenance of the shrubbery. The Town Council requests that residents advise them of any issues with regard to these areas of land.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To maintain the areas in their current state
- To respond to requests from residents

**Trees**
The Town Council are responsible for many trees within the town. In 2015 a full tree survey was undertaken and all urgent work identified was undertaken. One area that has proved an issue is the avenue of trees on Henry Page Road. These trees were planted as part of the planning condition when the Norfolk Homes estate was built. The Town Council has a responsibility to ensure that these conditions are adhered to.

It has been noted that some residents have taken action on the trees reducing them to virtual stumps and going against the conditions described above. In 2015 the Town Council pruned this section of trees that were either not growing, were too dense or too close to properties. The remaining trees were retained as part of the tree survey. In December 2015 the Town Council resolved that any further unapproved action to trees would be considered as criminal damage and would take action accordingly.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To regularly have the trees inspected by a tree specialist
- To take action from that report
- To advise all residents why the trees are in place
- To take action on any work not approved by the Town Council
BURIAL AREAS

CLOSED CHURCHYARD
The cemetery at St Michaels Church was closed for burials in the 1850's. The Town Council have maintained the area for several years but the land remains in the ownership of the church. Over the last year there has been much discussion as to whether the Town Council should be responsible for the maintenance of the land. The extent of the maintenance responsibilities is still to be clarified and hopefully a final decision will be made in 2016. In the meantime, the Town Council continues to maintain the land.
It is noted that the footway and roadway within the church area is in need of repair. It is also understood that the small retaining walls are also in need of maintenance.

Town Council Commitments
- To agree the maintenance responsibilities
- To regularly inspect the gravestones

CEMETERY
The cemetery on Norwich Road was created in the 1850's following the closure of the churchyard at St Michaels Church. The cemetery is made up of three areas. The front is the old area initially used when the cemetery was opened. At the rear to the right of the drive is the current burial area which contains both consecrated and non-consecrated areas. The third area is currently used as allotments and will be used for burial land when the remaining areas are full.
In 2015 the Town Council took action to clear some areas of the cemetery. We also created some areas for composting and storing consecrated earth. More work is planned for 2016.

Town Council Commitments
- To review the cemetery rules and regulations
- To enforce the rules and regulations more vigorously
- To clear the remaining overgrown land at the rear of the cemetery
Cemetery Cottage
The Town Council owns Cemetery Cottage located at the entrance of the Cemetery which is leased on a long-term lease.

Town Council Commitments
• To undertake maintenance as required

Paupers Graveyard
There is an area of land on the St Michaels estate backing onto Sapwell Close that was used as a paupers graveyard when the former hospital was a workhouse. The land here is consecrated and cannot therefore be built on. The land was purchased by the developers when the old hospital site was sold. To date the developers have not indicated what will happen to the ownership of this land. The Town Council have approached them regarding this as the other open space in the area will be transferred to the Town Council.

Town Council Commitments
• To establish the ownership of the land and request the land be transferred to the Town Council
• To work with Aylsham In Bloom and the Aylsham Historical Society to recognise the land and provide information
**TOWN CENTRE**

**MARKET PLACE**
The Market Place is owned by the National Trust and is leased to the Town Council. The area was subject to a re-organisation in 2011 when the bus route was changed slightly. There is parking for approximately 30 cars which is limited by a traffic regulation order to two hours, however this is constantly abused and cars are regularly parked for periods way in excess of this. A parking warden visits the town occasionally. Many cars also park on the double yellow lines 'as they are not going to be long' which can cause traffic issues. When the markets are held the parking ability is removed.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To regularly review the Market Place traffic regulations
- To continue to press Norfolk County Council for more signage to advertise the parking restrictions

**GENERAL MARKETS**
General Markets are held on Mondays and Fridays (excluding Bank Holidays). There are also two semi-permanent stalls located in the area in front of the Town Hall. The markets set up from 7am and most stalls are removed by 3pm although the rules allow them to remain until 6pm.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To continue to hold two markets a week
- To close the Market Place to protect the stallholders from cars trying to park
- To promote the markets wherever possible
- To ensure all traders meet the requirements detailed in our market rules
- To regularly communicate with the traders

**FARMERS MARKETS**
In 2004 the Town Council instigated a Farmers Market – one of the first in Norfolk. This is held on the first Saturday of every month (not always held in January). Some years later a second market was introduced but this finished in December 2015. The Farmers Market has provided a launching pad for many small producers who have since grown their business with local suppliers and have outgrown the market. Luckily new suppliers are still coming forward. The Farmers Market requires the producers to have a direct link to the produce they sell. In 2016 we will look at extending the stalls available to make use of the Town Hall for very small producers.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To continue to hold a monthly market
- To promote the market as widely as possible
- To look at growing the market using the Town Hall for smaller producers
• To regularly communicate with the traders
• To have a Town Council presence at the market

**Craft Markets**
Craft Markets are held 3-4 times a year in the Town Hall. In 2016 with the closure of the third Saturday Farmers Market we will review these to see how they can be integrated with producers

**Town Council Commitments**
- To continue to hold Craft Markets
- To review the frequency and make-up of the markets

**Collectors Fairs**
Until April 2015 regular Collectors Fairs were managed by a private individual. These are held on Mondays in the Town Hall about 30 times a year. From April 2015 the Cittaslow Events Committee has taken over the management of these. The profit from these fairs will be used to off-set costs for large events organised by the Town Council.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To continue to hold the fairs
- To use the surplus funds for town events

**Christmas Lights**
The Town Council is very grateful for the work of the Christmas Lights Committee and the fantastic display they provide each year. Over the last few years many of the lights have been replaced by LED’s which both look better and cost less. The Town Council offers support to the committee through a small budget allocation, undertaking all purchasing and accounting, storage and venue. In return the Christmas Lights Committee undertake the decorating of the inside of the Town hall

**Town Council Commitments**
- To continue allocating funds in the budget
- To continue to provide staffing support and storage
- To work with the committee to update lights and decorations within the funds available

**Public Toilets**
The Town Council own and manage the public toilets located in The Loke next to the Town Hall which are well used. These toilets were rebuilt in 2008 and now require some further work. Complaints are regularly received and these need to be reduced. The flushing mechanisms can prove problematic for some people leading to blockages and an unkempt look. Some of the toilet pans have high levels of lime scale and the chosen flooring often
looks unclean and remains wet long after washing. In 2016/17 extra funding will be allocated to try and rectify some if not all of these faults.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To refurbish the toilets to meet user’s expectations
- To continue to clean daily
- To undertake regular inspections and rectify problems during the day

23 **MARKET PLACE**
The Town Council owns 23 Market Place which is the offices of William H Brown this is leased on a long-term lease.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To undertake maintenance as required

**EMPTY BUILDINGS**
Unfortunately, Aylsham has a number of significant buildings which are currently empty. These include The Old Post Office and Clarke’s shop in the Market Place, Aegel House and the Aylsham Bath and Door site on Burgh Road and the Old Police Station on Gas House Hill. There is little direct action that the Town Council can take with regard to these buildings. However, the Town Council does regularly correspond with the District Council on actions they can take. The Town Council are aware that there is often rumours as to what is happening with these buildings. Sometimes these rumours are accurate other times they are very wide of the mark! To try and keep residents informed details will be placed on the Town Council website as to the latest news for these sites.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To provide a page on the website with details on the sites
- To continue to put pressure on Broadland to take action where appropriate

**CHURCH CLOCK**
The clock located on the tower of St Michael’s Church is the responsibility of the Town Council.

**Town Council Commitments**
- To ensure this is maintained and repaired when required.
COMMUNICATION

TOWN COUNCIL WEBSITE
The Town Council website www.aylsham-tc.gov.uk lists details of councillors, policies, meeting agendas and minutes and information on services and latest news. Every effort is made to keep this as current as possible.

Town Council Commitments
- To ensure the website is reviewed in detail annually
- To update the website as soon as practicable

NOTICE BOARDS
Although many people get their information electronically there is still a need – and for the Town Council a legal requirement – for published information available via noticeboards. At the moment the Town council has one noticeboard in the town centre on the Town Hall wall. This was replaced in 2015 to incorporate the defibrillator. The Town Council feel there is a need for more notice boards and will look to place boards in public areas in the residential areas.

Town Council Commitments
- To continue to use printed information for residents
- To assess areas where new noticeboards may be placed
- To look at potential funding streams for noticeboards
- To liaise with the developers of Bure Meadows and The Willows to provide notice boards.

BLOG/E-UPDATES
The clerk provides a clerks report for each Town Council meeting and draft minutes of the meeting are available two weeks after the meeting. It has been suggested that a regular blog may also be something to consider. This could be e-mailed to all residents (and non-residents) who sign up to a mailing list. This would allow information to be passed on more quickly and could also include information that would not necessarily go to the Town Council e.g. temporary road closures

Town Council Commitments
- To consider the creation of a blog should staffing time permit

SOCIAL MEDIA
The growth of social media for communicating has grown very quickly over the last few years. The Town Council does have a twitter account (@aylshamclerk) but currently does not have a presence on Facebook. The Town Council also has an account with the local social media platform StreetLife.
Town Council Commitment

- To continue to grow our social media presence
- To tweet on Council activities and/or news as appropriate
- To not get into long debates via social media but continue to use more private methods of communication
- To adhere to the social media policy adopted by the Town Council

AYLSHAM APP

One of the major areas of growth in recent years has been the development of mobile apps. A mobile app is a computer program which is designed to run on smart phones. More and more cities and tourist attractions throughout the world have created or are creating an app to enhance the visitor experience to their town or facility. Aylsham will be joining this group

ABEF have commissioned a local company to develop an app to promote various aspects of the town and in particular the businesses in the town. To assist with the development of this app the Town Council awarded a grant of £500.

The app should be widely available from the summer of 2016.

Town Council Commitment

- To promote the app as widely as possible
- To ensure details regarding the Town Council are accurate
OTHER ACTIVITIES

EVENTS
The Town Council has often organised one-off large scale events. Recent activities include the Olympic Torch Relay and the Diamond Jubilee Street Party. The events are usually organised via the Events Committee, this committee is open to all and new volunteers are always welcome. As well as the one-off events the committee organises two large events each year; the summer fete and the Christmas Light Switch-on event. The Christmas Lights event has steadily grown over recent years and is now a well-established and greatly anticipated event where most businesses and local organisations take part. This is held on the last Friday in November. The event does mean street closures but every effort is made to keep the roads closed for the minimum time possible so please be patient and understanding. The summer event was not held in 2015 but will return in 2016. Recent events have been victims of appalling weather but as the event is overdue sunshine hopefully 2016 will see a change of fortunes!

Town Council Commitments
• To continue to organise the summer event
• To continue to organise the Christmas Lights switch on event
• To consider organising one-off celebratory events at either no-cost or minimum cost

RECYCLING
The Town Council has a series of recycling banks located in the car park of the Bure Valley Railway. The Town Council receives income from recycled glass which is used to provide grants to local organisations. Following the changes in waste collection in October 2014 less glass is collected in the bottle banks as many people use their own recycling bins. This has led to a drop in income and will eventually lead to a reduction in the grants available. The Town Council encourages residents to still use the bottlebanks if possible.

Town Council Commitments
• To continue to provide bottle banks for recycling
• To use any recycling credits received to fund grants to local organisations within the terms of the grant making policy
• To encourage residents to use the bottlebanks as opposed to the grey recycling bins

ARCHIVES AND HERITAGE CENTRE
The Town Council has a substantial amount of archive materials. These range from minutes of meetings, letters, photographs, maps etc. Any item that is particularly delicate will be examined with a view to sending it to the Norfolk Records Office. The archives are managed by the Hon. Archivist and are located at the Town Hall. They are available for public use and are open on Tuesdays – please ring the Town Council to check times.
**Town Council Commitments**

- To continue to retain and record archive material relating to the town and its surrounding
- To store the items in the best possible manner which includes removal for expert storage at the Records Office
- To continue to provide material free of charge for the public and at cost to businesses/writers etc.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

As part of the Localism Act 2011 Town and Parish Councils can create a Neighbourhood Plan detailing very local requirements in relation to planning. Once approved the document is considered material evidence when dealing with planning applications. Aylsham Town Council started a neighbourhood plan but unfortunately progress on this has stalled. It is the Town Council’s intention to resurrect this and complete a plan for adoption.

The vision and aims of the Neighbourhood Plan have been agreed as follows:

**Aylsham Neighbourhood Plan**

**Agreed Vision**

Aylsham is a market town that is known for its independent nature, the individuality of its layout and its strong historical elements. The vision for the future is to retain this uniqueness and build on its excellent location being a short distance from the coast, the city of Norwich, the Norfolk Broads and the beautiful rural countryside of Norfolk. The town has a strong sense of community which it is important to retain whilst ensuring that all new developments become an integral part of the town.

**Aims and Objectives**

To develop the opportunity to have sustainable employment in the town
To expand the variety of leisure activities in the town
To be aware there will be further pressure for additional large scale development in the town

**Town Council Commitments**

- To revisit the work on the Neighbourhood Plan
- To encourage more residents to join the working group
- To consult at all stages whilst compiling the plan
- To complete the plan prior to referendum by March 2017
- To have the plan in place by September 2017
### SUMMARY ACTION PLAN

The summary below shows only new projects/initiatives that will start in the next three years. On-going activities as listed in the current activities are not included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2016/17 Description</th>
<th>2017/18 Description</th>
<th>2018/19 Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>To commission a full structural survey of the Town Hall to discuss and, where possible, address any urgent items highlighted by the report</td>
<td>Formulate a Business Plan for the future of the Town Hall Investigate funding options for any substantial work to the Town Hall</td>
<td>Start and depending on scale finish any refurbishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill Hall</td>
<td>To secure the Drill Hall for community use by either purchase or long-term lease</td>
<td>If Drill Hall is purchased to complete a Business Plan for its future including any upgrading required</td>
<td>To seek any funding necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>Establish the two new allotment sites to be received from the new developments</td>
<td>Consider establishing a community orchard to use all allotment sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aylsham Recreation Ground</td>
<td>To establish new working agreement between Town Council and Recreation Ground Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street Lights</td>
<td>To undertake a review of all street lights owned by the Town council</td>
<td>To undertake any work rising from the review</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To undertake meetings with residents to discuss the proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus Shelters</td>
<td>To consider additional locations for bus shelters</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Staithes</td>
<td>To clear all brambles from the Large Staith. To develop a plan for the future use of the</td>
<td>To obtain any necessary planning permission. To create picnic area</td>
<td>To re-establish the overgrown footpath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closed Churchyard</td>
<td>Establish the areas of responsibility for the closed churchyard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>Fully review the cemetery rules and regulations. Clear the remaining overgrown area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish grass area where brambles etc have been cleared</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paupers Graveyard</td>
<td>Establish Ownership of land</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work with aylsham In Bloom and Aylsham Historical Society to agree a plan for the area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complete all work proposed including any signage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Toilets</td>
<td>To agree changes required in the public toilets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To replace flushing mechanisms and toilets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To change the floor surface</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notice Boards</td>
<td>To agree new sites for additional noticeboards.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To look at funding sources for noticeboards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To install new notice boards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To liaise with developers to provide notice boards at Willow Park and Bure Meadows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>To consider implementation of a regular blog detailing Town council news</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Plan</td>
<td>To complete the plan prior to referendum by March 2017</td>
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