



Ashby de la Zouch Town Council Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023

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[Office opens to the public from 8.30am to 1.00pm Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays]



1. Forward.

Welcome to Ashby de la Zouch Town Council Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023. The following plan will be revised annually and is developed to provide an overview of how Ashby de la Zouch Town Council will use its available resources over the next four years to ensure successful delivery of its key priorities and its statutory obligations.

Every business has to plan for the future and improve its service to its customers. Ashby de la Zouch Town Council is no exception. Our plan sets out our vision for the town and what we aim to achieve in the next four years.

The corporate plan helps to ensure that the Town Council can take a planned and consistent approach to:

- The design and delivery of services;
- The prioritisation and allocation of resources;
- The achievement of value for money.

All plans need to be flexible. We need to be able to re-act to changing national and local circumstances as the need arises. The plan, therefore, will need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis over its lifetime.

The Town Council is committed to improving the level and efficiency of its services over the next four years. Services will be reviewed to ensure that the Town Council can provide its core service. Priorities are assessed by identifying needs by consulting residents and working directly with the community to identify various needs.

If you wish to comment on this document please do so. Your views are extremely important to the Town Council. Details of how to comment are included at the end of the document.

2. Executive Summary.

The aim of the Corporate Plan is to give residents of, business of and visitors to Ashby de la Zouch a clear understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver its aims and objectives.

The plan sets out what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next four years and in doing this, the document will outline those areas that are not identified as priority aims and objectives as there may well be other public sector bodies better placed to deliver these areas of service.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council is committed to improving and enhancing the parish in an environmentally sustainable manner, having regard to the identified needs and wishes of all sections of the community. The Town Council will examine in detail its responsibilities, review them and set a viable and achievable development plan for the future.

In order to achieve a better quality of life for residents in Ashby it is important to work with external partners. The Town Council is committed to:

- Developing its relationship with North West Leicestershire District Council and Leicestershire County Council;
- Developing its relationship with local organisations and groups;
- Developing its relationship with the businesses in Ashby;
- Develop partnerships with local service providers.

The document sets out the Town Council's vision and its corporate priorities which are to represent residents, businesses and community groups in the town on key strategic issues facing the parish and community.

3. Overview of Ashby de la Zouch.

Ashby de la Zouch is a historic market town of 13,689 people (2011 census) and an electorate of 12,248 (2019) at the heart of the National Forest and on the borders of Leicestershire and Derbyshire. The parish includes the village of Blackfordby and the hamlet of Shellbrook.

Ashby de la Zouch has a vibrant daytime and evening town centre that forms the heart of the local community by providing the principal focus for the town's economic, social and leisure activities. The wide range of specialist shops, ancient castle and broad Market Street give Ashby its unique character. It is set within attractive countryside and sits at the heart of the National Forest, it is the only town on the National Forest Way, a long-distance walking trail and has the Ivanhoe Way running through the town. New National Forest plantations can be found in the extensive countryside that surrounds the town. Residents have easy access to public footpaths and cycle trails, for example at the Hicks Lodge cycle centre, there is a popular golf club and a wide range of other sporting facilities and clubs. Within the Town Centre there are tracts of attractive green spaces at the Bath Grounds, Hood Park and Western Park.

Ashby stands at the intersection of the roads between Nottingham and Tamworth/ Birmingham (A42) and between Leicester and Burton upon Trent (A511). These provide easy access to the major cities in the East and West Midlands, leading to many of the town's residents commuting to work around the Midlands and beyond. Although the railway station still exists within the town the railway that connected Ashby with Leicester and Burton upon Trent closed for passenger transport in 1964. The line still carries freight traffic.

Employment in the town has changed in recent years with significant manufacturing employers like Arla Dairy and the Soap Factory closing. However, the two significant industrial estates, Ashby Park and Ivanhoe Business Park have been expanding.

The first documented record of the town is in the Domesday Book of 1086/87 and the town takes the second part of its name from the La Zouch family who held the castle and manor from circa 1160 to 1399. During the medieval period Ashby Castle was one of the chief influences on the town's development. The castle was slighted (partial demolition) by parliamentary troops in March 1646. The appearance of the town's Conservation Area is predominantly Georgian/ early Victorian townscape. However, many buildings contain medieval structures. Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area was first designated in November 1972.

The town has experienced significant growth in recent years with planning permission for 2508 dwellings being granted since 2003. The attractiveness and location of the town means developers can achieve higher prices for properties in Ashby than in neighbouring towns. Average property prices within the Ashby LE65 postcode area are £312,542 compared with £230,742 in the Coalville LE67 postcode area, £245,709 in the Castle Donington postcode area and £176,505 in the Swadlincote DE11 postcode area ('Zoopla' Nov 2020).

A review of 2011 census data (the latest available) shows that:

- There is a high level of home ownership (70.8%), but this is lower than the average in the District (72.5%).
- There is a larger proportion of detached properties (42.6%) than on average in the District, regionally and in England (22.4% in England) and fewer terraced properties (14.9%).
- There are more four- and five- bedroom properties (30.4%) than in the District, region and in England (19% in England).
- There is a high level of car ownership 43.9% of households having two or more cars.
- 49.4% of households are not deprived in any dimension, compared with 46.2% in the District and 42.6% nationally.
- The proportion of residents aged 16-64 (61.9%) is lower than the proportion in the District, region or England (64.8% in England).
- The majority of residents enjoy good health (82.5%).
- Educational attainment is high with 33.8% of residents over 16 having a level 4 qualification or above, this compares with 27.4% in England.

4. Overview of Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.

The Local Government Act 1894 created Ashby Urban District Council which was in existence until 1974 when local government re-organisation, following the 1972 Local Government Act, created Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.

- The Town Council is made up of 17 Councillors who are elected every four years. The next election is in May 2023. Six members of the current Town Council also serve as District Councillors and three of those, in addition, are County Councillors, one of whom is the current Leader of Leicestershire County Council;
- The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are elected by the Town Council every year;
- There are five standing Committees of the Town Council: Finance & Administration; Parks & Cemetery; Events & Tourism; Planning & Transportation; and, Licensing;
- Full Council and Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber in Legion House and are open to the public. There is a public participation session at each meeting;
- The Town Council employs a qualified Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and other administrative and grounds maintenance staff as necessary;
- The Town Council has been awarded the Local Council Award Scheme Quality Gold, the first Town Council in Leicestershire to receive it, and it was the first council in Leicestershire to meet the eligibility criteria for the 'General Power of Competence';
- The Town Council has also been successful in its application for Purple Flag which demonstrates a commitment to raising the standard of, and broadening the appeal of, the night time economy within the town;
- More recently the Town Council was awarded Green Flag status for its work on Ashby Bath Grounds.

The Town Council as a corporate body makes decisions which are in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and current legislation. Town Councillors have a number of responsibilities including making key policy decisions, agreeing the annual budget and precept for the financial year ahead and monitoring the performance of all Town Council services throughout the year.

The Town Council is funded entirely by the residents of the parish of Ashby de la Zouch through the 'precept' which is part of the Council Tax charge. Additional income is generated through various services provided by the Town Council including the cemetery, Legion House and its sports facilities.

The precept for 2020/21 was £484,881.58. This equates to £81.74 per Council Tax D Band household. The precept for the financial year 2021/22 has been set at £514,808.34 which is a 5% increase over the previous financial year. This represents £85.83 for a Band D property – an increase of £4.09 per year of 8p per week.

The Town Council's total budgeted expenditure for 2021/22 is £634,800.00 with an income projection of £575,358.34. The Town Council has a General Reserve of £136,101.35 and "earmarked" reserves of £52,213.17 as at 31st March 2020.

Supporting the Town Council is a staffing structure that is employed to help to deliver services and ensure that all decisions are carried out. The staff structure is headed by the Clerk to the Town Council and 'Proper Officer' who also acts as Responsible Financial Officer. The Town Clerk is supported by the Deputy Town Clerk, the Town Centre Manager, Administrative Assistant, Grounds Maintenance Staff and Legion House Caretaker.

5. Ashby de la Zouch Town Council's Vision.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council serves the local community by providing a range of services to its local residents.

Our mission statement.

Ashby de la Zouch is a prosperous, attractive and historic market town at the heart of the National Forest. Our vision is to build on that uniqueness and create a town that meets the needs of local people whilst making the most of its special qualities to attract visitors and shoppers from further afield.

This will be achieved by creating a safe, clean, accessible and attractive town in which people can shop, work, live and pursue their leisure activities. The town should offer something for everyone regardless of their age, lifestyle or status.

Our vision for the town.

- A historic market town with heritage appearance protected and a clear separation between it and neighbouring villages.
- A tourist destination with a wide range of accommodation, restaurants, attractions and events.
- Industrial diversity with a mixed employment base.
- A robust infrastructure which meets the needs of residents and reduces the need to travel to neighbouring towns.
- Well used and accessible public open spaces across the town.
- An economically thriving and diverse town centre shopping experience which meets the day to day needs of residents.
- A functional transport infrastructure which effectively manages traffic flows and supports the use of public transport and cycling and walking.
- A balanced night time economy which attracts all ages in to a town centre where they feel safe.
- A wide range of housing provision that meets the needs of the whole of the community. Including affordable housing and town centre living.
- A clear sense of community identity, with an active voluntary sector and a range of community groups and facilities.

6. Ashby de la Zouch Town Council's Corporate Priorities and Key Objectives.

The purpose of the Town Council is to improve community well-being and provide better services at a local level which will improve the quality of life of the residents of Ashby de la Zouch. Its activities fall into three main categories:

- **We represent the local community:**

- The Town Council considers every planning and licensing application made in the parish;

- It debates highways (e.g. road safety schemes) and transportation matters (e.g. location of bus stops), rights of way changes and on street naming;
- It sends representatives to outside bodies such as the New Albion Liaison Committee, the Ashby de la Zouch Museum, the Ashby de la Zouch Educational Foundation, the Lount Landfill Liaison Committee, the Willesley Tenants and Residents Association and many others;
- It supports initiatives within the town (for example, on the Money Hill Master Plan);
- The Town Council worked with the community to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the town. This was passed by referendum in November 2018;
- The Town Council has initiated the process which will lead to the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the village of Blackfordby;
- It sends representatives to the District and County Councils;
- It works with the police on law and order and local schools to reduce anti-social behaviour;
- The Town Council supports the civic duties and responsibilities of the Town Mayor;
- It supports the democratic process by holding meetings, Councillor surgeries, elections, providing polling stations and supplying information to members of the public.

- **We deliver services to meet local needs:**

- The Town Council supports and encourages the arts and crafts;
- It provides and maintains the town cemetery and burial records;
- It maintains the St. Helen's and Holy Trinity 'closed' churchyards;
- The Town Council clears the water courses at Willesley Recreation Ground, Leicester Road estate, Fairfax Close and part of the Giliwiskaw Brook and Coleorton Brook;
- It controls litter;
- It maintains war memorials on Market Street, St. Helen's Churchyard and in Blackfordby;
- It provides and maintains street furniture: benches, bins, information boards, finger posts, litter bins;
- It maintains and updates the town website and social media outlets;
- It grits footpaths in the town centre as part of the 'snow warden scheme' and provides grit bins at critical points around the town;
- It supports and sponsors Ashby de la Zouch Museum;
- It provides Legion House as a facility for use by community and voluntary groups;
- It provides financial support grants of up to a total of £12,000 annually to community and voluntary groups in the town.

- **We improve the quality of life and community well-being:**

- The Town Council is responsible for 95 acres of recreation grounds, parks and playing fields,
- It provides and maintains sports pitches and pavilions on Western Park, the Bath Grounds, Westfields Recreation Ground, Hood Park, Willesley Recreation Ground and in Blackfordby;

- It maintains 16 children's play areas and the skate park on Hood Park;
- It encourages tourism and business;
- It provides allotment gardens at Wilfred Gardens;
- It provides Christmas trees and lights in the town centre of Ashby and in Blackfordby;
- It provides seasonal floral decorations;
- It organises, in partnership with the Royal British Legion, the annual Remembrance Day Parade and Armistice Day service;
- It organises other events for the town such as Jim's Tractor Run & Family Fun Day and the Christmas Market;
- It supports events and markets organised by the community throughout the year;
- It maintains the heritage of the town including the Loudoun Memorial and other listed structures;
- It maintains the tree stock of more than 1,000 trees on Town Council owned land;
- It encourages and supports residents' and tenants' associations across Ashby and Blackfordby.

Our plan 2019 – 2023.

Community Engagement.

The first Corporate Plan of the Town Council for the period 2015 – 2019 and the objectives within it, were developed following extensive public consultation as part of the Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan community engagement strategy. This public consultation formed the framework within which the Corporate Plan for the Town Council was developed. The responses from the public were sifted, distilled down and prioritised into the specific actions which form the basis of the previous, and this, Corporate Plan.

The latest Town Council elections were held on Thursday 2nd May 2019. All 17 seats were contested by one candidate from the two main political parties. The controlling group won 15 out of the 17 seats available on the Town Council. It received 56% of the popular vote on a turnout of 36.64%. One Labour Party candidate and one independent candidate were returned.

The manifesto priorities of the controlling group were to:

- Continue to keep our share of Council Tax as low as possible;
- Complete the purchase of the entire Bath Grounds as soon as possible;
- Do everything we can to get the Royal Hotel re-opened;
- Ensure our voice is heard and our Neighbourhood Plan is taken into account in planning matters;
- Continue to develop our popular programme of events;
- Continue to maintain and improve our parks and cemetery;
- Continue to hold regular council surgeries for residents.

A more recent public consultation exercise took place on the increase in the Town Council's precept. In accordance with the manifesto pledge the Town Council proposes to purchase the Bath Grounds, which is a large open space of around 14 acres in the centre of the town. In order to service the loan repayments to be able to do so, an increase in the precept is required. A public consultation on the proposed precept increase is part of the process of applying for a loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB).

The PWLB guidance states that: ***"Evidence of the public support to increase the precept to cover the loan repayment (the results of any consultation) and details of how local residents were consulted about the proposed purchase and the associated borrowing (newsletter/website/agenda of public meeting) will be required to support the application."***

It is also a requirement of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that everyone in the parish must have the opportunity to respond. An on-line survey only is not acceptable. As the 'Ashby Life' and the 'Ashby Times' had been out of print due to the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020, the Town Council would not have been able to reach every household in the parish without a very expensive (and probably impracticable) leafleting campaign and, therefore, would not have been able to satisfy the MHCLG on this point. 'Ashby Life' is a free magazine which is delivered to every household within the parish of Ashby de la Zouch.

The Town Clerk liaised closely with the editor of the magazine over timing. It was decided to wait until 'Ashby Life' was back in print in July 2020 at the end of the first lockdown before proceeding with the public ballot. The 'Ashby Times' did not re-appear in print until August 6/7th.

The question put to the public was as follows:

"Are you in favour of Ashby de la Zouch Town Council proceeding with the purchase of the freehold of the Bath Grounds if it includes a council tax precept increase of 5% which is the equivalent of an additional £3.89 a year for the purpose of the annual loan repayments?"

The public consultation period, therefore, took place during the month of July 2020. The 'SurveyMonkey' on-line consultation went live on Thursday 25th June and ran until close of business on Friday 31st July 2020. 'Ashby Life' was distributed to all households within the parish over the weekend of 27/28th June. A clear deadline of 4.00pm on Friday 31st July was imposed upon both voting methods.

The results of the consultation on 'SurveyMonkey' were as follows: 1,206 votes "Yes" (95%) and 60 votes "No" (5%). The results from the receipt of voting slips published in 'Ashby Life' and from e-mails received at the Town Council office were as follows: 181 votes "Yes" (98%) and 4 votes "No" (2%).

The overall result was, therefore, 1,387 votes “Yes” (96%) and 64 votes “No” (4%). The number of votes cast represents approximately 12% of the electorate of the parish.

The results of the public consultation within the parish were overwhelmingly in support, therefore, of the Town Council’s proposed precept increase of 5% to service the loan repayments to the PWLB in the sum of £630,000.00 to be repaid over 50 years in order to facilitate the planned purchase of the freehold to the Bath Grounds from Oakland Hotels Ltd (or its successors in title). Negotiations are continuing on the proposed purchase of the Grounds and the increase in the precept has been implemented for the financial year 2021/22.

6.1 Improving our Parks & Open Spaces.

- We will work with partners to ensure Ashby’s open and green spaces, street trees and woodland are protected, maintained and safeguarded for the future;
- We will continue to negotiate the transfer of the ownership of the Bath Grounds to the Town Council;
- We will work with Ashby Hastings Cricket Club & Ashby Bowls Clubs to provide a new lease and to progress grant applications to enable enhanced facilities i.e. new pavilions;
- We will complete the refurbishment of the roadways at the town cemetery; we will also replace the damaged garage at the cemetery and instigate memorial testing as appropriate;
- We will install new/replacement benches and bins where required;
- We will explore the options for the re-roofing or the complete replacement of the community cabin on Willesley Recreation Ground;
- We will resurface the car park area at Willesley Recreation Ground;
- We will complete the process of the adoption of land at the former soap factory site and Leicester Road development and other new developments as they are constructed;
- We will work with the land owner to complete the transfer of land to the Town Council of open space at Trinity Close;
- We will improve the access road into Western Park from Avenue Road and complete the pathway from the car park to Packington Nook Lane;
- We will develop a management plan for the Bath Grounds to facilitate a possible Green Flag application in 2020;
- We will initiate a project to refurbish and reorder the Hood Park play hub;
- We will explore possible uses for Prior Park Road field;
- We will re-align our tree inspection regime in the light of the decision in the case of Cavanagh v Whitley Parish Council;
- We will regularly clean play equipment to remove algae and offensive graffiti.

6.2 Enhancing our Town Centre.

- We will work with other agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve safety;
- We will negotiate a new Christmas light scheme for 2021;
- We will apply for Purple Flag re-accreditation August 2019 and 2021;
- We will develop the existing good relationship with businesses in Ashby and the Ashby Town Centre Traders group by working together to promote and enhance the economic vibrancy in the town;
- We will maintain Market Street's vibrancy: traditional retail is shrinking fast and will continue to do so, so we will encourage the "day time economy" by exploring options for the future of the town centre;
- We will enhance our floral displays and 'green' the town centre;
- We will work with stakeholders to develop and define the concept of Ashby as a "Forest Town" and as the only town on the National Forest Way;
- We will encourage climate change reduction initiatives including the reduction in the use of plastic bags with the support of "Bag for Life", "green tourism" and becoming a water refill scheme;
- We will initiate a marketing campaign to encourage tourism and destination management;
- We will use the free guest town centre Wi-Fi effectively to gather footfall data & utilise features such as messages to the public for the marketing & promotion of the town;
- We will enter for recognised national and local award status (e.g. Great British High Street) where appropriate;
- We will consider the options for introducing park & ride for key events;
- We will work with appropriate stakeholders and agencies to monitor and reduce noise and air pollution in and around the town centre;
- We will support an initiative to introduce a community bus service;
- We will support local traders in undertaking a feasibility study for the possibility of progressing a Business Improvement District (B.I.D.) for the town;
- We will confirm, develop and enhance the role of the town centre manager.

6.3 The future shape of the town.

- We will maintain vigilance on housing numbers and major planning applications;
- We will progress the Blackfordby Neighbourhood Plan to referendum;
- We will work with the District Council and County Council to improve car parking and reduce congestion in the town centre;
- We will continue to monitor the HS2 project and comment upon it as necessary;
- We will work to improve public transport and reduce road congestion in Ashby;
- We will work with relevant partners to promote cycle routes and pedestrian access as a sustainable and healthy form of transport;

- We will implement the walking and cycling strategy for the town, including “Walkers are Welcome”;
- We will work with the National Forest Company to develop Hicks Lodge as "Ashby's Cycle Centre" [assuming Willesley footpath finally gets the go-ahead, apply to make the connection to Hicks Lodge a bridleway, secure funding to improve the surface and get it signposted];
- We will work with the District Council and the developers on the Money Hill Master Plan;
- We will work with Oakland Hotels Ltd (or its successors) to secure the future of the Royal Hotel building, preferably as a thriving hotel;
- We will work with the Money Hill consortium and other stakeholders to explore the opportunities for a Community Centre and additional sports facilities on the proposed site or on other suitable land in or around the town;
- We will encourage, support and promote volunteer organisations and charities within Ashby for the benefit of the town and act as a dependable signposting centre;
- We will comment upon the Local Plan Review and other strategic planning documents which may impact upon the town;
- We will work with partners, including the Ashby Civic Society, to protect the heritage and character of Ashby, ensuring conservation areas, buildings, developments, modifications and materials are in keeping with the town.

6.4 Being more effective in our governance and administration.

- We will continue our dialogue with the principal authorities for the possible transfer of assets and the delegation of services to the Town Council that are in the town’s best interests;
- We will support the initiative for local government re-organisation in the county and for improving service delivery;
- We will produce a paper identifying Town Council assets and council activities that may benefit from climate change scrutiny, outlining where improvements can be made to commit the Town Council to support a climate change strategy and policy;
- We will continue to improve our use of social media;
- We will continue to explore opportunities to be more cost effective in everything we do;
- We will continue with our programme of improvements to Range Road Depot to increase efficiency and reduce costs;
- We will continue to develop the Town Council website and social media presence;
- We will continue to make improvements to Legion House to maximise its use, to reduce its environmental impact and improve its “green” credentials;
- We will negotiate a new lease with the NHS for the ground floor (rear) of Legion House;
- We will develop an emergency response plan for the town;
- We will arrange for one Town Council meeting in each municipal year to be held in the village of Blackfordby;
- We will apply for Local Council Award Scheme Gold Award re-accreditation in April 2021.

6.5 Resourcing Plan 2019 - 2023.

Income.

In order to deliver the plan, the Town Council needs resources. Most of the Town Council's income arises from four main sources:-

- The precept;
- Lettings of facilities at Legion House;
- Fees for services provided by the Town Council such as the cemetery and sports facilities;
- Any capital sums from developers to reflect the costs of maintaining amenity areas and providing playgrounds.

Over the period of the corporate plan the actual and budgeted income for the Town Council is as follows:

Heading	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Precept	441,798.75	484,881.68	514,808.34	540,539.76
Local Council Tax Support grant	12,381.75	6,190.75	0.00	0.00
Legion House lettings	41,496.00	32,000.00	21,000.00	22,000.00
Allotment rents	517.50	500.00	550.00	550.00
Lettings	5,182.00	5,000.00	6,000.00	7,000.00
Events income	2,980.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	2,500.00
Cemetery	36,651.60	16,000.00	27,000.00	27,500.00
Other income	26,356.84	0.00	0.00	0.00
Grants/loans/receipts	95,391.19	56,722.83	0.00	0.00
Commutated sums (developer contributions)	80,878.39	3,839.20	4,000.00	4,500.00
Petty cash extra	287.07	0.00	0.00	0.00
GRAND TOTAL INCOME	743,921.09	607,134.46	575,358.34	604,589.76

The income from our room bookings at Legion House is an important part of the revenue of the Town Council. Unfortunately, Legion House, the Town Council's Headquarters and community hub, was closed to the public from 23rd March 2020 until late September due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Casual hirings of rooms stopped in early March 2020 in anticipation of lock-down rules. Although Legion House re-opened for bookings

on a limited basis with all of the necessary Covid-19 precautions in place for a short-period between lockdowns it remains closed for the foreseeable future. This will have a considerable impact upon the finances of the Town Council.

The fees from the burial ground are reviewed and increased in line with inflation by the Parks & Cemetery Committee in June of each year. The Town Council recognises that the cemetery has benefitted from considerable investment in recent years and we will continue to make some long overdue improvements and changes at the cemetery.

It is extremely difficult to quantify the revenues expected from developers' contributions. These amounts and timings of payment are dependent upon factors wholly outside the control of the Town Council. It will be for the Finance & Tourism Committee and the Parks & Cemetery Committee to determine how best to use those resources for the benefit of the town as a whole.

We will continue to seek grant funding where it is appropriate to do so to assist with the funding of capital projects or to seek match funding for Town Council contributions towards such projects.

Precept demands.

The Town Council's principal source of income continues to be the council tax demand (precept). The Town Council has a very good track record in keeping any precept increases to an absolute minimum.

For the financial year 2021/22 the Town Council has increased the precept by 5%. The revenue generated from this increase will be used principally to service the loan repayments for the proposed purchase of the Bath Grounds and to offset the phased reduction of the Local Council Tax Support Grant from North West Leicestershire District Council. This increase in the precept is the equivalent of 8p per week on a Band D property.

YEAR	PRECEPT £	COUNCIL TAX	TOTAL BUDGET	INCREASE £	TAX BASE	BAND D £	INCREASE £	% +/-
		SUPPORT GRANT £	REQUIREMENT £					
2019/20	441,798.75	12,381.50	454,180.25	8,600.75	5,675	77.85	0.00	0.0
2020/21	484,881.68	6,190.75	491,072.43	36,892.18	5,932	81.74	3.89	5.0
2021/22	514,808.34	0.00	514,808.34	23,735.91	5,998	85.83	4.09	5.0
2022/23	540,539.76	0.00	540,539.76	25,731.42	5,998	90.12	4.29	5.0

Expenditure.

To meet the objectives with the Corporate Plan the main areas of actual and projected expenditure for the Town Council over the period of the plan are as follows:

Committee	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Finance & Administration Committee.				
Salaries	118,008.64	133,000.00	123,000.00	124,000.00
Office Costs	10,032.21	12,450.00	8,900.00	9,500.00
Legal/Financial	39,819.60	29,050.00	29,600.00	30,900.00
Support Grants	23,327.78	19,549.99	17,000.00	17,000.00
Election Costs	8,820.44	3,000.00	0.00	0.00
Legion House loan repayments	23,677.53	23,500.00	23,500.00	23,500.00
Legion House staff costs	23,049.15	24,000.00	25,000.00	26,000.00
Legion House	23,763.56	27,000.00	27,500.00	27,500.00
The Ashby Project	67,666.53	35,659.16	25,000.00	0.00
St. Helen's Churchyard Project	44,422.09	6,548.72	4,500.00	0.00
Petty cash extra	288.96	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Finance & Administration Committee:	382,876.49	313,757.87	284,000.00	258,400.00
Parks & Cemetery Committee.				
Staff costs	141,215.41	139,000.00	153,000.00	154,000.00
Parks supplies	33,428.25	25,550.00	27,050.00	28,050.00
Pavilions repairs & maintenance	4,292.16	3,000.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
Water/rates/power	10,580.07	8,000.00	9,000.00	9,000.00

Machinery & vehicles	40,193.88	27,000.00	27,500.00	28,000.00
Play equipment	1,039.40	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Special projects	80,935.00	26,324.59	30,050.00	35,050.00
Loan re-payments	16,796.64	42,900.00	42,900.00	42,900.00
Range Road Depot	13,453.39	13,000.00	14,500.00	14,500.00
Total Parks & Cemetery Committee:	341,934.20	289,774.59	312,500.00	320,000.00
Planning & Transportation Committee.				
Salt/grit bins	439.84	600.00	600.00	600.00
Neighbourhood Plan	5,510.00	5,000.00	0.00	0.00
Total Planning & Transportation Committee:	5,949.84	5,600.00	600.00	600.00
Events & Tourism Committee.				
Events Programme	21,640.92	24,000.00	18,000.00	18,000.00
Christmas lights	20,600.72	13,000.00	14,000.00	14,500.00
Town Centre initiatives	16,268.21	5,900.00	5,700.00	5,700.00
Total Events & Entertainment Committee:	58,509.85	42,900.00	37,700.00	38,200.00
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURE	789,270.38	652,032.46	634,800.00	617,200.00

Reserves.

The position on the Town Council's reserves is as follows. As at the end of March 2020 the following reserves were held:

General Fund Balance	188,314.52

Earmarked Reserves: -	
Allotment garden reserves	1,913.18
Election costs	0.00
Street furniture reserve	4,000.00
Play provision policy	1,000.00
Receipt of sale of North Close, Blackfordby	22,549.99
solar farm community benefit	22,750.00
sub-total	136,101.35

The Town Council's Internal Auditor (IA) raised two issues in her report dated 24th April 2020. They were:

- The Town Council may wish to consider whether its current level of reserves is sufficient to finance unexpected expenditure or emergencies. Section 5.32 of Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England sets the generally accepted recommendation that a Smaller Authority's General Reserve should be maintained at between 3- and 12-months Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE);
- The Town Council should review its current banking arrangements as it currently holds all of its funds with one banking organisation. The Financial Services Compensation Scheme provides protection for deposits up to £85,000 if an authorised bank or building society fails. The Town Council's balance is substantially over this limit, particularly at the point when the precept is received in two instalments throughout the year.

Level of Reserves.

Section 5.32 of Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (March 2020) sets the generally accepted recommendation that a Smaller Authority's General Reserve should be maintained at between three- and twelve-months NRE.

The full paragraph of the Practitioners Guide reads as follows:

"5.32 General Reserve — The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between three (3) and twelve (12) months Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE). NRE (subject to any planned surplus or deficit) is effectively Precept\Levy less any Loan Repayment and/or amounts included in Precept\Levy for Capital Projects and transfers to Earmarked Reserves. The reason for the wide range (3 to 12 months) is to cater for the large variation in sizes of individual

authorities. The smaller the authority the closer the figure should be to 12 months NRE, the larger the authority the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with an NRE in excess of £200,000 should plan on 3 months equivalent General Reserve. In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a General Reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size and situation and plan their Budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Changes in activity levels/range of services provided will inevitably lead to changes in the requisite minimum level of General Reserve in order to provide working capital for those activities.”

It is assumed that Ashby de la Zouch Town Council falls in the middle of this band and therefore the aim should be to maintain a general reserve at around six months of NRE. The Town Council’s NRE is around £400k (precept minus loan repayments and capital works). If the Town Council wishes to comply with Section 5.32 of the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (March 2020) it should, therefore, be aiming to achieve (and maintain) a general reserve position at or around £200k.

The position on general reserves as at 31st March 2020 was that the Town Council held £136,101.35 on account. The trajectory of the Town Council’s general reserves is an upward trend. Nevertheless, as a result of the IA Report, the Town Council has resolved to have a stated policy to aim for, and then maintain, its general reserve at or around £200k by 31st March 2024 in order to comply with Section 5.32 of the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (March 2020) and the Internal Auditor’s comments.

Banking arrangements: spreading the risk.

Secondly, the IA has suggested in her report that the Town Council should review its current banking arrangements as it currently holds all of its funds with one banking organisation. The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) only provides protection for deposits up to £85,000 if an authorised bank or building society fails. The Town Council’s balance is substantially over this limit, particularly at the point when the precept is received in two instalments throughout the year. The IA has, therefore, suggested that the Town Council should spread its load among a number of banking institutions.

However, the FSCS does not protect deposits made by a public authority (including a parish council), unless it is a small local authority with an annual budget of up to EUR 500,000. The Town Council’s budget is substantially more than euro 500,000 so the Town Council would fall outside scope of the FSCS in any event. The FSCS scheme covers only 'small' local authorities and, therefore, the Town Council is not covered. There will be no compensation if an institution fails.

Although the risk of money being lost by the Town Council as a result of a UK bank failing is very low (Northern Rock collapsed but no-one lost a penny), members were invited to consider spreading the risk by using an investment product designed for local authorities. It is essential to ensure that there is no excessive exposure to any one financial institution which, in the event of that institution’s failure, would result in any unacceptable level of loss for the Town Council.

The recommended investment product is the Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) of the Churches, Charities & Local Authorities (CCLA). The minimum initial investment is just £25,000 so there are a number of parish and town councils making use of the Fund, besides principal authorities. Access is same day. There is an 11:30 cut-off time for instructions. The Fund has exceeded £500m under management with 600+ clients (including 22 County/unitary Councils, 400+ Parish, Town and Community Councils and 100+ District/Borough Councils). The Town Council has agreed to an initial investment of £100k with the CCLA PSDF in order to spread its financial risk. It has also adopted an Investment Policy in accordance with government guidance.

7. How to Comment on this Document.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council would appreciate your views on the content of the Corporate Plan as well as any comments, queries or complaints regarding the services provided by the Town Council. It also welcomes suggestions from all sections of the community regarding further services development or on other issues that are important to the parish that the Town Council may be able to have an impact on.

How we let you know what we have achieved:

- We will publish a quarterly newsletter in 'Ashby Life' to keep you informed of what we are doing;
- We will publish an Annual Report in April summarising our activities;
- We will issue regular press releases to the local media and updates on social media.

If you do wish to comment, or for specific help and advice on matters concerning the Town Council, you can contact us by:

Telephone: 01530 416961

Email: info@ashbytowncouncil.org.uk.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Ashbytowncouncil/

Twitter: @AshbyTCouncil

Website: www.ashbydelazouch.info

Write to: The Town Clerk, Ashby de la Zouch Town Council, Legion House, South Street, Ashby de la Zouch, Leics. LE65 1BQ.

March 2021.