

Aberaeron Town Council Business Plan



2021-2024

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Mayor's Foreword



I am very pleased to be introducing the Aberaeron Town Council Business Plan for the period April 2021 – March 2024.

This document provides a summary of the main aspirations of Aberaeron Town Council for the next three years and outlines key aims and objectives.

Our Business Plan should also give you the confidence that your town is being supported in an efficient, forward thinking and effective way. However, the work of the Town Council is not limited by the aspirations and objectives of its Business Plan. We are always ready to consider new projects, take on new challenges and listen to

your ideas.

The Council understands that community engagement and involvement is key to our success (although the recent Covid-19 pandemic has admittedly made this difficult) and therefore we will welcome your comments and suggestions as we move forward.

Introduction

The Business Plan is a statement of the Town Council's vision for the town, its purpose, values, objectives and key priorities. Our intention is that this is a live working document and not a document that just sits on a shelf.

The aim of the Business Plan is to give Aberaeron's residents a clear understanding of what the Town Council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver this. It details what the Town Council intends to focus on over the next three years. The Business Plan will be used each year to plan activities and set the budget for the coming year.

Having an agreed strategy will provide a framework for the Town Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a consistent and co-ordinated way. The strategic direction for the Business Plan stems from the Aberaeron Place Plan which was developed by the Town Council in 2018. Community engagement was a major part of developing the Place Plan and therefore this Business plan has been largely based on community engagement.

The Plan will help the Council minimise risks as well as justify its budget and actions. It provides a benchmark for reviewing the Council's performance and shows that the Council has planned its activities with care. At the same time, the Business Plan will help the local community to have a better understanding of what the Town Council does.

Community Involvement in the Business Plan process

To ensure that the Business Plan truly represents Aberaeron's best interests, the Town Council will continue to involve the community whenever possible in its planning and decision making.

Monitoring the Business Plan

Evaluating progress against the list of actions will take place at Town Council Planning Working Group meetings as well as monthly Town Council meetings. The Planning Working Group was established in the summer of 2020 to help drive forward work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Every year the Town Council has an Annual Action Plan and the Planning Working Group meets regularly to review Business Plan actions, seeking to understand progress made, where further work is needed and if there are any blockages to progress. They then report to Full Town Council every month.

The whole Business Plan will be reviewed annually to keep the document relevant and up-to-date.

The Town Council

An overview of Aberaeron Town Council

Aberaeron Town Council is a corporate body; it is not a voluntary organisation, or a community group. It is the first tier of local government.

There are two tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities. Aberaeron Town Council is the first and most local tier, with an important role to play in promoting the town, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups within the community.

Ceredigion County Council is the second tier and is responsible for services including car parking, street cleaning, highways relating to both roads and pavements, education, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries, to name but a few.

Aberaeron Town Council has twelve Councillors who are elected every four years. The Town Mayor is elected annually at the Town Council Annual General Meeting held in May, together with the appointment of the Deputy Mayor.

Councillors are unpaid and commit their time to improving Aberaeron and maintaining it as an attractive and sustainable place in which to live, visit and to do business.

Town Council Duties

Duties placed upon the Council are limited. Many of these duties are procedural and include that a Chairman or Mayor must be elected, that all meetings must be given public notice of at least three clear days, and not less than three meetings plus one annual meeting of the Council must be held during a year.

There are some duties relating to functions and these include the fact that Councils must consider the impact of crime and disorder within their decisions.

Town Council Powers

The powers a local Council have are wide and varied. Some of the things a local Council may do include the provision of, or contribution to, a wide range of recreational facilities, tourism schemes, festivals, fetes and the arts, bus shelters, litter bins, footpaths and street cleaning, to name but a few.

Role of the Town Council

Aberaeron Town Council represents the views, needs and wants of the community, acting as the cohesive voice. Councillors have a collective responsibility to listen and respond to constituents.

Whilst Councillors have individual responsibility for the decision-making process, decisions are ratified by the whole Council. In other words, each Councillor has a 1/12th decision

making and voting right. All ratified decisions are recorded within the Council meeting minutes and the Clerk is responsible for their implementation and providing future updates.

The Council is also subject to an annual internal and external audit and has a duty to appoint an Internal Auditor. There is also an obligation for the Council to act with openness and transparency as well as abiding by both the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The role and responsibilities of a local Council are often far above the impressions that members of the public envisage.

Town Council Staff and Management

The Council has one employee. The administration of the Town Council is carried out by a Town Clerk who is appointed by the Council and is also the Council's Responsible Financial Officer.

The Town Clerk must carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's Proper Officer and issue all statutory notifications determined by legislation in particular the Local Government Act 1972.

Vision, Aims and Objectives

The Town Council's Vision for Aberaeron is:

"To embrace change yet retain its cultural heritage and identity as a special place within Ceredigion."

The Town Council's strategic aims for the period of this Business Plan are to:

1. Make the town an attractive place to live.
2. Promote business growth and enhanced employment opportunities.
3. Retain and improve services for the benefit of the town and the wider community.
4. Maintain and promote its cultural heritage and the Welsh Language.
5. Continue to develop Aberaeron as a major tourism destination.

The Town Council's key objectives to help achieve these strategic aims are:

1. To serve those who live, study and work in Aberaeron and those who visit the town.
2. To promote and represent the community's views and aspirations at local, county and national level.
3. To provide high standard, cost-effective services and amenities to help meet the needs and wishes of residents.
4. To work in partnership, or otherwise, with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses and individuals to ensure an improving standard of services and facilities to meet the needs and expectations of Aberaeron's residents.
5. To achieve more influence over service delivery and development in the town to ensure that the best interests of Aberaeron are considered.
6. To seek a fair share of investment in the town by local and regional authorities.
7. To enhance and promote the historic and cultural heritage of Aberaeron.
8. To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the town centre and to strive for a pleasant, clean and safe environment throughout the town.
9. To promote and support local voluntary groups and clubs that seek to assist residents and visitors to Aberaeron.

10. To be a professional, competent and caring Town Council.
11. To help to create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race, sexual orientation, gender, disability or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding and cooperation.

Financial Information

The successful achievement of the Council's objectives is dependent on the Council and its Clerk managing and delivering projects, processes, governance and activities to a high standard, thus ensuring confidence in being well placed to achieve the objectives set out above.

The Town Council is funded by the residents of Aberaeron, through what is known as the Precept. This is the local tax set by the Town Council which is collected on its behalf by Ceredigion County Council as part of the Council Tax bill.

The main items of expenditure are:

- Square Field
- Parc-y-Fro
- Allt-y-graig and Banc Bach woodlands
- Harbour Lighting
- Town floral displays
- Community Christmas
- Community themed projects allocated with the Town Council Business Plan.
- General Town Council administration and Clerk's salary
- Community organisation grants
- Contribution to cleaning of South Beach toilets
- Contribution to the running of the Tourist Information Centre.

Except for a small contingency sum, the budget is fully allocated. Any unused contingency or under spend can be allocated to a rolling capital fund and built up for specific purposes, examples of which are earmarked community themed projects allocated within the Business Plan.

Aberaeron Town Council adopts a risk-based approach to its levels of reserves which is reviewed annually. Currently the minimum level of general reserves is set at approximately six months' gross operating costs.

During the period of this Business Plan, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Continue to improve the budget setting and monitoring process and to identify efficiencies
- Ensure that monthly income and expenditure reports are reviewed
- Ensure accounting and audit procedures are completed in a timely manner.

Town Council Governance

Aberaeron Town Council aims to be a professional, competent and a caring Town Council. It aims to be open and accountable in all that it does, whilst ensuring the management of Town Council resources are both rigorous and sound.

Aberaeron Town Council's main areas of responsibility

The Town Council is responsible for:

- Square Field
- Parc-y-Fro
- Allt-y-graig woodland
- Banc Bach woodland
- The provision of Christmas lighting
- The provision of town floral displays
- The provision of Community Organisation Grants (Grant Aid)
- Submitting comments on all planning applications and change of use applications in Aberaeron as a statutory consultee of Ceredigion County Council.

The Council is also represented on several external organisations, including:

- Ysgol Gynradd Aberaeron Governors
- Ysgol Gyfun Aberaeron Governors
- Harbour Users Group
- Aberaeron Swimming Pool Management Committee
- Aberaeron Memorial Hall Management Committee.

2021-24 Business Plan Responsibilities and Actions

1. Christmas Lights and Community Christmas Event

The Town Council is responsible for the annual Community Christmas Event, the Christmas Tree and the lighting around Square Field.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Organise the installation of the town's Christmas lights with its partners
- Organise the purchase and erection of the town's Christmas Tree
- Organise and work in partnership with other Aberaeron businesses and groups to deliver the town's Community Christmas Event.

2. Square Field

The Town Council is fully responsible for this area.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Cut the grass and hedges at regular periods
- Regularly inspect and maintain the park equipment
- Improve the layout and safety of park area.

3. Floral displays

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Plant and maintain the designated flower beds as required
- Irrigate plants as required.

4. Harbour lights

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Maintain and replace where necessary the Harbour lighting.

5. Volunteers

The Town Council will make use of volunteers to help meet its objectives.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Regularly review its Volunteer Strategy and encourage town volunteers
- Engage with volunteers making sure they have the resources to help.

6. Parc-y-Fro

The Town Council is fully responsible for this area.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Cut the grass at regular periods
- Regularly inspect and maintain the park equipment
- Improve the layout and safety of the park area.

7. Allt-y-graig woodland

The Town Council is fully responsible for this area.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Cut back path foliage as required to maintain safe access
- Maintain furniture including gates, benches and signs.

8. Banc Bach woodland

The Town Council is fully responsible for this area.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Cut back path foliage as required to maintain safe access
- Maintain furniture including gates, benches and signs.

9. Donations and Annual Grants

Aberaeron Town Council is committed to supporting and strengthening the many networks and community groups that help to make a positive difference to Aberaeron as a place to live, work and visit, for everyone.

Aberaeron Town Council will continue to support local non-profit organisations through its grants scheme. It will take actions to increase the impact of the grants by:

- Regularly reviewing grant policy in terms of assessing the likely impact of the grant
- Increasing active promotion of the occasional donation requests on the Town Council website, social media and in the press
- Request feedback from successful grant applicants to evaluate the success of their projects together with attendance at a Council meeting to provide verbal updates.

10. Communications

Aberaeron Town Council recognises the benefits of regular and effective communication in building positive relationships with residents, local organisations, businesses and key partners.

It has recently invested in a new Website to support the Council's on-going commitment in terms of community engagement whilst highlighting the positive work of the Town Council.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Continue to develop the website providing information about the Town Council and signposting people to other service providers
- Post regular news regarding Town Council initiatives on the website, and via social media and the press
- Strengthen the Town Council brand
- Review and improve other methods of distribution for Town Council information and news
- Provide an opportunity at each Town Council meeting for the attendance of the press and public to ask questions and receive relevant updates
- Provide updated versions of the Town Council Business Plan on the Town Council website and the provision of hard copies where required
- The compilation of an annual report covering Town Council activities during the previous twelve months at the Annual General Meeting. (AGM)
- Continue to review the Council's information and communication requirements
- Regularly update the Council noticeboards with relevant and current information.

11. Community Policing and Safety

Aberaeron Town Council works closely with Dyfed Powys Police and Ceredigion County Council on matters relating to Community Safety. Councillors regularly engage with the Neighbourhood Policing Team and officers from Ceredigion Council's Community Safety department.

Aberaeron Town Council will continue to work in partnership with Dyfed Powys Police and other organisations so that they are able to deliver a service that is visible, accessible and responsive to what local people need.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Listen to residents and report their concerns to the relevant authorities
- Work with the Police and other Ceredigion County Council Community Safety officers to address the issues that have been identified and provide reassurance when required
- Keep residents informed of progress made and signpost them to the relevant authorities.
- Continue to work with Dyfed Powys Police to share information on local crime and safety issues. This includes Dyfed Powys Police being invited to attend Town Council meetings and the Town Council forwarding any enquiries and concerns submitted to them
- Facilitate access to the Police, by including Police contact information on the Town Council's website and other social media
- Hold the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys together with the geographical Policing Inspector to account by reviewing and responding to local policing strategies on behalf of residents.

12. Planning and Environment

Aberaeron Town Council is a statutory consultee for any planning applications submitted within the town boundary or within the wider area which may influence the town or its residents.

Ceredigion County Council is the local planning authority and makes the final decision.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Encourage residents to participate in any strategic planning consultations which impact upon Aberaeron
- Continue to comment on all key strategic planning documents and consultations that affect Aberaeron, ensuring that the Council's knowledge and understanding of the local context is considered in planning decisions
- Review the way in which it currently considers and supports planning applications, ensuring that its recommendations are robust, clear and represents the interests of the community wherever possible
- Continue to establish a close working relationship with Ceredigion County Council, the officers and members on the Planning Committee, to ensure that the needs and best interests of Aberaeron are considered in planning decisions
- Ensure that the Town Council's views are appropriately represented at the Ceredigion County Council's Planning Committee
- Consider options for proactively targeting specific new businesses which meet the needs of residents and support the economic sustainability of Aberaeron
- Carefully consider applications for the work to protect trees, open spaces and buildings within the town's Conservation area.

13. Highways

The Town Council is not directly responsible for the delivery of highways, transport, access or parking services in the town, but strives to ensure that the relevant delivery bodies provide a good quality, affordable service and considers the needs and expectations of its residents together with the town's businesses.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Work with Ceredigion County Council on a long-term plan for road and pavement repairs in the town, including effective maintenance of roadside verges and where appropriate well-maintained signage
- Continue to collate and forward reports of dangerous kerbs or pavements to Ceredigion County Council
- Liaise with Ceredigion County Council to influence scheduling of major road works so that, as far as possible, disruption to residents is minimised and peak visitor periods are avoided
- Provide clear information on the Town Council website to provide guidance on how to refer highways matters

- Work with Ceredigion County Council to supply and maintain an adequate number of winter gritting bins and advise on appropriate locations.
- Liaise with Ceredigion County Council to introduce road and pedestrian safety schemes linked to fact based risk analysis.
- Identify areas where improvements regarding street lighting is necessary and liaise with Ceredigion County Council to provide this; also to look at the energy efficiency measures for existing street lighting and consider alternatives.

14. Street Cleanliness

While the Town Council itself is not directly responsible for the delivery of environmental services, it works in partnership with the relevant delivery bodies to encourage a high standard of service. Ceredigion County Council is responsible for street cleaning in Aberaeron.

Aberaeron Town Council regularly organises litter picks within the town. This is supported by other groups who regularly assist.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Liaise with Ceredigion County Council to improve the quality of the service provided
- Listen and respond to matters arising from residents and businesses in relation to street cleanliness and faulty litter bins
- Signpost residents and businesses via the Council website on how to refer issues to Ceredigion County Council.

15. Public footpaths and rights of way

There are many public rights of way within Aberaeron and the surrounding countryside.

Aberaeron Town Council is only responsible for two public footpaths but regularly consult with and promote the views of the community to Ceredigion County Council.

During the Plan period, Aberaeron Town Council will:

- Liaise with relevant partners to improve the signage, quality of public footpaths together with rights of way within the town.

16. Economy and Development

Aberaeron Town Council encourages and promotes the social, economic, environmental and commercial vitality of the town. Although the Town Council's own funds are limited, it

works in partnership with appropriate agencies and organisations to encourage and facilitate all opportunities.

In terms of economic development and planning, the Town Council is guided in its activities and decisions, not only by its corporate objectives, but also by the following specific economic development objectives:

- To support a balanced approach to economic growth, ensuring the sustainability of the town and working with key partners to achieve this outcome
- To support the development of tourism, recognising that this is one of the main drivers of the local economy, while at the same time encouraging wider economic development which safeguards the sustainability of Aberaeron
- To encourage a vibrant retail mix and to do what it can to encourage and support new businesses which meet the needs of Aberaeron's residents and the wider community in general
- To support the provision of good quality, well-managed events and festivals in the town, with its own financial support focused on community celebrations which enhance the wellbeing of its residents
- To facilitate coordination of town centre initiatives working in partnership with Ceredigion County Council, Aberaeron Town Improvements Committee and other relevant partners
- To support the development of commerce and light industry for enhanced employment opportunities in the town, with the focus being on training, education and youth development
- To promote and support entertainment and the arts.