

Berwick Town Council (BTC) Strategic Plan

Adopted November 2024 (version 4)



1. Introduction

The purpose of the strategic plan is to set out what Berwick Town Council (BTC) wants to happen in our community over the next 5 years. It will guide all of our actions ensuring that we stay on course to deliver what we believe is best for the town. It sets out our priorities for action and how we will deliver them.

2. Our mission

Our mission is to be a forward thinking organisation looking for opportunities to promote the sustainable development of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal, and the well-being of our residents and the environment.

3. Scope and limitations

It aims to be realistic about what we can deliver as the role of the Town Council is limited. Northumberland County Council (NCC) makes decisions on education, social services, planning, health and major capital schemes. BTC's responsibilities include allotments, bins, benches, bus stops, supporting community initiatives and local festivals, and organising various civic events. Where we do not have direct responsibility for a service we will still aim to influence and persuade when we consider this to be appropriate. We will do this directly with NCC or through our 3 County Councillors and with our local partners.

4. The Council and plan delivery

The Council consists of up to 16 councillors representing Berwick, Spittal and Tweedmouth. It is led by the Mayor who leads civic events and chairs full Council meetings. The Mayor is supported by a Deputy Mayor and Town Sheriff who provides support at Civic events reflecting the long history of Berwick and its town officials.

The plan will be delivered primarily by its team of staff led by the Chief Officer who is supported by an Operations Manager and an

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Administrative Team. The Council also employs a small Town Warden/Horticultural team having taken over some environmental services from NCC in recent years.

The Council is based in the town centre of Berwick on Marygate and also has a depot on The Ramparts Business Park. The current councillors are in place until May 2025.

Plan delivery will be kept under constant review going forward by its councillors. The plan will be reviewed annually.

5. Key themes of the plan

As an historic walled town, 60 miles from the nearest cities in England and Scotland we face challenges but need to embrace the town's potential. We will aim to encourage and create opportunities for our residents by focusing on:

- i. Strengthening our economic base - encouraging work, training, educational developments and tourism.
- ii. Strengthening our infrastructure (buildings, parks, shops etc) - making more of our heritage while encouraging development of our housing and infrastructure.
- iii. Protecting our environment to safeguard us, as far as we can, into the future.
- iv. Developing our community, supporting and generating cultural events.

6. Our values and way of working

As a publicly funded organisation we will:

- i. Maintain high standards of governance, integrity, transparency and financial management.
- ii. Be a good employer.

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- iii. Work in partnership with, and learn from others.
- iv. Listen respectfully to our residents and communicate clearly.
- v. Aim to work efficiently and effectively.

7. Where we are now (November 2024)

There has been significant investment in Berwick and more is planned.

- i. A new leisure centre was completed in the last 2 years.
- ii. A new hospital is underway and nearing completion.
- iii. Major works to renew the Maltings Theatre and Cinema are scheduled to start within a year.
- iv. A new 58 unit affordable housing scheme is being developed.
- v. Significant investment is planned for the academy.
- vi. The staged regeneration of the historic Barracks is underway.
- vii. The Culture and Creative Zone is delivering a range of projects.
- viii. The River Tweed trail is being developed which could potentially significantly increase tourist visits to Berwick.

Meanwhile, the main road link to Berwick remains single carriageway and is not going to be upgraded. Changes in retailing have impacted the town centre leaving numerous empty shops. However a number of small independent traders have taken over some of the smaller units and previously empty premises above shops are being converted into residential accommodation.

In recent years sizeable manufacturing companies have left the area which have not been replaced. However, the business and industrial parks on the edge of town have continued to attract businesses.

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Higher and further education and training opportunities remain limited.

It is within this context that the strategic plan emphasises the actions we aim to take. The following list is not final and fixed. Actions can be removed from it or added to it by the decision of the Council.

8. Specific actions

Short Term (up to 12 months)

- i. Develop a programme for Christmas promotions including light displays and markets in partnership with local organisations.
- ii. Revise and update the BTC website and review communications and our use of social media.
- iii. Declutter Marygate and improve the appearance of the town centre with planting and improved street furniture.
- iv. Commence a bus shelter upgrade programme.
- v. Finalise the BTC Neighbourhood Plan.
- vi. Increase and upgrade allotment provision.
- vii. Encourage the establishment of community gardens.
- viii. Progress the Shielfield Terrace woodland walk.
- ix. Commence a bench renewal program with low maintenance recycled plastic benches in outlying areas.
- x. Investigate the feasibility of installing outdoor gym/activity equipment.
- xi. Work with key partners to develop tourism in the town.
- xii. Develop with partners, a code of conduct to restrict and control banners on railings and the use of pavement 'A' boards.

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Medium Term (up to 2 years)

- xiii. Investigate the feasibility and financial viability of taking over the Marygate Market.
- xiv. Investigate potential cost and benefits of rationalising our existing properties (Marygate and The Ramparts).
- xv. Investigate the transfer of Castlegate war memorial from NCC.
- xvi. Upgrade the existing Spittal Splash Park.
- xvii. Work with the Electoral Commission to reduce the number of wards from 7 to 3 to encourage greater accountability.
- xviii. Consider options for the future use of the vacant former play area at Grove Gardens South.
- xix. Encourage the development of additional hotel space.

Longer Term (2-5 years)

- xx. Work with local partners to encourage landlords to improve properties.
- xxi. Investigate the viability of providing a multi-wheeled, multi-disciplined sport facility and a social centre for young people.
- xxii. Consider accepting responsibility for additional services should NCC seek to disinvest in local services.
- xxiii. Investigate and encourage the development and provision of affordable housing.

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9. Where we aim to be by 2030

- i. A local council whose contribution is valued and recognised by residents and visitors as having helped to make the town become sustainable economically and environmentally.
- ii. Partner organisations will say we have worked productively with them.
- iii. The town centre will be thriving and busy with local residents and visitors.
- iv. There will be more opportunities for local people of all ages and more interest from visitors.
- v. New housing will have been developed helping to retain and grow the town's population.
- vi. Berwick-upon-Tweed will be a sought after place to live and visit and a place where people thrive.