



# Bishop Auckland Town Council

## Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy 2026–2031

### 1. Purpose of the Sub-Strategy

This Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy supports and sits beneath the Town Council Strategy 2026–2031, delivering Strategic Priority– Strategic & Corporate.

It sets out how Bishop Auckland Town Council will strengthen its internal capacity, governance, financial resilience and external influence to enable effective delivery of services and future opportunities.

This sub-strategy provides a clear framework for corporate improvement and strategic leadership, ensuring the Council is well-governed, well-managed and prepared for change.

It builds on:

- Statutory duties and best practice in local council governance
- Councillor workshops and officer experience
- The Council's ambition to increase influence, visibility and readiness for future service delivery

This sub-strategy is supported by:

- A rolling Action Plan
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Bi-monthly reporting to Committee and quarterly reporting to Full Council

### 2. Strategic & Corporate Vision

*A confident, well-governed and forward-looking Town Council that provides strong leadership, manages resources responsibly and advocates effectively for Bishop Auckland.*

### 3. Strategic & Corporate Objectives (as set out in Town Council Strategy 7.3)

This sub-strategy is explicitly structured around the Strategic & Corporate objectives agreed in the Town Council Strategy:

1. Develop strategic partnerships and improve the Council's visibility and influence
2. Advocate effectively for Bishop Auckland at local, regional and national levels
3. Support local economic vibrancy through partnerships and initiatives
4. Improve governance, communications and public engagement
5. Seek a Community Governance Review (boundary review) to reflect the true footprint of the town
6. Strengthen financial resilience and prepare for future service delivery and potential service transfer

All themes, priorities and actions within this document align to one or more of these objectives.

## 4. Strategic Themes and Priorities

### *Theme 1: Leadership, Influence & Partnerships*

**Linked Objectives:** Develop strategic partnerships; advocate for Bishop Auckland

Priority:

- Establish the Town Council as a credible, influential and visible local leader

Key commitments:

- Strengthen relationships with Durham County Council, the MP and strategic partners
- Maintain representation on key boards and partnerships
- Use the Council's voice to advocate for local priorities

Key areas of focus:

- Strategic partnerships and networks
- Advocacy and representation
- Place-based leadership

### *Theme 2: Economic Vibrancy & Opportunity*

**Linked Objective:** Support local economic vibrancy through partnerships and initiatives

Priority:

- Support a thriving town economy through collaboration rather than duplication

Key commitments:

- Work with partners supporting town centre vitality, skills and employment
- Use Council influence to attract opportunity and investment
- Support relevant initiatives aligned with community benefit

Key areas of focus:

- Partnerships with economic, skills and regeneration bodies
- Support for town centre vitality
- Strategic use of Council assets and influence
- Be the Lead for the Town of Culture 2028
- Lead development plans for Bishop Auckland

### *Theme 3: Governance, Risk & Performance*

**Linked Objective:** Improve governance, communications and public engagement

Priority:

- Ensure the Council is well-governed, transparent and compliant

Key commitments:

- Maintain strong governance arrangements, policies and procedures
- Continuously review risk management and internal controls
- Improve member development and officer support

Key areas of focus:

- Policy framework and compliance
- Risk register and internal control
- Training and development

#### *Theme 4: Corporate Capacity & Readiness*

**Linked Objectives:** Strengthen financial resilience; prepare for future service delivery

Priority:

- Build a resilient organisation capable of responding to change

Key commitments:

- Maintain robust financial planning and reserves strategy
- Improve digital systems and ways of working
- Plan for potential service transfer and increased responsibilities

Key areas of focus:

- Financial management and reserves
- Workforce capacity and succession planning
- Digital transformation and modernization

#### *Theme 5: Community Governance Review*

**Linked Objective:** Seek a Community Governance Review (boundary review)

Priority:

- Ensure governance boundaries reflect the true town footprint and communities of interest

Key commitments:

- Build and maintain the evidence base for a governance review
- Engage with residents, partners and Durham County Council
- Advocate for fair and effective governance arrangements

Key areas of focus:

- Data and evidencing
- Engagement and communication
- Formal review processes

## 5. Delivery Approach

The Council will deliver this sub-strategy by:

- Embedding strategic and corporate improvement across all Council activity
- Aligning resources to strategic priorities
- Working proactively with partners and stakeholders
- Planning ahead for change, growth and opportunity

An annual Strategic & Corporate Action Plan will:

- Set out actions against each strategic objective
- Identify lead members and officers
- Allocate resources
- Define measures of success<sup>6</sup>. Measuring Success

## 6. Measuring Success

Progress will be monitored through:

- Delivery against the Strategic & Corporate Action Plan
- Financial performance and reserves monitoring
- Governance and compliance reviews
- Evidence of increased influence, partnership working and readiness

Performance will be reported:

- Quarterly to Council (headline progress)
- Annually through a public-facing performance report

## 7. Review and Governance

This Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy will:

- Be owned by Full Council
- Be reviewed annually
- Inform budget setting, governance improvement and service planning

It will remain a live document, evolving alongside the Town Council Strategy and the changing role of the Town Council.

# Bishop Auckland Town Council Strategic & Corporate Action Plan 2026–2028

## Supporting the Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy 2026–2030 and Strategic Priority 5.3 – Strategic & Corporate

### 1. Purpose of the Action Plan

This Strategic & Corporate Action Plan sets out **practical, deliverable actions** to implement the Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy 2026–2030. It focuses on the first two years (2026–2028) and will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

The Action Plan is structured directly around the **Strategic & Corporate objectives** agreed in section 5.3 of the Town Council Strategy to ensure clarity, accountability and strong governance.

### 2. Strategic & Corporate Action Plan – Table

Objective (Strategy 5.3)	Action Ref	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Measures of Success	status
<b>Develop strategic partnerships and improve visibility and influence</b>	5.3.1	Maintain and strengthen strategic relationships with Durham County Council, the MP, neighbouring councils and key partners	Mayor / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Evidence of engagement; attendance at strategic meetings; outcomes achieved	
	5.3.2	Ensure effective representation on external boards, partnerships and forums aligned to Council priorities	Mayor / Nominated Members	Ongoing	Representation maintained; feedback to Council	
<b>Advocate effectively for Bishop Auckland</b>	5.3.3	Act as a strong advocate for Bishop Auckland on strategic issues affecting the town	Mayor / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Issues raised; responses and outcomes	
		Be the Lead of the Town of Culture	Mayor / Town Clerk/ Committee Chairs	Ongoing		
<b>Support local economic vibrancy through partnerships and initiatives</b>	5.3.4	Work with partners to support town centre vitality, regeneration, skills and employment initiatives	Mayor / Town Clerk	Ongoing	Partnership activity; initiatives supported	
	5.3.5	Use Council influence and assets to support opportunities that deliver community and economic benefit	Town Clerk / Council	Ongoing	Opportunities supported; community benefit demonstrated	
<b>Improve governance, communications and public engagement</b>	5.3.6	Maintain and review the Council’s policy framework to ensure compliance and best practice	Town Clerk/ Governance Support	Annual	Policies reviewed and adopted	
	5.3.7	Maintain and regularly review the Council’s Risk Register and internal control arrangements	Town Clerk/ Governance Support	Quarterly	Risks identified and mitigated	

	5.3.8	Support councillor and officer development through training and capacity building	All	Ongoing	Training undertaken; skills improved	
<b>Seek a Community Governance Review (boundary review)</b>	5.3.9	Develop and maintain an evidence base to support a Community Governance Review	Town Clerk/ Governance Support	2026–2027	Evidence base in place	
	5.3.10	Engage with residents, partners and Durham County Council regarding governance boundaries	Mayor / Town Clerk	2026–2028	Engagement activity undertaken	
<b>Strengthen financial resilience and prepare for future service delivery</b>	5.3.11	Maintain robust financial planning, budgeting and reserves strategy	Town Clerk/ Committee Chair	Annual	Balanced budgets; reserves maintained	
	5.3.12	Review and modernise systems, processes and digital working practices	Town Clerk / Deputy Clerk/ Governance Officer	2026–2028	Efficiency improvements achieved	
	5.3.13	Plan for potential service transfer or increased responsibilities where appropriate	Town Clerk / Council	2026–2028	Readiness demonstrated; options identified	

### 3. Monitoring and Review

- Progress against this Action Plan will be reported **quarterly to Council**
- A summary will be published **annually** for residents
- The Action Plan will be **reviewed and refreshed each year** to reflect capacity, funding and emerging priorities

### 4. Relationship to other strategies

This Action Plan supports:

- The Town Council Strategy 2026–2030
- The Strategic & Corporate Sub-Strategy 2026–2030
- The Community and Allotment & Environment Sub-Strategies

It will inform budget setting, governance improvement, partnership working and organisational planning.