



Bishop Auckland Town Council

Council Strategy 2026–2031

Executive Summary

This Council Strategy sets the overarching direction, ambitions, and framework for Bishop Auckland Town Council for the 5 period 2026–2031. It establishes who we are, what we aim to achieve, and how we will work to deliver meaningful improvements for the town and its residents.

This strategy sits *above* a suite of thematic delivery documents. Each of the identified strategic priorities will be supported by:

- A dedicated sub-strategy
- A dedicated Action Plan
- A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

These underpinning documents will guide delivery, measure progress, and ensure accountability.

The Council also recognises the need for a Community Governance Review (boundary review) to ensure our governance reflects the true shape and identity of Bishop Auckland. This is identified as a major strategic priority in this strategy.

This strategy will be subject to community consultation to ensure transparency, accountability and community ownership.

1. Who we are:

Bishop Auckland Town Council is a larger local council representing a diverse and evolving community. While our statutory remit is limited, our influence, partnerships, and local leadership role continue to grow.

The Council consists of 11 elected and co-opted members, who were elected in May 2025 for a four year term. The council is supported by 4.5 FTE officers. This strategy arises from councillor workshops and reflects the aspirations for Bishop Auckland beyond 2026.

Our Current Position:

- A respected but modestly empowered local authority
- Strong partnerships but limited boundaries and tax base
- Increasing expectation from residents for visible leadership and service delivery

Where We Want to Be by 2031:

- A key town leader with greater influence
- A recognised voice holding others to account
- A highly visible and engaged council
- A driver for positive change across Bishop Auckland

2. What We Do

Our Core Functions:

- Statutory allotment provision
- Seasonal and Civic Events Programme (Christmas, Remembrance, Heritage Festival)
- Recognition Awards
- Community support via grants, planting schemes, and small projects
- Running the Kingsway Court building
- Planning application consultation
- Representation on:
 - Stronger Towns Board
 - County Durham Association of Local Councils
 - Greener Together, In Bloom, Green Matters, and other local groups.

3. Mission & Vision

Mission:

To be the best Town Council for Bishop Auckland. Leading locally. Serving well. Shaping a stronger Bishop Auckland.

Vision:

A proud, thriving, and sustainable town for everyone.

4. Our Values

- Open & Democratic – transparent and accountable
- Act in Residents' Best Interests – fair, representative, community-focused
- High-Quality Services – value for money and efficiency
- Strong Partnerships – collaborative and outward-reaching
- Long-term Planning – sustainable development and regeneration
- Inclusivity & Diversity – ensuring all voices are heard

5. What We're Already Doing

5.1 Community:

- Annual Council events programme and partnership with other town events
- Support to community groups and organisations
- Grant schemes supporting wellbeing and inclusion

5.2 Allotment & Environment:

- Statutory allotment service
- Town floral displays
- Environmental partnerships and community planting

5.3 Strategic & Corporate:

- Representation on regional partnerships (Stronger Towns Board, County Durham Association of Local Councils)
- Collaboration and strong partnership working with DCC, MP, Bishop Auckland College, and local organisations, groups and charities

6. Opportunities for Growth

- Increased visibility and communications
- Stronger police collaboration on ASB
- Volunteer pathways and community engagement
- Business forum and economic development partnerships
- Boundary review to reflect the true footprint of the town
- Emergency and resilience planning
- Town of Culture 2028

7. Strategic Priorities 2026–2030

The Council will operate across three strategic pillars.

7.1 Community - Strengthen the wellbeing, safety, and pride of residents.

Objectives:

- Support physical and mental wellbeing through donations, grants and partnerships
- Deliver a high-quality, inclusive events programme
- Improve community safety and resilience in partnership with police and emergency services
- Enhance communication and community participation

7.2 Allotment & Environment - Deliver a high-quality allotment service and champion environmental improvement and sustainability.

Objectives:

- Provide transparent and efficient allotment services
- Improve site standards and tenant relationships
- Support community planting and local environmental projects
- Enhance biodiversity and sustainable practices town-wide

7.3 Strategic & Corporate - Strengthen the Council's capacity, governance, and influence.

Objectives:

- Develop strategic partnerships and improve visibility
- Advocate for Bishop Auckland in regional and national forums
- Support local economic vibrancy through partnerships and initiatives
- Improve governance, communications, and public engagement
- Seek a Community Governance Review (boundary review) to ensure that they reflect the true town footprint
- Seek to be Town of Culture 2028

- Prepare for the future through strong financial management to build resilience and be ready for any service transfer
- Development of multiagency shared master plans to ensure consistent outcomes for residents.

8. Strategic Delivery Framework

To ensure structured delivery and measurable progress, each strategic pillar will be supported by:

A Dedicated Sub-Strategy

- Setting out the detailed vision, priorities, and frameworks for delivery.

An Action Plan

With:

- Specific actions
- Measurable targets
- Assigned leads
- Resource requirements
- Timeframes

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Allowing progress to be monitored quarterly and annually.

Integration into Council Governance

- Standing item on committee agendas
- Quarterly strategy updates to Council
- Annual performance report with the Councils Annual Report
- Public visibility through website and community engagement

9. Next Steps

1. Public and stakeholder consultation – May 2026 – June 2026
2. Strategy and associated documents adopted by Full Council – July 2026
3. Integrate Strategy into ongoing Council operations – July 2026