



Skipton Town Council



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2028

Adopted on 14th March 2024

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INTRODUCTION

A strategic plan is one of the most important documents for any organisation, setting out its priorities and giving direction to all those involved in its work.

This strategic plan is separated into four themes- Profile, Place, People and Partnerships, and details what objectives the Council aims to achieve in each of these four themes.

Mission Statement

“Making Skipton a better place to live, work and visit.”

Vision

Revitalising the High Street

Protecting the environment and ensuring sustainability

Working with others to tackle big challenges on

Transport, Housing and Community Safety

Profile

An overview of Skipton Town Council

Skipton Town Council is part of a two-tiered council system, with North Yorkshire Council being the principal or unitary authority and provides a range of services to the town of Skipton in North Yorkshire.

Skipton Town Council was created as part of the Local Government Act 1972, which came into force in 1974 as part of a reorganisation of local government across the country.

The reorganisation saw the abolition of the old Skipton Urban District Council and Skipton Rural District Council and created the new Craven District Council alongside Skipton Town Council.

Responsibility for council services was split between the two new authorities, with the bulk of services being taken on by the new district council. Skipton Town Council took responsibility for several services specific to the Parish of Skipton and the role of Town Mayor was created. The chains of the former chairman of the Urban District Council passed to the new Town Council, and a new crest was added to the chain.

Over the last 40 years, the role of the Town Council has evolved, taking account of changes in the town and it has adopted several new roles and services.

In 2022 elections were held and 16 members were elected to cover 4 wards in Skipton with 4 members in each ward. Two of these members were co-opted.

In 2023 Craven District Council was abolished during the local government reorganisation, with North Yorkshire Council becoming the Unitary Authority.

Councillors in 2024:

Councillor Sheila Bentley

Councillor Aidan Higgins

Councillor Lewis Morgan

Councillor David Noland

Councillor Virpi Kettu

Councillor Winston Feather

Councillor Robert Heseltine

Councillor Karen McIntyre

Councillor Malcolm Courcier

Councillor Annabel Heseltine

Councillor Brian McDaid

Councillor Stephen Morton

Councillor Claire Nash

Councillor Peter Madeley

Councillor Chris Harbron

Councillor Richard Judge

Local Government Act 1972

The Local Government Act 1972 was an act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that reformed local government in England and Wales on 1 April 1974. It was one of the most significant acts of Parliament passed by the Heath Government of 1970–74. The Act redefined the procedures, structures, duties and geographies of all English and Welsh councils. It was a major milestone in the history of local government in the UK.

General Power of Competence

The General Power of Competence (GPC) was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and took effect in February 2012. In simple terms, it gives councils the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. It replaces the wellbeing powers in England that were provided under the Local Government Act 2000.

The freedom of the GPC is available to local councils that meet two criteria for eligibility (LA 2011 s8) set out in a statutory instrument known as the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 that came into force in April 2012. The Council has the GPC because the Clerk is certificate in local council administration (CiLCA) qualified, and more than two thirds of members were elected. Eligibility was confirmed in May 2021.

Council and Committees

The Town Council meets at Full Council meetings. Full Council can delegate some of its statutory functions (responsibilities assigned to a parish council in legislation) to one or more committees. These may in turn have sub-committees. If there's a specific task focussed activity, then working groups may be setup.



Member Engagement

A survey was launched during the summer of 2023 to ask members of the public their views on the Council and what we do. Over 60% of the public asked said that the Town Council could better engage with them.

All Council and committee meetings are open to the public and are clearly advertised on the website and a public notice displayed on the door of the office.

Feedback was given and the following adjustments will be made and are clearly defined in this plan, be more visible, proactive, transparent and have a presence on social media.

Hold Councillor Surgeries and ward meetings.



Profile- Objectives

P1: To improve the Town Council's communication channels to help connect with the community and keep the community informed on the activities of the Town Council

P2: To hold regular councillor surgeries and ward meetings.

P3: To maintain high standards of accountability and transparency, striving to achieve Quality Standard on the Local Council Award Scheme.

P4: To increase public awareness and participation at council meetings, most of which are open to the public.

PLACE

Planning

North Yorkshire Council is the local Planning Authority, Skipton Town Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process - and the Council's Audit, Scrutiny & Planning Committee considers and makes recommendations on all planning applications submitted for work within the parish of Skipton.

All meetings of the committee are open to the public - and the views and comments of those present at any meeting are considered and included in any submission the Town Council makes to the Planning Authority. For larger or potentially contentious planning applications, the Town Council may advertise a larger public meeting to gather views and opinions.



Environmental Issues

Trees

The Council is responsible for the upkeep of all trees and hedges across its land. In particular, is responsible for the trees lining Skipton High Street. These native lime trees were planted in 1897 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The trees are protected meaning that if they are damaged or die, they must be replaced. A number of the trees have been replaced in recent years.

Across the Estate the creation and implementation of our Tree Policy will identify trees that need attention in priority order.

Grass Cutting and Wildflowers

In April 2015, North Yorkshire Council ceased all amenity grass cutting in urban areas across the county. Skipton Town Council now undertakes all of this work within Skipton, to ensure that all areas of amenity grass within the town continue to be cut. Generally, grass is cut on a regular basis through the season (from around March to September/October).

In 2022 Skipton Town Council embarked on a wildflower trial scheme for the planting of wildflower seeds, and reduced grass cutting to increase the habitats for pollinators. Grass that is required to be cut for visibility purposes is still cut regularly.

Six trial sites were selected for the planting of seeds, and other locations were left to grow rather than being regularly cut, to see what would grow without seed planting. The Council employed the services of a surveyor to advise on this project. This project will continue into the coming year.

Traffic and Transport

Currently a Local Transport Plan is being created by North Yorkshire Council and Skipton Town Council have asked to be consulted on this. Their aim is to overcome the difficulties and encourage active travel, improve rural transport links and make areas for pedestrians safer. Feedback to the Town Council has been, better towpaths, more lockable bike racks, reduce speed limits, cycle lanes, town centre traffic reduction, promote active travel more. The Town Council has passed a resolution in favour of more 20mph speed limits within Skipton.



Sustainability

The Town Council adopted a Sustainability Framework which is in its early stages and is developing throughout the year. In addition to partnership working with Skipton Climate Action group that has recently been created, the council has secured funding for a Climate Audit of the town which will highlight areas of development for the Framework.

The Town Council will create a Sustainability Skipton-wide map, which will include green verges, electricity charging points and the Civic Society green trail. This map will evolve as it is developed. Within the Framework, the Council will continue to develop individual actions such as hybrid working for staff, encourage more public transport, organising litter picks, nesting boxes and bug hotels within recreational grounds, reduce plastic waste in the office and reduce paper use.

Cleanliness

Skipton Town Council brought recycling to the High Street and market traders. An initiative was introduced where traders package up their cardboard and plastic waste which is then collected by the Market officer and taken to the appropriate container for collection. This has improved the amount of trade waste into land fill.

The Council regularly organises community litter picks. Staff at the events litter pick the High Street before during and after and have assisted waste management staff of NYC in clearing bags of rubbish.

In partnership with Skipton Business Improvement District and HAZ (Heritage Action Zone), an investment has been made in 2024 to secure new improved litter bins around the High Street. They have a larger capacity so can hold more waste and have larger openings so that waste does not build up and overflow the top.



Skipton Market

Skipton Town Council took over responsibility for the management of Skipton Market in 2013, under a ten-year lease arrangement with the owner of the Market Charter Rights – Skipton Castle. This was renewed in 2023 for a further 10 years. The Council manages the Market under the terms of this lease and under legislation set out in the Food Act 1984 and the Byelaws for the operation of Skipton Market, approved by the Secretary of State and sealed by the Council in 2014.

The Market plays an active role within the wider market industry and has achieved a number of industry awards.

Over 70% of respondents that engaged in our community survey confirmed that they used the market and feedback was given for car free days, more local produce and a wider variety of stalls.

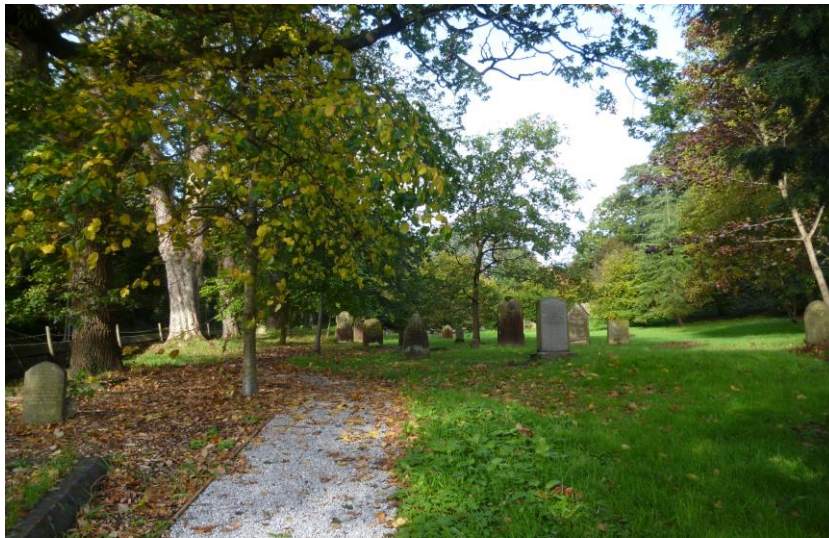
Churchyards & Closed Burial Grounds

The Town Council, by statute, maintains the churchyards at Holy Trinity Church and Christ Church in Skipton, together with the closed burial ground on Raikes Road.

This work includes the majority of grounds maintenance and grass cutting and the management of any trees, hedges and boundaries.

The Council is also responsible for floodlighting and the maintenance of the clock at Holy Trinity Church.

A community group - the Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground - oversees an ongoing project to restore and maintain these historic grounds and to make them accessible to the public. Several events and open days take place each year.



Recreation Grounds

The Council maintains a significant number of recreation grounds and play areas across the Parish. Many contain items of play equipment, all of which is regularly inspected to ensure the highest safety standards. Some areas also include 'runs' for the exercising of dogs.

The recreation grounds are:

Bold Venture Recreation Ground

Millennium Green Play Area

Broughton Road Play Area

North Parade Recreation Ground

Burnside Recreation Ground

Pasture Close Recreation Ground

Lytham Close Play Area

Raikes Road Recreation Ground

Middletown Recreation Ground

Shortbank Recreation Ground

The Ginnel Play Area

Some of the recreation grounds (Broughton Road, Millennium Green, Pasture Close and Raikes Road and Burnside) have recently seen refurbishments and the installation of new and improved equipment and facilities. The Council has developed a Park Strategy, following public consultation, to inform its maintenance and improvements to its parks and recreation grounds.

The Council is increasingly working with developers and the Planning Authority to ensure fair amounts of funding are received from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy arrangements for the provision of any additional play facilities required following the construction of new housing developments.



Place-Objectives

P4: To maintain trader numbers in an increasingly difficult retail trading environment.

P5: To identify new traders, ensuring a good retail offering on the market.

P6: To maintain the profile of Skipton Market regionally and nationally.

P7: To maintain visitor numbers – and to target the ‘visitors of the future’ and, in particular younger market users.

P8: To look at ways of minimising the operational impact of the Market on the Town.

P9: To improve the safety and security of market staff, traders and customers.

P10: To facilitate and license other market activities within the Council’s area of jurisdiction and to identify and control unauthorised activity.

P11: To attract additional investment into the Market.

P12: To continue to play an active role in the wider market industry.

P13: To implement the Town Council’s adopted Park Strategy to proactively maintain and enhance the Councils play and recreation provision.

P14: To work to protect the towns trees, including those on land managed by the Town Council.

P15: To engage in all consultations on local planning policy.

P16: To engage with developers to ensure that any development which takes place delivers the maximum community benefit.

P17: To continue work to improve the biodiversity of the town.

P18: To lobby for improvements to cycling and bus provision, and to be an active member in the development of the Local Transport Plan.

P19: To work towards delivering the Sustainability Framework.

P20: To create a Skipton wide-sustainability map.

P21: To discourage car use within Skipton Town Centre.



PEOPLE

Events

Skipton Town Council plans, supports, organises, and funds a range of events and festivals in the Town each year – either alone, or in partnership with other local groups and organisations. These include popular events on the towns calendar such as Sheep Day, the Christmas Light Switch On and Christmas Markets.

Christmas Lights

Skipton Town Council works with the Skipton Business Improvement District (BID) to provide Christmas lighting displays across the Town Centre each year.

The joint funding arrangement provides for comprehensive displays on the High Street, Sheep Street, Otley Street, Newmarket Street, Keighley Road, Swadford Street, Coach Street, Water Street and Mill Bridge.

The Town Council manages the various contracts and oversees installation of the lighting and the main Christmas tree located outside Skipton Town Hall.



Civic Events

Skipton Town Council supports and assists with the organisation of many civic events throughout the year, including the annual Remembrance Day Parade and Wreath-Laying Ceremony in November - together with Armistice Day, St George's Day, the Battle of Britain Parade and Armed Forces Day.



Young People

In several areas of this strategic plan, reference is made for the need to encourage greater engagement with younger people.

The need to do this is particularly significant in aiming to secure the continued success of Skipton Market and of the Visit Skipton, Events and Tourism functions.

The need for greater involvement by younger people applies equally, however, to all aspects of the Council's business.

The Town Council has sought to work closely with the Youth Council, establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Youth Council to ensure the views of young people are taken into account.

Cost of Living

The Town Council is aware of the struggles families and businesses face during the cost-of-living crisis. To make its events and activities more affordable for families the Town Council has not charged people to attend events. At the 2023 Christmas Light Switch On event, fairground rides were free of charge for attendees. The Town Council also held free activity days in many of its parks in 2023 during the summer holidays. This will continue moving forward and grants will be sourced and applied for to ensure that this is made a permanent offering.

Allotments

The Council operates three allotment sites within the parish of Skipton. There are two large sites, at Middletown and Broughton Road, and a smaller site at Burnside Chapel. There are approximately 291 plots in total across all three sites.

Availability of plots varies with demand, and the Council operates a waiting list when sites are full. Plot sizes vary, and the Council is moving towards measuring plots, and re-evaluating its allotment rents.

Plot holders are required to sign a tenancy agreement and pay an annual fee. The Council has been building links with the two Allotment Associations over the last two years and will continue to develop and strengthen this relationship.

Trusts

The Council owns, in trust, two blocks of almshouses on Otley Road in Skipton - comprising 12 units designed for occupancy by local people aged over 55.

Heap Parkinson Homes operates as a charity and is managed separately from the Council - although all 16 councillors are trustees.

People- Objectives

P22: To continue to develop a links with Skipton Youth Council to work alongside Skipton Town Council.

P23: To identify improvements that can be made to the Council's allotment provision, including the support and partnership with the allotment associations.

P24: To deliver an annual programme of events designed to promote footfall to the town centre and to include events to bring the community together.

P25: To understand the service needs of the community and lobby for service retention and increased provision as necessary.

P26: To deliver free or low-cost events/activities for the benefit of the community in Skipton.

P27: To work with partners on events and initiatives which celebrate and promote the town's heritage.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership Working

An important part of the Council's work involves partnership working with other organisations and authorities – both locally and as part of wider industry involvement. The Town Council has worked to strengthen its relationships with partner organisations such as North Yorkshire Council, Skipton BID and North Yorkshire Police.

Community Safety Working Group

The Town Council has established a Community Safety Working Group with members from the Police, NYC, local schools, Craven College and Skipton BID. The aim of the group is to identify issues, and work collaboratively on projects to improve the feeling of safety in groups within the community.

Support to Community & Voluntary Groups

The Council gives support to a number of local community and voluntary groups.

These include:

Skipton in Bloom

Friends of the Wilderness

Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground

Skipton Rotary Environment Initiative

Woodland Trust

Canal and River Trust

Incredible Edibles

Church and Community groups

Climate Action Skipton

Most of these groups operate under a separate 'constitution' and determine their own priorities and workload, supported by the Council where required. Councillors and Council officers also support many other community groups by attending their regular meetings and providing ad-hoc assistance.

Tarn Moor Estate

The Tarn Moor Estate is a separate charity holding a substantial amount of land on the outskirts of Skipton which is held in trust for the benefit of the Community.

Skipton Town Council, as an entity, acts as the 'Custodian Trustee' for the land. This means that it owns the title to all of the land but holds it in trust for the Charity.

In practice, the Council has no control over the day-to-day management of the estate. This is undertaken by a group of five Managing Trustees of which the Council nominates two.

Twinning

Skipton is twinned with two European towns – Simbach-Am-Inn and Erquinghem-Lys. Simbach-Am-Inn is in the Bavarian region of Germany, on the border with Austria. The twinning has been in operation since 1983. Erquinghem-Lys is in northern France around ten miles from Lille and is very close to the Belgian border. The twinning charter was signed in 2009 and the Town Council remains in a close relationships with both towns.

Climate Action Skipton & Rotary Environment Events

Skipton Town Council supports the Climate Action Skipton group and the Rotary club with the Environmental day that is held each year.



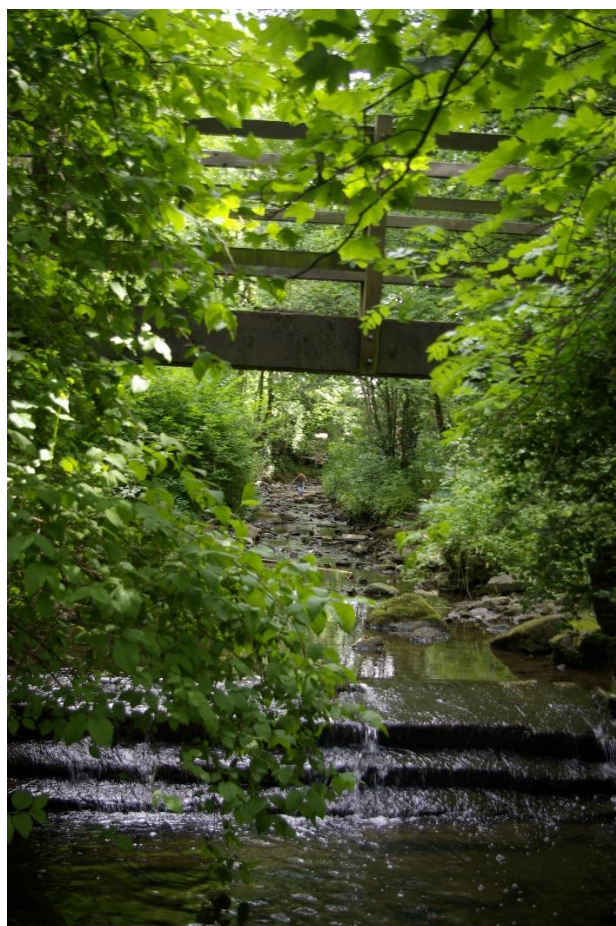
Partnerships- Objectives

P28: To support community organisations operating in Skipton ensuring they have the skills and resources needed to thrive.

P29: To continue to work with partners to identify needs and improve community safety.

P30: To establish a community grants scheme for people to apply to fund community led projects.

P31: To maintain links with the Twin Towns, and carry out activities that support those links.



HOW WE WILL DELIVER THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

- Each year, the Town Council will produce an action plan for the year ahead which will make it clear which objectives we will be working to achieve and how we will work to do that.
- The action plan will be prepared for the meeting of the Council in May each year.
- The action plan will detail specific actions the council will undertake in that civic year to contribute to meeting our objectives.
- Each action will be specific, assigned to the responsible officer and to whichever committee has oversight of ensuring delivery, with the timescales for the actions to be taken.
- The Town Council committees will have a key role in making the strategic decisions required to give effect to the objectives of the council.
- An Annual Report will be produced each year to detail the progress that has been made on the objectives.



Skipton
Town Council