



**Seaton Town Council**  
**Strategic Plan**  
**2021 - 2026**

Adopted: 1 November 2021

## Seaton Town Council Vision

Seaton Town Council values its community, heritage, environment, beach and open spaces. Through a proactive rather than reactive approach, it will work towards improving the social and economic wellbeing of the town's community as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as strive to work in partnership with other stakeholders to develop and enhance the town's assets for the benefit of the community and visitors.

### 1. Why have a Strategic Plan?

The strategic plan ('the Plan') has been developed by Seaton Town Council ('the Council') and details its aims and objectives for the next 5 years. It is a living document that will be reviewed and updated regularly by the Council, taking into account prevailing financial and other circumstances at the time.

Over recent years, the Council has established its priorities for the coming year but has lacked longer-term plans that make realistic provision for preserving and maintaining existing assets, whilst gradually building resilience to deliver other projects. This has, on occasions, led to projects being embarked upon that were neither financially deliverable or realistic. It is the view of the existing members of the Council that such a plan is essential for the town to evolve and best serve local residents, business owners and visitors.

### 2. How was the Plan developed?

In order to inform the Plan, the Council carried out a community consultation in August 2021. The consultation was intended to enable the Council to produce a Plan reflecting issues that are important to residents, businesses and visitors to Seaton, whilst balancing those aspirations against available resources. Like any organization, the Council needs to forward plan its activities and associated budgets to achieve best value for all. It is hoped that this Plan for the next five years will help determine how the Council's limited resources are allocated and enable a cohesive partnership approach to delivery of services.

It is anticipated that further consultations may follow, directed at certain sectors of the community and to gain further insight into the community's views on proposed projects and activities.

### **3. Who is the Council?**

#### **Councillors**

The Council is made up of 12 elected and co-opted Councillors who offer their time voluntarily and work collectively on behalf of the community with the aim of improving the service provided, thereby making a difference to residents' daily lives. The current Councillors will serve until the next local council elections in May 2023. This Plan is intended to provide realistic short and longer term aims that may be delivered by the Council and built-on by future administrations.

The Council meets monthly on the first Monday in the Council Chamber at the Marshlands Centre on Harbour Road. These meetings are open to members of the public and provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Council at the start of the meetings. All decisions taken by the Council are voted on within such meetings, and it is only those decisions made by the whole Council which are legally binding.

#### **Staff**

The Council is supported in its work by a small team of employed staff known as 'officers'. Currently the Council has the following staff:

- **Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer (37 hours)** – the Town Clerk manages the team and all the Council's assets and is the legally appointed 'proper officer' for the Council, who must carry out the functions required by law and issue all statutory notifications, as well as being responsible for the proper administration of the Council's finances. She also leads on various projects such as the water refill stations, outdoor gym, sensory garden, art trail and community consultation.
- **Deputy Town Clerk (28 hours)** – the Deputy Clerk supports the Town Clerk and takes primary responsibility for the management of the Marshlands Centre, supporting Promote Seaton and other special projects such as the Summer First Aid Station and Youth Genesis Project.

- **Planning Clerk (4 hours)** – the planning clerk supports the Council in its capacity as a statutory consultee on planning applications.
- **Administration & Community Events Officer (24 hours)** – the Administration & Community Events Officer runs the Council’s reception and the tourist information service (which has recently been transferred from Devon Wildlife Trust). She also manages the Council’s allotments and leads on special events such as Seaton in Bloom.
- **Town Maintenance Officer (37 hours)** – the Town Maintenance Officer is responsible for regular inspections of the town’s play parks to ensure their safety, the general maintenance of the Council’s assets and buildings and the installation of the Christmas lights. Recent projects have included the rebuilding of the seafront planter and installation of numerous benches across the town.

#### 4. What does the Council currently do?

In East Devon there are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities:

- **Seaton Town Council (STC)** is the first tier and has an important role to play in maintaining local assets and supporting the work of all the different groups within our community.
- **East Devon District Council (EDDC)** is the second tier and has the responsibility for services such as planning, housing, rubbish collection and street cleaning.
- **Devon County Council (DDC)** is the third tier and has the responsibility for services such as highways, education, and social services.

STC only has jurisdiction over the various buildings and land that it owns and maintains. These include:

- Cliff Field Gardens
- Seaton Down Hill
- Underfleet Play Park
- Elizabeth Road, including the play park, Martial Arts Centre & Scout Hut

- Allotments
- Seaton Town Hall
- Marshlands Centre (including the Tourist Information Centre)

It also provides, maintains and replaces as required numerous planters, benches, notice boards and other infrastructure across the town and arranges, organizes and funds the planting and watering of all the town's planters. Increasingly it works in partnership with EDDC to benefit the town – recent examples, include the outdoor gym and two water refill stations which were funded by STC and installed and maintained by EDDC. Furthermore, STC has assumed responsibility for the installation and funding of the annual Christmas lights and supports or funds other ad hoc events, community ventures and projects. It also provides substantial assistance to the Gateway Theatre Company by letting the building on a peppercorn rent and also making a significant contribution towards the upkeep of the building.

**The Council also uses its best endeavours to influence and encourage EDDC and DCC to take forward larger projects which affect the town, such as the seafront enhancement scheme and the Stop Line Way.**

## **5. Financial Information**

The Council has few income generating assets and therefore its primary source of funding is the 'precept' which is the local tax levied by the Council and collected on its behalf by East Devon District Council as part of residents' council tax bills. At present £110.47 per year (based on a Band D property) of each resident's council tax contributes to this precept. This equates to £2.12 per week.

### **Income**

The precept for 2021-22 is set at £356,939. The Council currently has a small income over and above the precept from renting land and buildings to local groups and occasion grants for specific projects.

### **Expenditure**

The Council's primary items of expenditure are:

- running the tourist information service
- maintenance of the open spaces, buildings and other assets detailed above
- provision and maintenance of the town's floral displays
- grant funding for community groups
- provision of Christmas lights
- staffing and core administration costs
- subsidizing the town's primary events venue (Gateway)
- ad hoc special projects (first aid station, youth projects, water refill stations, art trail, marketing the town, cleaning the sea wall, funding outdoor gym, sensory garden)

## 6. Key Actions

These are the things which the current Council would like to achieve, which have been split into two sections:

- Short term – by the end of the current municipal year (May 2022)
- Longer term – 2022 – 2026

The general aims have been divided into four broad areas of work:

- **Economy & tourism** – to work actively with local stakeholders, insofar as the Council's powers and finances permit, to support the local economy and promote tourism. The Council will model and share good practice through its own role as an employer, landlord and provider of community assets.
- **Community** – to maximise benefit to the community by working closely with other stakeholders in the town
- **Environment** – to protect the town's natural heritage and improve and enhance its built environment for future generations
- **Other** – to ensure the ongoing good governance and efficiency of the Council, thereby providing best value and resilience for the town

It should be noted that **these projects are over and above the general operational work of the Council which takes up much of existing officers' time**. The Plan will be reviewed regularly, particularly during the budget setting process, to ensure budgetary requirements are in place as necessary to achieve the following year's aims.

In order to progress as a Council and implement projects over and above those detailed herein, further staff will be required. In particular, the Council is mindful of the need to 'future-proof' the work it does on the town's amenities by increasing capacity over and above existing amenities staff as well as considering the appointment of staff to improve on community engagement, events and activities.

### Short Term Aims (2021-2022)

At present the following projects are ongoing - having already been the subject of earlier Council decisions and budgetary allocation:

Project	Timescale
<b>Tourist Information Centre</b> – relocation of TIC to Marshlands seafront offices	Completion by March 2022
<b>Art Trail Phase 2</b> – to complete this	May 2022
<b>Museum</b> – in partnership with the Axe Valley Heritage Association, to begin the progress of investigating further the possibility of relocation the town museum.	Ongoing
<b>Tourism</b> - to attend the Travel & Tourism Show 2021 to promote the town	Completed in September 2021
<b>Marketing</b> – to produce a marketing film and distribute as widely as possible	Autumn 2021
<b>Youth Genesis Project</b> - to encourage engagement with the towns young people to establish their needs	Recruitment process ongoing
<b>Jurassic Fibre</b> – to finalise the lease and secure the fee of £12,000	March 2022
<b>Sensory Garden</b> – working with EDDC, Re:store and other community stakeholders to develop sensory garden in Seafield Gardens for all ages to enjoy.	Completion by Summer 2022

<b>Community Grants</b> – to encourage engagement with the scheme to ensure maximum benefit to local eligible groups	Ongoing
<b>Christmas Lights</b> – to work with community groups to re-establish this event after the hiatus in 2020, due to Covid-19	December 2021
<b>Volunteer programme</b> – to develop a volunteer policy/register to increase volunteer involvement in improving the town and increase community cohesion	Summer 2022
<b>Marshlands</b> – continuing the programme of works at Marshlands to ensure compliance with all safety and regulatory requirements and the safety of all visitors. To investigate how the Harbour Road-side might be best utilised to serve the community and generate income.	Ongoing
<b>Town Hall</b> – lease negotiations are ongoing to ensure the lease is fit for purpose for both landlord and tenant	March 2022
<b>Allotments</b> – to establish and implement the works required to repair recent storm damage to the allotments and improve generally the infrastructure (ie car park and paths)	Ongoing
<b>Rewilding/trees</b> – to identify further open spaces for rewilding, planting of tree.	Ongoing
<b>Sea wall</b> – to engage contractors to clean the sea wall	Autumn 2021
<b>Seafront enhancements</b> – Members will continue to lobby EDDC regarding the redevelopment of the Moridunum and wider redevelopment of the seafront and to make such smaller improvements to the seafront as are feasible within available budgets (such as cleaning the seawall and working with EDDC to pilot the disabled beach access project	Ongoing
<b>Welcome Back Fund</b> – working with EDDC to secure maximum available funding to replace assets such as benches and bunting and to develop the sensory garden	March 2022
<b>Local Council Awards</b> – to achieve Foundation Award to demonstrate that the Council operates efficient systems of management, governance and transparency.	March 2022

<b>Investment strategy</b> – to develop a strategy for future reserves and investments to ensure the future of the town’s assets	Ongoing
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### Longer Term Aims (2022- 2026)

The following are both ongoing projects and proposals arising from the community consultation and further decisions will be made as part of the budget setting process in Autumn 2021 as to which to progress during the following financial year and beyond:

Project	Timescale
<b>Art Trail – Phase 3</b> – with a view to producing a trail to encourage footfall around the town.	Ongoing
<b>Town Map</b> – to develop a simple town plan for visitors to encourage them to explore all of the town, possibly tying in the Art Trail	Summer 2022
<b>First Aid Station/Blue Flag status</b> – to investigate extending the first aid station for longer hours in 2022, possible further funding for the project and working with EDDC to gain Blue Flag status	Ongoing for Summer 2022
<b>Museum project</b> – ongoing work to obtain funding and progress this project.	Ongoing
<b>Disability access to beach</b> – to work with EDDC and help fund a pilot beach accessibility project to improve beach access for wheelchairs, with a view to a larger scheme being implemented depending on the results of the pilot	Summer 2022
<b>Funding for a beach school programme</b> – look at possibility of funding a summer programme of events for locals and visitors	Summer 2022
<b>Income generation</b> – to increase available income, other than the precept to develop the town by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development of a policy for letting of the Council’s assets</li> <li>- research into available grant funding for different projects</li> </ul>	Ongoing

- possible asset transfers or acquisitions such as beach huts	
<b>Maintaining community grants programme</b>	Ongoing
<b>Events</b> – to hold more events:  - 2 outdoor cinema events per year - Platinum Jubilee Celebration - fireworks event, if feasible	Ongoing
<b>Youth provision</b> – continue to work in partnership with Youth Genesis to engage with young people, understand their needs and develop youth provision in the town	Ongoing
<b>Ongoing maintenance and improvement of play equipment</b> - to ensure the longevity of the town’s play areas and to develop an maintenance fund	Ongoing
<b>Marshlands</b> – continuing the programme of works at Marshlands to ensure compliance with all safety and regulatory requirements and the safety of all visitors. To investigate how the Harbour Road-side might be best utilised to serve the community and generate income.	Ongoing
<b>Seaton Hole Telephone Box</b> – to refurbish the telephone box as a community project	Ongoing
<b>Comprehensive review of litter and bins in the town and investigate the cost of provision and emptying of more recycling bins and more bins generally</b>	2022/23
<b>Floral displays</b> – to increase floral displays by increasing business sponsorship.	Summer 2022
<b>SW in Bloom 2023</b> – to take necessary action to enter in 2023	2023
<b>Climate Change</b> – to carry out a review of what action the Council could realistically take to counter the effects of climate change and how it could assist in achieving ‘Plastic Free Seaton’	2022/23

<b>Litter picking/beach cleaning stations</b> – provision of stations to improve the environment	2022
<b>Seafront enhancements</b> – Members will continue to lobby EDDC regarding the redevelopment of the Moridunum and wider redevelopment of the seafront and to make such smaller improvements to the seafront as are feasible within available budgets (such as cleaning the seawall and working with EDDC to pilot the disabled beach access project)	Ongoing
<b>Relocation of bus stop (The Vault)</b> – to look at possibility of relocating bus stop to improve access	2022/23
<b>General power of competence</b> – to provide greater flexibility in the work the Council does	May 2023 (next elections)
<b>Training &amp; Development</b> – to ensure the continuing professional development of staff as required, to ensure they bring best value in their roles	Ongoing
<b>Staffing</b> – to keep staffing structures under review and build on resilience of existing team	Ongoing

## 7. Conclusions

This Plan is intended to provide realistic short and longer term aims that can be delivered by the Council and built-on by future administrations. It is a living document that will be reviewed regularly to ensure fitness for purpose.