



Strategic Framework (2025 – 2029)

Introduction

As we welcome the newly elected members of Ashington Town Council for the 2025-2029 term, we present this Strategic Framework document for your consideration. This document is not a finalised plan but rather a starting point for discussion and decision-making.

This framework outlines the priorities previously established by the 2021-2025 Council and highlights work already delivered toward these goals. These existing priorities have informed our current budget commitments and provide operational continuity during this transition period.

As newly elected representatives, you have the opportunity and responsibility to review, refresh, and redefine our strategic direction. While the established priorities offer a practical foundation aligned with current spending plans, you may wish to consider additional or alternative priorities that better reflect your vision for Ashington and the current needs of our community.

The challenges and opportunities facing Ashington deserve thoughtful consideration, and it is hoped this Council will work collaboratively to determine how we can best serve our community going forward. This approach aligns with our current staffing capacity, as we have deliberately maintained an underspend in this area pending Council's strategic decisions. Once our refreshed direction is established, we will evaluate the resources and capacity needed to deliver on these priorities effectively.

This document is presented as a reference point and potential foundation upon which you may choose to build. Should you decide to adopt all or part of this framework, it would then become a working document that evolves as new decisions are made and actions agreed upon. Each priority area includes potential work programmes and project plans that could serve as the basis for tracking and reporting progress.

You may wish to invite residents to engage with us as we shape the future direction of Ashington Town Council. Their input is invaluable as we strive to identify where we can add the greatest value and deliver the most positive outcomes for our community.

Staffing and Capacity Considerations

It is important to note that there is currently an underspend in our staffing budget. This has been maintained deliberately to provide the incoming Council with flexibility to determine strategic priorities before committing to additional personnel resources.

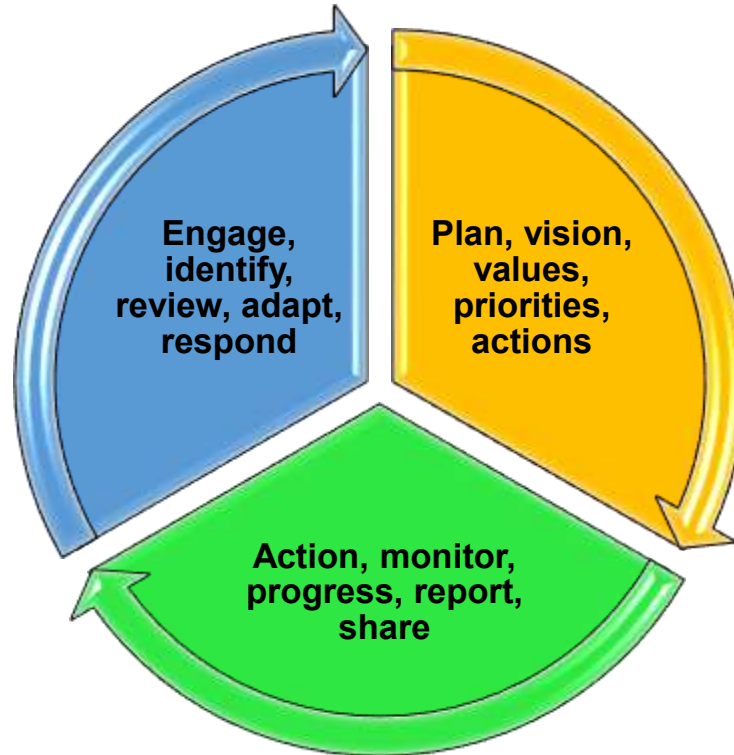
Once you have established a clear direction and set of priorities, we will be better positioned to assess the staffing capacity required to deliver these objectives effectively. This approach ensures that our organisational structure will align with whatever strategic vision the Council adopts, maximising the impact of public resources.

In the meantime, we remain committed to delivering essential services and continuing work on initiatives that have already been budgeted for in the current financial year.



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This framework document is presented with respect for your role as the decision-making body of Ashington Town Council. We look forward to supporting you as you determine how best to serve our community and shape Ashington's future direction.



Mission Statement

Defining Our Purpose Together

A mission statement defines why we exist as a Town Council and what we aim to achieve. It serves as our guiding star and helps focus our efforts on what matters most to our community.

The previous Council considered several options for a mission statement but did not formally adopt one. This presents an opportunity for you, as the new Council, to shape the fundamental purpose that will guide your work over the next four years.

Below are the previously considered options, which you may use as a starting point for discussion:

1. **Heritage and Future Focus:** *"With our heart in our heritage, and our focus on the future, we will work to improve the quality of life of present and future generations in Ashington."*
2. **Environmental Leadership:** *"To strive towards a bright future for Ashington residents, by improving the local environment and opportunities available in the town and putting climate considerations at the heart of everything we do."*



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3. **Community Wellbeing:** *"With our heart in our heritage, and our focus on the future, we will work to provide a safer, healthier, happier, cleaner, and more sustainable community."*
4. **Quality of Life:** *"Improving the quality of town life for present and future generations, whilst putting climate considerations and the priorities of our residents at the heart of everything we do."*
5. **Pride and Aspiration:** *"To strive towards a bright future for Ashington residents, raising aspirations and pride in the town by improving the local environment and the availability of positive opportunities."*
6. **Service and Empowerment:** *"To deliver quality services, events, and support that benefit and are valued by Ashington residents and generate increased community pride and empowerment."*
7. **Growth and Development:** *"We will continue to work to improve the quality of life for people living in Ashington and to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a place in which to live, work, visit or invest."*

Developing Your Mission Statement

As you consider these options, you might want to ask:

- Which statement best reflects your collective vision for Ashington?
- Are there elements from different statements that could be combined?
- Is there something missing that you feel is essential to include?
- How might the mission statement most effectively inspire both the Council and the community?

You may wish to create an entirely new mission statement that better captures your shared vision for Ashington's future. The most effective mission statements are clear, memorable, and authentic to the community they represent.

Once adopted, your mission statement can appear prominently in Council communications and serve as a touchstone for decision-making throughout your term.

Council Values

Building on Foundations of Public Service

The values of Ashington Town Council represent our core beliefs and guide everything that we do. They reflect both universal principles of good governance and the specific commitments we make to our community.

The Nolan Principles

Our values are underpinned by the Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles), which are the foundation of ethical standards in public service:

- **Selflessness:** Acting solely in the public interest
- **Integrity:** Avoiding external influence and conflicts of interest



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- **Objectivity:** Making decisions on merit
- **Accountability:** Submitting to necessary scrutiny
- **Openness:** Acting and making decisions transparently
- **Honesty:** Being truthful
- **Leadership:** Exhibiting these principles in conduct and challenging poor behaviour

Our "Six C's" Framework

Building on these principles, the previous Council looked at the following values framework organised around six "C" values, but this never formally adopted. As the new Council, you have the opportunity to review, refine, or reaffirm these values:

Community

Putting our community at the heart of everything we do. Embracing diversity, and valuing and respecting everyone.

Collaboration

Working together within the Council, for the Council, and with external partners, stakeholders, community groups and local businesses.

Competence

Working in a way that makes the most efficient and sustainable use of resources. Always seeking improved ways of working, value for money, and financial efficiency.

Communication

Upholding integrity, transparency, and accountability in all that we do. Prioritising inclusivity and accessibility.

Consideration

Being a caring employer that values and develops the team and provides a framework for good working relationships. Asserting social and environmental responsibility and acting in the best interest of society and the planet.

Championing

Promoting a positive image of the town through actions, sharing stories and opportunities. Advocating for residents. Celebrating the town's heritage and raising aspirations for the future.

Your Values Journey

As a newly formed Council, you may wish to:

1. **Discuss and Explore:** Consider how these values resonate with your vision for Ashington and your approach to governance.
2. **Refine and Adapt:** You might want to modify descriptions to better reflect your priorities or add emphasis to particular aspects.
3. **Bring to Life:** Consider specific examples of how these values might be demonstrated in your work and decision-making.



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4. **Ownership:** You may wish to hold a dedicated session to discuss these values and how they will shape your work together.

Once confirmed, these values will serve as a reference point for your decisions and actions throughout your term. They can also be communicated to residents as a commitment to how you will serve.



Community

Putting the community at the heart of everything we do. Embracing diversity, and valuing and respecting everyone.

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Core Priorities

Shaping Our Focus and Impact

The previous Council identified four core priorities that guided their work and resource allocation. These priorities were selected based on their potential to add value and create positive outcomes for Ashington residents.

As the newly elected Council for 2025-2029, you have the opportunity to review these priorities and determine whether they still represent the most pressing needs and greatest opportunities for our community. You may wish to affirm these priorities, modify them, or identify new areas of focus that better reflect your vision for Ashington's future.

Previously Established Priorities

The four core priorities identified by the previous Council were:

Keeping the town's streets and estates clean and litter free

Creating an environment where residents can take pride in their surroundings

Taking urgent action to fight the effects of Climate Change

Ensuring Ashington contributes to global sustainability while building local resilience

Supporting the community via events, engagement, and grant funding

Fostering connection, celebration, and empowerment among residents

Improving the environment by providing a pleasant and safe place to live

Enhancing quality of life through thoughtful management of public spaces and infrastructure

Developing Our Way Forward

As you consider these priorities, you might want to:

1. **Evaluate Progress:** Review what has been accomplished under each priority area and assess ongoing needs.
2. **Consider Emerging Challenges:** Identify new issues that may have emerged or grown in importance since these priorities were established.
3. **Assess Community Feedback:** Reflect on input from residents about their current concerns and aspirations.
4. **Explore Connections:** Consider how these priorities interact with each other and with other aspects of Council work.
5. **Propose Specific Projects:** Develop concrete initiatives that would advance these priorities or new ones you identify.

The subsequent sections of this document outline specific actions that have been taken under each priority area and suggest *potential future initiatives*. These can serve as a foundation for your discussions as you determine the direction and focus of your term.



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By establishing clear priorities, you will provide direction not only for Council decisions but also for staff planning and resource allocation. This clarity will help ensure that Ashington Town Council delivers meaningful impact in the areas that matter most to our community.

Keeping the town's streets and estates clean and litter free

Taking urgent action to fight the effects of Climate Change

Supporting the community via events, engagement, and grant funding

Improving the environment by providing a pleasant and safe place to live

Keeping the town's streets and estates clean and litter free

What we have done:

- ✓ Partnership with NCC to deliver enhanced neighbourhood services, to significantly improve the local environmental quality of Ashington. This is delivered via a team of five operatives, with increased litter bin emptying, street cleansing and response to fly-tipping in addition to NCC Core Services.
- ✓ Ashington Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and installation of litter bins. There are over 400 litter bins in the town, many of which have been transferred to the town council. We have pledged to update aging bins each year and continue to reinstall bins to our high standards. Also to choose the most appropriate bin for the area.
- ✓ Ashington Town Council supports the work of volunteer litter pickers, via funding and administrative support. We also arrange a town-wide litter picking project over the week of the Great British Spring Clean.
- ✓ We supported Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Police in initiatives in the Hirst Ward of Ashington.
- ✓ Sought stats on dog fouling and fly-tipping enforcement with a view to publicising to act as a deterrent.

What else could we do?

- Increase analysis of the quality of the work delivered by NCC under the Partnership Agreement. Ongoing negotiations with NCC on the delivery of services.
- Quarterly 'Love Where You Live' Campaign with greater increased collaboration between stakeholders in areas that require attention, and more proactive use of the resources available.



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Taking urgent action to fight the effects of Climate Change

What we have done:

- ✓ Changed the council's small petrol van to a fully electric van and installed an electric car charging point. However, we are currently back to fuel due to the vehicle catching fire.
- ✓ Redesigned the beds on Station Road and at the Gateways into the town to display sustainable planting, reducing the maintenance and watering required and improving biodiversity.
- ✓ Tree planting campaigns and targets.
- ✓ Councillors and Officers qualified in Carbon Literacy.
- ✓ Installed improved water systems on allotment sites.
- ✓ Adopted a 'working from home' policy.
- ✓ Organise an annual local 'Great Big Green Week' event at Ashington market and an ECO Fair at Hirst Welfare. This included attendance by leaders in energy efficiency and recycling, and all things climate friendly.
- ✓ Bulb and Wildflower planting.
- ✓ Glass, metal and plastic recycling schemes on allotment sites.
- ✓ Included community groups on Climate Committee.
- ✓ Made and installed Bird Boxes, as well as making available to community groups.

What else could we do?

- Fund Carbon Literacy training for others.
- Work with NCC to review the grass cutting schedules to help improve biodiversity.
- Engage with residents, and work with NCC, to identify areas that would benefit from re-wilding, wildflower planting, and/or bulb planting.
- Advocate for residents in social housing in Ashington and seek an update on the retrofit of properties in Ashington, including those most in need of energy efficiency upgrading.
- Encourage and support all allotment holders in water conservation and towards better recycling.
- Utilise the grant funding and engagement budget of the Council to support community groups in pursuit of sustainability.
- Launch a campaign for 'Meat-Free Monday' with incentives for pledges and recipes.
- Facilitate the opening of a Repair/Loan shop.

Supporting the community via events, engagement, and grant funding

What we have done:

- ✓ Improved website, and social media engagement.
- ✓ Introduced videos as a more engaging method of communication.
- ✓ Improved the process and awarding of annual and small grants to ensure transparency, due diligence, and regular communication.
- ✓ Organised Ashington Fair Day at People's Park, with local groups and businesses invited to take part.
- ✓ Organised Great Big Green Week, with the support of environmental and climate conscious groups and organisations.



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- ✓ Listed and shared town-wide events during school holidays, and throughout the year.
- ✓ Appointed a Communication and Engagement Officer.
- ✓ Supported groups in the town with events, i.e. Ashington Camera Club, NCC Get Onside, Leading Links, Woodhorn Museum – Northumberland Miners Picnic.
- ✓ Organised School's banner exhibition as part of Northumberland Miners' Picnic.
- ✓ Facilitated the attendance of our Civic Head at Community Events and activities.
- ✓ Attended Hirst Co-ordination Meetings.
- ✓ Attending Thriving Together Networking event.
- ✓ Annual and Small Grants awarded.
- ✓ Provided free swims sessions.
- ✓ Created youth survey.
- ✓ Funded youth engagement events.
- ✓ Shop competitions and engagement events

What else could we do?

- Arrange an annual engagement event for community groups and organisations in the town.
- Facilitate Ward Councillor engagement.
- Engage with residents about environmental issues, including grass cutting, rewilding, wildflower, and bulb planting.
- Engage with residents on their use of small local play areas.
- Connect with residents on priorities and issues affecting the town.
- Attend events in the town organised by others.

Improving the environment by providing a pleasant and safe place to live

What we have done:

- ✓ Improved Christmas Lights displays on Station Road.
- ✓ Invested in advanced CCTV on Station Road.
- ✓ Maintain speed indicator devices.
- ✓ Regular maintenance of bus shelters, seats, and litter bins.
- ✓ 10-year Asset Management Plan to update play areas.
- ✓ Initiated project to further develop the management of allotment sites.
- ✓ Flower displays throughout the town.
- ✓ Installed twelve public access defibrillators.
- ✓ Pledged to replace four bus shelters every year.
- ✓ Committed funding to each ward for environmental enhancements.
- ✓ Ward specific projects including outside Ashington Football Club, gates at Nursery Park Allotment site, supported Ashington Cricket Club memorial project, St. Johns Church Workers Memorial, and Doves Corner.
- ✓ Funded the engagement work to seek improvements to accessibility and to enhance Ashington Community Woods.

What else could we do?

- Facilitate temporary displays to screen empty shops on Station Road.
- Further improve Christmas Lights displays.



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- Campaign for improvements to the Ashington Market.
- Take an active role on the Ashington Town Board to progress investment in Ashington.
- Identify town assets that are neglected by others, with a view to seeking transfer and responsibility.
- Campaign for positive action on empty homes and the licensing of landlords.
- Allotment Strategy to further improve allotments for cultivation.

The Power of Possibility

As a Town Council, we possess the legal authority to undertake a remarkably wide range of initiatives for the benefit of our community. The *General Power of Competence* gives us the freedom to innovate and act on almost any opportunity that would enhance Ashington's wellbeing.

What transforms possibility into reality is a combination of three essential elements:

- Clear Direction: A shared vision and purpose that guides our decisions
- Collective Will: The determination and commitment to see initiatives through
- Strategic Resources: The thoughtful allocation of financial and human resources

Where these three elements align, meaningful change becomes not just possible but inevitable. The priorities you establish and the projects you champion will determine where we focus our collective energy and resources.

Conclusion

Moving Forward Together

This document has presented a framework for consideration as you begin your term as Ashington Town Councillors for 2025-2029. It reflects the work, values, and priorities that have shaped the Council's approach to date, while recognising that you now have both the opportunity and responsibility to chart the course ahead.

Your Role in Shaping Ashington's Future

As elected representatives, you bring fresh perspectives, diverse expertise, and a mandate from the residents of Ashington. The mission statement, values, and priorities outlined in this document are offered not as constraints but as foundations upon which you can build.

We encourage you to:

Engage deeply with the issues facing our community

Collaborate effectively as a Council and with community partners

Propose boldly the initiatives that will make the greatest positive difference

Decide thoughtfully how to allocate the Council's resources and attention



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From Framework to Action

Once you have reviewed and refined this strategic framework to reflect your collective vision, the next step will be to develop specific action plans and projects. These should include clear objectives, timelines, resource requirements, and success measures.

With strategic direction established, we can then assess staffing needs and organisational capacity to ensure the Council has the resources required to deliver on your priorities effectively.

A Living Document

The strategic framework you adopt should remain a living document throughout your term—one that guides your decisions while evolving in response to changing circumstances, emerging opportunities, and lessons learned.

Regular review points will help ensure that your strategic direction remains relevant and that progress is being made toward your goals. These reviews also provide opportunities to celebrate successes and communicate achievements to the residents of Ashington.

In Service to Ashington

The ultimate purpose of this strategic framework is to focus our collective efforts on making Ashington an even better place to live, work, and visit. By establishing clear direction and purpose, you will enable the Council to serve the community more effectively.

We look forward to supporting you in this important work and to witnessing the positive impact you will have on Ashington's future.