



Cranbrook Town Council

Business Plan 2024-2029

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3	4 May 2018	Version 1 published
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Foreword by the Town Council's Chairman

Cranbrook is now over ten years old since its first occupations but still remains a work in progress with development in the town continuing until far beyond the scope of this plan. The Town Councillors and staff are working hard to ensure that public facilities are delivered and provided in the town.

As a completely new development we know that these much-needed facilities will come from funding raised by the sale of new homes. With that in mind we continue to work very closely with the developers, the local planning authority East Devon District Council and Devon County Council to ensure that development comes forward at both the right pace and at the right quality and that infrastructure and facilities are delivered at the appropriate time and place. There are many things which we would all like to see in the town but we all need to accept that not everything will happen immediately.

The Town Council is working with a number of uncertainties, not least that the development of Cranbrook as it expands will encroach into the current boundaries of surrounding parishes. In 2021 the Town Council's request for a further governance review of the parish boundaries was postponed by the District Council and is now being picked up again..

The Cranbrook Development Plan Document (DPD) was found sound by the Planning Inspector and the expansion areas are progressing with two of them, Cobdens and Treasbeare, having received outline consents. We are working together with East Devon District Council and Devon County Council on the future delivery of the town as part of a placemaking group made up of the three local authorities.

The Council publishes this Five-Year Plan in order to inform you what you might expect from the Town Council during that period. It also provides you with some up-to-date information about how the Town Council operates which you might find informative.

We hope that the contents of this document will give you the confidence to believe that your town is being managed in an efficient, forward-thinking and effective way. Please do get in touch with us if you would like any more information or to discuss any of the contents of this document. You can find our contact details on page 13.



Cllr Les Bayliss
Chairman
Cranbrook Town Council

1. Introduction

What is the purpose of this document?

This Plan is our blueprint for how Cranbrook Town Council will work in a co-ordinated way in the best interests of all who live, work in and visit our town. It sets out our vision, objectives and priorities. The Plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

This Plan will drive and determine the direction and content of our strategies and our resources, particularly through the budget-setting process. The detailed content of the Plan will be strongly influenced by other work and will need to be regularly reviewed and updated accordingly. Internal pressure will largely arise from plans to improve service quality and the availability of resources. External pressure will arise particularly from our partnership work with the developers, the local planning authority East Devon District Council, Devon County Council and changes in legislation.

Later in the Plan we have identified Cranbrook Town Council's vision and long-term outcomes as well as our priorities and actions over the next five years.

Why do we need a plan?

The Plan helps ensure that the Council can take a planned and consistent approach to the design and delivery of services, how we prioritise and allocate resources and how we achieve best value for public money.

National and local planning context

The Council recognises both national and local policies especially those within the East Devon Local Plan and the Cranbrook Development Plan Document in addition to the National Planning Policy Framework and other local government legislation.

How we ensure community involvement

Council meetings are open to the public and we encourage attendance and provide the opportunity for the public to speak at our meetings. We have both a website and social media presence which recognises that the favoured method of communication within Cranbrook is social media. We also make use of more traditional channels of communication including noticeboards. Anyone is always more than welcome to pop into our office in the Younghayes Centre or to email or phone us. You can find our contact details on page 13.

This document sets out our mission, purpose and priorities for the next five years for elected councillors, staff and the community we serve.

2. Cranbrook

Cranbrook lies to the north-east of Exeter, approximately 2km to the east of the M5 motorway and north of the A30. The northern extent of Cranbrook is formed by the West of England railway line which serves Cranbrook railway station providing direct services to Exeter St David's and London Waterloo. Exeter Airport lies to the immediate south-west.

Development is taking place on former agricultural land and around an existing flood plain. A small number of pre-existing rural dwellings and two small hamlets, Bluehayes and Southbrook, are located within the Town Council's existing boundary.

Cranbrook commenced development in 2011 with first home occupations in 2012. Since its commencement several phases of development have been completed; and subsequent phases are in the process of development with yet additional phases in the process of reserved matters and detailed planning. Once complete this will take the town to 3,500 homes. Further expansion areas are planned, taking the town to around 8,000 homes by the end of the East Devon District Council Local Plan period (2031) and beyond.

To the west, between Cranbrook and the M5, further employment development is taken place at Sky Park (DPD, warehouse, distribution, small business units and office space), Science Park (high-tech industry and Met Office) and the Exeter Logistics Park (Lidl and Amazon distribution centres and other large warehouse and distribution facilities). These provide extensive local employment opportunities to supplement those within the town.

Education is provided by two existing schools with primary education for up to 420 pupils at St. Martin's Primary School and all-through facilities at the Cranbrook Education Campus. Additional schools are planned within the expansion areas.

The Younghayes Centre, a multi-purpose building on Younghayes Road which is owned and managed by the Town Council, currently houses the Town Council, a multi-use sports hall, a conference room, a small meeting room, a resource hub (internet access, hot desking, computer and printing) and a medical practice. The building is adjacent to a small parade of neighbourhood shops.

The first tranche of the town centre in Cranbrook, with the exception of the Cranberry Farm public house which had been in operation for a number of years, commenced during 2022. The East Devon New Community Partners (EDnCP) are delivering, among other provisions, a supermarket, retail spaces, a town square and a nursery alongside town centre infrastructure. The Town Council delivered a wheeled sports facility (skatepark) in the town centre. Future town centre development includes a town hall building with café, terrace, public toilets and small business units, land for extra care facilities and land for blue light facilities. The extent of town centre housing and the provision of additional facilities such as a leisure centre and health and wellbeing hub await finalisation in the local planning authority East Devon District Council's town centre masterplan which is in development.

3. Overview of the Town Council

The Council was created by a community governance review in 2015 and is made up of 12 councillors who are elected every four years. The first Town Council was elected through planned elections in May 2015 which were held again in May 2019, May 2023 and will be held again in May 2027.

The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected by the councillors at the annual meeting of the Town Council in May each year.

There are three committees: Amenities, Finance & Personnel and Planning.

There are four standing working groups – Asset Delivery; Policy Review, Safety and the Town Emergency Response Group. Other working groups are formed to deal with specific issues as they emerge.

The full Council meets monthly. The Amenities Committee meets approximately every six weeks and the Finance & Personnel Committee meets quarterly. The Planning Committee is called as required to meet the 14 or 21-day timescale for commenting on planning applications and other planning related matters.

Full Council meetings and committee meetings are usually held in the Younghayes Centre and are open to the public. Agendas for full Council and all committee meetings make provision for members of the public to speak, make representations, ask questions or give evidence in respect of Council business.

Approximately 9,000 or so residents occupied 3,170 households in January 2024. The current growth rate is somewhere between 150 and 250 new homes per annum.

The Town Clerk and other Council employees work from the Town Council office located in the Younghayes Centre.

The Council has adopted the General Power of Competence, a legal power which enables the Council to undertake a wider range of activities to serve the community.

The Town Council is non-party-political and non-religious in nature, and serves all members of the community, regardless of their age, race, sex, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

4. Management Structure

The administration of the Town Council is carried out by a qualified Town Clerk who has been appointed by the Council and employed on a full-time basis. The Town Clerk is required to carry out all the functions required by law as the Town Council's Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Seven members of staff provide administrative support to the Town Clerk and the Council and have responsibility for specific activities, including providing administrative support to the Amenities and Planning Committees, website, asset register, financial management, risk assessment, allotments, management of the Council's public open spaces and buildings (including the bookings for the main hall and the meeting room), regular play park inspections and social media and are often the first point of contact for the community.

One of those appointments is a qualified Deputy Clerk. As the town grows and with it the Town Council's adoption, ownership and responsibilities of additional assets, this appointment is essential to efficiently manage the Council's affairs and responsibilities.

The Town Council also usually employs a Ranger who looks after all areas of public open space in Cranbrook and manages the Council's grounds maintenance contract.

The provision of youth services is seen as a key function in this emerging town. The Section 106 agreement provides for basic youth provision represented by the presence of a youth bus for two hours on two evenings a week. This is provided by Space and commissioned by Devon County Council. To supplement this, the Town Council commissions its own youth service provider, the Cranbrook Youth Club CIC, to provide youth club and future outreach services.

There are a number of functions which fall to the Town Council which are subject to a legal agreement linked to development of the town. These include management of the urban drainage system, the construction of a sports pavilion, a wheeled sports facility (skatepark), a pump track, play parks and other amenities in conjunction with the developers and the provision of allotments. These functions attract a basic level of funding which will come to the Council in order to enable it to deliver on these responsibilities.

5. Corporate Vision

We see Cranbrook Town Council as a modern organisation which strives to be open to all, transparent and responsive. We pride ourselves in working with and for people in order to help create a place where everyone feels part of a strong, prosperous and vibrant community. We want Cranbrook to be a safe, clean, healthy and green environment where everyone is proud to live and bring up their families.

The Council aspires to be a leader in the development in the town and is working hard together with partners to drive future development, including an inviting and attractive town centre, to propose suggestions for improvement to existing and future infrastructure, and to resolve outstanding issues affecting the town.

The Council initiated and holds regular monthly meetings with the partner organisations involved in the delivery of the town to identify and resolve any issues. These meetings have been very effective in finding practical solutions to resolve issues as they arise quite simply by bringing all the key players round the table.

The Town Council is responsible for the management of the Country Park, five play areas, the Crannaford Allotments and other areas of public open space including verges. The Town Council also took on responsibility for litter picking and bin emptying away from the main local route (MLR). Towards the end of October 2018, with the adoption of the first roads in the town, certain statutory responsibilities for litter were taken over by the District Council and that authority now has responsibility for the litter and bins in the adopted areas. In addition, East Devon District Council has agreed to extend its litter bin clearance role to include two litter bins along the unadopted but open areas of the Main Local Route (MLR). Since 2018 this picture has changed little with very slow progress on further highway adoption.

Since June 2019, the Town Council has also been managing the sports pitches at the Ingrams site and is delivering a sports pavilion for the use of the sports clubs and wider community.

The Town Council will continue to adopt and manage more assets including:

- multi-purpose town hall (see below);
- town square and lift;
- the Ecology Park;
- sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) systems;
- further play areas and a trim trail;
- sports provision;
- CCTV; and
- allotments.

The Council is also looking to provide many services, including the maintenance of community areas and open spaces, hosting community events, community competitions and opportunities for young people. To better facilitate events, the Council installed an events space in the Country Park which enables small supporting vehicles to enter the Park without risk of damage to the surface. Hitherto events have been impacted by adverse weather conditions which have prevented use of the Park by support vehicles and necessitated cancellation of planned events.

The Council is working together with partner organisations in the delivery of

- excellent public transport;
- sport and leisure facilities;
- road policing and speed control;
- Cranbrook as a destination, e.g. gateway to the countryside;
- improvements to the Country Park;
- cycle routes and facilities; and
- enterprise, business development and support.

In taking this work forward, the Town Council is conscious of the financial pressures and limitations it faces and is prepared to campaign for the facilities which a town the eventual size and scale of Cranbrook requires. But there will be some difficult choices to make along the way.

The town is well served by a commercial bus service. The Town Council continues to be in discussions with Devon County Council and the service provider to improve the service including greater capacity and integration with the train service. The bus service serving Cranbrook is one of the few commercially viable bus services in Devon and has been the fastest growing service in the county.

Delivery of the town centre is crucial to the economic and social well-being of the town and the Town Council is working with the developers and the local planning authority to bring forward vibrant and modern spaces. The key question in the 21st century is what a modern town centre looks like. With Exeter just nine minutes away by train and with good local connections, the town centre in Cranbrook needs to have that unique selling point to attract both townsfolk and neighbours.

The Town Council is looking to commission a multi-purpose building in the centre of Cranbrook called The Tillhouse. The vision is that this building will incorporate the Town Council offices and a multi-use open space for entertainment, events, exhibitions, indoor markets and for Council meetings, a café-bar, small business units, flexible meetings spaces and exhibition space. The Council hopes that this building will be at the heart of the community of Cranbrook as the hub for community and social activities, and will benefit residents, tradespeople and visitors alike.

The Council hopes that The Tillhouse will be built alongside a town square which will afford opportunities for outdoor events, celebrations and markets.

6. Financial Information

The budgeted annual revenue expenditure for the Council for the 2024-25 financial year is £649,785.00. This figure excludes expenditure in relation to the Younghayes Centre and the Ingrams Sports Pitches. This figure is funded from the Council's activities and the Cranbrook element of the council tax known as the precept, which for 2024-25 is £659,021.22. The Council also operates a capital budget and individual budgets for both the Younghayes Centre and the Ingrams Sports Pavilion.

Because of the recent slower-than-anticipated build rate and reduced tax base due to high discounts and disregards, the Town Council has been managing budget pressures. The tax base is expressed in terms of the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in an authority's area, taking into account exemptions, discounts, disablement relief and the collecting authority's estimate of its collection rate for council tax. It does not represent the number of homes. The precept is collected by East Devon District Council as the rating authority.

This document sets out projected details of its spending in order that residents can understand what the what the Town Council's council tax will be in the future.

The council tax Band D for 2024-25 remains £256.03 which is contributed directly to the Town Council. This represents a 0% increase on the preceding years since 1 April 2018 with increased revenue being provided solely by the increase in the tax base, i.e. the number of Band D equivalent occupied properties in Cranbrook as explained above. The continued aim over the five-year period of this document is to maintain council tax at the same level with annual increases in precept to meet increasing service demands being delivered from annual increases in housing numbers only. It is therefore crucial to this that the local planning authority East Devon District Council maintains a constant throughput of housing supply over the delivery period of its Local Plan.

The budget pressures described above stem from the additional revenue liabilities as a result of both East Devon District Council and Devon County Council only adopting their statutory responsibilities in Cranbrook and not assuming responsibilities for assets and services which they discharge everywhere else across their respective areas.

The Council will adopt a balanced approach to capital expenditure in respect of the procurement of new assets and the maintenance of its existing assets. For the financial year 2024-25 the Council has set a capital budget of £13,286.00 which will contribute towards the fitout costs of the Town Council's future town centre building The Tillhouse.

No targets for capital receipts have been set. Additional income may also be generated, where appropriate, through renting, leasing etc. of the Town Council's properties and assets.

The Council has adopted a risk-based policy and approach to its levels of reserves which will be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary. Reserves should reflect around 50% of operating revenue but the Town Council, recognising the desire to maintain council tax as low as possible, will gradually build reserves from any budgeted underspends. Reserves will only be held above the minimum level for specific, earmarked purposes.

Councillors have taken the decision not to claim an allowance for their duties.

7. Council's Functions

There are three main drivers which will influence the functions of the Town Council over the short and medium term:

1. The decision taken towards the end of the 2017-18 administrative year to work with the consortium of developers to adopt delivered areas of open space. This was effective from 1 April 2018.
2. The decision taken by Council in November 2018 to work with East Devon District Council to adopt responsibility for ownership and management of the Younghayes Centre. This was achieved in November 2019.
3. The current attitude of higher-tier councils (mainly driven by constraints on their funding and the reduction and the expected eventual cessation of the central government grant) to not adopt anything other than their statutory responsibilities.

As the town grows, we can therefore expect Devon County Council to gradually adopt the highways and street lighting and East Devon District Council to continue to collect kerbside waste and recycling and to street-clean and empty litter bins on the main local routes. Beyond these statutory responsibilities any discretionary functions which fall to a local authority will ultimately fall to the Town Council.

From April 2018, the Town Council adopted ownership and responsibility for managing the Country Park, together with various play parks and a great number of public open spaces.

As the town grows and other areas of open space and recreation come forward, these will pass to the Town Council once they have been completed satisfactorily and undergone a 12-month maintenance period – effectively a guarantee period during which those areas remain within the responsibility of the developers. This process provides the Town Council with reassurance that assets are properly delivered and within a timescale which allows the Council to budget accordingly.

Over the next five years, the Council expects to adopt further facilities including an Ecology Park, more play parks (including a trim trail and multi-use games area (MUGA)) and urban drainage facilities. This is an ambitious programme linked to an ambitious housing delivery timescale which could ideally see between 350 and 500 homes delivered in Cranbrook per year.

The Younghayes Centre accommodates, among other provisions, the Cranbrook Medical Centre which has been experiencing significant pressures on their operations for a number of years as a result of the ever-increasing number of patient registrations.

The development and management of the Younghayes Centre and other assets such as public open space, play parks and the future town centre building and public realm will form a large part of the Town Council's functions over the short and medium term but in addition the Town Council is an important partner in the delivery of housing and other development as well as a statutory consultee on the many planning applications which will come forward over the next few years.

The nature of the development of Cranbrook – essentially a private development funded from house sales – dictates that the future delivery of infrastructure and assets stem from the various legal agreements associated with planning applications. To this end the Town Council will work closely with the developers and other partners to ensure that facilities are provided in accordance with the framework of those legal agreements.

In addition, the Town Council through its Asset Delivery Working Group will work with developers and partners to monitor delivery and ensure that any identified defects are corrected.

The Town Council will support the wider community by providing grant funding support for local groups with the longer-term aim of supporting their individual sustainability.

The town benefits from district heating and the Town Council will continue to work closely with E.ON to ensure that this service is delivered appropriately.

The Town Council recognises how approachable all utility companies have been in working closely and effectively with the Town Council – more so than might have been expected. The Town Council will build on these relationships and continue to work with all utility companies and providers.

The functioning of the Town Council is quite unique in that it involves many roles which local councils do not traditionally perform. This stems from the point made above that the top-tier councils of Devon County Council and East Devon District Council have made a conscious decision not to undertake any roles in the town other than those which they are required to perform by statute. Some examples of this are:

- Resolving with the developers any generic development and infrastructure issues;
- Bringing together all delivery partners in round-table meetings to resolve issues;
- Arranging and supporting community engagement with E.ON;
- Promoting and supporting community engagement with broadband providers;
- Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon and Cornwall Police to improve policing in the town and resolve misunderstandings about speed and other traffic enforcement;
- Working with the two schools in Cranbrook to address highways safety concerns at school drop-off and pick-up times;
- Working with the developers to bring forward top-quality sports facilities including a pavilion. In this regard we are also working with sports teams;
- Successfully adopting public open space and providing best value for public money;
- Assuming responsibility for sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS);
- Providing litter picking and bin emptying services in public open spaces which provide best value for public money.

8. Reviewing the Plan

This plan forms an annual item on the agenda of the full Council to ensure that it remains relevant and focused on the key areas of responsibility and objectives. Any changes will be rolled forward through the budget cycle for the forthcoming financial year.

9. Consultation

Our Plan will continue to be a main way of telling you what we are doing to meet the needs of the community. Please tell us what you think about our Plan. We welcome your comments and would particularly appreciate your views on its content and format. If you require any further information which would help you understand what we are trying to achieve, please let us know. We can also provide additional information on the issues raised in this document or put you in touch with the relevant person within the Town Council for more detailed information. More information about the Town Council, including an electronic version of this document, is available on our website www.cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk.

Copies of this document are available at our Town Council offices.

How to contact us:

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Appendix A – Forward Budgets

There are two major contributing factors which directly influence and inform the budgeting process: The rate of delivery of house building which determines the council tax base (the number of homes each year used in the calculation of the council tax, see page 10) and the timing and process of delivery of open space assets.

The Town Council has established arrangements with the developers for a programme of open space delivery and a structure which provides the Town Council with sufficient notice to ensure that delivery and adoption follows the budget-setting process. This arrangement includes notification that a section of open space is to be laid out, its completion and the start of a one-year maintenance (guarantee) period at the end of which the land is adopted by the Town Council. This structure and timescale mean that the Town Council is aware that a section of open space is to be delivered ahead of the autumn budget-setting process and that actual delivery will not be before the commencement of the subsequent financial year.

During the financial year 2024-25, the assets under Town Council management include the Younghayes Centre, the Country Park, play areas at St Martin's, Hayes Square, Northwood Acres, Crannaford and the Platinum Park, a skatepark, a pump track, the Ingrams sports pitches and the Crannaford allotments. We are also delivering, at the time of writing, the Ingrams Sports Pavilion and we are preparing the delivery of a multi-use games area (MUGA) and the Town Square and associated works.

In the short- to medium-term future, we anticipate taking responsibility for the Ecology Park, additional areas of public open space, a trim trail, further plays areas and the Southbrook allotments. In the medium- to long-term future we expect the delivery of further play areas, more sports facilities and areas of open space.

The Town Council will need to carefully plan its budgeting to meet the programme of asset delivery and will seek to maintain pressure on the level of further development to ensure that it keeps pace with the financial demands placed on the town's community.

The table below sets out the main elements of the budget over the next five years, but this information will need to be refined as the build rate and infrastructure delivery emerges.

Full details are on the Council's website at www.cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk/finance/.

Overview of Forecast Budgets

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Number of Homes	3,000	3,200	3,400	3,600	3,800
Tax Base	2,415	2,600	2,800	3,000	3,200
Precept	£618,312.45	£665,678.00	£716,884.00	£768,090.00	£819,296.00
Band D	£256.03	£256.03	£256.03	£256.03	£256.03
Income					
Precept	£618,312.45	£665,678.00	£716,884.00	£768,090.00	£819,296.00
Interest	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00	£200.00
Younghayes Centre	£52,950.00	£55,000.00	£60,000.00	£65,000.00	£70,000.00
Allotments	£2,100.00	£4,200.00	£4,200.00	£4,200.00	£4,200.00
Ingrams Sports Pitches	£0.00	£27,840.00	£27,840.00	£27,840.00	£27,840.00
Solar Panels	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00
Other Income	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Total	£684,962.45	£764,318.00	£820,524.00	£876,730.00	£932,936.00
Payments					
Salaries	£185,000.00	£195,000.00	£205,000.00	£210,000.00	£215,000.00
Pension & NI	£64,000.00	£70,000.00	£75,000.00	£80,000.00	£85,000.00
Grants	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00
Youth Service	£13,500.00	£14,000.00	£14,500.00	£15,000.00	£15,500.00
Younghayes Centre	£49,156.00	£50,000.00	£52,000.00	£54,000.00	£56,000.00
Ingrams Sports Pitches	£46,594.00	£50,000.00	£55,000.00	£60,000.00	£65,000.00
CCTV	£10,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Open Space	£220,000.00	£240,000.00	£260,000.00	£280,000.00	£300,000.00
Play Areas	£7,000.00	£9,000.00	£11,000.00	£12,500.00	£14,000.00
Waste Management	£16,000.00	£19,000.00	£21,000.00	£23,000.00	£25,000.00
Winter Gritting	£6,500.00	£7,000.00	£7,500.00	£8,000.00	£8,500.00
Council Vehicle	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Contingency	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Other Costs	£40,000.00	£50,000.00	£60,000.00	£70,000.00	£80,000.00
Total	£681,750.00	£733,000.00	£790,000.00	£841,500.00	£893,000.00