



Every four years the council develops a Corporate Plan. This is the council's overarching strategic document. It sets out our vision and ambitions for the area and for the organisation.

As part of our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Town and Parish councils, we want to find out what is important to you and what you would like to see in the plan. At the same time, we're also keen to hear your views on the budgets which will support the delivery of the plan.

You can give your council's views by answering the questions below. Please only give one response per council. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact our [Business Planning team](#).

Please give the name of your council:

Bleadon Parish Council

We would like to ask your views about our vision to be Open, Fair and Green.

Thinking about how we work together, what does being an open council mean to you?

Clarity about objectives

Involvement prior to decisions being made

Explaining why decisions are made when they differ to views expressed.

We need access to information that decisions are based on the **Seven Principles of Public Life/ the 'Nolan principles'**, are the basis of the ethical standards expected of public office holders. E.g. "**Openness** - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing." This should be the starting point and stated in the consultation.

The Corporate Plan isn't as open as it could be. For example, p7, Opportunities "**Weston-super-Mare – our largest town is set to become the second biggest settlement in the West of England over the next decade.**" Second to where? (WSM 82K - Clevedon 21K - Portishead 26K). Cllr Bell has confirmed second to **Bristol** and greater than Bath (current population 94K) Why is this not clearly stated in the Corporate Plan? WSM is down the road from Bleadon. NSC plans to build 15K houses over next 15 years, approx. 36K people with a third of that growth in WSM, how will this scale of development effect rural land and associated communities, culture, farmers, food security? The new Local Plan has not been published yet, will there be strategic gaps to protect rural communities such as Bleadon (e.g. from Bleadon Hill and Hospital roundabout WSM)? Where is NSC's unpublished Rural Strategy in relation to this plan?

Plan p14 "**Quality and affordable new homes will be being built on the council's own land with infrastructure projects underway to unlock further delivery.**" Is NSC selling off farmland? How much has it sold over the last 5-10 years? How does this fit with Food Security and the future generations of agriculture within North Somerset, and young peoples' career choices?" How does this fit with any 'duties' for food production and delivery nationally? How does this fit with NSC Local Plan re: solar, wind and housing development in general? **Govt UK Food Security Report 2021** - "*In meat, milk, and eggs, the UK produces a roughly equivalent volume to what it consumes.*" "*The UK produces a significant proportion of the other domestic crops it needs, including 54% of fresh vegetables, 67% of sugar beet, 71% of potatoes, and 79% of oilseeds, though only 16% of fresh fruit*" How will the altering North Somerset rural land affect this? What happens in these economic times if the UK is not food secure locally and nationally? <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources>.

Thinking about how we work together, what does a fair North Somerset mean to you?

Something stronger than an 'aim' to be fair and inclusive. North Somerset Council has a host of statutory responsibilities to some of the most vulnerable – and often disadvantaged - in society.

Nolan Principles / 7 Principles of Public Life “1.3 **Objectivity** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias” This should be the starting point stated in the consultation.

Thinking about how we work together, what does a green North Somerset mean to you?

The 'green' agenda is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate, with many wanting to contribute. However, with increasing evidence of what was once deemed to be 'good' now being questioned in terms of its environmental impact, there is a clear need for a leadership role.

Maintaining rural environments to continue food production and food security. Only build houses or 'green' energy projects on brownfield or non-agriculture land.

CPRE states, “Our 2022 state of brownfield report shows that the availability of previously developed land continues to grow across England. In summary, it has found that over 1.2 million homes could be built on 23,000 sites covering more than 27,000 hectares of brownfield.” <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/state-of-brownfield-report-2022/>

NSC declared 'green' as a vision – **what is its definition of 'green'?** We should be good custodians of our environment, avoid greenwashing, reduce plastic use and resulting pollution. **Includes when encouraging 'green' purchases or initiative to consider the whole life cycle in its calculations** e.g. solar panels where and how are the raw materials mined, sourced, decommissioned and disposed. Put solar on roofs not agricultural fields. **Work with farmers** who already need to protect biodiversity., but not all farmers own the land they work. **Do not encourage landlords to turn agricultural fields into rewilded meadows, forests, wetlands, solar, wind, etc.** Many rural areas are asking, e.g. via CPRE, to put solar on roofs not fields. <https://www.cpreberkshire.org.uk/news/put-solar-panels-on-roofs-not-farmland-cpre-tells-west-berkshire-council/>

P12 “North Somerset’s natural environment playing a more instrumental role in our communities through improved health and wellbeing, helping our response to the climate emergency **through rewilding and additional woodland, and supporting sustainable development and inclusive growth** - We will deliver the in-year (2022/23) actions of the Green Infrastructure Strategy including continued roll out of rewilding and developing the opportunities of biodiversity net gain” **How does NSC 'greening' fit with any unpublished Rural Strategy and agriculture land management?**

NSC indicate that 70% of North Somerset is 'green', how is its plans protecting this and associated agriculture? NSC state, 1.2 “**Approximately 40% (15,490 hectares) of land in North Somerset is designated as Green Belt.**” (Jan 2022 Green Belt Review Pt1 paper <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/16.23%20Green%20Belt%20Review%20Part%201%20Broad%20Locations.pdf>) 2.11 “The protection and maintenance of the Green Belt is very important to the affected communities, and ensures a clear distinction between urban Bristol and **rural North Somerset**” NSC Sustainable Community Strategy, p8 “North Somerset is a diverse area, with coastal, urban and market towns and rural villages. **30% of our population live in rural areas** with the remaining population living in the coastal towns of Weston-super-Mare (40%), Clevedon, Portishead and the market town of Nailsea (30%)3.”

Corporate Plan p7, **Opportunities "Work with local, regional and national partners to support sector development** (visitor economy, creative industries, rural, food and drink, **green**)”. What is 'green'? Business mentioned but farming and food security is not mentioned? Farmers are being encouraged to diversify outside of farming (solar, wind, woodland, etc), how is NSC supporting existing farmers to continue with farming and food production?

How do NSC partnerships with UK100 Countryside and Rural Services Network and others directly affect our communities? **Where are these meetings and discussions openly published?** How do BPC, the residents, farmers and businesses that it represents, interact with NSC decision making?

Do you agree that this vision is right for North Somerset?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please tell us why you agree or disagree that this vision is right for North Somerset:

It's unclear at this stage how the vision relates to the range of responsibilities which the Council must discharge – and which are often the core issues for residents.

Particularly for NS rural communities.

We have drafted four ambitions designed to help us achieve our vision. We would like your views on each ambition.

Our ambition for our children and young people is: *Our children and young people feel cared for, safe, supported, and are given equality of opportunity to thrive.*

Do you agree this is the right ambition for children and young people in North Somerset?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you have disagreed please tell us why:

The ambition should extend beyond children and young people – it should expressly include their parents/carers as support for the child/young person's family (however that is defined) is key to the outcomes for the individual.

What percentage of budget is spent on special needs children, what is causing this need? Is the cause being investigated and a plan to reduce this need?

Please give your thoughts on how you think we could help to achieve this ambition together, what actions should we take?

There is a need for more in the way of targeted support for children and young people to prevent problems escalating to the point where they then need more specialist (and more costly) intervention. This is particularly true in rural areas where there is limited access to services, which will potentially be exacerbated by changes to public transport provision.

Are there any areas aligned to this ambition where services could be shared between us or transferred that you would like to explore?

Following North Somerset Council cuts a few years ago, Bleadon Parish Council has supported play and youth activities within the Parish. It's unclear what further scope there might be in this respect – but the Council is open to discussions.

More support to develop agricultural interests, with a view to studying and becoming part of the future rural community, working with local farmers. Sharing and understanding local farmers work and commitment to producing our food. Creating conversations with farmers, relating to soil and land management, hedgerows, wildlife and their continued endeavours for good husbandry, to protect the environment in general for current and future generations.

Our ambition for adults and communities is: *Our communities are caring, healthy and safe, where people help each other to live well.*

Do you agree this is the right ambition for adults and communities in North Somerset?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you have disagreed please tell us why:

Please give your thoughts on how you think we could help to achieve this ambition together, what actions should we take?

Parish and Town Council are well placed to assist in this ambition – they will often have a more detailed understanding of the communities they serve and many will already have a core role in empowering community engagement.

Social isolation is an issue for many older residents and a tendency to assume that technology will always make things easier – when this is not always the case. It would be helpful if there was a genuine shared commitment to involve less technically proficient/inclined users in the design of new services.

What are NSC's plans with regards to accommodating the expansion of WSM to the second largest settlement after Bristol, including immigrants (whether from outside North Somerset or abroad)? With the switch from central to local government funding, how will this affect rural communities, especially with regards job, housing availability/allocation and services? What services will be available to support cultural integration, including urban vs rural?

P24 “New and emerging technologies are harnessed effectively to deliver efficient and good quality services. The Council is well on the way to ‘**paperless**’ and ‘**cashless**’ operation and is beginning to make use of robotics and Artificial Intelligence” A **total cashless society is in itself discrimination and will affect old and young alike**. It must maintain privacy as the current cash system does. (A move to Central Bank Digital Currencies negatively challenges this position, especially if programmable). NB: Some shops already refuse cash and are discriminating between customers.

No specific areas identified, but Bleadon Parish Council would be open to further discussions in this respect.

Our ambition for North Somerset as a place is: *Our towns and villages are thriving and sustainable places to live, work and visit.*

Do you agree this is the right ambition for North Somerset as a place?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you have disagreed please tell us why:

Please give your thoughts on how you think we could help to achieve this ambition together, what actions should we take?

It is not yet clear how this ambition relates to the anticipated revision to the Local Plan and, therefore, how it might be achieved in terms of allocation of land use. As a consequence, it would be helpful to understand how the proposals in relation to the Corporate Plan dovetail (or not) with the Local Plan and any, as yet, unpublished Rural Strategy.

Are there any areas aligned to this ambition where services could be shared between us or transferred that you would like to explore?

Please see comments above.

Our ambition for North Somerset Council is: *Our council delivers consistently good services and value for money to support an ambitious community.*

Do you agree this is the right ambition for how we work as a council?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If you have disagreed please tell us why:

This is not an ambition. It is a legal requirement and a way of working which should inform all of the work of the Council, including the other three stated ambitions. It is an expectation placed upon all Councils/bodies which have a fiduciary duty. It is a little concerning that North Somerset Council does not seem to recognise its responsibilities in this respect.

Please give your thoughts on how you think we could help to achieve this ambition together, what actions should we take?

See comments above.

Are there any areas aligned to this ambition where services could be shared between us or transferred that you would like to explore?

See comments above.

Do you have any other thoughts on the development of the Corporate Plan, if so please tell us here:

Bleadon Parish Council recognises that consulting with a more fully formed set of proposals gives rise to potential challenges that consultation is not genuine and decisions have already been made. However, in this instance, it may have been more helpful – and ultimately more productive – if there had been more ‘flesh on the bones’ to enable a more meaningful response. As things currently stand, whilst the Vision and Ambitions may have merit, it is difficult to see how they relate to statutory responsibilities and the issues which often detain residents

To support delivery of the Corporate Plan we set our budget each year which shows us how much money we have to spend and what we are going to spend it on. We would like your views to help this process.

Can you give us your view on which of these issues you think will be most important in North Somerset in the coming year (add an 'x' in the relevant box):

	Very important	Important	Not important	Not at all important	Don't know
The climate emergency					X
The cost of living crisis		X			
Inequality in our society		X			
Availability of services for vulnerable adults	X				
Availability of services for vulnerable children and young people		X			
Availability of services to support good physical health and wellbeing					X
Availability of services to support good mental health and wellbeing		X			
Availability of leisure services and things to do					X
Availability of public transport	X				
Availability and affordability of housing		X			
Crime and community safety	X				
Community development and resilience		X			
The condition of our highways and roads	X				
Changing the way we travel			X		
Access to good jobs		X			
The environment for businesses to thrive		X			
The condition of our town centres and availability of shops and services there		X			
The availability of services in rural areas		X			
Our environment including flooding risks and biodiversity	X				
Dealing with local waste and increasing the amount we recycle		X			
Add in any other important issues here:					

Please add in any comments you might have on these issues:

Without detailed information it's difficult to answer these questions. However, the NSC stated 'climate emergency' needs to be reconsidered in light of current and previous court cases questioning the data that led to crisis being declared. It is predicted that NSC may be £50 million in deficit in the next four years. How much money has NSC spent on climate change (rather than chemical and plastic pollution, good stewardship of environment, etc.) and how much does it intend to spend over the next 4 years?

Can you give us your view on which of these issues your council is most concerned about:

	Very important	Important	Not important	Not at all important	Don't know
The climate emergency					X
The cost of living crisis		X			
Availability and affordability of housing		X			
Affordability of utilities			X		
Affordability of food			X		
Inequality in our society		X			
Access to services for vulnerable adults	X				
Access to services for vulnerable children and young people			X		
Access to services to support good physical health and wellbeing			X		
Access to services to support good mental health and wellbeing		X			
Access to leisure services and things to do			X		
Access to public transport		X			
The impacts of crime and anti-social behaviour on you and your community			X		
The offer for community activities and support in your area		X			
The condition of our highways and roads	X				
Changing the way we travel			X		
Access to good jobs			X		
The environment for businesses to thrive		X			
The condition of our town centres and availability of shops and services there		X			
Access to services in rural areas		X			
Our environment including flooding risks and biodiversity		X			
Dealing with local waste and increasing the amount we recycle		X			
Add in any other important issues here:					

Please add in any comments you might have on these issues:

See above.

Is there an issue, either North Somerset wide or important to your council, that you would like to prioritise for investment and improvement?

Support for easy accessible locally produced food and associated food security will increase community interactions, improve understanding of the food chain and importance of good custodianship of the land. Proving why we need to protect our environment for health/food, leisure and wildlife. May help existing and new interested farmers to diversify into other traditional food production appropriate to our region. Will assist reduced food miles, carbon footprint, etc.

The council will need to balance its budget to pay for the rising cost and demand for our services and increasing council tax is an important part of the budget because this money helps to pay for the services we provide. Each year the government sets an upper limit on council tax increases although councils can ask residents to support higher increases if there is a local need to raise more money. The current limit is 4.99%. As of August 2023, inflation is running at 6.8%.

What level of council tax increase would you support in the coming year?

- Up to 3%
- Between 3% and 5%
- More than 5%
- An increase aligned to inflation
- An increase aligned to the government limit

When planning for the future the council wants to ensure that the services we provide are delivered at an affordable cost and in the best way possible.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with using the following approaches?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Bringing services back in house from commercial companies			X		
Transferring services to other organisations like commercial companies			X		
Working in partnership and sharing services with other councils and public sector agencies		X			
Transferring services to other organisations like community groups, social enterprises and town and parish councils		X			
Changing working practices to make better use of technology and more efficient ways of working			X		
Using digital technology more widely to support the delivery of services and making more services available online			X		
Making more efficient use of council assets such as land and buildings		X			
Increasing fees and charges for some services			X		
Targeting resources on the most vulnerable and people most in need		X			
Stopping provision of some discretionary services to protect services to vulnerable groups		X			
Reducing the quality of some services provided			X		
Scaling back or stop providing some services			X		
Encouraging more people to volunteer their time to become involved in the delivery of services		X			

Do you have any comments on any of these approaches or would like to suggest any others?

Without detailed information it's difficult to answer these questions. Other than a reduction in government funding, how did NSC end up in a predicted budget deficit? Are the contracts being created, and subsequently managed effectively and efficiently? Who are the proposed partners and what are their priorities?

Are there any comments you would like to make about the budget or have any suggestions for where we could make savings or generate income?

NSC estimate a £50million deficit over the next 4 years.

<https://www.northsomersettimes.co.uk/news/23777894.north-somerset-council-faces-17-million-budget-shortfall/>

Are there any plans to devolve certain services to the parishes and how with these affect the precept?

Before spending money on the 'green' agenda and climate emergency/crisis, **pause to look at the emerging real world data on this issues, and court cases, compared to computer modelling used to date.**

The Prime Minister has just stated £36billion going to mayors to control future budgets via the HS2 project closure, how will this affect NSC future budgeting? E.g. *"Rest of the country: £6.5bn. Keeping the £2 bus fare until the end of December 2024. The major funding was already in place – the government had already extended this scheme until the end of October as part of its bus recovery funding, and then through until the end of 2024 but at the higher level of £2.50."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/oct/04/hs2-rishi-sunaks-36bn-in-transport-funding-is-it-new-or-just-repackaged>

Do you have any thoughts in how we could work more collaboratively together in the future to support our communities and ensure the best use of resources?

Better engagement on consultations, without a pre-determined top down agenda e.g. climate crisis, getting residents out of car travel, etc.

SURVEY ENDS