

## **Charlton Kings Parish Strategy 2018-22**

**Approved by Council Minute 147/18/19 (26<sup>th</sup> November 2018)**

### **Our Purpose**

Charlton Kings Parish Council exists to serve the interests of Charlton Kings residents. We will take the lead in promoting these interests with all our service delivery partners and use the resources available to us to best effect.

### **Our Priorities**

- Maintain a safe environment for residents to live within and move around
- Protect and enhance the character of the Parish
- Develop good facilities that enhance the well-being of community members.
- Promote people's feeling of inclusion throughout the Parish
- Conduct Council's business in a way that minimises our carbon footprint

### **Our Strategy**

With the increasing emphasis placed on localism, it is important to have a simple but comprehensive document that sets out the Parish Council's strategic business objectives over the four-year life of this elected Council. This strategy provides the framework for the annual Parish Action Plans that will be the responsibility of our Standing Committees to deliver.

In this way, there will be a transparent mechanism by which everyone can identify the purpose of what the Council seeks to achieve, how it will do it, and the ways in which residents can contribute to the development of our community.

### **Our Objectives**

Our key objectives are set out below and provide:-

- a solid basis for planning the financial needs of the Council and a means of reviewing progress against defined targets.
- a mechanism to review, on an annual basis, the adequacy of existing policy objectives and thus an opportunity to amend them to reflect changing need.
- a means of updating the action programme to ensure a full four-year planning horizon. The programme will set out all significant work designed to meet the Council's policy objectives but will build in flexibility that will allow us to react to changing circumstances.

### **Community and well-being**

The role and scope of the Parish Council in carrying out this function has changed significantly as a result of continuing economic austerity. Key service providers have found their budgets significantly reduced, in line with central government's deficit reduction measures. As a result, a number of local services have come under threat and the Parish Council has stepped in to take a proactive role in safeguarding the future of certain key resources and services which the local community, and Councillors, consider important. This trend is likely to continue and will

present the Council with continuing challenges as we move forward. Key services and resources that have come under threat and which the Council has so far committed to safeguarding are:

- The Stanton Hall and Conference Room (by taking a lease from Cheltenham Borough Council).
- Rebuilding and upgrading the Church Piece public toilets as part of the Parish Hub.
- Helping to safeguard local youth provision after the withdrawal of County resources.
- Community engagement, including an improved local police presence at the Council's office.

All these initial goals have been achieved in the life of the previous Council. This Council has identified three challenging goals which are to:

- Develop the Grange Field as an integral part of the Parish Hub (by taking a lease from Cheltenham Borough Council) and to increase the number and range of events held there.
- Assure the future of the Kings Hall, by redeveloping the building in a way that will enhance facilities for young people and develop it as an enhanced community asset in combination with the Stanton Hall (by taking a lease from Cheltenham Borough Council).
- Catalyse and support community organisations in the provision of services that enhance the well-being of our community.

**We will:**

- Identify key issues affecting the Parish when determining the allocation of budgets to committees.
- Take proactive action to support and facilitate the provision of certain key community functions which may be withdrawn as a result of service cuts imposed by higher levels of local government; e.g. maintaining and further developing the Parish Hub.
- Continuously improve communications between the Council and our community via our enhanced website, a more proactive use of social media (Facebook and Twitter accounts) and continuing our monthly topical editorial column in *The Local Answer*.
- Actively seek views from the full range of Charlton Kings communities and identify priority issues through the Community Open Meeting, surveys, and other appropriate means.
- Contribute to the well-being of the community by identifying measures that enhance public safety and crime reduction.
- Promote community health and care services.

**People**

It is important that we address the needs of all age groups within the community and bring young and old together to help and learn from each other. Bringing the Grange Field and the Kings Hall into the Parish Council's estate will provide a major opportunity to make better provision for different age groups and particularly for young people.

**We will:**

- Investigate means of improving our communication, to ensure that everyone within our community feels included and has a voice in local decision making.
- Work in partnership with the community and organisations in our area, including schools, churches and clinics, to develop and support initiatives that promote well-being and quality of life for all.
- Identify areas of concern and seek means by which to improve everyone's sense of well-being.
- Support the Trustees of the Kings Hall Youth and Community Centre to ensure the continued provision of youth facilities in the village centre, enhancing and using its facilities in the best way for the benefit of young people.
- Support the adequate provision and upgrading of local facilities, to provide access to , and support with, a range of social and recreational activities.

## **Environment**

When compiling the Parish Plan in 2017, the results of our consultations showed that residents valued the unique interrelationship between the built environment, its green spaces, and the surrounding Cotswold AONB above virtually all other aspects of living in Charlton Kings. In the wider sense of 'environment', there was support then, and probably increasing support now, for actions that will contribute to limiting Global Warming by, e.g. energy efficiency, recycling, public transport.

### **We will:**

- Integrate environmental aims into our business planning processes for continuing improvement and comply with (and wherever possible exceed) relevant environmental legislation when carrying out our activities, including procurement services.
- Reduce our use of consumables when carrying out our administrative functions by making better use of electronic means of communication and storing data.
- Continue to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions by reviewing the effectiveness of design features and make changes as necessary.
- Minimise waste from our activities and introduce an office and kitchen recycling scheme.
- Actively participate in, and lead the conservation of, the most precious elements of our natural heritage, e.g. Charlton Kings Common Site of Special Scientific Interest, Gloucestershire Key Wildlife Sites, e.g. Ravensgate Common, and surrounding Cotswolds AONB landscapes.
- Actively encourage the preservation and enhancement of the most valued elements of our built environments, e.g. green spaces, built heritage Conservation Areas, listed buildings and structures.
- Work to ensure that future developments are sympathetic to existing street scenes.

## **Planning and Planning Policy**

Planning is an area of the Council's work that has a potential impact on every resident. It is, however, an area in which the Council cannot take the initiative – it can only respond to consultations on others' strategic development plans and make its views on individual planning applications known to the Borough Council as the Planning Authority. Recognising these limits on our influence, we aim to become increasingly effective in shaping the future of Charlton Kings, creating an environment where people can live, work and play in ways that make the best and most sustainable use of our resources and which protect the areas and features that the residents of Charlton Kings most value.

### **We will:**

- Work in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council and other Parishes within Cheltenham, to ensure that full account is taken of local views when developing policy and introducing measures likely to affect our community.
- Use our Parish Plan to inform our responses to policy statements and proposals affecting our community.
- Deal consistently, transparently and in a timely manner with all planning applications on which we are invited to comment; seeking to maintain the unique character and feel of Charlton Kings and avoid inappropriate design.
- Seek improvements in the standard of documentation submitted for our scrutiny and continue to develop our own capacity to use electronic systems to assess and comment on applications.
- Resist cases of 'back garden development' where they impact adversely on neighbours' quality of life or the overall environment of Charlton Kings.
- Encourage Local Planning Authorities to take timely and effective enforcement action in all cases where planning regulations have been breached.

## **Highways and transportation**

The Parish Council has no responsibility for the maintenance or improvement of highways, nor for managing and controlling their use. We have had a good working relationship with Gloucestershire Highways in the past and with their change of delivery partner in April 2019, will seek to reinstate our 6-monthly liaison meetings at which we discuss priority issues in the parish.

### **We will:**

- Develop our partnership with Gloucestershire Highways and other key service providers to encourage, and on occasion contribute towards, the achievement of the highest practicable standards of highway maintenance and renewal of roads and footways within the Parish.
- Explore options for taking on or supplementing certain tasks, to ensure that the highest standards of provision are achieved, e.g. by widening the scope of the salt warden scheme, through our Winter Action Plan as agreed with Gloucestershire Highways.
- Identify community priorities for traffic safety, champion their inclusion in service-providers' work programmes and, where appropriate, make financial contributions.
- Help ensure that public transport and cycling are attractive options for our community.

## **Public Rights of Way**

There are over 40 Public Rights of Way (Footpaths and Bridleways) in the parish that provide well-used and valued opportunities to access the countryside and explore the historical streets of Charlton Kings. Gloucestershire Highways (GH) have the responsibility to keep footpaths clear of vegetation and obstructions and ensure that landowners maintain them in a useable condition. We work closely with GH and provide local volunteer assistance and some funding to ensure a continuous programme of maintenance and enhancement.

### **We will**

- In conjunction with the County Rights of Way office and other service providers, target improvements to make existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) serviceable and available to all for recreational and access purposes.
- Promote the public's use of PRoW by installing new public information map boards ('Walking Maps') to show all PRoW in the parish, and also develop a range of signage for circular walks in both the countryside and built-up areas.
- Develop our network of Rights of Way Guardians, to carry out periodic surveys and spot checks to ensure the continued serviceability of routes throughout the Parish; and encourage users to notify the County Rights of Way Office and the Parish Council of problems with existing PRoW and identify new needs.
- Negotiate with landowners where appropriate, to rationalise and improve the Parish's PRoW network and jointly fund new and improved provision as required, by improving or re-routing existing PRoW, creating new PRoW and attempting to secure new 'Permissive Access' where it is not possible, or too expensive, to create new PRoW.
- Provide a nucleus of specialist equipment and expert advice on its use, for volunteer PRoW working parties to maintain and tidy PRoW to complement the County Rights of Way team's actions.

## **Allotments**

The Parish Council owns four allotment sites at Croft, Haver, Ryeworth and Sappercombe that between them have 250 allotment plots covering 3.3ha of cultivatable land. Although demand is not as high as it used to be, there is a steady flow of new tenants taking up plots and there is seldom more than a handful vacant at any time. Rents are set to cover running costs and smaller capital improvements, with larger projects, e.g. easy access plots with a toilet at Sappercombe, subsidised from the precept.

### **We will:**

- Manage and improve our four allotment sites for the benefit of the Charlton Kings community, ensuring our allotment plots are well used and available in good condition for the largest possible number of allotment tenants.
- Improve the effectiveness of communication about allotments between the Parish Council and tenants/potential tenants, using all communication channels e.g. website, site notice boards, committee meetings, yearly reports.
- Use the experience and knowledge of our allotment tenants to help inform what we do.
- Continue to run our annual allotments competition to encourage and reward tenants who achieve the best possible standards of cultivation.

## **Statutory Consultations**

Statutory consultations by partner organisations and government are becoming increasingly important to our ability to deliver our objectives. We will put in place appropriate internal mechanisms to ensure that Councillors are made aware of all statutory and other consultations in a timely manner and, where necessary, modify the Council's procedures to ensure that it is able to provide an appropriate response by the specified date. When a response is made to a public consultation, we will ensure that it is made publicly available on our website.

## **Four-year and Annual Action Programmes**

This document establishes Council's strategic objectives over the next four years. A separate document will set out a series of individual, costed, actions that our four Standing Committees (Finance & General Purposes, Community Development, Allotments, Planning) will use to deliver their parts of Council's annual programme. Year 1 has an identified budget, Year 2 estimates what could be achieved and at what cost, and Years 3 & 4 set out desirable actions to complete the rolling 4-year programme set out in this strategic vision.

## **Review**

This document will be reviewed, as necessary, over the life of this Council up to 2022. A new Strategy will be written after the next Parish Council is elected in May 2022.