



Long Ashton Parish Council

# *A council for the 2020's*



**Providing  
local  
services**



**Improving  
where we  
live**



**Giving  
local  
people a  
voice**



**Supporting  
the  
community**



**Long Ashton Parish Council Plan 2020 - 2023**

**Draft for consultation | March, 2020**

# Long Ashton Parish Council Strategy 2019 - 2023

## *A council for the 2020s*

### **Draft for public consultation**

#### 1. Long Ashton Parish Council

Long Ashton Parish Council is one of over 10,000 local councils in England. Parish and town councils make up the first tier of local government in most parts of the country. Long Ashton Parish Council was first established in 1894 and exists to represent the people of Long Ashton and Leigh Woods. The council is a democratically elected public body. Elections take place every four years for the 21 places on the council (2 are elected by residents of Leigh Woods and the other 19 by residents of Long Ashton). Councillors are not paid and give up their time freely to serve the local community. The next council elections will take place in May 2023.

The powers and responsibilities of parish councils have been determined by central government legislation over many years. Within this legislative framework, Long Ashton Parish Council's roles and responsibilities are as follows:

- Democracy - giving local people a voice.
- Services - providing a range of services to local people.
- Improving where we live
- Supporting the community

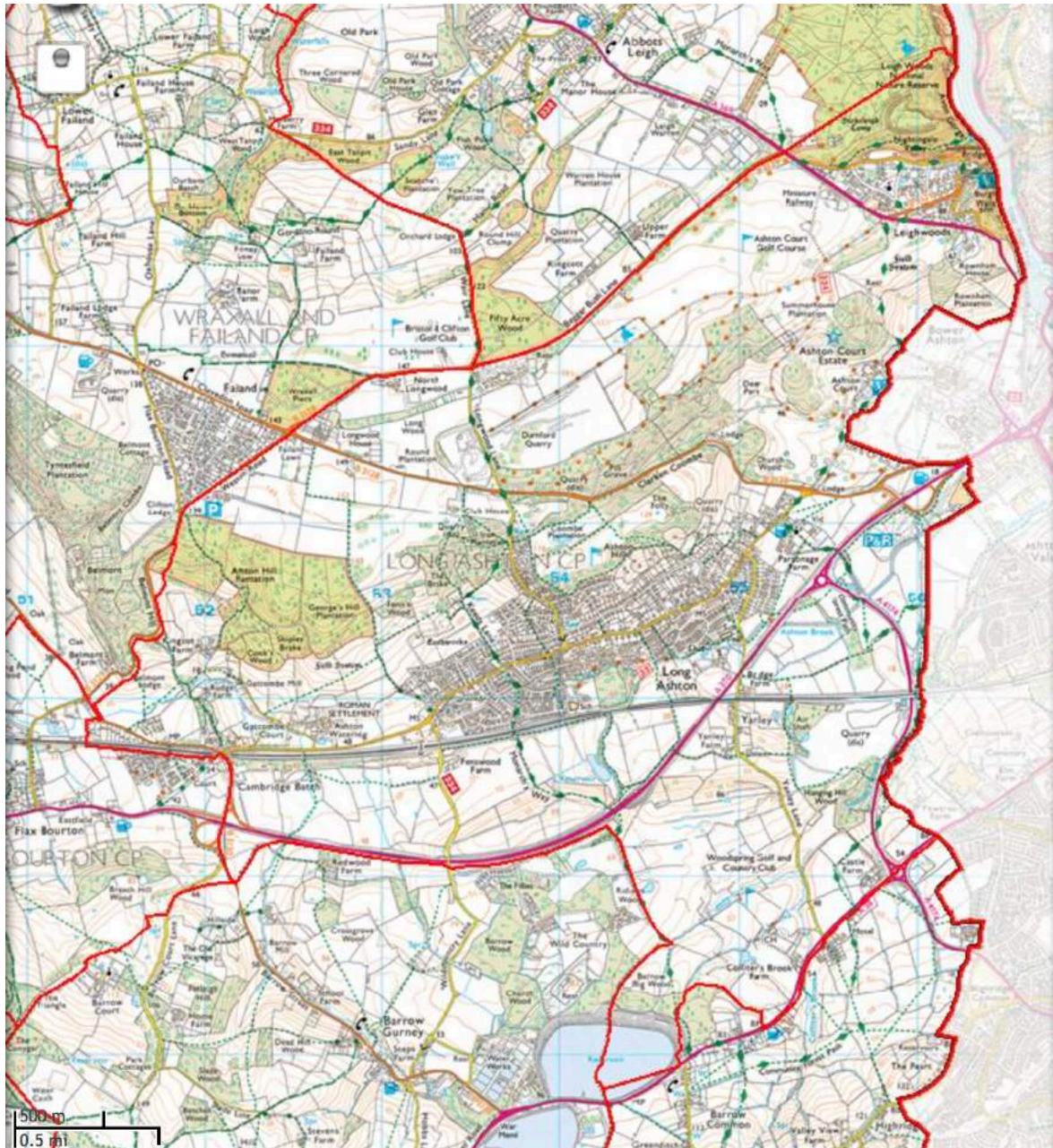
The Council raises money for local services through an additional charge on the council tax, known as a precept. In the 2019/20 financial year the Council's income was £184,277. £172,000 was raised through the precept and the other £14,277 from fees and other sources. The Council also has funds held in reserves which are used to deliver specific services and projects.

The council also employs a small number of staff to help deliver local services and to support the elected councillors. The Council's staff consists of the Clerk, Assistant Clerk, two village orderlies and a gardener.

#### 2. The place

Long Ashton is a village on the outskirts of Bristol and, together with Leigh Woods, forms a civil parish which in 2011 had a population of 6,044. Long Ashton is situated within the administrative boundaries of North Somerset Council, which is a unitary authority located within the historic county of Somerset. While separated from Bristol by the green belt the city is very close - the centre of the village is only around five miles from the city centre, the University, major hospitals and Bristol Temple Meads station. Leigh Woods is just over the suspension bridge from Clifton. This proximity brings many benefits but also challenges and pressures that could threaten the village and semi-rural character of the area.

The Parish Council's boundary (in light red, below):



### [3. Our Parish Council's Strategy for 2019 - 2023](#)

#### **Our vision**

The Parish Council wants to be at the heart of a sustainable, strong, inclusive, healthy, safe and thriving local community, where everyone benefits from a good quality of life, where community matters and everyone feels they belong and are respected. We want the Parish Council to be seen as relevant to the whole community, being a force for good that is influential, that listens to the community and responds effectively to the concerns of local people.

## **Our values and ways of working**

The Parish Council is striving to be:

- A well-run Council
- Ambitious but realistic
- Approachable
- Community minded
- Diverse
- Empowering
- Engaging
- Inclusive
- Representative
- Sustainable
- Transparent
- Welcoming

We want Long Ashton and Leigh Woods to continue to be a place that is distinctive from Bristol, and where people are fully engaged with the Parish Council. We want the Council to be representative and attractive to potential new councilors. We want to see the Council develop its community leadership and community engagement roles and to build partnerships with relevant local organisations.

The Council is well run and effectively manages its resources. We want to continue to deliver effective public services that give value for money, while at the same time helping to improve the social and environmental well-being of the area and all its people.

The Parish Council is very concerned about the threat of climate change and potential damage to our environment and will do all it can to help tackle these challenges by working with local people and organisations in the area.

***The Parish Council will seek to put the above vision, our values and ways of working into effect over the next three years by delivering a number of key priority projects alongside the more day-to-day delivery of the council's services and regular activities, which will be reviewed and where necessary improved.***

## 4. Delivering our strategy - Priority projects

### **a) Community Library / Hub**

Following the closure of the village library provided by North Somerset Council, the Parish Council established a working group in 2018 to pursue the delivery of a community library / hub. The working group, made up of parish councillors and local people, recommended to the Parish Council that a temporary building should be constructed adjacent to the community centre, which would enable a community library service to be offered at some point in the near future, and which would enable a longer-term solution to be explored and developed. The library working group represents an example of best practice as they have successfully progressed this initiative which benefits the community from good levels of resident engagement and involvement. The Council wishes to see this way of working continue and will support the on-going work of the working group as the project develops.

The Council is fully in support of this initiative. Capital funds have been identified to purchase and install and refurbish a container for this purpose. The Council will employ a part-time community library / engagement officer to help support the volunteers who will run the new community library / hub.

Beyond the immediate priority of delivering the community library, a feasibility study is planned for a community hub which is looking to explore greater community engagement space, a space for young people and further space for the Parish Council as an addition to the new library building.

**Timescales:** Recruit community engagement / library officer and secure planning permission - Spring 2020. Install and refurbish container - Summer / Autumn 2020. Open before the end of 2020.

### **b) Long Ashton Village Enhancement Scheme**

The Long Ashton Village Enhancement Scheme (VES) has been under consideration for a number of years. Following extensive consultation there is overwhelming support in the village to see traffic speeds reduced and for environmental improvements to be carried out in the centre of the village. There are a number of other areas in and around the village that would benefit from similar measures being considered. Due to limited resources, the introduction of such measures has to be done in phases.

Phase 1 of the VES has been developed by the VES working group and residents' engagement in the group has been extremely valuable with individual contributions enduring over the lengthy duration of the project. The proposals have been the subject of detailed consultation and have been considered and approved by the Parish Council and by the highways authority, North Somerset Council (NSC). All the works and officer time are being paid for by the Parish Council. Formal consultation by NSC took place over December 2019 / January 2020. It is planned that initial measures will be installed in mid-2020.

More work is needed on finalising the proposals for the area outside Piccolos. It is hoped that all works in the centre of the village will be completed by the end of 2020.

Phase 2 of the VES will look at other areas around the centre of the village and beyond, such as Providence Lane and the east end of the village. This phase of the project will also look at where 20mph limits could be introduced in other parts of the village. The VES working group needs to be re-energised to take forward this work and the active engagement of local people will be sought.

The Parish Council will also continue to work with local residents and other relevant bodies to address the problems of traffic speeds and the lack of a pavement at the Park Homes site at Kingcott Mill Farm and the stretch of road along the B3130 Clevedon Road.

**Timescales:** Phase 1 (installation of traffic calming and environmental improvements in the centre of the village) by summer 2020. Improve area outside Piccolos by end of 2020.

Phase 2 will establish a refreshed working group over the spring of 2020 with a view to new ideas being developed and implemented by the end of 2022.

### **c) Leigh Woods Enhancement Scheme**

The Council will work with local residents and other stakeholders in Leigh Woods to establish whether there is a desire for an enhancement scheme in the area. The Council has earmarked a sum of £10,000 to support this possible initiative.

**Timescales:** meet with relevant stakeholders and possibly establish a working group to carry out the consultation process - throughout 2020/21.

### **d) Skatepark**

The intended delivery of a skatepark followed a petition received from local school children, following which a working group was established to take forward the delivery of this facility and explore different funding methods. The parish Council is supportive of establishing a skatepark in Peel Park and will provide some funding to help with the initial planning and development of the project. Some match funding might also be provided for capital costs, but the majority of the costs will be met through fundraising. Some Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding might arise in the future that could be allocated to the project. The project will be led by the skatepark working group, working closely with LACA.

**Timescales:** Apply for planning permission, work up designs, etc. - by December 2020. Fundraising - ongoing. Build and open skatepark - by end of 2021.

### **e) Climate Emergency / Sustainable Development**

The Council recognises the threat to the whole world that is presented by the climate emergency. Helping to tackle the causes of climate change and loss of biodiversity will be a priority for the Council as a whole to address over the coming years. We support North Somerset Council's aim to for the area to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The Parish Council will carry out a review of all its activities and working practices to see if ways of reducing our environmental impact can be identified. The Council already carries out a number of activities that seek to protect our natural environment and help tackle the causes of climate change. We will carry on this work over the coming years, including by carrying out the following actions:

- Increased tree planting throughout the area.
- Encourage greater use of public transport and ensure the Parish Council's bus shelters are in good condition.
- Promote walking and cycling, including through the implementation of the VES.
- Promote recycling, waste reduction and re-use.
- Investigate the potential for locally generated sustainable energy.
- Push for higher environmental standards in all new housing developments in the parish.

We recognise that the Parish Council cannot tackle this challenge by itself. We have already agreed to support the setting up of a Long Ashton Climate Change Network (LA-CAN) and we are keen to work through this group as a means of bringing the whole community together to help move towards a carbon neutral parish by 2030. Some initial resources have been made available to support the Network with holding meetings and publicity.

The Parish Council will consider the possibility of setting up a climate emergency action fund to encourage small scale projects and actions in the parish. This could come into operation in the financial year 2021/22.

**Timescales:** help support and develop LA-CAN - on-going. Review the Parish Council's activities and actions / undertake an environmental audit of the Council - 2020/21.

## [5. Delivering our strategy - through the activities and services of the Parish Council](#)

### **Service delivery**

The Parish Council is responsible for delivering a number of public services in the parish. These are set out on page 10. The Council is committed to delivering services in an effective manner, providing good value for money as well as improving the well-being of the local community. We support the concept of achieving best value, which means that as well as looking for financial efficiency we are also interested in meeting our social and environmental objectives. We will undertake to keep our service delivery under review and look to improve the quality of our services wherever possible.

### **A quality Council**

The council has been recognised by the National Association of Local Councils as a well-run council and was given a Foundation Level Award in 2012. Over the next three years we will work towards achieving a Quality Award and by 2025 to have achieved a Quality Gold Award. Over the coming year we will draw up an action plan to show how we can move towards achieving these quality standards.

## **Increased staff capacity**

The way the Council itself works needs some attention. The capacity of the Council to deliver this strategy and to continue to deliver an ever-increasing number of services to a high standard means that we do need to invest more in the staff that the Council employs.

Over the next year the Council will seek to increase our staffing capacity by increasing the hours of the Clerk, so it becomes a full-time post, and by creating two new, part-time, posts (\* below).

This would give a staff structure as follows:

- Clerk (37 hours a week)
- Assistant Clerk (12 hours a week)
- Community Engagement / Library Officer (hours and exact job details to be agreed)\*
- Responsible Financial Officer (hours and exact job details to be agreed)\*
- Gardener (up to 10 hours a week)
- 2 Village Orderlies (each up to 5 hours a week).

## **Premises**

The current Parish Council office is far too small and a new office is needed, along with adequate storage space and a small meeting room. In the short term, best use will have to be made of the existing facilities, but in the longer term a new office, possibly as part of the community library / hub, will be explored.

## **The Council's brand, external image and communications**

The Council recently undertook a rebranding exercise and a new logo was agreed for use on all Council publications and communication materials. The Council now needs to roll out this new logo and to develop its use of social media. The new Community Engagement / Library Officer will have specific responsibility for leading on the Council's use of social media.

Over the coming year the Council will carry out a comprehensive review of its web-site, both in terms of its content and appearance.

The Council will continue to publish the Newsletter three times and year and will look to further improve its appearance and appeal.

## **The Council's democratic functions**

The current Council has 21 places for elected councillors - 19 from Long Ashton and 2 from Leigh Woods. Over the next year the council will undertake a review of the number of councillors, with a view to possibly reducing the number. More recently, elections have not been contested, which undermines the status of the Council. Most places do get filled, but through co-options. The Council would like to see the vast majority of its members directly elected - a smaller council or perhaps more wards, might help to achieve this.

Over the next year the Council will carry out such a review and will seek to involve local people in this process. The scope of the review will include:

- A review of the current warding arrangements.
- Consideration of a possible reduction in the number of Council seats.
- Consideration of changing the Council's name, for example to Long Ashton and Leigh Woods Parish Council or Long Ashton and Leigh Woods Local Council
- A review of the role of North Somerset councillors in relation to the Parish Council.

Recommendations for possible changes will be identified that could be implemented over the following two years (2021/22 and 2022/23) in time for the next Parish council elections in May 2023.

## **6. Delivering our strategy - through better community engagement**

The Council recognises that it needs to more proactively engage with residents and broaden its interface with the community.

There are a number of ways in which this could be done - over the next three years the Council will look to try out a range of communications methods, including:

- convening topical meetings which encourage residents to engage in a more non-formal way
- holding stalls at the village market and other public events, with different Councillors each time and featuring specific topics which residents are interested in
- engaging with more community groups
- extending its social media presence to platforms beyond Twitter
- developing the annual parish meeting
- the possible use of focus groups
- by reaching out more to the community
- by making it easier for people to engage ...
- while recognising the limitations to involvement.

The Council would like to ensure that it is representative of the whole community – and that issues that affect certain demographic groups, such as the elderly or children, are more effectively identified and addressed.

The Council will seek to work more closely with a wider range of different community groups, resources and time permitting. The Council will conduct an in-house research exercise to identify and map as many groups and organisations in the parish that it should engage with, and review how best to achieve this.

### **Engaging with young people**

The Parish Council will seek to continue to engage with children and young people and to find out their views, particularly on each of the Council's priority projects.

The Parish Council supports the Long Ashton Children and Young People's Network, which seeks to bring together children and young people's organisations in the parish. The Parish Council has a grant budget for young people - the youth grant - which is managed through the Network. The Council also supports the youth club through an annual grant.

### **Partnership working**

The Council is committed to working in partnership with a range of relevant groups, organisations and businesses in the area to better deliver services and to more effectively engage with local people. A stakeholder analysis will be carried out to identify groups and relationships that need to be developed / prioritised more.

The Council will continue to give grants to help support the work of local groups and organisations.

### **Long Ashton Community Association (LACA).**

A key relationship that needs developing and improving is that between the Parish Council and the Long Ashton Community Association (LACA). The Long Ashton Community Association is a separate charity which manages the local Community Centre and the surrounding recreational grounds / facilities. The Council part-funds the Community Association and is also responsible for appointing the members of its management committee. The Council also owns the community centre buildings and land, and these are leased to LACA on a long lease which currently lasts until 2026.

Over the next three years the Council will aim for more joint working and co-operation with LACA - we will meet regularly with the LACA management committee to explore areas of mutual interest and to ensure that the Council's grant and other funding is being effectively used and spent on jointly agreed projects, particularly the repair and maintenance of the buildings and facilities. The Council would like to see a different governance model for LACA explored and if possible agreed over the next year.

## **7. Maintaining Long Ashton and Leigh Woods' distinctive identity**

The Council is committed to maintaining Long Ashton and Leigh Woods' distinctive identity, as a place and a community that is separate from, but connected to, Bristol. The Council is aware that this is aim strongly supported by local people.

In May 2015, following a successful local referendum, the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan was agreed and became a part of the planning policy framework of North Somerset. The plan seeks to strengthen the importance of the green belt and to emphasis an area of separation between Bristol and Long Ashton. Over the next three years North Somerset Council will be producing a new Local Plan for the area. The Parish Council will seek to be involved as much as possible in the development of the new plan, and will resist most strongly any development that encroaches on the village or Leigh Woods. The Council will undertake extensive consultations with local people to develop its response to the proposed new plan.

The Parish Council is also a statutory consultee on all planning applications. The Council will continue to examine all planning applications that arise in the parish and to respond effectively and in what we feel are the best interests of all local residents.

## **8. Delivering our strategy - financial resources**

The Council raises funds through the annual precept - we will seek to limit any rises in the level of the Council's precept while at the same time seeking to meet the increasing demands being made on the Council to provide more services and respond to more issues that affect the local area.

The Council will continue to seek external grants and funding wherever possible.

The Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee will continue to keep the Council's spending under close scrutiny and ensure that the Council's resources are properly managed. An external audit of the Council's finances takes place each year.

## **9. Other documents to take into account**

There are a number of other documents that sit alongside this strategy, particularly:

- The annual budget
- The Action Plan
- The Neighbourhood Development Plan and Village Design Statement

All are available on the Council's web-site.

## **10. We welcome your views on this document**

This document is currently open for consultation and we would welcome any views you may have on it, and also how we can work with you to take forward some of the ideas set out in the plan, once it is agreed by the Parish Council. We hope to agree the document at the meeting of the full Council in March, 2020.

Please send any comments by email to the Council's Clerk by Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.

[clerk@longashtonparishcouncil.com](mailto:clerk@longashtonparishcouncil.com)

Thank you.

## Long Ashton Parish Council - Services provided directly by the Council

- Play areas throughout the village - at Kings Croft, Perry Road and Gardeners Walk
- Peel Park (maintained by LACA on behalf of the Parish Council)
- Birdwell recreation ground
- 13 benches throughout Long Ashton and Leigh Woods
- 2 defibrillators
- 8 noticeboards
- Regular newsletter
- Theynes Croft public car park
- 4 bus shelters
- Traffic calming / slowing measures and minor highways works
- 2 speed detectors
- 35 grit bins
- Litter picking
- 21 litter bins
- 34 dog bins
- Maintenance of the landscaped entrance to the village (opposite Ashton Court)
- Maintenance of the All Saints churchyard
- Provide all services and run the burial ground (behind All Saints church)



Long Ashton Parish Council  
17 February, 2020.