

Cranbrook Town Council

Business Plan 2020-2025

Iteration	Date Completed	Details of Amendments
1	5 March 2018	First draft approved by Finance & Personnel Committee
2	23 April 2018	Second draft approved by Town Council
3	4 May 2018	Version 1 published
4	18 February 2019	Version 2 approved by Town Council
5	22 June 2020	Version 3 approved by Town Council

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Foreword by the Town Council's Chairman

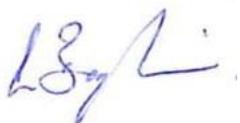
Cranbrook is now nearly eight years old since first occupations but remains a work in progress with development in the town continuing until far beyond the scope of this plan. The Town Councillors and staff are working hard to ensure that public facilities are provided in the town.

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 are working 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 within a number of uncertainties, not least the outcome of the Cranbrook Development Plan Document. In addition to that we know that Cranbrook, as it expands, will encroach into the current land areas of surrounding parishes. We have an expectation that East Devon District Council will carry out a further governance review of the parish boundaries to ensure that the entire extent of the development of Cranbrook sits within the governance of the Town Council. We need to ensure that council tax receipts which are needed for the Town Council to manage the town facilities are available to it. We are working together with East Devon District Council and Devon County Council on the future delivery of the town as part of a Strategic Delivery Board made up of the three authorities.

Your Town Councillors have produced 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.



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.

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 emerging 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 and we work closely with the local press.

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

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 on former agricultural land and around an existing flood plain. The locality has a small number of pre-existing rural dwellings and two small hamlets, Bluehayes and Southbrook, which will be within the town once it is complete.

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 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).

To the west, between Cranbrook and the M5, further employment development is taking place at Skypark (warehouse, distribution 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 will 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 expansions areas.

The Younghayes Centre, a multi-purpose building in Phase 1 which is owned and managed by the Town Council since 22 November 2019, currently houses the Town Council, East Devon District Council's Cranbrook planning team, Action East Devon, Devon Carers, a library, a medical practice, a small meeting room and a multi-use sports hall for hire. The building is adjacent to a small parade of neighbourhood shops.

With the exception of the Cranberry Farm public house, which provides a vibrant social environment for residents of the town and beyond, the town centre remains to be developed and this is a particular focus for the Town Council.

3. Overview of the Town Council

The Council was created by a 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.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman 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.

A Local Action Group (LAG) has been formed where Town Council and partners meet to respond to issues affecting the community. The LAG reports to and co-ordinates with the East and Mid-Devon Community Safety Partnership and is primarily concerned with community safety and crime reduction.

There are three standing working groups – Asset Delivery; Climate Change, CCTV and Safety. Other working groups are formed to deal with specific issues as they emerge.

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

Full Council meetings and committee meetings are 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.

In May 2020, approximately 5,000 residents occupied around 2,000 households. The current growth rate is between 150 and 200 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).

Two 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, risk assessment, allotments, management of the Younghayes Centre (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.

In the second half of 2019, a Country Park Ranger and a Community Development Worker joined the growing team of staff. Both positions are Section 106 deliverables. A Section 106 agreement is a legal agreement between a local planning authority and developers which outlines the amount and extent of contributions, e.g. assets, facilities and amenities, which the developers are obliged to deliver. With responsibility for managing the town's extensive areas of public open space, the Town Council appointed the Country Park Ranger to re-establish both expertise and education in the management of the Country Park and other open spaces. The Community Development Worker works with the residents and with partner agencies to develop and improve the quality of life and vibrancy of the community.

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 Youth Genesis to provide youth club and outreach services on two further evenings a week. The youth club operates a membership scheme and has good attendance but the Town Council is conscious that there are a number of youths who are not engaged – hence the outreach service which is proving to be effective. The Town Council is seeking to extend the service provided by Youth Genesis as funds permit.

There are a number of functions which fall to the Town Council which are subject to the Section 106 agreement. These include management of the urban drainage system, establishment of play parks in conjunction with the developers and the provision of allotments. The Town Council has been pressing for a so-called deed of variation to the Section 106 agreement be brought forward to ensure that the funds which go with these responsibilities are released to the Town Council at the earliest opportunity.

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 partner organisations 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 key delivery partners to identify and resolve delivery 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 delivered areas of the Country Park, three 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 June 2019, the Town Council also manages the sports pitches at the Ingrams site and is pressing for the timely delivery of a sports pavilion for the use of the sports clubs and wider community uses.

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

- multi-purpose town hall (see below);
- spaces for the arts and sculptures;
- skate park;
- further areas of Country Park and the Ecology Park;
- further play areas and trim trail;
- sports provision; 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.

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

- excellent public transport;

- 21st century telecommunications;
- sport and leisure facilities;
- road policing and speed control;
- Cranbrook as a destination, e.g. gateway to the countryside;
- cycle routes and facilities;
- hire bikes;
- car-sharing;
- enterprise, business development and support; and
- improvements to the Country Park.

In taking this work forward, the Town Council is conscious of the financial pressures and limitations which 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 impact of the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020 and the subsequent period of emergency measures will have to be awaited. During the first half of 2020, construction activities ceased which will impact on occupancy figures and therefore the Council's tax base and the income it is able to derive from the precept (council tax).

In normal times, the town is well served by three buses an hour Monday to Saturday during most of the day and an hourly service on Sundays. At peak times there used to be issues with lack of capacity. The Town Council continues to be in discussions with Devon County Council and Stagecoach 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 a vibrant and modern space. 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 town hall in the centre of Cranbrook called The Tillhouse. The vision is that this building will incorporate the Town Council offices and a multi-use council chamber, 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.

The Town Council is also engaged in discussions about the delivery of other town centre facilities including a health and wellbeing campus and leisure uses. In addition the Town Council feels that a skate park is an essential element of any modern town. The funds are available for this to be brought forward and the Town Council is waiting for the local planning authority to make a decision on the location.

6. Financial Information

The budgeted annual expenditure for the Council for 2020-21 is £577,139.02. This is funded from the Council's activities and the Cranbrook element of the council tax known as the precept, which for 2020-21 is £469,559.02.

The precept is collected through the council tax system on our behalf by East Devon District Council as the rating authority.

This five-year Business Plan will set out projected details of its future spending in order that residents can receive an indication of what the precept will be in the future.

The council tax Band D for 2020-21 is £256.03 which is contributed directly to the Town Council. This represents a 0% increase on the preceding years with increased revenue being provided solely by the increase in the tax base, i.e. the number of occupied properties in Cranbrook. The aim over the five-year period of this Plan 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.

Because of the slower-than-anticipated build rate and reduced tax base due to high discounts and disregards, the Town Council had managed significant additional budget pressures over the previous two years of this Plan. This led the Town Council to request from East Devon District Council a one-off financial contribution of £90,000.00 in 2020-21 to cover items of expenditure including the capital liabilities associated with the Younghayes Centre, installation of a CCTV system which is compatible with Crown Prosecution Service standards and additional revenue liabilities as a result of both East Devon District Council and Devon County Council only adopting their statutory responsibilities combined with no investment.

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. The first priority should, however, be developing and maintaining existing assets.

The Council will seek to maximise capital receipts from the sale of any assets which are deemed surplus to requirements in the future. No targets for capital receipts have been set at this point. Additional income may also be generated, where appropriate, through renting, leasing etc. of the Town Council's 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 over the period of the Plan 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 as soon as possible. Following extensive negotiations 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 be reluctant to 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 additional areas of public open space.

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 comfort 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)), a skate park, sports facilities and associated drainage facilities. This is an ambitious programme linked to an ambitious housing delivery timescale which could eventually see between 350 and 500 homes delivered in Cranbrook per year.

The decision to adopt the Younghayes Centre was driven by two important factors – the need to ensure that it remains available as a community resource within the town and the opportunity to develop its use both as a community asset and a source of income to support the delivery of local services. The figures relating to the Younghayes Centre provided in the financial summary on page 15 remain based on historic information provided by the previous building owner East Devon District Council. The figures will be revised and amended when the Town Council has been able to run the building for

consecutive financial quarters which were not influenced by the period of emergency measured following the outbreak of Covid-19.

The development and management of assets such as open space, play parks and the Younghayes Centre 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 within 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 which will bring forward considerable savings in carbon emissions and the Town Council will continue to work closely with E.ON to ensure that this service is delivered appropriately.

The town has access to high-speed fibre broadband delivered through a range of providers. The Town Council has also been working closely with the principal mobile phone service providers and has been instrumental in delivering a new 4G mast at the Parsons Lane roundabout in November 2019. The newly-built mast brings coverage to previously unconnected areas of the town. The Town Council will continue to work closely with all providers to ensure that services are delivered to the community.

The Town Council recognises how approachable all utilities 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 town 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;
- Providing litter picking and bin emptying services in public open spaces which provide best value for public money.

8. Reviewing this 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 Plan are available at our Town Council offices.

How to contact us:

Cranbrook Town Council

Younghayes Centre, 169 Younghayes Road, Cranbrook, Devon, EX5 7DR

Tel: 01404 514552

Mob: 07746 909933

Email: clerk@cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk

[facebook.com/cranbrooktowncouncil](https://www.facebook.com/cranbrooktowncouncil)

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) 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 2019-20 the assets under Town Council management include the Younghayes Centre, Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Country Park, play areas at St Martin's, Hayes Square and Northwood Acres, the Ingrams sports pitches and the Crannaford allotments. We are also expecting delivery of and are awaiting a planning application for a multi-use games area (MUGA), sports pitch and a pavilion.

In 2020-21 we anticipate taking responsibility for the Ecology Park, suitable alternative natural greenspaces (SANG), a trim trail and the Southbrook allotments. In the subsequent three financial years 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 this 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.

In addition to the programme of asset delivery, the Town Council is delivering additional services which are dependent upon additional funding streams. The Town Council is still awaiting the transfer of funds to maintain urban drainage and employ the Country Park Ranger and Community Development Worker, and awaits the requisite legal agreements which remain in preparation and the Town Council took the decision to employ those functions from its existing resources in the meantime.

The table overleaf 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/.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
House Numbers	2,000	2,150	2,300	2,600	2,900
Tax Base	1,834	1,950	2,100	2,400	2,700
Precept £	£469,559.02	£499,258.50	£537,633.00	£614,472.00	£691,281.00
Band D	256.03	256.03	256.03	£256.03	£256.03
Income	£	£	£	£	£
Precept	£469,559.02	£499,258.50	£537,633.00	£614,472.00	£691,281.00
EDDC	£90,000.00	0.00	0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Interest	£100.00	£100.00	£100.00	£100.00	£100.00
Younghayes	£52,000.00	£54,000.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00	£55,000.00
Allotments	£2,400.00	£3,360.00	£3,360.00	£3,360.00	£3,360.00
Solar	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00	£1,400.00
Other Income	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00
Total	£616,959.00	£559,618.50	£598,933.00	£675,832.00	£752,641.00
Payments	£	£	£	£	£
Salaries	£120,000.00	£125,000.00	£130,000.00	£135,000.00	£140,000.00
Pension and NI	£27,500.00	£29,000.00	£32,000.00	£35,000.00	£40,000.00
Open Space	£225,000.00	£240,000.00	£250,000.00	£260,000.00	£270,000.00
Younghayes	£41,000.00	£43,000.00	£47,000.00	£50,000.00	£53,000.00
Grants	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Youth Service	£13,500.00	£15,000.00	£17,500.00	£19,000.00	£21,000.00
Litter	£18,500.00	£20,000.00	£22,000.00	£24,000.00	£26,000.00
Gritting	£5,200.00	£5,350.00	£5,500.00	£5,700.00	£5,900.00
Contingency*	£21,500.00	£19,600.00	£21,000.00	£23,500.00	£26,500.00
Other Costs	£134,759.00	£52,668.50	£63,993.00	£113,632.00	£160,241.00
Total	£616,959.00	£559,618.50	£598,933.00	£675,832.00	£752,641.00

* Recommended to be set at approximately 3.5% of budgeted total expenditure for the year