



Strategic Plan

This plan sets out the Town Council's plans and priorities starting in 2025 and looking forwards

Approved by Council 20 January 2025

Vision Statement / Overarching Council Aims

North Petherton Town Council – Towards a vibrant, resilient community with shared aspirations

Our aims:

- To be effective, efficient and provide value for money
- To provide and improve facilities, services and projects of agreed benefit to the community's wellbeing and to regularly review their impact
- To listen to and consult with local businesses and residents from all age groups and the different areas, take appropriate actions and communicate with the community about what has been achieved, in relation to the ongoing strategic plan
- To maintain and further develop strong partnerships with organisations across the town area
- To ensure that everything we do is sustainable and takes account of the relevant risks

Introduction

The area covered by North Petherton Town Council has a population of approximately 10,000 of whom approximately 8,100 are on the electoral roll (as 1 August 2024). At the time of preparing the first draft of this strategic plan (April 2024) North Petherton is the 11th largest local council in Somerset by population size.

The Town Council area is a very diverse mixture of industrial (the edge of the area bordering Bridgwater) and very rural where agriculture is predominant, there are also areas where large scale housing development has taken place during the last 10 years - Wilstock and Stockmoor - and there are some distinct, well-established communities such as North Newton, and Moorland.

The Town Council does not currently meet the criteria to have the general power of competence so it can only fund, enable or provide projects and services where there is a legislative provision for a local council (parish or town) to do so.

The Town Council's responsibilities include the cemetery, an allotment site with approx. 70 allotments, provision of a library in North Petherton by working in partnership with Somerset Council and the Friends of North Petherton Library, public conveniences, provision of some litter and dog bins, provision of youth services including a youth club, and open spaces such as the Memorial Park and Parker's Field (acting as a sole corporate trustee).

The Town Council has a role to help shape the future of the area and the provision of services by other organisations; it does this by commenting on and responding to consultations on matters which may affect services and facilities or impact upon residents and businesses. The Town Council may also bring matters pertaining to the area to the attention of relevant bodies and organisations. This influencing role ranges from making observations on planning applications, through commenting on parking / traffic restrictions to responding to surveys etc on legislation changes and can be at a very local through to a national level.

The civic year runs from May and starts with the election of the Mayor, appointment of the Deputy Mayor and Council deciding which Councillors will sit on each committee.

There are 14 Town Councillors and elections to the Town Council are held every 4 years, the next election being due in May 2027.

Context of the Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan (2025 – 2029) is the Council’s first rolling strategic plan and has been drafted following a number of informal Councillor workshops where there have been discussions on broad topics such as branding, future projects, priorities, expenditure and funding.

The strategic plan will be reviewed and updated annually (usually at the Annual Town Council Meeting) so that ideas for projects, priorities and budgets can be amended and updated. Progress on achieving the projects and priorities identified in the plan will be reported to the full Council at least twice a year (in addition to the annual update review). The annual update will also be used to inform the budget for the following year and assist with determining work priorities.

The Town Council’s resourcing levels (time and money) are finite and constrained by a number of factors, including some beyond the Town Council’s control such as the impact of new legislation and the performance of partners.

The development of a 3 year rolling strategic plan and complementary medium term budget is intended to focus activity and decision making, help prioritise projects and resourcing, and provide a baseline against which progress can be measured. It is intended that the plan provides a clear indication of the Town Council’s intended future activities, so that local residents are better able to understand how the Council intends to work for the benefit of the whole area and the likely timescale for projects to reach fruition.

Current Information

Staffing

The Town Council has 3 directly employed members of staff:

Town Clerk – full time 37 hours per week

Admin Assistant – Part time 21 hours per week

Cleaner - part time 4 hours per week (the cleaner cleans the Town Council office, the library and the toilets and kitchen in the library side of the building)

In addition the Town Council re-imburses Somerset Council for the cost of a part-time Library Information Assistant

Office

The Town Council moved to its current office accommodation in spring 2022; the small office is next to the library and thus benefits from the kitchen and toilet facilities. It is suitable for 1 person to work in or for 1-2-1 meetings.

The Town Council is in negotiations for larger office accommodation within the Town Council area

Finance

The precept for 2024/2025 is £463,300. The estimated income (other than the precept) is £95,007 and the estimated expenditure is £529,797

Use of contractors to provide services

For anything other than administration work the Town Council uses contractors. Some of the work is on a long-term contract e.g. regular tasks such as grass cutting at the

cemetery, litter picking around the Town Council area, bus shelter cleaning, whilst for specific tasks individual prices may be sought.

Where there are no significant differences between the best value offered by contractors preference will be given to those who are based within or close to the North Petherton Town Council area.

Future Opportunities and Service Provision

As the number of houses and residents in the area grow so do the needs, wishes and expectations of the people who live, work and visit the area.

Following the merger of all the district councils and Somerset County Council in April 2023 and the resultant financial emergency, Somerset Council is open to discussion about devolving assets and service delivery to local councils; this may be an opportunity for the Town Council to enable services at a level it believes appropriate for the area.

Enabling more services, and possibly direct provision of some, may assist with transparency, accountability and improve response times, as the general public will know where to contact and local knowledge will assist in finding solutions and implementing them.

When deciding whether or not to enable a service or undertake a project the considerations are likely to include:

- Will it be possible, as a minimum, to maintain the current level of service?
- Will it be possible to improve the service e.g. standard of work, frequency, responsiveness?
- Can any economies of scale be realised- perhaps by working with other councils, or within the Local Community Network?
- Would it be possible to offer the service / deliver the project by working in partnership -perhaps with Community Interest Companies or local charities?
- Is the service better delivered in-house or by using contractors – remembering that employing staff carries significant legal responsibilities?

If it is agreed that a service or project will be delivered using contractors the Town Council's Financial Regulations will be followed and the steps to obtaining pricing information will include:

- Identifying the overall scope of the work / project
- Identifying the specific work for each element of the service delivery / project
- Specifying the price assessment criteria
- Assessing prices received and suitability of contractors
- Managing the contract / contractor

North Petherton Town Council SWOT Analysis

Councillors were asked to identify what, in their opinion, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were for the Town Council, the responses are detailed below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different skill sets • Local Knowledge • Longevity • Knowledge / experience • Continuity • No clear ideology • Flexibility • Diversity of opinion • Represent more than one area • Continued growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a stronger team to pull together • Not diverse enough • Not enough youngsters • We [Councillors] are all older than the average population / generation gap • Conceit • No clear ideology – difference perceptions of ? at council • Denial of responsibilities • Differing views of our responsibilities • Council has got too big for unpaid Councillors • Communication skills • Bypass • Lack of training • Time restraints of Clerk • Lack of understanding local government • Lack of strategy • Structures • Lacking a process to set priorities • Lack of out reach • Lack of action plans • Lack of young people
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endless – they are always there, its finding them at the right time and acting on it • We could do anything • Thinking outside the box • Collectivity • Individuality • Bus service • Doctors & Chemist • Playing Fields • Banks • Continued growth • Willingness to understand other communities • Increased pool of potential councillors • Use of existing assets for different purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No input from enough councillors • Changes in revenue coming in from government • Community trust • Not enough vision • Politics • Bad clerk • Weak leadership • Government controls and policy • Developers • Private sector • Government • Somerset Council • Climate Change • Red Tape • Lack of health services • Housing • Class differences • Doing nothing • Budgets • Uncertainty • Councillors are not social workers • Lack of humour • Lack of volunteers to be councillors • Lack of input from community • Areas not feeling part of North Petherton

Work Undertaken in Current Year (2024/2025)

- Employed an Admin Assistant

- Improved cemetery record keeping and started to manage the cemetery and its records
- Increased allotment inspections and continued to enhance the management of the allotment site
- Meeting held with allotment holders
- Repairs to the surface of Maunsel Lock Car Park
- Replacement of the ceiling in the ladies toilet
- Christmas Lights – changing from the small Christmas trees to illuminated motifs on street light columns
- Negotiated for new office accommodation
- (Annual Play Inspection commissioned and report received – no high risk items, work to rectify medium risks underway)
- Quotations considered to replace cemetery hedges and order placed for work.
- Quarterly bus shelter cleaning started
- Road Safety Public meeting held
- Summer holiday youth club sessions held and detached youth work took place throughout the Town Council area during the summer holidays
- Youth Club venue changed from the Church rooms to North Petherton Community Centre
- Application to borrow for grant to Wilstock Hub submitted and approved
- Christmas competitions held – including a new competition for a wreath using foraged or recycled materials.
- Councillor workshop on community resilience planning scheduled for February 2025

Routine / Operational Work

The Town Council has a number of responsibilities and provides or enables services which could be described as routine or operational, these include:

- Dealing with general enquiries from the public
- Convening, providing reports and minuting formal meetings of the Town Council and its Committees
- Providing support and guidance to Councillors
- Cemetery administration, including interments and Exclusive Rights of Burial
- Allotment administration, including inspections, lettings
- Administration for North Petherton Playing Fields Charitable Trust
- Financial Administration, including checking invoices, bank reconciliations, VAT return
- Commenting on planning applications
- Grant administration
- Communications – media releases, facebook posts
- Maintenance administration and contractor liaison e.g litter picking, grass cutting, bus shelter cleaning

Priorities and Future Projects

Councillors were asked to undertake an exercise (a pairing exercise in which each potential project was prioritised against every other project) to prioritise projects that had already been identified, the results are given in the table below.

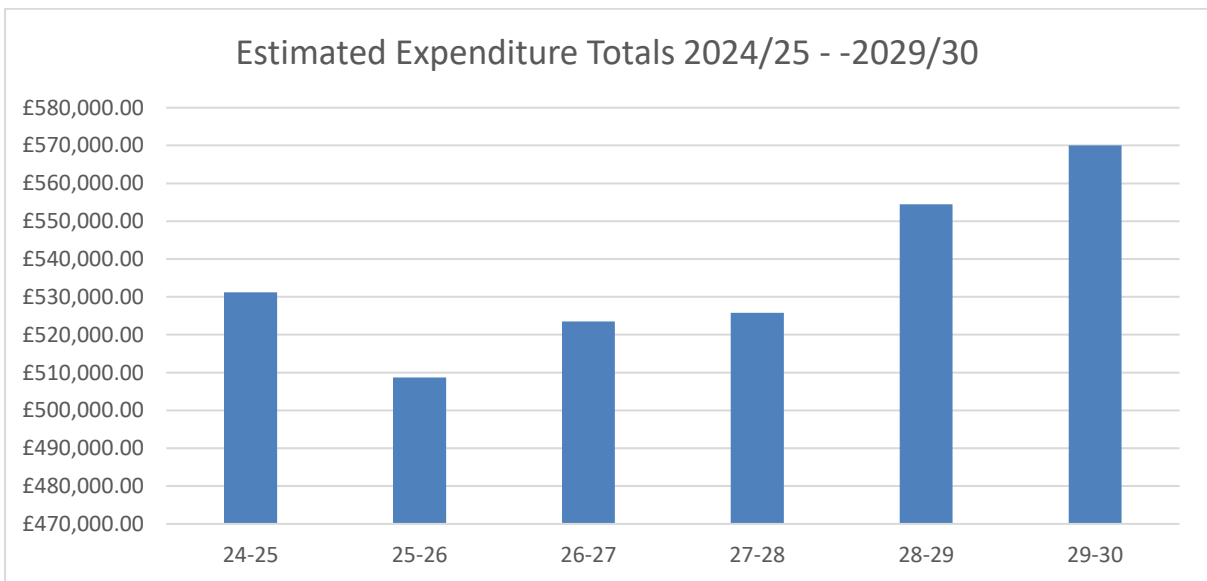
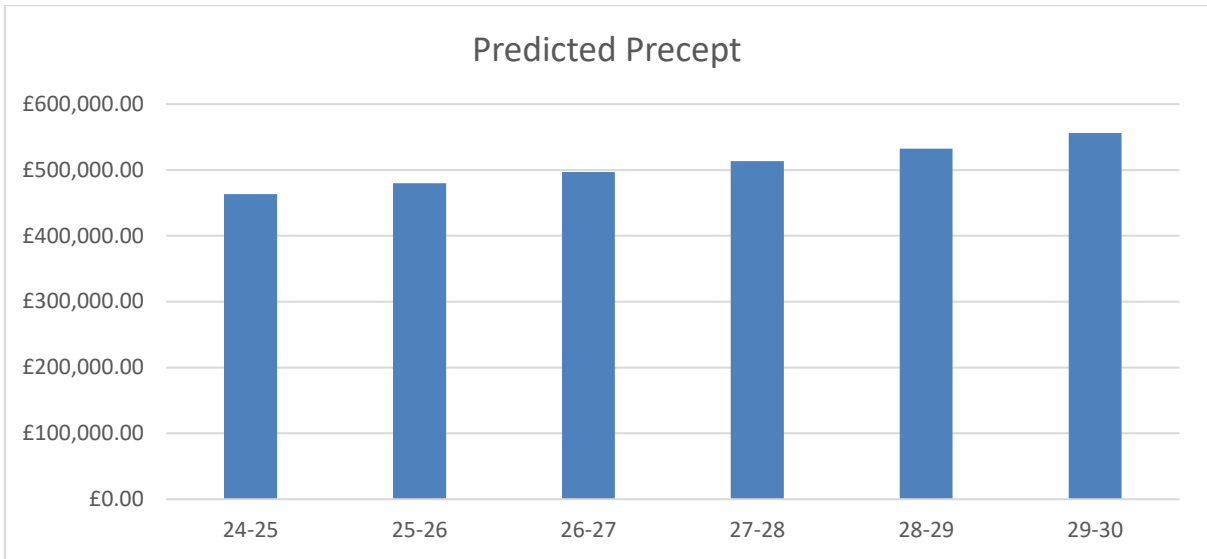
Some of the items listed may include enhancing facilities / services provided by other organisations including Somerset Council.

Project	Score
Road safety (incl 20mph zones & SIDS)	59
Leisure Facilities at Wilstock & Stcokmoor including play areas and country park	51
Wilstock Hub	48
Encourage tourism e.g solar walk, toilets, Maunsel aire, Macmillan Way,	41
Maunsel Lock Car Park – resurface car park & upgrade picnic benches	40
Welcome to North Petherton Good bye / thank you signs	30
Provision of more allotments	28
Cemetery Chapels	26
Parker’s Field Car Park (responsibility of the North Petherton Playing Fields Charitable Trust of which the Town Council is the sole trustee)	19
Parking at the Cemetery	10
Resilience Planning (not scored)	
Health & Wellbeing (not scored)	

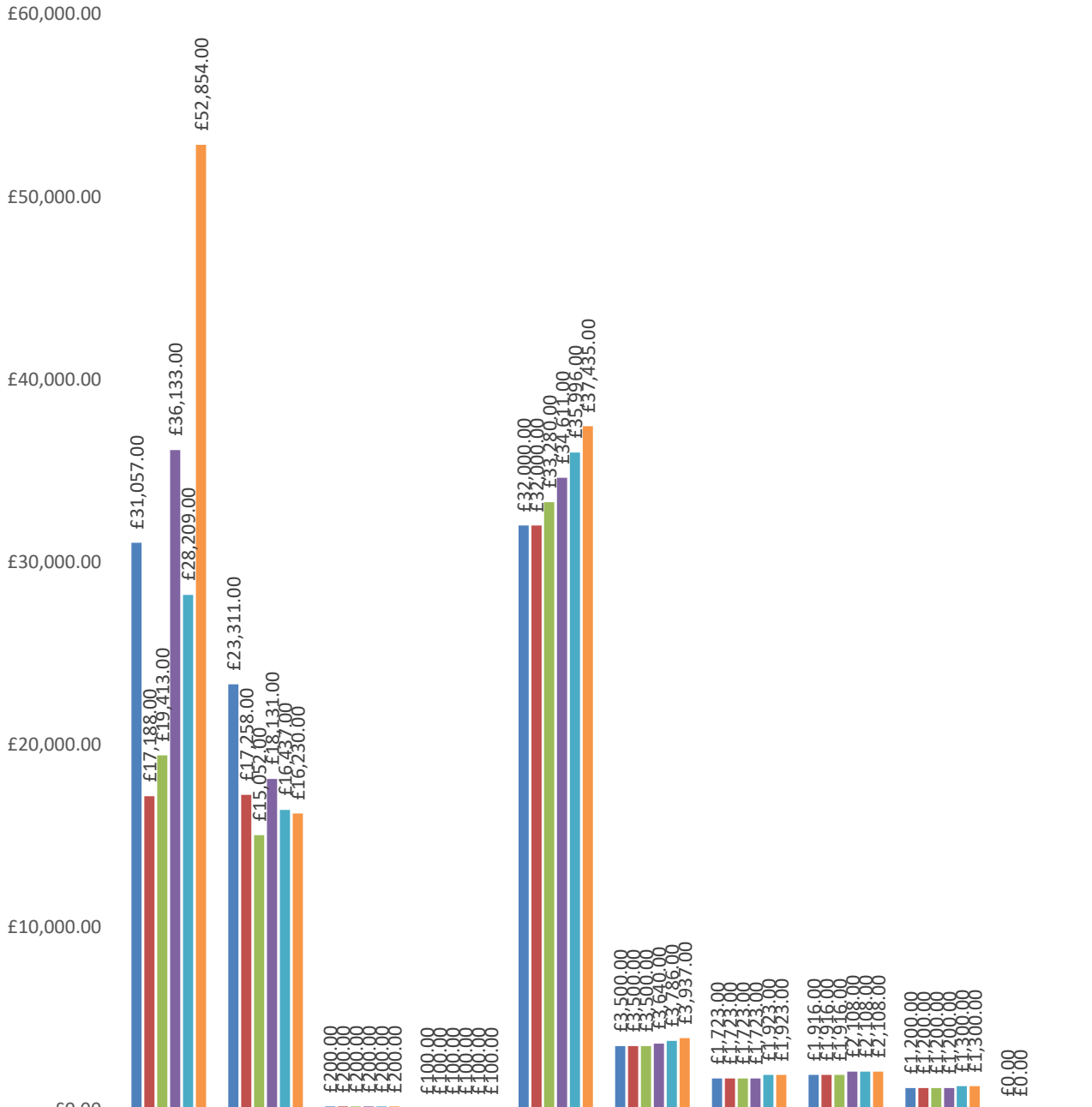
Discussion at the workshops also brought forward a number of new potential projects:

- Mayor’s Ball / fundraiser for nominated local charity
- 20mph speed limits in Wilstock & Stockmoor
- Footpaths / Bridges e.g. on footpath between Wilstock & North Petherton
- Macmillan Way improve signposting & promotion
- Signs for Wilstock & Stockmoor saying “Welcome to.... Part of the town of North Petherton”
- Bus shelter at bus stop in North Newton
- Cycle Route signs
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Community Resilience Planning

Financial Information



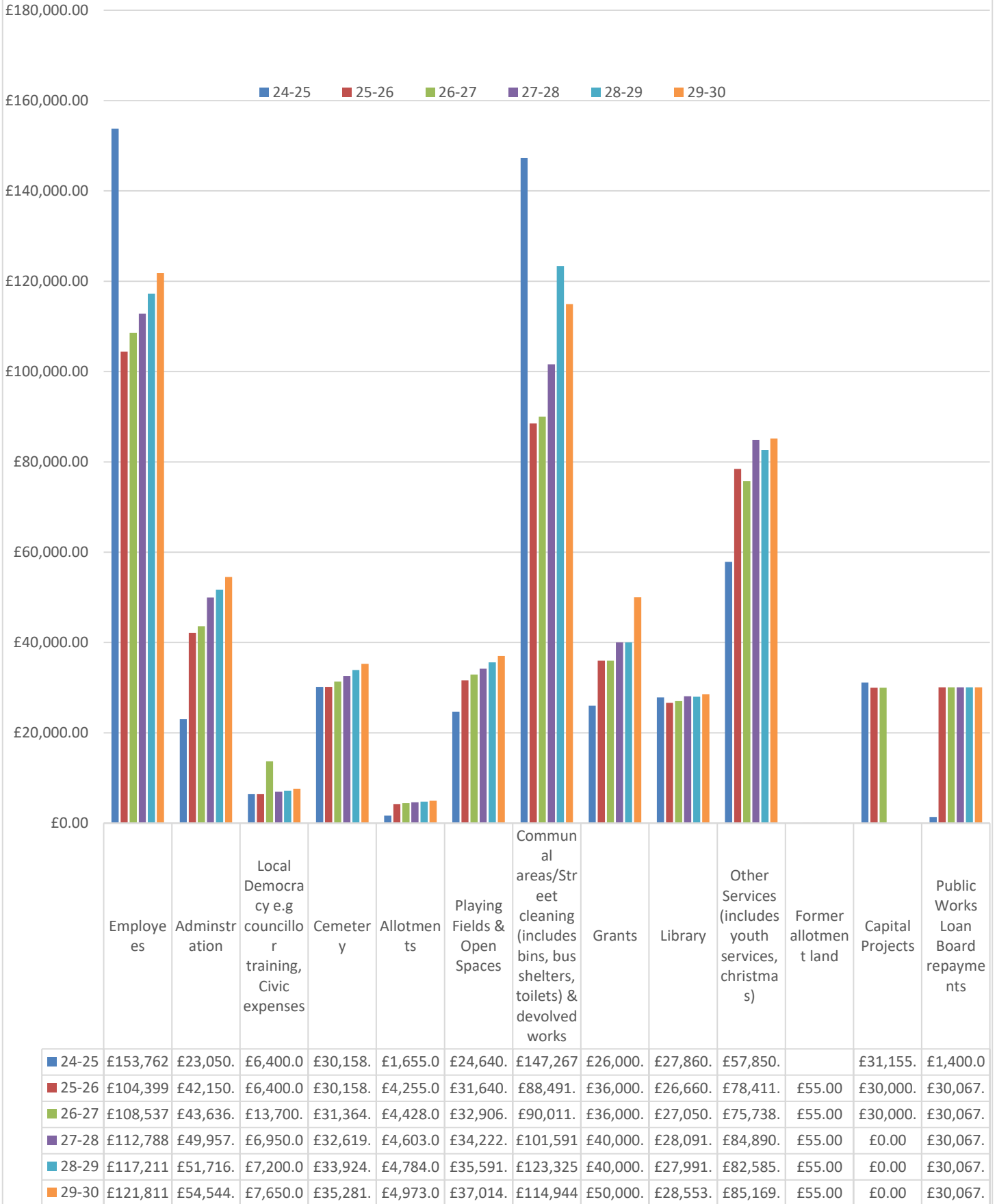
Predicted Income Excluding Precept



Year	CIL	Income bond/bank interest	Wayleaves	Misc income	Cemetery fees	Allotment rents	Former allotment land rent (Moorland, and Fordgate)	Land Rent (NP Bowling & NP Cricket Club)	Library fees	Playing fields/open spaces recharge
24-25	£31,057.0	£23,311.0	£200.00	£100.00	£32,000.0	£3,500.00	£1,723.00	£1,916.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
25-26	£17,188.0	£17,258.0	£200.00	£100.00	£32,000.0	£3,500.00	£1,723.00	£1,916.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
26-27	£19,413.0	£15,052.0	£200.00	£100.00	£33,280.0	£3,500.00	£1,723.00	£1,916.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
27-28	£36,133.0	£18,131.0	£200.00	£100.00	£34,611.0	£3,640.00	£1,723.00	£2,108.00	£1,200.00	£0.00
28-29	£28,209.0	£16,437.0	£200.00	£100.00	£35,996.0	£3,786.00	£1,923.00	£2,108.00	£1,300.00	£0.00
29-30	£52,854.0	£16,230.0	£200.00	£100.00	£37,435.0	£3,937.00	£1,923.00	£2,108.00	£1,300.00	£0.00

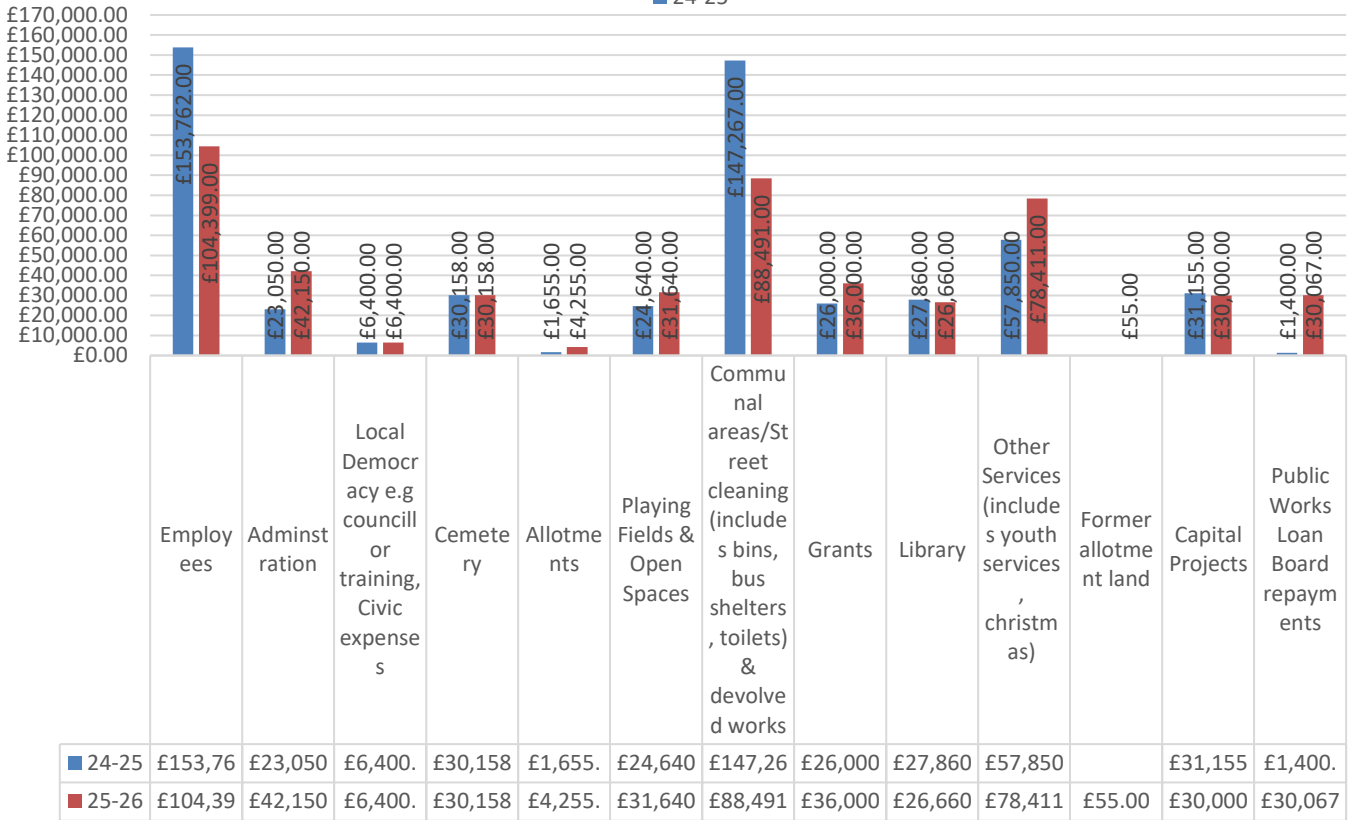
■ 24-25
 ■ 25-26
 ■ 26-27
 ■ 27-28
 ■ 28-29
 ■ 29-30

Estimated Expenditure 2024/2025 - 2029/2030



Estimated Expenditure 2024/25 - 2025/26

■ 24-25



Proposed Expenditure Budget 25-26

