

DRAFT BUDGET 2027/28

October 2026

CONTENTS

Contents

Contents 2
Introduction 3
About this Document 3
Finance Committee 4
Community Committee 7
Assets and Operations Committee 8
Environment and Transport Committee 13
Events Committee 14
Town Centre Committee 17
Personnel Committee 20
Reserves 21

INTRODUCTION

Following our inaugural engagement period in 2025, we have decided to undertake consultation on our budget each year. The aim of this is to receive input from the community to inform the final decisions which will be made on our budget in December and January. In local government, the financial year runs from 1st April to 31st March. Our budget process starts in August each year when we begin to prepare estimates for our year end position and identify budget requirements based on the commitments in our strategic plan, planned activity and commitments. During September/October, each budgeting holding committee considers a draft budget and recommends it to our Finance Committee. This is the stage we are now at; each committee has agreed its draft and this engagement process is on these committee drafts. In December, our Finance Committee will review the budgets and output from this engagement and agree recommendations to the January Full Council meeting which sets our budget and our precept (the amount we collect as part of council tax).

As part of this engagement process we are publishing:

- The complete draft budget – this is a report from our finance system which compares the previous (2025/26) financial year with our spending and projected spending to date. It also includes our draft allocations for budgets in 2027/28.
- This budget explainer – which talks you through each part of our budget explaining what it is for, relevant information and key changes
- A budget summary – this provides a summary overview of how the monthly amount we would collect in the council tax would be spent

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is presented by committee, as that is how we overview our budgets. Each committee has responsibility for its own budget, with our Finance Committee maintaining oversight across the council.

The tables in each section then present the information by cost centre (specific parts of our budget which contain individual spending lines). This matches the full budget report you can also read. We have provided notes on what the cost centre is for and contrasted the net budget (expenditure less income) for the current financial year and next. The key changes highlight where there is notable change in how the budget is prepared.

Where a centre shows a negative net budget, this is a profit centre and generates a net income.

The final section covers our reserves.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2027	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Central Admin	This centre is some of our core administration costs such as insurance, banking and audit. It also includes membership subscriptions to organisations which represent and provide guidance to the council in different areas – for example the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management. The value of the precept (our part of council tax) has not yet been formally discussed by the Finance Committee, but based on the budget would be level at £939,900. We do not budget for Community Infrastructure Levy income – we don't know precisely how much may be received in any year and there are restrictions on how it is used, so this does not affect the precept.	7,650	-41,900	• Renewing our insurance contracts saw us secure better than expected rates. • Budget included for the cost of elections • Due to the capital receipt this year, our external audit costs will increase for 2027 • We expect to generate significant bank interest next year with the proceeds of the sale of 60 King Street invested to achieve a strong return.
Civic	This is a small cost centre which provides budget for travel and subsistence costs incurred by councillors in their duties outside the town.	150	150	
Funded Services & Large Grants	We have entered a new three-year agreement (to 31/03/2030) with Cheshire East Council to part fund the town centre CCTV system. We fund the Citizens Advice to operate a twice weekly service in Knutsford. The income in this centre is from	107,712	115,332	• Decisions on large grant applications will be made at our Finance Committee meeting in December and may change the budget in this centre.

	neighbouring parish councils which contribute towards the costs of the Citizens Advice Service. Our Millennium Bursary is a grant to a student in Knutsford to support their final year studies at university. We are providing £50,000 to Toft Cricket Club towards the rebuilding of the clubhouse, the agreement for this includes a requirement that it be available (at reasonable cost) for community use for 25 years. £20,000 of the funding given this year is from development funds (CIL). We received three applications for large grants for 2027/28 – Stable Minds, Knutsford Heritage Centre and The Welcome. The figures are included in the draft budget for 2027 and decisions on these applications will be made when the council considers this budget in December.			• We adjust the value of the Millenium Bursary by inflation each year. • The CCTV cost has increased 3.4% for the next three-year period. • Due to the timing of the award in 2025, the bursary will be paid twice this financial year.
Mayor's Civic Cost	The costs in this centre support the operation of the mayoralty, this includes the annual allowance paid to the mayor to support them undertaking their duties, budget for travel costs when they attend events, and costs of civic events like Civic Sunday and Mayor Making. The projected expenditure for Civic Regalia this year is to buy a new carry case to protect the Mayor's Chain.	3,450	5,850	• We adjust the value of the Mayor's Allowance by inflation each year. • The Civic Regalia budget for 2027 is to buy additional 'Past Mayor Medallions' which are given to outgoing Mayor's in recognition of their service. This was introduced in the 1980s when the council stopped

adding names to the Mayor's Chain.

- We have increased the external contractors budget – this is to cover the cost of the band for Civic Sunday, which was incurred for the last two years.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Community Grants	This budget is used to provide a community grant scheme, which local organisations can apply to for grants of up to £1,500. In the last year we've supported Knutsford Runners with the cost of training run leaders and Hope Central with costs for the debt centre.	7,500	7,500	
Communication and Engagement	The computer software budget is our e-mail database software, costs in this centre support our external communications and provide some budget for public consultation costs.	2,180	1,730	
Community Services	The budgets in this centre are there to support activity in the community. This will include the work of our accessibility forum, and planned work supporting young people.	4,500	7,500	• We are increasing our budget for Youth Services to increase the provision of services and activity for our young people.
Town Awards	The Forum of Private Business sponsor this event and paid in advance for multiple years of sponsorship. The budget funds the Town Awards scheme.	500	-	• Due to the timing of the Town Awards, the 2027 awards will be in the current financial year (held in March to avoid the election period)
ReFresh Knutsford	This budget is used to organise our annual community 'freshers fair' which showcases community organisations.	1,400	2,500	• We have undertaken a review of the event and next year will be holding it in a new venue, with more focus on publicity to raise awareness.

ASSETS AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Council Offices	This budget is for the operating costs of the Council Office building, including utilities, business rates and general operational costs. This year a ceiling collapsed in one of the offices (fortunately this was covered by our insurance) and the insurance claim income and high projected building repairs budget in the current year cover the costs of replacing the ceiling.	41,845	41,275	• A national revaluation was implemented this year, with a taper to slow the increase over three years. • We anticipate our gas (heating) costs increasing in the new year. • The building attracts multiple charges for highway drainage/surface water water charges (due to it being split into multiple rateable units) four areas which were not previously charged have now started being charged for.
Council Office Improvement	The Council Offices is a Grade II listed building which has not had investment in a long time. We are developing a scheme to renovate the building to address structural works, undertake redecoration, make the building accessible, repair windows and more. This year we undertook a programme of works to the roof (which were delivered under budget). Next year we will be	65,000	15,000	

	further developing the plans for renovations with the aim of undertaking work in 2028.			
60 King Stret	The sale of 60 King Street is nearly at exchange and we envisage receiving the proceeds from the sale very shortly. We expect a refund on insurance once the building is sold – the value of this will be calculated once disposal has taken place.	11,350	-	• Removal of budgets following sale of the building
Lily Lodge / Justice View	These are the commercial spaces within the two public toilet buildings which are let to two local businesses. Under the lease, the utilities, insurance and a portion of repair costs are recharged to the tenants.	-24,920	-22,500	• We have agreed new leases with the tenants starting September/January. As part of this we reviewed the appropriate rents and have frozen rents for the tenants for the full five year period.
Other Buildings	This mainly cover the Freeholders Hut, a building we own near the Heath which is used for storage. In the current financial year we are undertaking roof repairs following a recent building survey. The budget also includes costs for renting a garage for storage.	4,960	2,097	
Transfer Fees/Costs	This budget covers costs associated with the transfer of assets from Cheshire East Council. We are looking to have Knutsford Bus Station transfer to us in 2027.	7,500	5,000	• No transfer costs envisaged (assuming budget used in the current year)

Cemetery	This is the operational budget for the cemetery (staff costs are accounted for separately); income is generated from cemetery fees which covers the various costs of operating the cemetery and contributes to the staffing cost. Income is above budget for the current financial year due to increased advance purchase of graves and a higher number of burials in the year to date.	-25,380	-28,566	• Cemetery fees are revised annually.
Cemetery Chapel	The Tabley Hill Chapel is in the centre of the cemetery and available to hire for weddings, funerals and functions.	2,775	5,075	• The chapel is due its quinquennial structural survey, the budget for this has been included (£2,500)
Market Hall Refurbishment	The budget in the current financial year was the residual payment for the 2025 refurbishment, and the final instalment of the roof works grant. We drew down additional funds from reserves to install air conditioning. The payments recovered line is an agreement with a trader repaying the fit out of one of the stalls.	-13,184	-	• No budget
Public Toilets	We have a contract with Danfo to operate the public toilets for us, this runs to 2038; the contract includes the cleaning and repair of the toilets. Income from the toilets is taken off of the contract value, so the contract costs line is the net cost. The utility recharges relate to a charge to Cheshire East Council for electricity used in the car park.	47,425	46,460	• We received a backdated refund for water costs which will result in an underspend in the current year. • The contract value is increased by CPI annually.

Allotments	We own the Sparrow Lane and Warren Avenue allotment sites. We work with Knutsford Allotment Society who manage them on our behalf. We expected the new Devis Way site to go live this year, but it was delayed (again). The budget is usually planned to break even – any surplus is committed to an allotments reserve to invest back into the allotments, and any deficit is drawn from the same reserve. In 2024/25 we received a £10,000 payment from Redrow to mitigate flooding issues at the site, the balance of this is the improvement budget in the current year.	-	-	• Expenditure will have been complete from the £10k Redrow funds. • We have move the balancing cost budget from operation costs to improvement projects.
Town Ranger	This is the operational budget for the Town Ranger (staff costs are accounted for separately). It includes the cost of tools and equipment, vehicle costs and incidental materials.	5,720	8,300	• The increased fuel costs are affecting this and next financial year budgets. • The van has required additional repairs over the last two years so we have increased the budget for next year. • We have increased the budget we have for the purchase of additional equipment to make certain jobs more efficient.
Grounds and Open Spaces	This funds the maintenance of Wallwood (Tatton Street), Higher Town Green (Chelford Road)and Obelisk Green (Chelford Road).	4,670	4,470	

	We are also paid by Cheshire East to maintain the River Lily, and have a contractor who does this for us.			
General Operations	This centre covers the 'general' costs of operating the office such as our phones, broadband and stationery. It also covers incidental costs for council activity. The overbudget computer equipment expenditure this year is being funded from our infrastructure reserve.	18,324	19,915	• We have expanded the software licence for our finance system to allow multiple users, we have part balanced this by moving from Zoom to Teams for meeting streaming. • We had added an IT support budget (our departing Town Clerk was skilled at IT so saved us this costs in previous years)

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Town Planting and In Bloom	This budget funds the town centre planters and hanging baskets, it also provides budget for replacing some plantes with Knutsford in Bloom, and our annual grant to Knutsford in Bloom to enable the volunteers to maintain other planters and flower beds.	5,100	6,950	• We have increased the annual grant to Knutsford in Bloom by £500 • We have increased budgets for the purchase of plants to improve our displays
Heritage	We plan to publish a guidance leaflet for people living in the conservation areas to raise awareness of how they can support their enhancement.	900	600	
Tidy Town Volunteering	Our Tidy Town sessions were introduced this year – this budget will support the costs associated with these sessions – such as hiring equipment, purchasing tools and skips for waste disposal.	-	1,250	• New budget
Environment Projects	The large expenditure this year is work we will be commissioning to design the Dog Wood cycle path. The budgets in this centre cover ad hoc projects, such as replacing bins and benches, installing blue plaques and replacing street name signs. This year we also hope to contribute to restoring Red Cow Yard.	51,440	13,750	• Removal of one-off costs of the cycle path design project • We have increased the budget for active travel projects following adoption of an Active Travel Plan.

Open Space, Climate and Nature	This budget mainly supports the implementation of our Nature Action Plan; this year it funded the bee trail, next year it will fund our work on frogs and ponds. It also covers the costs of tree planting and the big bulb plant events.	11,200	9,750	
Caesar Summerhouse	We have secured a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a project around the Henry and Julius Caesar Company. The grant will be spent in the next financial year.	-	15,000	• New budget (from grant funding)

EVENTS COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Christmas Lights Switch On	The cost of the Christmas Light Switch On event, including the Lantern Parade, this includes the stage, entertainment and promotion of the event.	13,850	12,850	
Christmas Market	This centre delivers a small surplus which offsets some costs of the Christmas Light Switch On. Income is from stall fees, whist the costs pay for the park and ride, gazebos, security and entertainment.	-3,450	-2,585	• Increase in costs paid to Cheshire East for closing car parks and road closures
Crib Service	This centre funds the crib service event, our annual community carol service and blessing of the town crib.	1,150	1,050	
Pumpkin Path	The costs of running the event include the road closure/traffic management, entertainment and marketing.	3,100	3,205	
Bunny Hop	The cost of the annual bunny hop event, including marketing and incidental events costs. The timing of the event impacts how it appears in our budget – depending on when easter falls, we may have the event	200	150	

	twice, once or not at all in the financial year. In 2026 we'll have it twice (April 2026 and March 2027) and some costs will be across the different financial years depending on when expenditure is incurred.			
Picnic in the Park	The costs of delivering this community event on St Helena's Field. This is a relatively new event, and we're adapting it as we go.	3,000	3,000	•
Movies on the Moor	This is our now annual cinema event on the Moor. This year we held it on a Saturday with three films being screened.	2,000	2,745	• We incurred additional costs for the larger screen this year (beyond what we had previously anticipated)
CRTA Event	We hosted a theatre production with the Cheshire Rural Touring Arts Association to host part of their programme in Knutsford. The budget was a break-even budget.	-	-	• Not included in 2027 budget.
Paint Knutsford	This year we developed Paint with more participatory sessions for children and adults, along with an even bigger cohort of artists.	-	500	• This year our workshops were funded with sponsorship, we've made an allowance to provide them should we not get this.
Music Festival	This is our weekend long community music festival which takes place in June. A large portion of the event costs are covered by ticket sales, and we coordinate a programme of free and ticked music events across the weekend. Costs include paying for artists and sound systems.	5,300	5,000	• Change in profile of income/expenditure
Other Events / Projects	This cost centre includes the budget for the Young Artist of the Year competition and Remembrance Sunday. It includes also includes our budget for events equipment – this year we bought radios and a deployable bar.	4,200	3,000	
Heritage Open Days	We coordinate a programme of heritage-focused activity as part of this national event, working with partners like	500	1,000	• The additional budget will be used to fund additional activity over the event, tied

	Knutsford Heritage Centre and the Brook Street Chapel Heritage Site. The event aims to celebrate heritage with freely accessible events.	in with the (to be announced) theme.

TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
Promotional Events	We run events in partnership with local businesses, designed to bring sector specific footfall to the town centre these include – Knutsford Fashion Week, Knutsford at Home and Knutsford Wellbeing Week.	2,800	2,800	
Town Centre Management	This centre includes incidental costs associated with our town centre management function. Benchmarking is regular footfall/visitor surveys to understand town centre performance. The payments recovered is the repayment of the BID development costs from the Knutsford BID, over five years.	-3,600	-3,330	
Town Centre Masterplan	We are working to develop a town centre masterplan. This cost centre provides funding for external consultants and public consultation.	10,000	7,000	• Project has been delayed and will be progressed in 2027 financial year.
Tourism	This budget is used to promote Knutsford as a visitor destination, which helps bring footfall to our town centre, including implementation of our tourism strategy.	16,200	12,700	• Curren year included a budget for creating a photo library of Knutsford for use in marketing.
Town Centre Map	The centre for producing a printed town centre map, funded by advertising.	-1,200	-2,000	• Centre created in year, more accurate budget.
Knutsford Christmas Guide	The centre for producing a printed gift guide promoting town centre shopping. Funded by advertising.	-1,000	-200	• Centre created in year, more accurate budget.
Market Hall	This cost centre include the income from market traders, casual traders and venue hire. Following the	-9,700	-9,700	• We had expected a business rates valuation for the central space, but

	refurbishment, the income streams for casual/venue hire are developing. The centre is a profit centre, which contributes to associated staffing costs.			the VOA did not impose this.
Markets (Outdoor/Licensing)	A small profit centre, mainly with income from our weekly outdoor trader and associated electricity costs.	-330	-300	
Makers Market	We receive a share of the profit from the Makers Market. We also coordinate the road closures and parking permits, the costs of which are recharged to the operator.	-2,500	-2,500	
Taste Knutsford	This is a small profit centre – our monthly food tours which support local eateries and are an additional visitor attraction.	-900	600	• 2027 includes one-off costs to develop a new website.
Knutsford Voucher	This is our town centre gift voucher scheme and is budgeted to be a break even centre. The costs of operating the scheme are funded by unredeemed vouchers and businesses receive 100% of the face value of vouchers redeemed at their business.	-	-800	• After a number of years operating the scheme, we can reasonably confidently predict an £800 surplus from the scheme (from unredeemed vouchers) – this is reinvested in the town centre through our other initiatives.
Town Centre Projects	This year we have a project to enhance the ginnels, the cost centre also funds the town centre bunting installation/removal. This year we also had to replace the bunting, which has a limited lifespan. We went for more robust (wired) bunting, which will last longer but has higher install costs.	15,500	12,995	• Purchase of new bunting was a one-off cost

Alfresco Dining Events	We work with hospitality businesses to coordinate alfresco dining events. We fund the road closure cost, whilst the businesses fund the traffic management and security costs.	2,500	800	• We had budgeted for a larger number of events in 2026 which did not take place, budget re-scaled down for 2027
Christmas Lights	We provide a Christmas tree in Canute Place and lighting along the town centre streets. We are in the 3rd year of a five year contract for this. We regularly have a sponsor for the lights and a tree, offsetting some of the costs.	31,000	31,050	

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Centre	Notes	Net Budget 2026	Net Budget 2027	Key Changes
HR Budget	The council employs 16 people in a mix of part time and full time roles. This centre includes the salary, pension costs and PAYE for all staff. Our staff are employed on nationally negotiated employment terms and pay scales whereby staff progress along a pay spine with performance and length of service. We assume a 3.5% increase to pay values in 2027. The costs in this centre also include our HR advisor contract, payroll fees and incidental employment costs (e.g. uniform, travel costs, eye tests etc). We also hold a budget for costs relating to recruitment costs and staff wellbeing and recognition (e.g. we provide an annual Christmas meal for staff to thank them for their work, and hold an annual team building event to foster a strong team).	557,586	617,131	• Provision for annual pay progression and inflation increases There have also been minor change to remuneration and hours in year, including a re-evaluation of the Town Clerk position as part of the recruitment process. • The Town Ranger apprenticeship ends in 2027, the budget would allow us to keep the post as a full member of staff. • We have included a minor additional budget for increased admin support.
Training and Development	Our training budget covers training costs for staff and councillors. We have revised the value of our staff training budget after several years of it being level, whilst our staff numbers have increased. This allows us to invest more in our staff development.	8,250	9,000	• Increased councillor training budget to allow for additional training of new members following 2027 elections.

RESERVES

Our reserves policy is reviewed annually as part of setting the budget. This page contains the proposals which will be presented to the Finance Committee as part of the 2025 review.

Reserve	Purpose	Current	Proposed	Change Explained
General	We are required to maintain a general reserve of around 25% - 100% of our net expenditure. Our general reserves are currently below this target but being built up gradually over a number of years to the required level.	175,000	210,000	Reserve increasing to build it to the required level (currently 235k). Proposal will be at 22% (target 25%).
Capital	In 2018, we sold the Cemetery Lodge and in 2026 will have sold 60 King Street. This reserve contains the funds from these sales. Capital receipts can only be used on capital expenditure, so are maintained as a dedicated reserve.	108,068	1,326,068	Proceeds from the sale of 60 King Street
CIL	We receive Community Infrastructure Levy from development which takes place, it must be sent on infrastructure or addressing needs arising from development. This reserve contains any unspent provisions.	28,963	12,810	The CIL received during the financial year is added to the reserve, this year we are granting £20k to Toft Cricket Club from CIL
Allotments	This reserve is the surpluses from allotment rents. We use the reserve to fund works at the allotments or make up any shortfall for years where expenditure is higher than receipts.	6,078	6,078	We adjust the reserve at year end based on the final position of the budget.
Elections	We are charged for by-elections and from 2027 will have to pay a share of ordinary elections too. Each election costs around £7,500 and our policy is to have funds for two elections.	15,000	9,375	Elections will be held in May 2027. We will be drawing ¾ of the expected cost from this reserve (to spread the cost over four years)
Rental	This reserve is designed to provide a buffer for any loss of income/additional cost related to our two tenanted buildings, for example in relation to a change of tenancy.	9,025	11,365	10% of the income each year is committed to the reserve.

Knutsford Royal May Day	This reserve was created in 2026 to enable the council to support this important community event should it every be necessary.	9,500	9,500	
Play Areas	We allocate £10,000 to the reserve annually to provide funds to contribute to future play area investment e.g. at the Moor.	15,500	25,500	The annual commitment was amended from £1k to £10k in the last budget.
Infrastructure	Over the last decade, we have accumulated a range of infrastructure, from chairs in the chapel and market, to computers and lawnmowers. We allocate £5,000 per year to the reserve, this is to build a reserve to be able replace infrastructure as it is required.	14,000	19,000	Annual commitment
Neighbourhood Plan Review	We intend to undertake a review of the neighbourhood plan when Cheshire East Council completes a new local plan, we are aiming to have £40,000 in the reserve for a 2028 review.	30,000	40,000	Annual commitment.
Community Services	We created this reserve to enable us to take decisions to safeguard local services that may be threatened with closure due to Cheshire East Council budget cuts.	80,000	80,000	
Town Awards	In 2023, the sponsor of the awards paid for multiple years of sponsorship. We draw £500 a year from the reserve each year to fund the awards.	1,700	1,200	Annual expenditure.
Capital Protection	This reserve will store the interest generated on the sale of 60 King Street, to preserve the value of the capital for investment in our other assets.		40,681	New reserve, funded from bank interest.