

Halesworth Town Council sets its precept for 2025

The Full Council, at its January 6th meeting, considered the proposed Four-Year Budget in detail and unanimously approved an increase in the Band D equivalent household rate to £155.46 (the current charge is £90.46), providing a total precept income of £300,350 p.a.

Whilst it was a difficult decision, resulting in a significant increase in relative terms, it came out of necessity and prudence. The 2011 Localism Act s78 instructs that councils are legally obliged not just to plan for the coming year but also to ensure that there are sufficient funds for subsequent years (through use of reserves, an increased precept, or a combination of the two). The agreed four-year budget shows exactly how this will be achieved.

It is quite evident that Halesworth Town Council finds itself at a crossroads, consistent with its stated long-term policy as spelt out in the Four-Year Strategic Plan (see link below) which arose out of the widely consulted Halesworth Neighborhood Plan - itself confirmed by a town referendum and adopted in 2023.

As such, the Council is now on the cusp of acquiring significant community assets from East Suffolk Council which will inevitably incur maintenance and refurbishment costs. Further down the line, the Council's involvement in bringing forward and relocating to the new Community Centre will add further expense to the budget. Amongst other community resources, this building will see the introduction of a much-needed pre-school facility.

With its increased funding, the Town Council (following the ESC Asset Transfer) plans the following:

- **Maintenance and enhancement of the Town Park and other green spaces**
- **A complete upgrade of the Skatepark, in consultation with its users**
- **A complete upgrade of the Basketball Half-Court, probably to a Multi-Use Games Area, but in consultation with its users.**
- **A survey of the Town's other play facilities and, for those that will be owned by the Council, a programme of maintenance and modernisation.**
- **The continued development of the historic weekly Market, along with the recently piloted and very popular Christmas Market**
- **Maintenance and improvements to the Town Allotments**
- **A long-term maintenance programme for its enlarged stock of trees (in coordination with community groups sharing the same objective elsewhere in Halesworth)**
- **To build on the very successful Climate Conferences as part of a wider climate sustainability strategy for the Town**
- **To create a permanent part-time post for a Marketing and Events Officer, on the back of the successful upgrade of the outstanding Halesworth Town website - with its concurrent digital marketing campaign - used to encourage the economic development of Halesworth.**
- **The coordination of economic development strategies and cooperation with the County, District and nearby Town Councils, particularly in terms of local and visitor tourism.**
- **The recruitment of a part-time Town Ranger with the role of filling the gaps between the outsourced maintenance of the Council's increasing portfolio of properties, enhancing the general appearance of the Town, and dealing with minor repairs arising from regular routine inspections**
- **A significant improvement programme for the Town's public toilets. Whilst currently functional, they are certainly not in keeping with "one of the best places to live in the UK" – Sunday Times 2024**
- **The promotion (directly or indirectly) of events throughout the year, enhancing Halesworth's increasing reputation as a cultural and historic centre of excellence.**
- **The resurfacing of the Memorial Garden**
- **To continue to play its part in making Halesworth an even better place to live, work and play.**

<https://halesworthtowncouncil.org.uk/the-council/action-plan/>