Halstead Town Council

2025/26 Proposed Budget
and
Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP)
to 2027/28

Contents

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Summary

Outlook for 2025/26

The past year has seen the finances of Halstead Town Council maintain a steady, consistent and healthy pattern, although the price increases of energy, and salary awards have had an effect. In terms of finance, the council is likely to make a considerable surplus which will allow it to transfer sums to earmarked reserves for projects in waiting, or indeed to create new projects. The ability to pay by card, phone and cash has significantly increased car park income for the year.
Income for Queens Hall has continued to perform very well and looks likely to meet the budget for the year. The number of bookings per month has remained steady. Regular group bookings as well as one-off events are in the diary almost every day.

The surplus is expected to be between £40k and £50k. This can be added to the reserves below, or new projects may be added which will need funding.

Our Earmarked reserves are currently **£167,159.** The Safer Street funds are not EMR, they are just ringfenced for Safer Streets salary payments. The report below shows the allocation of surplus at year-end in March 2024.

	Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
320	EMR - Election Costs	8,244.34	2,000.00	10,244.34
321	EMR - Parking Orders & Signes	3,323.00	400.00	3,723.00
322	EMR - Car Parks Maj Maint	7,681.00	2,000.00	9,681.00
324	EMR - QH Maj Maintenance	3,172.00	2,000.00	5,172.00
325	EMR - Empire Theatre Roof	756.00		756.00
326	EMR - Van/Tractor/Equip CP	2,000.00	2,000.00	4,000.00
327	EMR - Properties Maintenance	11,334.00	4,000.00	15,334.00
328	EMR - Churchyard Maj Maint	4,860.00	1,310.00	6,170.00
329	EMR - Community Centre	48,093.00		48,093.00
330	EMR - Maj Tractor/Van Repairs	23,700.00		23,700.00
331	EMR - Operation London Bridge	1,000.00		1,000.00
380	CR - Capital Reserves	17,365.78	-1,679.98	15,685.80
381	EMR - Happy Funds	3,600.00	0.00	3,600.00
383	Safer Streets	33,638.26	-18,458.93	15,179.33
384	Solar Panels	0.00	15,000.00	15,000.00
385	Apprenticeship	0.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
		168,767.38	**13,571.09**	**182,338.47**

Draft Budget for 2024/25 and LTFP

The budget that HTC sets for 2025/26 and the following years needs to continue to generate a surplus/ or at least to break even each year to further build reserves so that we can fund future requirements, and this year we need to bear in mind that all costs are currently rising.

- The proposed budget for 2025/26 includes a prudent and modest **5%** increase in Council Tax to counter inflation. This percentage increase was already agreed at the Budget seminar. This is equivalent to an additional **£2.59** per year for the representative Band D property, which would result in each household at band D paying **£54.29**
  The proposed budget generates a small surplus of £10,148, slightly larger than expected due to the increase in housebuilding. This extra surplus could be used to improve security at the Empire Theatre, and to review security at all Council buildings. In addition, due to changes in staffing, salary costs will be higher.

HTC continues to increase HTC reserves to fund ongoing expenditure and at the same time aims to provide an increased level of facilities and services.

Proposed 2025/6 Budget and LTFP – Key Points

Income	**£459.599**	**on £2.59 increase in council tax p.a. per household**
Expenditure	**£449,451**	
Surplus	**£ 10,148**	

Income

- **Precept and Council Tax**
    - The Tax Base (number of Council Tax paying households) has been set provisionally by BDC to be **4550.59** for 2025/26 - an increase of **98.37** households, which is about double the increase of the year before. A provision has been made for a 1% increase in households in subsequent years.
    - It is proposed to make a general increase in Council Tax per household of **5%** this year to cover cost inflation.

- **Car parking charges**
    - Car park charges were last raised in April 2022, along with the introduction of new ways of paying. The systems have settled down, and there is no intention to make any changes in this area. Income has gone up considerably since the introduction of the new machines and ways of paying. The effect of raising car parking charges is shown in the appendix, but doing so would be an additional expense for residents, and is likely to be received with opposition.

- **Senior citizens' coach outings**
    - Five coach outings took place successfully in 2024. Five outings for the year are planned for 2024 at a price of **£18.00** in 2025 (non- residents **£22.00**). This was approved by council on 14 October 2024

- **Queens Hall hire charges**
    - It is proposed to maintain current hourly rate charges. Although they have not been raised for some years, Queens Hall remains among the most expensive halls in the town. In addition, there are other new and attractive venues in the town. Raising the charges might well encourage hirers to find somewhere cheaper.

- **Allotment charges**
    - Allotment charges were increased by 50p from £4 to £4.50 per rod in 2023. It is not proposed to make any further increases.

- **Tenancies**
    - There will be no change in tenancy income as no leases are due for renewal.

Expenditure

In reviewing expenditure, current rising energy and fuel costs have been taken into account, as these rises will make an impact on the running costs of the council.

- **Salaries and wages**

    - NALC and LGA have now confirmed the agreed pay scales for 2024/25. The proposal from the Unions is for a lump sum increase of £1290 per person across the board, pro rata. This is a permanent increase to bring public sector pay in line with the current cost of living, and to replace what has been lost over the years. This pay increase has been backdated to April 2024

    - This budget is based on the new salary scales and has also taken account of the rise in employers' National insurance from 13.8% to 15%.

    - Due to the recent resignation of a member of staff, the project of taking on an administrative apprentice will have to be delayed for a year, while we fill the vacant post and train the new employee to do current tasks.

- Costs for our bookkeeper come under administration. It is proposed that her hourly rate is raised from £22 to £25 per hour. She is an excellent asset to the Council.

- **Activities**

    - The **Christmas lights** contract will be up for retendering in January 2026.
    - Summer Fun in 2025 will once again be activities at Fusion, so the budget has been reduced slightly to match this year's costs.
    - The budget for the bands has been retained at £4000 to allow for the possibility of more events and possibly another performance from the Beavers

- **Administration**
  Energy costs appear to have settled down, though still at a high level.
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- **S137 Grants**
  It is proposed that grants should remain at £5000 for the 25/26year.

- **Courtaulds**./**Environment**
  As costs of agricultural maintenance are rising, so the budget for this has been increased.

Capital Receipts Reserves

- This balance has been generated through the sale of assets in previous years and the council are permitted to spend these funds only on new assets.

- The balance at the end of this year is forecast to be **£15,179.33**
  There has been no recent expenditure from capital reserves but it has been suggested that the new roller shutter planned for the Empire Theatre could be funded from Capital reserves.

Appendix

1.On 5% increase in council tax

	Budget 23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Precept	**219,462**	**230,519**	**247,051**	**254,463**
Tax base	4401.57	4458.78	4550.59	4596.09
Council tax	49.86	51.70	54.29	55.37
% increase	0.02	0.037	0.05	0.02
Other income	**181,597**	**194,884**	**212,548**	**220,164**
Total income	**401,059**	**425,403**	**454,237**	**473,937**

Expenditure salaries	216,920	238,054	274,300	282,529
Other expenditure	156,850	159,151	175,151	180,406
Total expenditure	**363,770**	**397,205**	**449,451**	**462,935**
Surplus	**39,065**	**28,198**	**10,148**	**10,452**

Halstead Town Council Current Year

Forward Budget Detail - By Centre

		Current Year Budget	Next Year Budget	Year 2 Budget	Year 3 Budget	Year 4 Budget	Year 5 Budget
100	**General Income**						
1076	Precept	230,180	247,051	254,463	0	0	0
1080	Bank Interest	1,500	1,545	1,591	0	0	0
	Total Income	**231,680**	**248,596**	**256,054**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**231,680**	**248,596**	**256,054**	**0**	**0**	**0**
200	**Staff Costs**						
1400	Courtaulds Cost Recovered	1,776	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Income	**1,776**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
4000	Salaries Gross	178,176	198,000	203,940	0	0	0
4005	Employers Pension	32,778	43,000	44,290	0	0	0
4010	Employers NI	11,500	20,000	20,600	0	0	0
4015	Overtime	3,000	8,000	8,240	0	0	0
4030	HIB Staff Costs	10,000	2,500	2,575	0	0	0
4040	Safer Street Staff Costs	2,000	2,000	2,060	0	0	0
4050	Pension Admin Fee	600	800	824	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**238,054**	**274,300**	**282,529**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(236,278)**	**(274,300)**	**(282,529)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
210	**Administration**						
4100	Accounts	9,000	10,000	10,300	0	0	0
4101	Audit	0	1,600	1,648	0	0	0
4105	Bank Charges	200	400	412	0	0	0
4110	Insurance	5,071	6,500	6,695	0	0	0
4115	Computer and Software	5,000	7,000	7,210	0	0	0
4120	Evo Card Machine	400	412	424	0	0	0
4125	Photocopier	3,500	3,605	3,713	0	0	0
4130	Postage	1,400	1,442	1,485	0	0	0
4135	Stationery	1,000	1,030	1,061	0	0	0
4140	Telephone/Internet	3,000	3,090	3,183	0	0	0
4145	Legal & Profesional Fees	2,000	2,060	2,122	0	0	0
4150	Training Costs	1,000	1,500	1,545	0	0	0
4155	Travel Expenses	300	309	318	0	0	0
4160	Subscriptions	2,000	2,060	2,122	0	0	0
4170	Sundry Expenses - Admin	500	600	618	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**34,371**	**41,608**	**42,856**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(34,371)**	**(41,608)**	**(42,856)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
220	**Queens Hall & Offices**						
1110	Queens Hall (Inc)	16,000	16,000	16,480	0	0	0
	Total Income	**16,000**	**16,000**	**16,480**	**0**	**0**	**0**
4201	Business Rates: QH & Offices	6,500	6,695	6,896	0	0	0
4205	Electricity: QH & Offices	4,200	4,326	4,456	0	0	0
4210	Gas	8,500	8,755	9,018	0	0	0

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		Current Year Budget	Next Year Budget	Year 2 Budget	Year 3 Budget	Year 4 Budget	Year 5 Budget
4215	Water Rates - QH Hall & Office	450	800	824	0	0	0
4220	Cleaning Materials	120	200	206	0	0	0
4230	Licensing	400	412	424	0	0	0
4235	Maintenance	1,000	1,030	1,061	0	0	0
4240	Trade Waste	1,200	1,236	1,273	0	0	0
4250	Sundry Expenses - QH &	500	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
4260	Maintenance - QH	1,500	1,500	1,545	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**24,370**	**25,954**	**26,733**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(8,370)**	**(9,954)**	**(10,253)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
300	**Activities**						
4300	Advertising	500	515	530	0	0	0
4305	Bands	4,000	4,120	4,244	0	0	0
4310	Christmas General	3,000	3,090	3,183	0	0	0
4315	Christmas Lights	16,500	16,995	17,505	0	0	0
4320	Christmas Parties	500	515	530	0	0	0
4325	Summer Fun and Youth	2,000	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
4330	Miscellaneous Activities	500	515	530	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**27,000**	**26,750**	**27,552**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(27,000)**	**(26,750)**	**(27,552)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
310	**Coach Outings**						
1300	Coach Outing Income	13,000	13,390	13,792	0	0	0
	Total Income	**13,000**	**13,390**	**13,792**	**0**	**0**	**0**
4380	Coach Outing Expenditure	10,000	11,000	11,330	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**10,000**	**11,000**	**11,330**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**3,000**	**2,390**	**2,462**	**0**	**0**	**0**
320	**Allotments**						
1120	Allotment Income	4,700	4,841	4,986	0	0	0
	Total Income	**4,700**	**4,841**	**4,986**	**0**	**0**	**0**
4216	Water Rates - Allotments	360	200	206	0	0	0
4400	Allotments Expenditure	1,500	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**1,860**	**1,200**	**1,236**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**2,840**	**3,641**	**3,750**	**0**	**0**	**0**
330	**Grants**						
4500	Grants General	5,000	5,000	5,150	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**5,000**	**5,000**	**5,150**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(5,000)**	**(5,000)**	**(5,150)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
340	**Civic**						

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		Current Year Budget	Next Year Budget	Year 2 Budget	Year 3 Budget	Year 4 Budget	Year 5 Budget
4600	Chair Allowance	500	500	515	0	0	0
4605	Receptions	1,600	1,600	1,648	0	0	0
4620	Sundry Expenses - Civic	200	100	103	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**2,300**	**2,200**	**2,266**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(2,300)**	**(2,200)**	**(2,266)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
400	**Environment & Courtaulds**						
4200	Business Rates:	0	2,000	2,060	0	0	0
4225	Maintenance - Environment	4,000	5,000	5,150	0	0	0
4515	Grass General	2,000	2,500	2,575	0	0	0
4520	Machinery Repair	2,000	0	0	0	0	0
4700	Fuel	3,500	3,000	3,090	0	0	0
4710	Hi B	300	0	0	0	0	0
4715	Town Clock	300	150	155	0	0	0
4720	Van	750	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
4725	Vehicle Insurance	1,350	1,500	1,545	0	0	0
4730	Uniforms/PPE: Environment	500	500	515	0	0	0
4735	Climate Change	2,000	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
4740	Special Police	500	1,250	1,288	0	0	0
4750	Sundry Expenses -	1,000	1,500	1,545	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**18,200**	**19,400**	**19,983**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(18,200)**	**(19,400)**	**(19,983)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
410	**Car Parks**						
1130	Butler Road Car Park	16,000	20,000	20,600	0	0	0
1140	Chapel Street Car Park	59,000	70,000	72,100	0	0	0
1150	Car Park Excess Charges	5,000	6,000	6,180	0	0	0
1160	Car Park Permit	16,000	16,480	16,974	0	0	0
1170	Car Park Attendant Charges	26,532	28,532	29,388	0	0	0
1999	Miscellaneous Income	1,250	1,250	1,288	0	0	0
	Total Income	**123,782**	**142,262**	**146,530**	**0**	**0**	**0**
4202	Business Rates: Car-Parks	12,000	12,300	12,669	0	0	0
4731	Uniforms: Car-parks	300	300	309	0	0	0
4800	Machine Service	1,000	1,030	1,061	0	0	0
4805	Chipside Hosting	2,400	2,472	2,546	0	0	0
4810	Tickets	500	600	618	0	0	0
4815	Contactless	5,200	7,000	7,210	0	0	0
4820	MI Permit	1,200	1,236	1,273	0	0	0
4825	EV Charging	500	0	0	0	0	0
4840	Maintenance - Car-Parks	400	2,000	2,060	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**23,500**	**26,938**	**27,746**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**100,282**	**115,324**	**118,784**	**0**	**0**	**0**
420	**Empire Theatre**						
4110	Insurance	1,300	1,500	1,545	0	0	0
4860	Theatre Expenditure	2,000	3,000	3,090	0	0	0

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Forward Budget Detail - By Centre

		Current Year Budget	Next Year Budget	Year 2 Budget	Year 3 Budget	Year 4 Budget	Year 5 Budget
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**3,300**	**4,500**	**4,635**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(3,300)**	**(4,500)**	**(4,635)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
430	**Public Toilets**						
4206	Electricity: Public Toilets	500	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
4218	Water Rates - Public Toilets	350	361	372	0	0	0
4450	Clean/open	8,000	8,240	8,487	0	0	0
4460	Maintenance - Public Toilets	400	1,000	1,030	0	0	0
	Total Overhead Expenditure	**9,250**	**10,601**	**10,919**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**(9,250)**	**(10,601)**	**(10,919)**	**0**	**0**	**0**
440	**Tenancies**						
1200	Library Tenancy	13,000	13,000	13,390	0	0	0
1210	Air Cadet Tenancy	3,165	3,165	3,260	0	0	0
1220	Cellnet Mast Tenancy	6,000	6,000	6,180	0	0	0
1230	Car Wash Tenancy	6,000	6,000	6,180	0	0	0
1240	Empire Tenancy	4,800	4,800	4,944	0	0	0
1241	Empire Theatre Insurance	1,500	1,545	1,591	0	0	0
	Total Income	**34,465**	**34,510**	**35,545**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Net Income over Expenditure	**34,465**	**34,510**	**35,545**	**0**	**0**	**0**
	Total Budget Income	425,403	459,599	473,387	0	0	0
	Expenditure	397,205	449,451	462,935	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	**28,198**	**10,148**	**10,452**	**0**	**0**	**0**