



Knaresborough Town Council Annual Report 2025 -26



www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

01423 864080

clerk@knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk



Introduction

Welcome to our annual report. Knaresborough Town Council as a democratically elected body recognises the importance of providing updates on the work we undertake on your behalf. We hope you enjoy reading all about the various aspects of the Town Council's work over the last 12 months. The past year has been one of remarkable progress and shared community spirit for Knaresborough.

A couple of highlights have been the successful establishment of the Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guide Project, and the appointment of a Town Ranger - an important first step by the Town Council in responding to residents' calls for improved maintenance, repair and day-to-day care of our town.

Our community came together throughout the year to celebrate both national and local heritage, alongside much-loved traditions. Through our generous and robust community grants scheme, we were proud to support cornerstone organisations and events this year.

Significant progress was made on key projects; including the installation of solar panels at Stockwell Community Wellbeing Hub - an important milestone in advancing our sustainable energy ambitions, and the Town Council has taken major steps toward assuming operation and management of the town's historic Wednesday Market as part of North Yorkshire Council's Double Devolution scheme, strengthening our position for the years ahead.

You will discover in the pages ahead that there is a lot going on! You can keep up to date with all the work of the Town Council on our website and social media channels.



About us



Knaresborough Town Council is a Parish Council that has, like many of the large urban parishes, resolved to be known as a Town Council, which carries the right to a Town Mayor instead of a Chairman. Knaresborough Town Council was created in 1974 as successor to the former Knaresborough Urban District Council. Although it is styled as a Town Council, it has the same status in law as a Parish Council.

Elections to Knaresborough Town Council are keenly contested by all major political parties as well as by independents. There are 12 Town Councillors who are usually elected to serve for a four-year term of office: the most recent elections took place in May 2022. The Councillors appoint one of their number to serve as Mayor for a one-year term of office. The Town Mayor has 2 distinct roles, the Chair of the Council, chairing all full council meetings, and the Civic Head, representing the town and its area, with the insignia of the chains of office.

Councillors have three main areas of work:

- Decision making through attending meetings and committees
- Monitoring; making sure that their decisions lead to delivery of efficient and effective services
- Getting involved with the local community

North Yorkshire Council is the unitary authority and responsible for matters such as waste collections, maintenance of the roads and pavements, housing and many other services which your council tax pays for.



Council's Strategic Aims



While Town Councils have limited powers, they are consulted on a wide range of local issues. Much of Knaresborough Town Council's work focuses on lobbying North Yorkshire Council on behalf of the community.

Knaresborough Town Council conducted a major residents' survey in 2022, with full results available on our website. The findings continue to inform our strategic planning, shaping future policies and procedures across the Council. All Standing Committees and Sub-Committees use the survey outcomes to guide and measure their aims and objectives, ensuring our work reflects the priorities of the community.

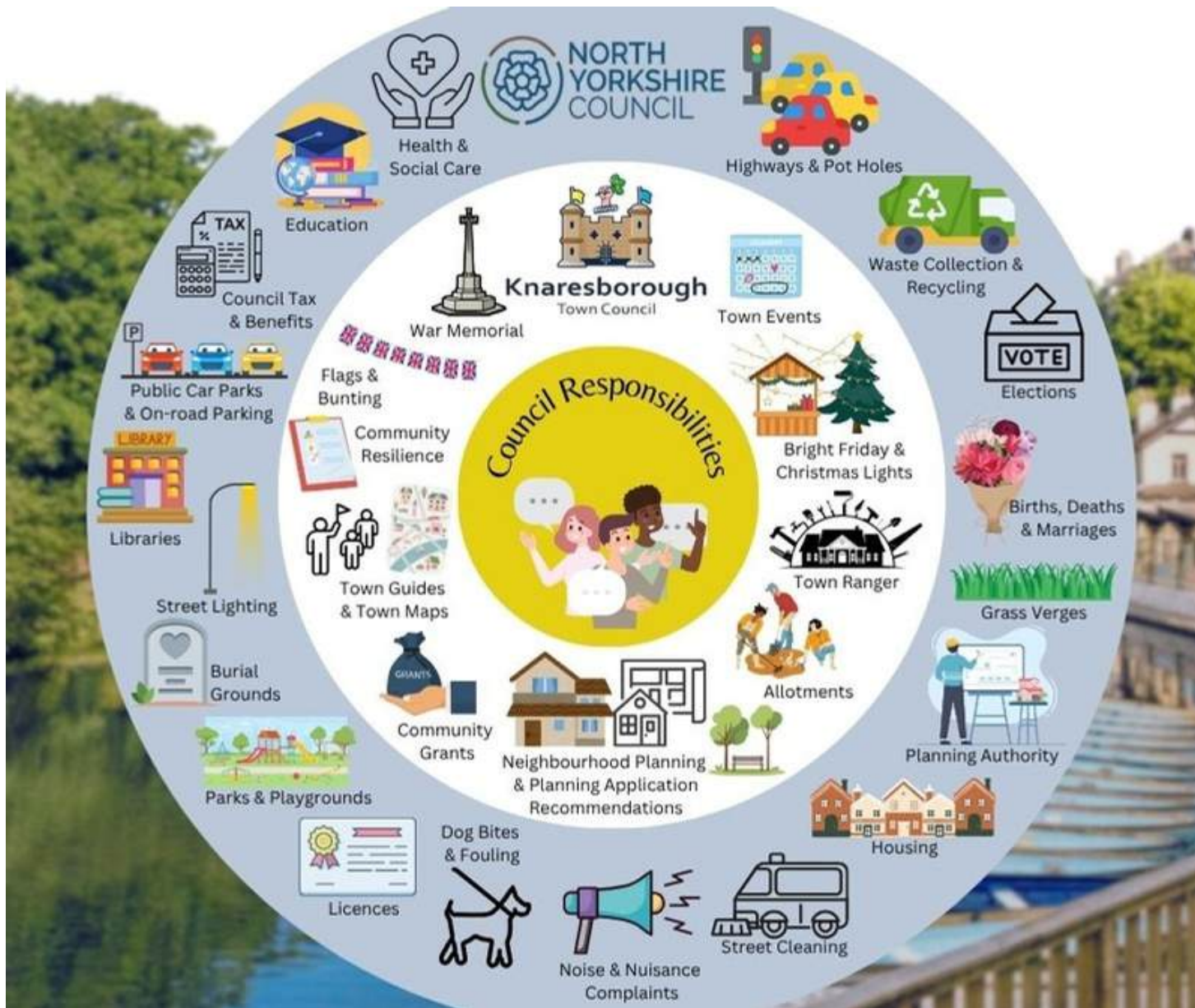
The Council's six strategic aims can be summarised as:

1. Supporting a thriving town centre and encouraging tourism
2. Protecting the town and its residents from the impact of environmental change
3. Protecting Knaresborough's heritage
4. Improving open spaces and recreational facilities
5. Working to improve community safety and lower fear of crime
6. Sourcing additional funding to facilitate further improvements in the town

The Council employs three part-time staff - the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Community Projects Officer - based at Knaresborough House. All staff work with complete political neutrality and are dedicated to delivering the Council's priorities and supporting its work on behalf of the community.



Council Responsibilities



Town Mayor Message



**The Mayor of Knaresborough
Cllr Helen Westmancoat and her
Consort John Westmancoat**



It has been both a pleasure and an honour to represent Knaresborough as Mayor over the past year. I am deeply grateful to my fellow councillors, and to office staff for their unwavering support. My thanks also go to Deputy Mayor Andy Bell, who has represented the town on several occasions and remains a valued presence at the Wednesday Market.

This has been a busy and community-focused year. One of my first engagements was supporting the inauguration of The Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guides, established by my predecessor, Cllr Margy Longhurst. The guides continue to promote our town through their popular walking tours, and as our Town Crier often says — what they don't know about Knaresborough is not worth knowing!

We were delighted to welcome our Town Twinners from Bebra in June, including a Bed Race team for the first time in several years, and plans are already underway for their return alongside visitors from our second twin town, Volodymyr in Ukraine. In October, my Consort John and I visited Bebra for Kirmes, enjoying the celebrations and the opportunity to strengthen our long-standing friendship.

The past 12 months have been a year of commitment, collaboration, and community pride, and I look ahead with real anticipation to the year ahead.

Civic and Community Events



VE Day 80th Anniversary - May 2025 Silhouette Tribute Installation

As part of the town's commemorations, a special silhouette tribute was installed outside Knaresborough House. The then Mayor, Councillor Margy Longhurst, joined students from Craft and Social to assist with the installation. The striking silhouette was created by students at Craft and Social and served as a focal point for reflection throughout the anniversary period. Many residents and visitors took the opportunity to view and appreciate the tribute as part of the town's wider programme of remembrance.

The silhouette tribute was re-installed to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day on Friday 15th August.



Silhouette tribute created by students at Craft and Social

VE Day 80th Anniversary

On Thursday 8 May 2025, Knaresborough joined communities nationwide in marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. This important milestone brought residents and visitors together to honour the end of the Second World War in Europe and to reflect on the resilience and shared spirit that continue to define our town.

Knaresborough Town Council hosted a free community event in the Castle grounds, where people gathered with picnics to enjoy early-evening performances from local musicians, singers, dancers, and community groups. Representatives from the Royal British Legion, Sea Cadets, Army Cadets, and Air Training Corps paraded through the grounds, leading the community to the War Memorial overlooking the viaduct.

A short service of remembrance followed, including prayers and the singing of 'I Vow to Thee, My Country'. At 9pm, Knaresborough joined towns and parishes across the country in lighting the national VE Day beacon, after which the Mayor delivered the official VE Day Tribute.

The event was well attended and warmly received, made possible by the many groups and individuals who contributed their time and talents. It served as a powerful reminder of the importance of shared civic occasions in strengthening community bonds.





255th Anniversary of the Enclosure Act & Knaresborough Forest Day



Knaresborough marked the 255th anniversary of the 1770 Enclosure Act with a programme of events that both reflected on the town's history and celebrated its renewed connection to the landscape. The anniversary coincided with Knaresborough Forest Day on 13 August 2025, an annual celebration introduced to honour the town's natural heritage and the legacy of the ancient Royal Forest. This year's activities highlighted the community's growing commitment to restoring access to shared green spaces, including the development of Long Lands Common and the successful community purchase of Knaresborough Forest Park — two significant achievements that demonstrate how local stewardship is helping to revive the values of the commons for future generations.



**Talk given by the late
Ian Fraser**

The commemorations took place during the vibrant Feva festival, bringing together residents, visitors, and local organisations for a week of workshops, guided walks, performances, and family activities. Highlights included a community theatre production of 'The Knaresborough Eleven' play, forest-themed events at Conyngham Hall, a civic gathering at Knaresborough House featuring talks on the history and future of the forest, and an afternoon of music, crafts, and celebration at Knaresborough Forest Park. Despite the summer heat, participation was enthusiastic throughout, reflecting the town's strong community spirit and shared commitment to protecting its natural and cultural heritage.



Remembrance Sunday 2025



A big thank you to the 1953 Knaresborough Squadron Air Training Corps and the Knaresborough Branch of the Royal British Legion for installing the poppy display at Knaresborough Castle as part of Knaresborough's Remembrance Sunday commemorations.



Knaresborough Town Council work with the Knaresborough Branch of the Royal British Legion each year to organise Knaresborough's Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service at the War Memorial in the Castle Grounds. The Service of Remembrance is led by Revd Garry Hinchcliffe.



The Deputy Lord Lieutenant Simon Theakston and The Mayor of Knaresborough Cllr Helen Westmancoat laid wreaths at the War Memorial during the Remembrance Sunday Service.



Bright Friday 2025



The town's much-loved 'Bright Friday' Christmas Lights Switch-On and Lantern Parade lit up 28th November in spectacular style, drawing record-breaking crowds to celebrate the start of the festive season. The atmosphere was buzzing, lanterns glowing, music filling the Market Place, and families and friends coming together to share in a truly magical evening.

The Town Council extends its heartfelt thanks to the many organisations, individual volunteers, performers, and residents who helped bring this vibrant community tradition to life. Your energy, and teamwork made Bright Friday shine brighter than ever; an event cherished by so many of us across the town.



Mike Whorley Photography

A big thank you to Blind Jack's pub for their fabulous Christmas Lights display and for making the Bright Friday festivities so special this year!

Projects and Initiatives



The Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guides

In autumn 2024, Knaresborough Town Council launched The Mayor of Knaresborough's Town Guides, a new community-led initiative developed and led by Councillor Margy Longhurst, herself a qualified Blue Badge guide. Following an open recruitment event, volunteers were selected for their enthusiasm and passion for the town. Under Margy's leadership, and with support from the Town Council office, participants completed a three-month training programme delivered in partnership with the Institute of Tourist Guiding and course director Sarah Cowling, combining classroom learning with practical guiding skills and culminating in nationally recognised White Badge accreditation.

By May 2025, nine volunteers had qualified and begun delivering free public walking tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 11am each week, offering visitors a high-quality, engaging introduction to Knaresborough's history and heritage.

The initiative is already strengthening the town's visitor offer, encouraging longer stays and increased spending in local businesses. Building on this success, the Council is now exploring themed tours, future recruitment rounds, and further partnership opportunities. The project is also contributing to wider ambitions for Knaresborough to achieve coach-friendly status, supporting a more sustainable and vibrant visitor economy for the years ahead.



Community Development

Town Ranger



**Town Clerk - Angela Pulman,
Town Ranger - Oliver Ward,
and Cllr Hannah Gostlow**



Last year, Knaresborough Town Council introduced a new Town Ranger service, delivered through a six-month contract with OJW Services beginning in June 2025. The Council was pleased to embark on this partnership with Oliver and his team, who initially focused on improving the appearance of the town centre ahead of the busy summer season. This initiative marked an important first step in responding to residents' long-standing calls for better maintenance, repair, and care of the town's public spaces. Designed as a trial funded within the existing Council budget, supported by the local precept, the service aimed to deliver small but meaningful improvements while helping to address gaps in provision that should ordinarily fall under the responsibility of North Yorkshire Council.

The Town Ranger quickly proved to be an invaluable asset, making a visible difference across Knaresborough through day-to-day maintenance, rapid responses to issues, support for community events, and care for green spaces. Their practical skills, local knowledge, and commitment to civic pride significantly enhanced the town's appearance and contributed to the smooth delivery of Council services. Owing to the clear success of the trial and the positive feedback received from residents, the Town Council took the decision to extend the initial six-month contract, ensuring continuity of this much-valued service.



Solar Panel project at Stockwell Wellbeing Community Hub



Pictured Cllr Hannah Gostlow, Cllr Andy Bell, Centre Manager Helen Dennis, Knaresborough Community Energy Director Adam Harper, Carlo Fiorentino, Lead Installer and Paul Wilde Technical Director both of Yorkshire Energy Systems.



Cllr Andy Bell

Great news for Stockwell Community Wellbeing Hub in Knaresborough!

Thanks to funding from North Yorkshire Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, solar panels and battery storage were installed and turned on in March 2025, helping the centre become largely self-sufficient in electricity and significantly cut its carbon footprint.

The project was delivered in partnership with Knaresborough Town Council, Knaresborough Community Energy and local installers Yorkshire Energy Systems, with added insulation upgrades to improve efficiency even further, lower running costs, reduce emissions, and create a more sustainable future for this vital community hub, plus new nesting boxes were installed while the scaffolding was up!

Following the installation of Solar and Battery Storage a year ago, Knaresborough Town Council's Climate Change Emergency Sub-committee is pleased to share the latest data from the solar and battery system at the Stockwell Community Wellbeing Hub. Since the system was commissioned, it has generated over 10MWh of clean electricity.

By generating this power on-site, we are significantly reducing the carbon footprint of one of our primary community buildings. This 10,000kWh of green energy represents a substantial step forward in our commitment to the Climate Change Emergency.

The Town Council Sub-committee will continue to monitor these results as part of our ongoing efforts to make Knaresborough a more sustainable town.

Police and Community Liaison Group



Cllr Kathryn Davies acting as voluntary Police Support Officer with Police Inspector Holly Nichols at the bed race in June 2025.

The Police and Community Liaison Group, chaired by Councillor Kathryn Davies, has met four times in the past 12 months, and continues to focus on neighbourhood policing and early intervention and prevention. Anti social behaviour and other crime remains low in the Knaresborough Area, which reflects the effectiveness of the neighbourhood policing team and partnership working with local community organisations.

This year the focus of the group has been mainly on anti social behaviour, unauthorised encampments, dangerous use of electric bikes, the buying and selling of suspected stolen quad bikes, and the need for the continued promotion of reporting suspicious behaviour or activities as a key part of police intelligence gathering.

The police continue to work at national level regarding a small number of suspected organised crime gangs in the area. The group has also spent time on looking at how to protect vulnerable young people, working with the Knaresborough Youth Council, local schools and other agencies. In addition, work has been taken forward between the police and key community groups on the cultural integration of economic migrant families.

For more information on the work of this group, and minutes of the meetings held, please visit www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk/Police_and_Community_Liaison_Group_48296.aspx

Wednesday Market Update

Knaresborough Town Council (KTC) has continued to make strong progress toward taking on the management of the town's historic weekly charter market. Following the submission of a detailed business case in July 2025, North Yorkshire Council's (NYC) Executive unanimously agreed in October to transfer the operation of the market to KTC. Since then, Town Councillors and staff have been working closely with NYC to ensure the arrangements needed for a smooth and sustainable handover.

At the Full Council meeting on 16 March 2026, Town Councillors resolved that KTC will take over running the market, subject to receiving firm commitments from NYC to safeguard its long-term viability. This includes ensuring that business rates for the market and its associated storage are zero-rated, and that written confirmation is provided on all annual and monthly charges, with no additional costs added in future. KTC remains committed to securing a thriving, well-supported market at the heart of our town for residents, traders, and visitors alike.



Charlotte Gale Photography

Town Allotments

Knaresborough Town Council have 2 allotments sites; one off Stockwell Road - run by KASHS - Knaresborough Allotments Self Help Scheme, and the Jubilee allotment site off Bilton Hall Drive.

In June 2025 the Mayor Helen Westmancoat and fellow Town Councillors Shan Oakes and Hannah Gostlow joined plot holders and members of the KASHS Committee to officially unveil and open their new noticeboard.



**Pictured Cllr Hannah Gostlow,
Rob Snow - Chair of KASHS,
Cllr Shan Oakes and Cllr
Helen Westmancoat**

Rob Snow the Chair of the KASHS Committee gave a short speech and thanked Knaresborough Town Council for their gift of a new noticeboard which will provide a fantastic platform for communication with plot holders and the allotment community.



Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Neighbourhood Development Plan has been through Reg 16 consultation, and to the Independent Examiner, and to North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Executive for their sign off.

Councillor David Goode gave a detailed update on the current status of the Knaresborough Neighbourhood Development Plan at the Knaresborough Town Council (KTC) Planning meeting on 30 March 2026. He explained that the Planning Inspector had produced his final report, together with his recommendations regarding policies – those to be updated and those to be removed. He was generally supportive of the Plan and recommended it be put forward to the public vote;

NYC is also in general agreement with the Planning Inspector's findings/comments. They have agreed to carry out an analysis of the amendments required to update the master document and KTC will then liaise with the original printer/designer with a view to producing the final document version. The plan will then go to the NYC Executive for sign off prior to the final stage, a public vote.

You can keep up to date with all Knaresborough Neighbourhood Development Plan news on the Knaresborough Town Council website.



Community Grants



The Town Council puts money aside in their budget each year for use by community groups and organisations in the town, to benefit the people of Knaresborough. Over the last 12 months the council has awarded over £26,000 in grants to local groups and community led projects, supporting a diverse and wide range of activities.

Group / Organisation	Grant Description	Amount Awarded
Waterside Resident Association	Waterside maintenance	£1050.00
Renaissance Knaresborough	Trompe L'Oiel	£1000.00
FEVA	Market Place Entertainment	£2500.00
Friends of Jacob Smith Park	Barn Owl Box	£350.00
The Village	Moses Basket mattresses	£350.00
Restart Yorkshire	Move Defib (Cricketers)	£300.00
The Half Moon	New Defib	£350.00
Yorkshire Create	Chrismouse Advent Window	£500.00
FEVA	Knaresborough Forest Family Fun Day	£300.00
Mind	Mental Elf Fun Run	£2000.00
Knaresborough Youth Council	Youth Council activities	£2500.00

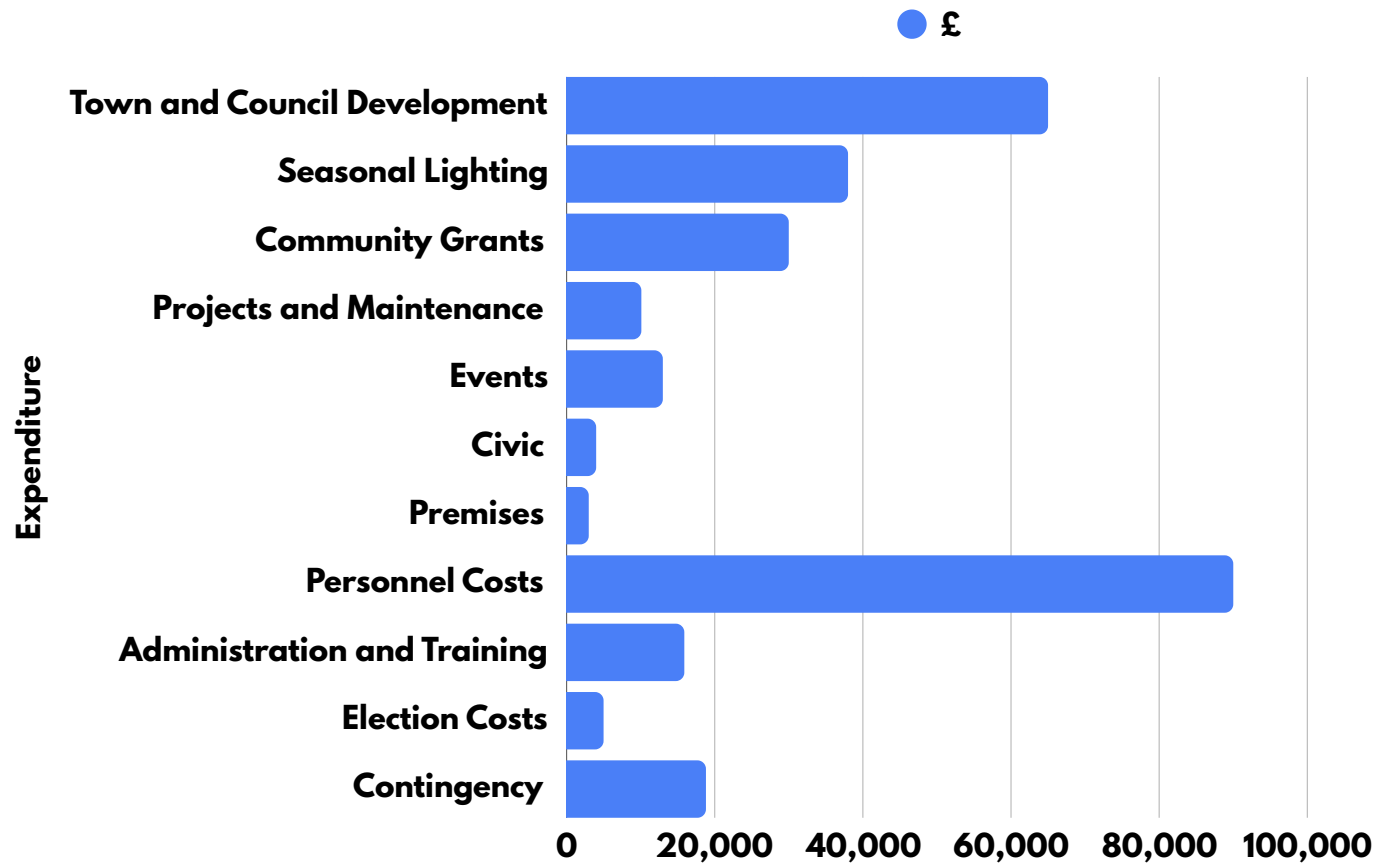
Group / Organisation	Grant Description	Amount Awarded
The Art Guild	Artmaker forum and festival	£1000.00
Friends of Aspin Pond	Restoration and maintenance	£1000.00
Inspire Youth Yorkshire	Planting for privacy	£280.00
Harrogate and Knaresborough Toy Library	Training for sling use and first aid	£219.00
Scriven pre-school	Outdoor refurb project	£1500.00
Knaresborough Lions Club	Bed Race support	£9000.00
Churches Together	Nativity - road closure support	£350.00
1st Knaresborough Scouts	Fire door replacement	£700.00
Knaresborough Choral Society	40 th Anniversary	£1000.00
Friends of Meadowside Academy	Garden Club	£350.00

For more information on how to apply for a grant from Knaresborough Town Council visit our website www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk/Grants

Financial Report 2025 / 2026



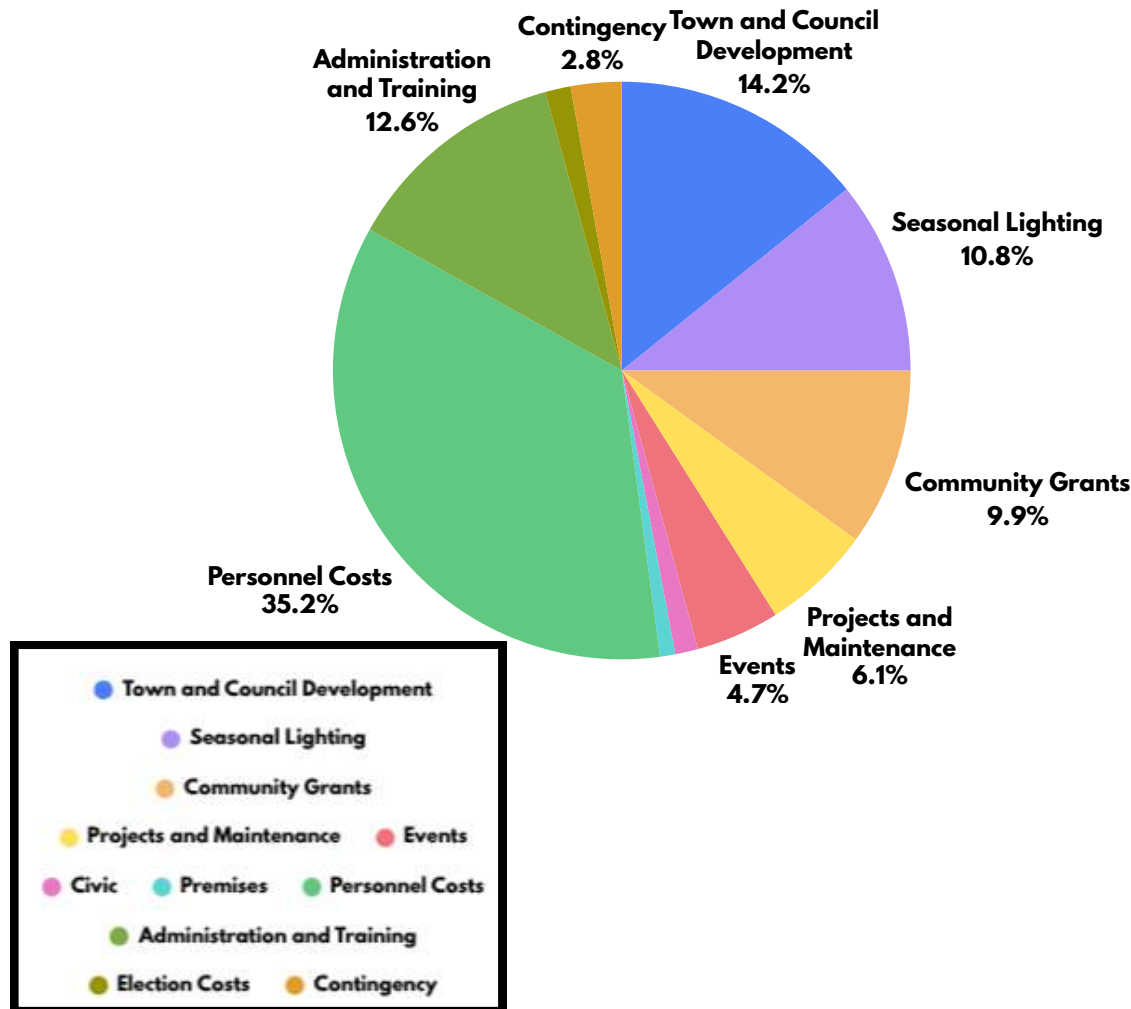
Each year Knaresborough Town Council conduct a thorough, comprehensive budget setting process that is open to public scrutiny. The chart below provides an overview of the breakdown of Council expenditure during the last full financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.



Council Budget 2026 / 2027



The budget and precept for the upcoming financial year 2026-2027 was approved by Knaresborough Town Council on 17 November 2025. A detailed budget is available in the minutes from that date on the Town Council website www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk/Finances or from the Clerks office in line with the Publication Scheme.



The precept:

The precept for the year 2026 / 2027 for an equivalent Band D Property charge per household is £42.89

This equates to an annual increase for a Band D household of **£5.91** per year. That's roughly **11p** per week.

In simple terms; for about the price of a pint of beer per year, the town gains safer roads, better facilities, community funding and a vibrant town centre.

Our approach is to protect items residents value, invest carefully in improvements and keep the increase minimal and responsible.

Charlotte Gale Photography



GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions after reading about the work of the Town Council, please don't hesitate to contact the Clerk's office.

EMAIL ADDRESS

clerk@knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

PHONE NUMBER

01423 864080

LOCATION

Knaresborough Town Council, Knaresborough House
High Street, Knaresborough, HG5 0HW

WEBSITE

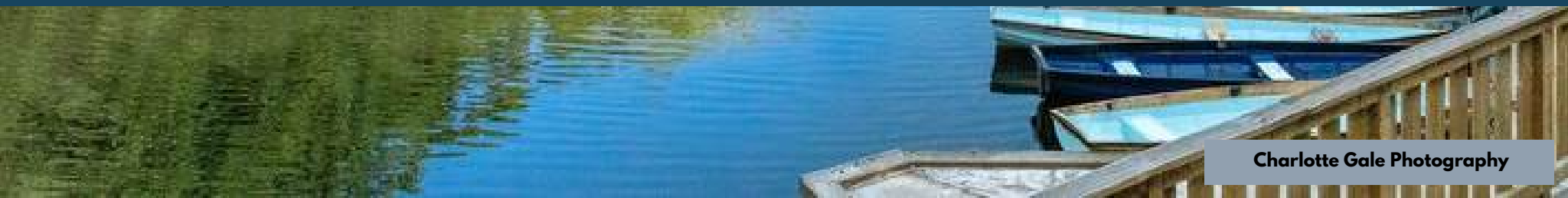
www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/KnaresboroughTC/>



THANK YOU



Charlotte Gale Photography