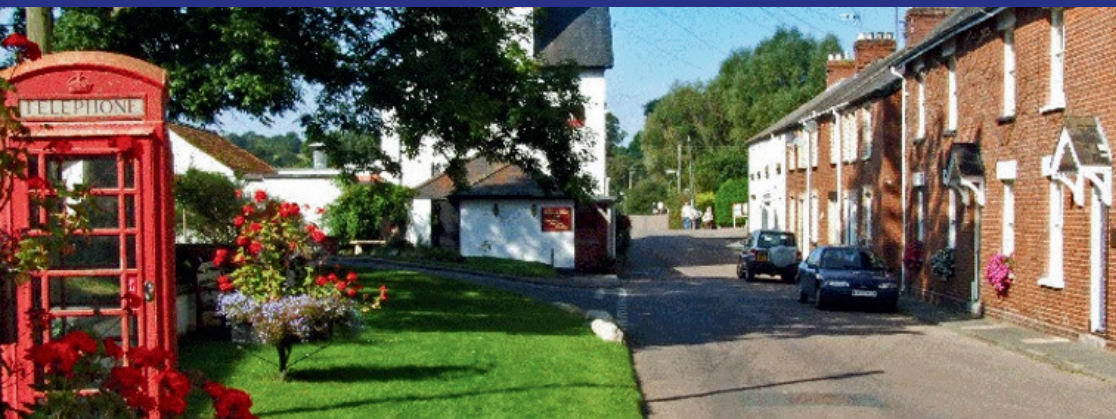


STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

Ottery St Mary Town Council are proud to share their annual report for 2025. This booklet will tell you about the Council's new Strategic Plan and details of our budget for 2026/27, as well as lots of details on what we have been up to in 2025.

Ottery St Mary Town Council
Council Offices
8 Broad St
Ottery St Mary
Devon
EX11 1BZ

01404 812252
admin@otterystmary-tc.gov.uk

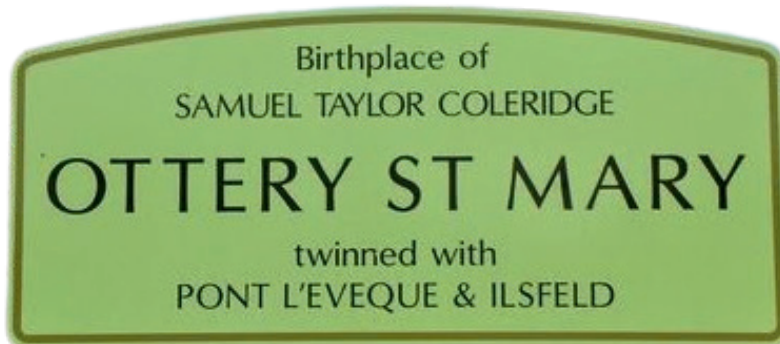


OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



FOREWORD



Town Clerk

Kerry Kennell

This document outlines the Council's priorities and ambitions for the next five years bringing together the work of councillors, staff, and community partners as we continue to focus on responsible financial management, the protection and enhancement of our community facilities, and the long-term wellbeing of our parish.

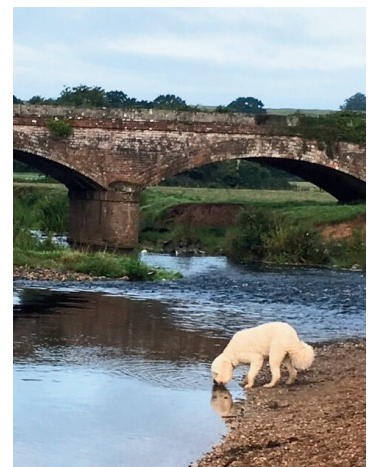
The Council remain committed to reviewing our expenditure, improving our processes, and ensuring that every decision supports the needs of our residents both now and in the future. Our aim is to deliver high-quality services while investing in projects that strengthen Ottery St Mary as a thriving, welcoming, and resilient place to live, work, and visit.

The year ahead is set to be an exciting one. We look forward to the opening of the new PlayZone at Strawberry Lane—an important investment in accessible, modern recreation for our community. Work will also begin on the Wayfinding Project, which will introduce clearer, more attractive signage throughout the town, helping residents and visitors alike navigate our beautiful local heritage, shops, and green spaces.

We hope you find this Strategic Plan and Budget informative and reflective of a Council committed to progress, transparency, and community value. Your engagement and feedback continue to be vital as we shape the next chapter for Ottery St Mary.

Vision

Ottery Town Council aims to build a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous town where the community is resilient, happy, and empowered to shape its future.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



INTRODUCTION FROM THE MAYOR, VICKY JOHNS

Recent years have been challenging for everyone. We have all felt the effects of national cutbacks and the ongoing cost-of-living pressures, and these difficulties are echoed at every level of local government. The current Local Government Reorganisation has created real uncertainty at County and District levels, and Town and Parish Councils often find themselves overlooked in the process. From the experience of other areas that have already gone through this change, we know that the workload for Town and Parish Councils is likely to grow significantly — but without any additional funding to support it.

That is why, after careful consideration, the Council has taken the difficult but necessary decision to increase the precept. This is not something we take lightly. However, it is the only way we can continue to deliver and protect the local services that matter most to our residents, especially as costs continue to rise.

Ottery Town Council invests directly back into our Parish, supporting a wide range of services and initiatives, including:

- SPACE Youth club and activities for our young residents
- Grants for our local groups and voluntary organisations
- Shop Front Improvement Grants to keep our town vibrant
- The new PlayZone, due to begin construction very soon—weather permitting
- Our Christmas lighting, which has been praised by residents from Ottery and beyond
- Providing the Visit Ottery platform to encourage visitors to visit our parish
- Community-requested electric vehicle charging points at the Station

Ottery is a community unlike any other—full of heart, resilience, and people who step up for one another. Our voluntary groups play an incredible role in filling the gaps left by national cutbacks, and they do so because they genuinely care about this town and its people.

Recently, many in our community have been affected by flooding. We have been working closely with our DCC County Councillor, EDDC, DCC and the Environment Agency to push for the support and resources our residents deserve. Progress can be slow, and the challenges are real, but please know that your Council continues to press forward on your behalf.

There is always more to do, and we remain committed to listening, learning, and responding to the community's concerns. As Mayor of Ottery, I am immensely proud to represent this town and all that we can achieve together when we support one another.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



STRATEGY

Chair of Finance and
Strategic Planning
Dean Stewart
Chair of Operations
Ben Feasey

Ottery St Mary is a distinguished and welcoming town located in East Devon, renowned for its historical significance, cultural heritage, and strong sense of community. The town offers a diverse array of independent businesses, local enterprises, and cultural activities, all set within a picturesque landscape that includes the River Otter and surrounding countryside. Its unique traditions - such as Pixie Day and the annual Tar Barrels event—and its literary legacy, notably as the birthplace of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, contribute to its reputation as a place of creativity and civic pride.

Despite its many strengths, Ottery St Mary faces a range of contemporary challenges. Opportunities for young people remain limited, and local businesses often encounter barriers to growth and sustainability. Rising housing costs, coupled with increasing prices for essential goods and services, have placed financial strain on many residents. Additionally, physical and mental health concerns persist across the community, while reductions in public services—stemming from broader financial pressures at the county level—have impacted support for vulnerable individuals. These challenges are not unique to Ottery St Mary; they reflect wider national and global issues, including the ongoing climate and biodiversity crises. Nevertheless, the town's greatest asset lies in its people. Through collaboration, mutual support, and a commitment to shared progress, the community of Ottery St Mary is well-positioned to address these challenges and to build a town that is inclusive, resilient, and prosperous for all.

Vision

Ottery Town Council aims to build a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous town where the community is resilient, happy, and empowered to shape its future.

OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



STRATEGY

How We Work

Ottery St Mary Town Council plays a key role in supporting the local community and managing public services within the town. Here's an overview of what they do:

Core Responsibilities

- Representation: Acts as the voice of Ottery St Mary residents on local issues, liaising with higher authorities like East Devon District Council and Devon County Council.
- Community Engagement: Encourages public participation in decision-making and regularly consults residents on town development and planning matters.
- Local Services: Manages and maintains:
 1. Allotments
 2. Cemeteries

Facilities & Infrastructure

- Oversees public buildings such as the Station Community Hub, a space for community activities and services, the Library, the Old Convent.
- Supports local events and initiatives that foster community spirit and wellbeing.

Governance

- Operates through elected councillors and committees.
- Publishes policies, meeting minutes, and strategic plans to ensure transparency and accountability.

Public Involvement

- Offers channels for residents to report issues, request services, and stay informed via the Ottery Gazette, Tipton Times and social media.
- Hosts consultations and public meetings to gather feedback on town projects and priorities.





STRATEGY

Strategic Aims & Priorities

1. Grow Community Wellbeing

Focus: Strengthen social fabric, support early help services, and improve access to community spaces.

Key Outcomes:

- Network of accessible community spaces.
- Thriving community groups.
- Open spaces promoting wellbeing.

2. Support a Thriving Town and wider Parish

Focus: Boost local economy, improve town centre and wider parish, and attract investment.

Key Outcomes:

- Cleaner, safer town centre.
- Fewer vacant shops.
- Increased footfall and tourism.

3. Cultivate Environmental Sustainability

Focus: Promote green energy, biodiversity, and active travel.

Key Outcomes:

- Climate Action Plan for Ottery St Mary.
- More green spaces and wildlife corridors.
- Town wide greener energy structures.
- Progress toward walking and cycle routes throughout parish.



STRATEGY

Strategic Aims & Priorities

4. Improve Assets and Infrastructure

Focus: Secure funding, enhance public spaces, and address local needs.

Key Outcomes:

- Increased external funding.
- Investment in the Parish.
- Improve traffic flow and safety.
- Enhance and develop community facilities and spaces.

5. Be a Bold and Effective Council

Focus: Improve governance, transparency, and civic engagement.

Key Outcomes:

- Better decision-making processes.
- Efficient resource use.
- Increased public participation.

Community Engagement

Ottery Town Council invites residents to:

- Share ideas and feedback.
- Participate in decision-making.
- Stay informed via newsletters and social media.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



TIPTON ST JOHN

Tipton St John, is three miles south of Ottery St Mary. The village dates back to the Domesday Book of 1086 and is now a thriving community, with its own bimonthly magazine run by volunteers, and various community clubs catering to all ages.

Amongst one of the few villages left with a pub, shop [the Post Office closed in 2008], and a primary school with approximately 100 pupils. We have a village hall, built in 1914 originally as the Church Institute and renovated over the past decade; also the home of our own Amateur Dramatic Association {TIPPS}. The playing field with tennis courts and children's swings, sits opposite the very busy garage. We have our own telephone box / book exchange. All of which sit in rolling green hills, predominately farmland, and the winding River Otter running through the heart of the village, a source of much wildlife, including Otters and Beavers, Kingfishers and Egrets. Up until 1967 Tipton had its own railway station, [the junction between Sidmouth and Budleigh Salterton railways], some remnants of which can still be seen today. The Church of St John's sits on the opposite side of the river, just below the Residential Care Home. The Church was built in 1840, designed by John Hayward and was constructed in the style of the 13th century Salisbury Cathedral.

The village is located near the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and offers a scenic walk along the river Otter to the historic town of Ottery St Mary. Truly an example of "England's green and pleasant land".

NORTH WARD

North Ward spans the northern part of Ottery St Mary Parish, bringing together a series of small, characterful settlements surrounded by rolling countryside and rich farmland. At its heart is Alffington, home to the Parish Church of St James, a peaceful and long-established focal point for worship, community gatherings, and village identity. The surrounding lanes and fields reflect the rural heritage that continues to shape daily life in the ward.

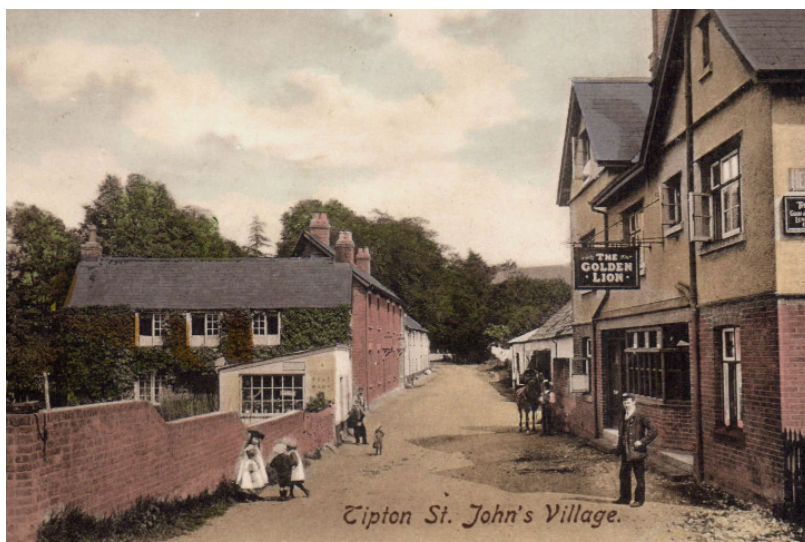
The ward is also home to Cadhay House, a Tudor manor house and Grade I listed building, with a fascinating history and beautifully maintained gardens that draw visitors from far and wide. Its architecture and tranquil setting provide a striking link to the parish's heritage and add to the distinctive character of this part of Ottery.

The area also includes Gosford, a quiet hamlet with historic roots, and Fenny Bridges, well known for its riverside setting and friendly inn that has welcomed travellers for generations. These communities are linked by winding roads, footpaths, and the agricultural landscape that defines this part of East Devon.

Further along the parish you will find Fairmile, a small settlement with a strong sense of place and a long association with travel and trade due to its historic coaching routes. Nearby Taleford sits close to the River Tale, offering a mix of rural homes, farmland, and gentle valley scenery—another example of the calm, countryside character that runs throughout the ward.

A unique feature of North Ward is the presence of Escot Village Hall which, despite its name, is not actually located in Escot. This continues to puzzle a few visitors, but the hall remains an important and well-used community venue firmly within Ottery St Mary Parish.

Together, the settlements of North Ward form a network of friendly, close-knit communities with varied local thriving businesses set among green fields, wildlife-rich hedgerows, and peaceful rural views. With its blend of heritage, landscape, and community spirit, North Ward is a cherished part of Ottery St Mary Parish.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



STRATEGY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHARTER

Ottery St Mary Town Council is committed to meaningful, inclusive, and transparent engagement with all members of the community. This charter outlines our principles and practices for community involvement.

Our Commitment

We will:

- Provide clear, accessible information about council decisions and projects.
- Offer multiple ways for residents to share their views, including online and face-to-face.
- Actively listen to feedback and use it to shape our work.
- Ensure underrepresented voices are heard and included.
- Report back on how community input has influenced decisions.

Engagement Methods

We will use a range of methods including:

- Public consultations and surveys
- Community forums and workshops
- Social media and newsletters
- Councillor surgeries and drop-in sessions



Annual Engagement Plan

Each year, the Council will publish an engagement plan outlining key opportunities for public involvement.

Review and Improvement

This charter will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



COUNCIL GRANTS

by Chair of Finance, Dean Stewart

One of the most rewarding and interesting roles at the Town Council is the Community Grant programme. We meet everyone who applies for a grant which gives us a chance to meet some of the real heroes of Ottery St Mary. The range and number of people who are doing good things for the town, usually in their own time and at their own expense is humbling. We are so proud to be able to support all these good causes.



TIPTON PLAYING FIELDS £2,000	FRIENDS OTTERY LIBRARY £700	ACTION EAST DEVON £15,000	TURKISH BARBER £600	HOSPIS-CARE £2,000	COMMUNITY GRANTS £17,300	
OPERATION RUDOLPH £1,500	OTTER WISHES £600	OTTERY FOOTBALL CLUB £3,000	TAR BARRELS CARNIVAL £5,000	COLD HARBOUR FARM £600	SHOP FRONT FUND £3,512.50	
DEVON ECO BOUTIQUE £250	OTTERY GIRL GUIDES £750	CITIZENS ADVICE £2,000	DILLYS FLORIST £410	OTTERY BOWLING CLUB £2,000	LARGE COMMUNITY GRANTS £20,000	
HONITON 729 CLUB £500	LEAH MARKS £512	STUDIO AIRE £540	OTTERY BELL RINGERS £500	OTTERY PRIMARY PTA £1,350	PROJECT FOOD £500	THE OTTERY LARDER £2,000



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

by Chair of Finance, Dean Stewart

The Town Council has invested heavily in services over the last few years. The Station Youth Club which is delivered for us by Space is the envy of many larger towns. Our grant support to groups such as Hospiscare, Action East Devon, the Ottery Larder and others has contributed greatly to the wellbeing of Ottery residents. We have kept staff costs to a minimum while still delivering an excellent service.

On the regeneration front we are close to now actually buying and installing a new set of wayfinding signs across town, and we are working with Devon County Council to invest in road and footpath improvements across the parish. We are also breaking ground on the new MUGA in February. These are significant projects that will benefit the whole community.

We will be raising our precept this year as we will need to increase our team as we take on more services, largely as a result of LGR which is explained on the next page.

The amount of your annual council tax bill which comes to the Town Council will increase to £148.48. This is around £2.85 per week for a Band D property. This compares to other local towns like Honiton (£243), Cranbrook (£256), Sidmouth (£111), Axminster (£171), Exeter (£191).

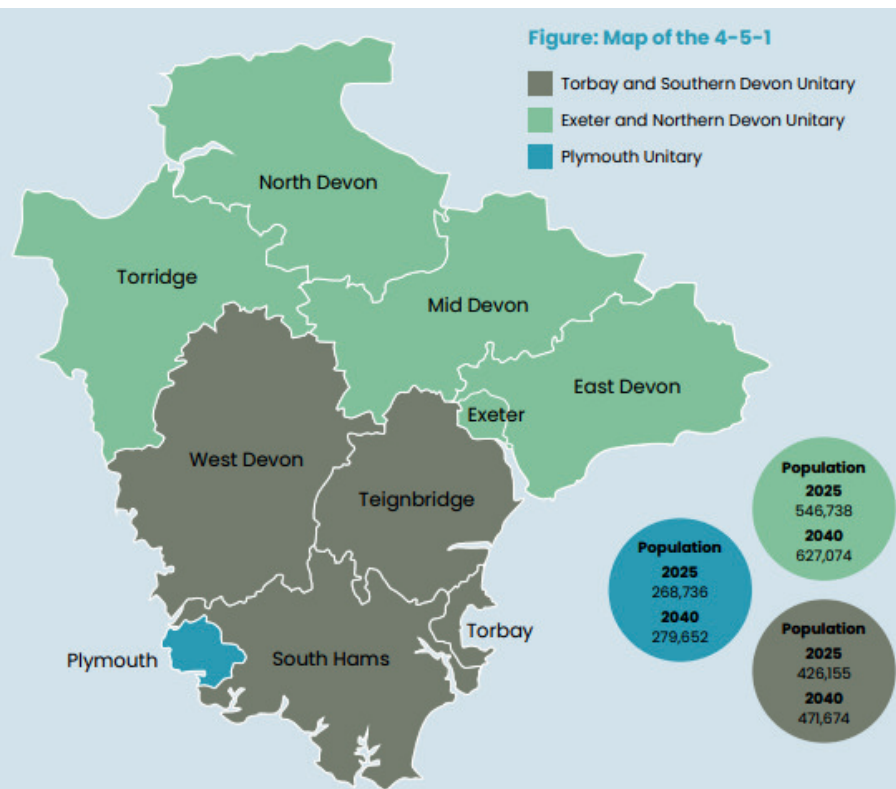
BANK ACCOUNTS FEBRUARY 1ST 2026

Council Current Account	£10,958.35
Council Savings Account	£329,744.12
Council Savings Account 2	£114,799.36
Hinckley & Rugby Account	£85,656.82
CCLA	£10,000.00
Total Cash in Bank 31st January 2026	£551,158.65
Forecast Council Expenditure Feb-Mar 2026	£49,000.00
Forecast Reserves March 31st 2026	£502,158.65
<i>Rolling Capital Fund (Wayfinding, Regenerati</i>	<i>£154,657.29</i>
<i>Building Repairs</i>	<i>£20,000.00</i>
<i>CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy Projects)</i>	<i>£130,499.96</i>
Unrestricted Reserves	£197,001.40





LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)



In December 2024, the government announced plans to simplify local government structures in England. Areas like Devon, which currently operate under a two-tier system (with both district and county councils), are now being asked to consider moving to a unitary authority model, where a single council is responsible for all local services. If this goes through, then East Devon District Council and Devon County Council will disappear, to be replaced by a single authority. Whether this will be one across the whole of Devon, or a group of councils, there will be changes for both the Town Council and local residents.

What will change?

We don't know!

The government will decide in August 2026 which direction to move in, but we know there will be changes to many services, including;

- Who collects your bin
- Who funds social care and education
- Who runs parks and libraries
- Who fixes the potholes and cuts the grass verges

East Devon District Council have advised us that they would like to pass on local assets to local councils before they disappear. This would include areas like Land of Canaan park and car park, Winters Lane park and Brook Street Car Park. But although there may be revenue from parking, they have not yet been able to tell us what the associated costs would be. There are also services like emptying the town bins and keeping the parks clean that could be handed us.

This has made planning hard for all local Town Councils. We will need to take on staff and equipment, but at the point we had to set the budget we do not know exactly what that will look like, and what it will cost.



OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FORECAST

INCOME	<u>2025/26</u>		<u>2026/27</u>	Budget Incr/Decr
	Projected	Budgeted (Revised)	Proposed	
Council Administration	£9,500	£6,500	£9,500	£3,000
CIL/S106	£44,298	£0	£0	£0
Allotments	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£0
Cemetery	£8,000	£6,000	£8,000	£2,000
Library & Info Centre	£4,750	£4,750	£4,750	£0
Station Centre	£12,145	£15,640	£11,640	−£4,000
Strawberry Lane Rec Site	£245	£0	£0	£0
Museum	£750	£750	£750	£0
Skate Park	£0	£0	£0	£0
Council Office (Excl Loan C	£22,018	£23,000	£22,018	−£982
Victoria Terrace car parking	£300	£300	£300	£0
	£105,006	£59,940	£59,958	£18

REVENUE EXPENDITURE	<u>2025/26</u>		<u>2026/27</u>	Budget Incr/Decr
	Projected	Budgeted (Revised)	Proposed	
Council Administration	£68,568	£50,460	£67,375	£16,915
Grounds Maintenance	£5,500	£5,500	£5,500	£0
Staff Costs	£78,695	£155,203	£175,185	£19,982
CIL/S106	£7,945	£0	£0	£0
Allotments	£2,380	£2,260	£2,360	£100
Cemetery	£7,994	£6,210	£8,010	£1,800
Events	£7,523	£7,000	£7,000	£0
Grants	£40,025	£25,000	£40,000	£15,000
Library & Info Centre	£6,372	£4,360	£4,360	£0
Meeting Rooms	£0	£0	£0	£0
Station Centre	£79,167	£77,800	£79,312	£1,512
Strawberry Lane Rec Site	£3,920	£1,880	£3,925	£2,045
Tourism	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£5,000
Museum	£2,748	£500	£10,000	£9,500
Skate Park	£5,100	£5,000	£5,100	£100
Council Office (Excl Loan Charges)	£24,586	£11,625	£24,586	£12,961
Tennis Court	£609	£565	£624	£59
Regeneration	£0	£500	£0	−£500
Victoria Terrace car parking	£642	£620	£650	£30
Services to be Devolved			£50,000	£50,000
	£346,774	£354,483	£488,987	£134,504

NET REVENUE EXPENDITURE **£227,457** **£294,543** **£414,718** **£120,175**

CAPITAL & PROJECT EXPENDITURE (NET)

Capital Funds (Unallocated)	£18,000	£18,000	£18,000	£0
PWLB Loan Charges	£14,311	£14,311	£14,311	
	£32,311	£32,311	£32,311	£0

TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE **£259,768** **£326,854** **£447,029** **£120,175**

OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET 2026/27



INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FORECAST

	2025/26		2026/27	Budget
	Projected	Budgeted (Revised)	Proposed	Incr/Decr
Precept Required	£319,330	£319,330	£447,029	£127,699
TOTAL TAXATION FUNDING REQUIRE	£319,330	£319,330	£447,029	£127,699

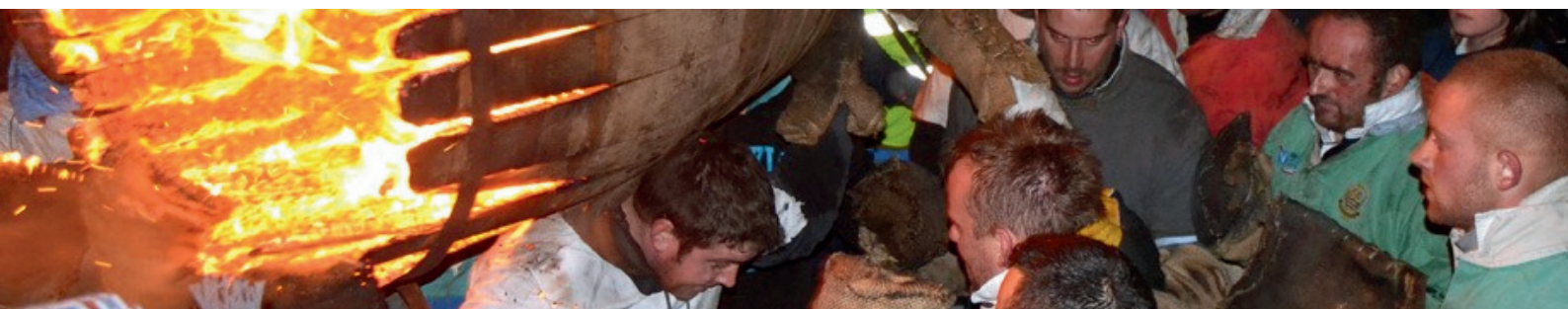
ADJUSTED BASIS

Band D Equivalent	3017	3011	
Precept per Band D Equivalent (£/annum)	£105.86	£148.48	£42.62
Precept per Band D Equivalent (£/week)	£2.03	£2.85	



In March 2026 building work is scheduled to begin on the MUGA in Strawberry Lane, where we hope to host the walking football and netball teams alongside anyone who wants to hire the pitch.

The wayfinding project with over 30 new signs throughout the town should see those signs delivered by Summer 2026, and we remain in discussion with Devon County Council about improvements to the road layout around the town. The funding from the MUGA came entirely from S106 developer money and a grant from the Football Foundation.



VICKY JOHNS

MAYOR

DEAN STEWART

DEPUTY MAYOR

CHAIR OF FINANCE & STRATEGY

BEN FEASEY

CHAIR OF OPERATIONS



KERRY KENNELL

TOWN CLERK

JANE BUSHBY

ADMINISTRATOR

JANICE AHERNE

COUNCILLOR, TIPTON WARD

RICHARD GRAINGER

CHAIR OF PLANNING

SARAH MARTIN

CHAIR OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

EMILY PEKA ROBYN BENNETT NICK SNELLER RICHARD COPUS PETER FAITHFULL
COUNCILLORS