



Stowmarket Town Council

Budget Book

**Financial Overview &
Budget Round 2026/27**



**Report of the
Responsible Financial Officer
February 2026**

The contents of this Budget Book have been developed following discussions between members of the Town Council's Financial Strategy Group comprising, Councillors Nick Gowrley (Chair), Alan Edwards, Barry Salmon, Keith Scarff, and Miles Row.

It is divided into the following sections:

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We wish to ensure that all members of the local community can understand our finances and use of public funds. Therefore, the Town Council seeks to present this information in simple language so that everyone who reads it can understand it. **COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT ARE ALSO AVAILABLE ON REQUEST IN A LARGE TYPE FORMAT.** If you require any help in understanding any of the contents, then please contact the Town Clerk or Head of Corporate Services for assistance.

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Part 1: Executive Summary

Introduction

The objective of the Town Council is to achieve a balanced budget:

- By levying a Precept each year (Council Tax);
- By generating income from its venues and services (which it runs on a cost recovery basis);
- By achieving value for money from its contracts for services provided by third parties; and
- By seeking efficiency savings and deferring costs so that they occur over more than one financial year.

The Financial Strategy Group has considered the cost pressures facing the Council and worked through them to identify which will be one-off pressures and which will be recurring pressures that will need to be contained in the Council's base budget each year.

The current budget round is conducted within the context of its immediate priorities which includes the following:

- The Recreation Ground Redevelopment Project, including the provision of new play facilities and upgrading the community café and CCTV.
- The Recreation Ground Former Toilet Block Refurbishment Project, including reconfiguration of the space in the building and upgrading of facilities.
- The Recreation Ground Security Fencing Project, including the provision of a new fence, seating and mounding to protect the site from unauthorised encampments.
- The Parish Churchyard Improvement Project, including the installation of historic gates, new kerbstones, upgrade of the roadway, pathway and seating.
- The Civic and Community Events Programme including hosting the county-wide celebration of Armed Forces Day.
- An internal reorganisation of functions to help ensure that resources are utilised effectively and the Council has access to specialist advice in all key areas of its work.
- A commitment to improve and innovate to ensure that the Town Council achieves re-accreditation as a “gold” rated Council under the Local Council Awards Scheme.

The measures outlined above involves expenditure of over £700,000 (including grants secured from third parties). This will lead to a planned reduction in the Council's overall reserves in the short-term with the intention that reserve levels will be rebuilt from the second half of 2026/27 through to 2028/29.

The public have expressed their appreciation of the work that the Town Council performs where it can be seen – specifically to support and deliver projects, events and services that the public can readily identify. Successes in recent years have included the Regal Redevelopment Project and launch of the Town Rangers service, as well as events such as Stowfest, Stowmarket Food & Drink Festival, Go Green Go Wild, the Stowmarket Town Awards, and the Civic Celebration. The Council will seek to carry this approach forward whilst also fulfilling its responsibilities to invest in the management and maintenance of its assets and in implementing sound governance arrangements.

The Town Council will also continue to work positively with key local partners and stakeholders to fulfil the objectives it has published in its Corporate Plan, “Proud of our Town”, and its prospectus for the development of the town called “A Fair Deal for

Stowmarket". This approach has brought additional resources into Stowmarket which have been used to support the development of local amenities, investment in infrastructure and secure financial support for the town centre.

An increase in the Council tax base for Stowmarket and a reduction in employer contributions have helped to manage the cumulative impact of cost pressures. A considerable amount of the cost pressures has come from factors outside the Council's direct control such as employer costs arising from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, the National Pay Award and increases in supplier costs. At the same time, there are some higher resourcing costs anticipated as the Council implements measures in responding to the findings of external reviews conducted by its HR business partner and Health and Safety adviser. The expectation is that these measures will increase the organisation's capacity, competency and resilience – and ensure that it continues to invest in its future.

The Financial Strategy Group has reviewed and refined the outline proposals presented to its first meeting so that there is clear plan in place for which cost pressures will be funded from the precept and which areas of expenditure will need to be managed through effective budgetary management and control. It is evident that it would not be reasonable for the Town Council to pass on the full range of additional cost pressures to the public but even so, the Financial Strategy Group believes that a larger than normal increase in the Precept is required for 2026/27.

The Precept Proposal

The Financial Strategy Group has considered the delivery of the Corporate Plan; the forecasts within the Town Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; the anticipated cost pressures for 2026/27; and the main risks to the Town Council's financial position.

On this basis, the Financial Strategy Group recommends:

That the Town Council's element of Council Tax for 2026/27 should increase by £0.323p per week for a Band D property (or 8%)

The total Precept will be **£1,651,996.46** for 2026/27.

Part 2: Financial Capacity

Definition

Financial capacity is the ability of the Town Council to maintain its financial health in meeting its revenue and capital funding requirements, holding adequate reserves, and ensuring that it can achieve its objectives.

Introduction

The Town Council requires financial capacity:

1. To achieve the objectives contained its Corporate Plan, Digital Strategy, HR Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy;
2. To operate amenities;
3. To provide services;
4. To hold civic and community events
5. To offer grant funding to local groups and bodies;
6. To deliver capital projects;
7. To absorb external financial shocks;
8. To maintain in good order, the assets that the Town Council manages on behalf of the local community; and
9. To implement organisational change that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council, including investment in new technology.

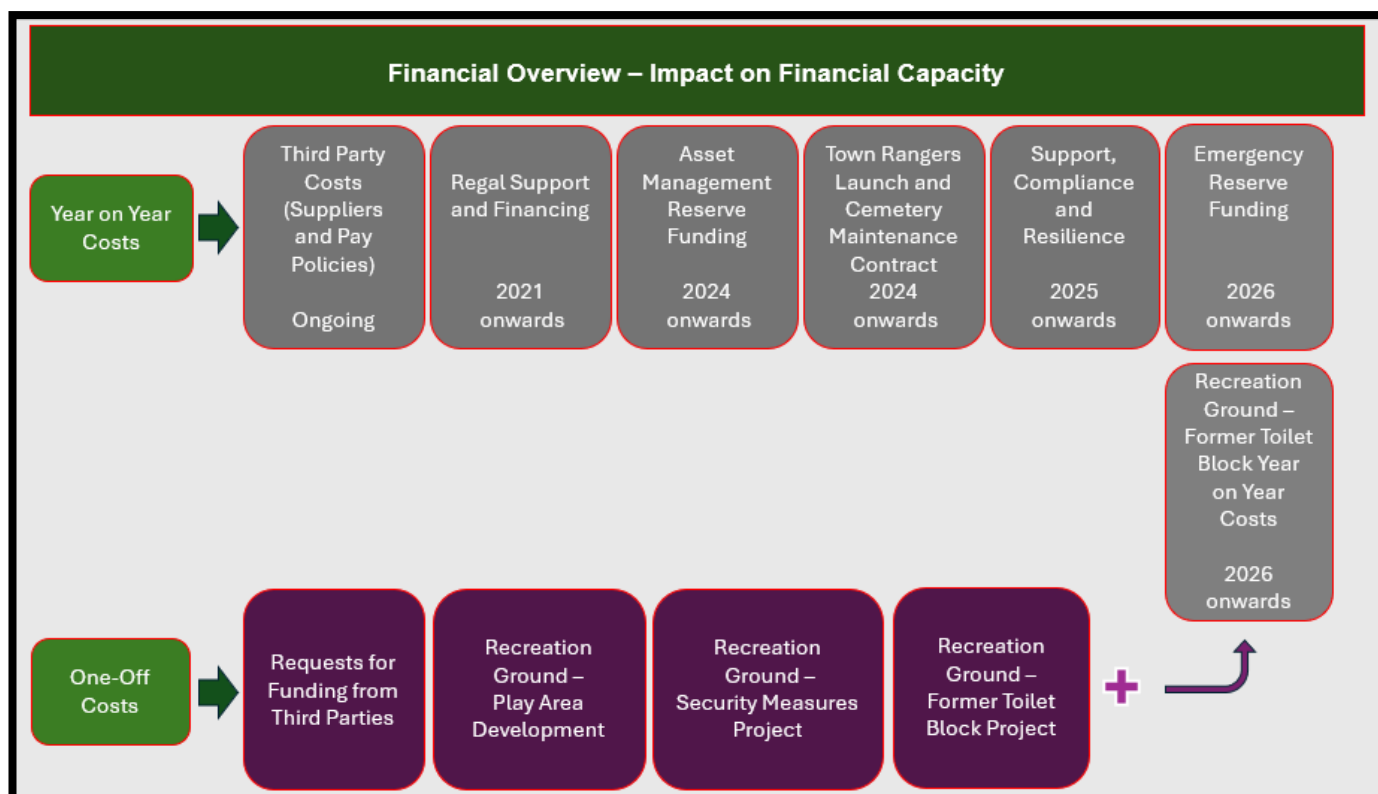
The Town Council plans its future financial capacity through its Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The forecasts contained within the strategy rely upon its ability to generate funds through its income streams, operating surpluses, and the Precept (Council Tax).

In particular, the Town Council's ability to fund its plans depend upon it being able to set its Precept each year without external regulation. Therefore, government policy has significant implications for the financial capacity of the Town Council. It has been confirmed through the recent Local Government Finance Settlement that a referendum will not be required in respect of any Council Tax increases proposed by Town and Parish Councils.

This provides the Town Council with discretion to determine the level of its Precept in 2026/27 without restriction from government.

Financial Overview

It is important that the Council retains a firm grasp of its spending decisions. An overview of some of the main decisions taken in recent years that have had significant financial implications are shown overleaf:



Through the annual budget round, the Council has sought to provide sufficient financial capacity to meet the challenges presented by year-on-year costs so that they are absorbed into the base budget. The exceptions to this have been Regal Support Funding, the Asset Management Reserve contribution and the new Emergency Reserve contribution which have been funded, (or will be funded) from existing money (balances).

This has resulted in a reduction in the surplus in the Income and Expenditure Account each year, providing the Council with less financial capacity to reinstate its overall reserves after a heavy period of projects such as seen during 2024 to 2026.

As stated at the time of the Mid-Year Financial Review, the Council's finances remain in good order, but the Council should seek to maintain its total reserves above £1 million or take immediate action to restore them to this level should they temporarily fall below £1 million. It should be noted that this is almost double the minimum level of general reserves that the Council is required to keep under its reserves policy. However, for an organisation the size of the Town Council, it should have the financial capacity available to respond to any unforeseen circumstances and £1 million is an adequate but not excessive provision to maintain.

Future Planning

The financial outlook in recent years has been unpredictable which has made financial planning difficult. In addition, the government has implemented some significant measures since it was elected in July 2024, with the signs being that suppliers will be passing on additional employment costs to their customers. Therefore, the Town Council must remain vigilant in managing its finances.

The Town Council wishes to ensure that it plays a leading role in the strategic decisions that are taken to provide new infrastructure and amenities for local people, creating a sustainable

future for Stowmarket. Such work is not immediately visible to the public but it is a vital part of what the Town Council does in shaping the future of the town.

In addition to the above, local organisations may turn to the Town Council for financial support from time to time, when they are encountering challenges with their finances, and/or need assistance in delivering improvements to their facilities. These approaches to the Town Council can be unpredictable in timing, scope and nature, but it is a fundamental purpose of the Town Council to support key amenities in the town so that these organisations can overcome short-term financial challenges and continue to contribute towards community life in the town.

Devolution and Local Government Restructuring

As referred to earlier in section 1, the face of local government is set to change in the next two to three years. Reorganisation is likely to have a profound effect on the delivery of projects and services, and it is likely that Town and Parish Councils will have greater demands placed upon their resources in liaising with more remote decision-making bodies and being the first point of contact for local people. Stowmarket Town Council will need to be prepared for this and have sound finances in place to resource any changes arising from local government reorganisation in the East of England.

Support, Compliance and Resilience

The Council has taken steps in 2025 to revisit its staffing structure and its resilience through an Organisational Review. The initial findings demonstrate the fragility of the existing staffing structure in certain areas of the organisation. Proposals will come forward in early 2026 to address this issue and a cost pressure has been included within this budget book for this.

There has been an overhaul of the Council's compliance arrangements and an external review conducted of its health and safety arrangements. There have been no additional cost pressures included in the budget as improvements will largely be funded as one-off costs rather than recurring costs.

Part 3: Revenue

Definition

The Council maintains an Income and Expenditure (or Revenue) Account. This includes all the income generated from normal business operations from which expenditure on the day-to-day running of the organisation is deducted. It is reported upon for each accounting period, which, in the case of the Town Council, runs from 1st April to 31st March annually.

This definition incorporates expenditure on repairs and renewals of capital assets where the expenditure relates to maintaining rather than adding to the value and/or earning capacity of such assets.

The account is monitored during the year as part of the Council's budgetary management and control arrangements with the Head of Corporate Services undertaking a minimum of four budgetary control meetings with budget managers each year.

VAT can normally be recovered by the Town Council on expenditure, except where it is incurred for business purposes.

In terms of income generation from services, the Local Government Act 2003 enables councils to charge for any discretionary services on a cost recovery basis.

Introduction

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken through the current budget round to identify savings and efficiencies that may be absorbed within the Town Council rather than through the Precept. This approach is not without risk, for in recent years, there has been a reduction in the annual surplus achieved on the Income and Expenditure Account each year. This has been evident in the budgetary control reports presented to Council in 2025/26. The role of the Financial Strategy Group is to prepare a budget proposal that achieves financial sustainability and this has led to the production of an updated version of the main cost pressures. This is attached at **Appendix A**.

Income

1. From Services

In meeting the Town Council's funding requirements, the Town Council's income from the Precept is supplemented each year by the following:

- a. Income streams from services provided through the Community Centre, the Regal Theatre and Market;
- b. Income streams from other services such as allotments and burials;
- c. Income streams from tenancies at Milton House; and
- d. Miscellaneous income such as interest on bank balances and short-term investments.

A summary of fees and charges for 2026/27 is attached at **Appendix B**.

2. From Funders

There was a readjustment of funding between the District Council and Town Council in 2025/26 with offsetting amounts relating to bin emptying, litter picking routes and CCTV which created a net budgetary pressure of £2,000 for the Town Council. The draft budget has been prepared on the basis that this situation remains unchanged.

Expenditure

1. Business Efficiency and Effectiveness

Steps continue to be taken across all cost centres to manage income and expenditure and operate as efficiently as possible. Indeed, the delivery of the budget relies upon this given that the Precept will not cover all of the cost pressures that have been identified. A programme of value for money reviews will be implemented once again in 2026/27 by the Corporate Services Team reporting to the Improvement and Innovation Committee. This seeks to ensure that the Town Council has chosen the most effective way of working in each area of the organisation and that its choices are financially sustainable rather than always ostensibly being bigger and better.

2. Contingencies

The Town Council will draw from its general and designated reserves to meet unexpected items of expenditure.

Contingencies are added to the cost forecasts of all its major projects.

3. Sinking Funds

The Council uses sinking funds to allocate monies in its budget each year to fund future projects. They are as follows:

- £10,000 for Fleet Vehicles
- £7,000 for CCTV
- £5,000 for IT & Software Upgrades
- £2,500 for Town Awards
- £50,000 for Asset Management (principally for long term roof replacement projects)*

* The target figure for this sinking fund is up to £50,000 per annum depending upon the financial position of the Council and tightness of the budget round.

There has been positive news received from the condition survey and report of Milton house which was conducted in 2025 in that the works to this historic building are not as extensive as had been feared. This places them within the scope of an annual repairs and maintenance programme rather than requiring major works to the fabric of the building.

4. Stakeholder Support

The main items of support that are fed into the budget process are as follows:

- £5,346 grant support to the Food Museum (this figure is index-linked rising from £5,000 when it was first awarded a number of years ago);
- £7,600 grant support to Mid-Suffolk CAB towards their rental costs in respect of Oak Cottage at Milton House (as per the existing hire agreement); and
- £3,000 grant support to Red Gables to support their role as a “Well-being Centre” (as per the existing agreement).

5. Grants Schemes

Currently, the grants schemes funded from the Budget are as follows:

- £11,000 for the Annual Grants Round (up £1,000 on the current year)
- £4,000 for StowFund (down £1,000 on the current year); and
- £5,000 for the Environmental Projects Fund (same as current year)

The funding of the Annual Grants Round has been increased by £1,000 and StowFund reduced by £1,000 in accordance with the recommendations of the Grants Panel as approved by Council.

Any underspends from the Annual Grants Round are transferred to the Resources Reserve at year-end.

There are no uplifts proposed to the respective grant funds in 2026/27 over and above the amounts shown above. However, looking forward, the Council may need to increase the overall amount available from £20,000 to £25,000 at the start of the term of the new Council, to reflect the increasing costs faced by small groups and clubs in improving their facilities.

Part 4: Capital Funding

Definition

Capital is the money that is used by the Town Council for the purchase and refurbishment of fixed assets including building works and improvement projects. The Town Council's Capital Programme sets out the capital projects that it will undertake in the future.

Introduction

The Town Council has made a commitment to deliver an annual programme of capital projects to ensure that community assets are maintained in good order. The Town Council recognises its duty to maintain the assets that it manages on behalf of the local community so that the value of these assets does not diminish.

Capital investment makes sound business sense as it brings future works within the scope of an effective repairs and maintenance programme that can be delivered at a lower cost in future years. Capital expenditure also includes new community projects where the Town Council acting alone, or in partnership with others, delivers capital works as part of a Place Shaping initiative.

Capital Contribution from Revenue

In the 2026/27 budget, there is a revenue contribution of £70,000 towards capital expenditure, as in previous years. It is proposed that this remains at the same level because of the tightness of the current budget round. Ideally, this figure would be increased in line with the increasing costs of contractors and materials, and so it will need to be reviewed in future budget rounds when a "step change" in funding may be required.

The Financial Strategy Group has approved four key priorities for the delivery of capital projects:

- Capital Priority: Asset Management of the Town Council's Estate
- Capital Priority: Business Improvement and Continuity
- Capital Priority: Improvement of Sports and Play Amenities
- Capital Priority: Place Shaping in Stowmarket (Infrastructure & Amenities)

None of the above is a higher priority than any of the other priorities. Instead, this framework seeks to provide a balanced programme of works.

The Capital Programme is managed by the Town Council's Leadership Team. The Town Clerk may make amendments to priorities and allocations subject to all capital authorisations being approved by full Council.

The current version of the Capital Programme which is recommended by the Financial Strategy Group is as follows:

Capital Programme

Capital Project	Current Year	2026/27	2027/28	Unallocated
Town Rangers Equipment	£ 35,000.00			
Milton House Fire & Security	£ 5,000.00			
Fire Risk Remedial Works	£ 5,000.00	£ 20,000.00		
Recreation Ground Improvement Project*	£ 200,000.00	£ 15,000.00		
Milton House Server Replacement		£ 10,000.00		
Milton House Improvements (Oak Cottage)		£ 25,000.00	£ 5,000.00	
Depot Improvements	£ 10,000.00		£ 10,000.00	
Cemetery Improvements	£ 10,000.00		£ 12,500.00	
Play Area Improvements	£ 5,000.00		£ 10,000.00	
Milton House Staff Toilet Improvements			£ 7,500.00	
Milton House Car Park Improvements			£ 5,000.00	
Regal Improvements			£ 20,000.00	
Community Centre Corridor Rebuild				£ 100,000.00
Regal Roof				£ 630,000.00
Milton House Roof				£ 320,000.00
Milton House Asset Management Plan				£ 500,000.00
TOTAL	£ 270,000.00	£ 70,000.00	£ 70,000.00	£ 1,550,000.00

*Funding for the Recreation Ground Improvement Project has been drawn down from Reserves

Part 5: Reserves

Definition

General reserves are funds that are held by the Town Council to manage financial risks that are outside of the Town Council's control and meet estimated expenditure requirements.

Designated reserves are funds held by the Town Council for capital projects, service development projects and/or business continuity. Within the Town Council's designated reserves, it has a Community Infrastructure Levy Reserve, which is a "restricted fund" that may only be used for specific purposes.

Introduction

Total reserves are provided by adding general (or unallocated) reserves to a small number of designated reserves. The amounts in these designated reserves provide financial capacity, which can be called upon, if required, to deliver specific projects. The amount held in reserves is combined with the value of the Council's assets to determine the overall wealth of the Town Council.

The designated reserves are as follows:

Name of Reserve	Amount as at 1st April 2025	Forecast as at 31st March 2026	Funding through 2026/27 Budget Round
Asset Management	£130,445	£180,445	£50,000
Emergency	£0	£0	£5,000
Capital	£288,958	£188,958	£70,000
Community Engagement	£125,000	£0	£0
Community Infrastructure Levy	£66,496	£1,496	TBC
Environment & Heritage	£20,000	£20,000	£0
Organisational Development	£310,271	£104,771	£24,500
Place Shaping	£30,000	£24,000	£0

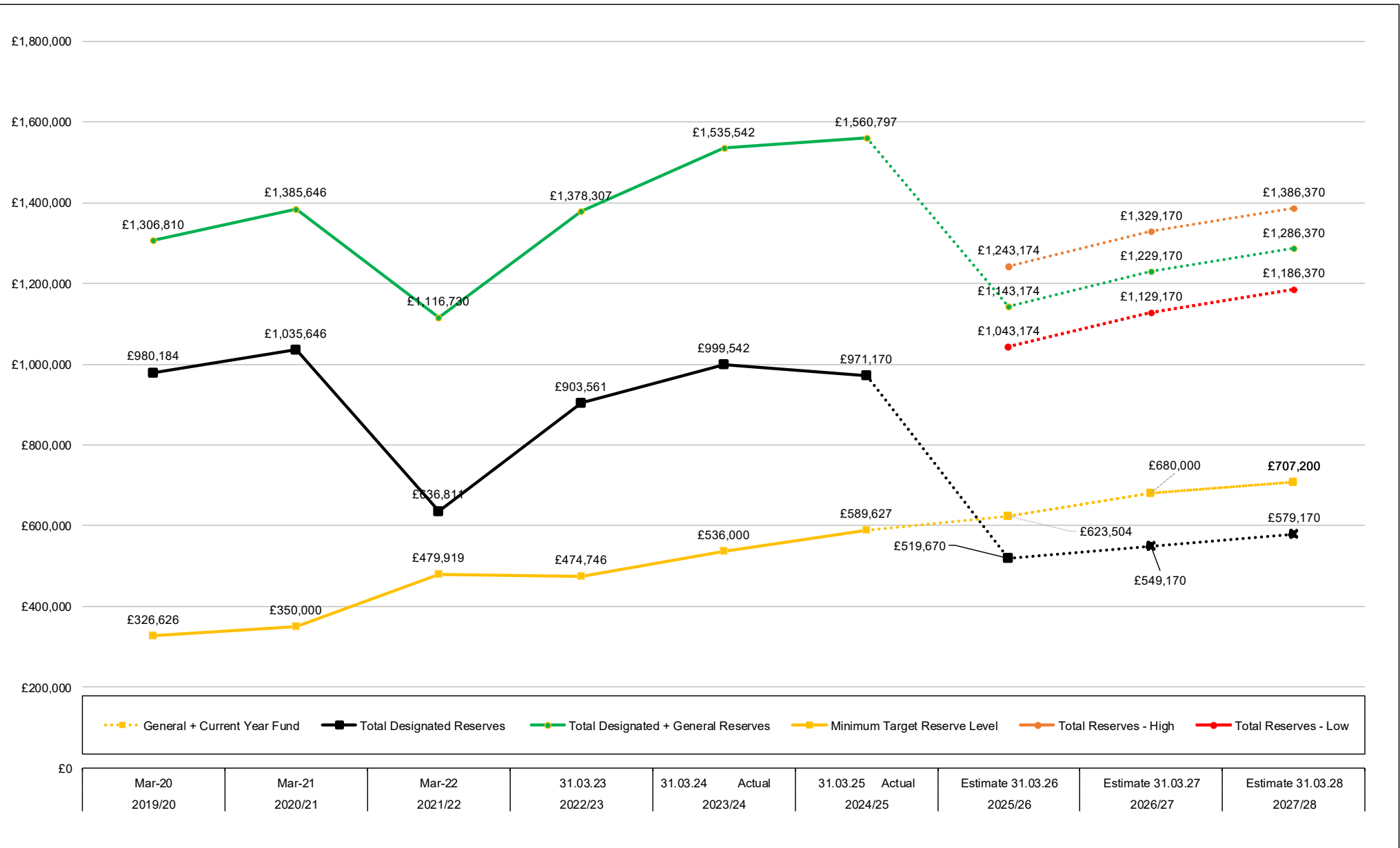
Note: The contribution of £5,000 will be a non-recurring item in the 2026/27 budget.

The methodology used by the Town Council for calculating the minimum level of general reserves is that general reserves shall not be less than 50% of annual salary costs. This approach has been accepted by the Council's auditor as an acceptable methodology in holding adequate, but not excessive levels of reserves. The rationale for this is that the Council's salary costs are its single highest area of revenue expenditure each year and so the Council must be able to fund them to continue the operation of its business.

The following page shows a summary of changes to the Town Council's total reserves in recent years with forecasts provided through to March 2028. The anticipated reduction in reserves reflects the anticipated financial impact of the Recreation Ground Improvement Project with expenditure due to be incurred in the fourth quarter of 2025/26 and the first quarter of 2026/27.

The forecasts made will remain under review by the Financial Strategy Group and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy updated accordingly as directed by full Council.

Reserves Overview (March 2020 to March 2028)



Note - The Minimum Target Reserve Level has been calculated based on 50% of staffing costs.

Part 6: Precept

Definition

The Precept is the amount of money that the billing authority (the District Council) has been instructed to collect to finance a Town or Parish Council's net expenditure.

The tax base is the total number of properties on which a charge may be levied. This is not the same as the total number of properties in an area as some properties may have discounts or exemptions. There are eight tax bands. Each property is assigned a Council tax band by the Valuation Office Agency.

Proposal

The proportion of properties in each band for the 2026/27 Council Tax calculations are as follows:

Final Taxbase as BAND D Equivalents									
Band 'A' Disabled	Band 'A'	Band 'B'	Band 'C'	Band 'D'	Band 'E'	Band 'F'	Band 'G'	Band 'H'	Total BAND D
3	736	2,180	2,378	1,210	653	82	31	1	7,276
0%	10%	30%	33%	17%	9%	1%	0%	0%	% in each band

Note: The above figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number with the tax base being 7,275.62

It is stated within the Town Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy that:

"The Town Council's element of local Council Tax will be decided each year in accordance with this Plan and any new priorities that may arise".

The Financial Strategy Group has discussed the budget in detail and overseen the identification of cost savings to help to offset some of the large cost pressures that are being experienced with regard to the national pay award, energy costs, supplier costs and insurance costs. Fortunately, there will be an increase from 7,143.15 to 7,275.62 (equivalent to a 1.9% increase in the tax base) which will help manage the extent of the increase.

The outcomes of the deliberations by the Financial Strategy Group are as follows:

1. There should be an increase in Council Tax to provide additional financial capacity to address the known cost pressures that the Council will face in 2026/27 and to ensure that it is on the correct financial path to be ready for local government restructuring and devolution;
2. The increase will be set at a level that covers some clear and significant cost pressures but relies upon the use of reserves, if necessary, to support the delivery of the budget in 2026/27;
3. The Town Council's Precept in 2026/27 should be at **£1,651,996.46**; and the recommendation to Council is:

That there should be an increase in the Precept for 2026/27, equivalent to an increase of £0.323p per Band D property per week.

Part 7: Risk Factors

Definition

Financial risks are unexpected and usually, unwanted occurrences, that may threaten the financial stability of the Town Council by reducing its financial capacity and introducing new financial obligations.

Risk management is the practice of identifying potential financial risks in advance, analysing them and taking precautionary steps to reduce the level of the risk.

Risks

The Town Council identifies each year its “Top Ten” areas of risk. They are assessed as follows:

Generally, up to £25,000	
Generally, from £25,000 to £50,000	
Over £50,000	

The end column identifies the impact (I) x likelihood (L) in terms of the managed risk using the following table:

Impact	Likelihood		
	1	2	3
1	1	2	3
2	2	4	6
3	3	6	9

The impact is multiplied by the likelihood to identify the potential impact of each risk. with the most severe risks (identified in red) requiring specific attention and mitigation measures to manage and control them.

The Town Council seeks to manage all the controllable risks by adopting appropriate risk management and control measures. This is undertaken by the Council’s Leadership Team with an overview maintained by the Audit & Governance Committee, financial planning by the Financial Strategy Group and ultimately, in accordance with the strategic direction set by the full Council. The main areas of risk are shown in table on the following page:

Risk Factors

	Area	Description	Cost	Base Risk Rating	Mitigation	Managed Risk Rating
1	Finance & Governance	Capping of Precept by Government.	£50k/Variable	4	The Government has announced that it will not be capping the Precept in 2026/27.	1
		Precept level is not aligned to services provided and financial risks facing the Council.	Variable	6	The Council sets the Precept to manage its costs or identifies ways of reducing its annual costs by reducing its grants, services and/or events.	2
		Flat-lining of Tax Base in the medium term because no new housing development is taking place within the town's boundaries.	Up to £25k in any one year	4	Housing development has continued with an increase in the tax base for 2026/27.	1
		Availability of affordable insurance for high value buildings and large community events given the increase in market premiums available.	Over £25k	4	Competitive quotes are due to be sought for insurance arrangements following the expiry of the current agreement.	2
		Increases in supplier costs.	Over £25k	4	The Precept proposal addresses reasonable increases in supplier costs.	2
2	Digital	System failures and data breaches with major implications for day to day business activities.	Variable	3	The Town Council has adopted a Digital Strategy, implemented security measures and has appointed a specialist ICT business partner to control its business risks in respect of data handling and communications rather than rely upon Cyber Insurance.	2
3	HR	Legal dispute between employer and employees, and inefficient use of staffing resources.	Variable	3	The Town Council has appointed a specialist HR business partner to assist it in supporting its HR functions and strategy.	2
4	Legal	Action taken by the Town Council is deemed to be illegal.	Variable	3	The Council establishes the legal powers for its actions, has adopted the General Power of Competence and legal advice is sought wherever appropriate	2
5	Health & Safety	Serious Incident occurs at Town Council Event or Town Council Managed Facility.	Variable	3	Event Manuals and Risk Assessments are prepared and external security and Health and Safety specialists are engaged to support the Council.	2
6	Projects	Lack of funding available for capital projects to conduct effective asset management.	Over £25k	4	Capital spending is prioritised to address necessary works as described in the Budget Book and risks managed in respect of major capital works with a revenue contribution made to asset management each year.	2
7	Business Interruption	Loss of key personnel.	Over £25k	4	The Council is working with its HR business partner to improve business support, continuity and resilience.	2
		Community Centre medium term closure (fire, flood etc.).	Variable	3	Insurance is in place for buildings and contents.	2
		Regal Theatre medium term closure (fire, flood etc.).	Variable	3	Insurance is in place for buildings and contents.	2
		Milton House medium term closure (fire, flood etc.).	Variable	3	Insurance is in place for buildings and contents.	2
8	Partnership Working	Projects and initiatives by partners and stakeholders require financial support.	Variable	3	All expenditure is planned within the context of the Town Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy has available.	2
9	Community Resilience	Emergency funding may be required to deal with community issues and/or respond to third party requests for funding.	Variable	3	The unpredictable nature of issues makes effective management strategies difficult to implement. Therefore, the Council has approved the introduction of an Emergency reserve which will require funding in future years from the base budget.	2
10	Organisational Compliance	Failure to operate safe premises and implement safe procedures and practices	Variable	6	Implementation of effective compliance regime and engagement of specialist advisers as necessary to address risk	3
11	Demand for Services	Commercial income can be volatile from the Regal and Community Centre.	Over £50k pa	6	Marketing/promotion initiatives for venues and cost control measures are implemented to support the performance of the Council's commercial venues.	2

Notes: Variable cost items will depend upon the precise set of circumstances in each case.

The above risks will be kept under review and revised upwards or downwards as necessary.

Overview of Cost Pressures covered by Precept increase 2026/27				
	Cost Pressure	Amount	Cumulative Amount	Net Increase %
                	SCP Increase from 2 to 3 As part of 2025/26 pay award	16,500.00	0.00	0.0
	Minimum Wage Increase Under 21s	1,500.00	0.00	0.0
	National Insurance	12,000.00	12,000.00	0.0
	Staff Role Changes	15,600.00	27,600.00	0.0
	Pay Award 3%	29,200.00	56,800.00	1.9
	Service & Supplier Increases	30,000.00	86,800.00	3.9
	Corporate - HR Support	6,000.00	92,800.00	4.3
	Corporate - Health & Safety Support	5,000.00	97,800.00	4.6
	Corporate - Investment in Software & Technology	1,200.00	99,000.00	4.7
	Operations - Works & Services	10,000.00	109,000.00	5.4
	Operations - The Horticulture Industry Scheme (THIS) ground works	2,000.00	111,000.00	5.5
	Operations - Rec Ground Toilet Block running costs	5,000.00	116,000.00	5.8
	Operations - Poppy Play Area CCTV / Maintenance / ROSPA	1,000.00	117,000.00	5.9
	Operations - Rec Ground Toilet Block cleaning	10,000.00	127,000.00	6.5
	Operations - Tree Works Backlog of outstanding issues	5,000.00	132,000.00	6.9
	Staffing Resilience Inc. maternity cover, sickness cover, etc.	18,000.00	150,000.00	8.0
	Town Awards (One-Off)	2,000.00	152,000.00	8.2
	Armed Forces Day (One-Off)	1,000.00	153,000.00	8.2
	IT Equipment & Software (One-Off)	4,500.00	157,500.00	8.5
	Leases, Contracts, Project Management & Surveys	9,000.00	166,500.00	9.1
	Implementation of Organisational Review (One-Off)	4,000.00	170,500.00	9.4
	Compliance Measures	5,000.00	175,500.00	9.7
	Town Rangers (Invest to Save Initiative)	5,000.00	180,500.00	10.0

The above are all estimated costs and are subject to change depending on actual costs

Notes
1. In the table above, the recurring pressures covered by the reduction in employer pension contributions, are shown in orange.
2. The increase in Council Tax Base at 1.9%, equivalent to £27,840.12 is shown in green.
3. A 1% increase in Council Tax equates to £14,652.69

Financial Risks 2026/27

		Cost Pressure	Amount
    	Risk Pressures	Milton House Tenancies	3,700.00
		Organisational Resilience	12,000.00
		SCP Increases Increasing all staff SCPs by one point, as a result of SCP 2 removal	20,400.00
		Emergency Reserve	5,000.00
		Bin Emptying	2,000.00

The above are all estimated costs and are subject to change depending on actual costs

Fees & Charges 2026/27									
		Current Year				2026/27			
Community Centre	Room	Weekdays 8am to 4pm exc. VAT (hourly)	Weekdays 4pm onwards exc. VAT (hourly)	Saturdays exc. VAT (hourly)	Sundays exc. VAT (hourly)	Weekdays 8am to 4pm exc. VAT (hourly)	Weekdays 4pm onwards exc. VAT (hourly)	Saturdays exc. VAT (hourly)	Sundays exc. VAT (hourly)
	Constable Room	£12.00	£12.50	£14.00	£16.50	£12.50	£13.50	£15.00	£17.50
	Milton Room	£11.00	£11.50	£13.00	£15.50	£11.50	£12.50	£14.00	£16.50
	Munton & Fison Room	£12.00	£12.50	£14.00	£16.50	£12.50	£13.50	£15.00	£17.50
	Gainsborough Room	£12.00	£12.50	£14.00	£16.50	£12.50	£13.50	£15.00	£17.50
	Gipping Room	£8.00	£8.50	N/A	N/A	£9.00	£10.00	N/A	N/A
	Main Hall (whole)	£16.00	£16.50	£20.00	£22.50	£16.50	£17.50	£21.00	£23.50
	Main Hall (large part)	£12.00	£12.50	N/A	N/A	£12.50	£13.50	N/A	N/A
	Main Hall (small part)	£10.00	£10.50	N/A	N/A	£10.50	£11.50	N/A	N/A
	Kitchen	£10.00	£10.50	£12.00	£14.50	£10.50	£11.50	£13.50	£15.50
Regal	Ticket	Before 6pm		After 6pm		Before 6pm		After 6pm	
	Adult	£8.45		£10.45		£8.95		£10.95	
	Child (up to 15 years)	£7.75		£7.75		£7.75		£7.75	
	Pocket Money Movies	£2.50		N/A		£3.00		N/A	
	Concession (Students & over 60 years)	£8.00		£8.25		£8.50		£8.75	
	Family (2 Adults + 2 Children or 1 Adult + 3 Children)	£31.00		£31.00		£31.00		£31.00	
	Companion / Carer (*With a valid CEA card)	Free*		Free*		Free*		Free*	
Cemeteries	Interments	Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident		Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident	
	Child (up to 18 years)	Nil		Nil		Nil		Nil	
	Adult (18 years and above)	£500.00		£1,200.00		£550.00		£1,300.00	
	Cremated Remains	£400.00		£1,000.00		£450.00		£1,100.00	
	Scattering remains on existing grave	£150.00		£300.00		£175.00		£350.00	
	Exclusive Rights of Burial	Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident		Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident	
	Purchase of Exclusive Rights (25 years)	£600.00		£1,200.00		£650.00		£1,300.00	
	Transfer of ERoB (registration)	£100.00		£100.00		£125.00		£125.00	
	Transfer of ERoB (additional document prep)	£100.00		£100.00		£125.00		£125.00	
	Memorials	Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident		Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident	
	Erection of Headstone, Scroll or Open Book	£300.00		£600.00		£325.00		£650.00	
	Additional Inscriptions	£150.00		£300.00		£175.00		£350.00	
	Wooden Cross	£35.00		£70.00		£40.00		£80.00	
	Maintenance and Grave Space Upkeep	Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident		Stowmarket Resident		Non-Resident	
	Annual Care of Grave	£75.00		£150.00		£85.00		£170.00	
	Turfing of Grave	£50.00		£100.00		£60.00		£120.00	
	Allotments	Plot Size	Fee (3 year period)				Fee (3 year period)		
Hospital Fields		£45.00 (half)				£50.00			
		£70.00 (full)				N/A			
Cemetery Fields		£45.00 (half)				£50.00			
		£70.00 (full)				N/A			
Recreation Ground	Time Period	Hire Rate				Hire Rate			
	Half day (up to 6 hours)	£120.00				£15.00 per hour (up to 6 hours)			
	Full day (6 hours and above)	£200.00				£200.00			
Milton House	Time Period	Hire Rate				Hire Rate			
	Boardroom - Per hour	£15.00				£20.00			
	Chamber - Half day (up to 4 hours)	£80.00				£85.00			
	Chamber - Full day (up to 8 hours)	£150.00				£160.00			

The Town Clerk is authorised to vary the above fees in accordance with the needs of the Town Council and/or to promote community use.

Precept Impact Calculator 2026/27								
Tax Base	Band D Rate	Increase	Precept	Net Increase	Total	Precept Increase	Band D Rate	Increase Per Household Per Week

2025/26								
7143.15	210.24	6.90%	£1,501,786.23	£121,227.57	£1,501,786.23	£96,934.75	£210.241	£0.261

2026/27								
7275.62	£210.24	0.00%	£1,529,626.35	£27,840.12	£1,529,626.35	£0.00	£210.240	£0.000
7275.62	£210.45	0.10%	£1,531,155.98	£29,369.75	£1,531,155.98	£1,529.63	£210.450	£0.004
7275.62	£210.66	0.20%	£1,532,685.60	£30,899.37	£1,532,685.60	£3,059.25	£210.660	£0.008
7275.62	£210.87	0.30%	£1,534,215.23	£32,429.00	£1,534,215.23	£4,588.88	£210.871	£0.012
7275.62	£211.08	0.40%	£1,535,744.85	£33,958.62	£1,535,744.85	£6,118.51	£211.081	£0.016
7275.62	£211.29	0.50%	£1,537,274.48	£35,488.25	£1,537,274.48	£7,648.13	£211.291	£0.020
7275.62	£211.50	0.60%	£1,538,804.11	£37,017.88	£1,538,804.11	£9,177.76	£211.501	£0.024
7275.62	£211.71	0.70%	£1,540,333.73	£38,547.50	£1,540,333.73	£10,707.38	£211.712	£0.028
7275.62	£211.92	0.80%	£1,541,863.36	£40,077.13	£1,541,863.36	£12,237.01	£211.922	£0.032
7275.62	£212.13	0.90%	£1,543,392.99	£41,606.76	£1,543,392.99	£13,766.64	£212.132	£0.036
7275.62	£212.34	1.00%	£1,544,922.61	£43,136.38	£1,544,922.61	£15,296.26	£212.342	£0.040
7275.62	£212.55	1.10%	£1,546,452.24	£44,666.01	£1,546,452.24	£16,825.89	£212.553	£0.044
7275.62	£212.76	1.20%	£1,547,981.86	£46,195.63	£1,547,981.86	£18,355.52	£212.763	£0.049
7275.62	£212.97	1.30%	£1,549,511.49	£47,725.26	£1,549,511.49	£19,885.14	£212.973	£0.053
7275.62	£213.18	1.40%	£1,551,041.12	£49,254.89	£1,551,041.12	£21,414.77	£213.183	£0.057
7275.62	£213.39	1.50%	£1,552,570.74	£50,784.51	£1,552,570.74	£22,944.40	£213.394	£0.061
7275.62	£213.60	1.60%	£1,554,100.37	£52,314.14	£1,554,100.37	£24,474.02	£213.604	£0.065
7275.62	£213.81	1.70%	£1,555,630.00	£53,843.77	£1,555,630.00	£26,003.65	£213.814	£0.069
7275.62	£214.02	1.80%	£1,557,159.62	£55,373.39	£1,557,159.62	£27,533.27	£214.024	£0.073
7275.62	£214.23	1.90%	£1,558,689.25	£56,903.02	£1,558,689.25	£29,062.90	£214.235	£0.077
7275.62	£214.44	2.00%	£1,560,218.88	£58,432.65	£1,560,218.88	£30,592.53	£214.445	£0.081
7275.62	£214.66	2.10%	£1,561,748.50	£59,962.27	£1,561,748.50	£32,122.15	£214.655	£0.085
7275.62	£214.87	2.20%	£1,563,278.13	£61,491.90	£1,563,278.13	£33,651.78	£214.865	£0.089
7275.62	£215.08	2.30%	£1,564,807.75	£63,021.52	£1,564,807.75	£35,181.41	£215.076	£0.093
7275.62	£215.29	2.40%	£1,566,337.38	£64,551.15	£1,566,337.38	£36,711.03	£215.286	£0.097
7275.62	£215.50	2.50%	£1,567,867.01	£66,080.78	£1,567,867.01	£38,240.66	£215.496	£0.101
7275.62	£215.71	2.60%	£1,569,396.63	£67,610.40	£1,569,396.63	£39,770.29	£215.706	£0.105
7275.62	£215.92	2.70%	£1,570,926.26	£69,140.03	£1,570,926.26	£41,299.91	£215.916	£0.109
7275.62	£216.13	2.80%	£1,572,455.89	£70,669.66	£1,572,455.89	£42,829.54	£216.127	£0.113
7275.62	£216.34	2.90%	£1,573,985.51	£72,199.28	£1,573,985.51	£44,359.16	£216.337	£0.117
7275.62	£216.55	3.00%	£1,575,515.14	£73,728.91	£1,575,515.14	£45,888.79	£216.547	£0.121
7275.62	£216.76	3.10%	£1,577,044.77	£75,258.54	£1,577,044.77	£47,418.42	£216.757	£0.125
7275.62	£216.97	3.20%	£1,578,574.39	£76,788.16	£1,578,574.39	£48,948.04	£216.968	£0.129
7275.62	£217.18	3.30%	£1,580,104.02	£78,317.79	£1,580,104.02	£50,477.67	£217.178	£0.133
7275.62	£217.39	3.40%	£1,581,633.64	£79,847.41	£1,581,633.64	£52,007.30	£217.388	£0.137
7275.62	£217.60	3.50%	£1,583,163.27	£81,377.04	£1,583,163.27	£53,536.92	£217.598	£0.142
7275.62	£217.81	3.60%	£1,584,692.90	£82,906.67	£1,584,692.90	£55,066.55	£217.809	£0.146
7275.62	£218.02	3.70%	£1,586,222.52	£84,436.29	£1,586,222.52	£56,596.17	£218.019	£0.150
7275.62	£218.23	3.80%	£1,587,752.15	£85,965.92	£1,587,752.15	£58,125.80	£218.229	£0.154
7275.62	£218.44	3.90%	£1,589,281.78	£87,495.55	£1,589,281.78	£59,655.43	£218.439	£0.158
7275.62	£218.65	4.00%	£1,590,811.40	£89,025.17	£1,590,811.40	£61,185.05	£218.650	£0.162
7275.62	£218.86	4.10%	£1,592,341.03	£90,554.80	£1,592,341.03	£62,714.68	£218.860	£0.166
7275.62	£219.07	4.20%	£1,593,870.66	£92,084.43	£1,593,870.66	£64,244.31	£219.070	£0.170
7275.62	£219.28	4.30%	£1,595,400.28	£93,614.05	£1,595,400.28	£65,773.93	£219.280	£0.174
7275.62	£219.49	4.40%	£1,596,929.91	£95,143.68	£1,596,929.91	£67,303.56	£219.491	£0.178
7275.62	£219.70	4.50%	£1,598,459.53	£96,673.30	£1,598,459.53	£68,833.19	£219.701	£0.182
7275.62	£219.91	4.60%	£1,599,989.16	£98,202.93	£1,599,989.16	£70,362.81	£219.911	£0.186
7275.62	£220.12	4.70%	£1,601,518.79	£99,732.56	£1,601,518.79	£71,892.44	£220.121	£0.190
7275.62	£220.33	4.80%	£1,603,048.41	£101,262.18	£1,603,048.41	£73,422.06	£220.332	£0.194
7275.62	£220.54	4.90%	£1,604,578.04	£102,791.81	£1,604,578.04	£74,951.69	£220.542	£0.198
7275.62	£220.75	5.00%	£1,606,107.67	£104,321.44	£1,606,107.67	£76,481.32	£220.752	£0.202
7275.62	£220.96	5.10%	£1,607,637.29	£105,851.06	£1,607,637.29	£78,010.94	£220.962	£0.206
7275.62	£221.17	5.20%	£1,609,166.92	£107,380.69	£1,609,166.92	£79,540.57	£221.172	£0.210
7275.62	£221.38	5.30%	£1,610,696.55	£108,910.32	£1,610,696.55	£81,070.20	£221.383	£0.214
7275.62	£221.59	5.40%	£1,612,226.17	£110,439.94	£1,612,226.17	£82,599.82	£221.593	£0.218
7275.62	£221.80	5.50%	£1,613,755.80	£111,969.57	£1,613,755.80	£84,129.45	£221.803	£0.222
7275.62	£222.01	5.60%	£1,615,285.42	£113,499.19	£1,615,285.42	£85,659.08	£222.013	£0.226
7275.62	£222.22	5.70%	£1,616,815.05	£115,028.82	£1,616,815.05	£87,188.70	£222.224	£0.230
7275.62	£222.43	5.80%	£1,618,344.68	£116,558.45	£1,618,344.68	£88,718.33	£222.434	£0.234
7275.62	£222.64	5.90%	£1,619,874.30	£118,088.07	£1,619,874.30	£90,247.95	£222.644	£0.239
7275.62	£222.85	6.00%	£1,621,403.93	£119,617.70	£1,621,403.93	£91,777.58	£222.854	£0.243
7275.62	£223.06	6.10%	£1,622,933.56	£121,147.33	£1,622,933.56	£93,307.21	£223.065	£0.247
7275.62	£223.27	6.20%	£1,624,463.18	£122,676.95	£1,624,463.18	£94,836.83	£223.275	£0.251
7275.62	£223.49	6.30%	£1,625,992.81	£124,206.58	£1,625,992.81	£96,366.46	£223.485	£0.255
7275.62	£223.70	6.40%	£1,627,522.44	£125,736.21	£1			