

Ringwood Town Council

Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood, Hampshire BH24 1AT
Tel: 01425 473883
www.ringwood.gov.uk

SUMMONS

Dear Member

22nd January 2026

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Town Council at the Forest Suite, Ringwood Gateway on 28th January 2026 at 7.00pm.

CBennett

Mrs C Bennett
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1.* PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There will be an opportunity for public participation for a period of up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting

**No formal decisions can be made during this item*

9.* To receive such communications as the Town Mayor may desire to lay before the Council

10.* To receive Reports from County and District Councillors

11.* To Receive Reports from Ringwood Town Councillors

12. Forthcoming Meetings – to note the following dates:

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 4 th February 2026
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 6 th February 2026
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 18 th February 2026
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 25 th February 2026

13. COMMUNICATIONS

Members to decide on items requiring publicity and to confirm a spokesperson if required.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider exclusion of the press and public from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2), to transact business for which publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature

15. LEGAL MATTERS

To receive a verbal report from the Town Clerk on legal matters

16. COMMUNITY AWARDS

Members are invited to form a Working Party to consider nominations put forward for community awards

If you would like further information on any of the agenda items, please contact
Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk, on 01425 484720 or
charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk

Council Members:

Chairman: Cllr Rae Frederick, Town Mayor
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andrew Briers
Cllr Luke Dadford
Cllr Ingrid De Bruyn
Cllr Gareth DeBoos
Cllr Mary DeBoos
Cllr Janet Georgiou
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr James Swyer
Cllr Michael Thierry
Cllr Glenys Turner
Cllr Becci Windsor

Officers:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk
Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL – 28 JANUARY 2026

BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2026/2027

1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1. This report represents the culmination of the Council's annual budget-setting process. The Strategic Plan was reviewed and agreed in October, providing the framework for budget development. An initial draft budget was considered by service committees in November, followed by presentation of a full draft budget to Policy & Finance Committee in December and January. In January, earmarked reserves were reviewed by committees in relation to their service areas to ensure continued alignment with delivery plans and emerging pressures. The budget now presented reflects that iterative process, incorporating updated assumptions, committee feedback and officer-recommended reserve assumptions.
- 1.2. Local councils are required to set a balanced budget each year and to formally notify the billing authority of their Council Tax precept requirement by the statutory deadline. For Ringwood Town Council, this requires notification to New Forest District Council by 30 January 2026.
- 1.3. The role of the Policy & Finance Committee is to scrutinise the proposed budget, underlying assumptions and reserve positions, and to advise Full Council on the level of the Council Tax precept required for the year. Full Council is required to approve the final budget and precept for the statutory notification to be made within the required timescale.
- 1.4. This report therefore sets out the proposed budget for 2026/27, the financial assumptions and pressures informing that budget, and the resulting Council Tax and precept requirement for approval by Full Council.

2. Earmarked Reserves – Review and Recommended Changes

- 2.1. The reserve assumptions set out in this section reflect officer recommendations informed by reviews undertaken by service committees. These assumptions have been incorporated into the draft budget and were approved by the Policy and Finance Committee.
- 2.2. The full reserve movements are set out in Appendix B.

2.3. Table: Summary of Reserve Recommendations from Committees

Reserve	Previous assumption	Committee recommendation	Officer recommendation to P&F	Budget impact
Cemetery Provision	£1,000 annual contribution	Remove annual contribution for 2026/27	Remove £1,000 contribution for 2026/27	Reduces revenue contribution to reserves by £1,000
Buildings Reserve (Buildings Repairs Provision)	£5,500 annual contribution; revenue costs	Questioned target level following works at 92 Southampton Road	Retain contribution level; <i>reclassify refurbishment costs at 92 Southampton</i>	Improves accuracy of revenue outturn; no change to net budget

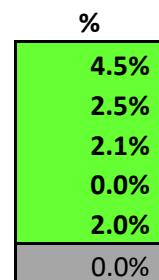
Reserve	Previous assumption	Committee recommendation	Officer recommendation to P&F	Budget impact
	charged in-year		<i>Road to Buildings Repairs Provision</i>	
Carvers Sheds Feasibility	No specific provision	Support creation of reserve to enable feasibility work	Create £10,000 provision for 2026/27	Funded from Capital Receipts; no revenue impact
Capital Receipts	Held for future asset use	Suggest use as contribution to Carvers Sheds Feasibility	Transfer £10,000 to Carvers Sheds Feasibility	Neutral (between reserves)
Infrastructure & Open Spaces	£3,000 annual contribution	Consider transfer of some or all market income into reserve to support future works required in Gateway Square	Retain a prudent £1.5k market income assumption within the base budget; transfer any income generated above this level into the reserve (c. £2.5k p.a. based on current performance)	Neutral to base budget; strengthens earmarked reserve
Gateway	<i>£0 annual contribution (as met the target)</i>		<i>Apply Gateway internal lighting costs to this reserve in the current and 2026/27 financial years. Rebuild the reserve to a target balance of £25,000 over a five-year period to provide resilience against future building-related service charge costs.</i>	<i>Reduces immediate pressure on the revenue budget</i>

The reserve movements set out above represent officer-recommended assumptions incorporated into the draft budget. Any amendments to these assumptions would require corresponding changes to the budget position.

3. Budget Pressures and Revised Assumptions

Inflation

- Pay
- Utilities
- Other Expenditure
- Non contractual expenditure
- Income
- Fixed expenditure (i.e. no inflation)



- 3.1. The table above summarises the assumptions made for the purposes of planning the budget.
- 3.2. Pay: in light of national pay discussions and early union positions for 2026/27, the assumed pay award has been revised to 4.5%.

3.3. Utilities and other expenditure: the OBR predicts inflation to average 2.5% for 2026. Note that we have increased the budget for water bills as we had a big spike this year across all sites and with drier summers water bills may increase over inflation.

3.4. Regarding other pressures, a new pressure identified since the December meeting relates to increased service charge costs arising from internal lighting replacement works at the Gateway. These costs are outside the Council's direct control and represent a structural increase rather than a one-off item, with an estimated impact of £7,800 in the current financial year and £9,100 in 2026/27. As set out in Section 2, it is proposed that these costs are met from the relevant earmarked reserve in the short term, reducing immediate pressure on the revenue budget while recognising the ongoing nature of the cost.

3.5. Interest base rates have begun to reduce but the more significant factor for this Council is the reduction in investable balances following expenditure on major capital projects, including the football club development. As a result, lower investment returns are anticipated in 2026/27.

3.6. A modest increase of £500 has been included in the staff training budget to provide appropriate flexibility for a relatively new team. This reflects the need to ensure staff are adequately supported in meeting statutory, financial and operational requirements, and to manage organisational risk as roles and responsibilities embed.

3.7. External auditor feedback has identified that, in the current financial year, the Council's General Reserve has fallen below the recommended minimum level of between three and twelve months' net expenditure. Earmarked reserves are held for defined purposes relating to specific assets, projects or known liabilities and are not available to support day-to-day expenditure. In that context, the recent review of earmarked reserves by committees was undertaken to ensure that reserve levels and purposes remain appropriate and proportionate. This position reinforces the need for careful budget management and limits the extent to which reserves, of any type, can be relied upon to support recurring costs.

3.8. The Council Tax base has reduced for the first time in several years. As a result, the same level of expenditure must be funded across fewer Band D equivalent properties, placing upward pressure on the precept before any cost increases are taken into account.

4. Resulting Draft Budget Position (2026/27)

4.1. Taking into account the revised assumptions and pressures set out above, together with the changes made during the budget-setting process, the proposed budget for 2026/27 has been prepared to ensure the Council has sufficient resources to deliver its Strategic Plan and meet its ongoing statutory and operational responsibilities.

4.2. The resulting budget requires a Council Tax precept of £740,842 representing an increase of 8.57% compared to 2025/26.

4.3. For information, the proposed precept would result in an increase from £124.13 to £134.81 or £10.68 per year in the Band D Town Council element of Council Tax. Individual household charges will vary by property band.

4.4. The draft budget includes a planned contribution of £15,000 to the General Reserve. With this contribution, the forecast General Reserve balance at the end of the year would be £252,022, equivalent to approximately 34% of the annual precept. This

remains at the lower end of recommended levels and reinforces the need for continued careful financial management, particularly in the context of uncertainty arising from local government reorganisation.

4.5. The draft budget focuses on maintaining existing services and delivering the Strategic Plan, with lower-priority items removed or deferred where necessary. Remaining pressures are largely external in nature, reinforcing the need for prudence and resilience.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

5.2 Members approve the draft budget.

5.3 Members approve a precept of £740,842 and consequent 8.57% increase in the Council Tax which will take the Band D equivalent Council Tax contribution for the Town Council to £134.76 and that this shall be notified to New Forest District Council in accordance with statutory requirements.

For further information, contact:

Charmaine Bennett, Town Clerk
01425 484720
Charmaine.bennett@ringwood.gov.uk or

Michelle Gordon, Finance Manager
01425 483883
finance.manager@ringwood.gov.uk

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
 BUDGET 2026/27

1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Committee	Actual 22/23 £	Actual 23/24 £	Actual 24/25 £	Budget 25/26 £	Estimated 25/26 £	Inflation £	Known Changes*	Budget 26/27 £
	Policy & Finance								
	Expenditure	382,040	421,425	438,427	430,796	490,383	12,019	19,321	462,640
	Income	-133,528	-215,977	-182,209	-168,785	-180,061	-2,132	-15,500	-186,418
	Net Expenditure	248,512	205,448	256,218	262,011	310,322	9,886	3,821	276,223
	Transfers to Reserves	14,000	45,595	0	12,700	12,700	0	0	17,200
	Transfers from Reserves	-37,841	-15,042	0	-3,000	-52,532	0	0	-13,983
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	224,671	236,001	256,218	271,711	270,490	9,886	3,821	279,440
	Recreation & Leisure								
	Expenditure	1,069,677	2,280,039	55,563	484,745	493,083	9,263	-8,054	269,060
	Income	-517,390	-1,962,442	0	-177,318	-127,538	-206	1,718	-25,841
	Net Expenditure	552,287	317,597	55,563	307,427	365,545	9,057	-6,336	243,218
	Transfers to Reserves	17,900	17,900	0	26,400	26,900	0	0	37,000
	Transfers from Reserves	-365,598	-85,180	0	-89,416	-156,598	0	0	-20,484
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	204,589	250,317	55,563	244,411	235,846	9,057	-6,336	259,734
	Events								
	Expenditure	51,702	41,356	28,449	37,418	46,805	792	23,000	69,567
	Income	-35,311	-49,857	-42,125	-38,000	-45,525	0	-8,000	-51,500
	Net Expenditure	16,391	-8,501	-13,677	-582	1,280	792	15,000	18,067
	Transfers to Reserves	0	12,361	0	5,582	3,720			0
	Transfers from Reserves	-10,823	0	0	0	0			-13,067
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	5,568	3,860	-13,677	5,000	5,000	792	15,000	5,000
	Cemeteries								
	Expenditure	63,343	66,427	10,739	70,224	67,189	2,876	-3,315	70,749
	Income	-41,041	-37,989	-33,296	-27,609	-36,320	-525	-6,500	-34,642
	Net Expenditure	22,302	28,438	-22,557	42,615	30,868	2,351	-9,815	36,107
	Transfers to Reserves	2,500	2,500	2,500	0	0	0	0	0
	Transfers from Reserves	-230	-250	0	-230	-230	0	0	-40
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	24,572	30,688	-20,057	42,385	30,638	2,351	-9,815	36,067
	Allotments								
	Expenditure	19,577	23,718	1,880	20,858	25,371	866	-314	21,637
	Income	-5,954	-7,791	-7,623	-7,380	-7,380	-148	400	-7,128
	Net Expenditure	13,623	15,927	-5,743	13,478	17,991	719	86	14,510
	Transfers to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0			0
	Transfers from Reserves	0	0	0	0	-4,650			0
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	13,623	15,927	-5,743	13,478	13,341	719	86	14,510
	Carvers Clubhouse								
	Expenditure	100,991	98,786	105,807	98,329	119,019	0	0	119,731
	Income	-26,274	-29,128	-27,084	-26,500	-27,900	0	0	-30,000
	Net Expenditure	74,717	69,658	78,723	71,829	91,119	0	0	89,731
	Transfers to Reserves	2,500	2,500	0	2,500	2,500	0	0	2,500
	Transfers from Reserves	-2,841	-165	0	-1,000	-1,000	0	0	-1,000
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)								0
	Committee net expenditure	74,376	71,993	78,723	73,329	92,619	0	0	91,231
	Planning, Town & Environment								
	Expenditure	37,474	30,610	40,583	41,815	41,322	1,777	0	41,960
	Income	-5,850	-1,100	-11,100	-1,100	-1,100	0	0	-1,100
	Net Expenditure	31,624	29,510	29,483	40,715	40,222	1,777	0	40,860
	Transfers to Reserves	0	3,650	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Transfers from Reserves	-6,016	-2,784	-960	-1,000	-1,941	0	0	-1,000
	Growth bids and adjustments (net of transfers from reserves and income)			1					0
	Committee net expenditure	25,608	30,376	28,523	39,715	38,281	1,777	0	39,860

**RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND REVISED BUDGET 2024/25 AND
DRAFT BUDGET 2025/26**

Appendix A

A

	Total Base Expenditure	1,724,804	2,962,361	681,449	1,184,184	1,283,171		1,055,345
	Total Income	-765,348	-2,304,284	-303,437	-446,692	-425,825		-336,629
	Total transfer to reserves	36,900	84,506	2,500	47,182	45,820		56,700
	Total Transfer from reserves	-423,349	-103,421	-960	-94,646	-216,951		-49,574
	Total New Bids				1,164			0
	Less funded from earmarked reserves							0
	Total Budget Requirement	573,007	639,162	379,552	691,193	686,215		725,842
	Precept	531,856	553,949	610,429	683,620	683,620		740,842
	Covid Relief grant		4,071		0	0		
	Transfer to/-from General Reserve	-41,151	-81,142	230,877	-7,573	-2,595		15,000

RESERVES AND PROVISIONS - MOVEMENT & ESTIMATED BALANCES

1st April 2025 to 31st March 2027

	Actual Balance 01/04/25 £	Transfers 2025/26 :				Balance 01/04/26 £	Planned and Proposed Movements 2026/27:					Estimated Balance 31/03/27 £
		from Revenue £	to Revenue £	Cash Receipts £	between provisions £		from Revenue £	to revenue		Capital & Other Receipts £	between provisions £	
		base budget £	Growth £				from Revenue £	base budget £	Growth £			
<u>EARMARKED PROVISIONS</u>												
I.T. & Equipment	28,300	1,700	-17,942			12,058.00	2,700		0			14,758
Gateway	25,000	0	-7,800			17,200.00	3,380	-9,100	0			11,480
Cemetery	27,033	1,000	0			28,032.72	0		0			28,033
Buildings Reserve	51,534	4,500	-17,530			38,503.97	5,500	0	0			44,004
Election	5,000	5,000	0			10,000.00	5,000		0			15,000
Vehicle & Machinery	51,546	20,000	-39,950			31,596.10	27,000		-5,750			52,846
Play Equipment	22,516	6,900	-7,164			22,252.18	10,000		0			32,252
Memorials	0	0	0			0.00	0		0			0
Christmas Lights	10,283		-6,000			4,282.50	0		-4,283			0
Carvers Clubhouse equipment reserve	3,988	1,000	-1,000			3,988.49	1,000	-1,000	0			3,988
Ringwood Events	18,152	3,720	-500		0	21,372.00	0	-22,767	0			-1,395
Memorial Lantern	0	0	0			0.00	0		0			0
Carvers Grounds	175		0			175.20	0		0			175
Carvers Sheds feasibility	0		0			0.00			0			
Infrastructure & Open Spaces	15,371	3,000	0			18,370.77	5,500		0			10,000
Open Space Security Measures	1,406	0	-1,406			0.04	0		0			0
Neighbourhood Plan	3,383	0	0			3,383.07	0		0			3,383
Football development Project	0	0	0			0.00	0		0			0
Budget Underspends retained for use in 2024/25*	3,000	0	0			3,000.00	0	0	0			3,000
Total Provisions	266,687	46,820	-99,292	0	0	214,215.04	60,080	-32,867	-10,033	0	10,000	241,395
<u>RESERVES</u>												
Earmarked Reserves:												
Dev Contribs	13,805		-845			12,960.46						11,960
Cem Maint	270		-230			40.00		-40	0	0		0
Dev Cons(CIL)	35,158		-18,759	5,206		21,603.73						21,604
Capital Receipts	18,942					18,942.34						8,942
Grants Unapplied	72,339		-96,248	28,859		4,949.95						11,300
Loans Unapplied	0					0.00						0
Maintenance contract fees in advance (Ellingham PC)	3,152		-1,576			1,576.00		-1,576				0
Total Earmarked Reserves and Provisions	410,354	46,820	-216,950	34,065	0	274,287.52	60,080	-35,483	-23,191	19,508	0	295,202
General Reserve	236,927		-2,595		2,690	237,022	15,000	0			0	252,022
Key & Rent Deposits		19,613				19,613						19,613
Total Reserves & Customer Deposits	666,893	46,820	-219,545	34,065	2,690	530,922	75,080	-35,483	-23,191	19,508	0	566,837

BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS 2025/26

Appendix C

ASSUMPTIONS:

1 Inflation

- Pay
- Utilities
- Other Expenditure
- Non contractual expenditure
- Income
- Fixed expenditure (i.e. no inflation)

%	Type
4.5%	1
2.5%	2
2.5%	3
0.0%	4
2.0%	5
0.0%	6

The Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2025/26 is:

124.13

A target Council Tax increase of :
would increase the Council Tax to:

124.13

And require an additional transfer from reserves of:
which would reduce the general reserve to £ 193,572 by March 2027
(given the assumptions in 1 - 3 on the left) or 26.1% of the annual precept

£58,449

2 Council Tax Base increase

Note, the Council Tax base for 2025/26 is

-0.18%
5,507.3

An increase of -0.18% (assumption 2) will increase the Council Tax base to:

5,497.4

£
-15,000

The General Reserve is expected to be £237,022 at April 1st 2026. This transfer will increase it to £252,022 by March 2027

Net Budget Requirement and consequent Band D equivalent Council Tax

Based on the above assumptions together with any proposed new bids and adjustments:

£
718,716
7,126
0
0
0
725,842
15,000
740,842

Summary movement on reserves:

Opening reserves 1/4/2026:	£
General Reserve	237,022
Earmarked Reserves & Provisions	274,288
Total Reserves 1/4/2026	511,309
Planned transfers in	60,080
Planned transfers out	-58,674
Plus Capital Receipts 26/27	19,508
Less Funding for growth	0
Less use of general reserve	15,000

Predicted reserves 31/3/2027 :

General Reserve	252,022
Earmarked Reserves	295,202
Predicted Reserves 31/3/2027	547,224
(nb excludes rent & key deposits)	

Band D equivalent Council Tax 2026/27

134.76

The budget requirement and resulting precept, as modelled, represents an increase of 8.57 % in the Council Tax

The Council Tax for 2025/26 is £124.13 per Band D Equivalent

An increase of one percent on the Council Tax will generate an increased precept of : £6,824

For each increase of £1,000 in the precept requirement, a further £0.182 will be added to the Band D Council Tax

A