



**Westerham
Town Council
Strategic Business Plan
2024 – 2028**

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1. Foreword by Chair of Council, Cllr Jonathan Lord

I am delighted to present our new strategic plan. A strategic plan is vital to our work as it sets out our values, priorities and the framework for our work over the term of this council. It details our ongoing responsibilities together with additional projects we intend to complete.

Westerham Town Council is here first and foremost to serve the residents, businesses and visitors to Westerham and Crockham Hill. We want to ensure our town is a thriving place that people want to live in, work in and visit. In developing this plan we started with public consultation, consulting as widely as possible using digital and printed media, together with in person meetings with key community groups/organisations. The results of consultation were considered by the appropriate council committees – finance, planning, highways & lighting, youth & community and allotments, playing fields & open spaces. You will find a response to all of the items raised in the appendix, together with the items that the committees agreed to look to achieve over the term of this plan.

In developing this plan we were mindful that individuals are facing challenges from the cost of living crisis and that businesses are still recovering from the covid pandemic and now face increased costs due to National Insurance and minimum wage increases. We have set out what I believe to be an ambitious and progressive plan, whilst ensuring that we use your Council Tax wisely, evidence value for money and keeping any increase in our share of your Council Tax bill as low as possible.

I would ask that when your Council Tax bill lands on the doormat and the additional amount we have asked for is expressed as a percentage, that you refer to our website/social media where we will set out what this increase means in real terms. Our share of the Council Tax is small, so expressing our increase as a percentage can look like a substantial increase, whereas in reality the monetary increase is low. For example, in 2025/26 we expect the additional contribution we will ask from you to be less than 15p per week.

Lastly, we always welcome your comments and input as your opinions are vital to us. I would like to remind you that all of our committee/Council meeting agendas and minutes are available on our website and we welcome all residents if you would like to attend any of our meetings.

Jonathan Lord



Jonathan Lord
Chair of Westerham Town Council

2. Introduction

Public services are provided by the three tiers of local government: Kent County Council; Sevenoaks District Council; and Westerham Town Council. As the tier of local government closest to people, Westerham Town Council aims to represent the best interests of the town and its residents. It is very important to us to ensure open and transparent decision making; and to undertake regular community engagement activities to seek residents' feedback on the issues that matter to them. This helps to establish the Town Council's priorities.

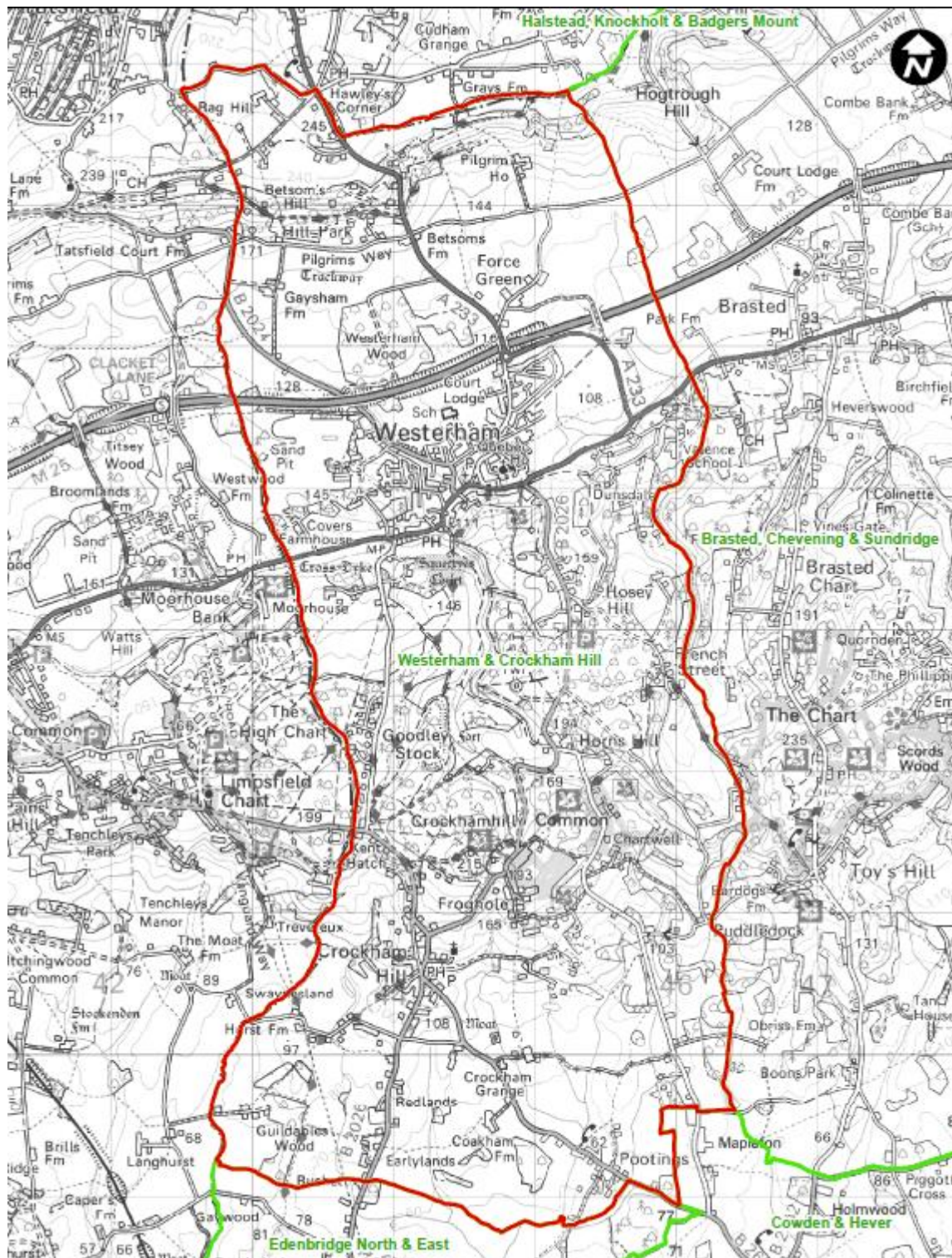
The Council undertakes public consultation on a range of topics and projects, as required, but is also committed to a four yearly full public consultation with each household in the parish. This takes place during the first year of a newly elected Town Council (last undertaken in 2023). From the results of this consultation clear themes emerged, which enabled Council to propose and set the key priorities for the next four years (2024 – 2028). These will need to be managed alongside and in addition to Council's ongoing obligations and will often need to be funded from separate external sources.

What is the Purpose of the Strategic Business Plan?

The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's vision for Westerham and Crockham Hill and provides a summary of its key priorities/objectives; it details major capital projects for the next four years. This helps the Council to plan its finances, workload and its allocation of resources. The Strategic Plan gives residents a clear understanding of what the Town Council does and what it is trying to achieve on behalf of the community.

3. The Parish of Westerham - an Overview

The Parish of Westerham consists of two main settlements, Westerham and Crockham Hill, and the surrounding rural landscape. The Parish covers slightly over nine square miles, is just 22 miles from central London, situated in Sevenoaks District, in West Kent. The Parish is home to approximately 4500 people made up of 1,184 households. 24.6% of residents are under age 19 and 27.5% are over 60s.



The historic town of Westerham, the main settlement in the Parish, dates from pre-Saxon times and the Town obtained its market charter in 1227. The town has many historic connections to important events and people including General Wolfe and Churchill, whose statues appear on the Green in the centre of the Town.

The National Trust owns two significant historic properties at Quebec House and Chartwell as well as significant land around Crockham Hill. The single largest estate is Squerryes, owned by the Warde family for almost three hundred years (tricentenary 2031). It was bought by the first John Warde in 1731 and the family are still resident.

There are approximately 100 listed buildings in the Parish, many of them along the busy A25 that runs through the centre of the Town.

The Council's area covers both the Historic town of Westerham and the neighbouring village of Crockham Hill. Westerham Town is surrounded by countryside designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and washed over by the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Crockham Hill is located within both the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Local geology provides a rich variety of small hills and valleys, which provide an attractive setting for the Parish between the North Downs and Kent Chart at the head of the Darent River Valley, with the ribbon of small roads and lanes leading off the A25. The single feature impacting the landscape is the M25 to the North of Westerham.

The town of Westerham is a popular destination for tourists, encouraged by the history of the town and the facilities on offer. There are many cafes, pubs, restaurants and independent shops, and the town also has its own brewery and winery. The location of Westerham with its convenient access to the M25 and motorway network makes it an attractive location for retail and industry.



4. Westerham Town Council (the Councillors)

The Council is made up of 13 Councillors, who are democratically elected every four years, ten to represent the ward of Westerham and three to represent the ward of Crockham Hill. The current term of office runs from 2023 to 2027. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are elected by the Council every year.

The Councillors all have relevant experience to represent the best interests of the Town and its residents and there is a training and development plan in place for all Councillors.

Councillors are also nominated to act as Council representatives on a number of community organisations.

Councillor	Ward	Role
Cllr Jonathan Lord	Westerham	Chair of Council
Cllr Loretta Bird		
Cllr Mario Bortolozzo		Chair of Highways & Lighting Committee
Cllr Eddie Boyle		Vice Chair
Cllr Ian Breminer		
Cllr Clare Dicker		
Cllr Neil Proudfoot		
Cllr Linda Rodgers		Chair of Open Spaces & Amenities Committee
Cllr Keith Thompson		
Cllr Deborah Coen	Crockham Hill	Chair of Community Engagement Committee
Cllr Amran Hussain		
Cllr Sharon Sheen		Chair of Finance, Governance & General Purposes Committee

Westerham Ward



Jonathan Lord
Chairman



Eddie Boyle
Vice Chairman



Loretta Bird



Mario Bortolozzo



Ian Breminer



Clare Dicker



Neil Proudfoot

Vacancy



Linda Rodgers



Keith Thompson

Crockham Hill Ward



Deborah Coen



Amran Hussain



Sharon Sheen

5. Council Staff & Performance of Staff

There are 5 part-time members of staff. Only appropriately skilled and trained staff are recruited, and all members of staff have job descriptions and contracts. The administration of the Town Council is overseen by the Town Clerk, who is the Town Council's Proper Officer; responsible for carrying out all the functions required by law and issuing all statutory notices. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) is responsible for managing the finances on behalf of the Council.

Objectives are set and reviewed at regular intervals with a formal appraisal process held annually. Training and development plans are in place for all members of staff.

Staff member	Role	Qualifications
Angela Howells	Town Clerk Committee Clerk for: Full Council Finance, Governance & General Purposes Planning Community Engagement	CiLCA ¹ Community Governance Level 4
Debbie Marshall	Responsible Finance Officer/ Project Manager	CiLCA FILCA ²
Carla DeBono	Deputy Town Clerk Committee Clerk for: Open Spaces & Amenities	
Jo O'Sullivan	Assistant Clerk Committee Clerk for: Highways & Lighting	
Tony Clark	Grounds Maintenance Operative	



Angela Howells



Debbie Marshall



Carla DeBono



Jo O'Sullivan



Tony Clark

¹ Certificate in Local Council Administration

² Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration

6. Council Vision Statement

'The aims of the Council are to maintain Westerham and Crockham Hill Parish as a thriving, attractive community, to improve the quality of life for residents in the area, and to enable local businesses and other key stakeholders to provide opportunities and community activities for the benefit of residents and tourists.'

The Council achieves these aims by providing a range of services within the Community and ongoing representation of the views of the community and relevant stakeholders.

There was a strong correlation between the proposals put forward by Council committees and the views expressed by residents during formal consultation (the latest in 2024). Clear themes emerged from the consultation which have informed Council's priorities for this term:

- 1) Progressing King George's Field redevelopment project**
- 2) Ensuring council maintains Gold Accreditation, demonstrates value for money and communicates effectively**
- 3) Improving road safety, parking and lighting**
- 4) Keep Westerham and Crockham Hill thriving, clean and safe**
- 5) Developing community and marketing activities for the benefit of residents and visitors**

7. Delivering the Vision

The actions adopted by the current Council to achieve these aims are:

Finance, Governance and General Purposes

Business as usual activities:

- > Oversee responsible financial control of Council funds, evidencing Value for Money in the provision of WTC goods & services
- > Ensure ongoing compliance with relevant legislation and Best Practice
- > Maintain and develop a highly motivated and skilled team through effective review of working practices, remuneration, personal development & training
- > Manage & maintain Westerham's historic assets - mosaic etc

Specific Deliverables by end of Council Term:

- > Complete revised Tenant Leases (Russell House/Churchill School)
- > Maintain our Gold Standard status
- > Improve parking at R Hse - (to maximise spaces)
- > Improve internal decoration/lighting R Hse & renew chamber chairs
- > Undertake feasibility study of additional improvements to R Hse (eg double glazing) to improve Energy Rating
- > Develop succession planning - councillors and staff

Highways and Lighting

Lobby KCC:

- > To improve pavements in town centre / paving access in Westerham and Crockham Hill
- > To extend 20mph zone in Westerham

Lobby SDC:

- > Free/reduced fees/more parking in Westerham

Lobby bus companies:

- > Better/more frequent bus services in Westerham and Crockham Hill

Investigate:

- > Improved lighting
- > Bus shelter at London Road

Survey residents:

- > Making Marlborough Court made one-way

Continue Speed Watch / work with Police:

- > To enforce speed restrictions

Communicate with residents:

- > Reporting potholes, road surface issues, drain issues, cars parking on pavements, overhanging vegetation



Council Strategy

- > Progressing KGF redevelopment project
- > Maintain Gold status, demonstrate value for money and communicates effectively
- > Improve road safety, parking and lighting
- > Keep Westerham and Crockham Hill thriving, clean and safe
- > Community and marketing activities for benefit of residents and visitors

Community Engagement

Will develop:

- > A range of activities for all school aged children

Will maintain:

- > All current activities for the elderly
- > Litter strategy and arrange / promote litter picking to keep Westerham clean and tidy

Will investigate:

- > Recruiting more volunteer drivers to support groups offering transport to medical and social appointments

Will work with retailers and businesses:

- > To facilitate communication between them on common issues

Will work in partnership with Police:

- > To increase visibility of our PC and to promote prompt reporting of crime and ASB



Open Spaces and Allotments

Will continue:

- > King George's Field (KGF) redevelopment project - Multi-use games area, refurbishment of pavilion including toilet / cafe and seating
- > Keeping Westerham and Crockham Hill clean and tidy including weed management and keeping footpaths clear
- > Managing allotments effectively

Will investigate:

- > More seating in town
- > Opportunities to improve biodiversity / environment by developing an accurate land register detailing site, ownership, use and any restrictions on use
- > Crockham Hill Sign renovation and improvement of garden and noticeboard

Planning and Development

Will consider on planning applications:

- > More affordable housing
- > Suitable housing for elderly to downsize
- > Stopping cutting of healthy trees
- > More access to green areas/common areas
- > Preserving Green Belt
- > Improving air quality



8. The Council Functions

What do we do?	
Allotments	Managing the town's three allotment sites: Bloomfield; Currant Hill and Farley.
Assets	General Wolfe & Sir Winston Churchill statues, Domesday Mosaic, Fountain, Trough, Jubilee Clock, War Memorials.
Christmas	Providing Christmas lights, Westerham and Crockham Hill Christmas trees and the 'Christmas Lights' event.
Commons	Working with Sevenoaks District Council to protect the town's commons: Crockham Hill; Farley; and Hosey Hill.
Community Engagement	Tourism, events, newsletters, website, Facebook, Instagram, public consultations.
Flowers	Working in partnership with the Westerham Society to provide the hanging baskets; planting beds & containers; creating wild flower areas.
Grants	To local organisations
Planning	Consultee on all planning applications within the parish; lobbying and representing the public on issues affecting the town such as Covers Farm, Moorhouse and the Local Plan.
Playing Fields	Managing the playing fields: King George's Field – pavilion, playing field, playground, skate park, tennis courts, outside gym, bridge and car park. Crockham Hill War Memorial Playing Field * – pavilion, playing field, tennis pavilion, playground, tennis courts. *This is run through a charitable trust (CHWMPF Trust) with the Town Council as managing trustee.
Public Open Spaces	Maintaining public open spaces (mowing, weed management etc): the Green; Verralls Corner; Grange Island; Bonneval Garden; Crockham Hill Garden; amenity space at Ash, Granville, Hartley and Madan Roads.
Public Toilet	Maintaining and cleaning the public toilet in Fullers Hill.
Running the Council	Financial management (including budgeting, fundraising, investments and meeting audit requirements); insuring Council assets/liabilities; administration; meeting regulatory reporting requirements; consultee to other authorities; the role of employer to Council staff.
Russell House	Provides: the Council Office for administration and public enquiries; the Council Chamber for Council meetings, Hearing Aid Clinics and public hire; and the ground floor houses the Doctor's Surgery.
Senior Services	Running a Forget-me-not-Café to support residents living with dementia and their carers; coffee mornings in Crockham Hill; facilitate/ support the Friday Lunch Club.
Street Furniture	Providing bus shelters, defibrillators, dog bins, notice boards & benches.
Street Lighting	The Council owns and maintains 176 of the street lights in Westerham
Trees	Managing 100s of trees on Westerham Town Council owned land.
Youth Services	After school age appropriate clubs and activities, Community Bus, outreach workers, boxing and holiday play schemes.

9. Council Committee Structure

The Council meets six times a year and holds an Annual Town Meeting. The annual calendar of meeting dates is published in advance. Members of the public are very welcome to attend all Council and Committee Meetings. The first 10 minutes of every meeting are available for members of the public to raise any issues. Each committee meets five times a year, with the exception of the Planning Committee, which meets every two weeks.

The Council in pursuance of its powers under Section 101 of the LGA 1972 Local Government Act and Section 15 of the LGA 2000 Local Government meets the requisite criteria to operate under the General Powers of Competence.

The Council operates under a delegated Committee Structure to provide and manage all of the Council's Functions listed, as follows:

Finance, Governance & General Purposes Committee

Key Responsibilities: all matters relating to finance & staffing; managing Council assets and community engagement, to ensure -

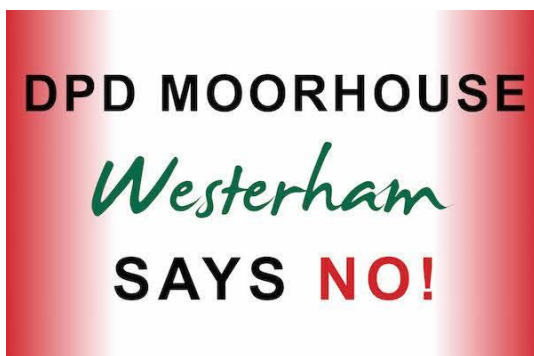
- responsible financial management of all funds within the Council's control, complying with best practice and all relevant legislation, securing an unqualified external audit.
- that all staff employed by the Council are recruited, managed, remunerated and trained to enable them to carry out the Council's strategy to high standards.
- that all Councillors attend training sessions appropriate to their Council roles which keep them up to date on legislation and regulations and current thinking on relevant topics.
- we manage and maintain Westerham's historic assets/buildings to keep them in good repair.
- we keep residents informed of Council initiatives/local matters through our website, social media, newsletters & Annual Town Meeting and hold consultations on key matters of public interest.



Planning Committee

Key Responsibilities: to provide comment on behalf of the Council on all planning matters by -

- acting as a consultee on Westerham Parish planning applications made to SDC, providing SDC with local knowledge on applications affecting decisions taken and to represent the views of residents.
- awareness of significant planning issues arising in neighbouring local authorities, advising the community where appropriate and responding where it is considered these may affect us.
- reviewing, considering and responding to wider public consultations on behalf of our community, endeavouring where possible to communicate this to residents as appropriate.
- keeping under review the changing framework of Neighbourhood Plans, and if considered appropriate bring proposals forward to Full Council.
- utilising relevant training seminars and conferences to improve and update the knowledge of both Town Councillors and staff involved in planning matters.



Open Spaces & Amenities Committee

Key Responsibilities: to manage the use/maintenance of allotments, playing fields & open spaces, to ensure -

- active management of the allotment sites, ensuring as far as we can that there is sufficient supply to meet demand, making improvements as and when we can.
- maintaining the open spaces in the Council's ownership so that they remain attractive to visitors and in good state for residents to use.
- encouraging the use of the Playing Fields in the Council's ownership or management, expanding the variety of sports which can use them, and maintaining them to the standard which enables them to be used safely and regularly.



Highways & Lighting Committee

Key Responsibilities: maintenance of Council owned streetlights and to provide comment on behalf of the Council on highways matters, to ensure -

- effective management of the Council's street lighting, ensuring that it is efficient and takes full advantage of technological advances. We will seek out the best value provision of energy supply.
- we work with organisations in the town to improve parking provision in and around the town.
- the monitoring of road issues & lobby/influence those responsible to take appropriate action.
- co-ordination of the speed watch initiative to make Westerham a safer place.



Community Engagement Committee

Key Responsibilities: promoting the Town for the benefit of residents, local business and tourists by arranging events/activities with particular focus on supporting young & elderly/vulnerable people by-

- continuing to support and provide activities which engage and support the young & elderly/vulnerable of the community.
- working with the Community Warden, the Police and SDC to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- involving retailers, businesses and the Town Partnership to support and develop economic activity in the town, taking leadership where appropriate.
- monitoring services provided by other bodies which are regarded as a benefit to the community and lobby to ensure that they remain.

Forget-me-not Cafés
Companionship over a cuppa

Sevenoaks Forget-me-not Café
FIRST Friday each month*
The Hayloft
National Trust Knole House
Sevenoaks TN13 1HU - 10:30am - 12noon

Hildenborough Forget-me-not Café
Second Wednesday each month*
St John's Church Centre
Foxbush Hildenborough
TN11 9HT - 11am - 12:30pm

Westerham Forget-me-not Café
THIRD Friday each month*
The Congregational Church
Fullers Hill
Westerham TN16 1AB - 11am - 12:30pm

Contact us - Web: www.forgetmenotcafe.org.uk
Email: forgetmenot.sadfc@gmail.com
Elaine 07946 534 476 - Amelia 07580 601 182
*There may be some months certain cafes do not operate

Olympia BOXING Starting 19th May 2021

Westerham boxing and multi-sport
for young people aged 8+

Get fit and have fun in a safe, non-contact environment

When: Wednesdays, 5.30pm
Where: Westerham Hall

To sign up, email youthservices@wkha.org.uk or DM us on our Facebook page @WestKentYouthServices

West Kent logo and other small logos at the bottom.

Westerham Family Fun
King George Fields, Westerham, TN16 1BL

28th July
4th, 11th and 18th August
(10.30am - 1.30pm)

FREE family fun for all ages this will include garden games, craft, inflatables, entertainers, sports and so much more....

Logos for West Kent, Play Place, Westerham, and Kent County Council are at the bottom.

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON EVENT
THURSDAY 29TH NOVEMBER
5 - 8 PM

KINGS ARMS MINI CHRISTMAS MARKET
NO. 17 CHILDRENS CHRISTMAS TRAIL
BEST DRESSED SHOP WINDOW

CHURCHILL SCHOOL CHOIR
WESTERHAM SEA CADETS BAND
WADS CINDERELLA CAST

Logos for various local organizations are at the bottom.

10. Financial Information – Year End 31/03/2024

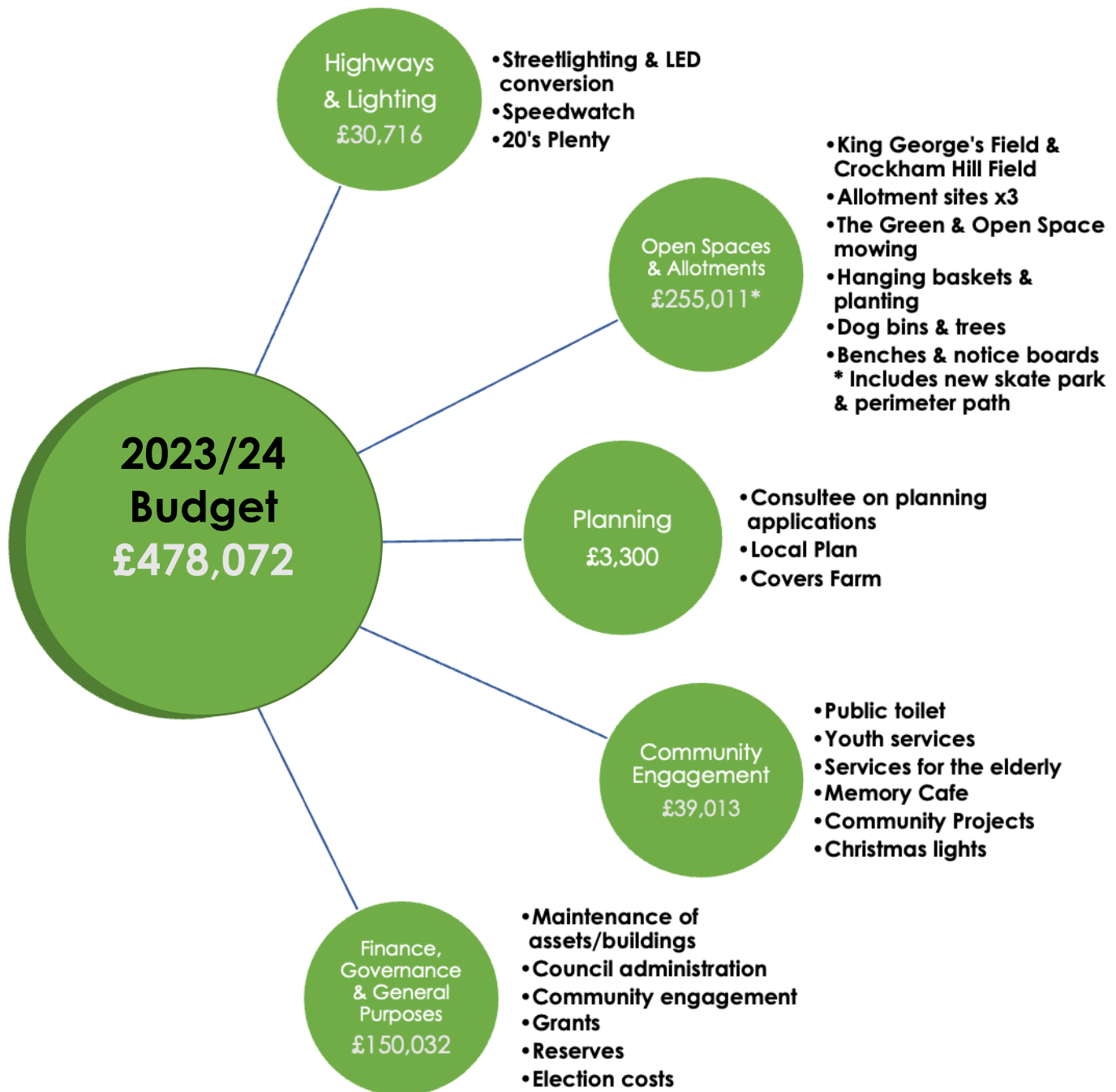
WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL RETURN	
Year ending 31st March 2024	
BALANCE B/F	£536,462
PRECEPT	£293,115
TOTAL OTHER RECEIPTS	£ 99,741
STAFF COSTS	£25,754
LOANS	Nil
TOTAL OTHER PAYMENTS	£352,318
BALANCE C/F	£451,246
TOTAL CASH & INVESTMENTS	£438,484
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	2,255,557

For the financial years 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 the Council received both clean Internal & External Audit Reports.

For the financial year 2023/2024 the Council's total expenditure was £478,072, some £184,957 in excess of the precept (the Town Council's share of your Council Tax). Council's ability to raise additional funds through rents, leases, accessing grants and other external sources of funding means that it can spend more on our community than it asks the community to contribute. This included using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, held in reserves, to create a new skate park at King George's Field and a perimeter all weather pathway.

The chart overleaf illustrates how the money was spent.

The Council tax passed to Westerham Town Council in 2023/24 amounted to £293,115 which cost £140.15 per year or £2.70 per week, for Council tax band D houses in Westerham and Crockham Hill.



11. Financial Information – Projected Budget 2024 - 2028

The Council operates a 4-year budget which is recommended by the Finance, Governance & General Purposes Committee in January each year for approval by Council. Performance to budget is monitored at each Committee meeting, is overseen by the Finance, Governance & General Purposes Committee and reviewed at each Full Council meeting.

	Budget 2024/2025 £		Budget 2025/2026 £		Budget 2026/2027 £		Budget 2027/2028 £	
Committee	Income	Expend.	Income	Expend.	Income	Expend.	Income	Expend.
FG & GP	61,930	217,140	60,930	227,085	56,930	236,865	56,930	247,025
OSA	4,600	62,650	4,800	65,210	5,000	67,660	5,200	70,220
CE	-	33,375	-	34,375	-	35,225	-	36,225
H & L	-	19,650	-	20,350	-	20,750	-	21,450
Total	66,530	332,815	65,730	347,020	61,930	360,500	62,130	374,920
Net		266,285		281,290		298,570		312,790
Increase to Reserves		73,500		73,500		73,500		73,500
Precept		339,785		354,790		372,070		386,290
% Increase		6.9% (shown as 4.5% due to an increase in the tax base)		4.4%		4.9%		3.8%

12. Financial Information – Council Reserves (as at 19.11.24)

NALC³ Recommends that local councils should hold three – six months of expenditure in a non-specific reserve. In addition, the council maintains earmarked reserves for specific projects, maintenance and replacement of assets and to mitigate liabilities.

Reserve	Amount £	Detail
General Reserve	90,504.66	The Council holds approximately three months of expenditure in a general reserve, which is deemed adequate given the extent of specific earmarked reserves.
Asset Repair Fund	70,468.51	The council is responsible for £2.5m of community assets. Repair, renovation and replacement often produce large costs that cannot be met from yearly budgets alone. The Council utilizes the asset maintenance plan to inform the level of reserving for this fund.
Office / Chamber Fund	3,744.35	To cover office and IT replacement costs.
Election Fund	1,500.00	To build a fund to cover four yearly election costs of £6,000.
Tree Fund	7,634.00	Regular tree surveys and resultant programme of tree works are covered by annual budgeting. It is necessary to hold an additional tree fund to meet unforeseen costs such as storm damage or disease as the Council's tree stock is substantial.
Crockham Hill Playing Field	49,789.02	This fund is to cover tennis court maintenance and resurfacing every 12/14 years (2 courts), playground replacement, pavilion refurbishment/replacement and car park provision.
King George's Field Redevelopment	123,165.00	This fund is to cover: playground refurbishment; skate park replacement; the creation of a MUGA (multi-use games area); maintenance of FIT trail; and pavilion refurbishment (currently desolate).
Professional Fees	9,565.00	To meet the cost of ongoing and future legal / accounting / planning / employment issues.

³ National Association of Local Councils

12. Financial Information – Council Reserves (as at 19.11.24)

Title	Amount £	Detail
Vandalism Fund	4,420.00	Although insurance generally meets most of the cost, this fund is to cover security improvements as they arise and to repair minor damage. Use of insurance for repeat smaller claims is not cost effective.
Payroll Contingency	12,500.00	To cover temporary staff costs, including recruitment, arising from long term illness, accident or the need for emergency additional resources.
CIL Reserve	91,061.98	This is the residue of CIL funding received from Sevenoaks District Council. It has been ring fenced by Council for the King George's Field redevelopment project.
Allotment Reserve	4,906.00	Residue of funds from the sale of a single allotment at Farley allotment site for improvement and maintenance works at the town's three allotment sites.
Youth Provision Reserve	14,439.00	The remainder of grants received to provide youth provision.
Open Space Fund	£4,000.00	To support maintenance of parking areas, knee rail/post replacement and development of open spaces.
Highways & Lighting Fund	£16,515.00	To support H&L projects and improvements around the town.
Miscellaneous Reserves	13,505.24	Funds received from other organisations and ring fenced by the council for specific purposes: £3,000 – donated by Westerham Town Partnership for new signage around the town. £1,961 – sale receipts of the walks' booklet held to fund reprinting. £5,713.78 – funding and donations held to support the running of the Memory Café. £2,830.46 – donations held to support the Community Lunch.

13. Value for Money Statement

Introduction

Value for Money (VFM) is important to Westerham Town Council because the Council is committed to:

- ensuring that public money is spent efficiently to provide effective services for our residents;
- whilst delivering and maintaining a balanced budget;
- and continuously striving for improvement.

VFM Principles

Value for Money (VFM) can be defined as the relationship between Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. It is a term used to assess whether the Council has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it procures and provides within the constraint of limited resources facing the Council. Value for money is not about achieving the lowest initial price. The Town Council has adopted the National Audit Office's (NAO) practice of using the three criteria to assess the value for money of government spending:

Economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs) – **spending less;**

Efficiency: the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – **spending well;** and

Effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – **spending wisely.**

Delivering VFM

We have integrated our approach to achieving value for money into all that we do. The Council seeks to achieve the optimum balance between the principles above in all aspects of service delivery, by the following means:

- a) Involving residents in our decision making by identifying community needs and priorities through regular consultation with all households; and ensuring that community needs and priorities are reflected in Council plans and strategy;
- b) Regularly reviewing, redesigning and modernising services to improve customer experiences and to address changing community needs;
- c) Allocating our resources in line with the Council's priorities, plans and strategy;
- d) Effectively managing the procurement process to secure the most advantageous combination of quality and price – the Council's Procurement Policy, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders must be observed. They provide clear guidance to officers on the limits for the purchase of goods and services above which three quotations should be sought and the limits that trigger a formal tendering process to award a public contract, as defined by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;
- e) Having strong governance processes in place - reviewing Internal Controls and Internal Audit procedures annually and commissioning an annual programme of Internal and External Audit;

- f) Operating a robust budgeting process. Each committee reviews their budget lines in detail when setting the budget, seeking to identify savings and minimise increases to costs. The Responsible Finance Officer challenges whether there is built in under-spending. Finance & General Purposes Committee and Full Council consider the consolidated budget in detail before setting the precept to ensure that the Council is offering good VFM. Expenditure against budget is reviewed at each Committee and Full Council meeting, throughout the year;
- g) Working in partnership with community groups to minimise costs whilst bringing benefits to the town. For example, working with the Westerham Society each year to jointly provide the floral displays around the town;
- h) Enhancing our budget by maximising sources of income, including allotment rent, chamber hire, sport club usage fees and rental of Russell House ground floor to Winterton Surgery. We undertake annual reviews and regular benchmarking to ensure we implement fair and appropriate charging for services;
- i) Striving to obtain external funding to supplement our resources through sponsorship and grant funding;
- j) Managing performance – we regularly review our performance, tracking progress against objectives and seeking opportunities for continuous improvement and increased efficiency. We always seek to learn from and share best practice with other councils, asking whether our staff and other resources are being used to best effect?
- k) Transparency – VFM is communicated through the Council website, annual report, strategic plan and to each household through external publications (TN16 and Crockham Hill village newsletter).

14. Review of the Strategic Business Plan

The Strategic Business Plan is monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that the Council is focused on the delivery of its aims. This is a responsibility of the Finance, Governance & General Purposes Committee in order that an overview can be taken of the proposed projects considered by each committee, and to assist with the budget setting process. The review of progress and any need for change in priorities is discussed and agreed by Full Council.

The Council uses numerous channels to keep the community fully informed of progress made in achieving the aims set out in the Council Strategic Action Plan through:

- Westerham Town Council website
- Westerham Town Council Facebook and Instagram accounts
- Regular articles in each edition of TN16 and Crockham Hill village newsletter
- Full Council and Committee minutes
- Annual Town Meeting
- WTC stand at community events

15. How to Comment on this Document and Contact the Council

Any comments or queries about any element of this Strategic Business Plan document can be made by contacting the Town Clerk, Angela Howells, by one of the following methods:

1. Completing the contact form on the website – www.westerhamtowncouncil.gov.uk
2. By email to office@westerhamtowncouncil.gov.uk
3. By telephoning 01959 562147 option 1
4. In person to the Council office – Russell House, Market Square, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1RB. Office hours are Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 1pm.