



HASLEMERE TOWN COUNCIL

Haslemere Town Council Budget 2025-26 working party **(Cllrs Banfield, Davidson, Leach, Nicholson, Waters and Town Clerk** **Lisa O'Sullivan)** **Report for Full Council, November 2024.**

At its first meeting in October, Cllr Waters was elected chair of the Budget working party for 2025-26.

The Clerk gave an overview of the budgeting process and passed on some advice from the Council's internal auditor, who stated that it is good practice to raise the precept annually by a steady percentage rather than keeping it too low then have to find a significant rise later.

Other local councils such as Godalming and Farnham are expected to raise their precepts by 5%-6% for next year.

Nationally the average band D precept charged last year was £85.89. Haslemere Town Council's was £55.52, £30 below average.

For 2025-26 the following percentage increases would equate to the rises stated for an average Band D property, **per annum**, as follows.

- 2.5% - £1.39
- 4% - £2.22
- 6% - £3.33

The Clerk also gave an overview of the current PWLB loan situation.

Some key factors were agreed:

1. What sort of percentage increase would be acceptable to the working party.

The working party was happy to see the precept increase by more than 2.5% due to 1) the very small numbers involved and 2) recognising the increased costs in services the council has taken on, such as the SANG and Lion Green toilets.

2. Whether or not the larger of the council's PWLB loans should be paid back.

The working party agreed that, subject to any comments received from the council's accountant who is checking the figures, the loan should be repaid early in the 2025-26 financial year.

3. Whether the working party was happy to agree a 'funding pot' approach to revenue and small/green grants and to small projects.

This approach was well received by the working party. Revenue grants will be considered at the next working party meeting, £75 has been budgeted, with applications totalling £95k. Combined small and green grant budget has been set at £7,500. Special projects budgeted at £17,500.

Revenue Grants 2025-27

The Budget working party considered thirteen applications, totalling £94,880 against a suggested budget of £74,000. Its recommendations are as follows:

Organisation	Amount requested 25-27	Recommended award
3Counties Money Advice	£2,000	£2,000
APTB youth club	£5,000	£0
CAB	£24,000	£20,500
Crossways counselling	£4,630	£4,630
Haslemere Biodiversity Group	£8,000	£5,000
Haslemere Food Bank	£7,500	£7,500
Haslemere Youth Hub	£15,000	£12,500
HOPPA	£7,500	£7,500
I'm All ears counselling	£8,000	£0
Sport Haslemere	£500	£500
Transition Haslemere	£6,000	£0
Visit Haslemere	£5,000	£5,000
Wey Hill in Bloom	£1,750	£1,750
Future Revenue Grant pot		£7,120
	£ 94,880	£ 74,000

3Counties Money Advice – This is a very well used local service which helps those most in need to secure assistance with debt management, assessment of benefits and grants for essential items. **Recommended** that the full amount of £2,000 should be awarded and 3CMA should be advised to come back for a further grant from the Future Grants pot should this be required, as there is a query over their funding for this year.

APTB youth club – This organisation runs a weekly youth club for local teenagers. The working party acknowledges that this provides an essential local service however, their income last year was significantly more than their costs and they currently have at least a year's running costs in reserve.

The £5k grant that they were awarded for 2024-25 has been available to them since 1 April but, despite a number of reminders, has not been claimed. The working party is not persuaded that they need the £5k they have applied for in 2025-27. **Recommended** that no award is granted and they are invited to apply again when they need the funding.

CAB – CAB's revenue grant was increased from £12,500 to £18,500 in 2023-24 meaning that their request to increase this to £24,000 would have nearly doubled their grant in the last few years. Having merged into CAB Waverley, the organisation is currently reviewing its offering to Haslemere residents, which could reduce in the near future. The working party felt that it was reasonable to fund around half of the Haslemere running costs (£40,500). They already receive an award of £12,500 from Waverley BC and the rest can be managed via other grants and donations. **Recommended** that a grant of £20,500 is awarded, any SLA with the organisation should stipulate that provide the equivalent of no fewer than three days per week equivalent physical local access to Haslemere residents.

Crossways counselling – this local charity provides over 1600 counselling sessions to local people per year. No one is turned away through lack of money, meaning that they need to raise funds to cover the gap between their income and costs. They have little funds in reserves and work hard to fundraise for this service. **Recommended** that the full £4,630 requested is awarded.

Haslemere Biodiversity Group – the working party is very impressed with the work that this organisation does to enhance biodiversity in the Haslemere area. HTC has financially supported a number of their biodiversity projects and has money elsewhere in the budget to take forward projects coming out of the recent biodiversity audit of the council's land. **Recommended** that £5,000 is awarded to HBG, and that they can apply for further funding if necessary, as local projects arise.

Haslemere Food Bank – the working party considers this to be a vital local service, calls on its resources may increase further over the next few months. They do have significant reserves which are gradually building and this needs to be kept in view for future. **Recommended** that the full grant of £7,500 is awarded for 2025-26, with the grant for 2026-27 to be reviewed in that year's budget round.

Haslemere Youth Hub – this facility is extremely well used by the community within excess of 1500 young people from 0-18 or older accessing support services there each week. It is not yet clear what impact the Weyhill Fairground carpark project will have on the organisation. They have not made a strong enough case for the whole £15,000 and this grant award should be reviewed in a year's time. **Recommended** that £12,500 is awarded in 2025-26 and that this application is reviewed in the 2026-27 budget round.

HOPPA – this is an invaluable local service. 431 people are registered in Haslemere and around 3000 trips per year are taken by Haslemere residents. They have limited reserves and do apply widely for grant funding. **Recommended** that the full grant of £7,500 is awarded.

I'm All Ears counselling – This is a limited company. They were not able to provide numbers of Haslemere residents helped and did not answer the question on how much the service costs to run in Haslemere. Their accounts did not give enough information for the working party to understand how any grant award would be spent. They already use the Town Hall council chamber free of charge for between 2.5 and 7 hours per week. **Recommended** that no revenue grant is awarded, they are advised to apply for a small grant if necessary.

Sport Haslemere – the Create a Star project which provides a bursary for young people in the area who show international sporting potential is a fabulous initiative and one HTC should be proud to support. **Recommended** that the full amount of £500 is awarded.

Visit Haslemere – Until 2017 VH was fully funded by HTC at a cost of around £15k. Since HEM took over the running HTC has provided a grant towards its costs, as the service does a great job of supporting Haslemere's visitor economy. In 2022-23 the grant of £5k to Visit Haslemere was cut to £2,500 and HEM is now looking for the previous level of funding to be reinstated.

Recommended that the full grant of £5,000 is awarded.

Weyhill In Bloom – The organisation does an amazing job of looking after the planting in Shottermill, which gives the whole area a lift and benefits retail outlets and residents. They are in real need of a water bowser for the summer months. They have received an annual amount of

£850 from the council for over 15 and it is time that this was increased in line with their costs and inflation. **Recommended** that the full amount of £1750 is awarded.

Transition Haslemere – this is not a revenue grant under the terms of HTC's guidelines. The working party was also concerned at the cost of funding the collation of information, much of which is already publicly held, at a cost of £6,000 and the direct benefit Haslemere residents would receive from this. It is a one-off project and Transition Haslemere should be advised to apply for a Green Grant towards the costs. **Recommended** that no revenue grant is awarded.

Future Revenue Grants pot – **recommended** that the small amount of unallocated budget (£7120) is held in a future grants pot to either allow the grant of revenue grant applications received after the budget is agreed, or increase revenue grants to those organisations already awarded a grant, such as 3CMA, if further help is needed.