

## Revenue Budget Summary - Finance Section

Budget Description	Budget Holder	2024/25 Gross Budget	2024/25 Net Budget
Finance Section	Tracey Woodhead Finance Manager	£149,950	£99,850

### **Purpose of the Budget:**

The main purpose of the Finance Section Budget is to provide the resources to ensure the efficient management of the Council's finances and the provision of an effective financial support service to members, officers, and front-line service areas.

The Finance Section plays an important corporate role in meeting the statutory requirements with regard to the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. This includes preparing the Council's accounts in accordance with proper practices, maintaining an effective system of internal control and internal audit, preparing the Medium-Term Financial Plan and annual budget, and ensuring accurate and up to date accounting records are maintained.

The Finance Section also provides important support services to the Council's front-line service areas including payment of salaries and wages, payment of invoices, income collection and banking.

Finally, the Finance Section Budget includes costs for the Council's Internal Audit Service which provides independent assurance on the Council's systems of internal control and governance arrangements, thereby helping to ensure the prevention of fraud, error, and other irregularities.

### **Scope of Activity and Nature of the Service:**

The Finance Section is responsible for the following activities and functions:-

- Managing and developing the Council's financial regulations, accounting systems, internal controls, financial records, and all financial policies and procedures;
- Reporting on the Council's financial performance;
- Preparing the Council's Revenue and Capital Budget;
- Preparing the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan;
- Preparing the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, incorporating the Accounting Statements and Annual Governance Statement;
- Ensuring an effective system of budgetary control;
- Managing an effective payroll and personnel support service;
- Managing an effective accounts payable and receivable function;
- Managing an effective income collection and banking system;
- Managing the Council's insurance arrangements;
- Providing an effective internal audit service;
- Providing financial advice and training; and
- Managing the administration of the Councils cash flow, loans, and investments.

The majority of the Finance Section's responsibilities are statutory requirements as set out in the Local Government Act 2003 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The Finance Section currently employs three members of staff; the Finance Manager, Senior Accountancy Assistant and part-time Accountancy Assistant.

**Contribution to Council Aims:**

The Finance Section contributes directly to two of the Council's Strategic Aims:-

*Aim 1. "To provide good quality governance and management of the Council"*

*Aim 2. "To manage the council's finances and assets in a responsible manner"*

**Performance Measures and Indicators:**

The main performance measure in place in respect of the Finance Section is the opinion contained within the External Auditor's Report in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in relation to the Council's Accounting Statements and Annual Governance Statement.

The Finance Section are also partly or fully responsible for the delivery of many of the corporate targets linked to Aims 1 and 2 within the Service Delivery Plan, as set out below:-

- Publish an Annual Financial Report.
- Undertake an annual review of the Council's Constitution, Financial Regulations and ensure compliance with current legislation.
- Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Undertake research where appropriate for new financial policies and procedures.
- Keep up to date with any changes in legislation and report to Council as and when required.
- Continue to monitor energy consumption, implement energy saving initiatives and reduce usage where possible.
- Ensure all staff have an annual appraisal.
- Undertake a quarterly review of staff sickness and report to Service Managers.
- Produce Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) by 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- Achieve an unqualified audit opinion on the AGAR by 30<sup>th</sup> September.
- Ensure the Medium-Term Financial Plan is approved by 31<sup>st</sup> July.
- Deliver the Internal Audit Plan schedule of work, in conjunction with the Internal Auditor, and report to quarterly to the Audit, Risk and GDPR Sub Committee and Council.
- Manage the financial impact of ongoing cuts to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme funding.
- Ensure quarterly budgetary control reports are presented to Policy and Resources Committee.
- Ensure that the 2024/25 Council Budget is set and the Precept approved by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.
- Ensure all relevant information is published in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code and Openness of Local Government Regulations.
- Undertake an annual update of the Council's Asset Register including the schedule of expected life and replacement costs for buildings, plant, and machinery.
- Undertake a budget setting and aims and targets consultation using social media or other suitable platforms.
- Produce timely responses to all major financial consultations carried out.

Finally, a Finance Service Plan is also in place, which includes a specific annual action plan to help monitor and improve the internal performance of the Finance Section each year.

**Key Budget Changes for 2024/25:**

The Finance Section Budget has increased by £2,050 to a net running cost of £99,850 per year.

This provides for increases in staffing costs from the forecast local government pay award, partly offset by savings on Internal Audit provision.

**Importance of Service to the Community:**

The Finance Section plays an important role in meeting statutory requirements in relation to the financial management of the Council, and in helping to ensure value for money for council taxpayers.

The 2024 'Your Parish, Your Choice, Your Voice' Satisfaction Survey provided some very positive feedback as to public satisfaction with the finances of the Council, with 71% viewing the Town Council as value for money.

**External Funding and Fees and Charges:**

The only income receivable by the Finance Section is in the form of internal recharges to front line service areas for the support services provided e.g. payroll, payment of invoices, income collection, internal audit etc. These recharges total £50,100 per year.