



BUSINESS PLAN 2025-2026

**GREAT CHART WITH SINGLETON
PARISH COUNCIL**





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council serves as the first tier of local government for the communities of Great Chart and Singleton. Our core mission is to support residents in leading balanced, fulfilling lives by maintaining a clean, safe, and welcoming environment for all.

While we are not a business in the traditional sense, we are committed to managing public funds responsibly and transparently. Each year, the Council carefully reviews its current services and future priorities to shape its budget. This process begins mid-year, led by the Finance Committee, to ensure that financial planning is aligned with community needs.

Our key aims and principles include:

- **Opportunity:** Identifying and addressing service gaps left by other authorities.
- **Mission:** Ensuring all residents receive high-quality, inclusive services.
- **Collaboration:** Working in partnership with Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, the police, local organisations, and service providers to deliver effective solutions.
- **Governance:** Decisions are made by 11 councillors who meet monthly, supported by a dedicated team of officers and stewards.
- **Community Impact:** Our goal is to foster a stronger, more connected community by investing in local priorities and enhancing the quality of life for all residents

This business plan outlines how we intend to deliver on these commitments, manage our resources, and continue building a resilient and vibrant parish.

Key Achievements of Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council

Over the past year, the Parish Council has made meaningful progress in delivering services and strengthening community life. Some of the most notable achievements include:

- **Maintaining and Enhancing Local Assets:** The Council has continued to invest in the upkeep of parish-owned facilities, including two play areas and multiple open spaces. Parish stewards, supported by new maintenance equipment, ensure these areas remain clean, safe, and welcoming for all residents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Environmental Stewardship:** Through its lease of the Singleton Environment Centre—managed in partnership with Singleton Spaces—the Council supports environmental education, sustainability initiatives, and community engagement with green issues.
- **Community Events and Engagement:** The Council has successfully organised events such as the annual Big Lunch, which brings residents together and fosters a sense of belonging. These events are complemented by regular public meetings and open forums that encourage direct dialogue between residents and councillors.
- **Support for Local Organisations:** A dedicated grants programme has enabled the Council to financially support local groups and initiatives that benefit the wider community, from youth services to wellbeing projects.
- **Effective Communication:** The Council has expanded its communication channels, including a quarterly parish magazine delivered to all households, an active social media presence, and regular updates via noticeboards and the website. This ensures residents are well-informed about decisions, events, and local developments.
- **Financial Responsibility:** The Council has demonstrated prudent financial management, with clear budgeting processes and transparent reporting. It has maintained a healthy reserve while funding key projects and services, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- **Resident-Focused Services:** Initiatives such as free dog waste bags, litter prevention, and mobile speed limit signage reflect the Council's commitment to practical, everyday improvements that enhance quality of life.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** The Council continues to work closely with Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, and other stakeholders to address local needs and advocate for residents' interests.

COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

The Parish Council is committed to delivering high-quality, inclusive services that support residents of all ages and backgrounds, enhance the local area, and foster a strong, cohesive community.

Organisational Background

Parish councils were first established under the Local Government Act of 1894. Since then, their roles have evolved significantly. Once responsible for only basic community functions, modern parish councils now play a crucial role in local governance, often serving as a hub for service delivery, community representation, and strategic partnerships with other authorities.

In addition to holding regular monthly meetings, the Parish Council is actively involved in delivering a broader range of services that respond to the needs of the parish and its residents.

Services Provided

Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council has a statutory duty to serve all residents equitably, ensuring that services are accessible and delivered without discrimination. Services may include environmental maintenance, community safety initiatives, recreational facilities, local events, and strategic partnerships to enhance infrastructure and support vulnerable groups.

Operational Structure

The Parish Council is managed by a small team of dedicated staff:

- Parish Clerk – serving as both Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
- Deputy Clerk (part-time)
- Parish Stewards – both full-time and part-time, responsible for the practical delivery of services across the parish

The council is governed by 11 members who meet monthly to make decisions in line with statutory duties and strategic objectives.

Financial Management and Objectives

The Parish Council's primary income is raised through a local tax known as the precept, which is collected by Ashford Borough Council (ABC) on behalf of the parish. The precept is paid in two instalments per financial year and is used exclusively for the benefit of the local community.

- Precept for FY 2025-2026: £391,235
- Use of Funds: All income is reinvested in the parish through service provision, community projects, or allocated to reserve funds for future use.
- Budgeting Process: The council prepares an annual budget based on planned projects and service needs. This forecast determines the precept request for the coming year.

Under legislation, all expenditure must be for the direct benefit of parishioners and must comply with strict financial governance standards.

WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL DO

Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council is the first tier of local government. The main aim of the council is to provide services for the best value that benefits the residents and the community. The council can establish and provide a wide range of services using its statutory powers. The services can improve parishioners' lives and make the parish a pleasant place to live and work within. Services can range from providing bus shelters, and allotments, to tackling littering and anti-social behaviour. The list below shows the current services the Parish Council offers:

- o Holding monthly public meetings to discuss parish council related matters and to make decisions. A time is allowed for the members of the public to raise any queries and speak directly to the council.
- o Ground maintenance services on parish council land.
- o Communication through the website, newsletter, social media and noticeboards.
- o Dog fouling prevention (by providing free 'poo bags' and waste bins)
- o Organising local events e.g. annual Big Lunch event.

The parish council has a number of key strategic partners, including Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council (KCC), banks and professional bodies and other various suppliers.

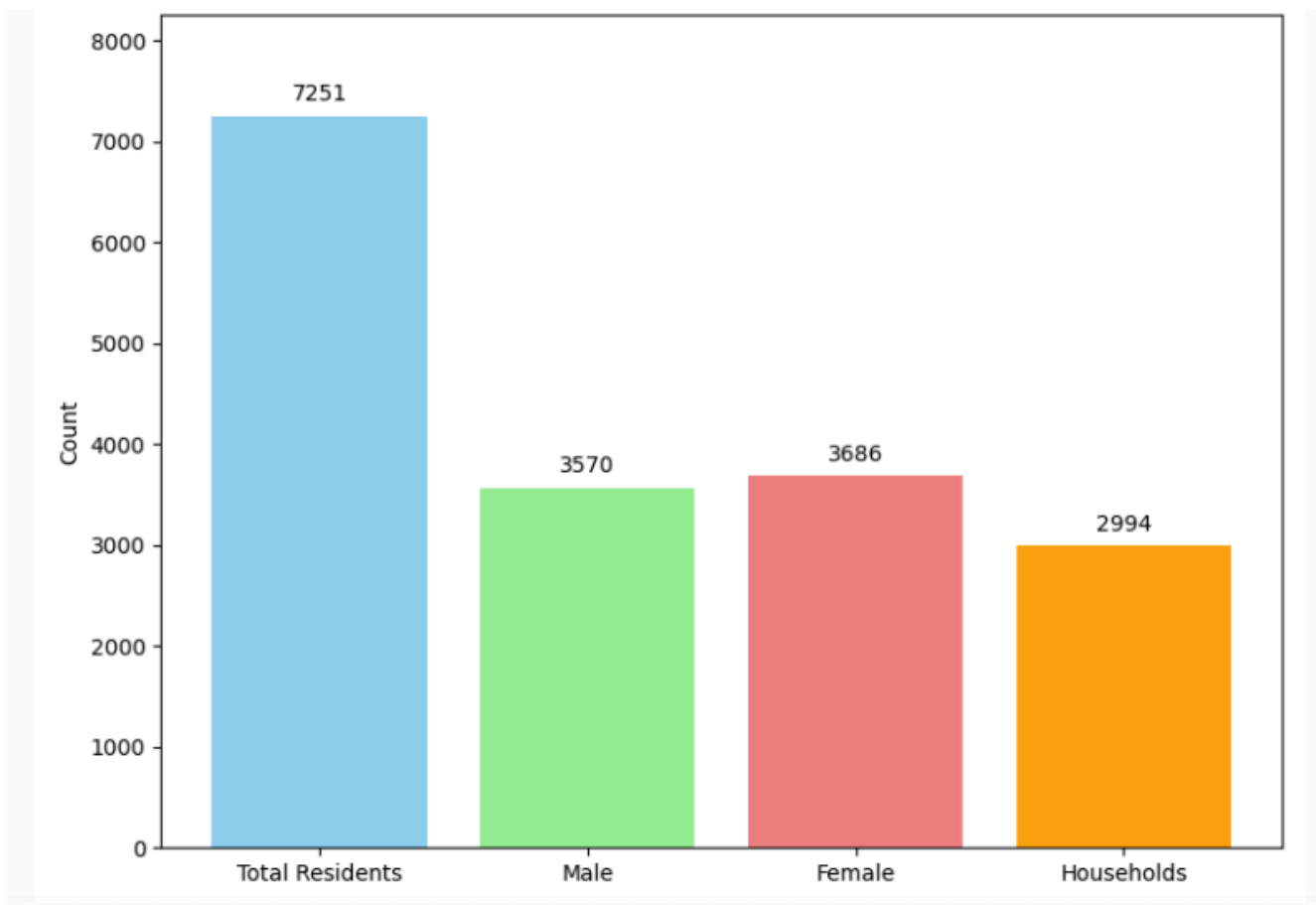
The main expenditure of the council relates to staff employment, followed by ground maintenance, equipment maintenance and tool purchase and parish projects. The parish council also has a significant pot of funds available as grants to support local organisations.

The funds to cover the cost of the services that the council is providing are raised through the precept, the local tax. The precept is set each year during the budgeting process.

The main objective of the council is to provide services to its residents for the best value. The money raised through the precept is just a small part of the council tax. For a Band D house for 2025-2026, this amounts to £132 a year.

POPULATION ANALYSIS

Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council falls within the local government sector and is one of the 72 parish councils in the Ashford borough. The parish council's main activities are within the boundaries of Great Chart and Singleton. The parish council is responsible for 6801 (2021 census) residents in this area.



Source: <https://censusdata.uk/e04012785-great-chart-with-singleton/ts001-number-of-usual-residents-in-households-and-communal-establishments>:

The Parish Council plays a vital role in fostering a strong and connected community. As the first tier of local government, it is often the first point of contact for residents seeking support or guidance. While its powers and responsibilities are limited, the Council helps direct residents to the appropriate authorities—such as Ashford Borough Council (ABC) or Kent County Council (KCC). Full contact details and further information are available on our website and in the parish magazine.

STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

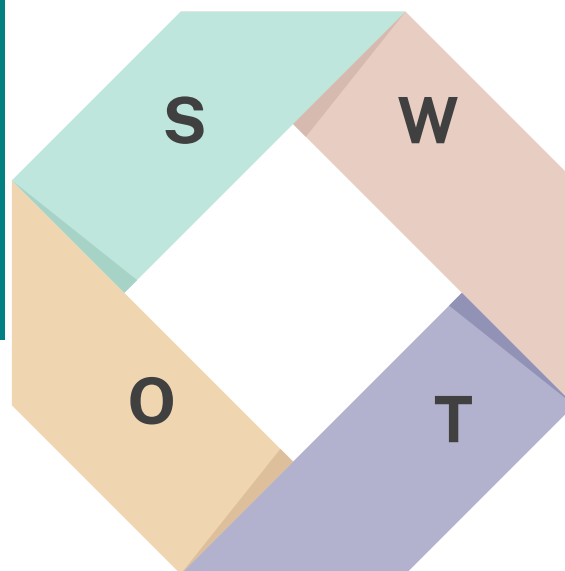
The SWOT analysis provides a structured overview of the Parish Council's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. This framework helps identify areas where the Council is performing well, where improvements are needed, and what external factors may influence future operations. This analysis informs strategic planning and helps ensure the Council remains responsive to the needs of the community.

Strengths

- Precept spent at local level
- Uncapped precept
- Can build up reserves for a specific project
- Maintaining local assets
- Supporting residents directly
- Non-political

Weakness

- Lack of knowledge and expertise in key areas
- Gap in capabilities
- Lack of resources
- Lack of experience
- Lack of support from KCC and ABC



Opportunities

- Providing new and relevant services to the community directly
- Supporting local economy and employment
- Empowering residents in decision making

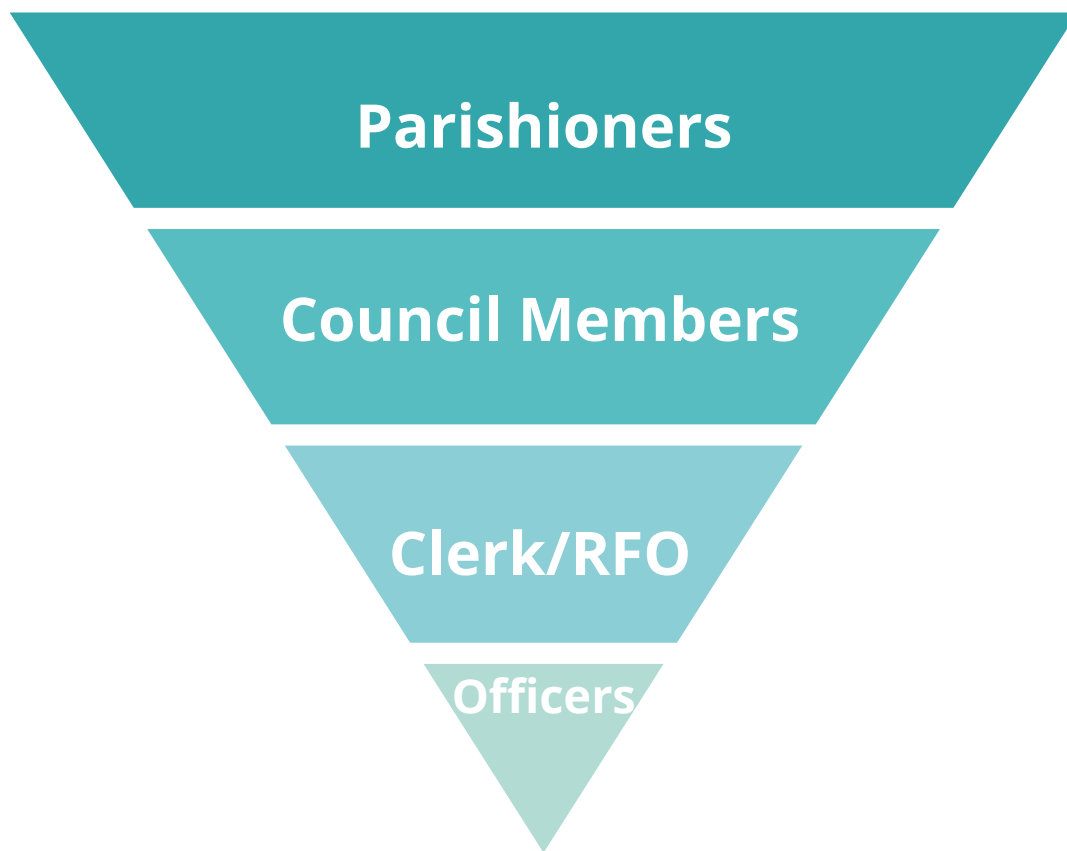
Threats

- Loss of key staff and councillors
- Political pressure
- Obstacles to services
- Climate Change

HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

The Parish Council is positioned at the top of the organisational structure and comprises eleven Councillors. These Councillors convene monthly to deliberate and make decisions on matters affecting the parish.

The implementation of Council decisions is overseen by the Proper Officer, who also holds responsibility for managing Council staff. The operational team includes the Deputy Clerk and the Parish Stewards, as illustrated in the organisational chart below.



Key Stakeholders

The primary beneficiaries are the residents of Great Chart and Singleton, who contribute an annual precept to fund the services provided by the parish council.

Staff and Governance

The parish council is supported by its members and the Clerk, who are essential to the smooth running of its operations. The Clerk is responsible for implementing the council's decisions in accordance with the legal framework governing local councils. Other council employees also play a crucial role in delivering day-to-day services.

This small but dedicated team covers several important areas:

- **Communications and Events** are managed by the Deputy Clerk.
- **Grounds Maintenance** is carried out by the Parish Stewards.

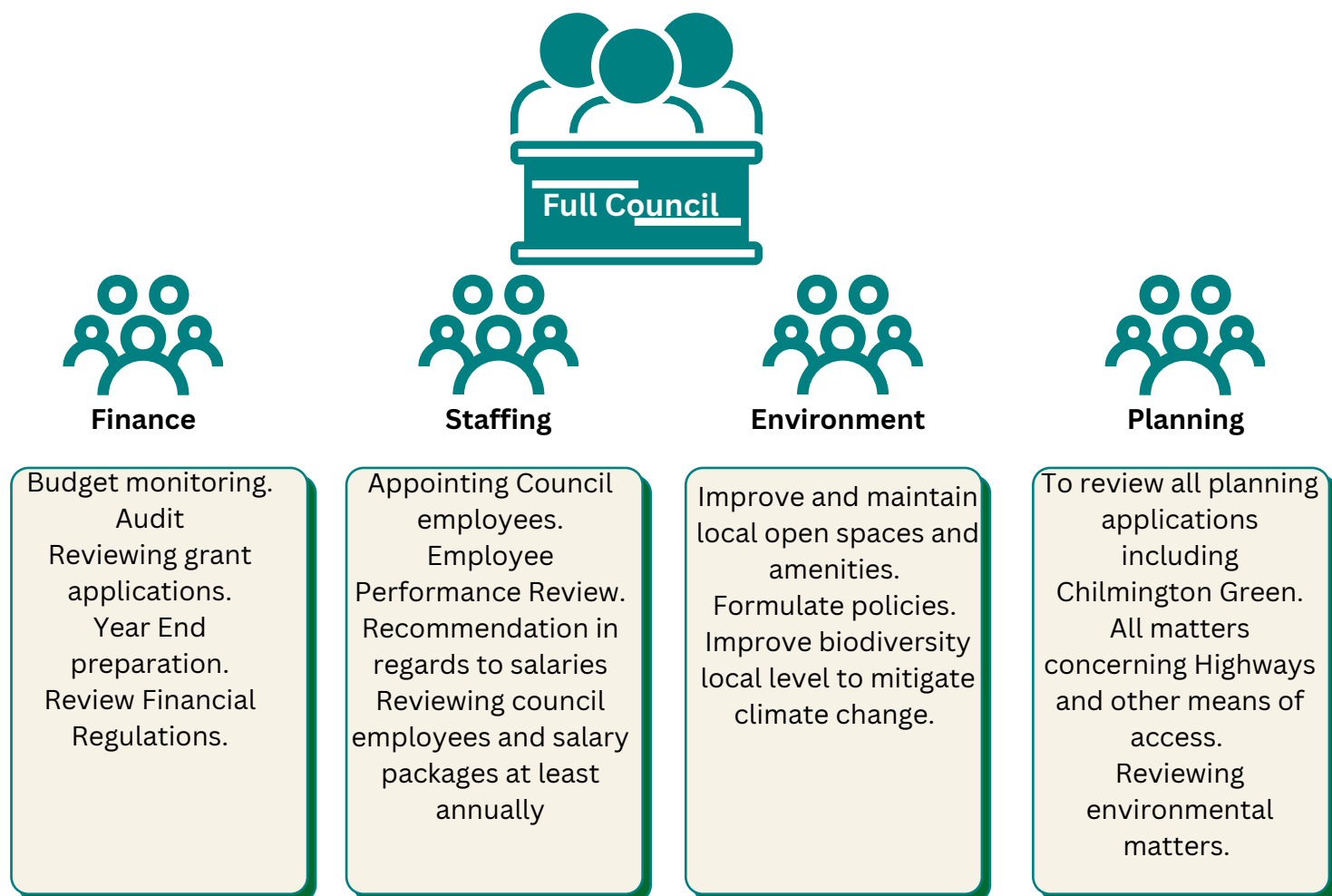
HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

Governance and Organisational Structure

The parish council operates as a corporate body, a legal entity established under the Local Government Act 1972. As such, it is bound by a range of statutory duties and responsibilities, including:

- Holding a minimum of three full council meetings per year, one of which must be the Annual Meeting of the Council.
- Appointing a Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) to oversee the council's financial management and ensure compliance with financial regulations.
- Adhering to the Members' Code of Conduct, which governs the behaviour and ethical standards expected of elected councillors in public life. The Nolan Principles set out the seven principles of public life.

Decisions are made collectively by the council at full council meetings. However, to support effective governance and informed decision-making, the council established sub-committees and working groups. These committees are delegated specific areas of responsibility and are tasked with conducting detailed research, engaging with stakeholders, and making recommendations to the full council.



COUNCIL FACILITIES & ASSETS

The council's open spaces are maintained by the Parish Stewards, who are supported by council investment in grounds maintenance equipment to ensure efficient and high-quality service delivery. In addition to general open space management, the council is directly responsible for the upkeep of two designated play areas within the parish.

To support responsible dog ownership and promote cleanliness, the council also maintains and replenishes dog 'poo bag' dispensers located throughout the parish.

The parish council also holds the lease for the Singleton Environment Centre. While the council retains legal responsibility for the premises, day-to-day management is delegated to Singleton Spaces, a registered charity operating under a formal agreement with the council. This partnership ensures the centre continues to serve as a valuable community hub for environmental education, sustainability initiatives, and local events.

Open Spaces

- Cuckoo Park
- Great Chart Play Park
- The Viewing Point
- Allotments at Hillcrest – Great Chart

Buildings/Other

- Singleton Environment Centre
- Noticeboards & benches
- Storage containers
- Dog Poo bag dispensers
- Planters/Scooter Pod and Cycle rack

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communication Strategy

The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that all residents have clear and consistent access to information about its services, decisions, and activities. To achieve this, the Council employs a broad range of communication channels tailored to reach the diverse needs of the community.

Key messages shared with residents include updates on Council meetings, decisions taken, ongoing and upcoming projects, community events, and other relevant local matters such as road closures and reporting procedures. The Council also fulfils its statutory duty to publish financial information, including the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which is made available on the Council's website and displayed on parish noticeboards following internal and external audits.

The Council's approach to communication is guided by two key policies:

- The Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy, which governs the Council's use of digital platforms, including its website and social media accounts.
- The Press and Media Policy outlines the standards for engaging with local media and publishing content in print.

These policies ensure that all communications are delivered in a professional, transparent, and accessible manner.

The Council currently uses the following channels to engage with residents:

- A bi-monthly parish magazine is delivered to all households
- Local newsletter segments
- Social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram)
- The parish website
- Public noticeboards
- Community events and free talks/seminars
- Signage across the parish
- Informal word-of-mouth networks

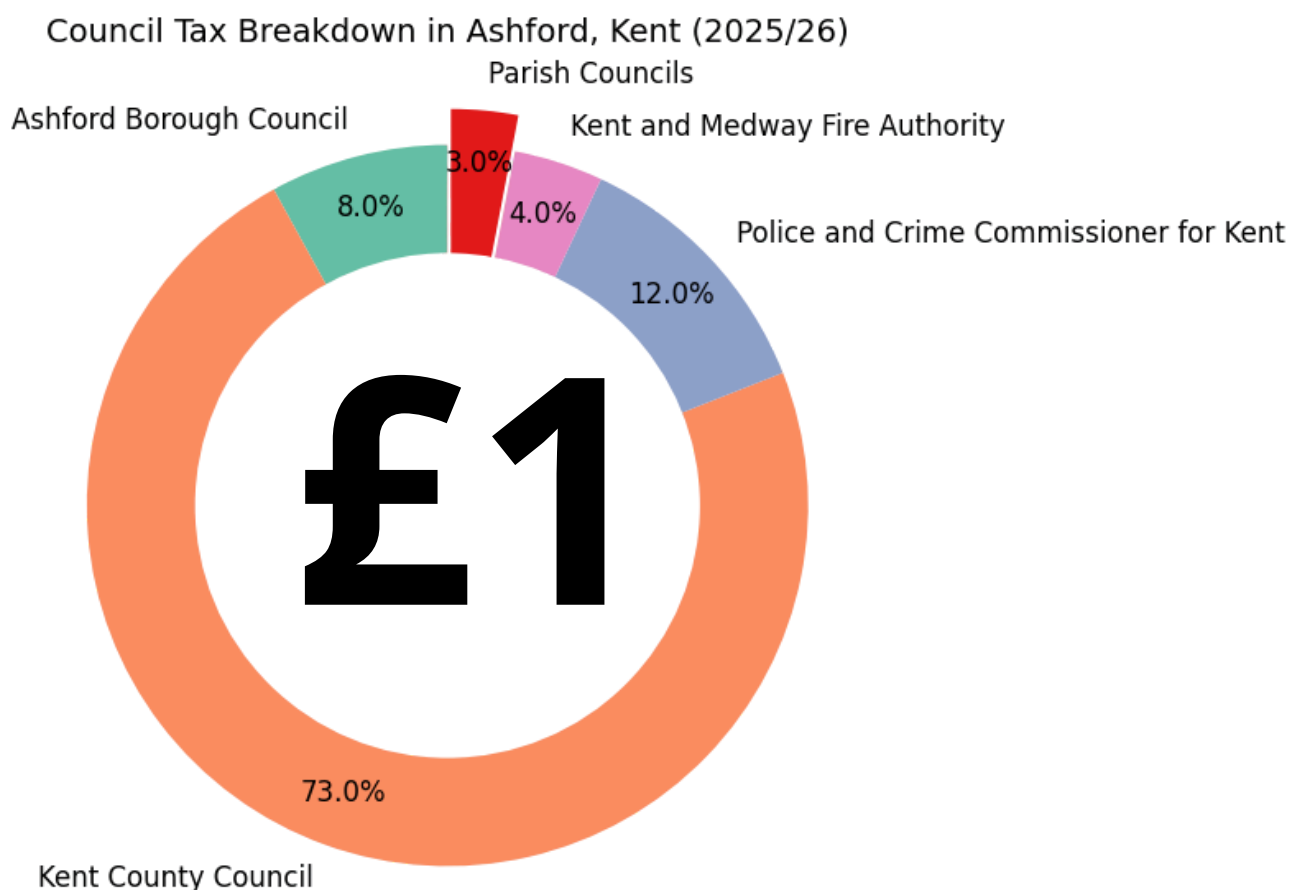
This multi-channel approach provides residents with multiple means to engage with the parish council, remain informed, involved, and empowered to participate in parish life.



FINANCIAL PLAN

The Parish Council's operations and services are primarily funded through the precept, which is collected as part of the local Council Tax. The Council maintains a continuous review of its financial position to ensure that all spending aligns with approved budget lines and complies with relevant financial regulations. This proactive approach allows the Council to identify areas where adjustments may be needed in future financial years.

As a local government body, the Parish Council does not operate for profit and does not incur losses in the commercial sense. However, it is responsible for delivering a range of essential services, each with associated ongoing costs, which are carefully managed to ensure value for money and community benefit.



Projected Finances: The Parish Council begins its financial forecasting mid-way through the year, once there is a clear view of project progress and budget performance. The forecast includes projected income, a breakdown of recurring expenses, and a summary of total expected expenditure for the upcoming financial year. This section outlines the Parish Council's recurring expenses, followed by a summary of total projected expenditure for the financial year.



HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT



	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
Income- Precept	£391,235	£421,860	£455,608	£492,057
Administration Including salaries, grants and other expenditures	£293,111	£316,559	£341,885	£369,235
Ground Maintenance Equipment and tools	£7,500	£8,100	£8748	£9448
General Maintenance	£42,000	£45,360	£48,989	£52,908
Projects and local amenities support	£48,000	£51,840	£55,987	£60,466

Please note: The total projected expenditure may exceed income for the year, as the Parish Council will be drawing on its financial reserves to support planned activities. At the time of writing this plan (September 2025), no formal decision has been made regarding the Local Government Reorganisation. Should the Council acquire additional local assets as a result, this will have a direct impact on its financial position. The financial forecast presented here is based solely on the assets currently owned and maintained by the Parish Council.

The above projection is based on an 8% increase across the board.



WHERE THE MONEY IS SPENT



Administration	Projects	Parish Stewards	Maintenance	Singleton Environment Centre
Staff Salary	Allotments	Vehicle Cost	Yellow Land	PFA
PAYE/NI, Pension	Mobile Speed limit sign	Vehicle Fuel	Play Park Mainenance	WWI War Memorial
Venue Hire	Parish Projects	Equipment	Play Park Equipment	
Training/ IT Infrastructure	Stronger Communities		Village Sign	
Insurance/ Bank Charges	Capital Purchase		Highway Matters	
Office Supplies/ Postage	Events		Village Sign Maintenance	
Parish Grants/ Website	Singleton And Great Chart Village Halls		Defibrillator	
Telephone and Braodband/ Photocopier	Raised flowerbed		Repairs/ Maintenance	
Audit Fees	Raised Flowerbed		Churchyard	

*The council annually reviews its expenditure, the information above is correct at the time of writing.