

# LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL



*Corporate Plan 2026-2031*



## Introduction

### Cllr Philip Evans MBE, Mayor of Lyme Regis

As another council year draws to a close, I want to tell you about what is going on at the town council.

When I drafted my contribution to the Corporate Plan last year, I identified our main challenges as land movement at Ware Cliff, fall-out from financial pressures on Dorset Council, member behaviour, the low regard many residents have for the council, and a general lack of understanding about what we do.

Reflecting on the last year, has anything changed? It has.

The immediate issue of land movement at Ware Cliff was addressed with the removal of an estimated 3,000 tonnes of earth. Is this a permanent solution? No, it is not, but it does provide further protection to the chalet park below. Will there be further cliff movement?

Yes, there will, and there is some evidence of this already. We are monitoring the situation closely.

Did the town council suffer from any fall-out from financial decisions made by Dorset council in 2025-26? Thankfully not, but the extent of Dorset Council's 2026-27 budget shortfall is concerning and something we will monitor closely.

Has member behaviour improved? This is and remains my top priority for this council and the answer is a definite yes. Since May last year, meetings have been cordial, and decision-making has been less fraught. Disagreements still exist, and some members remain more passionate than others but, we are getting along most of the time.

Is public perception about the council still negative? In some parts of the town, negativity remains and to be honest, whatever we do, some people will never change their opinion about the council.

But, over the last year I have received an increasing number of unsolicited positive comments about the council's achievements.

These include, the reintroduction of the town bus service, the building of a children's multi-use games area in Anning Road Playing Field, the Party in the Park, and LymeLiving.

In addition, the financial support given by the town council to local organisations and projects is really appreciated. These grants have benefitted 38 organisations and have helped to make possible the launch of a repair café, and the reintroduction of a post office. Beneficiaries from council grants are detailed elsewhere in this report.

The Corporate Plan goes on to further detail our achievements in 2025-26, identify our objectives for 2026-27 and to explain how we fund ourselves. As I said last year, what I want, more than anything, is for this council to be recognised for the good work it does.

*"These grants have benefitted 38 organisations and have helped to make possible the launch of a repair café, and the reintroduction of a post office."*

# Projects 2025-26

**1** Bursaries for young people of Lyme Regis

**2** Opening of the multi-use games area at Anning Road Playing Field

**3** Replacement of gardens' handrails

**4** Sporting Lyme festival

**5** Upgraded football pitch at Anning Road Playing Field

**6** Relaunching the Lyme in Bloom competition

**7** River Lym improvement works

**8** Repairs to seafront gardens' paths

**14** Reintroduction of the town bus service, Lyme Link

**13** Repair Cafe launched at the Boat Building Academy

**12** Full refurbishment of the cemetery lodge

**11** New council office premises

**10** Installation of CCTV covering Broad Street, seafront and gardens

**9** The launch of a local publication, LymeLiving magazine

# Last Year's Achievements

Despite the complexities of running a council which largely operates as a business, and the inevitable distraction of events and unforeseen issues, the town council has delivered several significant projects in 2025-26.

The most notable include the office move to St Michael's Business Centre, the re-introduction of the town bus service, the refurbishment of the cemetery lodge, the launch of a community-based magazine, Lyme Living, repairs to the footpaths in the Langmoor and Lister Gardens, the installation of a multi-use games area in Anning Road playing field, Party in the Park, VE and VJ Day events, and the financial support given to the Waffle House to reintroduce a post office.

Less visible but equally important projects include investments in the sculpture trail, the launch of an employee assistance programme, preparatory work for Sporting Lyme 2026, the response to Dorset Council's Local Plan which could mean the development of housing at Strawberry Fields, the installation of town-wide CCTV, and a clean bill of health from the external auditor.

The delivery of projects tends to dominate discussions, and not enough recognition is given to the day-to-day management of the council.

So, to put the record straight, council meetings take place most weeks and up to 180 decisions are actioned by staff each year, staff are trained and developed, external relations are managed, the office is open all day Monday to Friday, the council performs to budget, suppliers get paid on time, health and safety events are managed, recruitment takes place on a timely basis, people issues are dealt with, press enquiries are responded to, briefings get issued to members, businesses and community groups, events are managed, repairs to buildings are undertaken, enforcement is effective, the grass gets cut and the cemetery is a credit to the council. All of this doesn't happen by accident.

One last point, and one the town has always been mindful of, is that tensions in the council chamber, that have plagued the council for years, have eased; business is conducted cordially and decision-making is less fraught. Long may this continue!



*"The delivery of projects tends to dominate discussions, and not enough recognition is given to the day-to-day management of the council."*



## What Are We Doing in 2026-27?

The council's objectives and projects are centred around its key business activities which are essential to the proper running of the organisation and include major repairs to its assets and support for the community.

In 2026-27, the council has agreed a projects' budget of £154,000.

The town council believes it should use its surplus finances to maintain its assets and support its local community and economy; the council invests significant resources in its cemetery, playing fields, seafront, and gardens to create a highly presentable town for residents and visitors. It also subsidises the summer park and ride service.

Starting in April 2026, the town council aims to link its CCTV cameras to Dorset Council's control centre in Dorchester, achieve Community Safety Accreditation for the council's enforcement officers (this extends their powers to deal with low-level policing issues), secure the transfer of Dorset Council toilets to the town council and establish a local cleaning service, between 1 May and 30 September trial a weekend shuttle bus between Bridport and Lyme Regis, install new webcams at the Jubilee Pavilion and The Cobb, deliver a sporting festival from May to September, run Lyme in Bloom, undertake a biodiversity audit, and undertake repairs to the steps and railings at Bell Cliff, a section of the Church wall, and the passageway and windows at the Guildhall.

*"The town council believes it should use its surplus finances to maintain its assets and support its local community and economy."*





## Money Matters

Lyme Regis Town Council operates a unique business model; for the year ending 31 March 2025, 94% of the council's income came from commercial trading activities.

Unlike most councils, only a relatively small amount is raised through the precept; the precept is the amount residents pay for the services delivered directly by town or parish councils.

The council's business model has its origins in the local government reorganisation of 1974; the reorganisation saw the abolition of Lyme Regis Borough Council and the absorption of most of its functions into a newly created West Dorset District Council. At the time, the council won the argument that Lyme Regis should keep some income-generating assets, particularly car parks, to offset the high cost of maintaining a seaside town.

This has meant that, compared to other councils, Lyme Regis Town Council has had a high degree of financial independence. Moreover, successive town councils have worked hard to ensure the cost of delivering services aren't onerously borne by its residents, who share this beautiful town with visitors.

To put this into context, Lyme Regis Town Council's precept has only been increased twice in the past 15 years and currently stands at £70 for a band D property. This compares favourably with local town councils.

If you check your council tax bill for 2026-27, you'll notice the Lyme Regis precept has reduced; this is mainly because there has been an increase in the number of properties in the town, while the total charge to residents for services provided by the town council has remained the same as the previous year.

*"Lyme Regis Town Council operates a unique business model; for the year ending 31 March 2025, 94% of the council's income came from commercial trading activities."*

# Budget Report 2025-26

The prudent assumptions that inform the council's budget-setting generally mean financial performance exceeds budget, i.e., the surplus at the end of a financial year is greater than we estimated when we put the budget together.

On 1 April 2025, the council started the financial year with a reserve of £1,665,046; this included £553,705 accrued for projects not completed in 2023-25, leaving a net reserve of £1.111 million. The council set its reserve at £1 million for 2025-26.

Officers forecast a reserve of £126,642 at 31 March 2025.

In addition, after routine operating expenditure, e.g., paying staff, maintaining the gardens and cemetery, administering the council, the council budgeted for an annual surplus of £168,485 in 2025-26.

In total, the council had £295,127 available for projects in 2025-26. It was decided that the council would install two new beach huts on Marine Parade that would be available for purchase. These were anticipated to generate approximately £120,000 in further income. The additional income would be used for the implementation of further projects in 2025-26, bringing the total available to £415,127.

The projects are principally aimed at maintaining the council's assets and supporting the community. Details of the council's 2025-26 projects are detailed on the previous page of the Corporate Plan.

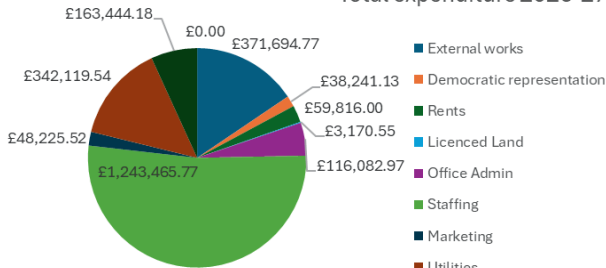
During the course of 2025-26, some areas of income have exceeded budget, e.g., car parking income and the council received unbudgeted income from chalet and beach hut sales.

The estimated surplus increases the council's budget reserve from £1 million at 31 March 2026 to £1,185,285. The probability is the council's financial position will improve during the last three months of the financial year.

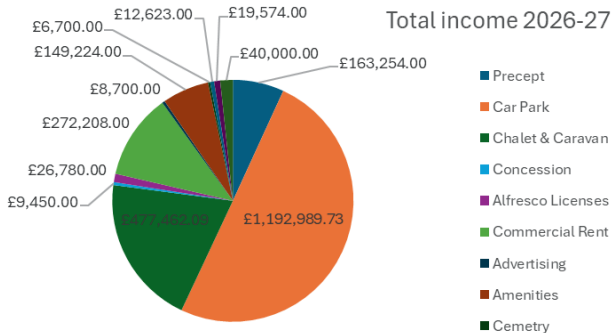


*"Lyme Regis Town Council has only increased the precept twice in 13 years."*

Total expenditure 2026-27



Total income 2026-27



## Five-year Plan

The council's five-year financial plan shows modest in-year deficits; however, these estimates are based on deliberately prudent assumptions to ensure the council can respond effectively to unexpected costs or economic changes. The assumptions that inform these forecasts do not include adjustments for inflation and other increases. This approach helps maintain long-term financial stability.

2026-27: -£7.3k, 2027-28: -£44.9k, 2028-29: -£57.5k,  
2029-30: -£61.5k, 2030-31: -£65.8k

The council will shortly embark on a consultation exercise to obtain the electorate's views on its investment priorities for 2027 and beyond.

## Budget Report 2026-27

The council is reasonably confident it can continue to reduce its total reserve to £1 million; a reserve of £1 million represents over 40% of the council's annual income.

This allows the release of the excess reserve, i.e., £185,285, for projects in 2026-27.

After routine operational and staffing expenditure, the council has a 2026-27 budget deficit of £7,296.

The additional 2025-26 year-end surplus minus the 2026-27 budget deficit allows the council to release £154,000 to invest in its assets and the community in 2026-27.

## The Precept

The precept, which is the charge Lyme Regis residents pay for services delivered by the town council, has remained the same at £163,254. Lyme Regis Town Council has only increased the precept twice in 13 years.

To place this increase in context, the amount payable for a Band D council tax property has decreased from £68.82 to £66.10 due to the tax base increasing from 2,382.30 to 2,469.90.

## Treasury Management

The council's historic approach to treasury management is for low-risk investments, only. This means the council's reserve is tucked away in reputable high street banks.

Increases in the Bank of England's base rate over the last two years means treasury management is now a more important part of the council's overall financial management.

The majority of the council's reserve now attracts an interest rate in excess of 3%.

# Projects 2026-27

**1** Transfer of Dorset Council toilets to the town council and the establishment of a cleaning service

**2** Achieving Community Safety Accreditation status for the council's enforcement officers

**3** The trialling of a weekend shuttle bus between Bridport and Lyme Regis, from 1 May to 30 September

**4** New webcams for the Jubilee Pavilion and The Cobb

**5** Sporting Lyme - 29 participants - May to September

**6** Lyme in Bloom

**7** A biodiversity audit

**8** Repairing the steps at Bell Cliff

**9** Repairs to the Guildhall passage and windows

**10** Repairs to the churchyard wall at St Michael's Parish Church

**11** Linking the town's CCTV cameras to Dorset Council's control centre