# Budget Report 2025/26

RYDE

TOWN COUNCIL

**21st JANUARY 2024**

**Ryde Town Council**
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## Forward

### From Finance Committee Chairman – Councillor Phil Jordan.

Once again, I am delighted to be to thanking the Responsible Financial Officer and the staff of Ryde Town Council for their excellent work enabling us to bring forward this legal and balanced budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year. Ryde Town Council's financial security is assured, the budget supports corporate plan, and it balances the Capital and Revenue expenditure with established income.

The detailed budget report is included as Appendix A.

The community of Ryde remains right at the heart of the budget allowing the Council to provide valuable support across a range of key priorities:

- Cultural organisations
- Managing and protecting our heritage
- Supporting our business community to thrive
- Providing vital and necessary services across the town
- Continuing the positive growth already being achieved by careful and prudent management

The 2025-26 budget continues to support the Council's Corporate and Place Plan and ensures that investment and services are delivered appropriately meeting the needs and wishes of the community of Ryde.

The news that the Town Board will go ahead is incredibly welcome and will ensure that there is further, significant investment into Ryde over the next ten years. However, regardless of this investment, it is vital to balance the budget against a backdrop of increased revenue costs as well as the additional services that the Isle of Wight Council is being forced to reduce.

The Financial Strategy Group is continuing to work diligently to bring the Council's general reserves in line with the approved independent financial guidance whilst considering the associated CPI inflation pressures (forecast to be 2.6% in 2025)

By focussing on the needs of the town and the community within, Ryde Town Council remains a remarkably successful Town Council. It has achieved growth and momentum whilst building confidence and sustainability through a determined mix of aspiration and strong financial management.

However, it is crucial not to rest on laurels and Ryde Town Council always seeks to maintain achievements and strives to do more for the people who live in, work in and visit Ryde. This budget is prudent, appropriate and allows Ryde Town Council to continue to significantly improve Ryde, for the people of Ryde, in an ever-changing and difficult economic environment.

There are two budgets being presented, with five options for the precept requirement contained in Appendix A, demonstrating different levels of reserves at the end of the 2025-26 financial year. The Ryde Town Council Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer's recommendation is to adopt budget option 2, with a precept of £1,552,376.75 which provides for General Reserves of £315,481.24 as at the 31st March 2025 and sets a Band C Council Tax of £160.94 for the year, an increase of 14p per month per household.

## A Charter for Ryde

Ryde Town Council is committed to supporting and enhancing the health, well-being and economy of Ryde for the benefit of residents, local businesses and visitors, within a culture that makes best use of our heritage and the beauty of Ryde and conforms to the Biosphere Principles.

In order to achieve this, we will, to the extent that our powers and functions permit, seek to:

1. **Maintain and improve the availability and quality of public services for our residents, including:**
   - physical infrastructure;
   - sustainable transport;
   - affordable housing;
   - social services.
2. **Protect, enhance, support and celebrate our rich environment, including:**
   - our natural environment;
   - our green spaces;
   - our architectural heritage;
   - our cultural and artistic strengths.
3. **Promote and support the local economy, including the development and diversification of appropriate and sustainable:**
   - employment opportunities;
   - retail and industrial development;
   - tourism activity.
4. **Protect and promote the interests of all residents, including groups with specific needs such as :**
   - children and young people;
   - the elderly;
   - those with disabilities;
   - those on low incomes.
5. **Improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of governance in the town by:**
   - constantly monitoring and reviewing our own policies and procedures;
   - promoting and supporting local community organisations;
   - working in partnership with other organisations, including public sector bodies, the business sector and community groups.

## Purpose

To provide background information to the Committee to assist Members in considering the base budget and precept for the 2025-2026 financial year. The Full Council will be required to set a legal budget and precept at its meeting on 4th February, unless the Isle of Wight Council set a different timetable.

The Town Council is well placed to support the local community going forward by promoting the town as a visitor destination and supporting local businesses in growing footfall into the town via a series of events throughout the year.

Whilst formulating these budget options for members' consideration, we have kept focus on the needs of the Town Council to deliver the objectives stated in the Corporate Plan whilst also being mindful of the current cost of living crisis. The autumn budget set by central government has put an unprecedented pressure on the 2025/26 budget with the increase to the employer national insurance not only increasing the Council's staffing costs in the region of £28,000 but has led to increased supplier and contractor prices.

## Council Background

The current precept on the local taxpayer is £1,494,825 which represents a Band C Council Tax of £159.26 per annum.

In September 2020 the Council adopted a Corporate Plan for the years 2020-2025.The budget options as presented in this report reflect the key objectives agreed in the Corporate Plan.

## Budget Setting Process

Setting the budget for 2025/26 has been a challenging process due to the before mentioned increases in costs. All departments, contracts and services have been reviewed in great depth to ensure that the council can continue to run in a secure financial position.
With that in mind, there are two budget papers being presented to committee for consideration, a summary of which is below:

- Option 1 demonstrates a budget based on last years' service levels, with known increases applied throughout.

- Option 2 shows moderate reductions in services provided and budgets allocated to departments, with the key areas being:
    - **Ryde Help Centre** – funding of this IWC service has been reduced to one day per week vs three days, saving RTC £14,465.60. The service is still accessible online and via the phone, and the RTC staff running Ryde Information Support Service will be able to aid where needed.
    - **Grants** – value limited to a maximum of £2,000 for approved applicants, except for Ryde Carnival who have a two-year agreement in place for £4,000. Saving of £14,000
    - **Decorative Lighting** – Trees and tree lighting only – saving £24,000

- **Isle of Wight Council (IWC) services contributions**:
  - **Park Services** – this option proposes to reduce the contribution to mowing and hedge cutting in the non-principal parks within the town. This will provide a saving of £4,259.33
  - **Playground Equipment** – this is a discretionary contribution to IWC for the replacement of any playground equipment in Ryde. It has been agreed to withdraw this funding and if there is any equipment that needs to be replaced within 25/26 then a discussion will be had between RTC & IWC.
  - **Beach Cleaning** – reduction in the tractor cleaning from alternative days between May-September, to twice a week. Saving of £9,311

These options take into account the required levels of service, contracts awarded, the objectives in the Corporate and Place Plans, previously approved decisions and the current economic and inflationary pressures we are facing.

The Council undertook Public Budget Consultation in December 2024. Participants were asked to consider the Council's optional services and activities, and the consultation asked whether they would be happy to pay an increased precept for services. The results are to be presented to the Finance Committee alongside this report at their meeting on the 21st January 2025

a. The results of the consultation can be viewed here.

## Reserves - Current

The current forecast levels of reserves are detailed below. These figures contain restricted reserves, for example, the funding from the former Ryde Youth Service, monies not spent in the current financial year that are committed to future years' projects and provision for election costs, plus the 'General Reserve' provision. The current year's budget provided for General Reserves of £250,353 as at the 31st March 2024 and the Council continues to aspire to setting General Reserves of 3 months' running costs within the next 5 years, which is approximately £340,000.

| Earmarked | 2024/25 |
|---|---|
| Capital Expenditure (St Thomas' Church) | £46,504 |
| Youth Service | £11,152 |
| HSHAZ | £80,786 |
| Staff Costs | £10,000 |
| Beach Replenishment | £50,000 |
| Network Ryde | £6,500 |
| Facilities Maintenance | £30,000 |
| Election | £7,000 |
| Phonebox | £600 |
| Appley Steps | £500 |
| NWR Allotment | £921 |
| Marina Loan | £4,448 |
| Appley Toilets Loan | £7,505 |
| Lifeguard Station Loan | £10,269 |
| Mayor's Charity | £314 |
| Public Realm & Planning | £15,000 |
| Community Development | £9,676 |
| Art Trail Grant | £6,300 |
| Social Action Project Grant | £5,525 |
| Greening Ryde | £5,000 |
| Beach Accessibility | £15,705 |
| **Total** | **£323,705** |

| Combined | 2024/25 |
|---|---|
| General Reserves | £282,915 |
| Earmarked Reserves | £323,705 |
| **Total Reserves** | **£606,620** |

## Reserves - Proposed 2025/26

### Earmarked

The amounts listed below are the agreed expenditure that has not been incurred in the current financial year, balances of grant awards not yet completed, as well as known expenditure in the future that a provision needs to be built for:

| Earmarked | 2025/26 |
|---|---|
| Capital Expenditure (St Thomas' Church) | £9,232 |
| Youth Service | £10,472 |
| HSHAZ | £21,579 |
| Staff Costs* | £15,000 |
| Beach Replenishment | £33,147 |
| Network Ryde | £543 |
| Facilities Maintenance** | £30,000 |
| Election | £10,000 |
| Phonebox | £700 |
| Appley Steps | £700 |
| Appley Toilets Loan | £7,505 |
| NR Allotments | £443 |
| Public Realm & Planning*** | £11,750 |
| Fixed Assets Replacement | £6,000 |
| Community Development | £7,966 |
| YIF Grant | £19,789 |
| Social Action Project | £3,500 |
| NatWest Capital Works | £10,000 |
| Greening Ryde | £10,000 |
| Vectis Hall | £7,500 |
| Flagpole | £400 |
| Beach Accessibility | £6,739 |
| NatWest Purchase Loan | £22,701 |
| Flood Prevention Grant | £10,355 |
| **Total** | **£256,021** |

*** Provision for maternity/sick pay**
**** Due to the aging of our current facilities, there is a requirement to build a maintenance fund for additional repairs.**
***** £10,000 of this fund is allocated to public realm works on Ryde Esplanade.**

## General Reserves

Current 2024/25 General Reserves are budgeted at £282,915 as of 31st March 2024. The Council continues with its aspiration to build the General reserves levels in line with 3 months running costs over the next 5 years, which is approximately £340,000, as advised by the internal auditor.

## Managing Risk

The Town Council currently hold PWLB loans to the value of £1,084,935.50 and the repayment periods will not be completed until 2054. If the Council decide to move forward to take further loans, then it is likely that this will result in an increase in the Precept. Careful consideration will be required to ensure that the local community will accept such an increase, and it is recommended that surveys with residents should be taken.

Having taken account of the level of assets the Council owns and the swiftly increasing running costs, it is recommended that the level of reserves held by the Council is a minimum of £290,000 for the year 2025/26.

## 2024/25 Part Year Review and Forward Planning

## Community Development

The Community Development work done by the team of officers has grown to be a pivotal and staple provision for the community, which continually offers support for residents through various channels.

### Funding

The Community Development Officer has been successful with being granted funded £23,000 so far in the 2024/25 year for services and projects within the town. Details of these can be found below.

### Cookery Lessons

Since April 2024, RTC have provided free 6-week cooking sessions for the community, grant funded by Southern Western Railway Customer Communities Improvement Fund and Sovereign Network Group. To date we have provided sessions at all Ryde primary schools (for families), Network Ryde Youth Service (both home educated and high school students), The Foyer, Men Only, Women's Refuge and Fellowship House. These have been very well received.

### Ryde Information and Support Service

From November a new drop-in service at Ryde library has been offering support with tasks such as applying for benefits and empowering people to access online forms. Two part-time advisors support the service and it is open weekly on Monday, Tuesday and Friday and on the 1st Wednesday evening and Saturday morning of each month. This pilot scheme is initially funded for 6 months by RTC and IWC. External funding is being sought to continue to provide the service for another 6 months. To date (19th December) the team have supported 108 people.

### School Uniform Swap Shop

During the summer school holiday, a school uniform swap shop was held over a weekend and then every Friday for the rest of the holidays. Local voluntary group, The Messy Mums, who run a baby clothes and equipment bank also joined the sessions. The event was held at the former NatWest building and received excellent feedback from the community. These events will be held annually.

### Ryde Community Guide

The second Ryde Guide was completed and distributed by a third-party organisation to households between October and December 2024, which consisted of 12,700 copies. This second guide was updated with more community groups having been listed and the number of paid advertisements increased. All income received from the paid advertising space was used to offset the cost of producing the guide, with the final cost being just 20p per copy.

**Ryde Timebank**
Ryde Timebank was launched at the Town Meeting at the end of May 2024. Timebanking is a way of spending one hour of time helping someone out and earning one-time credit in return. More information on Ryde Timebank can be found here. To date, there are 50 members who have completed 97 exchanges. These included teaching young people how to crochet, cleaning the Lind Street armed forces memorial, designing a logo and working in the community garden.

**Other Projects:**

- Riboleau Community Garden – working alongside Aspire and Ryde School Students to continue to run a community garden for all.
- Community Forum – organising monthly meetings with local community groups and services


## Planning Matters

In June 2024, the planning team has been working in partnership with a dedicated Planning Enforcement Officer from the IWC to tackle buildings in the town that are in breach of legislation. In just 7 months there is a noticeable change in the town, with several buildings being refurbished throughout the high street and surrounding areas. There are also at least 14 further live cases in the town.

There have been two public realm projects delivered so far this year which was the completion of the restoration of the “Welcome to Ryde” signs and artwork being installed via banners on the scaffolding at Vectis Hall. Currently there are 3 active public realm requests which include the addition of 2 new benches in Ryde and improvements to the seaside shelters.

## Ryde Marina

The renovation of Ryde Marina has seen further improvements within 2024 where several key projects have been completed by both in-house staff and external contractors, improving the overall look, functionality and feel of the Marina.

Projects completed include the installation of all electric hook-up points which directly links up with the provision of a coded access gate to the pontoons, increasing the security of vessels.

It was a relatively quiet summer (due to elements outside of our control) however, the visitor feedback was very positive of the staff, they also commented that the works have made the Marina a more attractive place to visit.

During 2024/25 the Marina continues to face a build-up of sand in entrance, which is having an impact on reputation and revenue. The Council have had the sand cleared during the year, with another clearance planned for February 2025. A large-scale plan with IWC, EA and RTC should be considered to manage the sand levels on the marina beach to relieve the issues not only in the marina entrance but also the esplanade as a whole. The sand issue is a larger project for the whole of Ryde seafront, rather than just the Marina and is causing issues for homeowners, road users and businesses.


## Former NatWest Bank Purchase

In April 2024, RTC purchased the former NatWest Bank building, now known as 11 St Thomas’ Square. The building has undergone minor refurbishment to make it a temporary community space, in which there have been several events held over the year and the building is now housing all RTC public meetings.

Works with an appointed architect are underway for the main restoration works that are required to make the building a multi-purpose space for RTC offices and the community. The council is mindful of their current borrowing obligations and therefore savings have been made within budget option 2 that allows the council to allocate funds for capital works required for the renovation.

## Network Ryde

Network Ryde remain incredibly busy during 2024/2025, which has included moving into their new centre in July 2024. Below are some key highlights

From April 24 – January 25, they have offered:

- Total number of sessions offered at Network Ryde – 321
- Total number of sessions offered at Network Ryde's allotment – 60
- Number of young people aged 11-18 registered with Network Ryde - 727 with an average of approximately 100 individual young people a month attending at least one session

Being in the new centre has allowed the team to offer a much wider range of sessions to young people that include baking, disco nights, movie nights and they have even hosted their first Murder Mystery event. Network Ryde have also taken part in several additional projects with external funders/organisations such as HAF (Holiday Activities & Food Programme) Summer project, school holiday activities including a trip to Kings Theatre in Southsea, Social Action Project and Merry & Bright

### Duke of Edinburgh's Award

2024/25 saw 16 young people complete their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which is a fantastic achievement, with 3 more due to complete shortly. To accomplish this, it has meant that the young people, supported by the Network Ryde team, had to complete 5 expeditions between April and October, some in inclement weather conditions. We have had 4 young people complete their Gold residentials and expeditions and they are due to complete by April 2025

### Funding

Network Ryde have been successful with funding applications and have been awarded funding of £37,980 (£20,0084 via crowdfunding) for additional sessions and activities such as Short Breaks, HAF, Social Action and the kit out of the new building.

### Safeguarding

There have been 98 recorded safeguarding incidents in the 12-month period January 2024-January 2025, and these have been shared with the relevant agencies. The issues covered range from self-harm, antisocial behaviour, neglect, substance misuse and bullying.



## Services

The Town Council is already contractually committed to delivering the following services until 2026 and the budget lines for these have been carried forward into Appendix A.

- Beach Cleaning £25,738
- Co-op Square Planting - £2,200
- Beach Safety and First Aid £23,500

The officers are continually evaluating the way in which we provide the planting and watering contract within the town, due to financial restraints, the number of flower displays will be slightly reduced in 2025/26.

### Beach Safety

The Beach Safety and First Aid contract was awarded in December 2022 as a two-year contract between 01/05/2023-01/10/2025 to the team at Waterside Community Trust. This contract now covers additional patrols at the Marina beach to support the beachfront activities Ryde Town Council offer.

### Public Conveniences

Our in-house facilities operatives continue to provide a high level of cleaning within the public conveniences and visitor feedback has been extremely positive. Unfortunately, we are still faced with vandalism in both the seafront toilets which adds pressure to both the workforce and the Council's budget. During 2024/25, the facilities at St John's Road remain closed with only the accessible toilet being available to all members of the public. Ryde Interchange toilets are now open and managed by RTC. Overall, they have been a welcome addition to the town, however there is repeat issues with drainage that is being investigated by officers.

In addition to the above, the Town Council is committed to the following budgets in respect of Council owned/managed assets and property and the budget lines for these have been included in the budgets outlined, with various options being made available.

- Festive Lighting
- Skatepark
- Allotments
- Network Ryde
- Eastern Gardens
- St Thomas' Rest Gardens
- Additional Summer Bin Collections

The Town Council have a dedicated Allotments Officer and Maintenance Officer, both of which have allowed the Council to recognise savings in expensive external contractor costs. The Clerk has recently been in discussions with other local parish councils to put into place a service level agreement for the hire of RTC's facilities team in the near future.

## Beach Accessibility Project

2024 saw the first year of the Council's beach accessibility project which offered residents and visitors the opportunity to use the following equipment, free of charge:

- Boardwalk on Marina beach – providing easy access to the beach for those with restricted mobility.
- Mobi-Chair (floating water chair)
- Hippocampe Beach wheelchair
- Wheeleez beach rollator
- Changing places unit – equipped with hoist and changing table

To fund the project, RTC held a corporate gala event, a Crowdfunding Campaign and secured £10,000 match funding from Sports England, raising a total of £37,137.

The project was extremely successful, both from the construction phase where RTC worked with local voluntary group NaShers to build the boardwalk, and the delivery aspect. Some feedback received included:

"Finally we've got a more accessible beach here now. No more struggling. Thank you so much Ryde Town Council for listening to the residents needs. Hopefully this can be rolled out onto the other popular beaches on the Island too"

"Amazing!! All councils should be following this town's example. In this day and age, there should be no barriers for disabled people. 👏👏"

RTC are looking to extend the boardwalk in 2025/26.


## Events & Marketing

Tourism is an incredibly important part of Ryde's economic health and has the dual benefit of providing free entertainment for residents and an important influx of customers to local businesses. Therefore, events in Ryde continue to be seen as a key way of promoting the town as the numbers of visitors they bring are vital to the town's economic stability.

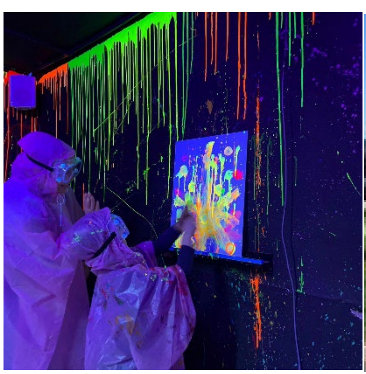
In 2025/26 it is important to continue to build on the reputation that Ryde is creating for itself, as a town that works alongside a range of progressive, visionary partners to host high quality events of all shapes and sizes across a number of exciting locations – including our wonderful beaches and our vibrant town centre.

Positive promotion of the town to ensure that visitors and residents continue to see the thriving elements of Ryde will be a focus for 2025/26.

Ryde Town Council is very aware of the responsibility for excellence in communication and the brand-new website that has been launched is going to be a crucial, central part in this. In conjunction with our press releases, social media posts and physical noticeboards RTC will ensure that the community of Ryde is the best-informed town on the Island.

Planned Events:

- Summer Events (street entertainment, buskers etc)
- Merry & Bright
- IW Pride
- Jack Up the Summer
- Mardi Gras
- Party on The Green
- Deadpool & Friends Family Fun Day
- SPLAT paint sessions
- Ryde Carnival



## Income and Growth

The Corporate Plan adopted in September 2020 confirmed the intention to move into commercial operations with the view of income generation.

This plan is still in place and the council continue to explore new revenue streams alongside applying for grant funding income that will allow the Council to invest in new commercial services to create additional income in the future.

## Officer Recommendation

Taking the above into account, the RFO and Clerk recommend the adoption of budget paper two and precept Option 4 which equates to the following:

| **Detail** | **Value** |
|---|---|
| Precept | £1,552,376.75 |
| Band C Rate | £160.94 |
| Monthly increase to taxpayer | 14p |