

Kingsley Parish Council

Financial Plan 2026-27

Approved: 17.2.26

Kingsley Parish Council

Kingsley Parish Council
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There are 8,896 precepting parish councils in England

The largest majority of precepting local councils (2,450) raise a precept of between £25,000-£124,999.

Total cumulative tax levied by parish and town councils is £856M - a year-on-year increase of £75M (9.68%)

Band D year-on-year precept increases in England of up to £271.20

10,236 parish and town councils in England

Largest Band D precept raised by a local council: £557.10

Average Band D parish precept in England is £95.32 - a year-on-year increase of 9.1% (excluding zero precepts)

PARISH + TOWN COUNCIL SECTOR SNAPSHOT 2025-2026

County with largest average Band D year-on-year precept increase in England was Bedfordshire with an increase of +26.53%. Second largest county increase was Yorkshire with +14.16%

Year-on-Year precept increases in England of up to 2,728%

The council with largest precept increase (Weston Super Mare) raised its precept from £3,135,840 to £4,450,668 (+£1,314,828)

Some parishes have a negative (-£) precept, which is distributed back to residents in the form of a reduction in their council tax bill. Examples of this include Beesby with Sleazy Parish Council (East Lindsay) where the district council collects rental income from parish land on behalf of the parish.

Largest precept raised by a local council: £6,571,886

Executive Summary

Kingsley Parish Council is required to set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year. This has been achieved through careful financial planning and a modest adjustment to the Council's precept, equating to an additional £0.06 per month for an average Band D household.

Background

The Council prepares an annual budget to ensure the effective delivery of services to the community. Funding is generated through a range of sources, including the parish precept, cemetery fees, grants, and other income streams such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Council also maintains an investment strategy designed to secure sustainable long-term returns.

In accordance with financial regulations, the Council reviews and determines appropriate levels of reserves each year, ensuring that adequate resources are available to manage future contingencies. The financial year commences on 1 April.

The precept represents the element of Council Tax collected by Cheshire West and Chester Council specifically for Kingsley Parish. It is ring-fenced for the exclusive benefit of residents within the parish boundary and enables the Council to deliver its statutory duties and local priorities.

The precept level set by the Council ensures it can continue to provide core services at an acceptable standard, meet legal and asset maintenance obligations, and support agreed service enhancements. This approach reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility, value for money, and the sustainable management of public funds.

Legal Obligations

The Council must set a balanced budget and comply with all statutory requirements pertaining to the setting of its budgets as set out in the Local Government Act 2003, Part 2, Section 25 and 26, which holds under clause 25 (1) that the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) must report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

To satisfy the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, Councillors must have due regard to this report when making decisions on the budget and precept. They must also approve a precept which:

- meets the Council's objectives and service level responsibilities.
- maintains an appropriate level of reserves.
- provides stability in the event of any unforeseeable demands.

Introduction

Over recent years, the Council has taken deliberate steps to establish a realistic and sustainable budget. This means Kingsley Parish Council is now better placed to respond to issues as they arise and to manage unforeseen circumstances - such as vandalism and essential repair works - without undermining the delivery of other services.

Historically, annual increases in the precept were kept very low. Between 2009 and 2020, the precept rose by an average of £0.83 per year, which delivered short-term savings for taxpayers but effectively resulted in real-terms reductions as these modest increases did not keep pace with inflation. At the same time, the principal authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC), has experienced funding reductions of almost £400 million since 2010, placing additional pressure on the wider system of local service delivery¹.

In response to this challenging context, Kingsley Parish Council has adopted a more proactive role, seeking to mitigate the risk of a decline in local standards by undertaking additional public realm maintenance, including work on key public rights of way within the village. Looking ahead, several larger projects may require parish funding in the next financial year, including:

- Significant repair works to the Kingsley Cemetery retaining wall on Hollow Lane (estimated cost £25,000–£30,000).
- Replacement of playground equipment (estimated cost £10,000–£15,000).
- Highways signage improvements (estimated cost £5,000–£10,000).

The Council also expects further proposals to emerge from residents and will therefore be circulating a parish survey to identify the key concerns and priorities that the community would like the Council to focus on in the coming years.

An illustration of Kingsley's precept requests over the past two decades is set out below.

Year	Precept	Tax Base	Precept per Band D Properties	Year-On-Year change per Band D Properties (£)	Year-On-Year change per Band D Properties (%)
2025/26	£80,375	938.9	£85.61	£3.23	3.92%
2024/25	£77,000	934.7	£82.38	£11.30	15.90%
2023/24	£66,641	937.5	£71.08	£22.47	46.23%
2022/23	£44,752	920.70	£48.61	£16.13	49.67%
2021/22	£29,400	905.2	£32.48	£0.93	2.95%
2020/21	£28,750	911.3	£31.55	£0.11	0.35%
2019/20	£28,500	906.4	£31.44	£4.89	18.42%
2018/19	£23,765	895	£26.55	£0.04	0.2%
2017/18	£23,598	890	£26.51	-£0.03	-0.11%

¹ <https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/the-economy-forecast/inflation/>

Year	Precept	Tax Base	Precept per Band D Properties	Year-On-Year change per Band D Properties (£)	Year-On-Year change per Band D Properties (%)
2016/17	£23,431	883	£26.54	£2.2	9%
2015/16	£21,398	879	£24.34	£0.39	1.63%
2014/15	£22,082	922	£23.95	£0.19	0.8%
2013/14	£22,002	926	£23.76	£0	0%
2012/13	£22,738	957	£23.76	£1.13	5%
2011/12	£21,612	955	£22.63	£0.07	0.31%
2010/11	£21,612	958	£22.56	£0.19	0.85%
2009/10	£21,609	966	£22.37		

The tax base shown above represents the number of Band D equivalent properties in the parish. This figure, derived from data supplied by the Valuation Officer, is adjusted to reflect discounts, exemptions, successful valuation appeals, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, non-collection assumptions and expected housing growth. For consistency, properties in other council tax bands are converted to their Band D equivalent.

Unlike some parishes that have experienced significant new development and associated growth in their tax base, Kingsley remains a small, stable community with limited appetite for expansion. It is not identified as a main service centre in Cheshire West and Chester's Local Plan, meaning the Parish Council must manage rising costs within a largely static tax base and with a greater proportion of the burden falling on existing households.

There are approximately 799 net dwellings in Kingsley that are liable for Council Tax and on which the Council Tax Base is calculated. The approximate number of net dwellings in each council tax band is as follows:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Number of Dwellings	39	7	94	96	237	182	133	11
% of Total	4.88	0.88	11.76	12.02	29.66	22.78	16.65	1.38

The Council is committed to making every penny work hard for residents, ensuring essential services are protected while costs are kept under control. A frugal approach to expenditure is taken, with prices routinely compared and local suppliers used wherever possible. Supporting local businesses in this way helps to retain spending within Kingsley, strengthening the local economy and contributing to a more resilient, circular pattern of investment.

This year's precept has been set at a level that will maintain and deliver essential services, enable continued investment in the parish and provide visible benefits to residents. For comparison, the average Band D precept charged by local precepting bodies in England in 2025/26 was £95.32, rising to a projected £102 in 2026/27, an increase of around 7%. By contrast, Kingsley's proposed Band D charge of £86.33 for 2026/27 remains below both the current and projected national average, and below nearby Frodsham Town Council's Band D precept of £93.71 for 2024/25.

It is important to recognise the financial environment in which the Council is setting its 2026/27 budget. While inflation² has reduced from the peak of 11.1% recorded in October 2022³, underlying cost pressures remain embedded within the local government supply chain. Contract renewals, utility costs, insurance premiums and grounds maintenance services continue to reflect the cumulative impact of price increases over recent years.

In addition, nationally determined changes - including increases to employer National Insurance contributions and ongoing public sector pay pressures - are creating unavoidable upward movement in the Council's staffing and service costs. These are not discretionary pressures and must be managed responsibly within the Council's financial planning.

Freezing the precept in 2026/27, or modelling repeated freezes in future years, would progressively erode the Council's ability to sustain essential services and respond effectively to unforeseen events. A structurally underfunded base budget increases long-term risk, constrains resilience and reduces the Council's capacity to invest proactively in the village.

Despite these pressures, the Council remains committed to delivering visible, community-focused outcomes. Core initiatives - including the Community Grants Scheme, environmental enhancement through wildflower meadows, and the maintenance of community orchards - continue to provide tangible local benefits by supporting biodiversity, improving wellbeing and strengthening community cohesion.

The Council is acutely aware of the wider pressures on household budgets and remains focused on delivering strong value for money. Through prudent financial management, careful use of reserves and strategic investment in services that matter most to residents, the Council aims to protect essential local services, maintain financial stability and resilience, continue modest but meaningful investment in community wellbeing, and safeguard the long-term character and quality of life in Kingsley.

The 2026/27 budget is therefore not simply about balancing the books for a single year, but about ensuring the sustainable stewardship of the village's finances over the medium to long term.

² <https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/the-economy-forecast/inflation/>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/october2022>

**Proposed Kingsley Parish Council Budget
April 2026 - March 2027**

The Proper Officer of Kingsley Parish Council has consulted with members and considered a budget that contains realistic objectives that can be achieved in the financial year.

INCOME

Item	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Precept	£80,375.00	£84,000.00
Cemetery	£7,500.00	£7,500.00
VAT	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Investment Return		£2,000.00
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	£0.00	£0.00
	£90375	£96000

EXPENDITURE

Item	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Cemetery Maintenance	£17,250.00	£18,500.00
Grants + Donations	£1,500.00	£1,000.00
Overheads / Training / Professional Service	£5,000.00	£7,500.00
Playing Field / Playground / PROWs	£17,500.00	£17,500.00
Staffing	£23,625.00	£24,500.00
Subscriptions	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Village Environment	£9,000.00	£9,000.00
Contingency	£8,000.00	£5,000.00
	£82875.00	£84000.00

RESERVES

Item	2026-27 Budget
General Reserves	£43,000
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	£8,639.55
General Capital Reserves	£35,000.00

Item	2026-27 Budget
Total Reserves	£86,639.55

Budgetary Explanation

Cemetery Management

This sum has been budgeted for cemetery maintenance, which includes management such as waste removal, grass cutting, hedge trimming, and general maintenance works such as repainting/repairing of infrastructure such as railings, gates, and benches etc. There are also unanticipated costs to consider such as vandalism and works to trees.

Grants + Donation

The Council awarded a number of grants and donations in the past year to local organisations. This has been allocated to continue providing support to community groups.

Overheads

It is expected that overheads will remain fairly consistent year-on-year, with costs within this budget including office expenses, legal fees, website management, insurance, planning, professional services, audit fees, and training (with an additional increment for training due to it being an election year).

Playing Field / Playground

With costs for tree maintenance, playground maintenance, and grass cutting ever increasing, the Council requires an adequate budget to anticipate all expenditure, whilst ensuring consistent delivery of projects such as the wildflower meadow. It is anticipated that additional replacement costs for play equipment will occur in the coming years and this budget has been adjusted to account for these increased costs.

Staffing

Remuneration of staff is at the nationally-set rates for the sector. This budget line must foresee nationally-set annual adjustments, medical/occupational fees, reasonable adjustments for protected characteristics, contractual obligations, team building costs, staff training, and other possible costs which may arise from unexpected staffing shortages or unanticipated events such as termination payments.

Subscriptions

This budget line has been retained to service the membership of ICCM, Cheshire Community Action, Cheshire Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Village Environment

This budget line includes anticipated enhancements in the village which could include items such as street furniture, Christmas tree and lights, signage, and additional work to open spaces.

Contingency

The Council has kept a contingency budget for unexpected costs increases to service delivery.

Reserves

The Council is required by law to maintain an adequate level of reserves to cover unexpected costs, such as unforeseen incidents or one-off expenditure. As a general rule of thumb, smaller authorities are advised to hold reserves equivalent to between three and twelve months of normal net revenue expenditure.

Reserves are not held in separate “pots” or bank accounts, but form part of the Council’s overall bank balance and are shown in budget reports to indicate the level of funds available. This approach ensures that resources are clearly identified, allocated wisely, and can be accessed promptly when needed.

For smaller authorities in particular, maintaining a prudent safety net is essential to manage inflationary pressures, unforeseen events and other unusual circumstances without compromising day-to-day service delivery. Planning the budget to sustain an appropriate level of reserves helps protect vital services while avoiding unnecessary strain on the Council’s finances and, in turn, on local taxpayers.

In line with this guidance, the Council aims to hold general reserves between 25% and 100% of its anticipated annual expenditure. For Kingsley, this translates to a general reserve in the region of £43,000, which is considered sufficient to manage unforeseen costs while ensuring the smooth continuation of routine operations.

In addition to general reserves, the Council maintains a General Capital Reserve of £35,000 to meet short-term capital needs and invest in the parish’s infrastructure. This may include significant projects such as repairs to the sandstone wall at the cemetery, provision for future cemetery extension to ensure ongoing burial capacity, or supporting a potential community asset transfer of Middle Lane Playing Field. These are not simply maintenance tasks but forward-looking investments that help safeguard the quality and resilience of local facilities for the years ahead.

2026-2027 Proposed Precept

The proposed budget for FY2627 is £84,000.00. Income of £10,000.00 is anticipated from the cemetery and VAT reclaims. The Council has also agreed to an Investment Strategy which will also produce an income in FY2627 (estimated £2,000.00).

The Council's reserves of £86,702.94 represent prudent financial management and provide:

- Protection against unforeseen expenditure
- Capacity for asset maintenance or capital works
- Resilience against income volatility
- Stability in precept setting

Best practice guidance suggests general reserves are typically between 3-12 months of net revenue expenditure depending on risk profile. The Council's current level sits within a range that can be justified by reference to operational risk, inflationary pressures, and future asset liabilities.

Whilst it is anticipated that there may be an underspend carried forward from FY 2025/26, the Council should determine whether:

- Such funds are to be treated as one-off underspends, or
- Formally allocated to a time-limited precept subsidy strategy

Reducing the precept by, for example, £10,000 for a single financial year would create a short-term saving to taxpayers. However, unless matched by recurring savings or recurring income, this over time would:

- Deplete reserves
- Reduce financial resilience
- Risk a compensatory precept increase in subsequent years
- Increase volatility in annual council tax bills

Volatility in the precept can undermine public confidence and create longer-term financial inefficiency.

A structured, multi-year approach (for example, modelling any reserve-funded subsidy over a defined 3-year period) would allow:

- Predictable precept levels
- Managed reduction of reserves if desired
- Clear justification under audit
- Alignment with the Investment Strategy maturity cycle

Following the first full year of investment maturity, the Council will be in a stronger position to determine the optimal allocation between short-, medium- and long-term deposits to maximise yield whilst maintaining liquidity.

With a 2026-2027 tax base of 949.8, a precept of £82,000.00 would equate to the approximate sums in the table below for each property band in the Kingsley Parish Council area.

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
£57.84	£67.34	£76.83	£86.33	£105.32	£124.32	£144.17	£172.66

This precept level would equate to an annual year-on-year increase for each property band in the Kingsley Parish Council area outlined in the table below. The year-on-year increase equates to 0.85%.

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
£0.48	£0.56	£0.64	£0.72	£0.88	£1.04	£1.20	£1.44