

13 January 2025

Budget Report 2025-26 FINAL RESOLVED

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1. Town Council Aims and Objectives

- a. The budget is set to fulfil the Town Council’s Aims and Objectives.
- b. These were last resolved in October 2024 and are published on:
www.grangeoversandstowncouncil.gov.uk

2. Reserves/Working Capital

- a. The Reserves Policy is reviewed annually and published on the website.
- b. At the June 2024 Town Council meeting, the reserves allocation at the opening of the new financial year was approved (C24/37) as below.
- c. Since then, donations have been received from the Victoria Hall Support Group and that reserve balance on 30 September was £7,858. There has also been a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment of £12,696 which is in a ringfenced reserve.

Opening Reserves 2024 - 2025 JUNE 2024	£
General Reserve	
Council	113,110
Earmarked Reserve	
Victoria Hall	90,000
Public Conveniences	15,000
Recreation, Play and Culture	35,000
Allotments	12,000
Public Domain	10,000
Professional Fees	1,000
Restricted (ring-fenced) Reserve	
Allotments fencing works approved April 2024	7,346
Victoria Hall Support Group donations	79
Reserves as AGAR Box 7 March 2024	283,535

3. Westmorland and Furness Unitary Council Figures and Charges

a. Council Tax Base

This determines the effect of the Council Tax demand on households. It changes each year, increasing as houses are built, and decreasing when more residents claim discount or homes are empty.

The Council Tax base for 2025-26 has increased from 2,169.59 to 2,391.90, an increase of 222.31 properties.

b. Council Tax Grant

Until this year, this was granted by the Unitary Council (WFC) to each parish to supplement the precept. In 2023/24 Grange Town Council received £7,850.

The withdrawal this year means that income will be £7,850 down.

c. Street Lighting Charge

This was historically charged to Grange residents and retained by the then District Council (SLDC). The Unitary Council (WFC) are reviewing these charges. There is no charge for this year.

4. Staff and Pensions (Dept. 1 Council and Dept. 2 Victoria Hall)

- a. Salaries include the NALC pay rise backdated to 1 April 2024, approved in October 2024 Full Council; similar provision has been made for 2025.
- b. A separate allocation for apportioned salaries to run the Victoria Hall is listed in Dept.2, Victoria Hall. This is to give an indication of the true cost of operating the hall and makes provision for the recruitment of a Hall Administrator.
- c. Cleaning is now done by a contractor so is shown in 'Cleaning' not as a salary.
- d. Employers NI is included in salaries. This increased after the Government budget in October 2024.
- e. Pension auto-enrolment commenced February 2017. The budget amount represents the costs as defined by the Local Government Pension Scheme.

5. Christmas Lights (Department 1 – Council)

- a. This is the third year of a 5-year contract with LITE Ltd. which ends after Christmas 2026.
- b. The contract is for £4,751 per annum plus carriage and electricity charges.

6. Accountancy Service Fees (Department 1 – Council)

These include PAYE, payroll, pensions, and VAT.

7. Victoria Hall (Department 2)

- a. Budget shows £18,700 for Maintenance, Repairs and Renewals.
- b. An allocation has been shown for salaries to give an indication of the true cost of running the building.
- c. Provision has been made for website and promotions development.
- d. This includes the annual LOLER inspections for the stage scenery hoists which cost £1,365 ex VAT in August 2024.

8. Public Conveniences (Departments 4,5,6)

- a. This service is provided to the community and cost £20,802 in 2023-24.
- b. SLDC (now WFC) devolved providing public conveniences to the Town Council in 2011 and an annual grant was given. This has now been phased out.
- c. Healthmatic clean the facilities on a contract which ends March 2027.
- d. Maintenance is no longer included in the Healthmatic contract so the budget for public convenience repairs and maintenance has been increased.
- e. The facilities are deteriorating and will need refurbishing in due course.

- f. The entrance fee was increased from 30p to 40p in July 2024. This is reflected in increase in projected income.

9. Recreation Ground (*Department 7*)

- a. The Recreation Ground is leased by GTC from WFC who gave up running the facility, in around 2009, as it was not viable.
- b. In March 2016, a 2-year contract was agreed with Horton Landscapes to operate it. Further contracts were agreed until 31 October 2024.
- c. It was not possible for Horton Landscapes to operate the site successfully in 2024 due to the Unitary Council's refurbishment works on the Prom and Lido.
- d. The contract was not renewed in October 2024 due to uncertainty about the site's viability.
- e. Negotiations are underway with WFC about the future of the facilities, the Lido, and the southern end of the Prom.
- f. The Town Council now has responsibility to maintain the site and a budget to cover this is included. A tender for the work will be issued in the New Year.
- g. The Town Council remains responsible for infrastructure maintenance, WFC annual inspection fee and GTC monthly inspections.

10. Public Domain Maintenance (*Department 10*)

This includes the Lengthsman services and skips. The budget is increased for 2025-26 to bring the Lengthsman hourly rate up to same grade as the Hall Team staff.

11. Surplus

Any budget surplus mitigates against the loss of WFC grants towards the running of the Ornamental Garden public conveniences and the Victoria Hall and/or capital replacement costs. The Town Council Finance Risk Assessment (approved annually in October) states that funds should be set aside annually towards capital replacement costs of assets.

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