



Buckfastleigh Town Council Precept and Budget 2026-27

Statement by the Chair and Town Clerk

How we raise and invest your money

Buckfastleigh Town Council is a relatively small local authority with very few powers compared to the larger authorities, but we continue to endeavour to make the most of our main source of revenue, a small slice of your Council Tax which for 2025/26 was £172,250. For every £ you paid in Council Tax, 43p per day (based on a Band B property) came to Buckfastleigh for the services we provide.

We also look elsewhere for funding, for example we work hard to win Government funding and donations for specific projects such as two successful bids to the Government UK shared Prosperity Fund for street scene improvements, refurbishment of the tourist information centre within the Valiant Soldier and the new Cosy Cinema in the Town Hall.

Your Council Tax is divided between Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council, Devon and Cornwall Police Service and Devon and Somerset Fire Service. From our precept we fund the following:

34% of our budget is used for grants to organisations and groups within the town such as the Town Hall, Victoria Park and swimming pool, the Citizens Advice Outreach Service and the annual Christmas Fair – a full list of recipients can be found at www.buckfastleigh.gov.uk

34% is used to employ a full time Town Clerk, a part-time Deputy Clerk and a part-time Town Ranger.

11% contributes towards the very popular youth activity programme (Hello Summer), Wellbeing Café and outreach work.

5% is for the rental of fully serviced office and meeting space at the Town Hall which is run by a charity.

9% pays for the Christmas Lights display with effect from 2024, free Christmas meals and treat bags for residents who are isolated or on low incomes and various events during the year.

The rest is used for the maintenance of assets such as some street furniture, the community defibrillators, equipment, insurance etc, although the list is much longer!

Change on the horizon

We are often asked why there are so many things that we don't do? Each tier of local authority has different statutory powers and different levels of funding for eg. Devon County Council is responsible for highway and bridge maintenance, street lighting and education provision, Teignbridge District Council is responsible for collection of household waste and recycling, street cleaning and electoral services to name but a few of their many responsibilities.

Our budget does not stretch very far, and we do not have the funding, resources or capacity to undertake any more than what we already do but in 2027 this is all going to change with **Local Government Reorganisation**.

The current two-tier County and District Council system will no longer exist and will be replaced with Unitary authorities serving larger populations – this will impact the way your services are delivered.

Buckfastleigh Town Council will undoubtedly be expected to take on more responsibilities and will be offered non-revenue generating assets which are basically liabilities such as the green spaces in our town. We will not be given any extra funding for this, it is unlikely that any asset will be transferred in good order or with a dowry such as a portion of the Council Tax you already pay for these services and it is unlikely that car parks, the one asset which does raise revenue will be offered to the Town Council.

If the Town Council chooses not to take on any assets from Teignbridge District Council or Devon County Council these may be lost forever and if we do decide to take on some or all of the assets offered, we currently do not have the staff or funds to run them without significant increases to your Council Tax.

The first dilemma we are now facing is the proposed closure of the Teignbridge District Council owned public toilets in Woodholme car park. We have been informed that unless the Town Council take over the toilets these will be closed in April 2027. There is no statutory duty by any Council to provide public toilets, but it is a basic human right and we do not live in a Third World Country.

The Town Council is actively raising the profile of the town, encouraging visitors to support our local economy so having no toilets in the main car park which are also used by the children playing in the park and attending Hello Summer etc, bus drivers and passengers, delivery drivers and residents who are out shopping, attending events etc is incomprehensible.

Whilst no firm decision has been made and despite repeated requests, we do not know the actual costs of running the toilets or their current state of repair, but we are aware that it is a huge liability and the toilets are in a poor condition.

Following research, it is estimated that the annual running costs including daily cleaning, opening and locking up outside of normal office hours, replacement consumables, utility bills, water testing, insurance and basic repairs such as a leaking pipe will cost approx. £30,000 per year this does not however, include any refurbishment or substantial repairs caused by vandalism. We are aware from feedback from the community including a consultation event at the Town Hall in October that we cannot lose our only public toilets.

Getting the right balance

In our decision making we never forget that there are some in our community who struggle financially and for whom any rise in Council Tax will be another costs. On balance therefore, the Town Council agreed it would be prudent to plan ahead and therefore raise the precept to enable us to ring-fence 50% of the above amount for 2026/27 and 50% for 2027/28 and make other budget cuts to ease any increases.

So, we are announcing now a reduction in the grants we give to community projects. Our current smaller and larger grants budget is £16,000, it was agreed to cut this to £8,000 to meet some of the funds needed to retain the toilets. This means that grant applications will face greater scrutiny and many will be rejected. We will no longer be able to fund running costs for all the groups and organisations we currently support, and we encourage applicants where possible to seek other sources of funding.

At the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 17th December Members voted to increase our budget from £172,250 to £193,100.

This equates to 9.25% for a Band B property increasing our proportion of the Council Tax bill from £111.50pa to £121.81pa. In real terms this is an extra £10.31 per year for Band B or £13.25 for Band D.

All our advertised meetings are open to the public; we actively encourage participation and welcome feedback from residents. We continue to have some vacancies on the Council and are keen to hear from anyone who meets the eligibility criteria. Our councillors are all volunteers, many of whom work full-time and do not receive any remuneration for their position or accept expenses. For further information please visit our website or contact Judith, our Town Clerk: clerk@buckfastleigh.gov.uk or telephone: 01364 642576/07904033616

Councillor Sue Clarke, Chair of Buckfastleigh Town Council and Judith Hart, Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer