

# **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TOWN MEETING 2026**

**Date of meeting**                      Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 6.30 p.m.

**Place of Meeting**                      Atherstone Red Lion, Hotel, Long Street,  
Atherstone, CV9 1BB

## **Present:**

Public: 35 members of the public were in attendance.

Atherstone Town Council (ATC) Councillors: Cllr (Chair), J Chambers, C Evans, C Jones, G Short, M Short, D Wilkinson & D Wright, Barnett, M Thomas, T Short, O Dipple. (Apologies received from Cllr S Bishop, R Collins and G Chamberlain)

Warwickshire County Councillor R Gisbourne.

North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) Mayor, Councillor Davina Ridley and Consort, Mr Steve Ridley.

Organisation representatives as listed in the minutes.

**Chair:**                      Town Mayor, Councillor Jacky Chambers

**Clerk:**                      Deputy Town Clerk, Sally Oldham - Minutes

The Town Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

## **1. To receive the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 21st May 2025**

It was noted that draft copies of the minutes have been on the Town Council website, in Atherstone Library and are circulated at the meeting.

The minutes of the 21st of May 2025 were presented and approved.

## **2. Atherstone Town Council's Annual Report**

The Town Mayor presented the Annual Report of the Town Council 2025-6 (appendix 1). The main headline items were mentioned by the chair. It was noted that there was a Social Supermarket in the Arcade, Community Safety was being addressed through the Town's CCTV and Townwatch Radio scheme, better use of the parks and play areas

was being planned with improvements to St Mary's Park. Finances were noted including grants issued to local groups. The chair thanked the Deputy Clerk for working in the absence of a Clerk to keep things running smoothly.

### **3. Any other Business. Electors were invited to ask questions.**

**Question 1 Mr Martin Shaw** a resident in the market square asked what could be done about heavy goods vehicles trying to drive through the Archway in the market square. Mr Shaw was concerned as the Archway was weak and had a height restriction in place. As WCC Gisbourne was in the meeting the chair invited him to respond. Cllr Gisbourne said he would take the question away and assist the resident with a reply. Mr Shaw thanked him.

**Question 2 Cllr Ray Jarvis** ( a resident and NWBC Cllr) asked what was happening with the extension to the Sheepy Road cemetery. He noted that there had been some objections from statutory bodies. The Deputy Town Clerk responded that the Town Council plans were with NWBC Planning Department and reports that had been submitted previously had required an update due to a change in legislation. Those updated reports should address the concerns raised.

**Question 3 Mr Martin Shaw** asked if graves could be re-used after 100 years. The Deputy Town Clerk responded that this was not currently allowed under current cemetery legislation. She also re-iterated that there are still many years of space in Atherstone Cemetery but that as a statutory body running the Cemetery the Town Council had a duty to plan for the future, which it was doing. Plans and funding would be pursued along with a public consultation in the future.

**Question 4 – Cllr Jarvis** asked if the clerk would send him the planning reference for the Cemetery Extension Application and this was agreed.

The chair thanked everyone for the questions posed and invited others to share news about activities / events. The chair outlined the local focus on the two parks and encouraging local “ownership” of the areas to tackle anti-social behaviour and vandalism. It would be good to see residents and young people taking a role in organising events and making best use the parks in particular.

**Cllr Mick Thomas** – a Town Cllr and resident asked those in attendance to consider how youngsters could be encouraged to get involved locally –

not just with sport – but getting them together and out and about using the open spaces.

Other groups then were invited to speak:

**Mr Mark Jordan – Atherstone Car Show** – Thanked the Town Council and others for all the support given to the event. Last year a Spitfire fly-past took place despite the bad weather and another fly-past is planned for 2026. It is hoped to have new activities for the children including Transformers. The chair thanked the Car Show for all their hard work.

**Mr Dave Hughes – Chair of Dickens** - thanked for the Town Council's support towards the fireworks and this year would be the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this popular Atherstone Event.

**Mr Steven Airey - Ruby's Yard** – explained how the organisation contributed to the Town. A derelict and overgrown area had been transformed into a safe and peaceful haven. It was accessible to nature and allowed for socialising outdoors. A firepit and outdoor kitchen was popular along with yoga days. Local SEND organisations used the space along with Scouts and Warwickshire Young Carers. Friendships could be built in what has been called “A little oasis in the heart of our town”.

**Maria Beale of Atherstone Football Club and Cohort 4** – explained her work with vulnerable women in North Warwickshire. It allowed people to come together in a safe place to enjoy creativity activities or walking. There was also a men's group who met for breakfast.

**Andy Ball – Atherstone Partnership** – explained how the not-for-profit group worked hosting the upcoming Two Day Big Weekender and Christmas events. They were working in Partnership to promote Atherstone as part of an application to be the UK Town of Culture. Having lived in Atherstone for 19 years himself he said what a great place Atherstone was to live.

**Ellen Alcock of WCAVA** spoke to explain how, along with her colleague Michelle Black, their work involved supporting groups to find volunteers and funding.

**The meeting closed at 19:25pm**

**Date of the next meeting: 19<sup>th</sup> May 2027**

Following the meeting all those in attendance were invited to stay for the presentation of the following awards followed by light refreshments.

The Mayor made the Presentations to:

**Honorary Citizen 2026:**

Town Cllr Carol Evans spoke about this year's recipient:

**Mr Eddie Smallwood of the North Warwickshire Museum.**

**Ruby Chambers Young Person's Sports Award 2025**

Mrs Jill Thomas spoke about this year's recipient:

**Miss Ellen Simmons of Atherstone Adders Hockey Club.**



# Atherstone Town Council



## Annual Report 2025/2026



# Town Council Office

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday: 9:00am – 3:00pm by appointment

Visit us: Atherstone Town Council  
The Council House  
South Street  
Atherstone  
CV9 1DE

Telephone: 01827 720829

Email: [clerk@atherstone-tc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@atherstone-tc.gov.uk) Website: [www.atherstone-tc.gov.uk](http://www.atherstone-tc.gov.uk)

Write to: Atherstone Town Council,  
P.O. Box 2000,  
Atherstone,  
Warwickshire,  
CV9 1YN

Town Council meetings are held monthly in the Committee Room, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Civic Suite, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, CV9 1DE.

The calendar of meetings is published on the website and in the noticeboard on the Market Square.

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend Town Council meetings. A public session is held at each meeting, where the public can comment on agenda items.

For 2025-26, the Chair of the Town Council was Cllr Sara Bishop and the Vice-Chair was Cllr Jacky Chambers.

## Officers and Staff



**Locum Town Clerk/RFO**

Jack Turner B.A. Hons. Cert. CiLCA.



**Deputy Town Clerk**

Sally Oldham

B.A. Hons. PSLCC



**Administration Assistant**

Natalie Coggins

# Town Councillors

## Central Ward



**Councillor Keith Barnett**

Appointed to: Employment Committee, Communication and Engagement Working Group, Council Development and Review Working Group, North Warwickshire Area Committee Rep.

**Tel:** 01827 230703

**Email:** [keithbarnett@atherstone-tc.gov.uk](mailto:keithbarnett@atherstone-tc.gov.uk)

**Address:** 28 Mancetter Road, Mancetter, CV9 1NZ



**Councillor Jake Braithwaite**

Appointed to: Council Development and Review Working Group

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**Address:** 38 Leicester Crescent, Atherstone, CV9 3BH



**Councillor Jacky Chambers (Deputy Mayor)**

Appointed to: Employment Committee (Chair), Communication and Engagement Working Group (Lead), Open Spaces Working Group, CCTV Partnership Working Group

**Tel:** 07966 425052

**Email:** [jackychambers@atherstone-tc.gov.uk](mailto:jackychambers@atherstone-tc.gov.uk)

**Address:** Green Farm, Main Road, Baxterley, CV9 2LW



**Councillor Richard Collins**

Appointed to: Arcade Working Group, Open Spaces Working Group

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**Councillor Gary Chamberlain**

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Appointed to: Arcade Working Group, CCTV Partnership Working Group, Ball Game Rep.

**Address:** 131b Long Street, Atherstone, CV9 1AD



**Councillor Gwyn Short**

Appointed to: CCTV Partnership Working Group (Lead), Arcade Working Group

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**Address:** 69 Ratcliffe Road, Atherstone, CV9 1LF

## North Ward



**Councillor Chris Jones**

Appointed to: Communication and Engagement Working Group, Open Spaces Working Group, CCTV Partnership Working Group

**Tel:** 07984 160667

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**Councillor Mick Thomas**

Appointed to: Communications and Engagement Working Group, Open Spaces Working Group and Atherstone Partnership Rep.

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**Councillor Martin Short**

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Appointed to: Open Spaces Working Group (Lead)

**Address:** 69 Ratcliffe Road, Atherstone, CV9 1L



**Councillor Olivia Dipple**

Appointed to: Communication and Engagement Working Group

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**Councillor Dawn Wilkinson**

Appointed to: Council Development and Review Working Group (Lead), Communication and Engagement Working Group, Atherstone Partnership Rep.

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**Councillor David A Wright**

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## South Ward



**Councillor Sara Bishop**

Appointed to: Employment Committee, Arcade Working Group (Lead), Communication and Engagement Working Group, Warwickshire Association of Local Councils Rep.

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**Councillor Carol Evans**

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**Councillor Tony Short**

Appointed to: Communication and Engagement Working Group, Open Spaces Working Group

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## Farewells and Welcomes

This year, the Council welcomed new Town Councillors: Tony Short and Mick Thomas.

In May 2025, a casual vacancy was filled via co-option by Tony Short.

In September 2025, we said goodbye to Cllr Nomonde Pritchett and in November 2025 welcomed Mick Thomas via co-option.

In November 2025 new Administration Assistant Natalie Coggins joined the staffing team and in January 2026 Jack Turner was welcomed as Locum Clerk/RFO.

## What has the Town Council achieved in 2025/26?

### Civic Role – Mayor of Atherstone Cllr Sara Bishop



Mayor and Consort Mr Alan Bishop

Before writing for this year's Annual Report, I looked back at the Annual Report for 2024-2025, which was when I served my first term as Mayor. This year, my second term, I have donned the Mayoral Chain and attended almost double the number of Civic visits and events. Instead of just having one charity for which I was raising funds I chose two smaller, more local charities. One was Atherstone Veteran's Contact Point and the other was Restore Collective's Men's Wellbeing Group. Both of these worthy causes have provided valuable support for members of our local community. I am looking forward to presenting each charity with a cheque before the end of this mayoral year. However, these funds would not have been raised without the support from fellow Civic Dignitaries, affectionately known as "The Chain Gang", who travel here, from around Warwickshire and beyond, and everyone who attended Atherstone Town Council's Civic

Events, made donations, bought raffle tickets and paid for tickets. I would also like to thank everyone who donated raffle prizes not only individuals but all the local businesses who have generously provided prizes for each of the Civic raffles.

During this year I have visited nurseries, schools, local clubs and community groups and been to many local events, performances and celebrations, which help to make Atherstone such a special place to live. Much of the work that goes into these events is done by volunteers so I would like to say a particular thank you to all of them. I feel very proud to have been the Mayor of Atherstone over the last two years.

## Market Square

The Town Council has an agreement with North Warwickshire Borough Council to manage events on the Market Square. The Town Council continues to manage the twice weekly markets.

During the summer months the local publicans serve drinks outside on the Market Square in a café culture style.

A monthly Farmers Market that began in February 2022 has been well received and continues to expand.



Several annual events take place on the Market Square, including the Dickens Event, Atherstone Partnership's Big Weekender, the Car Show and Christmas Tractor Run.



We have also been treated to several smaller events, including performances by the Anker Morris Men and First Class Stamp.

## Allotments

The Town Council provides allotments for rent at two sites: 88 plots at Merevale and 73 plots at Gypsy Lane.

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, both sites are almost fully occupied with a few vacant plots still to be let.

Anyone requiring a plot should register at the Town Council offices.

The Town Council also owns the neighbouring Atherstone Allotment Association site, in Gypsy Lane. The Town Council works with the Associations, and tenants, for the sites' general improvement.

Allotment Awards were judged and presented in the summer of 2025 at both sites. The Allotment Judging Panel comprised Cllrs Jones and Barnett.



Allotment Prize Winners 2025

Chair of the Open Spaces Group commented: "Both allotments continue to be well used. Security continues to be a major issue for plot-holders on the Merevale site who have suffered thefts and vandalism, because of others' failure to lock the gate.

The chair visited Haddenham Parish Council's allotments in Oxfordshire to research the possibility of solar-powered irrigation systems like theirs. This idea remains on the table".

## Cemetery

The Town Council maintains Atherstone Cemetery on Sheepy Road and is responsible for the maintenance of burial and memorial records for the cemetery.

The Town Council continues to engage with the Community Payback team, who now provide additional help maintaining the cemetery.

The Town Council received funding from Warwickshire County Council for the planting of four new trees to replace those previously removed for safety reasons.

As a Burial Authority, the Town Council has arranged and attended 36 interments, authorised 40 memorial applications, and conducted 104 deed transfers and other administrative duties.

Atherstone Town Council has responsibility for the event management of the Remembrance Day Parade and service which takes place at St Mary's Church and the War Memorial in Atherstone Cemetery.

## Old Allotment Gardens

The land between Atherstone Cemetery and the A5, which runs from Sheepy Road through to the brook at Abeles Way, is known as the Old Allotment Gardens.

In early 2021, the Town Council began consulting for the future extension of the cemetery, and began work surveying the site. In 2025 a planning application has been submitted for the site to be used for future burials



## CCTV

The CCTV cameras and ducting in the town centre are owned and maintained by the Town Council, who are also responsible for the staffing costs monitoring the screens by dedicated CCTV operators. The Town Council works in partnership with North Warwickshire Borough Council and Warwickshire Police.

The live monitoring of the CCTV provides a proactive approach to crime in Atherstone. Active monitoring staff work closely with the local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team, and the CCTV system includes a direct link to Police Headquarters at Leek Wootton.

The Town Council carried out a consultation with our residents and key stakeholders regarding the future funding of the active monitoring service.

The Town Council supports the Town's retail radio system, known as Townwatch. Subsidies are given towards the cost of the radios, for those taking part.



Chair of the CCTV Working Group, Cllr Gwyn Short, has the following report:

“The monitored CCTV and Townwatch Radio scheme have continued to show their worth to Atherstone residents. Crime rates statistics show that, for example, shoplifting rates in Atherstone are lower than the national average.

Atherstone Town Council has maintained its partnership with NWBC, Safer Neighbourhood Team, who have both given financial support, local businesses and Warwickshire Retail Crime Initiative, which promotes the Townwatch scheme. Last year, 45 businesses were members of the scheme. In October Cllr Chris Jones explained on BBC CWR how this joined-up approach supports the prevention and detection of crime.

It's also important to note that our system comes into its own when aiding residents and visitors who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

This year ATC provided new Townwatch signage within the town and as we enter. Thanks to PCSO Scott and Cllr Chamberlain for their work on this.

The following ATC 2024 - 2026 Action Plan outcomes have been addressed:-

- Finance - consultation regarding budget priorities (1.2.1)
- Engagement - online survey to gather community views (2.3.2)
- Marketing - promoting our town (5.1.3)

## Play Areas, Anker Meadows Project and Open Spaces

There are two play areas managed and maintained by the Town Council: at St Mary's Road, which is owned outright, and at Westwood Road, which is leased.

Due to several instances of damage, vandalism, and anti-social behaviour at both play areas they are now fully covered by CCTV.

Over the past year, the Town Council has made a number of visible improvements to the St Mary's Play Area.

These have included tackling persistent graffiti through repainting and refreshing the play equipment, installing new signage, improving the safety of the entrance gate, and planting trees to provide future shade, support nature, and enhance the play environment.



Chair of the Open Spaces Working Group, Cllr Martin Short, writes the following report:

“Much of what this working group has done this year can be related to the Council’s Action Plan, which, amongst other things, includes engaging with local people to build up an understanding of community priorities and planning improvements, replacements and future developments on council-owned property.

#### Anker Meadows Project

Since our consultant produced her very positive reports last spring, we have been trying to put her ideas into practice, which is not easy, bearing in mind that we are totally dependent on permission from a range of landowners. We have met with the Sports Club and have had a succession of productive meetings with North Warwickshire Borough Council. A recently innovated nature reserve on NWBC land behind Carlyon Road will incorporate a number of our consultant’s ideas, while we ourselves have permission for a number of developments in the Royal Meadow area, including a Miyawaki mini-forest

and other hedge- and tree-planting. Planting of a wildflower meadow, with involvement of local families, has already taken place.

#### Other access issues

Atherstone Town Council will continue to try to minimise threats to access to our open spaces, particularly on the southern edges of the town, where the GUCT project seems bound to impact rights of way and access to the Outwoods”.

## Planning

As a Statutory Planning Consultee, the Town Council comments on planning applications within the civil parish of Atherstone, and those outside it which would affect Atherstone.

Planning applications to be considered can be found on the monthly Town Council agenda and responses on the website. In total the Town Council considered 45 planning applications in 2025/26.

## Christmas Lights

The Town Council owns the Christmas lights erected each year along Long Street, Church Street, and Market Street, and outside St Mary’s Church. There are also pole mounted displays installed in Station Street and the Market Square. The Council is solely responsible for the purchase, testing, maintenance, erection, and dismantling of the lights.

## Support for Local Community Groups

The Town Council can make small grants to assist local community groups. Details of these can be found on the website.

During 2025/26 the Town Council awarded community grants to:

- Atherstone Big Weekender May 2025 - £1000
- Atherstone Football Club - £800
- Atherstone Motor Show – £500
- Dickens Event 2025 – £2,600
- Atherstone Ball Game (road closures) – £2,323.70

Additionally, the Council continue to support the social supermarket in Unit 7, The Arcade (Ediblelinks) by providing this retail unit free of charge and meeting their service charges. This equates to approximately £5,500 in support.

Each year the Council also purchases a poppy wreath for Remembrance Day, for a donation of £25 to the Royal British Legion.

## Honorary Citizen and Ruby Chambers Award

Each year the Town Council debates the choice of Honorary Citizen, an award made to a person(s) who, in the opinion of the Town Council, has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the town.

For 2026, the title of Honorary Citizen will be awarded to Eddie Smallwood in recognition of his commendable contributions and many years of service to the community of Atherstone.

The Ruby Chambers Sports Award 2025-6 will be awarded to Ellen Simmons of Atherstone Adders Hockey Club.

Both awards will be presented to the recipients at the Annual Parish Assembly in May 2026.

## Floral Displays

The Town Council maintains the floral displays in the town centre during the year with summer and winter plantings.

## Website and Social Media

The Town Council has a website – [www.atherstone-tc.gov.uk](http://www.atherstone-tc.gov.uk) – maintained by the clerks which gives up-to-date information on Council activities, local news, and documentation.

The Council Meetings page gives the public access to all public meeting papers alongside meeting agendas and minutes.

During the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the Council's social media channels continued to grow as an effective tool for community engagement and communication. Our content achieved a total of 209,587 views, reflecting strong and consistent public interest in council updates, events and local information. The number of followers increased by 27% compared with the previous year, demonstrating a significant expansion in our digital reach. Notably, 82% of followers are based in Atherstone, with the remaining audience located in surrounding areas, showing that our channels are successfully reaching both local residents and the wider community.

## Local Council Award Scheme

The Town Council currently holds the Foundation Level, as part of the Town Council Action Plan 2024-26 the Council are working towards higher levels of the Local Council Award Scheme in the coming year.

## Arcade Shops

The Town Council owns and operates the Arcade Shops, in Long Street and it is currently fully tenanted. This complex provides a mixture of retail, commercial and community use. The current Arcade tenants are:

Unit 1	Emily's Gifts
Unit 2	Becca Kim Aesthetics and Skin Clinic
Unit 3	Jenni Rose Studio
Unit 4	BFH Bargains
Unit 5	The Seraph Tattoo
Unit 6	AEL Furniture and Interiors
Unit 7	Ediblelinks Social Supermarket
Unit 8	Elite Energy Solutions
Unit 9	Arcade Carpets
Upstairs front	Glossy Nail and Beauty Studio

To join our waiting list, contact the Town Council Office.

Arcade Working Group report from Chair Cllr Sara Bishop.

Action Plan 3.4.1 Arcade Management- Continue to explore interest, feasibility and funding sources for potential use of upstairs space in the Arcade building

As a result of renewed interest from Restore Collective in using the upstairs space at The Arcade for community activities, a meeting was arranged for the Working Group to hold initial discussions with representatives of Restore Collective. Craig Bird of Restore Collective agreed to become a member of the Arcade Working Group.

In order to be able to let the premises improvements are needed to the Energy Performance rating. A grant of £1000 was given by Warwickshire County Councillor Robert Gisbourne, which enabled the lighting in the upstairs space to be upgraded to LEDs. The Working Group was successful in obtaining a grant from the National Lottery, to enable the installation of heating and interior insulation to the external walls. Quotations for the work have been sought and it is expected that work will begin very shortly.

Work has also been undertaken to ensure that all electrical installations within the building are compliant with safety standards. In addition, replacement fire doors are on order and expected to be fitted shortly.

# Atherstone Town Council

Financial position as at 31 March 2026

Annual Report Snapshot

Total income

**£366,976**

Includes precept and locally generated income

Total expenditure

**£313,237**

Cost of running services and facilities

In-year surplus

**£53,739**

Added to the Council's overall year-end position

Bank balances

**£311,535**

Held across the Council's bank accounts

## Year-end overview

The Council ended 2025/26 in a stable reported position. Income of £366,976 exceeded expenditure of £313,237, producing an in-year surplus of £53,739. This provides a stronger closing position, with net assets reported at approximately £299k and cash balances of approximately £312k at 31 March 2026.

## Income compared with expenditure

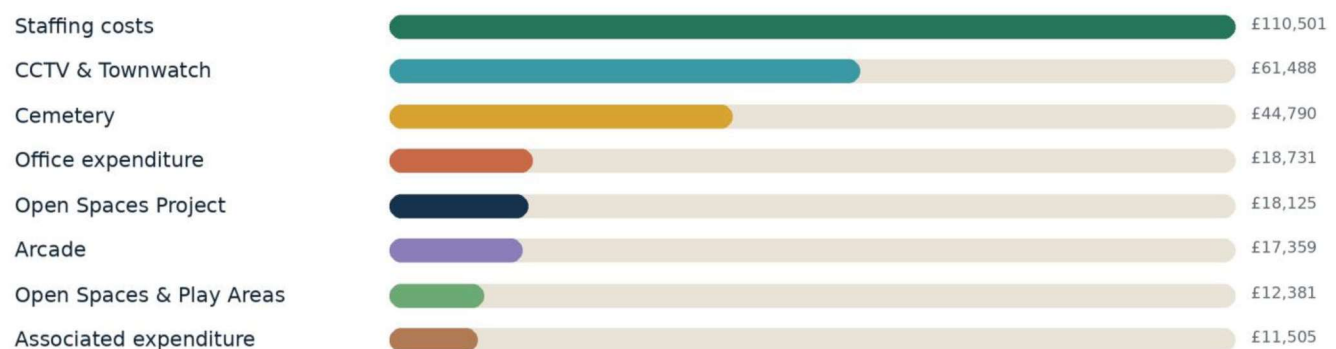


A surplus means income was higher than expenditure during the year.

## Reported capital and reserves



## Where the main expenditure went



## Income mix

