

Kendal Town Council Annual Report 2025 – 2026



Mayor of Kendal

Cllr Richard Sutton, May 2025 – May 2026

It has been a busy year. I have greatly enjoyed representing Kendal Town Council at annual civic events, community events and some of the town's great festivals.



This year also marked significant anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day, which were particularly poignant and offered an important opportunity for reflection and hope for the future.

I have also pursued my mayoral theme of 'Volunteering'. I have visited many local volunteers and volunteering organisations across the year, wanting to highlight the incredible work they do and impact they have on our community. There are so many ways to get involved in the life of the town and at every opportunity, I have been met with much kindness and unselfish giving.

My wife Sarah and I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for allowing us the honour of serving the town this year. I am very proud to have been the Mayor of Kendal. I will end my year full of admiration for this town, a special place full of kindness where people try to look out for each other.

Foreword from the Town Clerk

Chris Bagshaw, Town Clerk

To say that it has been a privilege to serve the Town Council for another year seems to be stating the obvious. There are so many exciting initiatives that the Town Council is involved in, not just as a passive observer, but often leading the way to make our town the best place to live, work, visit, and yes, why not set up your business here? The first quarter of the 21st century has challenged every community in ways that many of us would not have imagined 25 years ago.

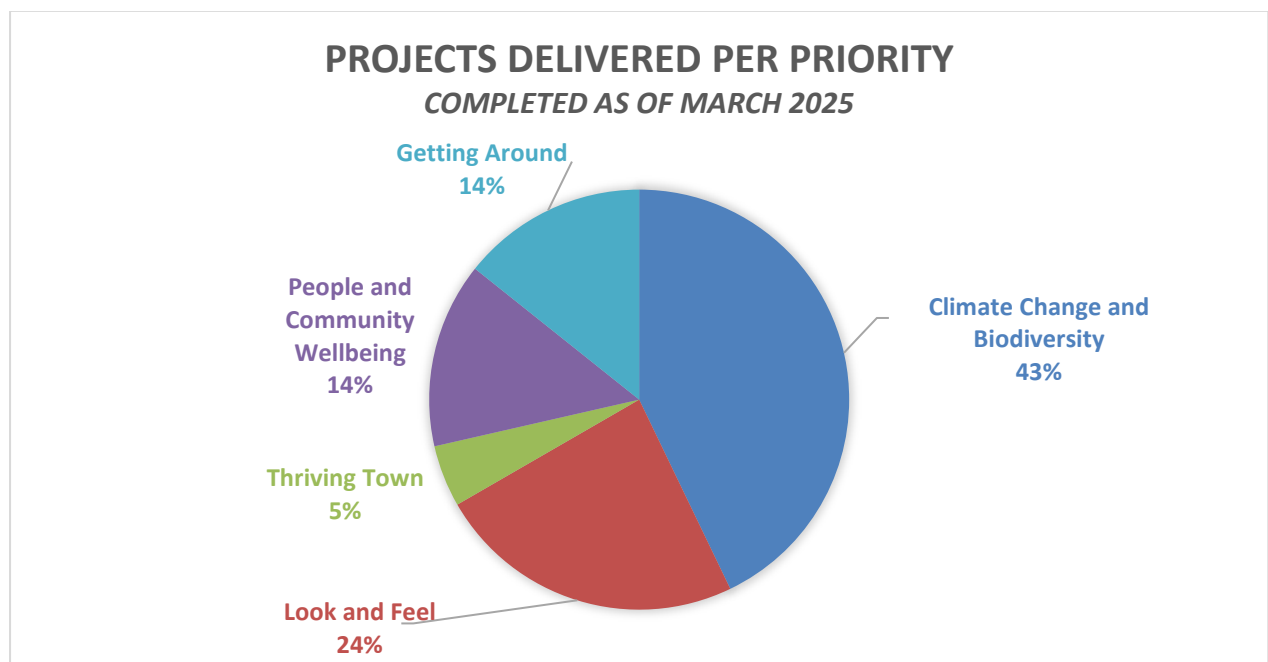
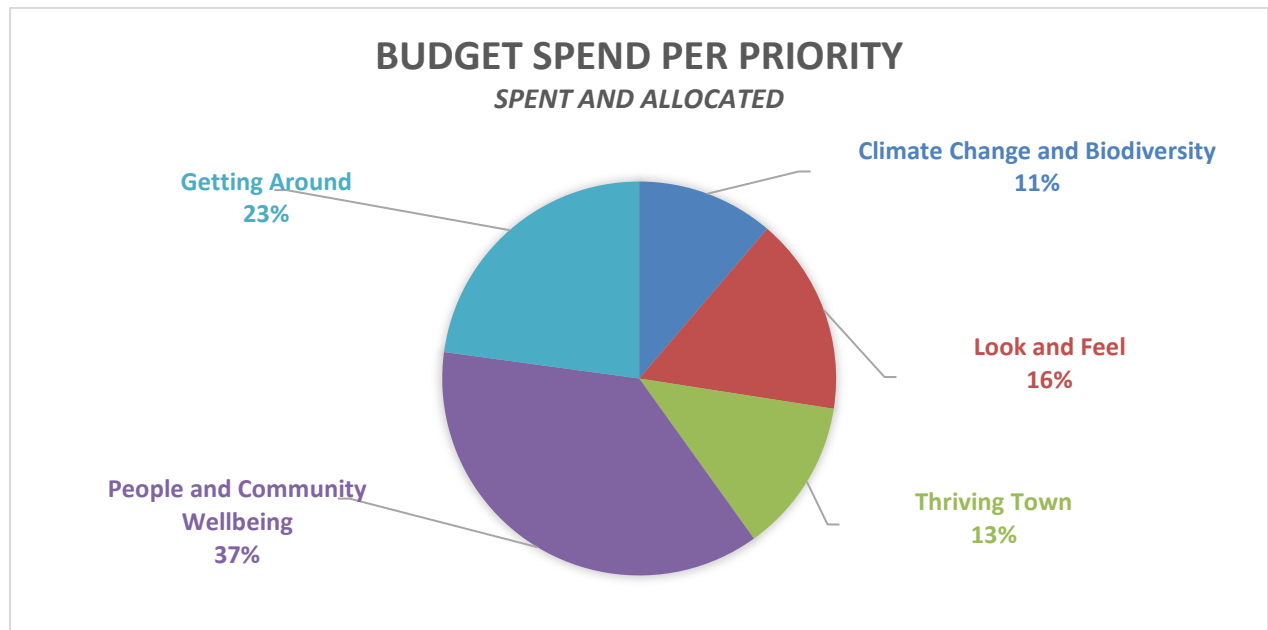
I hope this report shows that by working together, we can address them and create a better place for everyone.

Council Plan

Kendal Town Council remain committed to delivering the key priorities outlined in the Council Plan.

In 2025 – 2026, we have continued to invest in the appearance, wellbeing, and vitality of our town.

Through a range of projects, large and small, we're focussed on improvements that make a real difference to residents, businesses and visitors alike.



Key achievements in 2025 – 2026, by Council Priority

Climate Change and Biodiversity

Kendal Town Council recognises that climate change and the depletion of biodiversity are emergencies that challenge the planet's wellbeing. We continue to work as an active partner on nature recovery, the care and improvement of the town's green spaces and localised climate friendly projects.

Here's just some of the highlights from this year:

- **Dark Skies** – we have been working on dark skies lighting solutions that prioritise the needs of people and are ecologically sensitive. We replaced the 'lantern heads' on several lighting columns across town with new heritage style, dark sky friendly alternatives.
- **Pollinator planting and enhancement** – we've been working with partners on establishing habitats that support pollinating insects and animals. We 'sponsored' the creation of three pollinator sites across Kendal, which we will be enhancing in the coming year.
- **Investment in green spaces** – we've invested in the beautiful and significant area of Bowling Fell and Castle Howe, improving accessibility through directional signage and handrails to allow this green space to be enjoyed by more people across the town.



Pollinator Planting Site – Kendal Green



Handrails at Bowling Fell – Bowling Fell and Castle Howe



How Kendal Looks and Feels

During the last year we have continued to invest in the town, focussing on repairing, renewing and improving our own assets and the services. By focussing on our own 'estate' we hope to raise the standards and provide meaningful contribution to how the town feels for both residents and visitors.

- **Kendal in Bloom** - our summer and winter planting continues to bring joy and beauty to the town throughout the year. We have also been working on 'Kirkland in Bloom', a project centred around Abbot Hall which has developed a strong network of volunteers and planted key areas such as the Peace Garden.
- **Benches** – we have been conducting routine inspections of the benches we own across town and are taking a proactive approach to maintenance and repairs.
- **Allotments** – we have delivered key accessibility improvements at Town View Allotments and delivered the first allotment community event, which we hope to make a bi-annual moving forward.
- **Christmas Lights** – we are very proud to deliver the Christmas lights and have invested to create a consistent and visually striking display. These are showcased at the annual Christmas switch on event and bring sparkle to the town throughout the festive period.

The Kendal in Bloom committee are encouraged by the positive progress we've made towards the objectives outlined in the first year of the three-year 'Kirkland in Bloom' project. Residents and visitors alike will appreciate the significant improvements that have been made to the Dowker's Lane Bed and the Peace Garden through the efforts of KTC officers, voluntary groups and individuals.

We look forward to further developments in this 'historically rich' part of our town including the encouragement of greater biodiversity along Kirkland.

Councillor Andy Blackman, Chair of Kendal in Bloom Committee

Civic planting outside Town Hall



Bench repairs before and after



Christmas Lights, Switch On



This year has been one of real progress across our allotment community. At Town View, we have made several accessibility improvements which have proved extremely beneficial during the winter months. We also hosted the first Allotment community event. This was a great success, allowing people to network and receive information about allotments and climate conscious gardening. Alongside this, the steady improvements in general maintenance—paths, water points, plots —have made a noticeable difference to everyone’s day-to-day experience on site.

Councillor Alvin Finch, Chair of Allotments Committee

A Thriving Town

In the last year, we have been investing funding and time into developing key partnerships that contribute to the economic, cultural and historic vitality of the town.

- **Visit Kendal** – Visit Kendal continues to develop as a central resource for both visitors and residents to learn more about Kendal, including events attractions and activities. This year, we re-designed three information leaflets that showcase more about the town including an events calendar and walking trails. www.visit-kendal.co.uk
- **Local Heritage Partnership** – The Town Council has led the way to facilitate a partnership of stakeholders who are concerned about the preservation of Kendal’s precious heritage. There are many challenges, but only by talking and working together can we ensure that our town’s historic assets are preserved for future generations.
- **Stricklandgate House** – We’re proudly supporting Stricklandgate House’s exciting lottery-funded development project with a three-year investment, to transform the building into a modern and effective third sector hub in the Heart of Kendal.
- **Town of Culture 2028** – Through the Kendal Town of Culture Partnership, Kendal has launched its bid to become UK Town of Culture in 2028. Kendal Town Council are supporting the bid, which is bringing together more than 25 prominent arts, community and business groups to showcase the rich history and heritage of the town for the competition.



Stricklandgate House



Kendal Pattern Book of 1769

This year has been one of meaningful collaboration and forward momentum for Kendal. By strengthening key partnerships, we've helped promote the town's culture, support its heritage, and invest in projects that will benefit our community for years to come. From enhancing how people discover Kendal, to uniting organisations around heritage preservation and cultural ambition, we're proud of the foundations we've built—and excited for what these partnerships will enable in the future.

Councillor Richard Sutton, Chair of Mayoralty and Heritage Committee

Supporting People and Community Wellbeing

Local people are at the heart of Kendal's thriving community and are what make it such a special place. We're continuing to focus on supporting people and community wellbeing. Some highlights from this year include:

- **Grants** - In 2025 – 2026, we provided over £ 30,000 worth of community grants to groups and organisations in Kendal, with an additional £ 25,000 supporting the town's vibrant festivals.
- **Waste into Wellbeing** – Kendal Town Council continue to support Waste into Wellbeing, through rent payments, to establish themselves in their new home at the Eddington CIC.
- **Community Resilience** - Resilience is all about ensuring that the community can prepare for and quickly recover from emergency situations. Over the last year, we've been helping to develop 'community resilience' in Kendal, revitalising emergency plans and creating a strong volunteer network.

- **Flooding** – Kendal Town Council began working with the Environment Agency as soon as their plans for a flood relief scheme in Kendal became apparent. Eight years later, this is most apparent in the new glass wall on Waterside. Throughout the town, the Town Council has worked to lessen the impact, improve the design and ensure that the scheme is appropriate for our unique townscape and all of our communities.

It's been a delight chairing the Culture and Communities committee. We have given many grants supporting communities and festivals. I am particularly pleased to welcome back the Comic Arts Festival to Kendal in 2026 and proud of the support we have provided to key institutions such as the Quaker Tapestry Museum and Stricklandgate House. The Christmas lights were amazing again this year following our continued investment. A particular thanks to our officers for all their work.

Councillor Helen Ladhams, Chair of Culture and Communities Committee

Kendal Town Council is a consultee in planning matters, which means that it does not have legal powers itself, but its views have to be taken into account by Westmorland and Furness Council when they make their decisions. One of our greatest challenges had been the government's greatly increased new figure as an annual requirement for new housing.

We have looked at continuing developments such as Brigsteer Rd and High Sparrowmire this year – these are long term and continue to be altered. In practice, though, most applications considered are for small scale development. We look for their significant effect on the neighbourhood and Kendal as a whole, treating every application on its merits, within government restrictions. In addition, this year, we conducted responses in the consultation for W&F's latest Local Plan, commenting on policy and on proposed land allocation and these are ongoing as well as influencing local planning policies. The flood relief working sub-group continues to work to attempt to improve any the visual impact of plans that come from the Environment Agency (EA) as well as take this opportunity to create a Kendal river corridor with enhanced biodiversity. The EA is the organising and planning institution for this application and therefore actual powers for this development rests with the EA.

I'd like to thank all the Committee's members for their preparation & thought in an ever-changing legal world, and despite restrictions caused by the process guidelines.

Councillor Doug Rathbone, Chair of Planning Committee

Getting Around

In 2025 – 2026, we've made great progress in our ambition to change the way that we move around the town. Continuing support for active travel and encouraging people to explore alternative methods of transport, we've made key strides in the following areas:

- **Footpath Improvements** - In 2025, working in partnership with Westmorland and Furness Council, we funded improvements to 3 key footpaths and have a priority list for the coming year.
- **20 MPH** - We're thrilled to see the approval of the 20-mph scheme for Kendal. After advocating for several years, Kendal Town Council believe that the introduction of the 20-mph scheme will create friendlier, cleaner and safer streets.
- **Bus Shelters** - We've established a new maintenance routine for the bus shelters we own in Kendal, in the hope of encouraging the use of public transport. This work will continue and see further improvements, including replacements and where there is community need, introduction of lights and seating.

This has been a strong and productive year for the Environment Committee, with a clear focus on practical action to improve Kendal and respond to the climate and nature challenges we face. One of the most significant achievements has been the approval of the 20mph rollout in Kendal, which will help create safer, cleaner and friendlier streets while supporting a shift towards healthier and more sustainable travel. We have also secured funding for a new pump track, delivered improvements to a number of footpaths with further works already in the immediate pipeline, and supported enhancements at Bowling Fell. Alongside this, we have provided grants to local community groups to help deliver biodiversity projects, recognising the vital role local people play in protecting and enhancing nature. The committee has also continued to back a wide range of smaller but important improvements, from bins and benches to painted handrails and upgraded signage. Looking ahead, we want to build on this momentum, continuing to take practical action on climate, biodiversity, accessibility and the quality of Kendal's public spaces.

Councillor Eamonn Hennessy, Chair of Environment Committee



Before and after footpath improvements at Vicarage Drive



Replacement bus shelter at Castle Green Lane

Governance

In March, we launched an updated version of the Kendal Town Council website, marking a significant step forward in our governance and access to information.

www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk

We continue to focus on our governance and operations through the work of our Management and Audit Committees.

Over the past year, the Management Committee has dedicated significant time to two key areas of work:

Strengthening our approach to staffing matters

We have taken a much more proactive stance on staffing issues, with particular emphasis on ensuring that appraisals are completed on time and that any training needs a properly identified, monitored and delivered. Through the year, as issues have arisen, the Committee and the HR sub-group have provided senior managers with guidance and direction as required. The continued use of external HR support has also ensured that Kendal Town Council handles any staffing matters appropriately and in line with best practice.

Supporting the development of additional office space

We have overseen the process of securing and preparing additional office space to meet the Council's growing needs. As the year draws to a close, we are on the cusp of achieving a far more accessible and organised records system, along with a breakout room that will be available to us outside normal Kendal Town Hall operating hours.

Councillor Stephen Coleman, Chair of Management Committee

Finance

Most of the Town Council's income comes from the Council Tax, collected from residents within the civil parish of Kendal. Set alongside the tax collected to pay for other authorities, the Town Council share of the 'precept' accounts for around 2.5% of an average Council Tax bill.

In 2025, we precepted £712,496 contributing to a total income of £764,996.

The Council raises a relatively small amount through allotment rents and other sources of income. A larger sum comes from the Community Infrastructure Levy, from which the Council is allocated a share from new developments in the town. A small team of staff deliver the Council's services.

Kendal Town Council has an ambitious plan for the town and that ambition needs to rise to meet the growing challenges and opportunities our committees face.

The Audit Committee helps oversee and assess how effectively the Council has addressed the five priorities of its plan and has a key role in helping the Council to learn from its experience and more effectively serve the town.

Councillor Craig Russell, Chair of Audit Committee

Summary of Income and Expenditure for coming year

Income

Precept:	£785,488
Rents:	£25,250
Interest:	£20,000
CIL:	n/a
Other income:	£12,500
Total	£843,238

Expenditure

Allotments:	£16,350
Culture & Communities:	£175,500
Kendal in Bloom:	£40,000
Environment:	£37,095
Delivery, support & compliance:	£407,343
Management & overheads:	£143,800
Mayoralty & Heritage:	£23,150
Total:	£843,238

Attendance Records

The table shows the percentage of meetings attended by elected members of the council, where their attendance was recorded in the minutes. It does not show where Councillors submitted apologies for a meeting and their apology was accepted as a valid reason for not attending under the terms of s85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Name	% Attendance	Name	% Attendance
G Archibald	66	L Hendry	78
A Blackman	88	E Hennessy	87
S Blunden	60	H Ladhams	97
J Brook	41	S Long	60
D Brown	100	T Martland	79
A Campbell	resigned	D Miles	resigned
S Coleman	39	D Rathbone	80
J Cornthwaite	85	C Russell	88
J Dunlop	87	M Severn	29
L Edwards	99	K Simpson	46
R Edwards	58	G Supka	69
D Evans	54	R Sutton	83
S Falshaw	87	P Thornton	60
A Finch	32	G Tirvengadum	93