

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE PART I COUNCIL MEETING**  
**OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,**  
**HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE**  
**ON TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JULY 6PM**

- Present:** Councillor Ellis in the Chair
- Councillors Allman, Atkin, Brereton, B. Dhillon, K. Dhillon, Evans, Reeves, Sheridan and Simcock.
- Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald  
Deputy Clerk/RFO – Mrs. C. Caddock  
Administrative Assistant – Mrs. H. Thomas
- Apologies:** Councillors Ball (personal) and Price (work)

**Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests**

The Chair reminded Members of their responsibility to declare any personal interest or prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when the item is reached.

125/24-25 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 80 and 81 below).

Councillor Atkin **proposed** that the payment of accounts be approved; This proposal was **seconded** by Councillor K. Dhillon **and** was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

126/24-25 **JUNE 2024 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Simcock **proposed**, Councillor Brereton **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

**PROGRESS**

127/24-25 **BENCHES**

The RFO stated that we have still not received a further update from WBC regarding their search for a new supplier.

128/24-25 **WEBSITE**

- (a) The Clerk has been working on the new website updates. She stated that it still requires some additional information inputting and further checking prior to being ‘advertised’ to the community.
- (b) The RFO stated that to continue to maintain a smooth transition, our previous website provider has been contracted to supply ‘Joomla!’ support and website hosting for one further additional month (£73.00).

This arrangement will continue on a month-by-month basis until the new website goes live.

129/24-25 **ELECTION CHARGES**

The RFO reported that we have not yet received an invoice for the May 2024 local elections.

130/24-25 **OAKWOOD NOTICE BOARD**

The RFO stated that the noticeboard was delivered yesterday. Our Maintenance Team will liaise with the Caretaker of Birchwood CofE Primary School regarding the installation of the noticeboard.

131/24-25 **LIGHTING**

To note that the final phase of replacing all the fluorescent light units with LED lighting units took place on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

The only lights that are not currently LEDs are the halogen motion-activated security lights covering the barn rooms. These only come on when it is dark, mainly in winter and only when activated for a short period of time. They will be replaced as and when they cease working.

132/24-25 **ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDITS**

(a) **‘General Risk Assessment’ and ‘Fire Risk Assessment’**

The RFO reminded Members that the annual Health and Safety Audits undertaken by our current contracted Health and Safety specialists at which the ‘General Risk Assessment’ and ‘Fire Risk Assessments’ are reviewed and updated, will be undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

(b) **Legionella Risk Assessment**

To note that weekly water flushing and monthly temperature testing continue and that the Administrative Assistant has also now successfully completed the Legionella training course.

133/24-25 **CO-OPERATIVE BANKING**

To note that documents required by the bank, for adding the Administrative Assistant as an Officer who can set up payments for approval on the Co-operative Community Directplus account, are in the process of being completed.

134/24-25 **DIGITAL ACCOUNTING**

As resolved at the June 2024 meeting (minute 097/24-25) the RFO has liaised with Scribe regarding the onboarding of BTC onto their software accounting package.

The RFO stated that she has started to input BTC’s information into Scribe and is taking some online training modules to help familiarise herself with the software.

There is an initial set-up fee of £797.00 +VAT, then £89.00 +VAT monthly costs. This is a 10-year license.

135/24-25 **RENEWAL OF ADOBE ACROBAT PRO FOR TEAMS SUBSCRIPTION**

To note that, as resolved at the June 2024 meeting (minute 101/24-25) the two annual licenses for Acrobat Pro (£243.00 each) have been renewed.

136/24-25 **HEALTH & SAFETY AND EMPLOYMENT LAW CONTRACTS**

- (a) The RFO reminded Members that Officers are undertaking market testing to see if BTC can achieve better value for money for these services once our current contracts end.
- (b) The Clerk and RFO have had meetings with two different companies that offer Health and Safety and Employment Law packages and have received proposals from both. These will be presented at the September 2024 Council Meeting.

137/24-25 **END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS 2023/2024 AND AUDIT ITEMS**

- (a) To note that the end of year accounts have been submitted to the external auditor within the allotted timeframe. The relevant documents, including the audited accounts and the Notice of Public Rights were published on BTC's website and notice boards as required. Dated photographs and screenshots have been taken as 'evidence' to be included in next year's end of year accounts.

The RFO said that it will probably be September before we receive the final report.

- (b) To note that the internal auditor has confirmed that he is able to continue as BTC's internal auditor for 2024/2025 financial year, and that he remains independent of the Council.

**NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS**

138/24-25 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2023 – 30th June 2024.

The payroll figure for May 2024 was £15,173.15 (9) staff. The payroll figure for June 2024 was £15,381.48 (9 staff).

After consideration and approval by Members, the schedules will be signed by the Clerk or RFO, and the Chair, as soon as is practicable.

Members **unanimously approved** the schedules.

139/24-25 **BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN**

The RFO reminded Members that a Working Party Meeting took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024 to discuss and propose how the Council wishes to proceed over the 2024-2028 municipal years. Notes from this meeting were circulated to all Members prior to the Council Meeting.

It was **unanimously resolved** by those who attended the Working Party Meeting to approve the notes as an accurate record.

Members **unanimously resolved** that they were happy with the recommendations made within the Working Party notes.

Councillor Ellis said that he is happy to make the amendments to the draft document and the revised draft plan will be presented to full Council at a future meeting.

**Action** Councillor Ellis to draft a revised BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 and present it at a future meeting.

## 140/24-25 GAS AND ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS

The RFO circulated contract options received from two different brokers.

The RFO stated that she has also spoken directly to both SSE and Octopus Energy following a recommendation from the Council at a previous meeting. The RFO has compared the available options and sent her recommendations, along with all options, to Members prior to the meeting.

Councillor Atkin stated that, while he understands a 3-year fixed rate would be good for stability, he believes the 2-year fixed tariff by Octopus Energy would be cheaper.

Councillor Reeves wondered whether opting for a 3-year fixed contract would be less of a financial risk than opting for a shorter, 2-year contract, with the possibility that prices might increase again following the conclusion of the second year.

Members discussed the various options, including the possibility of how the energy market could fluctuate.

They **unanimously resolved** to opt for the 3-year fixed British Gas lite options for both the gas and electricity contracts, as per the RFO's recommendation.

**Action** RFO to arrange for the new gas and electricity contracts to be implemented.

## 141/24-25 FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPENSATION SCHEME (FSCS)

To note some information circulated from ChALC, from Parkinson Partnership LLP for information:

*“At least one bank has written to Parish Councils saying that it believes that they are no longer covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). This seems to be a mistake, as the FSCS standard conditions have not changed and still say “FSCS does not protect deposits made by a public authority (including a Parish Council), unless it is a small local authority with an annual budget of up to EUR500,000” (about £430.950 using the required 3 July 2023 exchange rate)”*

The RFO stated that there is some confusion as it is not entirely clear whether the ‘annual budget’ refers to the amount spent by a Council in a year, or the total it holds in all banking accounts collectively. Further investigation is needed.

**Action** Officers to investigate this matter for clarity.

**The meeting concluded at 7.15pm.**

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual May 2024 and part of the June 2024 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
08.05.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 74.06	£ 14.81	£ 88.87
09.05.2024	DD	British Gas	Parkers Farm gas 22 March 24 to 23 April 24	£ 76.72	£ 3.83	£ 80.55
13.05.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
15.05.2024	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 39.85	£ 7.97	£ 47.82
15.05.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 85.32	£ 17.06	£ 102.38
15.05.2024	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - 01.04.2024 to 30.04.2024	£ 40.80		£ 40.80
16.05.2024	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) May 2024	£ 237.81	£ 47.56	£ 285.37
16.05.2024	*	Elite Industrial Supplies (aka HiVis)	Workwear and PPE (inc. items for new staff member)	£ 180.13	£ 36.03	£ 216.16
22.05.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 33.11	£ 6.62	£ 39.73
24.05.2024	*	J&K Ross Ltd	Safety boots (ppe) HE	£ 40.32	£ 8.06	£ 48.38
24.05.2024	*	Black Box Security	Fire Extinguisher Annual Service and Fire Blanket Inspection	£ 139.90	£ 27.98	£ 167.88
24.05.2024	*	CMUK Visual Safety Ltd (t/a Eureka)	3 x critical injury (bleed) kit - single use	£ 156.00	£ 31.20	£ 187.20
24.05.2024	*	Black Box Security	6 monthly commercial fire maintenance and 6 monthly emergency lighting maintenance contracts, and a replacement battery	£ 292.53	£ 58.50	£ 351.03
				£ -		
29.05.2024	*	Premiclean	May office cleaning service (with credits for bank holidays)	£ 370.87	£ 74.17	£ 445.04
29.05.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 84.64	£ 16.93	£ 101.57
30.05.2024	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone charges (May 2024)	£ 60.90	£ 12.18	£ 73.08
30.05.2024	DD	James Todd	April 2024 payroll fee	£ 58.00	£ 11.60	£ 69.60
30.05.2024	DD	O2	New mobile phone, adaptor and cables and monthly contract (Awaiting formal O2 invoice - VAT amount may change)	£ 80.72	£ 16.14	£ 96.86
				£ -		
31.05.2024	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - June 2024 monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
31.02.2024	DD	Viking	Transfer files and A5 notebooks	£ 65.95	£ 13.19	£ 79.14
03.06.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
03.06.2024	DD	B&Q Trade Account (Screw fix)	Fence stain (planters), plant food and basket plants	£ 55.37	£ 11.07	£ 66.44
04.06.2024	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 161.09		£ 161.09
04.06.2024	*	Wynhcote	One month Joomla! Support and hosting	£ 73.00		£ 73.00
05.06.2024	DD	SSE	Electricity - Parkers Farm (15/11/23 to 14/05/24)	£ 397.60	£ 19.88	£ 417.48
05.06.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 51.93	£ 10.39	£ 62.32
06.06.2024	*	Defibstore	Adult pads and battery pack for defibrillator	£ 140.00	£ 28.00	£ 168.00
06.06.2024	*	Reimb C. Caddock	Amazon - 4-way service utility keys (for waste bins)	£ 9.48	£ 1.92	£ 11.40
06.06.2024	*	Reimb C. Caddock	Amazon - 10 x A6 notebooks	£ 11.84	£ 2.37	£ 14.21
06.06.2024	*	Reimb C. Caddock	K-Mart Wholesale Limited - large nitrile gloves (ppe)	£ 14.16	£ 2.83	£ 16.99
06.06.2024	*	Reimb C. Caddock	K-Mart Wholesale Limited - medium nitrile gloves (ppe)	£ 20.82	£ 4.17	£ 24.99
06.06.2024	*	Reimb C. Caddock	Reeknokol - stickers for planners	£ 13.83	£ 2.77	£ 16.60
07.06.2024	*	JDH Business Services Ltd.	Year end internal audit 2023/2024	£ 422.00	£ 84.40	£ 506.40
07.06.2024	*	Staff wages June 2024	9 staff	£ 15,381.48		£ 15,381.48
08.06.2024	*	Reimb. F. McDonald	Petty Cash float reimbursement	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
10.06.2024	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd.	Diagnostics and repairs to SC19 TYF (ABS reluctor ring)	£ 127.50	£ 25.50	£ 153.00
12.06.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
12.06.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 76.17	£ 15.23	£ 91.40
14.06.2024	*	Elite Industrial Supplies	Workwear	£ 98.89	£ 19.78	£ 118.67
14.06.2024	*	Parish Online	New website May 28 2024 - May 28 2025	£ 425.00	£ 85.00	£ 510.00
14.06.2024	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: April 2024 Eee £1,130.72 Eer £3,759.76	£ 4,890.48		£ 4,890.48
14.06.2024	*	HMRC	Tax £1,531.40 Nil £ 2,1352.18 (6 May 2024 to 5 June 2024)	£ 3,883.58		£ 3,883.58
16.06.2024	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 73.92	£ 14.78	£ 88.70

Payments of Account since 16th June 2024

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
17.06.2024	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - 01.05.2024 to 30.04 .2024	£ 39.80		£ 39.80
19.06.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 134.29	£ 26.86	£ 161.15
21.06.2024	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 36.35	£ 1.82	£ 38.17
25.06.2024	*	Premiclean	June office cleaning service	£ 482.13	£ 96.43	£ 578.56
26.06.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 57.45	£ 11.49	£ 68.94
26.06.2024	DD	O2	Monthly contract	£ 32.00	£ 6.40	£ 38.40
26.06.2024	*	Cheshire PAT Testing (M Shallcross)	Annual PAT testing of electrical items at BTC (86 items)	£ 71.60		£ 71.60
26.06.2024	*	Black Box Group (previously t/a ESI)	2 x new fire extinguishers and disposal of old cylinders	£ 70.00	£ 14.00	£ 84.00
26.06.2024	*	Viking	Stationery - A4 blue copier paper	£ 64.20	£ 12.84	£ 77.04
26.06.2024	*	Viking	Stationery - gusset envelopes	£ 59.98	£ 12.00	£ 71.98
26.06.2024	*	labdesk ltd	Recurring - Microsoft 365 Online Plan (May & June 24), Microsoft 365 Business Premium (June 24), labdesk 365 accelerator (one month) & labdesk 365 Cloud Backup unlimited storage (one month)	£ 204.42	£ 40.88	£ 245.30
26.06.2024	*	E Smith & Son	Hanging basket refills (the cost of the baskets for the shopping centre is reimbursed to BTC)	£ 636.70	£ 127.34	£ 764.04
26.06.2024	*	labdesk ltd	Mircrosoft 365 accelerator onboarding	£ 850.00	£ 170.00	£1,020.00
27.06.2024	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone charges	£ 60.90	£ 12.18	£ 73.08
27.06.2024	*	Wynchcote	One month Joomla! Support and hosting (during crossover point	£ 73.00		£ 73.00
27.06.2024	*	Swift (NW) Ltd	Grant - portaloo for Birchwood Carnival 2024 (Public Health Act 1936, s.87)	£ 600.00	£ 120.00	£ 720.00
28.06.2024	*	labdesk ltd	labdesk 365 accelerator v24 20.06.24 to 19.07.24	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00
01.07.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 32.80		£ 32.80
01.07.2024	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - July 2024 monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
01.07.2024	DD	James Todd	May 2024 payroll fee	£ 65.25	£ 13.05	£ 78.30
01.07.2024	DD	Direct365	Hygiene disposal unit 5/6/24 to 4/6/25 & Duty of Care documents	£ 135.18	£ 27.04	£ 162.22
03.07.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 76.61	£ 15.32	£ 91.93
04.07.2024	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 161.09		£ 161.09
05.07.2024	*	S&S Marquees Ltd	(Grant) Hire of marquee/table/chairs 2023 Bw d Carnival	£ 2,117.80	£ 423.56	£2,541.36
			<i>(Local Government &amp; Rating Act 1972 (Section 145) (Provision of Entertainment and Support of the Arts))</i>			
08.07.2024	*	July 2024 Wages	9 staff	£ 15,271.99		£15,271.99
09.07.2024	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	SC19 TYF - New tyre fitting and disposal of old tyre	£ 100.83	£ 20.17	£ 121.00
09.07.2024	*	Hollis Electrical & Security Services	Replacement of 41 x fluorescent light fittings with LED fittings	£ 2,653.10	£ 530.63	£3,183.73
09.07.2024	*	labdesk ltd	Acrobat Pro for teams subscription renewal	£ 486.00	£ 97.20	£ 583.20
10.07.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 62.28	£ 12.45	£ 74.73
10.07.2024	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Argos - Canon IXUS 285 HS compact digital camera and SD Card	£ 254.95	£ 50.98	£ 305.93
10.07.2024	*	J&K Ross Ltd	PPE - Safety Boots (SM)	£ 57.60	£ 11.52	£ 69.12
10.07.2024	*	Gopak	Folding table	£ 97.24	£ 19.45	£ 116.69
11.07.2024	DD	British Gas	Gas Parkers Farm 25 May 24 to 26 June 24	£ 33.91	£ 1.69	£ 35.60
12.07.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
12.07.2024	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - new starter motor	£ 283.64	£ 56.73	£ 340.37
12.07.2024	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: April 2024 Eee £1,144.82 Eer £3,808.98	£ 4,953.80		£4,953.80
12.07.2024	*	HMRC	Tax £1,532.60 NI £ 2,405.16 (6 June 2024 to 5 July 2024)	£ 3,937.76		£3,937.76
14.07.2024	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 24.98	£ 5.00	£ 29.98

Payments of accounts for approval at the July 2024 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 161.09		£ 161.09
	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 32.80		£ 32.80
	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
	DD	Avoira	Cloud SAAS Protection - tw o additional months (June and July 24)	£ 66.82	£ 13.38	£ 80.18
	DD	James Todd	June 2024 payroll fee	£ 65.25	£ 13.05	£ 78.30
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area (June 2024)	£ 17.47	£ 0.87	£ 18.34
	*	Premiclean	June office cleaning service	£ 482.13	£ 96.43	£ 578.56
	*	Earth Anchor	Bespoke notice board for Oakw ood	£ 885.00	£ 177.00	£1,062.00
	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	SC19 TYF - MOT and full service	tbc		
	*	Labdesk	Microsoft 365 Business Premium (July24), labdesk 365 Cloud Backup unlimited storage (July 24) and Microsoft 365 Exchange Online Plan (July 24),	£ 141.90	£ 28.38	£ 170.28
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease	£ 252.00	£ 42.00	£ 210.00
	DD	DVLA	Vehicle Tax for SC19 TYF	£ 335.00		£ 335.00
	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 32.50	£ 6.50	£ 39.00
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - 01.05.2024 to 31.05.2024	£ 39.80		£ 39.80
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - August monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 57.48	£ 11.50	£ 68.98
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: July 2024 Eee £1,145.05 Eer £3,809.81	£ 4,954.86		£4,954.86
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,645.60 NI £ 2,406.06 (6 July 2024 to 5 August 2024)	£ 4,051.66		£4,051.66
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 99.36	£ 19.87	£ 119.23
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - 01.06.2024 to 30.06.2024	£ 41.60		£ 41.60