



## **BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET AND PRECEPT TIMETABLE POLICY**

### **Introduction:**

Birchwood Town Council is required each year, to formally consider its financial position and set a Budget and Precept for the following financial year.

The calculation of the Precept (Council Tax) is carried out in accordance with s. 41 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (with specific regard to the sections relating to England).

The Budget is the financial plan that the Council will implement throughout the next financial year. One of the main aims of setting a Budget, is to be able to calculate what the Precept will be. This is the amount that Birchwood Town Council will charge its residents in order to cover the costs incurred in delivering services for our community.

Having a Budget also provides financial accountability. The most recent figures are published to Members (along with the Budget line) for information/review, as part of the monthly reconciliation documents.

Having the figures available to view monthly, allows for ongoing monitoring of the financial position of the Council, and may highlight any potential issues with cashflow or 'overspends', showing where agreed earmarked reserves are required to be drawn on.

Budgeting also allows the Council to plan for future community projects, along with any ongoing costs going forward and proposed timescales.

### **Budget and Precept Setting Timetable:**

The timetable for Birchwood Town Council to undertake its annual Budget and Precept setting discussions will, unless there are exceptional circumstances, remain the same each year:

**(a) In the first or second week of October – to hold a Pre-Budget, Strategy and Precept Working Party Meeting.**

- This meeting will be open to all Members and may be held either as an online meeting, or in person, depending on the availability of Members at the time.
- Prior to this meeting the RFO will have spent some time looking at the current year's income, expenditure and reserves, using the most up to date figures that are available, to start to put together a draft forecast of what the year-end projected outturn will be and to create a financial projection for the next two financial years.
- At the Working Party Meeting, a lot of background information is given to Members by the RFO, along with proposed draft figures, and Councillors and Officers are free to exchange views, suggestions, etc. No resolutions are made at the Working Party Meeting. Recommendations can be made, to take forward to the next full Council Meeting.

**(b) At the October Council Meeting (normally held on the fourth Tuesday in the month) the first formal Budget Strategy and Precept Meeting will take place.**

- At the October Meeting, any recommendations from the Working Party Meeting will be presented to, and considered by, full Council. These may be reviewed as either Part I or Part II discussions, depending on the nature of the item(s) to be discussed.
- If the RFO has received any more specific financial information, and/or up to date figures since the Working Party Meeting, these will be included in amended documents presented to the Council for further consideration.

At this stage of the budgeting process, some of the figures are likely to require further adjustment. All figures are 'best estimates'.

- The Council will then give the RFO further guidance on how they wish the budget to be amended or re-considered (if necessary). Amendments and any further updates will be brought back to the November Meeting for further discussions and/or approval.

**(c) At the November Meeting, a full draft Budget and Precept will be presented to the Council.**

- Prior to the November meeting, the Town Council should have received information from Warrington Borough Council, confirming the number of Birchwood Band D properties that will be used to calculate the Precept for the following financial year. This figure can increase or decrease year on year, and will affect the formal Precept calculations.
- At this meeting, the Council will be asked to formally approve the Budget and Precept for the following financial year. If any additional review is required, this can be requested by Council.

**(d) December Meeting**

- The final Budget/Precept figures will be presented either for confirmation or formal resolution by the Council.

**(e) January**

- The Precept requirement and relevant documents will be submitted to Warrington Borough Council by their given deadline (this date can change, but is usually around the middle of January).

This policy was approved by Birchwood Town Council on 19th December 2023.