

**MINUTES OF THE JULY PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING  
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,  
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE, WA3 6AN  
ON TUESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022, 6PM**

**Present:** Councillor Ellis in the Chair  
Councillors Allen, Atkin, Ball, Bowden, Brereton, Dempsey, Evans, Scott,  
Sheridan, Simcock and Reeves.

Clerk – Mrs F McDonald  
Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO – Mrs C Caddock  
Administration Assistant – Mrs H Vout

**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.

*Councillor Ellis – Birchwood Youth and Community Centre (BYCC)  
Councillor Atkin and Councillor Ellis – Incredible Edible Birchwood*

112/22-23 **JUNE 2022 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Scott **proposed**, Councillor Sheridan **seconded**, and it was **resolved** that: The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

113/22-23 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Councillor Atkin **proposed** the Payment of Accounts be approved (see pages 94 and 95); Councillor Brereton **seconded** the proposal. This was **resolved** by those Members present.

**PROGRESS**

114/22-23 **INTERNAL AUDITOR**

The RFO stated that following the Town Council's resolution that it wants to continue with the services of our current internal auditor, JDH Business Services, they were contacted and we received verbal affirmation from them that they wish to remain as our internal auditors for the next financial year.

We will receive written confirmation later this week, that JDH Business Services remain independent of the supervision and management of the Council for the year ended 2022/23.

115/22-23 **EXTERNAL AUDIT - END OF YEAR 2021/2022**

The RFO advised that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and all supporting documentation required by the external auditor were submitted prior to the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022. We have received an email from the external auditor advising that the documentation has been received.

## 116/22-23 **BTC VEHICLE AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

- (a) The RFO reported that the issue regarding the electric vans not charging fully has been identified as being due to faulty sensors in both vehicles. One of the van's new sensors has already been fitted. The other van is also booked in for replacement of the sensor. This work has been done under warranty.
- (b) The RFO advised Members that one of the electric vehicles (MK71 FUU) requires some body work repairs due to someone reversing into the vehicle while it was parked. This is being dealt with through our insurance company.
- (c) The RFO stated that the fault with the opening/closing electrical mechanism on the o/s window of the tipper has been repaired (£273.83 inc. VAT).

## 117/22-23 **LOCKING STUMPS – PROPOSED PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT**

The Clerk stated that she had been in contact with WBC regarding the refurbishment of Locking Stumps play area. The Clerk advised that WBC is considering the possibility of contributing additional funding for this project; this would potentially allow the footprint of the play area to be increased slightly, with the possibility of one or two additional pieces of play equipment being installed. WBC will present proposed improvements to BTC in early to mid-September, for Councillors to consider. It is hoped that work on the play area may be able to commence in early October 2022.

## 118/22-23 **INCREDIBLE EDIBLE BIRCHWOOD / TOWN COUNCIL LAND**

*Cllr Atkin and Cllr Ellis declared an interest.*

- (a) The RFO informed Members that a meeting will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022 with Incredible Edible Birchwood and BYCC. This meeting is to formalise arrangements for the use of land at the rear of Birchwood Youth and Community Centre- (a draft agreement was sent to Members in the papers for this meeting). The draft agreement has also been sent to Incredible Edible Birchwood and BYCC for their input.
- (b) The RFO advised that, regarding the previous efforts to create a new lease in relation to the BYCC building being on BTC land, she proposes to put together a much simpler agreement which will protect the community use of BYCC, and also BTC, should BYCC ever cease using the building for any reason. This will be agreed by BTC and BYCC, with the option of asking a solicitor to review it prior to signing.

Members agreed with this proposal.

**Action** RFO to work on a draft agreement between BTC and BYCC as detailed above.

## 119/22-23 **STREET LIGHTING**

The RFO noted that we are still awaiting feedback following our request to WBC asking if they would consider adopting the two BTC owned lighting columns near the garages on Armstrong Close. This was raised at the recent partnership meeting with WBC. The potential adoption of a number of lighting columns on Ainscough Road was also discussed.

It was suggested that an evening walkabout take place with BTC Councillors and WBC in order to assess the general lighting levels in a number of areas of Birchwood. It was proposed that this should take place once the clocks go back.

## 120/22-23 SPEED INDICATOR DEVICES

The RFO informed Member that a working party meeting took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

The Administrative Assistant advised that it was proposed that a questionnaire be made available to residents in order to gauge support for the proposed installation of the devices within Birchwood. Information collected would be useful in supporting any applications for grant funding.

The Administrative Assistant also informed Members that she had been in contact with other Parish Councils to see if there was any guidance that they could provide regarding the purchase and installation of these devices. It was noted that there had been a few Local Councils that had successfully gained funding via the PCC Fund.

The Chair asked the Clerk's office to ask if any Local Councils would be happy to share copies of their applications, as this could help BTC in gaining funding via the PCC Fund.

**Action** The Clerk's office to request copies of the completed applications submitted by other local Parish Councils.

**Action** Clerk's office to prepare and publish a questionnaire for the local community to offer their views on the Town Council's proposals to purchase/install speed indicator devices.

It was noted that only solar-powered options will be presented to the Council for consideration.

Cllr Atkin suggested that consideration be given to which device is best suited for any proposed locations.

The Chair stated that, ideally, there should be two devices at each location – one pointing in either direction.

Members were asked if they wished the Council to purchase a device in this financial year.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Allen, **seconded** by Cllr Sheridan and Members **unanimously resolved** to the purchase or match funding of one device within the 2022/2023 financial year, depending on whether the Council is successful in obtaining grant funding from the PCC fund.

This will enable the Council to ascertain how useful the device is in practice, in relation to how it might help to address speeding issues. Devices that gather data will also be useful in providing evidence to support any future grant applications for additional devices.

Members were asked whether they wished the RFO to include costs in the budget figures for the 2023/2024 financial year. Members resolved that the Council should budget for potential additional units in coming years. The purchase of additional devices would be dependent on the first device meeting expectations and budget restraints-

Members agreed that, in principle and depending on the outcome of the first device, they would like speed indicator devices installed in at least five locations.

The Clerk advised that there had been a few potentially interested parties that might be willing to consider providing some funding to help purchase speed indicator devices.

If required, the next working party meeting to discuss options regarding the speed indicator devices will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022 at 10.30am.

**Action** The Clerk's office to compile the list of potential devices for the Council's consideration at the next meeting.

## 121/22-23 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING

- (a) To note that the shopping centre has advised BTC that it plans on asking BTC to supply and maintain additional hanging baskets next year.
- (b) To note that the shredder was serviced on 11th July 2022. A broken gear wheel required replacement at a cost of £38.74 +VAT.

## NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

### 122/22-23 BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account period 1st April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

The payroll figure for May 2022 (9 staff) was £11,415.72. The figure for June 2022 (9 staff) was £11,401.74.

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

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Dempsey **seconded**, and Members **unanimously resolved** to approve the bank reconciliation.

### 123/22-23 RESOURCES – STAFF AND VEHICLES

#### (a) **Vehicles**

The RFO advised Members that the team are currently 'managing' with the two electric vans, the small caddy van and one tipper van. The Senior Maintenance Operative has advised that there is a need for an additional tipper van.

The tipper van is required for the emptying of the bins twice a week, collecting and moving flytipped items, transporting lots of green waste to WBC's site when they have undertaken cutting jobs, etc.

The cutting work (unless it is on a very small scale) can only currently be undertaken during mid-week as the tipper is needed on a Monday and Friday for the bin emptying rounds – this is restricting the way in which the workload can be organised.

The team have tried collecting the bin bags in the other vans for onward transportation to the waste site at School Brow but they are enclosed, the bags are extremely foul smelling and often 'leak' – which is not really acceptable, especially in the new vehicles, even with the vents and the bags of waste have to be hand balled off the van.

The RFO asked if Members would consider the approval of the purchase of an additional tipper van.

The RFO stated that second-hand vehicles of all types are currently holding their prices very well. She shared some examples taken from the internet that showed vehicles currently available, for example, a diesel, 2018 Ford Transit 2.0 LWB caged tipper, with 42521 miles on the clock, 38 Mpg, 191 CO<sub>2</sub> (G/KM) from Van Monster is currently selling for £20,198 +VAT; which looked to be in very good condition.

The team are also going to look at some secondhand tipper vehicles at a local dealer, which are around the £25,000 mark.

The RFO stated that new diesel tippers vary in price depending on the manufacturer. A single-cab Ford Transit tipper can be purchased for prices starting at £30,995 +VAT and Road Tax. Adding a cage would be an additional cost (in the region of £800) along with a beacon – possibly reversing beepers and sign writing.

The RFO explained that there are currently very few options available on the market for electric tipper vehicles. The cost of an electric tipper is very high; anything from £55K upwards.

The RFO proposed that at this point in time, it would best to consider the diesel tippers as these are lower in price and there are more available on the market.

Members discussed the matter and **resolved** that at this time, due to the budget available and the lack of greener alternatives, it would be best to consider diesel options.

**Action** Clerk's office to continue investigating possible options for a new/second hand tipper.

**(b) Staff Resources**

The RFO asked Members to consider a request by the Senior Maintenance Operative for an additional full-time member of staff from April 2023.

Having been working with a reduced workforce (down to five full-time equivalent staff) the Senior Maintenance Operative had previously indicated that the team would 'see how it goes' for the 2022/2023 municipal year. The team has been working with four full-time maintenance team operatives and two part-time (whose hours have reduced to equal one fte) - see Minute 432/21-22 (a) (i) of the November 2021 Budget, strategy and Precept Meeting since April 2022.

During the same discussion the RFO had added that if it became necessary, there was enough funding in the proposed 2022/2023 budget for an additional Maintenance Operative to be employed.

The Senior Maintenance Operative has now stated that the team is finding it difficult to undertake all the work that they might have been able to do in the past, so some cutting work is not being undertaken as proactively as he would like and some of the litter picking is not being undertaken as frequently. He has asked if it would now be possible to employ one additional Maintenance Operative.

The Senior Maintenance Operative has said that if the same staffing level is maintained, the Council might have to consider what its environmental priorities are. He is happy to meet with Members if necessary.

Members asked if more information could be provided regarding the need for additional staff and cost of hiring an additional member of staff. Consideration needs to be taken regarding the increase in the living wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, details of which are expected to be released earlier this year, in September. They are usually released in November each year.

It was suggested that a meeting be arranged between the Senior Maintenance Operative and Councillors to discuss the needs of the team in relation to the environmental priorities of the Council.

**Action** Clerk to arrange meeting with the Senior Maintenance Operative and Councillors.

## 124/22-23 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING

- (a) Legal and General have undertaken the annual review of BTC's Ill Health Liability Insurance and done a 'sweep up' following the information submitted to them at the start of the new financial year.  
  
The monthly payment was £166.51. The August 2022 payment will be £93.45 (to take account of credit due) and will then be a monthly amount of £159.87 from September 2022 until the next review.
- (b) To receive the monthly 'health reports' from Avoira re: BTC's IT for June 2022. There are no issues to report.
- (c) The RFO noted that the cost of some basic items has increased significantly in the past year, even though the Clerk's office always tries to find the best deals. For example, the cost of A4 white paper was £2.77 per ream in January 2021 and rose to £3.95 per ream in April 2022 and is now £4.14 per ream (all prices + VAT). Colour paper has increased from £3.98 per ream to around £7.19 per ream + VAT.
- (d) To note that the cost of our water relating to account ref 4083868280, will increase on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 from £23.37 to £26.72 – a rise of just over 14%.
- (e) We received notification from our insurance company that there will be a change to its UK legal status from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 (subject to approval by the High Court). A report produced by an independent expert for the High Court concluded that the proposed transfer will not have a material adverse effect on any policyholders or claimants.
- (f) To note that Cheshire Pension Fund has been working on a new 'Communications Strategy' and has advised that a consultation will be taking place regarding this strategy.
- (g) To note that during the recent two days of extreme heat, the maintenance team worked slightly shorter hours. However, on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July, they started work at 6am to enable them to clean the playgrounds, and undertake other necessary jobs (e.g. watering the hanging baskets and planters and removing fly tipping) whilst it was slightly cooler.

## 125/22-23 AUGUST RECESS

The RFO asked Members to consider whether they wish a recess to be taken in August and, if so, that the Chair, Vice Chair, Leader of the Council, the Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer/Deputy Clerk be authorised, under delegated powers, to take any emergency action that may arise regarding planning matters, or payment of accounts.

If anything, particularly 'pressing' arises that might require significant consideration, a (remote) working party meeting or in-person Extraordinary Meeting of the Council could be called to discuss the matter(s).

Cllr Scott proposed, Councillor Allen seconded, and it was **resolved** that the Council will not hold a monthly meeting in August 2022, and that any emergency action may be taken under delegated powers.

\* Cllr Evans left the meeting at 7.40pm

**This part of the meeting concluded at 8.10pm**

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual May 2022 and part of the June 2022 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
17.05.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
17.05.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	£ 118.24	£ 5.91	£ 124.15
17.05.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges	£ 39.40		£ 39.40
18.05.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mow ers, equipment)	£ 47.11	£ 9.42	£ 56.53
22.05.2022	DD	SWALEC	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 325.39	£ 16.26	£ 341.65
24.05.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 9.20	£ 0.46	£ 9.66
24.05.2022	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services May 2022	£ 343.84	£ 68.77	£ 412.61
25.05.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mow ers, equipment)	£ 86.30	£ 17.25	£ 103.55
30.05.2022	DD	James Todd (Go cardless)	Payroll services (April 2022)	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
30.05.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
30.05.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	HK64 NNM - re: flat battery	£ 19.80	£ 3.96	£ 23.76
30.05.2022	*	ESI	Emergency Lighting Maintenance	£ 70.00	£ 14.00	£ 84.00
30.05.2022	*	ESI	Commercial Fire Maintenance	£ 160.00	£ 32.00	£ 192.00
31.05.2022	DD	Copyrite	Photocopying charges	£ 58.17	£ 11.64	£ 69.81
01.06.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37
01.06.2022	DD	Trade Point (B&Q a/c)	Timber for sign posts (re: rew ilding)	£ 23.13	£ 4.63	£ 27.76
06.06.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51
07.06.2022	*	June Wages	9 staff	£ 11,401.74		£ 11,401.74
08.06.2022	*	Viking	Papers hand tow els	£ 66.96	£ 13.39	£ 80.35
08.06.2022	*	Millhouse Training	Sharps Safety and Removal (6 x staff)	£ 300.00	£ 60.00	£ 360.00
08.06.2022	*	C Caddock (reimburse)	K-Mart Limited 12 x boxes disposable gloves	£ 59.88	£ 12.00	£ 71.88
08.06.2022	*	C Caddock (reimburse)	Peppy Group (UK) Limited 6 x 480ml hand sanitiser gel	£ 10.82	£ 2.17	£ 12.99
08.06.2022	*	C Caddock (reimburse)	The Beauty Center Ltd - 12 x 50ml hand sanitiser gel	£ 7.49	£ 1.50	£ 8.99
08.06.2022	*	C Caddock (reimburse)	Aw an Marketing International Limited - anti-bac w ipes 12	£ 11.57	£ 2.32	£ 13.89
08.06.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mow ers, equipment)	£ 146.04	£ 29.20	£ 175.24
10.06.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,220.20 NI £2,109.73 (6 June 2022 to 5 July 2022)	£ 3,329.93		£ 3,329.93
10.06.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions June 22 Eee £810.25 Eer £2,870.5	£ 3,680.75		£ 3,680.75
13.06.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 97.40		£ 97.40
15.06.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges	£ 39.20		£ 39.20
15.06.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mow ers, equipment)	£ 44.79	£ 8.96	£ 53.75
15.06.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
17.06.2022	*	Cheshire PAT Testing	Annual PAT testing 2022 - 89 x items	£ 73.40		£ 73.40
17.06.2022	*	Sw ift Loos	Grant (Public Health Act 1936, s.87) Portaloo s - 2022 Ca	£ 350.00	£ 70.00	£ 420.00
17.06.2022	*	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (June monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
17.06.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	£ 89.35	£ 4.47	£ 93.82
17.06.2022	*	Mrs F. McDonald	Reimburse - petty cash float	£ 100.00		£ 100.00

Payments of Account since 18th June 2022

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
21.06.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 9.34	£ 0.47	£ 9.81
22.06.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 220.87	£ 44.17	£ 265.04
24.06.2022	*	Infotone	Toner cartridge	£ 29.95	£ 5.99	£ 35.94
24.06.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions E'ee £810.98 E'er £2,866.16	£ 3,677.14		£ 3,677.14
24.06.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,215.80 NI £2,103.97 (6 June 2022 to 5 July 2022)	£ 3,319.77		£ 3,319.77
24.06.2022	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services June 2022	£ 412.60	£ 82.52	£ 495.12
24.06.2022	*	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (July monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
24.06.2022	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Year End Internal Audit 2021/22	£ 315.00	£ 63.00	£ 378.00
27.06.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges (re: August 2021)	£ 39.40		£ 39.40
27.06.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges (re: July 2021)	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
27.06.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges (re: September 2021)	£ 41.60		£ 41.60
29.06.2022	*	All Pumps Direct	Replacement pump for water bowser	£ 131.64	£ 26.33	£ 157.97
29.06.2022	*	Royal Images	Photograph	£ 78.00	£ 15.60	£ 93.60
29.06.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
29.06.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (equipment)	£ 7.62	£ 1.52	£ 9.14
30.06.2022	DD	James Todd (Go cardless)	Payroll services (May 2022)	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
30.06.2022	DD	Copyrite	Photocopying charges	£ 85.32	£ 17.06	£ 102.38
01.07.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37
04.07.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51
06.07.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 74.61	£ 14.92	£ 89.53
07.07.2022	*	July 2022 Wages	9 staff	£ 11,606.97		£ 11,606.97
12.07.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 97.40		£ 97.40
13.07.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 149.98	£ 29.99	£ 179.97
15.07.2022	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62

Payments of accounts for approval at the July 2022 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance (Aug - adjusted following 'sw eep-up')	£ 93.45		£ 93.45
	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 26.72		£ 26.72
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 97.40		£ 97.40
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 41.20		£ 41.20
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) July 2022	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
	DD	James Todd	June 2022 payroll fee	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 8.58	£ 0.44	£ 9.29
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 161.55	£ 32.29	£ 193.84
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 39.80	£ 7.96	£ 47.76
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions July 22 E'ee £811.46 E'er £2867.90	£ 3,679.36		£ 3,679.36
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,317.80 NI £1,905.62 (6 July 2022 to 5 August 2022)	£ 3,223.42		£ 3,223.42
	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services July 2022	£ 412.60	£ 82.52	£ 495.12
	*	Viking	Copier paper (prices have increased)	£ 237.50	£ 47.50	£ 285.00
	*	S&S Marquees Ltd	Marquee/tables/chairs hire - Birchwood Carnival 2022 (grant)	£ 1,675.50	£ 335.10	£ 2,010.60
	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm - June 2022 - Credit £16.88			
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subscription) August 2022	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance (Sept 2022 - adjusted new monthly premium)	£ 159.87		£ 159.87