

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MINUTES OF
THE MARCH 2022 COUNCIL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE, WA3 6AN,
ON TUESDAY 22ND MARCH 2022**

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

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
RFO / Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C. Caddock

Apologies: Councillor Scott (away) and Councillor Ball (health)
Admin Assistant – Mrs. H. Vout (health), PCSO Titans (health)

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 – Development Management Committee (WBC)

Councillors Atkin, Reeves and Simcock – Birchwood Carnival Committee

554/21-22 **FEBRUARY 2022 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING
MINUTES**

Councillor Ellis **proposed**, Councillor Atkin **seconded**, and it was **resolved** that: The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 22nd February 2022 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

555/21-22 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 283 and 284 below).

Councillor Ellis **proposed** the Payment of Accounts be approved; Councillor Evans **seconded** the proposal. This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

556/21-22 **PARKERS FARM ESTATE**

The RFO stated that the Clerk is continuing to liaise with Trinity and Cube regarding final snagging work and adjustments to the soil pipe at the rear of the building to be undertaken.

557/21-22 **BTC VEHICLES AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

- (a) Members received the February 2022 EV Cost & CO2 savings report from the Geotab readings. This shows a total saving of £203.61 compared to current diesel costs and a saving of 424.25kg in CO2 emissions.

- (b) To note that we have received a vehicle (partial) tax refund of £146.26 following the sale of NH57 CZV.
- (c) The RFO reported that the company that installed our EV chargers has submitted the claim for the EV Charger Grant on our behalf.

558 /21-22 **LOCKING STUMPS – PROPOSED PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT**

The RFO reported that WBC has provided us with some indicative costs (circulated to Members prior to the meeting and in hard copy tonight) regarding the proposed refurbishment of the small play area, on Borough Council land, behind the Turf & Feather public house in Locking Stumps.

The Town Council has earmarked a maximum £20,000 as its contribution towards this project.

Members considered options on how they would like to progress this matter. It was **unanimously resolved** that the Council wishes to pursue the refurbishment option, with maybe two new smaller pieces of equipment added for enhanced play value.

The Clerk said that now the Council has made a firm decision on how it wishes to progress with this project, she will inform WBC and ask for some alternative options for new play equipment, to bring to the next meeting.

She asked if Members wanted her to confer with YHG, to see if they might wish to contribute any funding to the project.

Members asked for the Clerk to speak to YHG regarding this matter.

Action Clerk to contact WBC about the Council’s decision and request for some additional information.

Action Clerk to speak to YHG regarding potential funding/sponsorship towards the project.

559/21-22 **HANGING BASKETS/BEDDING PLANTS/WILDFLOWERS**

- (a) To note that the Clerk has been liaising with the nursery regarding the purchase of hanging baskets, and bedding plants/compost for the planters.
- (b) To inform Members that we have been advised that we cannot choose a specific wildflower seed mix this year.

WBC has also asked when the Council’s ‘cut-off’ date for sowing seeds this year might be. We have asked for their advice, as Birchwood Carnival is taking place on 12th June 2022, and we do not want cars parking on Ordnance Avenue on prepared and sown wildflower beds.

- (c) To note that the Clerk is liaising with WBC regarding areas to sow and areas to be left to ‘rewild’.

The Clerk has also consulted with BTC’s Maintenance Team regarding the areas to be left to grow wild.

560/21-22 **BIRCHWOOD CARNIVAL – GRANT APPLICATION**

The BAFO asked Members to consider formally ratifying their decision, made in principal at the February meeting, to support the 2022 Birchwood Carnival (taking place in June 2022) by awarding the Birchwood Carnival Committee a grant of £1,962 +VAT, for the hire of the marquee, tables and chairs, plus the portaloos.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Dempsey and **unanimously resolved** that the grant of £1,962 +VAT be awarded to the Birchwood Carnival Committee. This will be accounted for in the available grant funding for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Action Clerk's office to administer the payment for the above items once the invoices are received, in the 2022/2023 financial year.

561/21-22 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note 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.

The lamps have been repaired, but the canopies have not been cut back as much as we would have liked them to be.

The RFO stated that the cost of the replacement lanterns was lower than had been expected, as WBC had found some 'in stock' and it had not been necessary to order new replacements.

- (b) To note that the Public Works Loan Board loan repayment in respect of Parkers Farm, was made on 10th March 2022 in the amount of £10,280.00.
- (c) To note that Officers are continuing the necessary processes regarding the auto-enrolling of staff Members into the Pension Scheme.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

562/21-22 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account period 1st April 2021 – 28th February 2021.

The payroll figure for January 2022 (9 staff) was £11,707.28. The payroll figure for February 2022 was £12,207.30 (9 staff).

The RFO stated that the £500.02 difference was due to January's payroll only including a small payment to the retired caretaker, regarding holiday pay owed to her. February's payroll figure includes payments to BTC's new Administrative Assistant.

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 resolved** they were happy with the reconciliation documents.

563/21-22 **END OF YEAR INTERNAL AUDIT**

The RFO stated that she has started the process of preparing the paperwork for the end of year internal audit. It has been agreed with the internal auditor that we will present the documents to him via 'WeTransfer'. The auditor has already seen all the hard copies of our files during the interim audit earlier in the year.

564/21-22 **STAFF WAGES**

- (a) The RFO reported that the National Employers have now agreed that the pay rise for 2021/2022 will be 1.75%, with back-pay to be applied from April 2021. This rise would affect the Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk. It would also affect our former BAFO's wages from April 2021 to the end of July 2021, when he was still working for BTC.

Members were respectfully asked to consider whether they wish these Officers to receive the 2021/2022 pay increase, backdated to April 2021.

Officers left the room whilst this was discussed.

Members **unanimously resolved** that the 1.75% pay rise, back-dated to April 2021, be applied to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and BAFO's wages.

Action Clerk's office to administer the wage rise as detailed above. RFO to contact the BAFO's family regarding wages owed to the BAFO (deceased).

- (b) Members were asked to formally ratify the resolution made at the Budget/Strategy and Precept Meeting held on 23rd November 2021 (Minute 432/21-22 (a) (ii)) that the Maintenance Team members' and the Administrative Assistant's wages will increase from 1st April 2022 by 4.2% - from £9.50 per hour to £9.90 per hour.

This is in line with the National Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** that the Maintenance Team members' and the Administrative Assistant's wages will increase from 1st April 2022 by 4.2% - from £9.50 per hour to £9.90 per hour.

Action Clerk's office to administer the wage rise as detailed above.

- (c) Members were asked to formally ratify the resolution made at the Budget/Strategy and Precept Meeting held on 23rd November 2021 (Minute 432/21-22 (a) (ii)) that the Senior Maintenance Operative's wage would increase by 4.2% from 1st April 2022.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Dempsey, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** that the Senior Maintenance Operative's wage would increase by 4.2% from 1st April 2022.

Action Clerk's office to administer the wage rise as detailed above.

- (d) The RFO reminded Members that National Insurance contributions increase to 13.25%, up from 12%, from 1st April 2022. This affects both employees and employers. For the first year (2022/2023) this additional 1.25% will be used to directly fund investment in the NHS, health and social care. HMRC has requested that a message be added to payslips explaining the reason for the increased NI contributions. We have asked our payroll provider if they are planning to add this message when they produce BTC's payslips.
- (e) To remind Members that two members of the maintenance team will be reducing their hours from 1st April 2022. Their combined new hours will be the equivalent of one full time member of staff.

565/21-22 INSURANCE RENEWAL 2022/2023

The RFO stated that she asked three companies for insurance renewal quotations for 2022/2023. The insurance is due for renewal on 1st April 2022.

It is difficult to get 'like-for-like' quotations, as our current insurer (Company A) offers an all-inclusive package, that includes everything, including motor fleet insurance, under one policy. The others (Company B and Company C – both insurance brokers) offer motor vehicle insurance separately.

Company A has quoted: for one year £5,783.01 and for a three-year contract £5,201.33 per year including insurance premium tax (IPT). Both these costs are less than last year's cost of £5,910.53.

Company B quoted to recommend a policy from Aviva, for a total premium of £3,542.54 inclusive of IPT. A three-year agreement would reduce the annual premium to £3,368.36 including IPT. However, this does not include motor vehicle coverage, which Company B said they were having difficulty in getting a separate quote for without a copy of our 'Confirmed Claims Experience' from Company A, which we have requested.

Company B will not even offer us a 'ball-park' motor vehicle quotation at this stage (although our current insurance company does not understand why this is the case, especially as we sent them details of our claims history and current vehicle details).

Company C advised that we stay with our current provider until an ongoing potential insurance matter is resolved.

The RFO recommended staying with our current insurance company, and taking the three-year option, which would 'save' £581.68 per year (£1,745.04 in total) over the one-year quotation.

Members **unanimously resolved** to stay with our current insurance provide for a three-year contract.

The RFO said that Company A also has an option for 'key personnel' cover, which would link with a business continuity plan. This covers absence as a result of an assault or accident – up to £500 per week for up to 10 weeks and £100 per week thereafter. This insurance would be an additional £16.80 per person for 1 to 7 people or for 8 people and above, it would be £10.49 per person. For 9 staff this would be £94.41 per year.

The RFO said that we have not had any staff off as a result of an assault, but we have had staff long-term absent, as a result of an accident. This cover would allow us to hire a temporary member of staff without having to find the full cost of additional wages.

Previously the maintenance team has had to work short-staffed for several months, as the Council could not afford to hire a temporary worker, who was injured as the result of an accident.

Councillor Evans **proposed**, Councillor Sheridan **seconded** and Members **unanimously resolved** to take out the additional ‘key personnel’ cover, as part of our three-year contract with Company A, covering all 9 members of staff.

Action RFO to contact the insurance companies regarding the Council’s decisions as above.

566/21-22 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

(a) Received – February 2022 Review Reports from Avoira re: our computer systems.

Avoira has enquired if the Council wishes to sign up for a second factor authentication contract (currently free of charge) to further protect Members from ‘phishing’ attacks. This has to be agreed by all Members in order to set it up for the BTC Councillor email accounts.

Members **unanimously resolved** that, as long as this is a no-cost option, that the Council should sign-up for this second-factor authentication.

Action Clerk’s office to contact Avoira regarding the Council’s decision.

(b) To note that we have pre-ordered Arnold-Baker Local Council Administration 13ED (£164.99) which will be published in October 2022. We will not be invoiced until then. This publication offers a complete statement of the law relating to Parish and Community Councils, and is well-used, and necessary for up-to-date reference.

(c) To note that we have expressed an interest in signing up for digital banking for our business savings account with the Nationwide. We have asked for confirmation that any transfer to other accounts can be restricted to our current Co-Operative Bank account, to enable us to ensure security (relating to our auditing commitments).

(d) To note that we have received notification that BTC’s business rates for 2022/2023 are NIL.

(e) Received – Employer’s Bulletin – February 2022.

(f) To note that one pair of specialist safety boots was ordered and has been received for an employee (£125.66 +VAT).

(g) To note that we contacted six companies for quotes regarding our five-yearly EICR check. Three companies did not reply. The company we contracted to undertake the work, which was done yesterday, is the same company that installed our EV chargers (£350 +VAT). We are awaiting the report.

- (h) To note that a new Stihl hedge cutter and a Stihl Kombi Engine with a hedge cutter attachment have been ordered and received (total £903.59 +VAT). These were purchased with a grant awarded to BTC earlier in the financial year by YHG.
- (i) To note that the proposal for a commemorative plaque, marking the work undertaken by employees at the ordnance factories in the area, during World War II, is being progressed with WBC. Several options are being considered.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.15 pm

Payment of Accounts:							
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual January 2022 and part of the February 2022 accounts							
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross	
14.01.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Urban Factory Ltd - Rhino Lock Key Safe	£ 20.83	£ 4.17	£ 25.00	
14.01.2022	*	Reimburse F McDonald	Petty cash float	£ 150.00		£ 150.00	
14.01.2022	*	Employment Law Advisory S	Pre-employment medical	£ 250.00	£ 50.00	£ 300.00	
14.01.2022	*	SAS Daniels LLP	SASprotect Service 13/01/2022 to 12/01/2023	£ 1,405.00	£ 281.00	£ 1,686.00	
17.01.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 188.70	£ 37.74	£ 226.44	
17.01.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1254.80 NI £2,114.75	£ 3,369.55		£ 3,369.55	
17.01.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Dec 21 Eee £832.42 Eer £2,938	£ 3,770.59		£ 3,770.59	
18.01.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas Parkers Farm (December 2021)	£ 219.12	£ 43.82	£ 262.94	
19.01.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 96.53	£ 19.31	£ 115.84	
19.01.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges and new token issued	£ 100.20	£ 12.00	£ 112.20	
20.01.2022	*	Able Group	Clear external drains	£ 159.00	£ 31.80	£ 190.80	
20.01.2022	*	Matco Direct	Mat maintenance Oct 2021 to March 2022	£ 194.45	£ 38.89	£ 233.34	
20.01.2022	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - brake repairs and replacements	£ 663.37	£ 132.68	£ 796.05	
24.01.2022	DD	E-on Next	Locking Stumps MUGA - electricity	£ 11.05	£ 0.55	£ 11.60	
28.01.2022	*	PREMIClean	Professional cleaning services - Parkers Farm Jan 22	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38	
28.01.2022	*	Regal Polythene	30 x boxes refuse sacks & 2000 x disposable gloves	£ 588.90	£ 117.78	£ 706.68	
31.01.2022	DD	James Todd & Co	December 2021 payroll fees	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80	
31.01.2022	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopier charges	£ 50.77	£ 10.15	£ 60.92	
01.02.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37	
02.02.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone charges	£ 58.01	£ 11.60	£ 69.61	
02.02.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 67.69	£ 13.53	£ 81.22	
04.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Postage of documents to Zurich Insurance	£ 3.85		£ 3.85	
04.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon seller - calculator	£ 11.66	£ 2.33	£ 13.99	
04.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Bolting Darts Ltd - cork notice board & pins	£ 14.08	£ 2.82	£ 16.90	
04.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Rhinos Autostyling - 2 x seat covers for vans	£ 16.18	£ 3.24	£ 19.42	
04.02.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51	
04.02.2022	*	CJ Auto Service	Pre-mot - NH57 CZV	£ 49.95		£ 49.95	
04.02.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	ND58 BZR - breakdown repair	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00	
04.02.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	ND09 VNL - breakdown repair	£ 221.42	£ 44.28	£ 265.70	
04.02.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	ND09 VNL - breakdown recovery	£ 180.00	£ 36.00	£ 216.00	
04.02.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	HK64 NNM - tyre repairs	£ 136.80	£ 27.36	£ 164.16	
07.02.2022	*	February 2022 Wages	Wages total this month (9 staff)	£ 12,207.30		£ 12,207.30	
09.02.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 61.52	£ 12.30	£ 73.82	
10.02.2022	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease 10/02/22 to 09/05/22	£ 343.00	£ 68.60	£ 411.60	
11.02.2022	*	Elite Industrial Supplies Ltd	Workwear and PPE	£ 167.62	£ 33.52	£ 201.14	
14.02.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Jan 2022 Eee £800.23 Eer £2,8	£ 3,613.36		£ 3,613.36	
14.02.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £933.00 NI £2,117.85 (6 Jan to 5 Feb 2022)	£ 3,050.85		£ 3,050.85	

Payments of Account since 14th February 2022

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
15.02.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges	£ 40.60		£ 40.60
16.02.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 278.48	£ 55.70	£ 334.18
18.02.2022	DD	SWALEC	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 447.35	£ 22.36	£ 469.71
18.02.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm January 2022	£ 241.56	£ 48.31	£ 289.87
18.02.2022	*	Duttons	Telescopic saw ,helmet system, various filters, cleaners & grease	£ 218.27	£ 36.82	£ 255.09
18.02.2022	*	Duttons	Pole pruner repair	£ 133.60	£ 26.72	£ 160.32
18.02.2022	*	Duttons	Service double hedgecutter	£ 20.86	£ 4.17	£ 25.03
22.02.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 10.84	£ 0.54	£ 11.38
22.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon - stapler and staples	£ 5.41	£ 1.08	£ 6.49
22.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Luzern Technology Solutions Ltf - Bankers boxes	£ 21.70	£ 4.34	£ 26.04
22.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon - correction rollers	£ 5.50	£ 1.10	£ 6.60
22.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon - tape dispenser, mouse mat, parcel tape	£ 11.12	£ 2.22	£ 13.34
22.02.2022	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon Seller - privacy ink rollers	£ 7.48	£ 1.50	£ 8.98
23.02.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 84.33	£ 16.87	£ 101.20
23.02.2022	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Interim internal audit 2021/22	£ 315.00	£ 63.00	£ 378.00
23.02.2022	*	PREMIOClean	Professional cleaning services - Parkers Farm Jan 22	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
25.02.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone charges	£ 58.01	£ 11.60	£ 69.61
28.02.2022	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopier charges	£ 24.36	£ 4.88	£ 29.24
01.03.2022	*	ESI	Fire Extinguishers Annual service/fire blanket inspection	£ 129.00	£ 25.80	£ 154.80
01.03.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,220.80 NI £2,040.42	£ 3,261.22		£ 3,261.22
01.03.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Eee £840.99 Eer £2,971.59	£ 3,812.58		£ 3,812.58
02.03.2022	DD	James Todd & Co	January 2022 payroll fees	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
02.03.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 111.59	£ 22.32	£ 133.91
04.03.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51
07.03.2022	*	March 2022 Wages		£ 12,212.80		£ 12,212.80
09.03.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (equipment)	£ 7.17		£ 7.17
10.03.2022	DD	Public Works Loan Board	Loan repayment (PW487017)	£ 10,278.81	£ 1.19	£ 10,280.00

Payments of accounts for approval at the March 2022 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51
	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 81.32		£ 81.32
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 36.00	£ 4.00	£ 40.00
	*	Duttons	Hedge trimmer service and repair	£ 55.00	£ 11.00	£ 66.00
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 232.30	£ 46.46	£ 278.76
	DD	James Todd	February 2022 payroll fee	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 9.50	£ 0.48	£ 9.98
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 69.03	£ 13.81	£ 82.84
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 84.34	£ 16.87	£ 101.21
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,222.00 NI £2,042.48 (6 March 2022 to 5 April 2022)	£ 3,264.48		£ 3,264.48
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions March 22 Eee £841.47 Eer £2,973.33	£ 3,814.79		£ 3,814.79
	*	Uniqw in	Annual Key Holding	£ 387.23	£ 77.45	£ 464.68
	*	Eureka	First Aid supplies	£ 45.95	£ 9.19	£ 55.14
	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm February 2022	£ 197.48	£ 39.50	£ 236.98
	*	Arco	5 x Peltor Combination Forestry Helmets	tbc		
	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	New 'Super Heavy Duty' battery HK62 NNM (+disposal of old battery)	£ 234.96	£ 46.99	£ 281.95