

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

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

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

Apologies: Cllr Bowden (health) and Cllr Evans (personal)

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
Councillors Atkin, Reeves and Simcock – Birchwood Carnival Committee*

015/22-23 **MARCH 2022 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING
MINUTES**

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

016/22-23 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 13 and 14 below).

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

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

017/22-23 **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.

018/22-23 **BTC VEHICLES AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

- (a) Members received the 5th March to 4th April 2022 EV Cost & CO2 savings report from the Geotab readings. This shows a total saving £200.72 compared to current diesel costs and a saving of 398.03kg in CO2 emissions. An additional report for the 29th March to 26th April 2022 show an additional saving of £152.86 and a 305.50kg saving in CO2.

- (b) The RFO confirmed that the £700 grant regarding the installation of our two electric vehicle chargers has been formally awarded. As soon as it has been received by the installer, they will forward the payment to us. The RFO said that she will chase the payment.

019/22-23 **LOCKING STUMPS – PROPOSED PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT**

BTC is continuing to liaise with WBC regarding the proposed refurbishment of the small play area, on Borough Council land, behind the Turf & Feather Public House in Locking Stumps. The RFO stated that we are awaiting potential choices for two additional small pieces of play equipment from WBC, following the Council’s decision to progress with the refurbishment option.

The Clerk advised that she has chased both parties but at the time of the meeting there is still no update.

020/22-23 **HANGING BASKETS/BEDDING PLANTS/WILDFLOWERS**

- (a) To note that the invoice for wildflowers for the 2021 season was challenged. The invoice has since been amended, down from £1,162.00 +VAT to £898.00 +VAT
- (b) The Clerk requested a quote for five plots of wildflowers for the 2022/2023 season – the corner of Fisherfield Drive, the traffic island near Asda petrol station, two plots on Ordnance Avenue and a triangular plot on Birchwood Way.

The RFO stated that we have been advised that the plot on Birchwood Way cannot be sown as it is too difficult/dangerous to get plant on and off this area.

The total quotation for the other four areas is £724.00.

The RFO asked Members if they are happy with the quotation for the four areas that can be sown.

Members unanimously **resolved** that they are happy with the quote.

Action Clerk’s office to contact WBC to progress the 2022/2023 wildflower meadow scheme.

- (c) To note that WBC has undertaken the first grass cut of the season. BTC is continuing to liaise with WBC regarding areas to sow and areas to be left to ‘rewild’. The mowers that WBC loan BTC for grass cutting have arrived, and the team has started the Town Council’s first cut of the season.

021/22-23 **BIRCHWOOD CARNIVAL – GRANT APPLICATION**

To note that the Birchwood Carnival Committee has been formally advised that a grant to support the 2022 Birchwood Carnival (£1,962 +VAT, for the hire of the marquee, tables and chairs, plus the portaloos) has been awarded by the Council. This will be paid on receipt of the invoices.

The grant was awarded under the Local Government & Rating Act 1972 (Section 145) (Provision of Entertainment and Support of the Arts) and the Public Health Act 1936, s.87.

022/22-23 **STAFF WAGES**

- (a) To note that all the resolutions relating to staff wages for 2022/2023, made at the March 2022 meeting, have been implemented. The resolution regarding back-pay for 2021/2022 has also been implemented.
- (b) To note that a letter has been sent to Mr Crowe's family (our BAFO now deceased) regarding the 2021/2022 back-pay owed to his estate.
- (c) To confirm that our payroll provider has added a note on staff wage slips explaining what the added 1.25% in National Insurance contributions (up to 13.25% from 12%) will be used to directly fund in 2022/2023: *"1.25% uplift in NICs, funds NHS, Health & Social Care"*.
- (d) To confirm that two members of the maintenance team have reduced their hours from 1st April 2022. Their combined new hours are the equivalent of one full time member of staff.

023/22-23 **INSURANCE RENEWAL 2022/2023**

To note that, as resolved at the March 2022 meeting, we have renewed our insurance cover with our current insurance provider, for a three-year period. 'Key Personnel' cover has also been added for all members of staff. (See Minute 565/21-22).

The RFO stated that the mowers have also been added to BTC's insurance for the grass-cutting season.

024/22-23 **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.
- (b) The Pension Regulator auto-enrolment processes are ongoing.
- (c) To note that the final VAT claim for 2021/2022 has been made and received into our Co-operative Bank account (£2,671.54).
- (d) To note that the Nationwide is currently undertaking internal testing of their new digital banking system for business savings accounts. Once they have completed the internal testing, they will roll it out to customers for beta-testing. We have expressed an interest in this option.
- (e) As resolved at the March 2022 meeting (Minute 566/21-22):
 - (i) Avoira has actioned a multi-factor authentication contract re: the BTC Councillor email accounts.
 - (ii) Avoira has enquired if the Council wishes to sign up for additional cloud software to help prevent phishing emails being received (proposal enclosed with Councillors' papers). There would be a set-up charge of £180.00 +VAT plus on-going monthly costs of £70.00 +VAT).

The RFO asked Members to consider the above option regarding additional software to help prevent phishing attacks.

Members **resolved** that at present there is no need for this additional service.

- (f) Following our five-yearly EICR check, we received a report detailing the remedial work required to enable us to ‘pass’ the check (copied to Members in the papers). As some of the work was quite urgent, we asked the Chair, Vice Chair and Leader of the Council, (*see Financial Regulations 11.1 (a)(vii)*) to approve acceptance of the quote to rectify the faults (£1,555.00 +VAT) – which they did. A deposit of £933.00 (inc. VAT) was required. The work was undertaken on 8th April 2022. The final payment of £933.00 (inc. VAT) was paid on 11th April 2022
- (g) The Fire and General Risk Assessment onsite review has been postponed and will now take place on 10th May 2022.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

025/22-23 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive the Town Council’s Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022.

The payroll figure for February 2022 was £12,207.30 (9 staff). The payroll figure for March 2022 was £12,212.80 (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 resolved** they were happy with the reconciliation documents.

026/22-23 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note that the annual Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) Affiliation Fee Invoice was received. Officers have renewed this subscription to ChALC, as they find their advice and training very useful, particularly over the last couple of years. (£1,470.04, plus £17.00 for the subscription to the ‘Local Council Review’ publication.

Since renewing the subscription for LCR, we have been advised that this is no longer being published. ChALC will refund the £17.00 paid for the subscription by BACS.

- (b) Cheshire Pension Fund has advised us that from 1st April 2022, we will no longer be required to submit a separate ‘EMP’ spreadsheet, in addition to the Monthly Interfacing (MI) File. Deadlines for the submission of files remain the same (no later than 22nd of the month following the month the contributions relate to).
- (c) Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Membership Data, as of 1st April 2022, has, as required, been sent to Legal & General regarding the Ill Health Liability Insurance scheme policy that BTC has, relating to Cheshire Pension Fund. Amended fees information will be sent to us shortly.
- (d) The annual PAT testing is booked to be undertaken on 14th June 2022. Birchwood Youth and Community Centre’s testing is booked to be done on the same day.
- (e) Received – Monthly IT reports from Avoira. There is nothing to highlight.

- (f) Received – Public Works Loan Board statement. The outstanding balance stands at £88,000.00 at the end of March 2022. The final payment is due to be made in September 2027 (for information, details of the bi-annual payments going forward are copied to Members in their papers).
- (g) To note that a rear light unit is being replaced on MK71 FVC (£120.00).
- (h) The RFO reported that Officers have started the process of obtaining three quotations regarding the upcoming lease renewal for the photocopier. Two quotes have already been obtained with a third company coming to the office to quote tomorrow.

The RFO outlined the current two quotes for Members' consideration, both for a five-year lease option. She asked if Members would be willing to delegate powers to herself and the Clerk, with approval from the Chair, Vice-Chair and Leader of the Council, once the third quote has been received, to make a decision on which company to award the contract to. There is an element of time-sensitivity as if we decide to change supplier, there is a 90-day notice cancellation clause that we have to abide by.

Members discussed the two quotations currently available and agreed that a five-year lease is a prudent option.

Members unanimously **resolved** to delegate the decision regarding a new photocopier lease to Officers, the Chair, Vice-Chair and Leader of the Council.

- (i) Received – Employer Bulletin – April 2022.
- (j) Received – information from Avoira re: price increases from 1st May 2022.
- (k) To note that a renewal document has been received from our current supplier (copied to Members in their papers) regarding website hosting, Joomla! Support and domain renewal, for one year, from 21st May 2022.

The RFO recommended renewing this contract for one more year, with a view to looking at options for updating BTC's website later in the year, with the possibility of switching software packages to make the site easier to manage.

Members unanimously resolved to renew the contract with our current supplier for one more year (£818.85).

027/22-23 APPROVAL / PRE-APPROVAL OF FORMAL DOCUMENTS

The RFO stated that the following three documents (the Annual Risk Assessment Review, the Financial Regulations, and the Standing Orders) have been updated/amended and need to be considered with a view to making any amendments or additions prior to the 2022 May Annual Council Meeting, when they must be formally approved for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

She added that these documents form an important part of the end of year annual governance considerations for the internal auditor:

(a) **Annual Risk Assessment Review – amendments April 2022**

To ask Members to consider the ‘Appendix C – Annual Risk Assessment Review (Financial and Operational Processes)’ – with amendments April 2022. This forms part of the documentation to be approved by the auditor.

The RFO stated that if Members did not have any changes to make to this document, and are happy to approve it at tonight’s meeting, then the relevant minute number will be used in the documents required by the internal auditor.

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Allen **seconded** and it was **unanimously resolved** that ‘Appendix C – Annual Risk Assessment Review (Financial and Operational Processes)’ as presented at tonight’s meeting, be **approved** without any changes.

(b) **Financial Regulations – amendments**

To ask Members to consider the proposed amendments in the Financial Regulations, which were circulated to Members in their papers.

Member unanimously pre-approved this document. It will be formally presented for approval at the May Annual Council meeting.

(c) **Standing Orders – amendments**

The RFO stated that this document has been significantly updated / amended to incorporate amendments and updates made to NALC’s Model Standing Orders in 2020. Statutory and/or legal text is published in bold type and cannot be removed.

Any references to ‘the Clerk’, ‘Responsible Finance Officer’, etc. have been altered to ‘Proper Officer’.

The RFO asked if Members have any comments to make or additional changes?

Councillor Atkin asked if, for consistency, references to ‘he’ or ‘he/she’, etc., can be standardised throughout the document.

Action RFO to make the changes as requested.

Member unanimously pre-approved this document, with the changes made as requested by Councillor Atkin. It will be formally presented for approval at the May Annual Council meeting.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.25 pm

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual February 2022 and part of the March 2022 accounts						
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	*	PREMI Clean	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	9 staff	£ 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 Account since 10th March 2022

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
14.03.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 81.32		£ 81.32
15.03.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 232.30	£ 46.46	£ 278.76
15.03.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
15.03.2022	*	Uniqwin	Annual Key Holding	£ 387.23	£ 77.45	£ 464.68
15.03.2022	*	Duttons Mow er world	Service 30" double hedgecutter	£ 55.00	£ 11.00	£ 66.00
15.03.2022	*	CMUK Visual Safety (t/a Eureka)	First Aid Supplies	£ 45.95	£ 9.19	£ 55.14
15.03.2022	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - investigate issues & replace battery	£ 234.96	£ 46.99	£ 281.95
15.03.2022	*	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
16.03.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 69.03	£ 13.81	£ 82.84
16.03.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	HK64 NNM - tyre repairs	£ 70.09	£ 14.02	£ 84.11
16.03.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	Ladder inspection	£ 9.00	£ 1.80	£ 10.80
16.03.2022	*	Reimburse F. McDonald	Petty cash float	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
17.03.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm (February 2022)	£ 197.48	£ 39.50	£ 236.98
17.03.2022	*	Arco	Specialist safety boots (ES)	£ 125.66	£ 25.13	£ 150.79
17.03.2022	*	Acle Garden Machinery	Stihl HS 82 T hedge trimmer 24", Stihl Kombi Engine	£ 903.59	£ 180.72	£ 1,084.31
			KMØ4RCE & Stihl HL-KM 145 24" hedge trimmer attachment			
22.03.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MJGA	£ 9.50	£ 0.48	£ 9.98
23.03.2022	*	Electric-call Services	Electrical Installation Condition Report	£ 350.00	£ 70.00	£ 420.00
24.03.2022	*	ESI	2 x new Titan 2KG CO2 extinguishers + commissioning	£ 116.00	£ 23.20	£ 139.20
24.03.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	Lantern replacement works (Armstrong Close)	£ 448.71	£ 89.74	£ 538.45
28.03.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Eee £841.47 Eer £2,973.32	£ 3,814.79		£ 3,814.79
28.03.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,222.00 NI £2,042.48	£ 3,264.48		£ 3,264.48
29.03.2022	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services March 2022	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
30.03.2022	*	Arco	5 x 3M Forestry helmet systems	£ 156.70	£ 31.34	£ 188.04
30.03.2022	*	Electric-call Services	Deposit re: EICR remediation work (50%)	£ 777.50	£ 155.50	£ 933.00
30.03.2022	DD	James Todd & Co. (GoCardless)	February Payroll	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
30.03.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone charges	£ 62.51	£ 12.50	£ 75.01
30.03.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 70.39	£ 14.08	£ 84.47
31.03.2022	*	Zurich Municipal	Insurance Cover 1/4/22 to 31/3/23	£ 5,295.68		£ 5,295.68
31.03.2022	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopier charges	£ 84.34	£ 16.87	£ 101.21
01.04.2022	*	ChALC	Annual affiliation fee & 1 x LCR magazine sub.	£ 1,487.04		£ 1,487.04
01.04.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37
04.04.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 166.51		£ 166.51
07.04.2022	*	April 2022 Wages	9 staff	£ 12,068.62		£ 12,068.62
07.04.2022	*	C Caddock	Reimburse - re: 5 x invoices for stationery items	£ 39.47	£ 7.90	£ 47.37
11.04.2022	*	Electric-Call Services	Balance (50%) for remedial electrical work following EICR	£ 777.50	£ 155.50	£ 933.00
12.04.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 81.32		£ 81.32
12.04.2022	*	Warrington Borough Council	2021 Wildflower scheme (amended invoice)	£ 898.00	£ 179.60	£ 1,077.60
13.04.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 158.31	£ 31.67	£ 189.98

Payments of accounts for approval at the April 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 w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 23.37		£ 23.37
	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 81.32		£ 81.32
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	tbc		
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 232.30	£ 46.46	£ 278.76
	DD	James Todd	March 2022 payroll fee	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	tbc		£ 10.67
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 61.78	£ 12.36	£ 74.14
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 39.07	£ 7.82	£ 46.89
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,417.40 NI £2,410.83 (6 April 2022 to 5 May 2022)	£ 3,828.23		£ 3,828.23
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions March 22 Eee £883.18 Eer £3,097.66	£ 3,980.84		£ 3,980.84
	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 79.63	£ 15.92	£ 95.55
	DD	Trade Point (B&Q a/c)	Wood & accessories to repair planters	£ 126.75	£ 25.35	£ 152.10
	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm March 2022	£ 118.79	£ 5.94	£ 124.73
	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services April 2022	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
	*	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	*	Warrington Borough Council	Wildflowers 2021 (amended invoice)	£ 898.00	£ 179.60	£ 1,077.60
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease 10/05/2022 to 09/08/2022	£ 343.00	£ 68.60	£ 411.60