

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL
MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE, WA3 6AN
ON TUESDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2022**

Present: Councillor Ellis in the Chair
Councillors Allen, Atkin, Brereton, Evans, and Scott

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

Apologies: Councillor Ball (personal), Bowden (work), Dempsey (away), Reeves (personal)
Sheridan (work) and Simcock (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.

151/22-23 **JULY 2022 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Scott **proposed**, Councillor Brereton **seconded**, and it was **resolved** that: The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting held on 26th July 2022, be approved as an accurate record, and signed by the Chair.

152/22-23 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Councillor Atkin **proposed** the Payment of Accounts be approved (see pages 120 and 121 below) Councillor Brereton **seconded** the proposal. This was **resolved** by those Members present.

PROGRESS

153/22-23 **EXTERNAL AUDIT - END OF YEAR 2021/2022**

The RFO advised Members that we have now received the end of year account documents from the external auditor. We have a clean audit, with just one comment in the ‘*Other matters not affecting our opinion*’ box: “*The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The AGAR had to be sent back for amendment.*” The RFO acknowledged to Members that there was an error in the initial submission, however, this was spotted by the RFO herself and did not affect final figures, balances, etc. At no point was the AGAR returned by the auditor for amendment.

The RFO explained that the external auditor had requested some additional information from BTC, which was supplied.

Whilst looking at this information, the RFO noticed a minor error in the figures that had been submitted to the external auditor. As per the process when this occurs, the figures were restated on the AGAR, initialled by the RFO, and were then re-submitted to the external auditor. The amendment was published on our website as required.

The RFO stated that there was also a ‘typo’ on the Income and Expenditure Balance Sheet, which has been corrected. This does not form part of the submission to the external auditor. The sheet will be re-signed by the Chair at tonight’s meeting.

The RFO emailed the external auditor regarding their comment on the report and enquired if it would be possible to consider amending the report to accurately reflect that BTC noticed the inaccuracy, that the AGAR was not returned to us for amendment, and to amend Section 3 of the AGAR accordingly.

The auditors agreed to rectify the statement on the AGAR. The corrected information has now been uploaded to the Town Council’s website: *“The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. The smaller authority identified an error and submitted an amended AGAR.”*

Members ratified the actions taken by the RFO and received the amended AGAR from the external auditor.

The RFO confirmed that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit, has been published on our website and noticeboards (23rd September 2022) as required, and Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the audited AGAR have been published on our website as required (initially on 23rd September 2022, with the amended Section 3 version published on 27th September 2022).

Members were asked to approve for payment the invoice from PKF Littlejohn LLP for their professional services. The invoice is in the amount of £800.00 +VAT.

Members **resolved** payment of this invoice.

154/22-23 **BTC VEHICLE AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

- (a) The RFO advised Members that one of the electric vehicles (MK71 FUU) is yet to be repaired as the body shop is still waiting for a part.
- (b) The RFO informed Members that PO51 WLE has now been repaired and is back in service.
- (c) The RFO stated that previously Members had agreed to the purchase of an additional second-hand tipper, and several options had been circulated to Members in their papers for tonight’s meeting. However, at tonight’s meeting, following the publication of some national wage increase figures that will directly affect the Council’s budget for 2023/2024, the RFO asked Members to consider delaying the purchase of a second tipper.

The RFO explained that due to the current financial climate and uncertainties around what will happen in the coming months, Officers currently think that it would be unwise to purchase an additional vehicle at the present time.

It was proposed that the purchase be delayed until the economic climate settles down, or until there is an immediate need to replace the tipper currently in the fleet. It was noted that a second tipper is not absolutely essential for the day-to-day activities of the maintenance team, although it would enable them to work more effectively in some circumstances.

The Chair agreed that it would make fiscal sense to postpone the purchase of any items that are not immediately required for the ongoing operation of the Council,

Members **resolved** to postpone the purchase of a second tipper.

155/22-23 LOCKING STUMPS – PROPOSED PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT

The RFO informed Members that the Town Council has now received more information regarding the refurbishment of the play area in Locking Stumps.

The RFO stated that WBC have suggested a farm theme for the new play area. Members were asked if they were happy with this selection. Members stated that they were happy to progress with this theme.

The RFO advised Members of potential options regarding the configuration of the swing sets.

There is an option for a boat swing, but it would have to replace one of the two flat swing seats. It could not replace one of the cradle seats, as the frame for the cradle seats is too low to accommodate it.

Members discussed the options and decided to retain two flat swing seats on one set and cradle seats on the other set.

The RFO stated that Members have previously resolved that the Town Council would commit £20,000 from earmarked Community Development funds towards the refurbishment of, and improvements to, this play area. The RFO asked Members to formally ratify this amount. Once this is done, we can let WBC know of this financial commitment from BTC, which will enable them to progress the scheme.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Allen, **seconded** by Cllr Evans, and **unanimously resolved** that BTC would contribute £20,000 towards the refurbishment of this play area.

Action Clerk's office to contact WBC regarding the decisions made.

156/22-23 STAFF RESOURCES

The RFO stated that at previous Town Council meetings Members were asked to consider employing an additional member of staff for the maintenance team.

The RFO suggested to Members that due to the current economic climate it might be prudent to delay the recruitment of an additional member of the maintenance team. The RFO informed Members that the recently published figure from the Living Wage Foundation, which the Council currently mirrors (although we are not formally signed up to) is for a wage increase of 10.1%.

Members **unanimously agreed** that it would best to postpone the recruitment of an additional member of staff.

The Chair proposed that further discussion regarding this matter be undertaken as a Part II item. This was unanimously agreed.

The RFO said that it is probably more important now for Councillors to meet with the Maintenance Team Supervisor to discuss the Council's environmental priorities going forward.

Action Clerk's office to arrange meeting with the Maintenance Team Supervisor and Councillors.

Cllr Allen asked if the work we do for Your Housing Group is paid for by YHG.

The RFO advised that costs for the work carried out by the team on YHG land is not recharged to them.

The Clerk reminded Members that the work undertaken on YHG land is usually only done, with YHG's permission, when there is a health and safety matter that needs dealing with as soon as possible.

It was noted that YHG residents pay the local precept as well as their service charge fee to YHG.

The RFO advised that YHG has, on a number of occasions, provided funding to BTC for the purchase of equipment, such as hedgecutters.

The Clerk added that YHG have also provided funding for Birchwood Carnival.

157/22-23 **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 several lighting columns on Ainscough Road was also discussed.

158/22-23 **SPEED INDICATOR DEVICES (SIDs)**

The Administrative Assistant informed Members that she contacted the Parish Councils that have been able to get funding from the PCC to ask if they had any advice regarding the completion of their grant application. It was noted that none of these Councils have been able to offer any advice.

The Administrative Assistant advised that the questionnaire for residents went live on the 6th September and there have been 334 responses. The closing date for the questionnaire was the 16th September. The results, if extrapolated from the answers of those who completed the survey, would indicate that the local community are in favour of traffic calming measures to address speeding issues in Birchwood.

Councillors were asked if they had a preference regarding the choice of speed indicator device they wish to install.

Members **agreed** that, at present, the Elan City speed indicator device seems to be the best option.

Cllr Atkin raised a concern over how the signs are going to work over the winter months, as the signs preferred are solar-powered. The Chair agreed that this was a valid concern and that we may need to consider other power options.

The Administrative Assistant replied that she would look into it and will send additional details to Members via email for consideration.

The Administrative Assistant informed Members that draft answers for the application have been forwarded to the Clerk for review. She added that this is just a starting point for completing the application.

The next step is to start completing the application form and compiling the evidence.

It was agreed to set up a meeting of the working party to discuss responses to the application and possible placements for the device.

Action The Administrative Assistant to arrange a working party meeting and compile additional detail regarding the SIDs.

159/22-23 OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE

Following the sad news of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Birchwood Town Council put Operation London Bridge into motion.

This involved liaising with a number of local organisations to co-ordinate local arrangements and the purchase of a wreath of flowers that was laid on behalf on the Birchwood community, at the Memorial at Birchwood Shopping Centre on 9th September. The cost of the wreath was £95.00.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

160/22-23 BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting periods 1st April 2022 to 31st July 2022 and 1st April 2022 to 31st August 2022.

The payroll figure for June 2022 (9 staff) was £11,401.74. The figure for July 2022 (9 staff) was £11,606.97.

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 Brereton **seconded**, and Members **unanimously resolved** to approve the bank reconciliations.

161/22-23 PROPOSED MEMORIAL - BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK

Previously, the Town Council has indicated that it would like a memorial dedicated to those people who worked in the ordnance factories in Birchwood during the second World War, to be placed in Birchwood Forest Park.

The Town Council has recently been working in partnership with WBC regarding this proposal, and WBC Officers have sourced materials and put together options for a memorial. This information has been circulated to Members.

The RFO informed Members that WBC believes that the cost of installing the memorial and an additional information lectern, would be in the region of £3,000.

The RFO asked Members if they would consider pledging a maximum contribution to WBC of half the expected cost, i.e. £1,500 towards the purchase and erection of the memorial, and the installation of an information lectern. The RFO advised that the funds for this project are available within the earmarked Community Development Fund.

Members discussed the proposal.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Brereton, and **unanimously resolved** that BTC will pledge a contribution to the installation of the proposed memorial and information lectern of either half the actual cost of these items, or £1,500 (which ever is the lower amount).

Action Clerk's office to contact WBC regarding the decision made above.

162/22-23 HEALTH SURVEILLANCE TESTING

The RFO advised Members that the Town Council are due to carry out HAVS, hearing and vision testing for the maintenance staff, this is usually done on an annual basis. We have been quoted £378.00 +VAT for this year's tests.

As part of our duty of care, Officers would recommend that we book this testing. Members were asked if they were happy to agree for this to be done.

Members **unanimously agreed** that this is an important part of the duty of care that the Council has for its staff.

Action Clerk's office to arrange for the tests to be carried out.

163/22-23 POPPY WREATHS

The RFO advised Members that in previous years, the Town Council has arranged for the purchase of/donation towards two poppy wreaths which are laid on behalf of the Birchwood community; one by the Chair at the Memorial at Birchwood Shopping Centre during the annual community Service of Remembrance, and the other at the Memorial in the cemetery on Cross Lane South.

In the past the Town Council has contributed £100 for the two poppy wreaths. Part of this is the actual cost of the wreaths, the rest is a donation.

Members **unanimously resolved** to allocate £100 for the purchase of the poppy wreaths (approximately £19 each this year) / donation towards the Poppy Appeal.

(To note: subsequently – with a Royal British Legion discount code, the Clerk's office was able to arrange for the purchase of the wreaths for £33.99, with a donation amount of £66.01.)

164/22-23 GRANT AID REQUEST

The RFO informed Members that BTC has received a grant aid application form (circulated to Members via email prior to the meeting) from Birchwood Lions requesting a grant of £150 to support the annual Community Service of Remembrance, as the Council has in previous years. The funding would assist in paying for Birchwood Brass Band to play at the service.

Members **unanimously resolved** to approve the grant.

Action Clerk's office to liaise with Birchwood Lions regarding this matter.

165/22-23 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING

(a) To report that we have received correspondence from the Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA) that we have the option to opt out of the central auditor appointment arrangements. The opt-out procedure is a complicated and onerous process (see information in the papers).

Officers recommended continuing to accept the external auditors that are appointed to us by the SAAA.

Members **unanimously agreed** to not opt out of the central auditor appointment arrangements

(b) To note that we received the July IT 'health reports' from Avoira – there are no issues to report.

- (c) The RFO ask Members to approve a contribution to occupational glasses for the RFO/Deputy Clerk re: Display Screen Equipment (DSE) use.

As per Financial Regulations 19.1 “...Where employees require glasses specifically for use with display screen equipment, the Council will provide these, on production of a receipt from the employee (subject to a maximum value). The employee can claim for the cost of their eye test, plus 50% of the value of their glasses, up to a maximum of £150 in total.”

Members **unanimously agreed** to contribute £137.00 towards the cost of the glasses.

- (c) The RFO asked Members to approve the order of some new waste bins and bin liners to replace several which have been damaged beyond repair, due to vandalism. For 6 x Maelor Trafflex 90L covers, black and gold with lock and key and 2 x Maelor Trafflex 90l galvanised steel liners the cost will be £730 plus carriage (around £75) plus VAT.

Members **unanimously agreed** to the purchase of the bins and bin liners.

Action Clerk’s office to arrange for the purchase of the bin liners and bins.

- (d) To note that three members of staff have undertaken first aid training (2 x refresher training courses and 1 x full First Aid at Work course). The total cost was £740.00 +VAT.
- (e) To note that the annual renewal payment to the Information Commissioner’s Office is due on or before 16/10/2022. The fee is £40.00, but as BTC pays by direct debit it is reduced by £5.00 to £35.00.
- (f) To note that we have received correspondence from the Valuation Office Agency requesting ownership details of Parkers Farm. This information must be provided by 08/11/2022 – if it is late, it may incur a £100.00 fine.

The RFO informed Members that this information has been sent.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.45 pm

Payments of Account since 15th July 2022

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
15.07.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges (re: June 2022)	£ 41.20		£ 41.20
20.07.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 161.55	£ 32.29	£ 193.84
20.07.2022	*	ChALC	Training course (HV)	£ 25.00		£ 25.00
21.07.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 8.85	£ 0.44	£ 9.29
22.07.2022	*	Risley MOT & Truck LTD	HK64 NNM - replaced O/S window regulator	£ 228.19	£ 45.64	£ 273.83
22.07.2020	*	S&S Marquees Ltd	Marquee, tables & chairs hire - Grant Birchwood Carnival	£ 1,675.50	£ 335.10	£ 2,010.60
(Local Government & Rating Act 1972 (Section 145) (Provision of Entertainment and Support of the Arts))						
25.07.2022	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 237.50	£ 47.50	£ 285.00
25.07.2022	*	PREMclean	Cleaning Services July 2022 (1 missed clean credited)	£ 412.60	£ 82.52	£ 495.12
27.07.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 116.36	£ 23.27	£ 139.63
28.07.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
29.07.2022	DD	Copyrite	Photocopying charges	£ 39.80	£ 7.96	£ 47.76
01.08.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 26.72		£ 26.72
01.08.2022	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services	£ 54.00	£ 10.80	£ 64.80
01.08.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,317.80 NI £1,905.62 (6 July 2022 to 5 August 2022)	£ 3,223.42		£ 3,223.42
01.08.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Eee £811.46 Eer £2,867.90	£ 3,679.36		£ 3,679.36
03.08.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers, equipment)	£ 90.13	£ 18.02	£ 108.15
04.08.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 93.45		£ 93.45
05.08.2022	*	F. McDonald	Reimburse - Petty cash float	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
08.08.2022	*	August 2022 Wages	9 staff	£ 11,602.38		£ 11,602.38
08.08.2022	*	Clr D Ellis	Part 2 of 2 Chair's Allowance	£ 250.00		£ 250.00
09.08.2022	DD	BNP Paribas Leasing	First payments re: New Photocopier lease	£ 515.00	£ 103.00	£ 618.00
10.08.2022	DD	BNP Paribas Leasing	Old photocopier end of lease owed	£ 40.00	£ 8.00	£ 48.00
12.08.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 97.40		£ 97.40
12.08.2022	*	ESI	6-monthly fire maintenance service	£ 160.00	£ 32.00	£ 192.00
15.08.2022	DD	SWALEC	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 483.56	£ 24.17	£ 507.73
15.08.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges (re: July 2022)	£ 38.80		£ 38.80
16.08.2022	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
17.08.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm (credit applied)	£ 1.10	£ 0.06	£ 1.16
17.08.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 140.57	£ 28.11	£ 168.68
23.08.2022	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 9.22	£ 0.46	£ 9.68
23.08.2022	*	Risley MOT & Truck	HK64 NNM - replace starter motor	£ 207.45	£ 41.49	£ 248.94
24.08.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 83.85	£ 16.76	£ 100.61
30.08.2022	CHQ	Post Office Ltd	Vehicle Licence HK64 NNM (chq 501898)	£ 290.00		£ 290.00
30.08.2022	CHQ	Post Office Ltd	Vehicle Licence PO51 WLE (chq 501899)	£ 290.00		£ 290.00
30.08.2022	DD	James Todd (Go cardless)	Payroll services (July 2022)	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00
30.08.2022	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
31.08.2022	CHQ	J Shelley (Executor)	Estate of G Crowe back pay owed CHQ 501897	£ 112.20		£ 112.20
31.08.2022	DD	Copyrite	Photocopying charges	£ 70.93	£ 14.18	£ 85.11
31.08.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 117.00	£ 23.39	£ 140.39
01.09.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 26.72		£ 26.72
01.09.2022	*	HMRC	Tax £1,465.80 NI £1,903.33 (6 Aug 2022 to 5 Sept 2022)	£ 3,369.13		£ 3,369.13
01.09.2022	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions Eee £810.98 Eer £2,866.16	£ 3,677.14		£ 3,677.14
05.09.2022	DD	LEVL (now paid by DD)	Geotab Pro Plus (July monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
05.09.2022	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (August monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
05.09.2022	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
06.09.2022	*	St John Ambulance	3 x First Aid training courses (MA, IS & PT)	£ 740.00	£ 148.00	£ 888.00
07.09.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 58.16	£ 11.63	£ 69.79
07.09.2022	*	Risley MOT & Truck	HK64 NNM - MOT	£ 55.00		£ 55.00
07.09.2022	*	September 2022 Wages	9 staff	£ 11,614.86		£ 11,614.86
12.09.2022	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 97.40		£ 97.40
12.09.2022	DD	Public Works Loan Board	Loan repayment re: PW487017	£ 10,090.00		£ 10,090.00
12.09.2022	*	C Caddock	Reimburse - re: flower wreath in Remembrance of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (laid at B/W Memorial)	£ 79.10	£ 15.90	£ 95.00
14.09.2022	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 30.18	£ 6.03	£ 36.21
14.09.2022	*	Arco	PPE and workwear (3 x invoices)	£ 336.15	£ 67.23	£ 403.38
15.09.2022	DD	Financial Direct Fees	Online banking charges	£ 42.00		£ 42.00
16.09.2022	DD	Avoira (formerly Yellow bus)	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.)	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
16.09.2022	*	PREMclean	Cleaning Services August and September 2022	£ 893.96	£ 178.80	£ 1,072.76
19.09.2022	DD	Avanti Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	£ 15.87	£ 0.79	£ 16.66

Payments of accounts for approval at the September 2022 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
	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	tbc		tbc
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) July 2022	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
	DD	James Todd	September 2022 payroll fee	tbc		
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 9.53	£ 0.48	£ 10.01
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 70.84	£ 14.17	£ 85.01
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 14.23	£ 2.85	£ 17.08
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions re: Sept 2022 Eee £812.16 Eer £2,870.	£ 3,682.66		£ 3,682.66
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,219.80 NI £1,909.08 (6 Sept 2022 to 5 Oct 2022)	£ 3,128.88		£ 3,128.88
	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services October 2022	£ 412.60	£ 82.52	£ 495.12
	*	Hivis (Elite Industrial Supplies)	Workwear	£ 404.35	£ 80.88	£ 485.23
	DD	Information Commissioner	Annual Data Protection fee renewal	£ 35.00		£ 35.00
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subscription) September 2022	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	*	Risley MOT & Truck	Repairs and service PO51 WLE	tbc		tbc
	*	Lexis Nexis	Arnold Baker - Local Council Administration - 13ED	£ 164.00		£ 164.00
	*	Local Government Org.	2022 Updated Green Book	£ 100.00		£ 100.00