

December 2024 Birchwood Town Council Meeting:

(1 to 3) Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Public Participation (including the Police Report).

(4) The approval of the November 2024 Council Meeting Minutes.

Clerks Report to the Council

(5) Progress Report - Copies of the main correspondence sent out/received since the Council Meeting in November 2024. **(6)** New Items for the consideration of the Council not otherwise raised in the Progress Report. **(7)** Members' Referrals. **(8)** Planning Matters. **(9)** Accounts for Payment **(10 and 11)** Part I Finance; including approval of Minutes, main correspondence sent /received since the November 2024 Meeting (progress). **(12)** New items received since the November 2024 Meeting. **(13)** Budget and Precept 2025/2026. **(14)** Part II Finance, Audit and Personnel, including approval of November 2024 Minutes.

Clerks Report to the Council & Part I Finance Agenda

6 New Items

6.1 Warrington Borough Council (WBC) *(details already circulated and/or available in the office)*

- (a) Sent/received – various emails/online reports/telephone calls following queries/contact from residents regarding flytipping, tree/shrubbery issues, flooding, muddy paths, etc.
- (b) Received – multiple reports of flooded underpasses, via email, phone calls and in person, particularly regarding the underpass near the fire station.
- (c) Received – an update to an enquiry made regarding Birchwood Park Avenue, confirming that the 40mph limit was based on speed data and road design, with further reduction to 30mph requiring significant changes and external funding, which is unlikely due to the low number of collisions and limited funding available.

6.2 Your Housing Group (YHG)

- (a) Sent/received – emails/reports following queries/contact from residents regarding various issues.
- (b) Sent – email with attached photos regarding outstanding work that needs to be completed on the 'Spinal Path'.
- (c) Sent – an email enquiring about multiple caravans outside properties on the Redshank estate.
- (d) Received – the pruning and hedge cutting programme for shrubs located on communal land owned by YHG in Birchwood.

6.3 Miscellaneous Correspondence (majority not in papers – already circulated / available in the office)

- (a) Received – various emails from Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA).
- (b) Received – an email from Locking Stumps Primary School's PTA requesting the use of BTC's sleigh and reindeer for some upcoming festive events at the school. The sleigh was inspected by our team for any potential safety issues and has been refurbished accordingly. It will be loaned to the school.

6.4 Cheshire Police – Various Neighbourhood Alerts received (already circulated).

6.5 Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC), National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) *(already circulated – copies available in the office)*

- (a) Received – NALC publications including the Chief Executive's Bulletins, events information, etc.
- (b) Received – ChALC weekly e-bulletins with various attachments, details of training sessions, etc.
- (c) Received – SLCC – various updates, briefings, news items, etc.

6.6 Publications Received - Various LGC e-mail correspondence/briefings.

6.7 Urgent /Time Sensitive Matters

To receive any urgent and/or time sensitive matters that have been received since the publication of the Clerk's Report for noting and/or action.

7 Members' Referrals - None for this meeting.

8 Current Planning Applications for Comment and Observation and Other Related Planning Issues

8.1 (a) **Warrington Borough Council - Development Management Committee (DMC)**

The next meeting of the DMC is scheduled to take place on 12th December 2024. There are currently no documents available for this meeting on the Borough Council's website.

(b) Information re: enforcement cases specific to Birchwood have been circulated to Members.

8.2 **Planning Decisions**

(a) **Application No. 2024/01308/DISCON** Unit 722 Birchwood Park, Warrington. Discharge of Condition 16 (Vibration) on previously approved application 2015/26044. **Discharged.**

(b) **Application No. 2024/00937/NMA** Land at Junction 11 of the M62 Motorway, Birchwood. Proposed amendment to condition 5 (approved drawings) on previously approved application 2023/00333 (motorway service area) to replace the Combined Parameter Plan. **Granted.**

(c) **Application No. 2024/00673/FULH** 12 Daniel Close, Birchwood, WA3 6QL. Proposed single storey rear extension to form bedroom an en-suite bathroom. **Withdrawn.**

8.3 **Planning Applications (Already circulated – not copied in papers) - all plans can be viewed via:**

http://www.warrington.gov.uk/home/transport_planning_and_environment/Planning/Searchplanning_applications/

Certain applications are not Planning Applications; therefore, there is no statutory opportunity to allow 21 days for comments, e.g.: Non material amendment applications, Lawful development certificates (S192) and 28 day prior approval/determination applications. These are received for information only.

- (a) **Application No. 2024/00963/REMM** Land At Junction 11 Of The M62 Motorway, Warrington, Proposed approval of reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout, scale) pursuant to ref. 2023/00333/VARC for Phases 1 (Enabling Works) and 2 (Hotel and Facilities Buildings) comprising creation of development platforms, earthworks including diversion of Silver Lane Brook, creation of Peat Habitat Zone, strategic landscaping, internal site circulation, vehicle parking including Electric Vehicle Hub, foul and surface water drainage feature; Facilities Building including commercial units, seating areas, associated amenities and management suite; 100-bed Hotel and associated facilities; landscaped external areas including outdoor seating areas and play equipment; internal and external plant areas; associated infrastructure including service yard, external bin store areas, photovoltaic panels, LV panels and substations, lighting, and fencing.
- (b) **Application No. 2024/01430/ADV** The Turf And Feather Glover Road, Birchwood, WA3 7PH. Replacement signage to include double sided panel to existing single post completed with 2x corex holders fitted below, lantern, welcome panel, fascia sign, 1 set of sign written house name and logo, and 1 single sided post mounted corex sign.
- (c) **Application No. 2024/01494/PA14J** Birchwood Warrington, Car Park, Genesis Centre Garrett Field, Birchwood, Warrington. The proposed works is for the installation of a roof mounted solar PV system generating 331.8 kWp, comprising of 568x Astro N5 585W panels or similar.
- (d) To consider, if necessary, any time sensitive planning applications received after publication of the Clerks Report.

PART I FINANCE

9 **Payment of Accounts**

Members are asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts (**hard copy to be circulated at meeting**).

10 (a) **To receive the Minutes and recommendations of the Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel Meeting held on 12th November 2024: for formal ratification/approval.**

(b) **To receive the Minutes and recommendations of the Budget, Strategy & Precept Meeting held on 12th November 2024: for formal ratification/approval.**

11 **Progress Finance, Audit & Personnel Items**

11.1 **Locking Stumps Primary School – Joint User Agreement for MUGA**

To note that, at the time of publishing the Clerk's Report we have still not been able to find a Solicitor prepared to act on BTC's behalf regarding the drawing up of a new joint agreement between the school and BTC.

11.2 Worknest

- (a) To note the contracts with WorkNest have been signed, including the additional option of taking out their Legal Expenses Insurance (LEI) contract, as resolved at the 12th November Part I Finance Meeting (Minute 198/24-25(b)). Arrangements have been put in place for initial ‘onboarding’ meetings and Officers can now access the WorkNest Portal.
- (b) To note that the cost of the LEI cover (inc. 12% IPT and ‘admin’ charge) is £211.25 plus VAT.
- (c) To note that letters informing current providers of the non-renewal of their contracts from January 2025 have been sent. Replies have been received from both providers acknowledging the Council’s decision.
- (d) To note that we have asked WorkNest for a quote regarding payroll services.

11.3 Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

To note that, as resolved at the November meeting (Minute 200/24-25) the renewal fee for the Clerk’s membership for 2025/2026 (£360.00) has been set up for payment (on 31st December 2024).

11.4 Ongoing Items for Noting/Considering

- (a) **Benches** - To note that at the time of publishing the Clerk’s Report, we have still not received any update from WBC regarding whether they have reserved/allocated the three benches BTC asked for.
- (b) **Litter Bins** - To ask Members if they would be happy for the office to propose three potential sites (see below) to WBC, to enquire whether they would approve the installation of new litter bins in the 2025/2026 financial year:
 - On the Brook Footpath close to the Dewhurst Road end of the path.
 - On Rendlesham Close, behind the fence where the footpath meets the ‘bridleway’ and
 - On Admirals Road, near Jay/Dove Closes.
- (c) **Election Costs** - To note that at the time of publishing the Clerk’s Report, we have still not received an invoice from WBC for the May 2024 local elections.

12 New Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

12.1 Bank Account Reconciliation

- (a) To receive the Town Council’s Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2024 – 30th November 2024. **Hard copy to be circulated at meeting.**
- (b) To note that the payroll figure for October 2024 was £15,285.88 (9) staff. For November 2024 it was £15,244.77 (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.

- 12.2 **Cover for tipper – to ask Members** to consider for approval a quote received for a cover to contain waste on the back of tipper HK64 NNM (£280.50) to secure loads when transporting them.

12.3 General Items for Noting/Reporting

- (a) To note that from 22nd January 2025 the interest rates for the Co-operative Business Select Instant Access (Community Directplus) account will reduce from Gross % 1.53 to Gross % 1.43 and AER % from 1.53 to 1.44. Interest will be credited twice yearly.
- (b) To note that the acquisition of the Co-operative Bank by Coventry Building Society is expected to complete on 1st January 2025. There will be no change to our banking services or products.
- (c) To note that the Maxus vans are booked in to have their signage changed from ‘.org.uk’ to ‘.gov.uk’. Signs Unlimited is doing this work free of charge.

12.4 Christmas Shutdown

To ask Members to consider what arrangements they wish to be put in place over the 2024/2025 Christmas and New Year period. If Members are minded to shut down the services for several days, as in previous years, this year the period would be from Wednesday 25th December 2024 to Wednesday 1st January 2025 (inclusive). Staff would take the days in between (that are not Bank Holidays) from their annual leave allowance.

Office and maintenance operations would then recommence on Thursday 2nd January 2025.

If there is a crisis during a shutdown period, which cannot be dealt with solely by the main authority (WBC) arrangements will be in place for there to be some Town Council emergency cover.

12.5 Urgent /Time Sensitive Matters

To receive any Finance/Audit/Personnel urgent and/or time sensitive matters that have been received since the publication of the Clerk's Report for noting and/or action.

13. BUDGET, STRATEGY & PRECEPT MEETING FOR THE 2025/2026 FINANCIAL YEAR

To note that the contents of the October Working Party Meeting notes were incorporated into the formal November 2024 Budget, Strategy & Precept Meeting Minutes.

13.1 *Band D Figures*

(a) To ask Members to receive the correspondence from WBC (circulated in Members' papers) regarding the arrangements for the parish Precepts for 2025/2026, including updated Band D figures, a worked example, and to note that the Precept amount required by BTC must be sent to WBC, with supporting documentation, by no later than Friday, 10th January 2025.

(b) Following the receipt of the Band D figures from Warrington Borough Council:

To ask Members to note that the 2025/2026 tax base for Birchwood has been calculated as 3158. This compares to 3175 for 2024/2025 – a reduction of 17 Band D properties.

To note that if the Band D Precept amount remains unchanged (£120.66) for 2025/2026, this would result in a decrease in local tax income to the Council of -£1,862.22. The resulting Precept to be requested would be £381,044 (rounded). This change equates to approximately a -0.486% decrease in the Precept to be collected by WBC on BTC's behalf, but a NIL change in the amount to be collected from residents for a Band D property.

(c) The RFO presented alternative estimated projections regarding the end of year balances for the 2024/2025 financial year and for 2025/2026 (Sheet 1 - circulated to Members in their papers).

These have been amended since the November 2024 meeting to take into account the reduction by 17 Band D properties but with an additional amount of £1,000 of projected interest rate income (to £10,000 from £9,000 in 2024/2025).

This sheet presents options for a NIL, 1%, 2% and 3% increase, using the 2024 Precept figure of £383,095 as the base figure to calculate any increase from.

13.2 *Schedule A / Projected Year End March 2024 Balances and Precept Options*

Members are asked to consider the proposed Schedule A figures as circulated in their papers. This has not changed since the November 2024 meeting.

Members are requested to consider the Schedule A figures for final formal approval.

13.3 *Projected Year End Balances and Precept Options for 24/25 and 25/26*

To note the projected year end balances and four Precept options presented to Members for their consideration (Sheet 1 circulated to Members in their papers).

(i) To note that a £210,000 6-month cash flow level is being proposed from 2025/2026 onwards.

(ii) It is proposed that an approximate amount of £25,902 is taken from the 2024/2025 estimated underspend, and put back into general balances.

(iii) To ask Members to note the draft projection year end balances for 2024/2025 and projected year end expenditure for 2025/2026, using the estimated schedule A figures; with 0% 1%, 2% and 3% Precept increase options for 2025/2026 also being illustrated.

Members are requested to consider the Precept options presented to them and to make a final formal decision on the level of Precept required for 2025/2026.

Also, to note that the RFO is required to write to WBC (by their deadline of 10th January 2025) detailing BTC's precept requirement for 2025/2026 (as resolved) including a breakdown of expenditure which, as a Council with a precept of over £140,000, the Town Council is required to do.