

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING OF  
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,  
ON TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2024**

**Present:** Councillor Dempsey in the Chair  
Councillors Ball, Bowden, Brereton, Scott, Sheridan and Simcock

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald  
RFO / Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C. Caddock  
Administrative Assistant – Mrs. H. Thomas

2 members of the public

**Apologies:** Councillors Allen (other commitment), Atkin (health), Ellis (health),  
Evans, and Reeves (work)

**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.

013/24-25 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 11 and 12 below).

Councillor Brereton **proposed** the payment of accounts be approved; Councillor Scott **seconded** the proposal. This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

014/24-25 **MARCH 2024 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Brereton **proposed**, Councillor Simcock **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

**PROGRESS**

015/24-25 **BENCHES**

WBC has asked BTC to provide details regarding the one negative response (from a Gorse Covert resident) received following the consultations. WBC will then provide a response to BTC via email. A copy of the response has been sent to WBC.

016/24-25 **GDPR**

To note that the Clerk and RFO will review the Personal Data categories as soon as possible.

017/24-25 **LEGIONELLA RISK ASSESSMENT**

(a) The RFO reported that the water samples that were sent to a laboratory for testing showed no signs of Legionella bacteria. This is certificated.

- (b) The RFO has completed the Legionella Awareness training course. The Clerk, Administrative Assistant and Senior Maintenance Supervisor will be undertaking the same course as soon as possible.

018/24-25 **WEBSITE**

The RFO reported that the creation of the new website is ongoing.

019/24-25 **IT PROVIDER**

- (a) Councillors Atkin, Ellis and Scott indicated that they are happy with the proposal, sent to them for their consideration as agreed at the March meeting. The company has answered several questions subsequently raised by Councillor Atkin, which satisfied additional queries.

The RFO reminded Members that there would be a £850.00 +VAT one-off set up fee and monthly recurring fee of £223.80.

It was **unanimously resolved** to progress with contracting the new IT provider.

**Action** Officers will inform the company that we will be moving forward with them as our new IT provider.

**Action** Officers will liaise with our current supplier regarding the non-renewal of our contracts with them.

- (b) The RFO reported that Officers are liaising with the company that will be taking over BTC's IT provision. The new IT provider and website provider will liaise directly with each other regarding the technicalities.

020/24-25 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

The RFO stated that she is continuing to prepare the necessary end of year financial information relating to the documents required for the end of year internal audit, including preparation of the documentation that will form the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Once these have been 'signed-off' by the internal auditor, they will be submitted to Full Council at the June 2024 meeting, for approval prior to sending to the external auditor, by 1st July 2024 at the latest.

021/24-25 **ELECTION CHARGES**

- (a) To note that only the Gorse Covert Ward is being contested. Notices regarding all wards have been published on BTC's notice boards, website and Facebook page as required.
- (b) The RFO informed Members that at the Parish Liaison Meeting in February 2024 the topic of recharging the parish elections was discussed. Parishes will be charged direct costs for items such as ballot paper printing, postal vote stationery and fees for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks. There will be a charge for the Returning Officer fees and Deputy Returning Officer fees.

There will also be a basic fee for the uncontested elections. We have requested an estimate of the expected costs from WBC. WBC has indicated that they will be able to supply this in a couple of weeks' time.

022/24-25 **EXTERNAL AUDIT**

The RFO stated that she has commenced preparation of the end of year financial information relating to the documents required for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for sending to the external auditor.

023/24-25 **GENERAL MATTERS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) The membership renewal invoice from the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) has been received (£1,551.66). Information from ChALC detailing the benefits of being a member has previously been circulated to Members.

The RFO asked Members if they are happy for BTC to remain a member of ChALC.

It was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present for BTC to remain a member of ChALC and to arrange for the payment of the invoice accordingly.

**Action** Clerk's office to arrange for the payment of the invoice and to send the information requested by ChALC regarding Councillors' details to them, following the May elections.

- (b) To note the change to employees' Class 1 employee National Insurance Contributions have been implemented in the April 2024 pay cycle.

**NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS**

024/24-25 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

Members received the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

The payroll figure for February 2024 was £13,573.10 (9) staff. The payroll figure for March 2024 was £13,330.03 (9 staff).

Councillors **unanimously resolved** that Members are happy with the schedules as presented. These will be signed by the RFO and the Chair, following the meeting.

025/24-25 **SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURE/POLICY AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The RFO asked Members to consider for approval and adoption the proposed new Sickness Absence Procedure and Payment Arrangements Policy – a draft copy of which was circulated to Members in their papers.

Councillors **unanimously resolved** that the Council adopts the Sickness Absence Procedure and Payment Arrangements Policy.

**Action** Clerk's office to circulate the new Sickness Absence Policy to all members of staff.

026/24-25 **GENERAL MATTERS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note that information has been received from Cheshire Pension Fund regarding the employee contribution rate bandings for 2024/2025.

- (b) Received - end of year statement from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The principal outstanding balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 is £56,000.00. The final payment is due to be made in September 2027.

Councillor Bowden enquired whether the Council had considered making this payment earlier, which would 'free' the Council from the ongoing interest charges.

The RFO stated that the last time this was investigated, the penalty charges would either outweigh or equal the total payment with interest. It was therefore decided to keep paying the loan back over the fixed term.

Councillor Bowden stated that he thinks the PWLB might be trying to encourage organisations to 'pay-off' their loans early and have removed penalties.

The RFO stated that she was not aware of this and would investigate. She added that the Council has not currently budgeted to make a one-off payment.

**Action** RFO to investigate PWLB repayment option for BTC's loan.

- (c) To note that during 2024 there are many changes being implemented in employment law. The Clerk and RFO have attended one webinar relating to these changes and will attend additional training going forward. These changes include:
- Reforms to holiday pay and entitlement
  - Equality Act 2010 amendments
  - Changes to family-friendly rights
  - TUPE changes for small businesses and
  - Flexible working developments.

We have also received an advice note from the Society for Local Council Clerks regarding flexible working arrangements.

- (d) The RFO asked Members to consider whether they would support the installation of a new noticeboard in Oakwood, as BTC does not currently have one in the area. This would probably cost in the region of between £800 to £1,000.

This is an issue for various reasons, such as the inability to publish local Town and Borough Councillor details, meeting agendas, Council vacancies, community event details, etc., and more recently displaying election information in the area. Oakwood tends to 'miss out' on having this information easily available to its residents.

Occasionally Birchwood Shopping Centre allows us to put important information on their notice board (such as the election information) but not general Council business.

The RFO said that she has emailed to enquire if WBC would give permission to potentially install one on their land, possibly adjacent to the John Keeney Play Area. She has also contacted the company that we purchased our most recent noticeboards from, to ask them for a quote as we are happy with the quality of the boards.

There was some discussion regarding potential locations for a new board.

Members **unanimously resolved** they would be happy for a new noticeboard to be installed in Oakwood, Birchwood.

**Action** Clerk's office to continue to investigate notice board options.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair thanked the residents for attending and explained that members of the public are excluded from further parts of the meeting, due to the confidential nature of items to be discussed in Part II Finance.

The residents left the meeting.

**This part of the meeting concluded at 6.40 pm**

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual February 2024 and part of the March 2024 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
20.02.2024	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Feb. 2024	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
21.02.2024	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MJGA	£ 10.91	£ 0.55	£ 11.46
21.02.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 69.07	£ 13.81	£ 82.88
21.02.2024	*	Reimb. C. Caddock	Safewater Solutions - Legionella testing kits	£ 90.00	£ 18.00	£ 108.00
23.02.2024	*	PREMIOClean	Office cleaning services February 2024	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
27.02.2024	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm (23 December 2023 to 7 February 2024) Est.	£ 170.20	£ 8.51	£ 178.71
28.02.2024	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 56.15	£ 11.23	£ 67.38
28.02.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 151.50	£ 30.30	£ 181.80
29.02.2024	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (January 2024 fee)	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
01.03.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
04.03.2024	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - March monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
04.03.2024	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 169.83		£ 169.83
04.03.2024	*	HMRC	Tax £1,485.40 £ 2,161.55 (6 Feb 2024 to 5 March 2024)	£ 3,646.95		£ 3,646.95
04.03.2024	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Feb. 2024 Eee £987.93 Eer £3,717.25	£ 4,705.18		£ 4,705.18
07.03.2024	DD	SSE Energy Solutions	Electricity Parkers Farm 15/11/23 to 14/02/24	£ 351.11	£ 17.56	£ 368.67
07.03.2024	*	March 2024 Wages	9 staff	£ 13,330.03		£ 13,330.03
08.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	Hi-Tech Global Limited - 13 ft extendable cleaning pole for signs	£ 36.66	£ 7.33	£ 43.99
08.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	Amazon seller - 5 pairs boot laces	£ 4.16	£ 0.83	£ 4.99
11.03.2023	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm (8 February 2024 to 23 February 2024)	£ 69.04	£ 3.45	£ 72.49
11.03.2024	DD	Public Works Loan Board	Loan ref: PW487017	£ 9,520.00		£ 9,520.00
12.03.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
13.03.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 77.17	£ 15.42	£ 92.59
14.03.2024	*	Reimburse F McDonald	Petty cash float	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
15.03.2024	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 60.63	£ 12.13	£ 72.76
15.03.2024	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.40		£ 40.40

Payments of Account since 15th March 2024

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
20.03.2024	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) March 2024	£ 237.81	£ 47.56	£ 285.37
20.03.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 72.33	£ 14.47	£ 86.80
21.03.2024	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA (1st to 29th Feb 2024)	£ 13.51	£ 3.26	£ 16.77
21.03.2024	*	Arco	Safety Boots (MA)	£ 57.59	£ 11.52	£ 69.11
21.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	i2Comply - 4 x Legionnaires training courses (FMc, CC, SJ, HT)	£ 84.00		£ 84.00
21.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	OT Group Ltd - 20 x green ring binders (ref: new Council files)	£ 23.28	£ 4.66	£ 27.94
21.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	Amazon - heavy duty punched pockets (ref: new Council files)	£ 14.82	£ 2.96	£ 17.78
21.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	Amazon seller - A4 plastic popper w wallets	£ 7.49	£ 1.50	£ 8.99
21.03.2024	*	Reimburse C. Caddock	Supplies for Schools Ltd - Extra wide file dividers	£ 48.32	£ 9.66	£ 57.98
22.03.2024	*	PREMclean	Office cleaning services March 2024	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
27.03.2024	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 56.34	£ 11.27	£ 67.61
27.03.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 60.24	£ 12.05	£ 72.29
28.03.2024	*	HMRC	Tax £1,476.80 NI £ 2,110.32 (6 March 2024 to 5 April 2024)	£ 3,587.12		£ 3,587.12
28.03.2024	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: March 2024 Eee £996.42 Eer £3,660.08	£ 4,656.50		£ 4,656.50
02.04.2024	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - April 2024 monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
02.04.2024	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (in arrears - Feb 2024 fee)	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
03.04.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
03.04.2024	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 123.20	£ 24.64	£ 147.84
03.04.2024	DD	Screw fix (B&Q a/c)	2 x w heelbarrow s, 4 x shovels, 4 x brooms	£ 190.50	£ 38.10	£ 228.60
03.04.2024	DD	Screw fix (B&Q a/c)	Timber, hacksaw s and blades for L/S bench repair	£ 54.08	£ 10.82	£ 64.90
03.04.2024	*	Reimb. Mrs C Caddock	Asda - Cleaning scourers and waste bin liners	£ 7.67	£ 1.53	£ 9.20
03.04.2024	*	Reimb. Mrs C Caddock	Brookmoor Trading Ltd - Sticky dots for w all planners	£ 2.91	£ 0.58	£ 3.49
03.04.2024	*	Zurich Municipal	2024/2025 Insurance Policies (inc. £553.59 IPT)	£ 5,166.86		£ 5,166.86
04.04.2024	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance (adjusted for March 2023 overpayment)	£ 152.35		£ 152.35
04.04.2024	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd.	HK64 NNM - Supply and fit tyre o/s rear outer w wheel	£ 77.70	£ 15.54	£ 93.24
05.04.2024	*	Helping Hand	Litter pickers x 15	£ 174.90	£ 34.98	£ 209.88
08.04.2024	*	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd.	SC19 TYF - Full service, replace front brake pads, replace front tyre	£ 567.93	£ 113.60	£ 681.53
08.04.2024	*	April 2024 Wages	8 staff	£ 13,634.13		£ 13,634.13
09.04.2024	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm 24.02.24 to 21.03.24	£ 90.43	£ 4.52	£ 94.95
11.04.2024	*	Hollis Electrical & Security Service	Replace 16 fluorescent light units for LED units in office/mess room	£ 1,062.38	£ 212.46	£ 1,274.84
12.04.2024	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
12.04.2024	*	J&K Ross Ltd	Safety Boots (JW)	£ 48.00	£ 9.60	£ 57.60
12.04.2024	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Appliances Direct - fridge for mess room & removal/recycling of old	£ 154.08	£ 30.81	£ 184.89
12.04.2024	*	Atlas FM Limited	Annual keyholder service	£ 489.64	£ 97.93	£ 587.57
16.04.2024	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) March 2024	£ 237.81	£ 47.56	£ 285.37

Payments of accounts for approval at the April 2024 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 161.09		£ 161.09
	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) April 2024	£ 237.81	£ 47.56	£ 285.37
	DD	James Todd	March 2024 payroll fee	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	tbc		
	*	Premclean	April office cleaning service (credit for Easter Monday to be accounted for on May 2024 invoice)	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 117.37	£ 23.47	£ 140.84
	*	Regal Polythene	40 x cases black bin sacks and 4 x boxes paper hand tow els	£ 678.00	£ 135.60	£ 813.60
	*	Matco Direct	Mat cleaning services - April 2024 to September 2024	£ 268.08	£ 53.61	£ 321.69
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans and equipment)	£ 94.28	£ 18.85	£ 113.13
	DD	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 39.85	£ 7.97	£ 47.82
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Jan. 2024	£ 237.81	£ 47.56	£ 285.37
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges - 01.03.2024 to 31.03.2024	£ 39.80		£ 39.80
	*	Black Box Security	Annual Intruder Alarm Maintenance and monitoring	tbc		
	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	tbc		
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: April 2024 Eee £1,032.75 Eer £3,417.73	£ 4,450.48		£ 4,450.48
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,530.60 NI £ 2,172.41 (6 April 2024 to 5 May 2024)	£ 3,703.01		£ 3,703.01
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - May monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier Lease	£ 170.00	£ 34.00	£ 204.00
	DD	B&Q Trade Account	Rubber tray mats for rear of van & miscellaneous screw s, etc.	£ 40.11	£ 8.02	£ 48.13