

MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING OF
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
INCLUDING PRE-BUDGET, STRATEGY AND PRECEPT CONSIDERATIONS
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,
ON TUESDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2025, 6PM

Present: Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Atkin, Ball, Brereton, Ellis, Evans, Price, Sheridan and Simcock

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

Apologies: Councillors Allman (away) B. Dhillon (personal) and K. Dhillon (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, Sheridan and Simcock – Birchwood Carnival Committee*

211/25-26 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 160 to 163 below).

Councillor Atkin **proposed** and Councillor Evans **seconded** that the payment of accounts be approved. This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

These will be signed by the Chair and RFO following the meeting.

212/25-26 SEPTEMBER 2025 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES

Councillor Brereton **proposed**, Councillor Atkin **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 23rd September 2025, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

213/25-26 OCTOBER 2025 PRE-BUDGET, STRATEGY & PRECEPT WORKING PARTY MEETING NOTES

- (a) Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Brereton **seconded**, and it was **resolved** by those Members who had been at the meeting that: the Notes of the Working Party Meeting, held on 14th October 2025, were an accurate record.
- (b) Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Evans **seconded** and it was **unanimously resolved** that the Notes from the Working Part Meeting be incorporated into tonight's meeting Minutes, with the recommendations to be formally ratified by Full Council.

214/25-26 WORKING PARTY MEETING NOTES INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION AND RESOLUTION AT TONIGHT'S MEETING

The RFO stated that Members need to consider the Notes of the Working Party Meeting (as Minuted below) and formally ratify all the recommendations made, to enable her to continue the budgeting and precepting processes, and progress any actions recommended:

2 Strategic Plan

The Senior Maintenance Operative (SMO) was in attendance and answered a number of questions regarding the work of the Maintenance Team, that will relate to some sections of the Strategic Plan, going forward.

To note that the 2024 – 2028 Birchwood Town Council Strategic Plan remains as a ‘live’ document.

Members had considered a proposal (enclosed in Members’ papers) from Councillor Ellis regarding litter and flytipping, which the SMO had also received a copy of. This is intended as a starter document for discussion and expansion where necessary.

Although Councillor Ellis arrived later to the meeting, Members asked the SMO if he had any thoughts regarding the draft proposals, and if he could offer any insight into the work of the team.

The SMO informed Members that the litter bins that BTC is responsible for emptying are all emptied on a Monday and Friday each week, some are also emptied on a Wednesday. If the team sees a bin that is overflowing for some reason, they may empty it again.

There are 15 litter bins in Oakwood, 8 in Locking Stumps and 6 in Gorse Covert that BTC are responsible for emptying. Others, such as those on Birchwood Forest Park, are the responsibility of the landowner to empty. Each week, therefore, the team removes at least 69 bags of waste from the litter bins alone. The other bags of waste are from the litter collected from the streets.

In response to a query about where the main litter ‘hotspots’ might be, the SMO explained that it is impossible to pinpoint one specific area.

The SMO gave the example of the area around Birchwood Shopping Centre and the high school. He said that when it is term time, the team usually has to pick the area, specifically Brock and Benson Road, at least three times a week, but when it is school holidays, this can usually drop down to twice a week.

The weather can also have an impact, for example on extremely windy days, the rubbish from the shopping centre car park can be blown onto public land, giving the team additional litter picking work to do.

The SMO added that it is not just some of the younger generation that drop litter. He said that on the stretch of road, between the two local garages, the litter there tends to be fast food waste that has been thrown out of vehicles.

Councillor Price offered an anecdote regarding a time when he had been travelling behind a vehicle and was surprised when waste was suddenly thrown out of a window from it.

The SMO stated that the team can litter pick a long stretch of road, and a few minutes after they have finished, people have already thrown litter onto it again.

The SMO stated that the team collects, on average, around one and a half tonnes of waste that has to be taken to WBC’s waste site every week.

With regard to ‘grot spots’, the SMO stated that these tend to be mainly on YHG land. The SMO informed Members that areas such as Leatham and Layton Close continue to have problems, particularly around the bin areas.

In a recent incident WBC refuse collectors refused to remove some side waste left next to these bins, as when they disturbed one of the large bins to empty it, allegedly, around 20 rats ran out. WBC would not touch the bags where the rats had been due to health and safety concerns regarding the diseases that rats can carry.

Members had a discussion regarding the difficulties being experienced in these areas, owned by YHG, specifically about the responsibilities regarding the supply of the waste bins, and whether additional bins could be put in place, which organisation empties them, the amount of flytipping that occurs around the bin areas, etc.

BTC does not have information regarding any contracts that YHG might have with WBC regarding the supply and emptying of the waste bins in these areas.

The team also removes some flytipping from around Birchwood. The SMO said that there is probably a rough split of about 2% of flytipping on WBC land to 98% from YHG areas. The container on Kingfisher Close has been put there by YHG in order that BTC can remove flytipping collected from their land and put it in the container for disposal. BTC is not allowed to take waste collected on YHG land to the WBC waste site. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.1.*)

Unfortunately, because people are now aware of the container, it has also become an area prone to flytipping. However, some waste is being dumped in front of the container doors, so it has to be moved before the team can use the container.

A local resident also has some footage of a white van pulling up and two people emptying the contents by the container. Unfortunately, the registration of the vehicle is not clear.

A discussion took place regarding the potential for installing mobile CCTV cameras covering the bin area. Councillor Ellis has identified the purchase of a mobile CCTV camera as a consideration in his draft proposal.

Members were reminded that this had been tried at Layton Close, but the camera had to be removed because a resident had raised a concern about privacy issues.

Councillor Brereton enquired, if it was ensured that a CCTV camera was only pointing at the bins, whether it could then be used.

The RFO said that, unfortunately, GDPR could be cited even if a person was legitimately using the bin area to dispose of their waste in the appropriate bin. If the person could be identified from the recording, then it could be argued that their privacy had been breached, if they had not been specifically made aware that there was a camera recording activity in that area.

Putting up signs to alert people to CCTV might deter flytippers, but it would not enable those determined to do it to be 'caught in the act', and once the camera was removed, flytippers might return and continue to dump waste with impunity.

A discussion took place regarding the suggestion of 'clean up' days, in the proposals.

The Clerk stated that, 'clean up' days have taken place in previous years, where the landowner has provided a skip and residents are encouraged to place unwanted items in here. However, this was taken advantage of, and some residents would only discard items once the skip was unmanned, which resulted in overfilling and additional skips needing to be hired.

A discussion took place regarding community litter picks, and the possibility of inviting residents to care for their own street and overall area.

The SMO stated that this is not something he would encourage for several reasons.

Firstly, he highlighted the potential for residents to question the necessity of BTC services, particularly as they already pay Council Tax, which covers the litter picking of their streets.

Secondly, the SMO raised concerns regarding the safety of community-led litter picking initiatives. He stated that BTC staff wear appropriate PPE, including high-visibility clothing when working near roads, steel-toed boots with midsole protection, and gloves. Additionally, he emphasised that risk assessments have been undertaken to ensure safety.

The SMO added that, while families and children have been seen litter picking in the area, they may not be fully aware of the potential risks or of any items that they should avoid handling e.g. sharps.

The SMO provided an example involving several residents who occasionally litter pick in the area. He recently spoke with one such resident, who mentioned having found a gas canister during their litter picking rounds. Upon questioning the resident about the disposal of the canister, they stated that it had been placed in one of the bin bags, and placed in a general public waste bin.

The SMO informed Members that when BTC staff empty the bins, they do not inspect the contents. As BTC staff are litter picking, items like gas canisters are put to one side and disposed of at the WBC depot at the area designated for hazardous items.

The SMO also stated that BTC have been approached by school groups in the past who have wanted to organise litter picks. However, he advised against this unless the litter picking was confined to school grounds for safety reasons.

Ultimately, the SMO indicated that if a community litter pick was to be organised, it would be advisable to hold it in a location away from roads, such as the Walled Gardens. He also said that it is important to avoid areas near ponds etc. Additionally, the event would need to be properly coordinated, with first aiders and marshals in place to ensure safety.

Councillor Atkin asked the SMO about staff resources.

The SMO gave Members an overview of current staffing matters. The SMO stated that at the present time, he does not believe it would be appropriate to bring an additional Member of staff into the team.

At this point in the (Working Party) meeting, Councillor Ellis arrived.

In response to a query from Councillor Ellis, the SMO stated that he believes the current main hotspots for flytipping and littering are on Chatfield Drive and on closes such as Layton and Leatham. He added that vermin have been spotted in the bin areas by BTC's Maintenance Team, and several Members commented that there are not enough bin facilities available.

The Chair thanked the SMO for his input and for attending, and the SMO left the meeting.

Councillor Ellis then reviewed the Strategic Plan, addressing each point in turn. He highlighted areas that have been completed, such as the new website and that Councillor training opportunities have been implemented. (Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 1.2.)

Councillor Ellis provided an update on other items within the Strategic Plan and specifically mentioned the potential for establishing a local history trail.

He stated that he has been in contact with WBC about the possibility of installing an information board at Cross Lane South Cemetery.

WBC has confirmed that BTC can facilitate this, and the next step is to coordinate with the cemeteries department and to obtain a quote for the information board and its associated fixings. He clarified that the board would need to be attached to the existing fencing, rather than being a freestanding installation. (Ref: *BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.9.*)

Councillor Ellis also raised the potential purchase of a thermal imaging camera, which could be used to help residents identify where heat may be being lost from their property or where levels of insulation could be improved helping them to reduce their fuel bills. He further mentioned that a future event will be held at Birchwood Youth and Community Centre, where residents can learn more about strategies for lowering their energy costs. (Ref: *BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 5.2.*)

Members did not have additional comments to make regarding the Strategy Document at this point.

Councillor Ellis asked if the Council was happy for him to update the document, and bring it back to the Council for formal approval.

Recommendation: For Councillor Ellis to update the Strategy document, as discussed, and to bring it back to a future meeting for approval.

At tonight's meeting (28th October 2025) the RFO asked Members to consider the updated Action Plan that had been circulated to them prior to the meeting.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Price and **seconded** by Councillor Simcock that the updated Action Plan be approved and inserted into the 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan, and for the updated Strategic Plan to be published on BTC's website. This was **unanimously resolved** by Members.

3. Pre-Budget and Precept Discussions

The RFO stated that the purpose of the Working Party Meeting is to give her a steer on main items that need to be considered when preparing figures for the proposed budget and precept for the 2026/2027 municipal / financial year. She had reminded Members that the Working Party can make recommendations to take forward to the next Council meeting, but cannot make any resolutions.

The RFO emphasised to Members that the figures she has prepared are currently best estimates, looking at half year costs, and having to 'guess' what the effect of inflation or the impending budget might be on various services, consumables, employment costs, etc. for the upcoming financial year.

4. Items for further consideration/discussion by Members

4.1 *To discuss potential strategy and budget implications relating to the Maintenance Team's working priorities for the 2026/2027 municipal and financial year*

(a) Staff resources (Maintenance Team)

The RFO said that BTC currently has six full-time Maintenance Team Operatives, including the SMO.

She stated that services have been impacted this year to date by various personal issues that have led to several members of staff not being in work for varying periods of time, some quite lengthy. When staff have returned to work, some have been on (medically advised) light duties for several weeks. At this point in time, there is one member of the team who remains on long-term sick leave.

(b) The RFO said that she had planned to ask Members to consider resourcing options to cover for long-term absences regarding the Maintenance Team. However, taking the SMO's comments earlier in the meeting into account, at the present time it might be appropriate to consider this at a later date, if necessary.

The RFO added that NALC provides locum services in relation to RFO and Clerking positions, should the need arise.

Recommendation: To defer consideration of resourcing options for the Maintenance Team to a later date.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(c) To discuss services to be undertaken by the BTC Maintenance Team in 2026/2027.

The RFO said that during 2025/2026 BTC did not undertake any intermediate grass cutting. Instead, the Maintenance Team concentrated on other priorities.

As mentioned during the October 2025/2026 discussions, last year, if the Council wanted to take on the intermediate grass cutting again, there would be a significant financial and resource impact.

The RFO proposed, as there have not been any significant concerns raised in relation to grass cutting within Birchwood, that BTC continues to concentrate on other priorities.
(Ref: *BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.7.*)

Members agreed with the RFO's proposal.

Recommendation: To continue with the current services that the Maintenance Team undertake.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Atkin, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(d) New equipment – To note that the team does not currently expect there to be a requirement to purchase any new, larger pieces of equipment in the next financial year. If the need arises it would be purchased from the General Equipment / Vehicles earmarked reserves.

4.2 & 4.3 *Staff Wages*

At tonight's meeting (October 28th 2025) the RFO stated that discussions that took place relating to staff wages would be moved to Part II Finance.

4.4 *Earmarked Reserves 2025/2026*

The RFO reminded Members that the budgets for the earmarked reserves for 2025/2026 were:

- Community Development Fund - £45,000
- Vehicle Replacement / General Equipment Reserves - £70,000
- Elections - £12,000
- Contingency Fund - £30,000

In order to achieve these budget levels for the earmarked reserves 2025/2026, some transfers of funds were made from the General Fund to bring the levels up from the balances that remained and were brought forward at the end of the 2024/2025 financial year.

An amount of £3,000 was also moved using a virement to the Parkers Farm Estate budget line to cover unexpected work required to repair collapsed sewage pipes.

5 *Proposals for the 2026/2027 Earmarked Reserves*

The RFO stated that the proposals for the 2026/2027 earmarked reserves are as follows:

5.1 *BTC Vehicles and Vehicle Replacement Policy / General Equipment Reserves*

- (a) To note the 2025/2026 earmarked reserves for the General Equipment / Vehicles fund, was £70,000. ‘General Equipment’ purchased from this fund is for larger/more expensive items such as hedgecutters, blowers, trailers, office computers, etc. Less expensive purchases can be absorbed within the ‘Town Council Revenue’ budget line.
- (b) At the present time, the team is not looking for an additional vehicle. However, at a future date, BTC will be looking at suitable electric tipper van options, which are currently still too expensive for the Council to consider.
- (c) The RFO asked Members to consider her proposal that BTC reduces this reserve for 2026/2027 to £55,000 of earmarked reserves for vehicle replacement/general equipment funds, until such a time that it is more likely that BTC might be able to afford a suitably sized and configured electric tipper. This amount would still cover the cost of a replacement diesel tipper, or an electric transit van if required, and leave some funding for equipment.

Recommendation: To approve the reduction of this reserve from £70,000 to £55,000 for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Price, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

5.2 *Community Development/Projects Fund Earmarked Reserves*

- (a) **Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)** – The RFO commented that the Council has previously resolved that they wish to move the location of the SID currently based on Admirals Road to an alternative location, rather than purchasing an additional SID.

We are still waiting for WBC to assist BTC with the relocation of this device. WBC has said that they do not have the resources to do this at the moment. (Ref: *BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.6.*)

The RFO asked Members if they are happy with their most recent decision, to move the device (when we are able) or whether they wish to consider the purchase and installation of any additional SIDs (around £2,000 each with additional costs on top included the mounting kits, battery and external battery charger – totalling around £3,000 - £3,500 +VAT, depending on the supplier).

We would still be reliant on WBC assisting in the installation of any new devices.

Installations would, again, have to be considered in liaison with the Police and the landowner.

Members discussed the above, bearing in mind the constrictions on BTC relating to the installation and approval of potential sites (which also have to be approved by WBC as well as the Police).

Recommendation: Not to purchase any additional SIDs in the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Atkin, **seconded** by Councillor Simcock and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(b) **Benches** – The RFO asked Members to consider whether the Council wishes to propose any locations where it would like to see the installation of additional benches in the area on public land (approx. £1,500 each for the metal benches that WBC supplies).

She reminded Members that there has been resistance from WBC and the Police regarding the installation of proposed benches, specifically in relation to their locations. It took two years to get the three benches that were installed last year agreed and put in place.

If proposed locations are near residential properties, WBC requires consultations to be carried out with residents, before it will consider installing them on public land that is not in a park area. Additional bench installations would have to be considered in liaison with WBC, the Police and the relevant landowner.

Members discussed the above, bearing in mind the constraints on BTC relating to the installation and approval of potential sites. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.8.*)

Recommendation: Not to purchase any additional benches in the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Akin and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(c) **Litter Bins**

The RFO reminded Members that WBC will no longer install litter bins, or allow them to be installed, near benches due to food waste and dog waste issues, attracting wasps and causing unpleasant smells. They will also not allow new bins to be installed in or located next to bus shelters due to the potential for ASB and a risk of fire damage to shelters.

BTC has previously been advised by WBC that litter bin provision and servicing liabilities must be discussed via their 'tech support'. WBC's Technical Support has not been forthcoming in responding to any emails between August 2024 and October 2025, despite being 'chased' on several occasions (copying in Councillor Contact and a WBC Officer).

Therefore, three additional bins (Brook Footpath at the Dewhurst Road end, Admirals Road near Jay/Dove Close and Rockingham Close, behind the fence onto the bridlepath) that BTC resolved to approve 2025/2026 funding for have still not been installed.

The RFO stated that except for Councillor Contact forwarding our messages to 'tech support', to date there has only been one-way contact with WBC regarding this matter.

Costs for bins purchased via WBC for installation on its land are expected to be around £200 for a bin unit and approximately £150 - £200 for installation onto a PCC paving slab, which reduces challenges with underground services.

The RFO stated that BTC does have a few bin 'outers' in stock which the team use if similar bins that BTC are responsible for are vandalised beyond repair.

Supply and installation of litter bins on other organisations' land would have to be discussed and negotiated with them.

The installation of any additional bins will increase the number that BTC's team have to empty at least twice a week, which will influence the time taken to do the bin emptying rounds.

The RFO asked Members whether the Council would like to consider requesting the installation of further additional bins in the area – if so, where? She added that there is no guarantee that WBC will respond regarding any new requests.

Members discussed the above, bearing in mind that BTC has not received any response from WBC regarding similar requests for over a year.

BTC made it clear to WBC that BTC would fund the purchase and installation of the litter bins that they have requested, and take on the responsibility for emptying them. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.1.*)

Recommendation: Not to purchase any additional litter bins in the 2026/2027 financial year. To continue requesting that WBC assist in the supply and installation of the three bins already approved by BTC for purchase in the 2025/2026 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

It was noted by Members that whilst BTC try to work in partnership with WBC, to attempt to ensure the Town Council's work is complementary to WBC's work/statutory responsibilities, and not 'instead of', this continues to remain difficult, with a lack of response from WBC to the majority of BTC's queries. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.13.*)

(d) **Grit Bin**

The RFO commented that, as reported at the September 2025 meeting, the repair to the damaged grit bin outside the shop in Locking Stumps, has already been compromised. This new damage could potentially let water in, which will dissolve the salt, rendering any grit inside almost useless.

She proposed that a new grit bin be purchased. Having investigated options online for 400 litre green bins, depending on the supplier and the design, the costs vary in the region of £200.00 to £250.00.

The RFO added that there are fewer suppliers for green bins, most suppliers only stock yellow or black grit bins.

Councillor Ball asked why it has to be a green bin, as most that he sees are yellow.

The RFO replied that the colour is to differentiate between the 'ownership' of the bins. The green grit bins are BTC's bins, the yellow bins are WBC's responsibility.

The RFO informed Members that WBC suggested that the Town Council purchases its own grit bin as it may save on overheads/administrative costs which WBC would have to add on for the supply and fit.

The Clerk stated that BTC can probably purchase a new grit bin at a lower cost than WBC, but the green grit bins were initially supplied to BTC free of charge. WBC do fill all the grit bins every year, but the BTC team have to go to a WBC site to collect grit for other footpath gritting.

Members discussed the above.

Recommendation: To purchase a new grit bin to replace the one outside Locking Stumps shop.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Evans and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(e) **Bus Shelters**

The RFO asked Councillor Ellis if he had any update regarding a previously proposed replacement for the two BTC bus shelters. Councillor Ellis said that he has been unable to get any additional information regarding this matter, from the person he had previously been in contact with.

The two BTC bus shelters are the grey/silver ones on Glover Road. They are now in a very poor state of repair.

The RFO said that to repair the roof of each shelter would probably require the use of scaffolding, as it would be deemed as 'working at height' and it would be an unacceptable health and safety risk to try to undertake the work off ladders.

Members discussed potential options regarding these two bus shelters, including their potential removal.

The RFO stated that BTC would probably have to hire a company to undertake the work.

Councillor Reeves commented that they would not necessarily require replacement. They would still be bus stops, but without shelters, similar to several others located throughout Birchwood.

The RFO said that Members might wish to consider installing replacement 'canopies', rather than fully enclosed shelters at a future date.

Recommendation: To investigate options for the removal of the two BTC bus shelters, and possible options for replacing them.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Evans and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(f) **Community Projects**

The RFO asked if Members have any suggestions for potential community projects going forward. (Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 4.5.)

Councillor Ellis said that he had been in conversation with a WBC Officer recently, who had commented that the ‘tarantula’ piece of play equipment on John Keeney Play Area in Oakwood has to be removed as it is reaching a point where it is no longer safe.

The cost of replacing the equipment and a new soft safety surface surrounding it would cost in the region of £10,000. WBC apparently has no plans to replace it. Councillor Ellis wondered if this is something that BTC might consider funding or part funding.

Councillor Atkin strongly opposed this suggestion. He questioned why BTC should fund a piece of equipment in a WBC park, when WBC does not even respond to requests for assistance from BTC when it is trying to do things to improve the area, such as installing new benches and litter bins.

Several Members agreed with the sentiment of Councillor Atkin’s comments.

The Clerk commented that BTC part funded the original installation of the play area. We have not been directly advised by WBC that there is an issue with any of the pieces of play equipment.

Members discussed the issue of this piece of equipment being removed from the play area.

It was suggested that if, once it is removed, complaints are received from residents, then BTC may review its stance.

Recommendation: To wait to see what the response might be from the community and consider options at that point in time.

Resolution: It was proposed by Councillor Atkin, seconded by Councillor Brereton and unanimously resolved to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(g) **Community Development Fund Earmarked Reserve Proposal**

The RFO stated that the items above would be purchased from the Community Development Fund earmarked reserves.

She proposed that BTC considers an amount of around £30,000 of earmarked reserves for the Community Development Fund for 2026/2027 (reduced from £45,000 for 2025/2026) and that the budget heading remains separate from the Monthly Expenditure Schedule and Schedule A.

This is a more suitable way to manage/record the amount spent from this fund for community schemes, in relation to the Scribe Accounting software.

Recommendation: To reduce the Community Development Earmarked Reserves from £45,000 to £30,000 for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Evans and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

5.3 *Elections Earmarked Reserves*

The RFO suggested that BTC continues to hold £12,000 of earmarked reserves for the Elections Fund, and that the budget heading remains separate from the Monthly Expenditure Schedule and Schedule A.

This reserve will help to fund any unexpected by-elections that might occur within the four-year term of office of a Council.

Recommendation: To continue to hold £12,000 in the Elections Earmarked Reserves for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Ellis, **seconded** by Councillor Price and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

5.4 *Contingency Fund Reserves*

The RFO suggested that BTC maintains an earmarked £30,000 budget for reserves for the Contingency Fund for 2026/2027. This will (help to) cover any unexpected costs that might arise that are not fully funded by any specific column item in the current budget line.

Recommendation: To continue to hold £30,000 in the Contingency Fund Reserves for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

5.5 *Earmarked Reserves for 2026/2027 formal proposal*

The RFO asked Members to formally consider the proposed earmarked reserves for 2026/2027, taking into account the information above. This will entail moving some money from the General Fund once the end of year balances are taken over to the 2026/2027 financial year accounts, to 'top up' the reserves to the amounts approved below:

- Community Development Fund - £30,000
- Vehicle Replacement / General Equipment Reserves - £55,000
- Elections - £12,000
- Contingency Fund - £30,000

Recommendation: To allocate reserves funding as detailed above for the 2026/2027 financial year.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Ellis, **seconded** by Councillor Price and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

6 *Other Costs For Consideration*

6.1 **Utilities**

(a) **Gas and electric**

The RFO stated that at the July 2024 Part I Finance Meeting, Members unanimously resolved to take contracts with British Gas Lite for both gas and electric for a three year term. (Minute 140/24-25.)

Gas usage is expected to cost around £1,000 - £1,250.00 and the electric (for both Parkers Farm and Locking Stumps MUGA) approximately £2,100.00 to the end of 2025/2026.

(b) **Water and Sewage**

The RFO reported that the price BTC is paying for both of our water and sewage services accounts have increased slightly in 2025/2026.

The projected end of year cost for 2025/2026 is approximately £1,700.00.

If the above amounts for gas, electric and water/sewage are close estimations, this would equal a total figure of approximately £5,050.00 at the end of 2025/2026.

The RFO proposed a budget figure of £5,500.00 for 2026/2027.

Recommendation: To adopt a budget figure of £5,500 for utilities in 2026/2027

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Ellis, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

6.2 Wildflowers / Bulbs / Hanging Baskets

(Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 3.4.)

(a) **Wildflowers** – The RFO asked Members if they wish to continue to finance wildflower areas in Birchwood for the 2026/2027 season. The budget for 2025/2026 was £600. It has been noted that although the wildflowers did come up, the displays have been disappointing for the last couple of years. She wondered if the Council might wish to defer sowing further wildflowers until the 2027/2028 season.

Members discussed moving the locations of the wildflower meadows.

The Clerk said that this is done on Ordnance Avenue every year, where the areas the seeds are sown are alternated from one year to the next. However, in other areas, there are no suitable alternative sites. The locations have to be a certain minimum width to accommodate the machinery required to prepare the land. Most verges are too narrow.

Members asked about planting more bulbs as an alternative.

(b) **Bulbs** – The RFO said that we had a budget of £600 for bulb planting in 2025/2026. However, due to unexpected circumstances that significantly reduced BTC's resources, bulb planting was not undertaken in the 2025/2026 financial year.

She added that if more bulbs are to be planted, they would have to be in locations where WBC is not going to mow over them whilst they are still dying back following their flowering. This has happened in the past when hundreds of pounds worth of flowering bulbs were mown down prematurely, meaning that they came up 'blind' in the years following.

The RFO also said that bulbs have been planted to the rear of grass verges in past years, only for landowners to not maintain the shrubbery by cutting it back to the same level that they used to, so the flowers have since become 'invisible' when / if they come up.

The Clerk commented that we would also have to have the permission of any landowner, as BTC does not own any of the land where bulbs would be planted.

Members considered the information received regarding the wildflowers and bulb planting. It was suggested that, depending on the team's resources for 2026/2027 that the decision be deferred regarding whether to plant bulbs, or have wildflower meadows.

It was suggested that a decision on how to proceed be deferred until nearer the time a decision has to be made; but a budget of £600 be proposed for whichever choice is made.

Recommendation: That a budget of £600 be proposed for either the wildflowers or the bulbs, but to note that the planting of bulbs remains dependent on team resources and landowners' permissions.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Evans and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(c) Hanging Baskets

The RFO stated that it would be her recommendation that the Town Council cease providing baskets at the entrance to the high school. The school is now part of a multi-academy trust (MAT), which is run as a business.

BTC has supplied these baskets free of charge for many years, initially because the baskets were close to the entrance of the public library, which used to be situated inside the school; and the school used to be a community high school. The school has been responsible for putting them up over the past few years.

The RFO added that since the school became part of the MAT, BTC has not received any acknowledgement or word of thanks for supplying and maintaining the baskets and, in addition to the actual cost of the baskets, watering and feeding takes up staff resources and time.

Following discussion, Members unanimously agreed to stop supplying the hanging baskets for the entrance to the high school.

Recommendation: To stop providing the hanging baskets at the entrance to the high school.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Price, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

6.3 Birchwood Carnival

The RFO asked Members if the Council wishes to consider continuing to support Birchwood Carnival financially.

The Town Council has historically supported the event by providing financial (grant) aid for the marquee, tables, chairs and portaloos, and BTC staff provide support with the set up and taking down of the equipment, etc. on the day.

Last year the Council also paid for first aid provision as a 'one-off'.

The Clerk and Administrative Assistant also assist the Rangers with organisational matters during the day. The RFO audits their annual accounts.

The amount of grant aid awarded in 2025/2026 was £2,834.00 plus VAT. This amount is taken from BTC's annual grant budget (currently £5,000.00).

Members (except for Councillors Atkin, and Simcock, who had declared an interest, as they are Members of the Carnival Committee) unanimously agreed that BTC will continue to support Birchwood Carnival financially, with a maximum grant of £3,000.00 support for the 2026 Carnival.

(At tonight's meeting (28th October) Councillors Atkin, Sheridan and Simcock declared an interest, as they are members of the Carnival Committee, and took no part in the discussion or decision making.)

Recommendation: That BTC supports that 2026 Carnival financially. That the total cost of financial support be £3,000.00 plus VAT.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Price and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

Following this recommendation, for information, Councillor Atkin said that the first Carnival Committee meeting will be taking place on 23rd October 2025. He also confirmed that WBC has removed grant funding for this event, so the Carnival Committee might have to consider paring back some of the acts, etc. and maybe put on a slightly different sort of event.

Councillor Atkin added that last year the Carnival Committee was fortunate that several sponsors had increased their sponsorship, but this cannot be relied on for the 2026 Carnival.

6.4 **Lettings**

The RFO confirmed that the Council is still not taking any bookings from external groups to use the meeting room.

6.5 **North Warrington Cavey Club (NWCC) Storage Arrangements/Fees**

The RFO asked Members whether they wish to continue offering storage to NWCC for 2026/2027; and if so, what level of storage fees do they wish to set (currently £400 per annum).

The RFO informed Members that there are some issues regarding this current arrangement, specifically the way the items are being put back into the barn as they are being left in a way that takes up additional space, not as agreed. In addition, it was initially agreed that the person/people who come to remove and then put their items back in the barn should remain consistent, mainly for security purposes.

BTC Members of staff are being relied on to assist on some occasions, as are BYCC volunteers. This was not part of the agreement.

The cages and trolley are not easy to manoeuvre. If someone gets hurt whilst assisting, it leaves BTC or BYCC potentially short of staff.

Members discussed the above, and the formal agreement. They agreed that a letter needs to be sent to NWCC, outlining the issues being experienced and reminding NWCC that the ongoing storage arrangement relies on the terms of the formal agreement being followed.

Members also agreed that the fees should be increased to £500 per annum from the end of July 2026.

Recommendation: That a letter be sent to NWCC as detailed above.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Atkin, **seconded** by Councillor Brereton and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

6.6 Birchwood Youth and Community Centre (BYCC) Tenancy

At the September 2025 Part I Finance Meeting, a draft tenancy agreement between BTC and BYCC was considered by Council (Minute No. 185/25-26). Once finalised it will be brought back to the Council for final consideration.

An annual fee of £12.00 commencing from the 2025/2026 financial year was included within this tenancy agreement, with an increase in rent (if any) being limited to adjustments in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

It was resolved by BTC at its Part I Budget, Strategy and Precept Meeting, that was held on 12th November 2024 – Minute 204/24-25 3.8 (e) that, starting from the 2025/2026 financial year) the BYCC rent payments will be collected for the cycle of a Council.

The next ‘new’ Council is expected to be elected in May 2028. The rent amount from the financial year April 2028/2029 to the end of the financial year March 2031/2032 will be approved by the current (2024 to 2028) Council during its 2028/2029 budget and precept deliberations in October/November 2027.

6.7 Vehicle Tax

To note that from April 2025 BTC is charged the same vehicle excise duty on its electric vehicles, as would be charged on petrol and diesel vehicles of the comparative size.

6.8 Insurance /Subs/Fees/Vehicle Tax

To note that this includes:

- Vehicle tax
- Insurance – both the full annual insurance policy and ill health
- Scribe – accounting package monthly subscription
- ChALC annual subscription
- SLCC annual subscription
- Internal auditor and external auditor
- Data Protection Officer
- Payroll services
- Information Commissioner’s Officer annual registration
- Employment Law and HR services
- Health & Safety Consultancy
- Environment Agency Fees

Projected approximate total for 2025/2026 = £21,500.

To ask Members to consider having the budget line for this item in the amount of around £22,500 for 2026/2027.

Recommendation: To have a £22,500 budget for this budget line.

At tonight's meeting, the RFO stated that depending on additional information that might be received over the next few weeks, this figure might require a bit of 'tweaking'.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above, however, noting that this is a provisional figure that might need to change. Any change will be presented prior to any formal final discussion and approval of the budget/precept figures for 2026/2027.

6.9 Training

The RFO stated that the training budget for 2025/2026 was £3,000. It is projected that the cost for 2026/2027 might be higher.

- (a) **Staff** – The costs of staff training varies from year to year.
- (b) **Councillors** – Whilst Officers, staff and Councillors have all been undertaking several online training courses throughout 2025/2026, it has become apparent that some elements of training for Councillors is becoming mandatory. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 2.2.*)

In addition, Councils are being advised that some training **must** be updated annually. This is important specifically in cases when a complaint or grievance might be brought against a Council.

The RFO reported that Councils must be able to show training is up to date. This is particularly important in the event of potential grievance cases, so that a claim that any training relevant to a grievance case is 'stale' (over 12 months) cannot be levied as an argument.

As training costs can be significant, depending on the amount of training required in a particular year, the RFO proposed that Members consider setting an increased training budget for the 2026/2027 financial year of £4,500.00.

Recommendation: That BTC has a £4,500.00 budget line for training in 2026/2027

At tonight's meeting, the RFO stated that depending on additional information that might be received over the next few weeks, this figure might require a bit of 'tweaking'.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Ellis, **seconded** by Councillor Brereton and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above, however, noting that this is a provisional figure that might need to change. Any change will be presented prior to any formal final discussion and approval of the budget/precept figures for 2026/2027.

- (c) The RFO asked Members to consider resubscription to the Learning Nest e-learning platform when it becomes due. We have requested a quotation for the Essential package (£436 in 25/26) and the Enterprise package (which has many more training courses available). We will share the information as soon as it is received – for further consideration at the October 2025 meeting.

Members noted that it would be less expensive to have access to a training package, rather than pay separately for various different courses.

(d) **Introduction to Local Council Administration (ILCA) Training**

The RFO proposed to Members that the Administrative Assistant undertakes the ILCA training. The RFO has already spoken to the Administrative Assistant about this, and she is keen to undertake this course.

This would be a good foundation qualification for her, prior to potentially undertaking the CILCA qualification in future years.

ILCA is a one-year course (current cost £120.00 +VAT - expected to increase slightly next year) which runs for a calendar year, from January to December.

The RFO asked, if the Council would like the Administrative Assistant to do this training, whether they would be amenable to her apportioning two or three hours a week (when possible) of her working hours to do some of the course work. The rest would be undertaken in her own time.

Members discussed the above proposal.

Recommendation: That the Administrative Assistant undertakes ILCA training, funded by BTC; and that she can use (when possible) three hours per week of work time to study in work.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

7 ***Band D Figures***

The RFO stated that we will not receive the Band D figures from WBC for another few weeks, therefore it is unknown whether there will be a positive or negative impact on the budget from these.

At tonight's meeting (28th October 2025) the RFO confirmed that we have still not received these figures, which can sometimes have a significant effect on any budget and precept considerations.

8 ***Income Overview***

The RFO reported that the main income this year continues to come from bank account / savings account interest. There has been an additional income amount of £400 from the storage fees for NWCC. There will also be income for the supply and maintenance of the hanging baskets for the 2025 season of £1,000.00, and a small amount of peppercorn rent from BYCC (£37 from 2024 to 2028 included).

The RFO said that depending on the interest rate from September 2025 to the end of March 2026, we expect a 'general income' figure for 2025/2026 of between £8,000.00 to £9,000.00.

Income for 2026/2027 will depend on the interest rates going forward, they have been decreasing during the 2025/2026 financial year.

The RFO suggests 'erring on the side of caution' when predicting the income for 2026/2027 with a proposed expected income figure of around £5,500.00.

Members acknowledged the above information.

The RFO asked Members to note that these are based on current ‘best estimate’ figures using the 2025/2026 6-monthly (i.e. to the end of September 2025) actual figures as guidance. They may need updating at the November/December 2025 Meeting.

(a) **Schedule A** – (See page 156 below.) The proposed changes to Schedule A from the projected expenditure outturn 2025/2026 to the budget estimated expenditure 2026/2027 are as follows:

Item 1 – General and Water Rates/Gas/Electric – as BTC is still within the fixed 3-year gas and electricity contracts and we have some idea of water/sewerage costs going forward, the amount proposed is to maintain this budget line at £5,500.

Item 2 – Insurance/Subs/Fees etc. – To propose a decrease from £23,000 to £22,500, as the current projected outturn for 25/26 is approximately £19,500.

Item 3 – Employment costs – The projected outturn is £307,000 for 2025/2026. The Real Living Wage increase, for 26/27 for Members to consider, is currently unknown. The LGA’s proposed 26/27 increase which would usually be mirrored for the Clerk and RFO’s wages is currently unknown. (*The Real Living Wage figures were received following the Working Party Meeting and will be discussed in Finance Part II of tonight’s meeting – see Minute 233-25/26*).

A potential increase in the Administrative Assistant’s hours from 20 to 25 hours per week, from September 2026 is also proposed.

An Employments costs budget line of £330,000.00 for 2026/2027 is provisionally proposed. Depending on the level of actual increases, this figure may change.

Items 4A , 4B and 4C – Civic expenditure inc. newsletter & other miscellaneous and Councillors allowances/expenses – no change.

Item 5 – Town Council Revenue Expenditure (including cleaning services) - the projected outturn for 2025/2026 is £42,000.00 (lower than originally estimated). The RFO proposes maintaining the same initial budget line of £48,000.00 for 2026/2027.

Item 6 – Training/Staff and Councillor Development – The RFO is proposing £4,500.00 in the budget for 2026/2027.

Item 7 – Grants – to propose an increase in this budget line from £5,000.00 to £6,000.00. (*Ref: BTC Strategic Plan 2024-2028 Action 4.4.*)

Item 8 – Parkers Farm Estate, etc. – to maintain a budget of £2,000.00 for 2026/2027. Any unexpected issues arising could be paid for from the Contingency Fund or the budget line could be increased using a virement from General Reserves.

Item 9 – Loans, etc. – To note that this amount is reducing annually as the Public Works Loan continues to be ‘paid off’.

The payments for 2026/2027 will total £16,950.00. The last payment (£8,190.00) is due to be made in September 2027 (in the 2027/2028 financial year).

The RFO asked Members to consider the above proposed figures and to make recommendations that will help to inform the formal precept discussions to take place at the October and November 2025 meetings.

Recommendation: That the above figures be approved.

At tonight's meeting, the RFO stated that depending on additional information that might be received over the next few weeks, the above figures might require a bit of 'tweaking'.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Evans, **seconded** by Councillor Ellis and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above, however, noting that these are provisional figures that might need to change. Any changes will be presented prior to any formal final discussion and approval of the budget/precept figures for 2026/2027.

**(b) Draft Projected Year End Balances and Precept Options for 24/25 and 25/26
(SHEET 1) See page 157 below.**

The RFO asked Members to consider the information below, but to note that the figures all remain estimations. Once additional information is received, specifically relating to Band D figures and proposed wages rises, these figures may be updated.

- (i) To propose that the current £210,000 6-month cash flow level is retained for the 2026/2027 financial year.
- (ii) It is estimated that an amount of around £15,387.00 may be available to be taken from the 2025/2026 estimated underspend, and put back into general balances.
- (iii) To note (SHEET 1) the draft projection year end balances for 2025/2026 and projected year end expenditure for 2026/2027, using the estimated schedule A figures; with 0%, 1%, 2% and 3% precept increase options for 2026/2027 being illustrated.

The RFO reported that BTC has managed to keep a relatively tight hold on its spending in 2025/2026, but costs for services BTC obtains from other organisations, and for goods and supplies that we need to purchase, are continuing to increase.

The RFO therefore proposed that an increase in the precept be considered for 2026/2027. She said that the budget does not become financially positive until a 3% increase is considered (based on these estimated figures).

The RFO reiterated that the currently unknown Band D figures will probably have an effect on these projections, as well as the awaited proposed wage increase percentages from the Real Living Wage Foundation.

Councillors acknowledged that for the last two years the Council has used some of its reserves to enable a NIL increase in the local Council tax, as the 'cost of living crisis' continues to bite, but that this is not sustainable in the long run.

Councillor Atkin asked if the figure could be reduced to just below 3%, to produce a balanced budget, so that the Council is not receiving any additional 'income' from the precept.

Members unanimously agreed that they wish to have as close to a balanced budget as possible.

The RFO said that she will look at the figures again; once the current 'unknown' figures are available, then she will present amended options to the Council, bearing in mind that the Council wishes to have a balanced budget.

Recommendation: For the RFO to provide amended figures to the Council once she has received the additional information regarding Band D figures as well as the figures from the Real Living Wage Foundation. The Council wishes to have as close to a balanced budget as possible.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Atkin, **seconded** by Councillor Price and **unanimously resolved** to approve the recommendation as detailed above.

(c) Precept Decision

In response to a question from the Council, the RFO informed Members that the final precept requirement usually has to be sent to WBC by around 17th January each year.

This means that the very final resolution regarding the 2026/2027 precept, must be made at the December 2025 meeting. Up until that point, the RFO will have a chance to adjust figures in line with information from the Chancellor's upcoming Budget or the Council's wishes.

It was proposed that the December 2025 meeting be brought forward by one week, to take place on 16th December 2025.

Members agreed with this suggestion.

Recommendation: For the December 2025 meeting to take place on 16th December 2025.

Resolution: It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** to bring the date of the December meeting forward to 16th December 2025.

DRAFT Schedule A						Oct/Nov 2025
		BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL				
		YEAR-END PROJECTED OUTTURN 2025/2026				
		AND FINANCIAL PROJECTION FOR 2026/2027 AND 2027/2028				
ITEM NO.	EXPENDITURE ITEM	BUDGET 2025/2026	PROJECTED EXPENDITURE OUTTURN 2025/2026		BUDGET ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2026/2027	BUDGET ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2027/2028
1	General and Water Rates/Gas/Electric	£ 5,500	£ 5,000		£ 5,500	£ 6,500
2	Insurance/Subs/Fees/Car Tax/Bank Charges	£ 23,000	£ 21,500		£ 22,500	£ 23,500
3	Employment costs (inc employer NI & superannuation)	£ 318,000	£ 307,000		£ 330,000	£ 345,000
4A	Civic - Chairman's Allowance	£ 1,000	£ 1,000		£ 1,000	£ 1,000
4B	Civic - Newsletter	£ 1,000	£ 1,000		£ 1,000	£ 1,000
4C	Councillors Allowances/Expenses	£ NIL	£ NIL		£ NIL	£ NIL
5	Town Council Revenue Expenditure (inc. cleaning services)	£ 48,000	£ 42,000		£ 48,000	£ 52,000
6	Training/Staff and Councillor Development	£ 3,000	£ 3,000		£ 4,500	£ 4,500
7	Grants/donations	£ 5,000	£ 5,000		£ 6,000	£ 6,000
8	Parkers Farm Estate/Maintenance	£ 2,000	£ 4,000		£ 2,000	£ 2,000
9	Loans inc. Mortgage Fund for Parkers Farm Estate	£ 17,710	£ 17,710		£ 16,950	£ 8,190
	TOTALS	£ 424,210	£ 407,210		£ 437,450	£ 449,690
Reserves budgets 25/26: Elections £12,000, Vehicles/Equipment £70,000, Community Development £45,000 and Contingency Fund £30,000 (Total 157,000)						
Proposed Reserves budgets 26/27: Elections £12,000, Vehicles/Equipment £55,000, Community Development £30,000 and Contingency Fund £30,000 (Total £127,000)						

Birchwood Town Council - Oct 25 - PROJECTION YEAR END BALANCES AND PRECEPT OPTIONS 26-27

Projection - Year End March 2026 Balances (rounded)		Projection - To Year End March 2026 Balances (rounded)				SHEET 1 (no Band D figures yet)	
Income		0% Increase	1% increase	2% increase	3% increase		
Balances B/F March 2024 (audited)	£ 378,553.00	Projected Balances B/F March 2025	£ 361,387.00	£ 361,387.00	£ 361,387.00	£ 361,387.00	£ 361,387.00
Precept 25-26	£ 381,044.00	Precept 26-27 (rounded)	£ 381,044.00	£ 384,854.00	£ 388,665.00	£ 392,475.00	
General Income approx. (bank interest & other)	£ 9,000.00		£ 5,500.00	£ 5,500.00	£ 5,500.00	£ 5,500.00	
		from previous earmarked reserves brought back into general balances	£ 15,387.00	£ 15,387.00	£ 15,387.00	£ 15,387.00	
2026/2027 change in Band D properties (xxx)							
Total:	£ 768,597.00		£ 763,318.00	£ 767,128.00	£ 770,939.00	£ 774,749.00	
Expenditure							
See Budget Schedule A							
Projected Expenditure Outturn: 25-26	£ 407,210.00	Projected Expenditure: 26-27	£ 437,450.00	£ 437,450.00	£ 437,450.00	£ 437,450.00	
Projected end March 2026 Balances to	£ 361,387.00	Projected March 2027 Balances C/F	£ 325,868.00	£ 329,678.00	£ 333,489.00	£ 337,299.00	
Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 210,000.00	Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 210,000.00	£ 210,000.00	£ 210,000.00	£ 210,000.00	
Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 151,387.00	Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 115,868.00	£ 119,678.00	£ 123,489.00	£ 127,299.00	
Projected reserves remaining end March 2026:							
Elections	£ 12,000.00		£ 12,000.00	£ 12,000.00	£ 12,000.00	£ 12,000.00	
Vehicles/Equipment	£ 65,000.00		£ 55,000.00	£ 55,000.00	£ 55,000.00	£ 55,000.00	
Community Development (inc. SIDs, benches, etc.)	£ 44,000.00		£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	
Contingency Fund	£ 15,000.00	Contingency Fund	£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 30,000.00	
Potentially to put back into general balances for 2026/2027 from underspend	£ 15,387.00	Potential difference or to put back into general balances for 2027/2028	-£ 11,132.00	-£ 7,322.00	-£ 3,511.00	£ 299.00	
	£ 151,387.00		£ 115,868.00	£ 119,678.00	£ 123,489.00	£ 127,299.00	
Band D Precept in 2025/2026 = £120.66		Approx. amount per Band D for 26/27	£120.66	£121.87	£123.08	£ 124.28	
			nil increase	+£1.21 per year	+£2.42 per year	+£3.62 per year	

The RFO stated that this completed the review of the Working Party Meeting Notes.

PROGRESS

215/25-26 **TRAINING**

The RFO said to Members that she is aware that several of them have already completed the ‘Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work’ training but that some Councillors still need to do this mandatory training, which is time limited. The link to the training is only available until 30th November 2025.

216/25-26 **END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS**

- (a) The RFO informed Members that we have received a clean report from the external auditor.
- (b) To note that audited AGAR has been published as required. It can be viewed on the BTC website and hard copies are available if residents wish to have them.
- (c) To note that the ‘Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been published as required.

217/25-26 **ASSERTION 10**

The RFO commented that work is continuing regarding this upcoming new Assertion, to ensure that we will be compliant. Part of the compliance relies on Councillors and staff undertaking regular GDPR and Data Protection training.

218/25-26 **CAMERAS FOR BTC VEHICLES**

The RFO informed Members that the cameras for the vehicles have been received. They were installed in the electric vehicles on 27th October, and will be installed in the tippers next week, on 4th November 2025.

219/25-26 **REPLACEMENT PLANTERS**

The RFO asked Members to note that the new planters for Warrington Road, Risley Village have been ordered. There is a ‘lead time’ of between six to eight weeks. It is planned to install them when the spring plants are ready for planting.

220/25-26 **TREE SURVEY**

To note that YHG has been informed that we would like them to survey the trees on BTC land and to provide a report following the survey. We are awaiting a date from them for the survey to be undertaken.

221/25-26 **GENERAL MATTERS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) Litter Bins – at the time of publishing the Clerk’s Report we are still awaiting a response from WBC’s ‘Technical Support’ re: the proposed installation of new litter bins in the 2025/2026 financial year.
- (b) To note that the three poppy wreaths were ordered to be laid on behalf of the community, as resolved at the September 2025 meeting. They have been received.
- (c) To note that the new desktop PC for the downstairs office has been received and set-up. We have made an insurance claim for the damage to the old machine, which is currently being processed.
- (d) To note that the draft lease agreement between BTC and BYCC is in the process of being ‘tweaked’, prior to trying to get a formal legal overview.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

222/25-26

BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

- (a) To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2025 – 30th September 2025.
- (b) To note that the payroll figure for August 2025 was £15,608.93 (9 staff). The figure for September 2025 was £15,448.35 (9 staff).

After consideration and approval by Members, the schedules will be signed by the RFO and the Chair, as soon as is practicable.

Councillor Atkin **proposed** that the reconciliation be approved, Councillor Ellis **seconded** the proposal. This was unanimously resolved by those Members present.

223/25-26

POLICY DOCUMENTS

The RFO asked Members to consider for approval/reapproval, the following four draft policy documents that had been circulated to them in their papers for consideration:

- Draft Information Technology (IT) Policy
- Information and Data Protection Policy
- Publication Scheme
- General Privacy Policy

Councillor Atkin noted that the tense requires changing in the last paragraph of the Information and Data Protection Policy.

Members were otherwise happy with the content of the draft policies. They **unanimously resolved** for them to be approved for publication on BTC's website, with the change having been made as noted by Councillor Atkin.

Action

Clerk's office to make the change to the Information and Data Protection Policy, and for the policies to be published on BTC's website.

224/25-26

GRANT AID APPLICATION

The RFO asked Members to receive and consider a grant aid application from Birchwood Lions in the amount of £150.00. The application is for funding to support the annual Community Service of Remembrance.

Members considered the application.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Atkin, **seconded** by Councillor Price and **unanimously resolved** that £150.00 be awarded to support the annual Community Service of Remembrance.

Action:

Clerk's office to arrange for the grant award to be paid to Birchwood Lions.

225/25-26

GENERAL ITEMS FOR NOTING/REPORTING

To note that the Business Instant Saver Issue 9 interest rate for the Nationwide account was decreased from 18th September 2025 from Gross 1.65% to Gross 1.50% and AER 1.66 % to AER 1.51 %.

ACTION PLAN

The RFO reminded Members that, as had been discussed earlier during the review of the 14th October 2025 Working Party Notes (see Minute 214/25-26 2 to 9 above) that it was resolved that the updated Action Plan be approved and inserted into the 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan, and for the updated Strategic Plan to be published on BTC's website.

The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm.

Birchwood Town Council
PAYMENTS LIST

13 October 2025 (2025-2026)

This report includes one or more cost centres that have been marked as confidential. This means that only the totals are shown without any further detail.

Voucher Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
Staff	08/09/2025 - 12/09/2025				Confidential			25,575.57		25,575.57
229 Water	01/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Water and Wastewater service: Waterplus	Z		28.03		28.03
230 Town Council revenue	01/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Geobat Pro Plus (in advance)	LEV	S	30.00	6.00	36.00
231 Town Council revenue	01/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		IT Support etc.	Labdeck Ltd	S	60.00	12.00	72.00
232 Subs/Fees	01/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Scribe services	Starboard Systems Limited	S	89.00	17.80	106.80
233 Subs/Fees	01/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Payroll services	James Todd & Co.	S	68.40	13.68	82.08
234 Town Council revenue	03/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Fuel (vans & equipment)	Allstar	S	120.66	24.12	144.78
236 Insurance	04/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Insurance	Legal & General	E	1,693.78		1,693.78
235 Vehicle Tax	04/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Vehicle Tax	DVA (Electronic Vehicle Lic)	X	345.00		345.00
237 Town Council revenue	05/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		IT Support etc.	Labdeck Ltd	S	136.74	27.35	164.09
238 Town Council revenue	06/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Fire alarm system (commercial)	Black Box Group	S	127.26	25.45	152.71
267 Town Council revenue	06/09/2025	169/25-26	Petty Cash		General /miscellaneous	Asda	S	4.08	0.82	4.90
248 Loans/Mortgage Fund	10/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Public Works Loan Board	E	\$3,500.00			\$3,500.00
257 Gas	11/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Gas for Parkers Farm	British Gas Lite	L	16.26	0.81	17.07
251 Town Council revenue	12/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		PPE/ workwear	38K Rose Ltd	S	33.59	6.72	40.31
252 Town Council revenue	12/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Maintenance repairs, supplies & Amazon EU UK Branch	S	15.82	3.16	18.98	
253 Town Council revenue	12/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Maintenance repairs, supplies & Amazon EU UK Branch	S	17.40	3.48	20.88	
268 Town Council revenue	12/09/2025	169/25-26	Petty Cash		General /miscellaneous	Asda	E	17.94		17.94
254 Contingency Fund	12/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Worknest	S	1,368.00	273.50	1,641.50	
261 Town Council revenue	14/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Photocopyer charges and lease	Automated Systems Group	S	35.00	7.00	42.00
258 Electricity	15/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Electricity - Parkers Farm	British Gas Lite	L	111.45	5.57	117.02
256 Bank and FD Online charges	16/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Bank & FD Online charges	Birchwood Town Council	Z	53.40		53.40
255 Electricity	16/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Electricity - Locking Stamps NL	E-on Next	L	18.58	0.93	19.51
270 Town Council revenue	17/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Fuel (vans & equipment)	Allstar	S	133.56	26.72	160.28
273 Community Development Fund	17/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Flowers (planters/baskets/width)	E Smith & Son	S	625.20	125.04	750.24
275 Grants Section 137 and other	17/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Graze services	Birchwood Arts	X	1,000.00		1,000.00
274 Parkers Farm Estate	17/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Maintenance repairs, supplies & JDW Services Ltd	S	3,500.00	700.00	4,200.00	
277 Town Council revenue	18/09/2025		Petty Cash		Maintenance repairs, supplies & Land Registry	X	14.00			14.00
271 Town Council revenue	19/09/2025		The Co-operative Ba		Garage services	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	S	234.93	35.99	270.92
269 Parkers Farm Cleaning Services	19/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Cleaning Services (offices and 1 PremClean	S	463.52	92.70	556.22	
272 Town Council revenue	24/09/2025	169/25-26	The Co-operative Ba		Phone charges office and BTC - O2 (Telefonica UK Limited)	S	34.40	6.88	41.28	
276 Town Council revenue	26/09/2025		The Co-operative Ba		Stationery supplies	Infonet Imaging Supplies	S	599.00	119.80	718.80
278 Town Council revenue	26/09/2025		Petty Cash		Janitorial supplies inc. bin sack, Home Bargains	S	3.32	0.66	3.98	

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Birchwood Town Council

PAYMENTS LIST

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Voucher Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
279	Town Council revenue	26/09/2025		Petty Cash	Janitorial supplies inc. bin sack	Asda		5	7.46	1.49
280	Town Council revenue	26/09/2025			Photocopyer charges and lease	Automated Systems Group		5	10.00	2.00
282	Town Council revenue	26/09/2025			Garage Services	Warrington Borough Council		5	158.39	31.68
281	Community Development Fund	26/09/2025			Flowers (planters/baskets/wild)	Taylor Made Planters Ltd		5	1,875.00	375.00
283	Subs/Fees	26/09/2025			Audit fees	PNF Littlejohn LLP		5	840.00	168.00
284	Town Council revenue	29/09/2025	169/25-26		Janitorial supplies inc. bin sack	Nuvo Trading Solutions Ltd		5	10.79	2.16
285	Town Council revenue	29/09/2025			Janitorial supplies inc. bin sack	Bargain Hunt Ltd		5	12.49	2.50
286	Town Council revenue	29/09/2025			Janitorial supplies inc. bin sack	Amazon EU UK Branch		5	21.57	4.32
287	Town Council revenue	29/09/2025			Phone charges office and BTC	Firstcom Europe		5	65.22	13.04
259	Subs/Fees	29/09/2025	169/25-26		Payroll services	James Todd & Co.		5	68.40	13.68
288	Grants Section 137 and other	30/09/2025			Grant	Royal British Legion Poppy	X	5	150.00	30.00
					Total			48,843.21	2,150.15	50,993.36

Voucher	Date	Net	VAT	Total	Cashed Date	Description	Supplier	Bank	Payment Ref	Minute Ref
3 335	23.10.2025	£27.19	£0.00	£27.19	31.10.2025	Maintenance repairs, supplies and other general	Asda	Petty Cash		211/25/26
4 322	22.10.2025	£123.67	£24.73	£148.40	31.10.2025	Fuel (vans & equipment)	Allstar	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
5 311	17.10.2025	£64.00	£16.80	£80.80	31.10.2025	Garage services	Lodge Tyre Commercial Fleet Services	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
6 312	17.10.2025	£53.82	£10.76	£64.58	31.10.2025	PPE/workwear	Medisave (UK) Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
7 313	17.10.2025	£54.40	£1.88	£56.28	31.10.2025	Stationery supplies	Amazon EU UK Branch	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
8 314	17.10.2025	£682.00	£136.40	£818.40	31.10.2025	Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, elRegal Disposables	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
9 315	17.10.2025	£281.49	£56.30	£337.79	31.10.2025	Mat cleaning services	Clean Linen & Workwear	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
0 316	17.10.2025	£193.22	£38.64	£231.86	31.10.2025	Fire alarm system (commercial) maintenance	Black Box Group	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
1 317	17.10.2025	£84.54	£16.90	£101.44	31.10.2025	Emergency lighting maintenance, supplies, etc.	Black Box Group	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
2 318	17.10.2025	£502.15	£100.43	£602.58	31.10.2025	Cleaning Services (offices and mess room)	PremiClean	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
3 319	17.10.2025	£18.55	£0.93	£19.48	31.10.2025	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	E-on Next	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
4 320	15.10.2025	£35.00	£7.00	£42.00	31.10.2025	Photocopier charges and lease	Automated Systems Group Limited (ASL)	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
5 321	15.10.2025	£55.60	£0.00	£55.60	31.10.2025	Bank & FD Online charges	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
6 309	14.10.2025	£46.68	£2.33	£49.01	31.10.2025	Gas for Parkers Farm	British Gas Lite	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
7 310	14.10.2025	£117.51	£5.88	£123.39	31.10.2025	Electricity - Parkers Farm	British Gas Lite	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
8 306	13.10.2025	£116.52	£0.00	£116.52	31.10.2025	Water and Wastewater services(4083867607)	Waterplus	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
9 307	13.10.2025	£88.74	£17.75	£106.49	31.10.2025	IT Support etc.	labdesk Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
0 308	13.10.2025	£752.00	£130.40	£892.40	31.10.2025	IT Support etc.	labdesk Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
1 305	08.10.2025	£64.46	£12.89	£77.35	31.10.2025	Fuel (vans & equipment)	Allstar	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
2 334	08.10.2025	£1.66	£0.33	£1.99	31.10.2025	Maintenance repairs, supplies and other general	Home Bargains	Petty Cash		211/25/26
3 296	07.10.2025	£735.96	£0.00	£735.96	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
4 297	07.10.2025	£1,140.50	£0.00	£1,140.50	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
5 298	07.10.2025	£1,658.05	£0.00	£1,658.05	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
6 299	07.10.2025	£1,658.05	£0.00	£1,658.05	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
7 300	07.10.2025	£1,659.05	£0.00	£1,659.05	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
8 301	07.10.2025	£1,662.11	£0.00	£1,662.11	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
9 302	07.10.2025	£1,914.80	£0.00	£1,914.80	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
0 303	07.10.2025	£2,649.15	£0.00	£2,649.15	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
1 304	07.10.2025	£3,158.94	£0.00	£3,158.94	31.10.2025	Wages	Birchwood Town Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
2 295	06.10.2025	£108.00	£21.60	£129.60	31.10.2025	IT Support etc.	labdesk Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
3 333	03.10.2025	£8.13	£0.63	£8.76				Petty Cash		211/25/26
4 292	02.10.2025	£15.74	£3.15	£18.89	31.10.2025	Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, elDiscounted Cleaning Supplies Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account			211/25/26
5 293	02.10.2025	£13.65	£2.73	£16.38	31.10.2025	Maintenance repairs, supplies and other general	Reliance UK Limited	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26
6 294	02.10.2025	£99.78	£19.96	£119.74	31.10.2025	Maintenance repairs, supplies and other general	Urban Hygiene Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account		211/25/26

47	289	01.10.2025	£28.03	£0.00	£28.03	31.10.2025	Water and Wastewater services(4083868230)	Waterplus	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
48	290	01.10.2025	£89.00	£17.80	£106.80	31.10.2025	Scribe services	Starboard Systems Limited (t/a Scribe Accounts)	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
49	291	01.10.2025	£97.16	£19.42	£116.58	31.10.2025	Fuel (vans & equipment)	Allstar	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
50	288	30.09.2025	£150.00	£0.00	£150.00	30.09.2025	Grant	Royal British Legion Poppy Shop	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
51	285	29.09.2025	£12.49	£2.50	£14.99	30.09.2025	Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, el Bargain Hunt Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26	
52	286	29.09.2025	£21.57	£4.32	£25.89	30.09.2025	Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, el Amazon EU UK Branch	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26	
53	287	29.09.2025	£65.22	£13.04	£78.26	30.09.2025	Phone charges office and BTC O2 mobile	Firstcom Europe	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
54	276	26.09.2025	£599.00	£119.80	£718.80	30.09.2025	Stationery supplies	Infotone Imaging Supplies	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
55	278	26.09.2025	£3.32	£0.66	£3.98		Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, el Home Bargains	Petty Cash	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
56	279	26.09.2025	£7.46	£1.49	£8.95		Janitorial supplies inc. bin sacks, papers towels, tissue, cleaning items, el Asda	Petty Cash	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
57	280	26.09.2025	£10.00	£2.00	£12.00	30.09.2025	Photocopier charges and lease	Automated Systems Group Limited (ASL)	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
58	281	26.09.2025	£1,875.00	£375.00	£2,250.00	30.09.2025	Flowers (planters/baskets/wildflowers etc.)	Taylor Made Planters Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
59	282	26.09.2025	£138.39	£31.68	£190.07	30.09.2025	Garage services	Warrington Borough Council	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
60	283	26.09.2025	£840.00	£168.00	£1,008.00	30.09.2025	Audit fees	PKF Littlejohn LLP	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
61	272	24.09.2025	£34.40	£6.88	£41.28	30.09.2025	Phone charges office and BTC O2 mobile	O2 (Telefonica UK Limited)	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
62	269	19.09.2025	£463.52	£92.70	£556.22	30.09.2025	Cleaning Services (offices and mess room)	PremiClean	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
63	271	19.09.2025	£234.93	£35.99	£270.92	30.09.2025	Garage services	Risley MOT & Truck Ltd	The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Bank Account	21/1/25-26
64	277	18.09.2025	£14.00	£0.00	£14.00		Maintenance repairs, supplies and other general	Land Registry	Petty Cash	21/1/25-26