

December 2025 Birchwood Town Council Meeting:

(1 to 3) Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Public Participation (including the Police Report).
(4) The approval of the November 2025 Town Council Meeting Minutes.

Clerks Report to the Council

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

Clerk's Report to the Council & Part I Finance Agenda

6 New Items

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

(a) Sent/received – various emails/online reports/telephone calls following queries/contact from residents regarding a variety of local issues on WBC land.
(b) Received – a list of Traffic Notices which include prohibition of driving orders for multiple streets in Warrington. Residents have been in contact with BTC to enquire for further information.

Officers contacted WBC for clarification, and it was relayed to us that, although the temporary traffic regulation order covers a 9-week period, no individual road will be closed for that full duration. A single order has been issued to cover all planned works in the area. Once the schedule is finalised, the contractor will notify affected residents and businesses of specific dates and any access restrictions, and will agree safe access arrangements where needed.

6.2 Your Housing Group (YHG)

Sent/received – emails/reports following queries/contact from residents regarding various issues including landscaping and flytipping.

6.3.1 Miscellaneous Correspondence (majority not in papers – already circulated or available in the office)

(a) Received/sent – various emails regarding ‘day-to-day’ queries from residents.
(b) Received – a poster advertising Birchwood Acts’ pantomime, Cinderella, with ticketing information. These have been displayed on BTC noticeboards.

6.4 Cheshire Police

Various Neighbourhood Alerts received (already circulated).

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

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

6.6 Publications Received - Various LGC and WVA e-mail correspondence/briefings received. Emails circulated.

6.7 Urgent /Time Sensitive Matters for Noting or Action

To receive any urgent and/or time sensitive matters received since the publication of the Clerk’s Report.

7 Members' Referrals: There were no Members' Referrals received at the time of publishing the Clerk’s Report.

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

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

(i) A meeting of the DMC will be held on 11th December 2025. There will be one item of interest on the agenda, relevant to Birchwood:

Application No. 2025/01026/FUL - Land At Dewhurst Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7GB. Erection of 8 Units for either E(e), E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) or E(g)(iii) purposes, Solar Panels and Provision of Access and Associated Works including Landscaping.

Councillor Atkin will be attending this meeting as BTC submitted an objection to this application.

(ii) A meeting of the DMC is scheduled to take place on 15th January 2026. No documents were available for this meeting at the time of publishing the Clerk's Report.

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

8.2 Planning Decisions

(a) **Application No. 2025/01353/DISCON** Land At Junction 11 Of The M62 Motorway, Warrington. Discharge of conditions 13 (Construction, Highways & Environmental Management Plan) and 18(Construction plan working method statement) attached to planning permission 2023/00333/VARC. **Condition Part Discharged/Part Not Discharged.**

8.3 Planning Applications (Already circulated – not copied in papers) - all plans can be viewed via: http://www.warrington.gov.uk/home/transport_planning_and_environment/Planning/Searchplanning_applications/

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

(a) **Application No. 2025/01635/HPA** 22 Hamsterley Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6UF. Proposed single storey rear extension to extend beyond the rear wall by 5.20m, height of 4.00m and height of the eaves to be 2.60m .

(b) **Application No. 2025/01425/FULM** The Enza Building (formerly Known As The Mercedes Benz - Roanza Truck & Van Dealership) Leacroft Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6NN. Demolition of existing buildings and construction of a 9,112sqm warehouse unit (Use Classes B2, B8, E(g)(iii), E(g)(ii) and E(g)(i)) with associated parking, service areas, landscaping and infrastructure works.

(c) **Application No. 2025/01536/FUL** Birchwood Retail Properties, Birchwood Shopping Centre Dewhurst Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PG. Proposed external alterations.

PART I FINANCE

9 Payment of Accounts - Members are asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts.

10 To receive the Minutes and recommendations of the Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel Meeting held on 25th November 2025 for formal ratification/approval.

11 Progress - Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

11.1 Training

To ask if all Members completed the 'Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work' mandatory training, and if not done already, to sign the sheet confirming that they have undertaken the training.

11.2 Assertion 10

Work is continuing regarding the upcoming new Assertion 10, to ensure that we will be compliant. Part of the compliance relies on Councillors undertaking regular, mandatory training.

11.3 Tree Survey

To note that the tree survey report has been received and was circulated to Members via email. Four trees specifically require attention within the next six months and two within the next 12 months. This will have a currently unknown financial impact. The report is very detailed. Checks will be required with the Local Planning Authority prior to any work commencing, and work must be carried out outside of bird nesting season.

To clarify; YHG is acting as the arboriculture consultants for the survey and hazard assessment, but does not have the in-house capacity to undertake tree surgery works. YHG recommends their sub-contractor. They would be able to provide the two separate quotes the RFO would request (Safety Works vs. Maintenance). They are also fully competent to handle all liaison with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) regarding TPOs and Conservation Area checks on BTC's behalf.

To ask Members if they would like the office to arrange a site visit/quote with YHG's contractors.

We may need to ask for additional quotes as per BTC's procurement policies.

There are other trees on BTC land that have been identified as potentially requiring attention (maintenance). Some trees on WBC land were also noted as requiring some attention.

11.4 2025/2026 Interim Internal Audit

To note that the 2025/2026 interim internal audit report has been received from our internal auditor. The report notes, 'No issues arising – a robust set of internal controls has operated during the period covered by the interim internal audit'. The invoice of £516.00 (inc. VAT) has been paid.

11.5 Grant Aid Application

To note that the Grant awarded to Warrington Open Doors at Christmas in the amount of £400.00 to provide various forms of support to people who are struggling over the Christmas period has been paid. They will send details of what the funding is spent on.

11.7 General Items for noting/reporting

- (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 remind Members that, as previously resolved the office and maintenance operations of BTC will close on 24th December 2025 and reopen on Monday 5th January 2026.
- (c) To note that we are still awaiting the outcome of an insurance claim regarding accidental damage to a pc, which is currently being processed.
- (d) To note that the draft lease agreement between BTC and BYCC is still in the process of being 'tweaked'.
- (e) To note that, as approved, the Fourteenth Edition of 'Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration', £144 for SLCC members, has been purchased.

12 New Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

12.1 Bank Account Reconciliation

- (a) To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2025 – 30th November 2025.
- (b) To note that the payroll figure for October 2025 was £16,236.61 (9 staff). The figure for November 2025 was £15,193.88 (9 staff). Variations are accounted for by SSP and additional hours payments (at 'time').

After consideration and approval by Members, the schedules will be signed by the Clerk or RFO, and the Chair.

12.2 Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS)

To note that the Prudential Regulation Authority has confirmed that from 1st December 2025, the FSCS will cover up to £120,000 of a depositor's money if their bank, building society or credit union fail. This figure was previously £85,000.

In 2015, the Bank of England extended the protections of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme to include small local authorities. These are described as an authority with an annual budget of less than €500,000 (converted to £ on the exchange rate at the relevant time of consideration). It is currently unknown if this amount will also be increased. At present BTC is currently classed as a 'small local authority'.

12.3 General Items for Noting/Reporting

- (a) To note that BTC's gas smart meter was exchanged on 25th November 2025.
- (b) To note that the NJC Unions have presented their 2026/2027 pay claim to the National Local Government Employers. The National Employers will consult on the claim between mid-December to late January before deciding how to respond. The final negotiated decision is usually reflected in the Clerk's and RFO's salaries for the next financial year.
- (c) To note that the Budget announcement regarding the pay-per-mile road pricing system for electric and hybrid vehicles will affect the Council when it comes into force in the 2028/2029 financial year. For information - the mileage driven between the 2024 to 2025 MOTs for MK71FUU was 4549 miles. The mileage between the 2024 to 2025 MOTs for MK71FVC was 5088 miles. At 3p per mile, this would be an additional cost of £136.47 and £152.64 respectively (£289.11 total) for BTC's two electric vans.

12.4 Urgent /Time Sensitive Finance/Audit/Personnel Matters for Noting/Action

To receive any urgent/time sensitive matters received since the publication of the Clerk's Report.

13 BUDGET & PRECEPT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DECISIONS FOR THE 2026/2027 FINANCIAL YEAR

To note that the contents of the October 2025 Working Party Meeting notes were incorporated into the formal October 2025 Finance Part I Meeting Minutes.

13.1 Band D Figures

- (a) To ask Members to receive the correspondence from WBC (circulated in Members' papers) regarding the arrangements for the parish Precepts for 2026/2027, including updated Band D figures, a worked example, and to note that the Precept amount required by BTC must be sent to WBC, with supporting documentation, by no later than Friday, 23rd January 2026.
- (b) Following the receipt of the Band D figures from Warrington Borough Council:
To ask Members to note that the 2026/2027 tax base for Birchwood has been calculated as 3210. This compares to 3158 for 2025/2026 – an increase of 52 Band D properties.
To note that if the Band D Precept amount remained unchanged (£120.66) for 2026/2027, this would result in an increase in local tax income to the Council of £6,274. The resulting Precept to be requested would be £387,318 (rounded). This change would equate to approximately a 1.65% increase in the Precept, but a NIL change in the amount to be collected from residents for a Band D property.

This increase would not be sufficient to cover projected estimated expenditure for 2026/2027.

- (c) The RFO presented alternative estimated projections regarding the end of year balances for the 2025/2026 financial year, and for 2026/2027 (Sheet 1 - circulated to Members in their papers).
This has been amended since the November 2025 meeting to take into account additional estimated costs relating to insurance and a change in projected employment costs, to reflect decisions taken at the November 2025 Part II Finance Meeting.

The sheet presents options for a NIL, 1%, 1.8% and 2% increase, using the 2025 Precept figure of £381,044 as the base figure to calculate any increase from.

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

Members are asked to consider the proposed Schedule A figures as circulated in their papers. These have been amended slightly since the November 2025 meeting. Item 2 has been adjusted to take into account an ‘overspend’ related to insurance costs, as indicated in the summary report to 8th December 2025 and an expected increase in subs/fees. Item 2 is therefore increased by £3,000 to £26,500. There has also been a change in projected employment costs, Item 3, adding an additional £4,000 to reflect decisions taken at the November Part II Finance Meeting, taking this Item to £334,000.

It is now expected that there will be an estimated underspend in item 5, ‘Town Council Revenue Expenditure’, therefore this Item is reduced to by £2,000 to £46,000 for 2026/2027 .

The final estimated budget expenditure (not including reserves) for 2026/2027 is £443,450. This updated figure was incorporated into Sheet 1 which presents the Precept options.

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

13.3 *Projected Year End Balances 25/26 and Precept Options for 26/27*

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

- (i) To note that a £210,000 6-month cash flow level was proposed from 2025/2026 onwards and remains at this level for 2026/2027.
- (ii) It is proposed that an approximate amount of £19,287 (which depends on final actual figures for 2025/2026) is taken from a 2025/2026 estimated underspend, and put back into general balances.
- (iii) To ask Members to note the draft projection year end balances for 2025/2026 and projected year end expenditure for 2026/2027, using the estimated schedule A figures; with NIL 1%, 1.8% and 2% Precept increase options for 2026/2027 also being illustrated.
- (iv) Whilst the Council remains mindful of ongoing financial pressures on our residents, having held the Precept at the same level for three years, the Council can no longer afford to continue to absorb the increased costs in the services and purchases, large and small, that the Council requires to function effectively.

Members have asked the RFO to produce a balanced budget, using the currently available figures. A Precept increase of 1.8% is the closest figure; which would make the Precept due on a Band D property £122.83 per year. This would equate to an increase of approximately £2.17 per year on a Band D property – around 18 pence per month, for Birchwood Town Council’s Local Council portion of the Council Tax. The Precept requirement notification to WBC would be in the amount of £394,284 (rounded).

Using the 1.8% increase figure, the estimated gap between our precept requirement of £394,284 and our budget of £443,450 for 2026/2027 (-£49,166) will be balanced by utilising a projected income of around £5,500 and an estimated £19,287 from any underspends, and some unused reserves from the 2025/2026 financial year.

Members are requested to consider the Precept options presented to them and to make a final formal decision on the level of Precept required for 2026/2027.

Also, to note that the RFO is required to write to WBC (by their deadline of 23rd January 2026) detailing BTC’s Precept requirement for 2026/2027 (as resolved) including a breakdown of expenditure which, as a Council with a Precept of over £140,000, the Town Council is required to do.