

**MINUTES OF THE FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE
ON TUESDAY 24th MARCH 2026 AT 6.00PM**

Councillors Present:

Cllr Nigel Reeves (Chairman)	Cllr Balbir Dhillon
Cllr Ian Atkin	Cllr Kuldeep Dhillon
Cllr David Ball	Cllr Jacquie Sheridan
Cllr Julie Brereton	Cllr George Simcock
Cllr David Ellis	Cllr Tim Price

Absent Councillors:

Cllr Barry Allman
Cllr Mike Evans

Also Present:

Ms Safia Kauser	Locum Clerk/RFO
Mrs Hannah Thomas	Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO
Mr Stephen Johnson	Senior Maintenance Team Operative [to 7.00pm]

Police x2 representatives [to 6.25pm]
Peter Owen Energy Projects Plus [to 6.25pm]

328/25-26 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Cllr Barry Allman.

329/25-26 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor David Ellis declared an interest in agenda item 9, relating to the community centre (BYCC).

330/25-26 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & POLICE REPORT

A public participation session was convened.

(a) Police Report

PCSO Palfrey apologised for the lack of a physical police report but explained there have been technical issues regarding this. A verbal update was given:

- Youth ASB has not been as much of an issue recently due to the reopening of the Youth Club. He said that at the most recent event, there were 16 youths in attendance, which has risen weekly.

PCSO Palfrey reported that he will be visiting Birchwood Community High School to encourage children to attend.

- Complaints from residents regarding speeding have been taken into account by Cheshire Police. PCSO Palfrey explained that any area/road of concern without a site code will be visited by Police, and speed checks are conducted. He stated that the times when officers are available are not always the times that the residents specify are the most needed.

Councillor Ball stated that during opening and closing time at Birchwood High School, the entrance to Aldi car park is usually blocked with cars, which makes manoeuvring into the car park harder. He pointed out that the cars are parked on double yellow lines.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

PCSO Palfrey stated that the offence of parking on double yellow lines is not enforceable by the Police and would need to be monitored by a parking attendant. He reported that he has been running 'mini police' sessions in some of the Primary Schools, which ultimately encourages parents to park better.

Councillor Brereton suggested that the issue of parking on double yellow lines around the Birchwood Centre be raised directly to WBC by the Borough Councillors.

(b) Residents Questions

No members of the public were in attendance.

(c) Invited Guest – Energy Projects Plus (10 minutes)

Councillor Ellis introduced Mr. Peter Owen and explained that he was in attendance to seek the Council's backing and support for his Community Interest Company, Energy Projects Plus. He noted that Energy Projects Plus provides free advice on energy matters. Councillor Ellis further stated that residents may be wary of offers of "free advice" or assistance from individuals or organisations, and that it would therefore be beneficial, subject to the Council's decision, to formally endorse the initiative via social media in order to enhance public confidence in the organisation.

Mr. Owen distributed leaflets to Members outlining the work undertaken by Energy Projects Plus and stated that he had been a resident of Birchwood for sixteen years.

Mr. Owen stated that, between April and June, the charity will be delivering a community-level campaign to provide residents with energy advice. He advised that representatives will attend Birchwood Shopping Centre on a weekly basis and that discussions have taken place with Your Housing Group regarding engagement with their tenants. Mr. Owen further explained that, although the campaign will run for eight weeks, the charity itself is a permanent organisation and will remain available for residents to access its services.

RESOLVED: Members unanimously agreed to endorse Energy Projects Plus.

331/25-26 BOROUGH COUNCILLORS WARD REPORTS

The three Town Councillors, Balbir Dhillon, Kuldeep Dhillon and Tim Price also representing the Borough Council were in attendance.

A verbal update was provided by Cllr Price:

- Cllr Price attended a consultation regarding bus stops and reported that from May 2027, select bus stops will have live data screens for bus information. In Birchwood, these will likely be in the following locations: Birchwood Train Station, one in Gorse Covert, one in oakwood, one in Heathfield/Locking Stumps. In other bus stops, QR codes will be available, which, when scanned, will provide live updates. This will be funded by a 5-year funding initiative.
- Cllr Price stated that WBC's budget has been widely publicised, and it has been forecast that there will be a large overspend. Government support has been obtained.
- Cllr Price reported that WBC's Housing Committee have had a consultation on HMO's, deciding that they will no longer be automatically approved and the applications will go through a more robust process. He stated that this was initially trialled in six areas of Warrington, but now will be rolled out across the entire Borough.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

332/25-26 **MINUTES** - To receive and approve the draft minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th February 2026

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th February 2026 are approved as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Ball to be recorded as being present at the meeting.

333/25-26 **PLANNING MATTERS**

(a) Planning Decision Notices

- (i) **Application No. 2026/00084/PA3MA** Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS, 81a – 81b Spencer House Dewhurst Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PG. Proposed change of use of existing offices to 4 no. apartments. **Prior Approval is Required and Granted.**
- (ii) **Application No. 2026/00062/FUL** 81a Spencer House, Warrington, WA3 7PG. 3 new external doors. **Granted.**
- (iii) **Application No. 2026/00066/FULH** 1 Roberts Fold, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6AJ. Proposed rear, side and front single storey extension, and proposed rear 2 storey extension. **Granted.**

(b) Planning Applications for comment

- (i) **Application No. 2025/01813/FUL** Mirion Technologies, 207a Cavendish, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6WU. Installation of new windows to the Gable End.

(c) Planning Matters & Enforcement Issues

- (i) To note that the March meeting of the DMC was held on 19th March 2026. There were no items specific to Birchwood on the Agenda.

334/25-26 **ABANDONED TROLLEYS**

Members were requested to consider recommendations brought forward by the Deputy Clerk in consultation with Councillors Atkin, Simcock and Price who were tasked to explore the issue relating to the abandoned trolleys, liaise with the supermarkets, authorities and agencies and to bring forward recommendations for council consideration.

A written report tabled at the meeting was discussed by members.

Legislative Position

Councillor Atkin provided an update on the legislative framework relating to abandoned shopping trolleys. The relevant powers enabling a charge to be levied on retailers for the collection and storage of abandoned trolleys are contained within Section 99 and Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

Key points noted were:

- The legislation applies where a shopping or luggage trolley is found by an authorised officer of the local authority on land in the open air and appears to be abandoned, subject to certain exceptions such as designated trolley parks.
- For the purposes of these powers, “local authority” is defined as a district council, London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London, or the Council of the Isles of Scilly.
- As Birchwood Town Council is not a district council, these powers rest with

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Warrington Borough Council.

Councillor Atkin also reviewed Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which provides general powers enabling councils to undertake actions necessary to discharge their functions. It was noted that this provision does not extend to adopting the trolley-collection powers set out in the 1990 Act, as those powers are expressly conferred only on district councils.

Birchwood Shopping Centre

The Deputy Clerk reported that Birchwood Shopping Centre has produced and displayed posters at building entrances and exits encouraging customers not to remove trolleys from the premises.

Aldi

Aldi had obtained a quotation for the installation of geo-fencing technology to prevent trolleys being taken beyond the store boundary. Implementation is subject to approval from the landlord and/or Warrington Borough Council.

Trolleywise / Wanzl

Trolleywise provided an update on their activity in the area:

- Two members of staff currently cover the site, undertaking an average of two to three visits per week.
- To date, 584 trolleys have been collected and returned to the Aldi store, with 29 visits completed.
- They confirmed that they collect trolleys from the surrounding car parks, although site staff have also recently been undertaking this work.

Historic discussions regarding measures to control trolley loss were noted. These included proposals for shared trolleys across retailers and the installation of perimeter locking-wheel systems. These options were considered costly, and discussions regarding shared ownership and maintenance responsibilities between Asda, Aldi, and the Precinct were not concluded.

RESOLVED: That the designated group of Councillors together with the Deputy Clerk will continue to liaise with Warrington Borough Council, local retailers, and relevant collection agencies to progress measures addressing abandoned shopping trolleys.

335/25-26 WILDFLOWERS & BULB PLANTING SCHEME

(a) Wildflowers – Order with Warrington Borough Council

Members noted that a £600 order for wildflowers had been placed with Warrington Borough Council following the October 2025 council resolution. Due to staff challenges, additional work could not be carried out to research the best locations which required, the relevant permission from landowners for bulb planting.

(b) Trial of Autumn Bulb Planting

Members were requested to consider a trial of autumn bulb planting to be carried out by the Maintenance Team and to consider authorising any associated costs.

The Senior Maintenance Officer provided a verbal report:

- The SMO advised that, in previous years, BTC had planted bulbs in the area – many of which are still visible today. He confirmed that this is a job that the team could undertake, should the Council and residents want this.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

- The SMO explained that, due to staffing issues within the maintenance team, it would not be possible to accomplish bulb planting this calendar year, but would be something for the Council to consider next year.

RESOLVED: That the trial of the Autumn bulb planting be deferred to next year, due to staffing challenges.

336/25-26 BTC & BIRCHWOOD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE - To receive and authorise the estimated costs for a Solicitor to review the agreement for BTC and the Youth & Community Centre.

Members considered the fee estimate that would be between £600 to £800 plus VAT. The following disbursements would apply:

- File scanning fee - £36.00 (inclusive of VAT)
- AML/ID Checks - £19.20 (inclusive of VAT) per individual
- Company search - £38.40 (inclusive of VAT) per company
- Land Registry office copies (each) - £7.00
- Additional costs to apply if negotiations or assistance required to drafting amendments to the lease or post requirements such as stamp duty or registration at the land registry.

RESOLVED: That the council proceeds with the above estimate and that the costs are equally shared with the Birchwood Community Centre.

337/25-26 BTC FINANCE

(a) Locum Responsible Financial Officer Report

Members considered the RFO report circulated with the agenda pack. The RFO presented the report to members.

Customer Information Request – Co-operative Bank

The Co-operative Bank requested updated account information, including a completed Personal Details Form for the Vice Chair, Cllr Jackie Sheridan, as part of their regulatory review. The required documentation had been completed and submitted by the deadline.

Scribe Financial Software

Budget and Coding Review - A full review of the council's agreed budget and its entry into the Scribe system was completed. Several coding issues were identified and corrected with support from Scribe. New cost centres and budget codes were created to ensure income and expenditure was accurately classified. The Deputy RFO participated as part of their training. The current year's budget remained unchanged due to the proximity of year-end, but members would be requested to consider reassigning budget lines at the start of the new financial year. The council would have access to the actual expenditure from the previous year for comparison purposes.

VAT Review - The Q3 VAT reclaim of £3,646.04 was received on 14 January 2026. A reconciliation identified discrepancies between Scribe records and submitted VAT claims. Scribe had advised on adjustments that would be required at year-end to bring VAT records back into alignment on Scribe.

Data Entry - The January transactions had been entered into Scribe and the February transactions were completed earlier this afternoon. Copies of the receipts and payments list were tabled to members.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Bank Transfers

Two transfers of £40,000 each were made from the Business Instant Saver account to the Co-operative Bank on 16 January and during March to support cash flow.

Members welcomed the changes to the budget report and revised coding/cost centre structure.

RESOLVED: That the RFO report is received and noted.

(b) Approval of Receipts and Payments for January and February 2026

Members considered the receipts and payments tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the payments for the period of January and February 2026 be authorised for payment (attached as appendix to minutes).

(c) Bank Reconciliation Statements

The combined reconciliation statements for the period of January and February 2026 were tabled at the meeting.

£123.16 - Petty Cash 28/02/2026

£10,550.49 - The Co-operative Business Select

£91,309.56 - The Co-operative Bank Charity and Community Account

£318,928.24 - Nationwide Business Instant Saver

£420,911.45 – Total Balances Held as of 28 February 2026

RESOLVED: That the combined reconciliation statement for the period of January and February 2026 be received and the latest balances noted. Chairman to sign the reconciliation statements.

(d) Bank Mandate Changes to add the Locum Clerk/RFO as a signatory

Members were requested to consider adding the Locum Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer to the bank mandate to facilitate payments in the absence of the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: That the Locum Clerk/RFO Safia Kauser is authorised to be added to the bank mandate to facilitate and approve payments in the absence of the Town Clerk.

338/25-26 PARKERS FARM BUILDING MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Members noted that the the six monthly fire alarm, emergency lighting, intruder alarm and fire extinguisher service was carried out on 27th February 2026 and no further issues were reported by Black Box Security Alarm systems.

339/25-26 CLERKS CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

The Clerks correspondence report was circulated with the agenda pack:

Date	Details	Action Required
Feb 2026	Cheshire Neighbourhood Association – monthly newsletter	None
Mar 2026	ChALC – Benefits of Membership	None
Mar 2026	Warning of a Scam Email to Councillors	Cllrs to note
Mar 2026	Invitation for a meeting re: the Cheshire and Warrington Devolution on 24th March 2026	Cllrs to inform office if they would like to attend. Only 1 Cllr per Parish may attend.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

RESOLVED: That the Clerks correspondence report be received and noted.

340/25-26 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the following agenda items (to be considered in part 2) in accordance with the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960 as the business would be prejudicial to the public interest because of its confidential nature or other special reason:

- Item 14 – Confidential notes from Full Council 24th February 2026
- Item 15 – Employment Matters

PART II ITEMS - [EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC]

341/25-26 EMPLOYMENT

(a) To receive and consider updates relating to ongoing confidential employment matters and resolve any further actions.

Confidential Item 1

The Locum Clerk provided members with a verbal update on this matter.

RESOLVED: That the update is noted and that any outstanding contractual payments are processed accordingly (see confidential notes on file).

Confidential Item 2

RESOLVED: That the Locum Clerk is delegated authority to work with Worknest and resolve the confidential matters within the limits and scope of the agreed actions as per confidential notes.

(b) Payroll Costs for February and March 2026

Members received the salary, pension and HMRC payments for the month of February and March which were paid in accordance with employment contracts. The pay date for employees is the 7th of the month, covering the pay period for the whole month.

Payroll Period	Total Per Month	Details	Take-Home Pay	PAYE	Pension
11-Feb	£22,545.75	£4,812.65 (x3 Administration Staff) + £8,667.10 (x6 Maintenance Staff)	£13,479.75	£4,208.25	£4,857.75
12-Mar	£26,513.62	£6,827.26 (x3 Administration Staff) + £8,556.12 (x6 Maintenance Staff)	£15,383.38	£5,604.31	£5,525.93

Pay date for employees is 07th March - covering the full monthly pay

*Feb PAYE paid on 12 March 2026

*February Pension Contribution paid 12.03.2026

*March PAYE to be paid on 25 March 2026

*March Pension Contribution to be paid on 25 March 2026

The Chairman had reviewed the payroll data. It was noted that the Locum Clerk was auto-enrolled into the Cheshire Pension Fund.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

RESOLVED: That the payroll (as detailed above) for the period of February and March 2026 be approved.

(c) To ratify the uplift in hourly pay rates in the national living wage from £12.60 to £13.45, effective from 01st April 2026 for all employees paid on this rate.

The council noted that, although not accredited as a Living Wage employer, it has committed to ensuring all staff receive at least the real Living Wage. Administration staff are already paid on NJC scale points. The Locum Clerk advised that team affected by these changes should also be moved onto NJC scales to create a single, consistent pay structure across the organisation. Members agreed that this proposal will be reviewed during the next budget-setting cycle.

RESOLVED: That the uplift in the National Living Wage hourly rate from £12.60 to £13.45 be ratified and implemented with effect from 1st April 2026, and that the corresponding pay increase differential be applied to the existing hourly rate of the Senior Maintenance Operative.

(d) Ill Health Liability Insurance Cover

Members noted the renewal details for the Ill Health Liability Insurance – Cheshire Pension Fund – G74154-04 – Birchwood Town Council. All policyholders were required to submit membership data as of 1st April annually, as outlined in the ‘Membership data’ section. This data would need to be provided by 1 May 2026.

This year’s premium rate remains to be determined by Legal & General who have calculated the deposit invoice based on the previous rate of £1.18 per £100 of LGPS pensionable pay (i.e. 1.18% of pay). Confirmation of the 2026 premium rate to be received.

RESOLVED: That this update be noted. Locum Clerk to action any outstanding matters arising on this item.

342/25-26 ITEMS FOR A FUTURE AGENDA

No new items were raised by members for inclusion of a future meeting agenda.

343/25-26 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date, time and venue of the next council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 28th April 2026 was noted by members.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.00pm.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated: