

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE, WA3 6AN,
ON TUESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2026, 5:30PM

- Present:** Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Atkin, Ball, Brereton, Ellis, Evans, K. Dhillon, Price, Sheridan and Simcock

Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO – Mrs. H. Thomas
- Apologies:** Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald (health)
Councillors Allman (personal) and B. 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.

317/25-26 **APPOINTMENT OF A LOCUM CLERK/RFO**

The Chair stated that this is a one-item agenda, and that decisions need to be made at this meeting for the benefit of the Council to collectively agree on the appointment of a Locum Clerk/RFO.

The Chair reminded Members that as agreed in the January Part II meeting (314/25-46 (f)), it was resolved that Councillors Atkin, Ellis and the Chair be given delegated powers to search for a Locum Clerk/RFO.

The Chair reported that Councillor Ellis had made enquiries with neighbouring parish councils to ascertain whether any current or former Clerks would be available to undertake the role; however, no individuals were able to assume the additional responsibilities at this time.

The Chair further advised that Officers had contacted ChALC and SLCC, resulting in the receipt of three CVs. Following consideration, two applicants were deemed unsuitable due to their location and level of experience.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Councillors Atkin and Ellis, together with Officers, for reviewing the CVs and for facilitating a meeting with the prospective Locum.

The Chair reported that the candidate presented a strong CV, demonstrating substantial experience in clerking roles. He advised that she had previously been employed by a mid-sized council in Cheshire and that her tenure there had recently concluded. The candidate is now seeking a new professional challenge.

Councillor Ball enquired as to the reasons for the candidate's departure from her previous Council. The Chair advised that he was not in possession of that information but noted that the candidate had intended her role to be temporary in nature, and therefore it was likely that her appointment had reached its natural conclusion.

The Chair further advised that the candidate resides in Keighley, West Yorkshire, and has confirmed her willingness to attend the Council offices two days per week, in addition to attending Council meetings as required.

The Chair stated that a virtual meeting was held; attended by himself, Councillors Atkin and Ellis, and the Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO. He advised that the candidate presented herself in a highly professional and knowledgeable manner and appeared to be well suited to the role.

Councillor Atkin informed Members that the candidate had subsequently provided a copy of her Casual Worker's Contract, which she utilises when undertaking Locum appointments with other councils. He confirmed that the contract had been shared with Jackie Weaver at ChALC, together with the Council's appointed HR advisers, WorkNest, both of whom had provided advice in relation to its terms. Councillor Atkin clarified that the contract is on a zero-hours basis.

Councillor Atkin further advised that the candidate holds a number of additional professional commitments. In addition to providing Locum Clerk services, she also undertakes internal audit work for other councils. He noted that this breadth of experience provided reassurance to those present at the virtual meeting that the candidate would be well placed to support the Council with key operational matters, including the year-end accounts and the completion of the AGAR.

Whilst acknowledging her other commitments, Councillor Atkin stated that the candidate had expressed confidence in her ability to dedicate sufficient time to Birchwood Town Council. He further advised that she has done an excellent job turning around the previous Council she was a Locum at and has considerable experience working with councils facing operational difficulties.

Councillor Reeves advised that Members had provided the candidate with a brief overview of the recent HR matters affecting the Council, including the Subject Access Request (SAR), an ongoing grievance, and instances of long-term sickness absence amongst staff. He noted that the candidate appeared unperturbed by these issues.

The Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO commented that the candidate had reassured those present by explaining that such HR matters are not uncommon within local town and parish councils and that she has experience in managing similar situations.

Councillor Ellis stated that he believes that the candidate will do an efficient and effective job in a short timeframe.

Members enquired as to the Council's current financial position and whether the proposed appointment would be affordable.

The Chair advised that, as the Council is presently operating with two vacant salaried positions, there is sufficient budgetary provision to meet the cost of the Locum appointment.

Councillor Atkin confirmed that the candidate had proposed a rate of £32.00 per hour, which falls within the range previously anticipated by Members.

Further questions were raised regarding contractual matters, including the process should either party wish to terminate the agreement and the arrangements for holiday pay.

Councillor Atkin advised that the contract provides for one week's notice by either party. He further explained that holiday entitlement would be calculated on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the statutory entitlement of 5.6 weeks per annum, equating to 12.07% of hours worked over the course of a year.

The Chair asked if all Members were happy with the decision to proceed with the appointment of the proposed candidate as Locum Clerk/RFO and invited any reservations or further questions.

Councillors **unanimously resolved** to appoint the proposed candidate as Locum Clerk/RFO.

Action Officers to write to the candidate to offer her the position, subject to the usual pre-employment checks.

The Chair thanked Members for attending tonight's Extraordinary Meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.50pm