

MINUTES OF THE FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE
ON TUESDAY 28th APRIL 2026 AT 6.00PM

Councillors Present:

Cllr Nigel Reeves (Chairman)
Cllr Barry Allman
Cllr Ian Atkin
Cllr David Ball
Cllr Julie Brereton
Cllr David Ellis

Cllr Kuldeep Dhillon
Cllr Jacquie Sheridan
Cllr George Simcock
Cllr Tim Price

Absent Councillors:

Cllr Balbir Dhillon
Cllr Mike Evans

Also Present:

Ms Safia Kauser
Mrs Hannah Thomas
Mr Stephen Johnson

Locum Clerk/RFO
Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO
Senior Maintenance Team Operative [to 6.55pm]

Warrington East Police – PC Shevlin
Three members of the public

001/26-27 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Cllr Balbir Dhillon.

002/26-27 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Councillors Atkin and Simcock declared an interest in Birchwood Carnival.

003/26-27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & POLICE REPORT

A public participation session was convened.

(a) Police Report

PC Shevlin apologised that no physical report has been sent this month, and instead, gave a verbal update:

- With crime levels reduced, the team has been able to concentrate on proactive work.
- Drug warrants have been carried out under 'Operation Helmsman', one of which had resulted in an arrest being made. PC Shevlin stated that 'Operation Helmsman' is due to conclude in the next month, but the work regarding drug raids and warrants will always be ongoing, it just won't be attached to a specific operation.
- PC Shevlin advised that he is planning to organise another community walkabout, similar to the one held last year, which involved members of BTC and Your Housing Group joining the Warrington East Policing Team to maintain a visible presence in the community and engage with residents about local issues.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Councillor Brereton asked if more notice could be given for this year's walkabout so that more members of BTC are able to attend.

PC Shevlin responded that he will inform BTC as soon as he has a date set.

- The youth club, run by Warrington Youth Zone (WYZ) and based at BYCC, has become a more established meeting place for young people in Birchwood. PC Shevlin noted that when police encounter anti-social behaviour involving young people, they will signpost them to the club.

Councillor Ellis added that around 20 children attend each week, and that WYZ staff have commented that, of all the youth clubs they deliver, Birchwood is one they particularly enjoy working at, citing both the young people and the facilities.

(b) Residents Questions

There were three residents in attendance.

One resident stated that he has been a resident of Locking Stumps for over 40 years and has seen the town thrive commercially, environmentally and residentially. However, the resident now believes that the area is overgrown and has not been tended to well. He explained that the grass has yet to have its first cut of the season and is asking for a meeting with the four Locking Stumps Ward Councillors to discuss what realistically can be done to improve the area.

Councillor Ellis explained that BTC are not landowners, and therefore, it is not within our responsibility. He explained that BTC used to undertake some interim cutting on behalf of WBC, but due to many reasons, Councillors voted to pause the cutting undertaken by BTC.

The SMO explained that the WBC operatives who are on the mowing are new, and therefore, learning the routes during this first cutting cycle.

Councillor Ellis recommended the forming of a Locking Stumps Residents group, and stated that he would be happy to attend.

Action – Councillor Ellis to coordinate a meeting between the Locking Stumps Ward Councillors and residents.

Another resident thanked Councillors Brereton and Price for their time during a walkabout regarding Locking Stumps Common. She then asked Councillor K. Dhillon if he arranged any Councillor surgeries for residents to attend, as she previously emailed him and Cllr B. Dhillon regarding this.

Councillor K. Dhillon responded that he carries out surgeries every second Thursday of the month at Thomas Risley Church in Locking Stumps.

The resident stated that these surgeries have not been published well as she has not seen them, and Councillor K. Dhillon expressed that he would advertise these surgeries better in future.

The resident asked if Councillor K. Dhillon had been receiving the resident's emails, he confirmed that he had.

The Resident also stated that there are two bins adjacent to Trident Business Park which appear to be attracting vermin. Councillor Ellis stated that he will look into this and report it accordingly.

The Chair thanked the residents for attending, and the residents left the meeting.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

004/26-27 **BOROUGH COUNCILLORS WARD REPORTS**

Two Town Councillors, Councillor K. Dhillon and Price, also representing the Borough Council, were in attendance.

A verbal update was provided by Cllr Price and Cllr K. Dhillon:

- Cllr Price said that he has been out and about at local community groups, including 'Bread and Butter Thing' as well as EAT café, which are run out of Birchwood C of E Church. He said that this important resource which provides food to the local community was at risk of being moved to Padgate, but it has managed to stay in Birchwood which is good news for residents.
- Cllr Price stated that he has attended a meeting regarding the Devolution, which explained that a portion of the funding will be available for the first year to establish a group to facilitate preparations ahead of the devolution, and then the rest of the funding will be made available once the new Mayor has been elected. It was clarified that money will be split evenly amongst the whole areas in the devolution.
- Cllr K. Dhillon shared that Rutherford House has submitted a planning application to rebuild as smaller rental units rather than a single heavy industrial unit. This is thought to have minimal nighttime traffic.
- Cllr Price said that WBC are scoping areas for potential redevelopment.

005/26-27 **MINUTES** - To receive and approve the draft minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th March 2026.

Councillor Ellis proposed and Councillor Ball seconded the approval of minutes.

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th March 2026 are approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

006/26-27 **PLANNING MATTERS**

(a) Planning Decision Notices

Members noted the planning decision notices.

- (i) **Application No. 2025/01740/FUL** Land at Birchwood Community Hub, Benson Road, Warrington, WA3 7PQ. Proposed construction of Padel Courts with canopy and boundary fencing and single storey clubhouse. **Granted.**

(b) Planning Applications for comment

Members considered the planning applications for comment. No concerns or comments were raised by members.

- (i) **Application No. 2026/00461/DISCON** Land at Junction 11 of the M62 Motorway, Warrington. Discharge of Condition 7 (Materials) on Application 2023/00333 (Motorway Service Area).
- (ii) **Application No. 2026/00491/DISCON** Land at Junction 11 of the M62 Motorway, Warrington. Discharge of Condition 8 (Surfacing Materials) on Application 2023/00333 (Motorway Service Area).
- (iii) **Application No. 2026/00339/FULH** 64 Bramshill Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6TZ. Demolition of existing conservatory and detached garage. Construction of a new 2 storey side extension and single storey rear extension.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

- (iv) **Application No. 2026/00460/FUL** Birchwood Community Academy Trust, Birchwood Community High School Brock Road, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PT. Installation of nine roof mounted air source heat pumps and seven ground mounted air source heat pumps.
- (v) **Application No. 2026/00411/CLDP** 100 Inglewood Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6UJ. Proposed single storey rear extension.
- (vi) **Application No. 2026/00504/ADV** Unit T45 Trident Way, Warrington, WA3 6AX. 2x number externally illuminated fascia signs and 1x no. externally illuminated totem sign.
- (vii) **Application No. 2026/00436/FULM** Rutherford House Warrington Road, Warrington, WA3 6ZH. Demolition of existing building and erection of one unit for office use and innovation centre (Class E), with ancillary B2/B8 use, roof terrace, new access, parking, service yard, landscaping, and associated infrastructure.

(c) Planning Matters & Enforcement Issues

- (i) To note that the April meeting of the DMC will be held on 23rd April 2026. There was one item specific to Birchwood on the Agenda Application No. 2025/01740/FUL which was mentioned above.
- (ii) **Enforcement Cases Closed – ENF/26/10989** – Alleged unauthorised change of use of land to rear of property (shared pedestrian access to rear of properties) to residential garden – No breach found.

007/26-27 TOWN COUNCIL MAINTENANCE TEAM UPDATE

The Senior Maintenance Operative gave the below report:

- **Staff** – Currently, there are 4 members of the Maintenance Team including the SMO.
- **Litter Picking** – The team collect 30-40 bags per day, including the rubbish bins around the area. They tip-off 3 times a week.
- **Parks** – All parks are checked daily for rubbish and any visual issues, and reported accordingly.
- **Cutting Jobs** – So far this year, prior to bird nesting season, the team have carried out 17 cutting jobs. There are plans for the Maintenance Team to undertake more cutting jobs, but these will be focused on safety and sightline issues (subject to bird checks and risk assessments).
- **Flytipping** – The team have removed 27 separate flytipping issues this year, so far. Any flytipping which is found on YHG land cannot be disposed of at WBC tips, therefore, YHG provide a shipping container for BTC staff to put any flytipping found on YHG estates in. The team can fill one of these containers every 2 months.
- **Planters** – There are a total of 14 planters (4 in Oakwood, 5 in Locking Stumps, 4 in Risley and 1 in Gorse Covert which is a tower planter). They are currently being maintained ready for the summer plants to go in the week commencing 11th May. At the same time, 8 hanging baskets, paid for by Birchwood Shopping Centre, will be maintained by BTC. Each planter takes around 25 litres of water and with the weather the way it currently is, planters could need watering at least twice a week. The new planters have now been installed on Warrington Road, Risley and we have already had compliments from residents.

Two of the Locking Stumps planters will likely need to be replaced in the next year or

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

so – this is the octagonal one on Locking Stumps Common and one near Havisham Close.

- **Rubbish Bins** – The team empties 36 bins 3 times a week. Including shop bins, there are 8 bins in Gorse Covert, 3 bins in Risley, 12 bins in Locking Stumps and 13 bins in Oakwood which BTC are responsible for emptying.

YHG have recently installed two new bins. One on Redshank Common, and one at The Birches play area. The BTC team also regularly ‘top pick’ other bins which are not the responsibility of ours to empty, which entails picking litter from inside the bin so that it does not overflow and so that residents are able to add more rubbish to it as BTC are not always aware when other organisations empty their bins.

- **Mowing** – The mowing this year has been undertaken by WBC. BTC do not currently have access to any mowers. WBC have informed us that due to wetter ground conditions, mowing has commenced later than usual.

This is the main work that the Maintenance Team carries out on a daily and weekly basis. This doesn't include various ad-hoc jobs that may arise. Starting from May, the team enter their busier season, this is also when annual leave commitments are more frequent, resulting in fewer staff.

Members thanked the Senior Maintenance Officer for his report.
**SMO left at 6.55pm*

008/26-27 ABANDONED TROLLEYS

There was no update regarding abandoned trolleys to receive at this meeting.

009/26-27 BTC & BIRCHWOOD YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE (BYCC) - To receive a progress update on the review of the legal agreement between BTC and the Youth & Community Centre.

Councillor Ellis declared an interest in this item, but shared that, as a board member of BYCC, he had spoken to the solicitor and sent the draft lease document so that a more accurate figure can be given for the legal costs.

010/26-27 BIRCHWOOD CARNIVAL

To receive an update on the event planning in conjunction with Warrington Borough Council and to resolve any further actions, inclusive of costs to contribute towards the event.

Councillor Atkin reported that the planning for the Carnival is well underway. He said that sourcing finances is always difficult, but thanked Councillor K. Dhillon for securing a NISA ‘Making a Difference Locally’ grant to support the Carnival.

Contribution / Portaloos and the marquee, tables and chairs

The Deputy Clerk reminded Members that, as resolved at the October 2025 Finance meeting (*minute 214/25-26 (6.3)*), BTC agreed to support the carnival financially by paying for the hire of port-a-loos, a marquee, generator and tables and chairs up to a value of £3,000.

Town Council stall at the Event

The Deputy Clerk asked Members if they would like to have a BTC stall at the Carnival this year so that they may be able to meet with residents and answer any questions they may have. She emphasised that Councillors would manage the stall as Officers would be

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

helping to support the event. Seven Councillors showed an interest in participating in the event and Councillors Brereton and Price agreed to organise Members for the event. Officers will look into purchasing promotional merchandise.

Request for Volunteers and Scheduled support from the Maintenance Team, including car park attendee

The Deputy Clerk stated that this year, the Carnival is lacking volunteers, which are essential to helping the event go smoothly. Three of BTC's Maintenance Team have already signed up to assist at the carnival, in return receive days in lieu at double time. She asked if Members would be minded to agree to a fourth member of the Maintenance Team to attend the carnival, with their main responsibility being tending to the Car Park, and therefore would be required to stay at the event for its full duration. Given that the Operative would be there for longer hours, the Deputy Clerk proposed that they would receive additional time in-lieu.

RESOLVED: Members unanimously agreed to the request for an extra Maintenance Team Operative to attend the event to assist with the car park.

011/26-27 MEMBERS' REFERRALS – To consider items brought forward by Cllr David Ellis

(a) Councillor Ellis – Disabled Access and Parking at BYCC

Councillor Ellis explained that the community centre has had some issues with parking for many years. The area at the front of the centre is quite narrow and when 2 rows of cars park one invariably the outer row ends up parking partly on the grass and causes problems of mud and it is dangerous for people getting out of the car.

Councillor Ellis is therefore proposing to add several additional rows of block paving to widen the area as shown in the diagram attached. He said that the centre are also proposing to extend the existing block paved area to the end of the building so that there is a little more room for parking given that there is a shortage given that the town council car park has limited availability as it is a working area. The block paving will be to match the existing paving.

BYCC are also proposing to add a new ramped area on the right side of the building for disabled access. The current access is near the front door, so if anyone parks it prevents wheelchairs from gaining access. The requirements for the ramp have been provided by Warrington Disability Partnership.

The changes above will mean that we have about four additional spaces for parking, reducing any impact the centre has on the Town Council.

This members referral is to receive an agreement in principal from the Town Council subject to the following conditions:

1. Ensure that if planning permission is required, this is obtained prior to any work being carried out.
2. Obtain a method statement for the works to be carried out from the contractor.
3. Obtain a risk assessment for the work to be carried out from the contractor.

This will avoid any time being wasted on obtaining the documentation needed. The proposed work is to be completed by the contractor for Lagan Airport Maintenance. The centre is their charity of the year.

Councillor Ellis tabled both the method statement and risk assessment at the meeting for Members to view.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

The Chair asked if there would be an impact to operations at BTC, given that the car park is used as a working yard. Councillor Ellis stated that it would be unlikely to affect daily operations, as the work would be carried out closer to the Community Centre.

Councillor Atkin stated that if planning permission is required, it would likely be BTC that has to apply for it as the landowner. Councillor Ellis said that, if this is the case, the Community Centre would write and fund any planning application and BTC could submit it.

Councillor Ellis clarified that a cat and genny survey would be carried out prior to any work taking place.

RESOLVED: That the council agrees to the proposed works in principle, including checking for utilities. Proposed minor works agreed in principle relate to the front of the community centre to increase the block paved area at the front. This would be done in two ways - widening the strip and adding some extra length - about 8 feet. The former is to avoid cars from going onto the grass and churning up mud. The latter is to provide a little more space and changes to the disabled access ramping as well. Before any work is done, BYCC would need to ensure that the council is in possession of a method statement and risk assessment from the contractor and if any planning permission is needed this would be sought by BYCC and approved as required (BYCC don't believe this is the case).

(b) Councillor Ellis – Library of Things/Renewal Project

Councillor Ellis presented Members with the below report:

Birchwood Town Council has significant space available in the barns in the part which is not accessible to vehicles or larger objects. This facility, is owned by the community but has never really had any significant use to provide them with any benefit.

The current referral is to seek agreement from councillors IN PRINCIPLE to use the room for the establishment of either a Library of Things or a Renew Centre, or possibly both which would bring significant benefits to our residents as well as contributing to the climate emergency by helping to reduce the number of items which are purchased by the public. It can be especially helpful for those residents who have less disposable income and therefore cannot buy new items and hence plays a role in the alleviation of poverty.

This referral is “in principle” as there is significant background work required before setting up an operation of this type, so it is important to gain this approval first before doing any work. Any approval at this stage does not imply definitive approval.

A Library of Things is a community-run lending service where people can borrow practical items instead of buying them. It typically offers tools, household equipment, leisure gear and other occasional-use items. The aim is to save residents money, reduce waste, and strengthen local connections by making shared resources easy and affordable to access. This can bring huge advantages to the local community. Items can be purchased or can be donated by members of the public and repaired/serviced.

A Renew Project is a community space where unwanted household items are repaired, refurbished and resold at low cost instead of going to waste. Skilled staff and volunteers fix furniture, appliances and bikes, giving them a new life. The model cuts landfill, provides affordable goods for residents, and creates opportunities for training, volunteering and local connection.

One of the biggest obstacles to setting this type of operation up is the need for a suitable space and the availability of volunteers to run it.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Birchwood Youth & Community Centre has a unique opportunity to run something of this nature. The centre has almost 30 volunteers involved with the Repair Café which was the first of its type in Warrington, and has given rise to several others across the town as its service has become known. The volunteers we have, often want to do more things and both the proposed projects would provide such opportunities. The Library of Things will undoubtedly require the repair and servicing of equipment hired out, and the renew project would also provide these opportunities as well as potential to repair/modify furniture items, giving it many of the same kind of activities that are available in Mens Sheds. Repair Café already carries out refurbishment of bikes.

If this type of project were run by Birchwood Repair Café, this is a part of the community centre, which is a fully registered charity with the Charity Commission, which opens up a lot of opportunities for seeking grants.

If councillors give the go-ahead in principle, this would allow the community centre to put together a strategy document. Once this work is completed, the centre would be in a position to put forward definitive proposals for approval and then access the level of funding which would be required to facilitate a successful operation.

RESOLVED: That the council in principle supports the initiative suggested by Cllr Ellis for the possible use of the storeroom in the barns to operate a library of things for the benefit of the community. The council notes that this will work well in conjunction with Repair Café at the Community Centre.

Action: Councillor Ellis stated to provide further information and details for consideration at a future meeting.

012/26-27 BTC FINANCE

(a) Locum Responsible Financial Officer Report

Members received a report from the Locum Responsible Financial Officer on current financial matters:

- FSCS protection: The council's Co-operative Bank accounts are covered by the FSCS up to £120,000. The council may need to review funds held with Nationwide and consider investment with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund once a new RFO is appointed.
- Insurance: The council's long-term agreement with Zurich runs to 1 April 2027. The 2026/27 premium is £5,972.93. The Locum Clerk/RFO has reviewed cover, and the updated asset register will be supplied to ensure all assets are insured. A procurement exercise for future insurance arrangements will be undertaken before the current agreement expires.
- Bank signatories: The form to add the Locum Clerk/RFO as a signatory to the Co-operative Bank accounts has been submitted and is being processed.
- Invoice authorisation: An invoice authorisation stamp has been ordered and will be used from 1st April, with stamped invoices scanned into Scribe to strengthen the audit trail.
- Business rates: The 2026/27 rates bill for Parkers Farm has been received; due to Small Business Rate Relief, no payment is due.
- Petty cash: Petty cash was reconciled as at 31st March 2026, with £93.25 cash verified and all expenditure entered into Scribe.
- Year-end and audit: March payments have been entered and year-end accounts preparation is underway. The internal auditor had been contacted and will conduct

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

a remote audit following completion of a questionnaire and upload of supporting documents. Year-end accounts are expected to be presented to the Council in May, or June at the latest, to meet the 30th June external audit deadline.

- Energy contracts: The council's current fixed-price electricity and gas contracts with British Gas Lite run to 30th September 2027 and 1st October 2027 respectively. An energy broker had approached the council regarding early renewal; any proposed contract changes or quotations will be brought to a future council meeting for decision.

RESOLVED: That the RFO report is received and noted.

(b) Approval of Receipts and Payments for March and April 2026

Members considered the receipts and payments tabled at the meeting.

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

(c) Direct Debits, Standing Orders & Continuing Contracts & Obligations 2026/2027

Members considered the schedule of direct debits, standing orders, and other pre-authorised payments arising from ongoing contractual commitments and obligations for the 2026/2027 financial year.

RESOLVED: That list (as circulated with the agenda) be agreed and approved.

(d) Annual CHALC Membership Fee 2026/2027

RESOLVED: That the annual CHALC membership fee of £1,631.80 for the 2026/2027 financial year be approved.

013/26-27 REVIEW OF IT EQUIPMENT

Members considered a report from the Locum Clerk/RFO regarding the condition and suitability of the council's existing IT equipment. The review identified that the two HP2311X monitors currently in use are over ten years old, no longer meet modern display standards, and should be replaced. The laptop being used by the Locum Clerk/RFO was also found to be unsuitable for regular administrative use and was also required for training purposes within the maintenance team.

Quotations for replacement equipment were presented. Laptops Direct provided the lowest overall cost for two Dell P2425H monitors and a Dell Pro 15 Essential laptop, totalling £912.00. IT had also quoted £105.00 for setup and configuration of the new laptop.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Council approves the purchase of two Dell P2425H monitors and one Dell Pro 15 Essential laptop from Laptops Direct at a total cost of £912.00 + VAT.
- 2) That the Council authorises IT to undertake the setup and configuration of the new laptop at a cost of £105.00.
- 3) That the existing Dell Inspiron laptop remains allocated as a training laptop for the maintenance team, and that IT assigns an appropriate user login for this purpose.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

014/26-27 **PARKERS FARM BUILDING MAINTENANCE UPDATE** - To receive and consider any building maintenance matters and to determine any required actions including associated costs

Annual Legionella testing

It was reported that the legionella testing contract was due for renewal. Officers advised that testing kits were currently being purchased and testing carried out in house and sent off to the company. It was further suggested that procuring a local contractor might offer a more cost-effective option. Officers will investigate this before proceeding with the contract.

Replacement of carpet in the Clerk's Office & Internal Improvements

Members received photographs showing the poor condition of the carpet in the Clerk's Office, confirming that replacement was necessary. The Locum Clerk also advised that both the Clerk's Office and the wet room required repainting, and the maintenance team had agreed to undertake this work, with the Council meeting the cost of materials.

RESOLVED: That the carpet in the Clerk's Office be replaced, and that the maintenance team carry out the internal painting works, with the cost of materials to be met by the Council.

015/26-27 **DEFIBRILLATOR**

Members were requested to consider the replacement of the existing defibrillator, as the model has been discontinued for some time, making it increasingly difficult to obtain replacement consumable pads. The current adult pads and battery are due to expire on 8th June 2026. It was noted that the existing defibrillator and cabinet were purchased in 2015 at a cost of £2,000.

Quotations were presented as follows:

- Company 1 – have offered a trade in option which includes the removal of the existing one and a replacement of a new one at a discounted price. Option 1 £1,145 + VAT; Option 2 £775.00 + VAT.
- Company 2 – Online Quote of £895.00 + VAT
- Company 3 – Online quote of £795.00 + VAT

Members considered the various quotes obtained and the differences between each model.

RESOLVED: That the Council proceeds with the replacement of the defibrillator at a cost of £1,195 + VAT, subject to confirmation that the new unit is compatible with the existing cabinet in terms of size and fitting.

016/26-27 **STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Copies of the Council's current Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were circulated to members, together with the latest NALC model templates. It was noted that the existing documents were out of date and contained references to legal and statutory provisions that have since been repealed.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be delegated authority to update the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in line with the latest NALC model documents.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

017/26-27 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 24 th March 2026	Cllrs to inform office if they would like to attend. Only 1 Cllr per Parish may attend.

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

018/26-27 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Members considered the format for the forthcoming Town Meeting and the potential inclusion of guest speakers. The Locum Clerk advised that, in her experience, some councils use the Town Meeting as an opportunity to engage the community by inviting speakers, while others hold a more limited meeting to fulfil statutory requirements. Councillor Ellis suggested involving the Community Centre as part of the programme.

RESOLVED: That the Community Centre and the Repair Café be invited to deliver presentations at the Town Meeting.

019/26-27 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 20 – Confidential notes from Full Council 24th March 2026
- Item 21 – Employment Matters

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

020/26-27 CONFIDENTIAL NOTES – To receive and approve the confidential notes from the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th March 2026.

RESOLVED: That the confidential notes from the Full Town Council meeting held on the 24th March 2026 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

021/26-27 EMPLOYMENT

(a) To receive and note the revised employer contribution rate for the Cheshire Pension Fund for the 2026/2027 financial year.

The Council received correspondence from the Cheshire Pension Fund confirming that the actuarial review of Ill Health Liability Insurance had been completed. The Fund advised that, following assessment by its Actuary, Hymans Robertson, the Ill Health Liability Insurance contribution rate has been amended, reducing from 1.18% to 0.90%. It was noted that this change has been determined by the Actuary and not by the Fund itself.

The revised employer contribution rates for Birchwood Town Council are as follows:

- Employer contribution rate: 20.5%

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

- Ill Health rate: 0.90%
- Total rate payable to the Pension Fund: 19.60%

RESOLVED: That the above update be noted.

(b) Payroll Costs for April 2026

Members received the salary, pension and HMRC payments for the month of April 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. The Locum Clerk/RFO and the Chairman had reviewed the payroll data.

Payroll Period	Total Per Month	Details	Take-Home Pay	PAYE	Pension
01 – April	£29,366.36	X9 Employees (x3 admin; 6 Maintenance Staff)	£17,835.67	£6,020.25	£5,510.44
Pay date for employees is 07th April - covering the full monthly pay					

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

(c) To receive and consider the staffing report from the Locum Clerk and ratify any costs.

PPE / Workwear – Maintenance Team

The Clerk reported that the maintenance team had requested for all-weather jackets and polo shirts. An was placed with Ross Workwear to include personalised logo/embroidery.

RESOLVED: That the order for the uniforms totalling £396.11 (net) be ratified.

New SSP Rules & Employee Absence

Members were informed of forthcoming national changes to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) effective from 6 April 2026. Payroll will need to be notified of all sickness absences, regardless of whether the employee receives full pay, and of the employee’s normal working days where not already recorded. The key changes included:

- SSP payable from day one, with the removal of waiting days.
- Removal of the earnings threshold, meaning all employees will qualify.
- New SSP rate set at the lower of 80% of average weekly earnings or £123.25 per week.

It was noted that the Council’s company sick pay policy will need to be reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate once SSP becomes payable immediately. Further details were available in the factsheet and the government guidance.

The Clerk informed members of the sickness absence of employees since the last meeting (see confidential notes).

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Contracts of Employment

Members were informed that, during administrative checks on a HR issue, it was identified that full employment contracts were not held on file for several staff members, with only the main particulars of employment available. The Locum Clerk confirmed that this had already been recognised by previous management, and that work to update and issue complete contracts was in progress following the appointment of WorkNest.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be delegated authority to issue employment contracts at the earliest opportunity.

Welfare Issues

A verbal update was provided to members relating to employed personnel (see confidential notes).

A discussion was held by members relating to the welfare matter and the sickness period. It was noted that the banking would no longer be an issue as Co-op were acting as the second signatory to authorise payments set-up by the Deputy Clerk/RFO via telephone banking whilst the Locum Clerk was added to the mandate and received her online banking logins.

RESOLVED: That the letter drafted by Worknest and subject to formatting, be issued to the individual and that a welfare meeting be arranged.

RESOLVED: That the employee's six-month sickness absence be administered in line with the Council's sickness policy, with any periods worked discounted, and that the Locum Clerk confirm with Payroll the date on which the six-month period ends.

Deputy Clerk/RFO

Members were informed of a matter involving the Deputy Clerk, and noted that it had been addressed by the relevant authorities.

(d) Confidential Employment Matters (see confidential notes on file)

Confidential Item 1

The Locum Clerk provided members with an update of an ongoing confidential matter that was now concluded.

Confidential Item 2

Members received an update on a confidential matter handled under the Clerk's delegated authority with support from WorkNest and other parties. The Locum Clerk sought direction from members regarding personal property.

Subject Access Request

This was completed and copy provided to the employee on the 01st April 2026. This matter is now resolved.

RESOLVED: That the updates be noted and that the Locum Clerk arranges the return of council property and personal belongings be returned to the individual. SMO to be present.

022/26-27 ITEMS FOR A FUTURE AGENDA

- NWCC barn storage fees

023/26-27 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date, time and venue of the Annual Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 26th May 2026 at 6.30pm was noted by members.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.05pm.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated: