

MINUTES OF THE FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE ON
TUESDAY 23RD JUNE 2026 AT 6.00PM

Councillors Present:

Cllr David Ellis (Chairman)	Cllr Mike Evans
Cllr Barry Allman	Cllr Nigel Reeves
Cllr Ian Atkin	Cllr George Simcock
Cllr David Ball	Cllr Tim Price
Cllr Julie Brereton	

Absent Councillors:

Cllr Balbir Dhillon
Cllr Kuldeep Dhillon
Cllr Jacquie Sheridan

Also Present:

Ms Safia Kauser	Locum Clerk/RFO
Mrs Hannah Thomas	Deputy Clerk/Deputy RFO
One member of the Public	

049/26-27 CHAIRMANS OPENINGS REMARKS

Councillor Ellis opened the meeting by welcoming those present and providing an update on his activities over the past month.

He reported that he had attended the Civic Ceremony of the Mayor, Councillor Sagheer Zaman, held at St. Elphin's Parish Church. Councillor Ellis described the service as a heartwarming occasion that brought together people from a range of cultures and traditions.

Councillor Ellis also advised that he had attended an initial meeting with a small group of Locking Stumps residents, alongside several Ward Councillors.

He explained that the group has been established to support the Locking Stumps area and that Councillors will consider how both the Town Council and the Borough Council can work together to assist with local priorities and initiatives, whilst setting realistic expectations for residents regarding what can be achieved and the respective responsibilities of each Council.

050/26-27 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs B Dhillon, K Dhillon and J Sheriden.

051/26-27 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY & OTHER INTERESTS

Members were invited to declare their pecuniary and other interests. None were declared.

052/26-27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public took part in public participation. It was noted that the Police were not in attendance at the meeting and no written report was received.

053/26-27 BOROUGH COUNCILLORS WARD REPORTS

Councillor Price gave the following report regarding issues which may be of importance to Birchwood:

- He has spoken to WBC regarding the roundabout at Moss Gate, which was raised at the Annual Town Meeting. He asked if wildflowers could be planted on there instead of weeds,

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

and was told that because of the repurposed cobbles which are installed, it would not be possible to do this. He also has asked them to improve the drainage on the roundabout, as flooding is a problem. Councillor Atkin commented that he has reported the drainage issue, and has recently noticed white paint around the affected areas, which may indicate upcoming maintenance.

- He noted that maintenance work appears to have been carried out on sections of the Spinal Path, and that several areas have been marked, suggesting that further repairs may be planned.
- He reported that WBC is planning to hold its budget meeting in August this year. It is anticipated that scheduling the meeting earlier will help ensure the Council's finances are managed more smoothly.

054/26-27 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the draft minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on the 26 May 2026 are approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

055/26-27 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING DRAFT MINUTES

Members received and noted the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 26 May 2026.

056/26-27 PLANNING MATTERS

a) Planning Decision Notices

- **Application No. 2026/00597/DISCON** Land at Junction 11 of the M62 Motorway, Warrington. Discharge of condition 36B (Remediation and Verification) on previously approved application 2023/00333/VARC (Motorway Service Area). **Condition Part Discharged/Part Not Discharged.**
- **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. **Granted.**
- **Application No. 2026/00411/CLDP** 100 Inglewood Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6UJ. Proposed Single Storey Rear Extension. **Granted.**
- **Application No. 2020/37719** North Cheshire Holdings, NORTH CHESHIRE HOUSE Kelvin Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7PB. Variation of Conditions - Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) and Condition 4 (Car Parking Spaces) - on previously approved application 2017/31859 (Manufacturing and storage of aluminium frame windows), as per Revised parking Condition wording to reflect revised plan. (Amended description). **Granted.**

b) Planning Applications for Comment

- **Application No. 2026/00781/FUL** Concentric Business Park, Warrington Road, WA3 6WX. Change of use of an existing stand-alone communal cycle shelter (Sui Generis) to a storage unit (Use Class B8) and associated changes to existing ancillary buildings for the storage of refuse, recycling and cycles.

c) Other Planning Matters & Enforcement Issues

- To note that the June meeting of the DMC was held on 18th June 2026. There were no items specific to Birchwood on the Agenda.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

- Following resolution at the May meeting, an objection was submitted by Officers on behalf of the Council for **Application No. 2026/00574/FUL** – Birchwood Golf Club, Kelvin Close for the proposed erection of one self-build bungalow, detached garage and associated works.

057/26-27 FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) RFO Financial Report

Bank Reconciliation for April and May 2026 and Scribe Accounts Transaction Report

Members received and considered the bank reconciliation statements for April and May 2026 together with the Scribe transaction report.

RESOLVED: That the bank reconciliation statements for April and May 2026 together with the Scribe transaction report be received and noted.

Petty Cash Report

Members received the petty cash report. The opening balance on 01 April 2026 was £93.25, and the closing balance at 27 May 2026 was £62.61. All petty cash transactions were supported by receipts and appropriately recorded.

RESOLVED: It was resolved to note the petty cash report.

Payments Schedule

Members reviewed the Payments Schedule covering the period 27 May to 18 June, which detailed all payments made under delegated authority, including pre-authorised payments, direct debits, internal bank transfers, and income received.

RESOLVED: That the payments for the period of May/June 2026 are approved (attached as appendix to minutes).

Update on Co-op Signatories and Online Banking Access

The Deputy Clerk reported that Co-op Bank had confirmed the current signatories as:

- Hannah Thomas
- Fiona McDonald
- Kuldeep Dhillon
- Safia Kauser
- Ian Atkin
- Nigel Reeves
- Russel Bowden

Former Cllr Bowden remained listed and would be removed via a Change of Signatory Form. The Deputy Clerk further advised that the same form could be used to request online banking access for signatories who require it in order to authorise payments.

Cllr Atkin reported that he currently had online banking access; however, there were issues with login and functionality that would need to be resolved.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk submits the Change of Signatory Form to remove former Cllr Bowden and update online banking access for current signatories in accordance with the two-signing rules.

02 Mobile contract monthly charges reduced to £15.56 + VAT

Members noted that the monthly O2 mobile contract charges have been reduced to £15.56 + VAT.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Hanging Baskets – Shopping Centre recharges

Members noted that the purchase cost for the hanging baskets installed at the Shopping Centre was £489.86 net and would be recharged accordingly.

b) Public Sector Deposit Fund

Members considered the report on the proposal to open an investment account with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund. The report outlined that the Fund aims to maximise current income while preserving principal and maintaining liquidity. It is classified as a short-term, low-volatility net asset value money market fund under the Money Market Fund Regulation. The report noted that many Town and Parish Councils invest in the Fund due to its low-risk profile, short-term accessibility, and competitive interest returns, and that it is widely regarded as a secure and flexible option for managing public sector cash balances.

The Locum RFO recommended that the Town Council open a short-term investment account with the Fund. Indicative returns were reported at between 3% and 4% interest per month, with interest payable directly into a nominated bank account. It was proposed that the Council transfer £200,000 into the Fund, comprising the Council's general reserves and a proportion of its earmarked reserves. Funds deposited can be withdrawn with one day's notice, providing flexibility and liquidity for the Council's financial management.

Cllr Atkin reported that he had looked into the Public Sector Deposit Fund independently and confirmed that it was considered low-risk, supporting the recommendation presented. The Chairman reported that the current interest rate on the Council's Nationwide account is 1.45%, and members noted this when considering the comparative benefits of the Public Sector Deposit Fund.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That an account be opened with the Public Sector Deposit Fund with a transfer of £200,000 from the Co-operative bank account.
- 2) That the monthly interest payments be made to the Co-op Charity & Community Account ending 9341.
- 3) That the following contacts be approved as authorised signatories and main contacts for the account:
 - Safia Kauser – Locum Town Clerk & RFO
 - Hannah Thomas – Deputy Clerk / Deputy RFO
 - Cllr David Ellis
 - Cllr Nigel Reeves
 - Cllr Ian Atkin
- 4) That Cllr Kuldeep Dhillon be approved as an additional signatory.
- 5) That the signing mandate requires any two authorised persons.

058/26-27 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

a) Internal Audit Report & AGAR Internal Audit Form

Members received the Internal Audit Report and the AGAR Internal Audit Form for the year ending 31 March 2026, along with the Locum Clerk/RFO's management responses for consideration.

The audit highlighted several areas for action. Members noted that the risk assessment had not been completed due to the sudden death of the RFO, and this will be addressed for 2026/27. Other recommendations related to payroll authorisation, employment contracts, NJC pay point accuracy, expense claim procedures, publication of minutes, and VAT

Signed..... Chairman Dated:

documentation. The Locum Clerk/RFO outlined the steps being taken to implement all required improvements.

The council acknowledged the auditor's conclusion that, despite staffing challenges, the Council's financial records and controls remained sound, with clear actions identified to strengthen processes further.

RESOLVED: That the Council receives and notes the year-end Internal Audit Report and AGAR Internal Audit Form, and approves the updated management response.

b) Annual Governance Statement Section One

Members considered the responses to Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26. The Locum Clerk/RFO took members through each assertion, and consideration was given to both the Yes and No responses.

The following responses were agreed as 'No' the governance assertion.

- Assertion 5 – Risk Management (No) - The Council cannot confirm that a risk assessment was completed during 2025/26 due to the sudden death of the Deputy Clerk/RFO in January 2026. The annual review normally takes place in March, and the last completed assessment (March 2025) fell outside the financial year. The Council will review the risk assessment earlier in future years and maintain ongoing monitoring.
- Assertion 10 – IT and Data Management (No) - While policies, GDPR training, and a Council-owned email domain are in place, wider requirements in the Practitioners' Guide such as regular data audits, detailed security measures, and clearer referencing of the retention/disposal schedule are not yet fully met. Some work was delayed following the sudden death of the RFO. The Council will update policies, strengthen data governance, and complete regular data audits.

All other assertions were agreed as 'Yes' responses with the exception of assertion 9 which was not applicable.

RESOLVED: That the annual governance statement assertions (as detailed above) be submitted as the responses to the annual governance statement.

c) Annual Governance Statement Section Two

Members considered section two of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ending 31 March 2026, along with all supporting financial documentation. The Locum Clerk/RFO presented the accounting statements and accompanying schedules, including the balance sheets, bank reconciliation, income and expenditure summary, variances, and the Asset and Disposals Register.

Members considered the Asset & Disposals Register and the notes from the Locum RFO, noting that the disposals recorded by the former RFO had been retained, the register had been updated for all purchases and disposals, and a further physical verification exercise will be undertaken. An updated Asset Register and Disposal Policy will be brought to the next meeting.

A discussion was held on asset treatment, and it was agreed that items valued at less than £100 will be removed from the register unless they are considered to have community significance.

Members reviewed the documentation and confirmed that it accurately reflected the Council's financial position at year-end.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

RESOLVED: That Section Two of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), together with the financial statements and supporting documentation for the period ending 31 March 2026, be received and approved and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That assets with a value of less than £100 be removed from the asset register unless they are considered to have community significance.

d) Public Inspection Period

Members noted the dates set by the Locum RFO for the public inspection period, which will commence on Thursday 25 June 2026 to Wednesday 05 August 2026, in accordance with statutory requirements.

059/26-27 OPEN SPACES MAINTENANCE

a) BTC supporting Warrington Borough Council Green Spaces

Members considered how Birchwood Town Council (BTC) could support Warrington Borough Council (WBC) in maintaining green spaces within the Parish, following recent complaints regarding grass cutting and tree maintenance received by the office and the Senior Maintenance Officer.

Members were advised of the correspondence sent to the WBC Area Manager on 9 April 2026, which confirmed that the grass-cutting cycle operates on a 6–8 week basis and that complaints should be logged via the WBC website to enable effective monitoring. Members were also advised that Town and Borough Councillors have been engaging with residents to explore options for maintaining specific grassed areas, and that BTC has requested indicative costings from WBC for commercial mowing equipment. WBC has confirmed that they would welcome additional support and are in the process of providing the requested information. A discussion took place on BTC's potential involvement, including staffing capacity, training requirements, and the possible acquisition of commercial machinery. Members agreed that costings should include both purchase and lease hire options, subject to compliant procurement and advice from WBC. Members were reluctant to consider the use of WBC equipment due to historical issues previously experienced.

Members agreed to authorise meetings between BTC and WBC officers, with nominated BTC Councillors in attendance. It was further agreed that the proposal would be explored in more detail and that a full report would be brought to the July Full Council meeting, mindful of the financial challenges associated with any new commitment, particularly as BTC is the highest precepting authority within Warrington Borough.

RESOLVED: That officers and nominated Councillors be authorised to engage with WBC officers; that staffing capacity, training needs, and procurement options (including purchase and lease hire) be explored; and that a full report be brought to the July Full Council meeting.

- a) To receive updates on recent vehicle issues and associated potential repair costs.
Quotes to be tabled

Members were informed that there was an incident with one of the council vehicles. An incident form had been completed and photos taken. One quotation was received. It was agreed that the work would need to be carried out to restore the safety parts to the vehicle.

RESOLVED: That further quotations are obtained.

- b) To consider maintenance responsibilities for the following areas and to explore how BTC can support future upkeep:
- Locking Stumps Common
 - Walled Garden

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

The Chairman reported that the walled garden was unsafe and the walls were rotten.

RESOLVED: That David Ellis undertakes research on the Walled Garden and Locking Stumps comms and reports back to a future meeting.

060/26-27 MUGA AGREEMENT WITH THE SCHOOL

To consider any updates relating to the MUGA agreement with the School. The Council received correspondence from the School on 19 March 2026 requesting a meeting with the Town Clerk. A follow-up email was sent on 9 June 2026 requesting the latest version of the agreement with the proposed amendments, and a response is currently awaited.

061/26-27 EMPLOYMENT

a) Approval of June Payroll

Members received the salary, pension and HMRC payments for the month of June 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
03 – June	£24,214.76	X7 Employees (x3 admin; 4 Maintenance Staff)	£14,448.29	£5,083.05	£4,683.42

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

b) Locum Clerk HMRC Mileage rate

RESOLVED: That the increase in the HMRC mileage allowance from 45p per mile to 55p per mile from 06 April 2026 be noted and that the backdated mileage adjustment of £167.40 for the period 07 April 2026 to 28 May 2026 in respect of the Locum Clerk, as reviewed by Payroll and the Chairman, be ratified.

- c) To confirm the SCP pay point for the Town Clerk/RFO, as recommended in the recent internal audit report, and to issue a confirmatory letter to be appended to the original contract of employment.

Following the matters raised in the internal audit report, members confirmed the SCP Pay point for the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk's pay point be confirmed at SCP 40, pro rata to contractual working hours, in accordance with the NALC pay scales.

062/26-27 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

To receive any updates or reports from Councillors appointed to outside bodies.

- Your Housing Group

The Deputy Clerk reported that a community clean-up event has been scheduled by YHG for Tuesday, 30 June, from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm on the Redshank Estate. The Deputy Clerk and the Maintenance Team will attend, and Councillors are invited to attend should they wish. It was also noted that the Police will be present to assist with any anti-social behaviour queries.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated:

Councillor Brereton commented that communication from YHG has not been as effective as usual, which has made it more difficult to assist residents.

Action – Officers to contact YHG to encourage better communication between organisations.

- Police Representative

There were no updates from the Police Representative at this meeting.

- Birchwood Carnival Committee

Councillor Atkin reported that this year's Birchwood Carnival was very well attended. He thanked Councillors Ball and Price for staffing the BTC stall, which was well visited by residents wishing to share their views and feedback. He also expressed his thanks to Councillor Ellis for officially opening the Carnival and leading the procession alongside Councillor Sagheer Zaman, Mayor of Warrington.

The Chair extended his thanks to the Carnival Committee for arranging this popular local event.

- Friends of Birchwood Forest Park

There were no updates regarding the Friends of Birchwood Forest Park at this meeting.

- Risley Moss

There were no updates regarding Risley Moss at this meeting.

063/26-27 **ITEMS FOR A FUTURE AGENDA**

No new agenda items were raised by members.

064/26-27 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date, time and venue of the next council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 28 July 2026 at 6.00pm, was noted.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

Signed..... Chairman

Dated: