

April 2024 Birchwood Town Council Meeting:

(1 to 3) Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Public Participation, including the Police Report.

(4) The approval of the March 2024 Council Meeting Minutes.

Clerks Report to the Council

(5) Progress Report - Copies of main correspondence sent out/received since the March 2024 Council Meeting.

(6) New Items for the consideration of the Council not otherwise raised in the Progress Report.

(7) Planning Matters **(8)** Accounts for Payment **(9 to 11)** Part I Finance; including approval of Minutes, main correspondence sent /received (progress) and new items not raised in the Progress Report **(12)** Part II Finance, Audit and Personnel, including approval of Minutes

6 New Items

6.1 Warrington Borough Council (WBC) (*majority not copied in papers as already circulated to Members and/or available in the office*)

- (a) Sent/received – various emails/online reports/telephone calls following queries/contact from residents regarding flytipping, tree/shrubbery/hedge issues (including ownership), flooding etc.
- (b) Received – Election Notices for both contested and uncontested elections for Birchwood. These have been displayed on noticeboards and on BTC’s website and Facebook page.
- (c) Received – list of locations that are cut back with a side arm flail in Birchwood.
- (d) Updated BTC cutting schedule sent to WBC for their information.
- (e) Monthly report, with BTC’s updates, sent to Simone for her information.

6.2 Your Housing Group (YHG)

- (a) Sent/received – various emails/reports following queries/contact from residents including issues with flytipping, shrubbery maintenance, trees blocking light from streetlamps, waste removal etc.
- (b) Sent – email to YHG to enquire about an update to a fridge freezer that had been flytipped in January, after a concerned resident called our office to make a complaint. This was followed up by a phone call from YHG who have put a note on their file for an update to be given in regard to a removal date.

6.3 Miscellaneous Correspondence (*majority not copied in papers – already circulated / available in the office*)

- (a) Received – various emails from Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA).
- (b) Received – emails from a resident re: a sign at the Walled Gardens that appeared to have been pushed over. A second email was sent after the resident ‘replanted’ the sign with suggestions on how the issue could be fixed. The Ranger who deals with the Walled Garden was copied into the emails.
- (c) Received – emails from a resident sharing the 2015 WBC Prohibition Order for Silver Lane, Croft. A number of Councillors were copied into the resident’s email, the contents of which have been noted.

6.4 Cheshire Police (*Alerts already circulated - not copied in papers – available in the office*)

Received – Various Neighbourhood Alerts.

6.5 Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC), National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) (*already circulated – not copied in papers – 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, consultations, etc.
- (c) Received – SLCC – various updates, briefings, news items, etc.

6.6 Publications Received

Various LGC e-mail correspondence/briefings.

6.7 Urgent /Time Sensitive Matters

To receive any urgent and/or time sensitive matters that have been received since the publication of the Clerk's Report for noting and/or action.

6.8 Annual Town and Annual Council Meetings

In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council must be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the Councillors are elected to take office. Therefore both meetings will be held on 14th May 2024.

The Annual Town Meeting, at which the current Chair presents their Chair's Report for 2023/2024, will commence at 6pm.

The Annual Council Meeting will commence at 6.30pm. The current Chair must open the proceedings and call for the nominations for a new Chair of the Council.

Current Councillors formally retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election. All newly elected councillors take office (provided they have made declarations of acceptance of office) on the day on which their predecessors retire (Local Government Act, 1972, Section 16(3)).

All newly elected Councillors will be required to come in person to the office between 9am and 3pm on Tuesday 7th May 2024, to complete and sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, which has to be witnessed by the Clerk.

All Members must complete a new Register of Interests form to bring to the meeting on 14th May 2024. This is a legal requirement. If any Member has a 'sensitive' interest in relation to their form, they must contact WBC's Solicitor directly regarding this.

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

7.1 (a) **Warrington Borough Council - Development Management Committee (DMC)**

A DMC meeting was held on 10th April 2024. There were no items specific to Birchwood on the main agenda for discussion. There is currently no May DMC meeting scheduled.

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

(c) Received – an email from Planning Enforcement in response to a concern from a resident regarding potential unauthorised works near a TPO for works at 3 Delenty Drive. A reference number of **ENF/24/10154** has been given to the case.

7.2 **Planning Decisions**

At the time of publishing the Clerk's Report there were no planning decisions for Birchwood listed on WBC's weekly lists for the last four weeks.

7.3 **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. 2024/00288/FULH** 9 Jay Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QJ. To erect a single storey rear extension to provide an accessible ground floor bedroom and shower room.

(b) **Application No. 2024/00303/FULH** 71 Woolmer Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6TT. Part single part double rear extension.

(c) **Application No. 2024/00443/VARC** N/a Land at Trident Business Park, Warrington. Removal of conditions 1, 8, 9 & 10. Variation of condition 2 (approved plans and landscape plan) on planning application 2021/40696 to allow the inclusion within the scheme of two substations, and minor layout changes and variation of wording of conditions 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 34, 35 & 36.

- (d) **Application No. 2024/00433/FULH** 6 Redvales Court, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7NN. Proposed single storey rear extension.
- (e) To receive and consider any planning applications received after the publication of the Clerks report (time sensitive).

PART I FINANCE

8. Payment of Accounts

Members are asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts.

9. To receive the Minutes and recommendations of the Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel Meeting held on 26th March 2024; for formal ratification/approval.

10 Progress Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

10.1 Benches

We are awaiting a response from WBC.

10.2 GDPR

The Clerk and RFO will review the personal data categories as soon as possible.

10.3 Legionella Risk Assessment

- (a) The water samples tested showed no signs of Legionella bacteria.
- (b) The RFO has completed the Legionella Awareness training course. The Clerk, Administrative Assistant and Senior Maintenance Supervisor will undertake the same course as soon as possible.

10.4 Website

The creation of the new website is ongoing.

10.5 IT Provider

- (a) Councillors Atkin and Ellis have indicated that they are happy with the proposal, sent to them for their consideration as agreed at the March meeting. The company answered several questions subsequently raised by Councillor Atkin, which satisfied his queries.
- (b) Officers are liaising with the company that will be taking over BTC's IT provision. The new IT provider and website provider will now liaise directly with each other with regard to the technicalities.

10.6 Internal Audit

The RFO is continuing to prepare the necessary end of year financial information relating to the documents required for the end of year internal audit, including preparation of the documentation that will form the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Once these have been 'signed-off' by the internal auditor, they will be submitted to Full Council at the June 2024 meeting, for approval prior to sending to the external auditor, by 1st July 2024 at the latest.

10.7 Election Charges

- (a) To note that only the Gorse Covert Ward is being contested. Notices regarding all wards have been published on BTC's notice boards, website and Facebook page as required.
- (b) At the Parish Liaison Meeting in February 2024 the topic of recharging the parish elections was discussed. Parishes will be charged direct costs for items such as ballot paper printing, postal vote stationery and fees for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks. There will be a charge for the Returning Officer fees and Deputy Returning Officer fees.

There will also be a basic fee for the uncontested elections. We have requested an estimate of the expected costs from WBC. WBC has indicated that they will be able to supply this in a couple of weeks' time.

10.8 External Audit

The RFO has also commenced preparation of the end of year financial information relating to the documents required for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for sending to the external auditor.

10.9 General Matters for Reporting / Noting

- (a) The membership renewal invoice from ChALC has been received in April 2024 (£1,551.66). Information from ChALC detailing the benefits of being a member has previously been circulated to Members. **To ask Members if they are happy for BTC to remain a member of ChALC.**
- (b) To note the change to employees' Class 1 employee National Insurance Contributions have been implemented in the April 2024 pay cycle.

11 New Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

11.1 Bank Account Reconciliation

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounting period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

The payroll figure for February 2024 was £13,573.10 (9) staff. The payroll figure for March 2024 was £13,330.03 (9 staff).

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

11.2 Sickness Absence Procedure and Payment Arrangements

To ask Members **to consider for approval and adoption** the proposed new Sickness Absence Procedure and Payment Arrangements Policy – a draft copy of which is circulated to Members in their papers.

11.3 General Matters for Reporting / Noting

- (a) To note that information has been received from Cheshire Pension Fund regarding the employee contribution rate bandings for 2024/2025.
- (b) Received - end of year statement from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). The principal outstanding balance at 31st March 2024 is £56,000.00. The final payment is due to be made in September 2027.
- (c) To note that during 2024 there are many changes being implemented in employment law. The Clerk and RFO have attended one webinar relating to these changes and will attend additional training going forward. These changes include:
 - Reforms to holiday pay and entitlement
 - Equality Act 2010 amendments
 - Changes to family-friendly rights
 - TUPE changes for small businesses and
 - Flexible working developments.

We have also received an advice note from the Society for Local Council Clerks regarding flexible working arrangements.

- (d) To ask Members to consider whether they would support the installation of a new notice board in Oakwood, as BTC does not currently have one in the area. This would probably cost in the region of between £800 to £1,000. We would have to ask WBC for permission to install one on their land, possibly adjacent to the John Keeney Play Area.

11.4 Urgent /Time Sensitive Matters

To receive any Finance/Audit/Personnel urgent and/or time sensitive matters that have been received since the publication of the Clerk's Report for noting and/or action.