

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD AT
PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY
ON TUESDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2014**

Present: Councillor Higgins in the Chair
Councillors Allman, Balding, Evans, Fitzsimmons, M. Hearldon,
T. Hearldon,

Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C Caddock
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe

Apologies: Councillors C. Bolton J. Bolton, Bowden, Nelson and Spencer
Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald. Mrs McDonald will be absent for a number of
weeks following recent surgery.

Councillor Evans proposed, Councillor Higgins seconded and it was resolved that:

**The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel meeting of the Town Council
which took place on Tuesday, 22nd July 2014, be approved as an accurate record and
signed by the Chair.**

410/2014 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

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

Councillor T. Hearldon proposed the Payment of Accounts be approved; Councillor Evans
seconded the proposal. This was agreed by those Members present.

The bank account reconciliations show:

Expenditure from 1st April 2014 to 31st July 2014 was £105,088.25

Total income (running total) was £564,686.36

The balance at 31st July 2014, including £12,709.28 in unrepresented cheques, was
£472,307.39

Expenditure from 1st April 2014 to 31st August 2014 was £130,558.88

Total income (running total) was £564,833.08

The balance at 31st August 2014, including £489.00 in unrepresented cheques, was
£434,736.81. This includes current earmarked reserves of approximately £138,000.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT ISSUES

411/2014 **BIRCHWOOD YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE**

As Councillor Nelson was not present at tonight's meeting, this item will be carried over to
the October 2014 meeting.

412/2014 **DEFIBRILLATOR**

The BAFO asked Members to consider the information circulated regarding the potential
costs and requirements for the installation of an external defibrillator (site still to be
determined).

The price range in the documentation circulated for the latest approved AED (defibrillator offering CPR help) combined with a HeartSafe® stainless steel public access cabinet started at £1,950 plus VAT.

Councillor Higgins stated that he thought the prices in the documentation were too high. He wasn't sure whether lighting and heating the cabinet would be necessary and all the additional work that would entail.

Councillor Evans said that it would depend where the external cabinet was situated as it may be that lighting would be necessary in a dark area.

It is still proposed that the Police Station would be a good site to place an external defibrillator.

Action To continue to liaise with the Police and to obtain further prices.

413/2014 **GENERAL PROGRESS ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

- (a) To inform Members that the BAFO has been reimbursed via petty cash for the personal payment made regarding the renewal of the Cloud back up service for the downstairs office PC (£79).
- (b) The BAFO reported that we have informed the Borough Council that our meeting room will be available as a polling station for Local and Parliamentary Elections on 7th May 2015 and for Local elections on 5th May 2016.
- (c) The BAFO reported that that the payment in the amount of £3,812.30 for the Locking Stumps Ward by-election held on 22nd May 2014 has been paid in one lump sum as agreed.
- (d) The BAFO reported that all our vehicles are now showing as being listed on the MID database.
- (e) The BAFO informed Members that we have asked UK Fire Training to try to find a local Fire Safety Awareness Course with spare capacity, that the one member of our staff who was absent on the day of our training might be able to attend. We would offer to pay a portion of the course fee to the company holding the training.

NEW ITEMS – FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL

414/2014 **GRANTS**

- (a) The BAFO asked Members to consider whether they wish the Town Council to purchase two poppy wreaths for the upcoming Remembrance Day Service in November. The wreaths have to be ordered in advance. This year the wreaths we usually buy are £17.00 each. In previous years Members have agreed £100 (this would be £34 'purchase price' and £66 donation).

Members agreed the same purchase/donation as last year.

Action Clerk's office to arrange the purchase of the poppy wreaths.

- (b) The BAFO asked Members to consider awarding a grant to WBC Ranger Service to purchase bulbs for the annual community bulb planting event. Dave Hazlehurst has asked if the Town Council would purchase the bulbs directly if they award the grant. The cost would be in the region of £80.

The BAFO reported that although Councillors C. Bolton and J. Bolton had been unable to attend tonight's meeting, they had asked for their comments to be noted regarding this application. They are concerned that as Warrington Borough Council is a rating body, our terms and conditions of awarding formal grants indicate that we should not be awarding grants to the Borough Council Rangers.

It was suggested that as the funding requested is for a local community bulb planting event, in an area that the whole community can enjoy, the bulbs could still be purchased by the Town Council and the funds be taken from the general 'Town Council Revenue' funds, out of which the bulbs and plants for all the other schemes (planters, baskets, wildflowers, etc.) are also purchased.

This was agreed by those Members present.

Action Clerk's office to arrange the purchase of the bulbs for the community bulb planting event.

- (c) The BAFO informed Members that we received a letter from 'Vitalise', based in London; a company that offers breaks for carers; requesting details of our grant aid scheme. A reply was sent, with a grant aid form, asking specifically how many Birchwood residents have been helped by this scheme or how many they hope to assist in the next financial year. We also said we would need a financial statement from them if they made an application. We have not yet received a reply.

415/2014 **STAFF TRAINING**

The BAFO informed Members that three of the part-time Maintenance Team Operatives have been booked onto two Lantra training courses: 'Brushcutter/Trimmers Course – Maintenance and Safe Use of Machines' and 'Hedgetrimmer - Maintenance and Safe Operation'. The total cost including Lantra registration is £930 plus VAT. This will give the teams more flexibility in the work they are able to undertake.

The Brushcutter/Trimmer course took place on 8th September and the three staff members all passed. The Hedgetrimmer course will take place on 6th October 2014.

416/2014 **NOTICE BOARDS**

The BAFO reported that two members of staff have made three new noticeboards to replace the ones previously in place which were in need of renewal. They have been made slightly larger to accommodate more information. The cost of the material for all three was approximately £420 plus VAT – about half the price of one new board if we had purchased them from another supplier. The new 'Birchwood Town Council' signs for the boards will be £14 each.

417/2014 **INFORMATION COMMISSIONER –DATA PROTECTION REGISTRATION**

The BAFO informed Councillors that we have re-registered the Town Council with the Information Commissioner's Office regarding our annual data protection registration, at a cost of £35.

We have received confirmation of the receipt of payment, associated documents and our Certificate of Registration, which is displayed on the main internal notice board.

418/2014 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

The BAFO reported to Members that we have received a number of general items:

- (a) HMRC Employer Bulletin – August 2014.
- (b) Notice from the garage we use for our vehicle services that they are closing and transferring all customers to another garage on the same site, under the same ownership.
- (c) Employment alert from SAS Daniels LLP re: Extension of family-friendly rights for employees and agency workers; relating to the new right to unpaid time off to accompany an expectant mother to antenatal appointments.

ITEMS DISCUSSED IN PART II OF TONIGHT'S MEETING THAT CAN NOW BE REPORTED IN PART I

The following items were initially discussed during Part II of tonight's Finance, Audit and Personnel meeting as there was the potential for sensitive information to be included as part of the discussions.

PROGRESS ITEMS – FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL

419/2014 **BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK – REGENERATION PROJECT**

The BAFO stated that the tree thinning tenders are to be received by 24th October at the latest by Warrington Borough Council. We will be updated as soon as possible after that date as to when the work is expected to commence. Once the contractor has been appointed by the Borough and start dates have been confirmed, the information will be put on notice boards in the Forest Park to advise the public about the thinning works.

The BAFO said that he had spoken to Dave Cotterill about the Town Council's concerns that resources for the regeneration project may be affected by the recent cuts and employee changes at Warrington Borough Council. We believe that one related post has been made redundant and the member of staff affected is one who has the most experience in delivering this type of project.

The Borough Council had a meeting planned for 24th September 2014 to clarify issues regarding the project.

The BAFO said he had suggested to Mr Cotterill that if it appears that the project could be delayed by lack of resources, that as a separate exercise the Town Council could take over the tender process for the fitness equipment, and possibly for the multi-use games area, using the Borough Council's preferred suppliers.

Mr Cotterill had thought that this might be helpful.

Councillor Fitzsimmons stated that Councillor Bowden is currently liaising with the Borough Council regarding the potential negative effects of the recent Borough Council cuts on the project.

Councillor Evans voiced his concern that if the project is not completed in time, then we may lose the WREN grant funding that was awarded.

Action To continue to liaise with the Borough Council about the project.

420/2014 **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2014**

The BAFO reported that the accounts have been returned from the external auditor and have been approved.

The auditor made three comments: 1) That pages of minutes submitted were not all signed – however, this was due to the external auditor’s timetable requiring documentation having to be with them prior to the meeting at which they would be formally ratified and signed. There is also a question regarding the page numbering of minutes which needs some thought prior to starting a new system. 2) That there was a £1 difference in one figure – however, this is due to the fact that figures have to be rounded up or down to the nearest pound on some sections of the Annual Accounts documentation rather than being accurate to the penny. 3) That it might be appropriate to add the value of workshop items to the list of assets – this is a suggestion, not a statutory requirement.

The appropriate completion of the audit notice was placed on our notice board as required.

421/2014 **CO-OPERATIVE BANK – ONLINE BANKING**

The BAFO reported on the implementation of the online banking facility, now operational with the Co-operative Bank.

All online transactions undertaken since the system was implemented are shown as * on the August expenditure statement (presented in Members’ papers). Existing direct debits/standing orders already set up will continue to be paid as normal. Some limited residual cheque payments will continue with some existing suppliers who prefer not to be paid electronically.

The BAFO and Deputy Clerk have received training on the use of the Co-operative Bank’s FD Online banking services. Several online payments have already been made.

The Deputy Clerk can set up ‘beneficiaries’ and input payments for approval. Either the BAFO or Clerk can approve these payments. If the BAFO sets up a payment, the Clerk has to approve it and vice versa. The Deputy Clerk cannot approve payments at the present time.

422/2014 **BARCLAYS BANK**

- (a) In regard to this second account of the Town Council, the BAFO informed Members that a further sum of £50,000 has been transferred from the Co-operative account to Barclays, to bring this reserve account balance to £150,000. Further transfers will be considered as appropriate but will now be limited as this account attracts ‘no interest’ payments, although there are no account charges. Interest rates are so low in the current economic climate that no interest in return for no bank charges is perfectly acceptable to the Town Council given the relatively low amount being held in the account.
- (b) The BAFO confirmed that the relevant pass codes to enable telephone banking transactions on this account have been issued for the BAFO. The Clerk will need to apply for her codes over the telephone on her return to duties.

As agreed in the year end financial risk assessment procedures, no payments out of this account are envisaged in the near future, but if any are proposed they will only be made following prior clearance with the Chair and be reported to the next appropriate Finance or Council meeting.

423/2014 **CHESHIRE PENSION FUND EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS 2014 SCHEME**

The BAFO reported that the Town Council's existing employer discretions scheme has, as required, been brought into line with the new 2014 National Pension Scheme and Regulations. The changes required were not policy changes rather, with one exception, regulation reference number amendments.

The exception is the deletion of the opportunity for employers to give added years of service when retiring. In future employees will no longer build up pension service in years; they will accrue yearly pension accounts.

NEW ITEMS – FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL

424/2014 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

Members received from the Business and Finance Officer the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statement and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounts period 1st April 2014 – 31st July 2014 and 1st April 2014 – 31st August 2014.

The payroll figure for June was £11,282.77 which reflects the recent restructuring costs. The payroll figure for July was £11,413.77; for August it is £11,454.69 and for September it is £11,389.90.

During July 2014, two regular BACS payments were made by Officers via the telephone, namely to HMRC and Cheshire Pension Fund (see items marked 'B' on the attached expenditure schedule).

All online payments made are shown (marked by *).

After consideration by Members the schedules were signed by the Business and Finance Officer and the Chair.

425/2014 **DECEMBER 2014 MEETING**

Councillor Fitzsimmons raised the issue of whether the Town Council should meet in December or cancel the December meeting.

Following a discussion, Members agreed that there will be no meeting in December 2014.

Action Clerk's office to update the information on the website.

Part I of the Finance Meeting concluded at 8pm