

**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 26TH APRIL 2016**

Present: Councillor T. Hearldon in the Chair
Councillors Allman, Balding, C. Bolton, J. Bolton, Fitzsimmons, M. Hearldon
and Nelson

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C Caddock

1 Resident

Apologies: Councillors Bowden, Evans, Higgins and Spencer
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe

Councillor Fitzsimmons proposed, Councillor M Hearldon 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 March 2016 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

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.

025/16-17 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule (see pages 23 and 24 below).

Councillor Fitzsimmons proposed the Payment of Accounts be approved; Councillor Nelson **seconded** the proposal. This was **resolved** by those Members present.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT ISSUES

026/16-17 **BIRCHWOOD YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Councillor Nelson declared an interest

For information, Councillor Nelson stated that there was nothing new to report re: the Youth and Community Centre at tonight's meeting.

027/16-17 **BROOK FOOTPATH FUNDING**

This was discussed earlier in the meeting (see Minute 007/16-17).

028/16-17 **BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK RECREATION SCHEME**

The Clerk stated that we are still awaiting costings relating to the potential reinstatement of lighting for the kickabout area. Borough Council Officers are currently working on a scheme of works regarding the improvements to the kickabout area and another meeting with them is scheduled for May.

Action Clerk's office to continue to liaise with the Borough Council regarding the above.

029/16-17 **DRAFT DATA PROTECTION POLICY**

The Clerk stated that an amended Data Protection Policy had been circulated to Members to consider which included changes made regarding sections 4.1 and 8.1 in the original document.

Councillor C. Bolton stated that he had, this evening, given the Clerk some additional comments on the policy for consideration and apologised that he had not been able to forward them sooner; however the main point had been addressed in the revised draft.

The Clerk said that she will follow up these new comments.

Action Clerk's office to consider the comments from Councillor C. Bolton and issue a new draft for consideration by the new Council.

030/16-17 **GRANT**

The Clerk confirmed that an email had been sent to the Trolley Angels informing them that the grant had been declined for the supply of trolley coins and the reasons why, but letting them know that it was suggested that perhaps another way of supporting the Trolley Angels could be found.

The Clerk stated that we have been informed that they were disappointed with the decision.

031/16-17 **CCTV**

The Clerk asked Members to note that one of the suppliers of the quotes for CCTV equipment had followed up their quote. They have been informed that this matter will be reconsidered in June/July 2016.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

032/16-17 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive from the Clerk the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the accounts period 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016.

The payroll figures were £12,449.19 for February 2016 and £11,470.04 for March 2016.

The difference is due to two employees leaving – one in February and one in March.

After consideration by Members the schedules were signed by the Clerk and the Chair.

033/16-17 GRANTS

Birchwood Carnival Committee

Councillors T. Hearldon and M. Hearldon declared an interest as they are on the Carnival Committee and took no part in the discussions or decision. (Councillor Nelson is no longer on the Carnival Committee.)

The Clerk reported that a request for £2,600 grant funding has been received to support the 2016 Carnival.

As in previous years, if grant funding is awarded, it will be used to make direct payments to the suppliers of marquees and portaloos with the remainder of the grant awarded being paid to the Carnival Committee to use to fund some of the other attractions booked for the event.

Following a discussion Councillor Fitzsimmons **proposed** and Councillor Nelson **seconded** that the grant be awarded; some suppliers to be paid directly and the remainder of the grant to be paid to the Carnival Committee.

This was **resolved** by those Members present.

Action Clerk's office to contact the Carnival Committee regarding the above.

034/16-17 PENSIONS

- (a) Received – Cheshire Pension Fund Administration Strategy (draft) which has been updated to reflect comments made during a consultation on the original document earlier in the year and came into effect on 1st April 2016.

A designated person has to be appointed by each employing authority. This will be the Clerk for the Town Council.

- (b) The Clerk reported that the auto-enrolment process (effective from 1st April 2016) for the Town Council for employees not currently in the pension scheme, have been completed.

Of five eligible employees, three have opted-out. These three individuals already have other pension provision in place. Overall six Town Council employees are in the Cheshire Pension Scheme.

- (c) Received – information relating to the Declaration of Compliance online form re: auto-enrolment, which must be completed by the Town Council by 2nd August 2016.

035/16-17 EXTERNAL AUDIT

- (a) The Clerk notified Members that our annual external audit review of accounts for the year end 31st March 2016 has been set by the external auditor for 25th July 2016.

The formal accounts and supporting documentation will have to be approved at the June 2016 meeting in order to meet this date.

- (b) The Clerk reported that internal work on the accounts detail is underway and that the processes have also started to report year-end figures to Cheshire Pension Fund and HMRC.

036/16-17 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

- (a) To inform Members that the Fire and General Risk Assessments were undertaken by Terrain in December 2015; we have now received their formal reports and a few minor items were highlighted which have been/are being actioned – e.g. obtaining ‘fish keys’ so that we can undertake our own testing of emergency lighting on a weekly basis.

The Fire and Risk Assessment forms part of the Council’s annual risk assessment processes and need to be recorded for audit purposes.

- (b) The Clerk asked Members to consider approving the annual renewal of the Town Council’s membership to ChALC (£1,429.31) and £17 for the yearly subscription to LCR magazine. Officers find these to be a valuable source of help and advice at times.

Councillor Fitzsimmons **proposed** and Councillor Balding **seconded** that the annual renewal to ChALC be approved.

This was **resolved** by those Members present.

- (c) To inform Members that the payment of £95 +vat has been made to renew our annual membership of Zurich LCAS (Local Council Advisory Service) has been made.
- (d) To inform Members that the payment of £88.88 +vat has been made for the annual supply and service charge for the feminine hygiene unit. This price remains the same as last year.
- (e) Received from NALC – Bulletin on National Developments and Meetings (8th April) including information relating to several items of potential financial relevance to local Councils.
- (f) To inform Members that a pre-order has been placed for a copy of ‘Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration 10th Edition’ (£92.00).
- (g) To note the receipt of an ‘Energy Saving Guide’ from SSE Business Energy.
- (h) To note that our new Allstar One fuel cards have arrived.
- (i) Received – Employer Bulletin 59 from HMRC.
- (j) Received – April 2016 legal newsletter from SAS Daniels.
- (k) To note that the 2016/2017 precept (£344,167.00) was paid into our Co-op Bank Account on 18th April 2016.

A discussion took place as to whether it would be prudent for the Town Council to open a third bank account to protect further against potential future banking crisis issues.

It was agreed that Officers should look into what suitable accounts there are that could be considered, which are not in the same banking groups as the Co-operative Bank and Barclays Bank, which we already have accounts with.

Action Officers to look at additional bank account options.

- (l) Received - Details of the membership of the relaunched Pensions Consultative Forum.
- (m) To inform Members that the annual PAT testing was undertaken on 25th April 2016.

037/16-17 **ITEMS FROM PART II MINUTES (RATIFIED FOLLOWING THIS MEETING)
WHICH CAN NOW BE MINUTED IN PART I**

During Part II which followed this part of the April meeting, Councillor Balding asked that some items previously considered in Part II of the meeting held on 22nd March be moved to Part I.

This was agreed by those Members present.

These were items previously considered at the Finance, Audit and Personnel Sub-Committee meeting on 8th March 2016. They had initially been considered as Part II items as there was the possibility that exempt information could form part of the discussions; the recommendations made at the sub-committee meeting were then brought to Part II of the meeting on 22nd March 2016 for formal ratification by full Council.

The following minuted items can now be copied into Part I minutes for this meeting (the minute numbers below refer to the minutes of the 8th March and 22nd March Part II meetings):

510/15-16 **RATIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 8TH MARCH 2016**

Mr G Crowe (BAFO) reminded Members that the recommendations from the Finance, Audit and Personnel Sub-Committee meeting in March are to be considered tonight for ratification by the whole Council.

Extracts from the Minutes of the 8th March meeting are in italics. The following are the recommendations that were to be considered:

Finance

- (a) **From Minute 463/15-16 (b) Payroll – Year End Outturn / Issues - Auto-enrolment – update and costs**

Recommendations:

- (i) *Pension - Members believe that the Cheshire Pension Scheme is fair and reasonable and it is this scheme which should continue to be available to all staff.*

At tonight's meeting a further discussion took place regarding auto-enrolment.

The BAFO confirmed that all employees currently not in the pension scheme had been informed about auto-enrolment and the additional benefits of joining the pension scheme. Not all employees, however, wish to join the scheme. They understand they have to be auto-enrolled and will then have the option to contact the pension provider if they choose to opt out.

Councillor Allman wondered if another additional pension scheme could be offered to employees, if it is a case that some may be put off by the level of employee contributions that have to be made to the Cheshire Pension Fund.

Councillors J. Bolton and Bowden agreed that employees should be encouraged to join a pension scheme and it might be worth considering a scheme with lower contribution rates which might be more attractive for some employees.

The BAFO stated that he has read that many of the pension schemes with lower contribution rates have very poor projections. It would also mean the administration of two separate schemes.

The BAFO added that the Town Council had decided on the Cheshire Pension Fund scheme some time ago and is not looking to put an alternative in place. There is already a '50/50' option whereby an employee can choose to pay half the contributions and will receive half the benefits.

The Clerk stated that offering two alternatives would potentially put the Council in a position of being seen to be offering financial advice, which we are not allowed to do.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the BAFO asked Members to consider the recommendation, *'Members believe that the Cheshire Pension Scheme is fair and reasonable and it is this scheme which should continue to be available to all staff.'*

This recommendation was **resolved**.

(ii) *Living Wage – Any increase to the Living Wage should be implemented in April of the following year.*

At tonight's meeting a further discussion took place regarding the Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, which the Council has adopted.

The BAFO stated that the Living Wage Foundation sets the rate each November. It is unknown until that point what impact it will have on the budget for that financial year. Effectively the Town Council has no control over wage increases for over 50% of its staff.

The BAFO added that in 2015 indications had suggested that the increase was likely to be around 2% but it actually increased by 5% which put additional pressure with regard to allocating funding within the budget for the 2016/2017 financial year as this level of wage increase had not been expected (particularly as it has other 'knock-on' implications in relation to NI contributions, etc.).

A query was raised as to whether the increase had to be implemented as soon as it was announced.

The Living Wage Foundation states: "Living Wage Employers should implement the new rates as soon as possible and within six months of the annual announcement."

The BAFO stated that by delaying the implementation of the Living Wage until 1st April the following year (five months after it is announced) it allows the Town Council to budget more efficiently.

Councillor Fitzsimmons agreed that the delay gives the Town Council more control over its own budget.

At the conclusion of the discussion Councillor Fitzsimmons **proposed** and Councillor Evans **seconded** that any increase to the Living Wage, announced in November each year, should be implemented in April of the following year.

This was **resolved** by those Members present.

(b) **From Minute 464/15-16 - Review of Council banking arrangements**

Recommendation: *The Town Council to retain current banking arrangements with both Barclays and the Co-Operative Bank.*

A brief discussion took place regarding the merits of looking for a different bank account which pays interest but would incur bank charges, rather than continuing with our cheque account with Barclays Bank which pays no interest but equally does not incur any bank charges.

It was **proposed** by Councillor C. Bolton and **seconded** by Councillor Fitzsimmons that: *The Town Council . . . retain current banking arrangements with both Barclays and the Co-Operative Bank.*

This was **resolved** by those Members present.

(c) *This Minute remains as a Part II item.*

(d) **From Minute 466/15-16 - Council Insurance Policy Renewal; with effect from 1st April 2016**

Recommendation: *Zurich continue to be the Town Council's insurer on the five year (3+2 year option) at the annual premium of £6489.47 previously £7661.57.*

The BAFO asked Members to consider the above recommendation.

Members **resolved** that Zurich continues to be the Town Council's insurer on the five year (3+2 year option).

(e) **From Minute 467/15-16 - Grant Aid Terms and Conditions – review**

Recommendation: *amendment to the Grant Aid terms and conditions item 11 ... 'The recipient(s) of any grant will be expected to write an article for inclusion in the Birchwood Community News and/or the Town Council's website'. To be amended to 'The recipient(s) of any grant will be expected to write an article for the Town Council's website'.*

This was discussed earlier in the meeting in Finance Part I (see Minute 508/15-16 (a)).

Audit

(f) **From Minute 468/15-16 - Data Protection Policy – draft for consideration**

Recommendation: *Data Protection Policy document should be published with one amendment, issued alongside Standing Orders and that a line be inserted to say that the Town Council is also registered with the Information Commissioners Office.*

This was discussed earlier in the meeting in Finance Part I (see Minute 508/15-16 (b)).

(f) **From Minute 469/15-16 - To consider the 2015/2016 internal audit plan**

The BAFO provided Members with a copy of the Internal Audit Plan 2015/2016 provided by JDH Business Services Ltd which included details of the audit process . . .

This links to:

From Minute 470/15-16 - Annual review of effectiveness of internal audit

The BAFO said that a key part of the audit process is for Members to carry out an annual review (usually as part of the year end accounts process) of the effectiveness of internal audit. He said that Members will need to ratify at the main Council meeting that they are happy to follow the framework outlined in the documents . . .

Recommendation: *Members to consider ratification of the Audit framework documentation.*

The BAFO asked Members to consider this recommendation.

Members **resolved** to ratify the Audit framework documentation.

Part I of the Finance Meeting concluded at 8.35 pm.

Payment of Accounts:	(DD - Direct Debit * - online payment submitted/approved by two Officers)				
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual February/March accounts					
Payee	Ref	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
Financial Direct Fees	DD	FD Online Transactions	£ 35.00		£ 35.00
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 55.09	£ 11.02	£ 66.11
E-on	DD	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 9.38	£ 0.47	£ 9.85
Waterfields (Leigh)	*	Buffet for meeting	£ 38.90	£ 7.78	£ 46.68
Acumen Wages	*	February payroll services	£ 39.35	£ 7.87	£ 47.22
Ultimate Invoice Finance Ltd	*	(Biz Plus) Stationery	£ 41.61	£ 8.32	£ 49.93
Arco	*	Workboots SC	£ 48.99	£ 9.80	£ 58.79
ESI	*	Call out to fire alarm fault	£ 50.00	£ 10.00	£ 60.00
Risley MOT and Truck	*	Service and MOT and 2 x new tyres NH57 CZV	£ 427.22	£ 75.45	£ 502.67
Cheshire Pension Fund	*	E'ee £470.36 E'er £1,454.99	£ 1,925.35		£ 1,925.35
HM Revenue & Customs	*	Tax £1104.00 NI £1,305.32	£ 2,409.32		£ 2,409.32
United Utilities	DD	Surface water and highway drainage	£ 65.52		£ 65.52
Telesis	DD	Annual maintenance charge	£ 133.10	£ 26.62	£ 159.72
Telesis	DD	Phone charges	£ 51.41	£ 10.28	£ 61.69
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 14.72	£ 2.94	£ 17.66
BNP Parabis	DD	Photocopier rental 26/2/16 to 25/5/16	£ 373.00	£ 74.60	£ 447.60
CopyriteSystems	DD	Photocopying charges	£ 43.99	£ 8.80	£ 52.79
United Utilities	DD	Water services Former Parkers Farm building	£ 26.56		£ 26.56
Telefonika UK Ltd	DD	2 x Mobile phones	£ 52.50	£ 10.50	£ 63.00
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 114.76	£ 22.95	£ 137.71
Legal and General	DD	Ill health insurance	£ 92.34		£ 92.34
Scottish Hydro	DD	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 297.79	£ 14.88	£ 312.67
March wages	*	12 staff	£ 11,474.04		£ 11,474.04
HSD Online	*	Litter pickers	£ 176.99	£ 35.40	£ 212.39
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 54.17	£ 10.83	£ 65.00
Public Works Loan Board	DD	Loan payment	£ 12,560.00		£ 12,560.00
MC-ES Electrical	*	Refix light fitting upstairs office	£ 45.00	£ 9.00	£ 54.00
Risley MOT and Truck	*	NH57 CZV - replace screen washer pump, check fuses	£ 51.73	10.35	£ 62.08
Risley MOT and Truck	*	NH57 CZV - puncture repair	£ 12.50	£ 0.50	£ 15.00
ESI	*	Replace two smoke heads on detectors in loft	£ 76.00	£ 15.20	£ 91.20
Regal Polythene	*	Refuse sacks	£ 332.40	£ 66.48	£ 398.88
ADS Recycling Ltd	*	Bulky waste collections (WM8320 and WM8345)	£ 600.00	£ 120.00	£ 720.00

Payments of Account since 11th March 2016

Payee	Ref	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
SSE Southern Electric	DD	Gas	£ 483.46	£ 24.17	£ 507.63
United Utilities	DD	Water services - Council building - Parkers Farm	£ 30.33		£ 30.33
Telefonika UK Ltd	DD	Mobile phone handset	£ 17.88	£ 3.57	£ 21.45
Financial Direct Fees	DD	FD Online transactions	£ 35.20		£ 35.20
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 51.70	£ 10.34	£ 62.04
E.on	DD	Electricity Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 8.61	£ 0.43	£ 9.04
Telesis	DD	Phone charges	£ 51.82	£ 10.36	£ 62.18
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 58.33	£ 11.67	£ 70.00
Arco	*	Workboots KA	£ 39.99	£ 8.00	£ 47.99
Mr G. Crowe	*	Petty cash reimbursement	£ 200.00		£ 200.00
Uniqwin UK Ltd	*	Annual key holding charges	£ 347.78	£ 69.56	£ 417.34
ADS Recycling Ltd	*	Bulky waste collection WM8361	£ 360.00	£ 72.00	£ 432.00
Cheshire Pension Fund	*	(E'ee £354.87 E'er £1,084.32)	£ 1,439.19		£ 1,439.19
HM Revenue & Customs	*	(Tax £776.60 NI £1,128.75)	£ 1,905.35		£ 1,905.35
United Utilities	DD	Surface water and highway drainage	£ 65.55		£ 65.55
Mr. J. Blyth	*	Refund re: overpayment of superannuation	£ 32.14		£ 32.14
Ultimate Invoice Finance Ltd	*	Stationery	£ 33.39	£ 6.68	£ 40.07
ADS Recycling Ltd	*	Bulky waste collections (WM8381)	£ 120.00	£ 24.00	£ 144.00
PDS Media Limited	*	Letterhead paper	£ 134.00	£ 26.80	£ 160.80
Copyrite Digital	DD	Photocopying charges	£ 181.85	£ 36.37	£ 218.22
O2	DD	2 x mobile phones	£ 53.94	£ 10.79	£ 64.73
United Utilities	DD	Water services	£ 14.17		£ 14.17
Screwfix Direct Ltd (B&Q account)	DD	B&Q - fluorescent tubes for lights	£ 53.43	£ 10.66	£ 64.00
Legal and General	DD	Ill health insurance	£ 92.34		£ 92.34
United Utilities	DD	Water services	£ 20.88		£ 20.88
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00
April Wages	*	Wages total this month £ 10,347.16 (10 staff)	£10,347.16		£10,347.16
United Utilities	DD	Water services	£ 30.33		£ 30.33
Acumen Wages	*	March payroll services	£ 37.20	£ 7.44	£ 44.64
Acumen Wages	*	Year end online filing	£ 45.00	£ 9.00	£ 54.00
Direct365 Online Ltd	*	Feminine hygiene disposal 14/4/16 - 13/4/17	£ 88.88	£ 17.78	£ 106.66
ADS Recycling	*	Bulky waste disposal (WM8397)	£ 120.00	£ 24.00	£ 144.00
Zurich Management Services Ltd	*	Local Council Advisory Service annual renewal	£ 95.00	£ 19.00	£ 114.00
Matco Direct	*	Mat cleaning services April 2016 - September 2016	£ 178.08	£ 35.62	£ 213.70
Zurich Municipal	*	Insurance policy 01/04/16 - 31/03/17 (inc. £563.01 IPT)	£ 6,489.47		£ 6,489.47
Risley MOT & Truck	*	ND09VNL - new clutch and windscreen wipers	£ 753.07	£ 150.61	£ 903.68
Risley MOT & Truck	*	NH57CZV - puncture repair	£ 12.50	£ 2.50	£ 15.00
Allstar Business	DD	Fuel	£ 110.83	£ 22.17	£ 133.00
Telefonika UK Ltd	DD	Mobile phone handset	£ 17.88	£ 3.57	£ 21.45
Financial Direct Fees	DD	FD Online transactions	£ 35.60		£ 35.60
E.on	DD	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 8.89	£ 0.44	£ 9.33
Plus various other recurring direct debits yet to be shown on bank statement / monthly invoices yet to be received					

Payments of accounts presented for approval at the April 2016 Meeting

Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
Acumen	* April 2016 payroll services	£ 32.90	£ 6.58	£ 39.48
Cheshire Association of Local Councils	* Affiliation Fee 2016/17 & subscription to Local Council Review	£ 1,446.31		£ 1,446.31
Infotone	* Laserjet printer cartridges	tbc		
Aquaspray	* Annual service/repair jetwasher	tbc		
Telefonika UK Ltd	DD 2 x Mobile phones	£ 53.42	£ 10.68	£ 64.10
CopyriteSystems	DD Photocopying charges	£ 59.90	£ 11.98	£ 71.88
Screwfix Direct Ltd (B&Q account)	DD B&Q - various maintenance sundries	£ 44.19	£ 8.85	£ 53.04
Warrington Borough Council	DD Business rates	£ 196.20		£ 196.20
United Utilities	DD Water and wastewater services	£ 59.31		£ 59.31
Legal and General	DD Ill health insurance	£ 92.34		£ 92.34