

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD AT
PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY
ON TUESDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2018**

Present: Councillor Atkin in the Chair
Councillors Allman, Bowden, D. Ellis, J. Ellis, M. Hearldon, T. Hearldon and
Reeves

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

Apologies: Councillors Breslin, Evans, Fitzsimmons and Nelson

288/18-19 **PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Reeves proposed, Councillor Allman seconded and it was resolved that: **The Minutes of the Town Council Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting held on 23rd October 2018 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.

Councillors Allman, D. Ellis and J. Ellis – Birchwood Youth & Community Centre Committee

289/18-19 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule (see pages 194 and 195 below).

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

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

290/18-19 **BIRCHWOOD YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Councillor D. Ellis had prepared a report in his capacity of Chair of the Trustees of the Youth and Community Centre, re: the most recent progress made at the Youth and Community Centre. This was circulated to Members via email and also copied as a late paper.

There have been several areas where financial savings have been made recently, improving the financial position of the centre.

It was noted that the final £500 of the £2,000 grant awarded to the Youth and Community Centre has been paid.

291/18-19 **GDPR**

- (a) To note that Officers are continuing to work through archived paperwork, etc. regarding GDPR Regulations. The majority of identifying personal documentation – such as information in previous employees’ files – has already been destroyed (except that which must be retained by law or has to be retained for a certain length of time).
- (b) The BAFO reminded Members that a meeting will be arranged with our Data Protection Officer in order for him to receive an update on how the Town Council is progressing with GDPR matters and to offer further guidance if necessary.

292/18-19 **GRANT AID APPLICATIONS**

To note that a letter of thanks has been received from Birchwood Lions regarding the £100 grant to support the 2018 Community Service of Remembrance, which they organise.

293/18-19 **BANKING SIGNATORIES ON THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK ACCOUNT**

The BAFO stated that all the necessary documentation, along with the declaration, copied into the October Minutes (see Minute 255/18-19) has now been sent to the Co-operative Bank. Councillors Atkin and Reeves are additional signatories for the account.

294/18-19 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

- (a) The BAFO informed Members that we have still not received a reply re: the letter sent to WBC about the late payment of the 2018/2019 precept into our account, asking that they consider refunding lost interest that this incurred. He added that he believes it is unlikely that there will be any positive progress regarding this matter as it is likely that they will claim they paid the full year precept (although later than they had indicated) well within their statutory timetable for paying precepts to Local Councils.
- (b) To note that winter bedding plants (and compost) have been collected and planted (£139.30 +VAT).
- (c) To note the purchase and receipt of the recently published Charles Arnold Baker Local Council Administration – 11th Edition (£110.00 including delivery).

295/18-19 **CHRISTMAS SHUTDOWN REMINDER**

The BAFO reminded Members that maintenance and office operations will shut down at the end of the working day on 21st December 2018 and re-open on 2nd January 2019. If there is a crisis during the shutdown period, which cannot be dealt with solely by the Borough Council, arrangements will be in place for there to be some Town Council emergency cover.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

296/18-19 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive from the BAFO the Town Council’s Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account periods 1st April 2018 – 31st October 2018 and 1st April 2018 – 30th November 2018.

The payroll figure for September 2018 was £13,579.10, £13,589.17 for October 2018 and £13,529.11 for November 2018.

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

297/18-19 **LIVING WAGE**

The BAFO asked Members to note the increase in the Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, announced in November 2018 and to consider whether they wish to continue to apply the Living Wage Foundation's level of wage increase for 2019/2020.

The BAFO stated that the amount has increased to £9.00 per hour, an increase of around 2.8%. When the impact of national insurance and pension contributions is taken into account, this equates to a total increase in cost of about 3.8%.

The BAFO added that he had prepared budget figures going forward, assuming a total increase of approximately 4% per year.

Those Members present indicated that they were happy for the increase, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, to be applied.

The BAFO stated that he would bring the full details back to Members for the March 2019 meeting, to ask for formal approval at that stage, as any wage increase would be applied from April 2019.

298/18-19 **CHRISTMAS TOY APPEAL**

The BAFO reported that we have received a very late appeal for financial assistance from Ruth Whitworth, on behalf on the Christmas Toy/Pyjama Appeal, as follows:

“Each year the Christmas toy appeal gives toys and pyjamas to families that are in financial crisis and might go into debt to provide toys for their children at Christmas. This year we have received twice as many referrals as normal, and therefore are short on financial donations towards the pyjamas. Due to the nature of being in financial crisis, we only got the final referrals last week, and the events to give the toys and pyjamas start tomorrow.

I am being asked if the parish council could consider a donation towards the pyjamas for the children in their parish, I am told that there have been 13 children referred from Birchwood Parish. Pyjamas average between £5 and £10.”

Members discussed the request in some detail.

Whilst they recognise and appreciate that there are children in need in Birchwood who have been referred to this programme, with the appeal being made so late, there is no time for the Council to undertake the procedures necessary for it to consider a grant application.

This would include a formal grant aid application form being completed and the organisation's financial statements being made available to Members.

In addition, the only banking details available (which had been passed to Councillor Bowden) are a sort code and account number – which is too vague for the Council to be seen to be applying proper fiduciary responsibility, as grants come out of public money. The appeal is apparently being run through The Friends of St Elphins Park, as a holding account; but we currently have no formal information to support this.

The BAFO reminded Members that we are also prevented from giving grant which would amount to 'individual benefit' which this would be. We could possibly give money to support the organisation supporting the event – but we would need time to find out more information and receive the necessary documentation.

Members reluctantly agreed that there was not enough time to process a grant application in the way the Council would need to.

If an application is submitted in good time next year, the Town Council will consider its position at that time.

Action Councillor Bowden will circulate the banking details for any Councillor who wishes to, to make a personal donation.

299/18-19 **PARKERS FARM - GUTTERS**

The BAFO asked Members to consider whether Officers can arrange to have the gutters on the buildings at Parkers Farm cleaned as a separate item from work to repair leaks in the roof. This is a necessary action which does not require planning permission. It had been proposed for the two jobs to be undertaken at the same time, but the planning permission issue regarding the roof work remains ongoing.

Members unanimously agreed that arrangements could be made for the gutters to be cleaned.

Action Clerk's office to arrange for the gutters to be cleaned.

The BAFO said that it has been arranged for a representative of a local company that has staff qualified in surveying listed buildings, to visit our premises, to undertake a preliminary discussion on the condition of Parkers Farm and to guide us on whether planning permission is actually required to complete the rest of the repair work that is necessary for the upkeep of Parkers Farm – a Grade II listed building.

300/18-19 **GRANT AID QUERY**

In August 2018 the Town Council awarded £190.00 to Sisters United to support the continuity of the group. At that time they had to purchase insurance to enable the group to undertake fundraising activities, which in turn would allow them to continue running.

Due to the refurbishment of the premises where they were previously meeting (which has been shut for several weeks) the group moved their meetings to Birchwood Youth and Community Centre. The cost of insurance for them here is less than the grant awarded (£69.20).

The group has enquired whether the Town Council would approve of them re-purposing the remainder of the grant (£120.80) to put it towards their first few months rent at the Birchwood Youth and Community Centre.

The move has enabled them to increase the numbers attending and the group is now on its way to becoming self-financing.

Councillor Reeves **proposed**, Councillor M. Hearldon **seconded** and it was **unanimously resolved** that the remainder of the grant can be used for rent, to continue to support the group.

Action Clerk's office to contact Sisters United regarding the above decision.

301/18-19 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING

- (a) Received - a detailed letter from Great Sankey Parish Council asking Birchwood Town Council to consider providing ongoing support for Warrington Foodbank. The Manager of the Foodbank has offered to give a presentation to Members, if they wish.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that Members would like to receive more details regarding the Warrington Foodbank and what type of support they are requesting.

Action Clerk's office to invite the Manager of the Foodbank to give a presentation to Members.

- (b) Received – (For information at present) - from our current phone system provider – news of BT's announcement that it will be switching off its ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) copper phone lines in 2025. A phase-out will start in 2020, when all businesses will have to migrate to new solutions.

The BAFO stated that we are unsure as to how or if this will affect our phone and broadband systems; whether it might entail any new equipment purchases or not. We will be seeking clarification on this matter.

- (c) Received – Request from a company that runs playschemes, asking if the Town Council wishes to receive a presentation on what they can deliver for local children. A reply was sent stating this is not something the Town Council would usually organise – although it has supported local playschemes in the past.

Members agreed that the Town Council would not wish to organise a playscheme directly.

- (d) To note that the Clerk's membership of the SLCC is due for renewal on the 1st January 2019 (£247).

Members approved this for payment.

- (e) Received – the Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendation 2019/2020 re: allowances to Councillors. (Note: with the exception of the Chair – who can take the Chair's Allowance, at their discretion – no Birchwood Town Councillors receive any allowances.) Details were posted on our notice board as required.

- (f) To note that the BAFO attended the Pension Consultative Forum, on 29th November.

- (g) To note that a representative from the Health and Safety Consultancy the Town Council currently has a contract with, will be undertaking our annual fire and health and safety review on 15th January 2019.

- (h) To note the Clerk and the Employment Law and HR specialists that we currently have a contract with, have been reviewing several policies, including the Sickness Absence and a Driving at Work policy.

- (i) To note information has been received from NALC re: accessibility requirements for websites and mobile applications. Our website provider has confirmed he is familiar with the guidelines; there is some work to be done on our website to make it fully accessible by 2020 (with potential financial implications).

- (j) The BAFO reported that he and the Clerk had a meeting with a representative of our current insurance company, Zurich, on 4th December 2018.

Our current three-year deal with Zurich ends in March 2019. The representative indicated the current amount we pay should still be adequate to cover all the Town Council's needs. Formal figures will be presented to the Council in March 2019, but our budget figures will not be affected.

- (k) Received – Notification from the Pensions Regulator that the re-enrolment window opens on 1st December 2018 and closes on 31st May 2019. A redeclaration of compliance must be completed by 31st July 2019.
- (l) To note the next Cheshire Pension Fund Employer Meeting is on 18/01/09.
- (m) To note that the Town Council has signed up to claim VAT refunds from HMRC online and that we have submitted our first online claim.
- (n) Received – from the ICO – their December 2018 e-newsletter.
- (o) To note that, following a tree survey undertaken on our behalf by a WBC Officer, two trees on the Town Council's land at Parkers Farm were identified as requiring removal on safety grounds. They were felled by Borough Council Operatives on 10/12/2018.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.45pm

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as some of the residual September 2018 and part October 2018 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
26.09.2018	DD	Telesis	Phone charges	£ 71.12	£ 14.22	£ 85.34
26.09.2018	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 145.94	£ 29.19	£ 175.13
27.09.2018	*	G Crowe	Petty cash reimbursement	£ 200.00		£ 200.00
27.09.2018	*	Zurich Municipal	Addition of tipper HK64NNM to insurance (inc. £35.67 IPT)	£ 332.93		£ 332.93
28.09.2018	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 20.51	£ 4.10	£ 24.61
28.09.2018	*	HMRC	Tax £1,690.00 NI £2,094.76	£ 3,784.76		£ 3,784.76
01.10.2018	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 28.61		£ 28.61
01.10.2018	*	Duttons Mowerworld	Nylon line for brushcutters	£ 13.33	£ 2.67	£ 16.00
01.10.2018	*	F. McDonald	Contribution towards glasses (Specsavers) - VDU work	£ 46.95	£ 2.55	£ 49.50
01.10.2018	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	E'ee £659.45 E'er £2,377.99	£ 3,037.44		£ 3,037.44
03.10.2018	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 9.56	£ 1.91	£ 11.47
03.10.2018	DD	O2	Mobile phone Charges x 2	£ 43.50	£ 8.70	£ 52.20
04.10.2018	DD	Legal & General	Ill Health Insurance	£ 136.46		£ 136.46
05.10.2018	DD	Southern Electric Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm (final payment)	£ 65.34	£ 3.26	£ 68.60
08.10.2018	*	October Wages	12 staff	£ 13,589.17		£ 13,589.17
09.10.2018	*	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit 2017/2018	£ 960.00		£ 960.00
09.10.2018	CHQ	RBL Poppy Appeal	Grant/donation for 2 x poppy wreaths	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
10.10.2018	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 271.87	£ 54.37	£ 326.24
12.10.2018	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 19.58		£ 19.58
15.10.2018	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 41.00		£ 41.00
16.10.2018	DD	Information Commissioner's Office	Data protection renewal fee	£ 35.00		£ 35.00
17.10.2018	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 7.89	£ 0.39	£ 8.28
17.10.2018	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 165.10	£ 33.00	£ 198.10
18.10.2018	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support, backups, internet services (3 x inv.)	£ 113.60	£ 22.72	£ 136.32
18.10.2018	*	ELAS	8 x job-specific staff health surveys	£ 383.60	£ 76.72	£ 460.32
19.10.2018	*	Matco	Mat servicing charges	£ 186.97	£ 37.39	£ 224.36
19.10.2018	*	Warrington Borough Council	Wildflower meadows 2018	£ 626.37	£ 125.27	£ 751.64
19.10.2018	*	James Todd & Co Ltd	Payroll Service fees	£ 48.20	£ 9.64	£ 57.84
19.10.2018	*	Regal Disposables	Refuse sacks (30 boxes) and paper hand towels (6 boxes)	£ 390.36	£ 78.07	£ 468.43

