

**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL
MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL, HELD AT
PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY
ON TUESDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2019**

Present: Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Atkin, Breslin, D. Ellis, J. Ellis, Evans, Fitzsimmons and
T. Hearldon

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

Apologies: Councillors Bowden, M. Hearldon and Nelson
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe

234/19-20 **OCTOBER 2019 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Atkin proposed, Councillor Evans seconded and it was resolved that: The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting held on 22nd October 2019 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 Breslin, D. Ellis and J. Ellis – Birchwood Youth & Community Centre Committee

Councillor Reeves – Birchwood High School

Councillor J. Ellis - YHG

235/19-20 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 173 and 174 below).

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

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

236/19-20 **BIRCHWOOD YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (BYCC)**

Councillor D. Ellis reported that BYCC currently has a balance of approximately £7,500 in its bank account.

237/19-20 **PARKERS FARM ESTATE**

- (a) To note that work regarding the cleansing of the gutters and downspouts at Parkers Farm and Birchwood Youth and Community Centre was undertaken yesterday.

- (b) The Clerk reported that just before tonight's meeting she received an email from CUBE regarding the damp survey that is required before the planning department can consider our planning application to undertake work on Parkers Farm (Grade II listed).

CUBE has recommended a company that has significant experience in this type of work, details of which were in the email.

This company has quoted £900 plus VAT to undertake the damp survey, although they may have to allow for a second visit with a second contractor, for which an additional attendance fee would have to be paid.

The damp survey could be undertaken early in the New Year.

Members discussed the information received from CUBE.

Councillor Evans **proposed**, Councillor Fitzsimmons **seconded** and it was **unanimously agreed** that, in principle the Council is happy to go forward with this company, on the proviso that the proposed potential second attendance fee is acceptable.

Action Clerk's office to contact CUBE to enquire about the potential second fee.

238/19-20 **CESHIRE PENSION FUND**

- (a) To note that Officers are currently undertaking the required initial steps regarding the Town Council's part in 'beta testing' the new Monthly Interfacing Project.
- (b) To note the receipt of links to the presentation slides from the Cheshire Pension Fund Valuation Meeting for Employers, that the BAFO attended on 31st October 2019.

239/19-20 **GRANTS/DONATIONS**

Birchwood Acts – We received the additional information requested regarding the group's constitution and bank account re: a £500 grant pledged to the group at the September meeting; this has now been paid.

240/19-20 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note that a letter of thanks has been received from The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal regarding the £100 donation sent (which included the supply to us of 2 x poppy wreaths in the amount of £34).
- (b) To note that, following the receipt of details requested, we have now repaid £25 to the Birchwood Repair Café that had accidentally been paid into our account.
- (c) To note receipt of a reminder that the annual renewal for the Clerk's membership for the SLCC is due (£254) and to ask Members to confirm they are happy for the Town Council to continue to make this payment.

Members **unanimously resolved** that the Town Council will pay this invoice.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

241/19-20 BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account periods 1st April 2019 – 31st October 2019 and 1st April 2019 – 30th November 2019.

The payroll figure for October 2019 was £12,693.37 (11 staff) and £14,437.01 for November 2019 (this higher amount includes notice pay and holiday pay for a member of staff).

After consideration and approval by Members the schedules will be signed by the Clerk and the Chair.

Members resolved to approve the bank reconciliations.

242/19-20 OFFICE COMPUTERS

The Clerk reported that support for Windows 7 is ending soon and efforts to try to upgrade this software on the office computers to Windows 10 Pro were unsuccessful, due to the specifications of the two old office pcs (six and seven years old) not being high enough.

The specialist IT company we currently use, quoted for the replacement and installation of both office pcs and two licences for Windows 10 Pro. Following consultation with the Chair, the quotation was accepted, and the new machines and licences were ordered (total £1,367.94 +VAT) and have been installed.

243/19-20 OFFICE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Clerk said that in January 2019 (see Minute 336/18-19) we were advised that all copper ISDN telephone lines will be turned off by 2025 at which point everyone needs to have converted to digital. Our provider submitted a proposal showing that there is a benefit to the Council switching to digital prior to 2025.

An upgrade to the digital, fibre broadband telephone system was agreed, ordered and has been installed. Outright purchase of the system, including programming of the equipment and training is £1,550.00 +VAT. This would have to be purchased in both instances - either now or if we left it to nearer 2025.

By purchasing now we will get 12 months free maintenance which will be £100 per annum thereafter (currently £177.16 +VAT per year) and will make immediate monthly savings. The network cost will be £50.50 +VAT per month (currently approximately £72.00 +VAT). The broadband speed has also been improved with this system, enabling Officers to work more efficiently.

244/19-20 ELECTRICITY – MULTI-USE GAMES AREA AT LOCKING STUMPS PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Clerk stated that yesterday we received the renewal summary from E-on for electricity payments that Birchwood Town Council makes to pay for floodlighting a play area at Locking Stumps Primary School. There is a limited time in which to make a decision.

We asked a company that we deal with regularly to look (free of charge) into options; to advise whether it is worth switching at all, considering the relatively small costs involved. If so, is there a company that can offer better value, preferably one that uses renewable energy?

They advised that some 'smaller' companies are good for domestic customers, but they do not offer fixed term prices and cannot commit to hold prices for a certain term. They said that it is only really the 'big six' that can offer these sorts of terms for businesses. They suggested that as the annual costs for this account are relatively small, their advice would be to try to get a longer-term fixed rate (3 or 4 years).

They offered several options (copied to Members). These were discussed by Members.

Action Clerk's office to look into the costs involved in taking out a 4-year contract with E-on.

245/19-20 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) The Community Room is booked as a Polling Station for the General Election on 12th December 2019. An invoice of £140 has been submitted to WBC for the use of our premises/caretaker's services.
- (b) To note that a reply has been sent to a resident who enquired about whether the Town Council is still considering an upgrade to play equipment on the playground next to Locking Stumps Primary School. (See Minute 211/19-20 (a) from the October Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel meeting for details.)
- (c) To note the receipt of the SAS Protect Newsletter – December 2019.
- (d) Received / sent – emails re: LED quotation – we have been awaiting a report prior to further consideration; which we have chased again.
- (e) Received – Employer Bulletin – December 2019.
- (f) To note that the Section 137 amount for Parish and Town Councils in England for 2020/2021 will be £8.32 per elector (up from £8.12 in 2019/2020).

246/19-20 **CHRISTMAS SHUTDOWN**

Members **resolved** that the office and maintenance operations should shut down over the Christmas and New Year period, as it had in previous years, from 25th December 2019 to 1st January 2020 (inclusive); with staff available in case of an unprecedented emergency.

If there is a crisis during a shutdown period, which cannot be dealt with solely by the main authority (Warrington Borough Council) arrangements will be in place for there to be some Town Council emergency cover.

Staff will take the days in between (that are not Bank Holidays) from their annual leave allowance.

247/19-20 **2020/2021 BUDGET AND PRECEPT**

- (a) The Clerk stated that, due to unforeseen circumstances, the formal 2020/2021 Budget and Precept Meeting that was due to be incorporated into the December 10th, 2019 Finance Meeting, has been postponed, after discussion with the Chair. She added that WBC will allow us until 15th January 2020 to send our precept requirement and related documents to them.

Members agreed that the January meeting should be brought forward to 14th January 2020 and will incorporate the formal 2020/2021 Budget and Precept Meeting.

(b) **Staffing levels and costs**

The Clerk asked Members to note the 3.3% increase to £9.30 per hour in the National Living Wage – as set by the Living Wage Foundation; the Town Council has previously resolved to mirror this wage rate for the Maintenance Team Operatives and the Caretaker. If Members are still minded to reflect this rate it, and any other potential wage increase decisions, will need to be formally ratified at the March 2020 meeting in order for any increases to be implemented in the April 2020 wage cycle, for the start of the new financial year.

Members resolved that they would like the Town Council to continue to mirror the National Living Wage – as set by the Living Wage Foundation, presuming it has been accounted for in the budget figures.

(c) **Precept 2020/2021**

- (i) Members acknowledged the receipt of the precept notification and calculation details for 2020/2021 (The WBC letter was copied to Members in their papers).
- (ii) Members noted that for funding purposes the 2020/2021 tax base for Birchwood has been calculated as 3128; up 42 from 3086 for 2019/2020; which equates to an increase in income of £4,457.04 if using last year's Band D charge for calculation.
- (iii) Members noted that notification of the 2020/2021 parish precept requirement and associated breakdown of parish expenditure documents should be with the Borough Council by Friday 10th January 2020; however due to extenuating circumstances the Town Council has been given an extension to Wednesday 15th January 2020.
- (iv) To note that the precept payment will be made as one payment by the Borough Council by 30th April 2020.

(d) The following documents were copied to Members to allow early consideration of **(draft)** figures for the formal Budget and Precept Meeting:

- Birchwood Parish Precept Letter 2020/2021 from WBC
- Birchwood Parish Precept Worked Example for 2020/2021 from WBC
- BTC Projection – Year End 2019/2020 Balance (draft)
- BTC Schedule A - the income & expenditure projections for the 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 financial years (draft)
- BTC Schedule B – Projections of Potential Precept Submissions 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023 (draft)

There were some figures in the draft Schedules A and B that still require adjustment. These will be re-issued, prior to the formal meeting on 14th January, for consideration.

The meeting concluded at 6.55 pm

Resolved: that the following payments be approved as some of the residual September and part October 2019 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
20.09.2019	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Data protection services	£ 1,000.00	£ 200.00	£ 1,200.00
23.09.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4032774195)	£ 68.03		£ 68.03
24.09.2019	DD	N Power	Electricity Parkers Farm	£ 175.67	£ 8.78	£ 184.45
25.09.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 154.16	£ 30.84	£ 185.00
25.09.2019	*	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit fees year end 31 March 2019	£ 800.00	£ 160.00	£ 960.00
25.09.2019	CHQ	RBL Poppy Appeal	Supply of two poppy wreaths for Remembrance Service	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
25.09.2019	CHQ	Birchwood Lions	Grant to support the community Remembrance Service	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
26.09.2019	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	£ 72.39	£ 14.48	£ 86.87
01.10.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water services Parkers Farm (4083868280)	£ 14.88		£ 14.88
01.10.2019	DD	Screwfix Direct Ltd.	Hozelock extendable lance spray & hose reel	£ 60.83	£ 12.17	£ 73.00
02.10.2019	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 44.51	£ 8.90	£ 53.41
02.10.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 55.68	£ 11.14	£ 66.82
04.10.2019	DD	Legal and General	Ill Health Liability Insurance	£ 136.46		£ 136.46
07.10.2019	*	October wages	Wages total this month (11 staff)	£ 12,675.12		£12,675.12
09.10.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 131.03	£ 26.20	£ 157.23
11.10.2019	*	Warrington Borough Council	Second of four (annual) payments for Locking Stumps	£ 1,322.34		£ 1,322.34
14.10.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 23.73		£ 23.73
15.10.2019	*	James Todd & Co. Ltd	3 monthly payroll service charges	£ 210.00	£ 42.00	£ 252.00
15.10.2019	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 39.80		£ 39.80
15.10.2019	*	Matco Direct	Mat cleaning services Oct 2019 to March 2020	£ 194.45	£ 38.89	£ 233.34
16.10.2019	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support, backups, internet services (3 x inv.)	£ 113.60	£ 22.72	£ 136.32
16.10.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 73.17	£ 14.63	£ 87.80
16.10.2019	DD	Information Commissioner's Office	Data Protection Fee (annual renewal)	£ 35.00		£ 35.00
16.10.2019	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Contributions (E'ee £759.30 E'er £2,775.94)	£ 3,535.24		£ 3,535.24
16.10.2019	*	HMRC	Tax (£1,385.40) and NI (£2,138.01)	£ 3,523.41		£ 3,523.41
17.10.2019	*	Society of Local Council Clerks	The Clerk's Manual 2019	£ 51.50	£ 0.80	£ 52.30
17.10.2019	*	Office Depot (UK) Ltd	Stationery	£ 46.52	£ 9.30	£ 55.82
18.10.2019	*	Elite Hi-vis	Workwear	£ 228.04	£ 45.60	£ 273.64

Payments of Account since 19th October 2019

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
23.10.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4032774195)	£ 68.03		£ 68.03
23.10.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 134.11	£ 26.83	£ 160.94
23.10.2019	*	CJ Auto Service	NH57 CZV - replace egr valve, batteries and gaskets	£ 538.91	£ 107.78	£ 646.69
25.10.2019	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	£ 71.54	£ 14.31	£ 85.85
28.10.2019	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area (with adjustments credited ref: previous overcharge)	£ 4.02	£ 0.56	£ 4.58
29.10.2019	*	F McDonald	Petty cash float reimbursement	£ 200.00		£ 200.00
30.10.2019	DD	Copyrite	Photocopying charges	£ 23.78	£ 4.76	£ 28.54
30.10.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (equipment)	£ 9.76	£ 1.95	£ 11.71
31.10.2019	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 90.54	£ 9.11	£ 99.65
31.10.2019	*	CSE Electrical Ltd	Supply and fit 4 x LED emergency lighting units	£ 504.00	£ 100.80	£ 604.80
31.10.2019	*	Able Group	Repair damaged light switch in garage	£ 65.00	£ 13.00	£ 78.00
01.11.2019	DD	Water Plus	Water services Parkers Farm (4083868280)	£ 14.88		£ 14.88
01.11.2019	DD	Screwfix Direct Ltd.	Cement, limestone and sand	£ 19.26	£ 3.86	£ 23.12
01.11.2019	*	CJ Auto Service	MOT and full service ND58 BZR	£ 391.54	£ 68.32	£ 459.86
04.11.2019	DD	Legal and General	Ill Health Liability Insurance (inc. 'sweep-up' amount)	£ 483.83		£ 483.83
06.11.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 120.83	£ 24.15	£ 144.98
07.11.2019	*	November wages	Wages total this month (11 staff - including final wages and holiday pay for 1 employee)	£ 14,437.01		£14,437.01
11.11.2019	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier rental 10/11/2019 to 09/02/2020	£ 343.00	£ 68.60	£ 411.60
12.11.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 18.34		£ 18.34
12.11.2019	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Contributions (E'ee £757.53 E'er £2,796.95)	£ 3,554.48		£ 3,554.48
12.11.2019	*	HMRC	Tax (£1,379.80) and NI (£2,131.83)	£ 3,511.63		£ 3,511.63
12.11.2019	CHQ	Post Office Ltd	Vehicle Tax ND09 VNL	£ 260.00		£ 260.00
12.11.2019	CHQ	Post Office Ltd	Vehicle Tax ND58 BZR	£ 260.00		£ 260.00
13.11.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 65.83	£ 13.17	£ 79.00
13.11.2019	*	Telesis Ltd	Deposit for handsets for new phone system	£ 620.00	£ 124.00	£ 744.00
15.11.2019	*	Regal Disposables	Refuse sacks x 30 boxes and 3 x boxes paper hand towels	£ 361.38	£ 72.28	£ 433.66
15.11.2019	*	Arco	PPE - safety boots (JW)	£ 38.97	£ 7.79	£ 46.76
15.11.2019	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.40		£ 40.40
18.11.2019	*	CJ Auto Service	Brake test and fluid change and door weld NH57 CZV	£ 257.06	£ 51.41	£ 308.47
18.11.2019	*	CJ Auto Service	ND09 VNL - full service and MOT (inc new brake pads/discs)	£ 977.83	£ 169.53	£ 1,147.36
20.11.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 178.05	£ 35.61	£ 213.66
21.11.2019	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support, backups, internet services (3 x inv.)	£ 113.60	£ 22.72	£ 136.32
25.11.2019	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 8.51	£ 0.43	£ 8.94
25.11.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4032774195)	£ 68.03		£ 68.03
27.11.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 61.14	£ 12.23	£ 73.37
27.11.2019	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	£ 71.47	£ 14.29	£ 85.76
28.11.2019	*	Birchwood Acts	Start-up grant	£ 500.00		£ 500.00
28.11.2019	*	Birchwood Repair Café	Refund of payment made to Birchwood TC in error	£ 25.00		£ 25.00
28.11.2019	*	Telesis Ltd	Balance for supply/installation/set-up of new phone system	£ 930.00	£ 186.00	£ 1,116.00
29.11.2019	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 35.82	£ 7.17	£ 42.99
02.12.2019	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 14.88		£ 14.88
03.12.2019	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 59.51	£ 8.90	£ 68.41
04.12.2019	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 148.45	£ 26.69	£ 175.14
04.12.2019	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 170.02		£ 170.02
05.12.2019	*	E Smith and Son (nursery)	Winter bedding plants for planters and compost	£ 163.50	£ 32.70	£ 196.20
06.12.2019	*	December wages	Wages total this month (10 staff)	£ 12,679.74		£ 12,679.74

Payments for approval at the December 2019 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 170.02		£ 170.02
	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 14.88		£ 14.88
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 18.34		£ 18.34
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4032774195)	£ 68.03		£ 68.03
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.20		£ 40.20
	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support, backups, internet services (3 x inv.)	£ 113.60	£ 22.72	£ 136.32
	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	tbc		
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 7.56	£ 0.38	£ 7.94
	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	2 x Dell Optiplex 3060 Micro Form Factor PCs with Intel Core i5-8500T (processor) 8GB RAM (memory) 256GB SSD (hard drive) and 2 x Windows 10 Pro licences	£ 1,367.94	£ 273.59	£ 1,641.53
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 130.85	£ 26.16	£ 157.01
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Contributions (E'ee £xxx E'er £xxx)	tbc		
	*	HMRC	Tax (£xxx) and NI (£xxx)	tbc		
	*	Warrington Borough Council	Recharge for tyre repair NH57 CZV via Lodge Tyres	tbc		
	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	SD card reader adapter	£ 5.80	£ 1.16	£ 6.96
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 35.82	£ 7.17	£ 42.99
	*	Aqua Solutions	Annual gas safety report/boiler service/replace thermostatic valve	£ 87.99		£ 87.99
	*	Office Depot	Stationery	£ 41.49	£ 8.32	£ 49.81
	DD	Trade UK(also t/a Screwfix Direct)	Cement, sharp sand and limestone	£ 19.26	£ 3.86	£ 23.12
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier rental 10/11/19 to 09/02/2020	£ 343.00	£ 68.60	£ 411.60
	*	Office Depot	Stationery (previously out of stock item)	£ 1.37	£ 0.27	£ 1.64
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 33.96	£ 6.79	£ 40.75
	DD	Npower	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 177.53	£ 8.88	£ 186.41
	*	Duttons	Hedge-trimmer grease tube	£ 27.50	£ 5.50	£ 33.00