

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING  
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,  
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE, WA3 6AN,  
ON WEDNESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2021, 6PM**

**Present:** Councillor Bowden in the Chair  
Councillors Allen, Atkin, Ball, Brereton, Dempsey, Scott, Sheridan and Simcock

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

**Apologies:** Councillors Ellis, Evans, and Reeves

**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.

390/21-22 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Councillor Brereton **proposed**, Councillor Scott **seconded**, and it was unanimously **resolved** that: In accordance with Section 63 of Standing Orders (admission of the public and press to meetings) that members of the public are excluded from the meeting due to the confidential and commercial nature of the business to be conducted.

Minutes will be written so that they can be published as Part I Minutes.

391/21-22 **BTC VEHICLES – URGENT UPDATES**

The Chair stated that this is a one-item agenda, and that decisions need to be made at this meeting due to potential repercussions on business continuity.

(a) **ND09 VNL and ND58 BZR**

The RFO stated that the purpose of the meeting is to ask Council to make some firm decisions regarding vehicle issues, as the team's ability to carry out their work efficiently is now beginning to be affected.

As previously reported ND09 VNL is already out of action and has been SORN'd.

The RFO stated that, as reported at the October meeting, ND58 BZR went in for its MOT and service and failed on emissions and welding. Unfortunately, it now appears that it is going the same way as ND09 VNL.

The RFO said that she had a long discussion with the mechanic at the garage and he was unable to say whether spending money on cleaning the sensors, inlet manifold and EGR valve would solve the problem, as this could then reveal some hairline cracks or other faults in various components which would then need replacing.

The RFO had circulated some detailed information to Members prior to the meeting, to give an indication of the costs already incurred in relation to ND58 BZR so far in this financial year (£1,365.86 plus vehicle tax pro-rata) and estimated costs going forward (£431.00 plus VAT) to try to get this vehicle back on the road.

These costs were estimated on the basis that the cleaning will solve the emissions issue and not reveal any other problems with the vehicle.

We have been advised by the garage that this type of issue is one that can often occur with diesel vehicles, due to the 'stop / start' nature of the journeys that our vehicles undertake each day.

Between April 2019 and the end of March 2021 repairs to ND58 BZR (including servicing requirements and those needed to get it through its MOT) were £2,253.38 net. Fuel was approximately an additional £2,000.

The RFO asked Members to consider whether the Council wishes to outlay more money on getting the vehicle back on the road (which is an unknown amount) or if Members believe the vehicle is no longer economically viable.

Members discussed this matter. Their considerations included the age of the vehicle, the increasing cost of fuel, the costs of repair and the unknown costs going forward. Also, the Town Council's other Ford Transit van has recently experienced similar issues, and is no longer running.

Members **unanimously resolved** that it would be financially irresponsible for the Town Council to continue to try to keep this vehicle on the road, at unknown costs.

(b) **PROPOSED ELECTRIC VAN(S)**

The RFO reported that, following the October 2021 meeting, as requested, Officers asked for further information regarding the Maxus eDeliver 3.

The option of the Maxus eDeliver 3 had been put forward after many months of researching various electric vans currently on the market (both new and second hand) and also considering the costs of second-hand diesel vehicles.

The price from dealers nationwide was fairly standard, at around £33,000 plus VAT (minus grant – currently £6,000 (but that can change without notice)).

We identified a 'local' dealer, based in Haydock, St Helens, who brought a Maxus eDeliver 3 demonstrator vehicle to site (twice) and met with Officers, the Senior Maintenance Operative and Councillor Ellis to answer questions that we had about the vehicle and different battery sizes, etc. The Maintenance Team have all had a chance to view the vehicle and four have had a test-drive.

The Clerk informed Members that she had spoken to a van broker in South Wales, who could sell the vehicle for less, but the level of after-sales service you could expect to receive was not clear.

The RFO reminded Members that as the Town Council has declared a climate emergency, the move towards an electric fleet has already been agreed at previous meetings.

The RFO stated that a lot has happened since the October meeting – including the news from the garage that ND58 BZR required some significant work if we had wanted to get it back on the road again (see (a) above).

The RFO informed Members that on Monday morning the Sales Director from Vans North West Ltd telephoned and she had a detailed conversation with him.

He advised that overnight, the price of many electric vans – including all the manufacturers that they deal with, have been put up without notice. Ford has put the price up by around £3,000 per vehicle, Mercedes has increased theirs too. The Maxus has gone up by £1,000. (The van broker in South Wales subsequently advised that their price for the Maxus had gone up by £2,500.)

The Sales Director from Vans North West said that any stock they have in (about six vans) will remain the same price – but any that have to be ordered will be £1,000 per vehicle more expensive.

The order delivery date for the Maxus eDeliver3 to bring more into the country, is currently around June 2022 (information obtained from two different suppliers).

The smaller battery 35kWh Maxus eDeliver3 is £500 cheaper – but these vehicles would have to be ordered in, at the +£1,000 cost – the smaller battery has a 40kg lower payload capability, making it less flexible for the team.

The RFO stated that there is a ‘City Range’ battery size difference of 72 miles range, which although it does not necessarily affect us due to the relatively short distances our vehicles travel each day, it would mean they have to charge less often. She added that, as battery life reduces over the years (8-year warranty) the 52.5kWh will potentially remain viable for longer for our needs. The current rate BTC pays per unit of electricity is 15.769p/kWh (fixed for three years).

The RFO reported that because of the immediate price increase that occurred on Monday – Officers contacted Cllrs Bowden, Ellis and Reeves to ask if, under delegated powers, we could put a ‘hold’ on two of the vehicles with a *refundable* deposit – so there is still no commitment to buy, which they agreed to.

The Sales Director agreed that we could put a refundable deposit on two of the vans (£500 each), which would enable him to hold them for BTC for two weeks, to allow the Council to consider its options.

He brought the demonstrator van to our offices again (for the second time) today, and two members of staff who hadn’t had a previous chance to drive the vehicle, were able to take it on a test drive. Councillor Simcock was also on site and viewed the vehicle.

Councillor Simcock indicated that he likes the vehicle and that, as long as the team believe it is big enough for their needs, he would be happy for it to be added to the fleet.

The RFO asked the Council to consider the option of the Maxus eDeliver 3 and to decide if they wish to continue with the purchase of a Maxus eDeliver 3 van (or vans) with the 52.5kWh battery – or go down a different route. She reminded Members that all EV prices are currently increasing – some by several thousand pounds. She also added that although a deposit has been paid to hold the vehicles, there is no obligation to purchase.

One van, including reversing beepers and a roof vent installed (not including VAT as we can claim that back) would cost approximately £26,130.40 (£500 of which has already been paid as a deposit). Two vans would therefore be around £52,260.80. This also includes a discount offered of £1,650.00 off the dealer’s list price.

The RFO stated that the Council has enough in earmarked funds to purchase two vehicles.

The Clerk commented that any subsequent vehicle purchases would need to be tipper vehicles, but that there are not currently any suitable electric tipper options on the market. The ones that are available are much too small.

(c) **EV CHARGERS AND INSTALLATION**

The RFO said that before making a formal decision regarding the Maxus eDeliver 3 van(s) Members might wish to consider the linked matter of EV chargers and charger installation.

The RFO stated that, as the barn is a Grade II listed building she has spoken to the new Conservation Officer at WBC, who asked for much more specific information, before he can consider potentially giving the ‘go-ahead’ to install EV chargers without the need for BTC to formally apply for listed building consent.

If he is happy with the information supplied the Conservation Officer might be able to give a verbal ‘go-ahead’. In order to obtain the information he required, we needed to have an EV charger installer survey the site and look at our electrical supply.

The RFO reported that earlier today an EV charger installer came to survey the site. Because of the way the electrics are installed, a cable would need to be taken from the supply box under the stairs in the main building, out to the back of the building and buried beneath some concrete and grass (to satisfy the Conservation Officer). This would require some groundworks to be carried out.

The installer surveyor was very thorough in explaining how he would feed cables, and how they could be mainly hidden from view in the barn (something the Conservation Officer is very keen on). He said it would take around two days in total, and with the costs of two chargers (one in the workshop and one in the end garage) the ‘ballpark price was around £3,000 (dependent on the actual cabling that would be required and the brand of charger(s) and if we would be eligible for the charger grant).

The EV charger installer said that he would check with OLEV, and said that their company would apply on our behalf, if we are eligible for the £350 grant per charger.

The Conservation Officer has expressed a preference for a black charger, that would not stand out against brickwork in the same way that a white one might.

The EV charger installer has taken some video and photos to send to the Conservation Officer and is going to send full technical details for us to send as well, (free of charge). He said that the company has dealt with similar conservation and listed building situations previously.

The installation of the chargers can be arranged without contacting several companies to quote, as an ‘exception’ to contract regulations, as listed in Financial Regulations 11.1 (a):

- (ii) *‘for **specialist services** such as are provided by legal professionals acting in disputes;’* and
- (iii) *‘for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to **or parts for** existing machinery or equipment or plant;’*

The company that came to site has experience in installing EV chargers at listed buildings, and the chargers will be required as an essential piece of equipment to enable electric vehicles to charge. We therefore only invited this one company to survey the site. We did contact one other, but they said they were too busy.

The RFO stated that, to sum up, two new Maxus eDeliver 3 vans and two chargers (installed) would cost in the region of approximately £55,260.80 (£1,000 deposit already paid). This also includes the discount of £1,650.00 discount off the dealer's list price for each vehicle.

The RFO informed Members that the Maxus vehicles come with a data recorder and tracker built in (which usually cost around £300 to have installed in other vehicles) but we have the option - for approximately £15 per vehicle per month to activate them (or not).

We are not yet sure if this is for a two or three-year contract. This would enable Members to receive data on how the vehicles are being driven, what the electricity usage is, and it might influence insurance costs (we are awaiting a reply from our insurance company).

The RFO said that there will be some additional costs including sign writing and possibly seat covers. In 2018 costs of the sign writing on one of the tippers was £175.00 plus VAT. We were thinking that we only need some simple wording, such as 'Birchwood Town Council Going Greener' and the phone number; but this can be discussed by Members nearer the time.

This would still leave around £45,000 in the earmarked vehicles and equipment fund – which can then be built back up over the next few years.

(d) **DECISION**

Members discussed the information given above in detail.

Councillors agreed that, given conversations the Clerk had with the van broker, that it was not appropriate to purchase from them, but to purchase the vehicles from a dealer, and that it made sense to purchase from a local dealer.

As second-hand electric vehicles are also currently holding their price well, it was decided that it made more sense to purchase new vehicles with warranty.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Scott, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** that BTC purchase two new Maxus eDeliver 3 vans.

**Action** Clerk's office to contact the necessary companies and organisations, as appropriate, with the Town Council's decision, to progress the matters involved with the purchase.

**Action** To ask the dealer whether they would be able to offer any trade-in options on ND09 VNL and ND58 BZR.