

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL
MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD ONLINE, ON TUESDAY 26TH JANUARY 2021, 6PM**

Present: Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Atkin, Bowden, D. Ellis, J. Ellis and Fitzsimmons

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

Apologies: Councillors Evans (IT issues) and M. Hearldon (dispensation)

283/20-21 **DECEMBER 2020 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor D. Ellis proposed, Councillor Atkin seconded, and it was resolved that: The Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting that was held on Tuesday 15th December 2020 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair, with one change: that a typographical error be amended from ‘CRP’ to ‘CPR’ on page 170.

284/20-21 **DECEMBER 2020 BUDGET AND PRECEPT MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Atkin proposed, Councillor D. Ellis seconded, and it was resolved that: The Minutes of the Budget and Precept Meeting that was held on Tuesday 15th December 2020 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair, with one change: that a figure in the 11th paragraph be amended to ‘9.5 pence’, on page 177.

Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to declare any personal or prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when the item is reached.

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

285/20-21 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 200 and 201 below).

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

PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL ITEMS

286/20-21 **BIRCHWOOD YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (BYCC) – OWNERSHIP DISCUSSIONS**

The BAFO reported that Councillor D. Ellis, in his role as Chair of the Trustees of BYCC had been able to make progress in researching the title deeds, and obtaining some additional information from the Lottery Commission.

The title deed for ‘Birchwood Youth Club’, taken from the Land Registry earlier last year, suggests that Birchwood Town Council (BTC) is the owner, but this could only be the case, based on the original restrictions placed by the Lottery, if the building was on a long-term lease.

Councillor D. Ellis stated it is his understanding that it is only possible for BYCC to be a registered charity (which it was for a number of years and is again now) if it is operating completely independently of BTC; that BTC cannot have any involvement in the operation or running of the centre. He added that his main concern is to ensure that the building is preserved for the benefit of the community in the long term, without any risk, and that it can also continue to be a registered charity.

The BAFO stated that it is now clear that there must be a distinct independence between BTC and BYCC so he has now ceased working on a new lease, as it would create a legal link between the two organisations. It was always understood that BTC could / would not have any management role or ownership of the centre.

The BAFO gave Members a brief 'history' of why BTC purchased the land on which BYCC now stands. It was purchased from the Homes and Communities Agency, with BTC's position only meant to give the youth centre long term protection from other potential purchasers / developers; as the Homes and Communities Agency was disposing of small parcels of their land which the Trustees of the centre could not afford to buy, at that time, in their own right.

The BAFO proposed that he now speaks to our solicitor about the past land purchase and the overlaps /contradictions causing confusion about the present position of ownership, and how each party wishes to see an ownership structure for the future, of the building, the land that the building sits on, and the 'garden' area at the back.

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor J. Ellis **seconded** and it was **unanimously resolved** that the BAFO ceases work on a new lease, and contacts our solicitor regarding clarifying the long term ownership of the BYCC, clearing up anomalies about the existing situation, and ensuring that BYCC is always protected for the benefit of the community.

Action BAFO to contact our solicitor regarding the above.

287/20-21 **PARKERS FARM ESTATE**

- (a) The Clerk reported on the current progress of the ongoing work. We received a Parkers Farm Roof and Associated Works Report – 25/01/2021.

The internal works will need to be completed once 'lockdown' is over.

- (b) To note that the Clerk has been liaising with our insurance company, keeping them updated regarding the status of the building works.

The BAFO stated that he has now clarified with our insurance company that the type of valuation that they require when considering our upcoming insurance renewal, is a rebuild, rather than a sales value.

The BAFO said that he has the names of some companies that specialise in these types of valuations. He will contact them for quotations to undertake the valuations, and to clarify how they can undertake the work during a 'lockdown' situation.

Action BAFO to arrange for a rebuild valuation of the Parkers Farm complex to be undertaken.

- (c) The BAFO reported that the second part payment invoice from Trinity has been received and paid (£14,887.97 + £2,977.59 VAT) and that the invoice for the third payment (£14,552.51 + £2,910.50 VAT) has been received and is on the list of payments for approval at the January meeting.

Members have previously resolved to approve the payments for this work. See the September 2020 Part 1 Finance Minutes - Minute 140/20-21 (b):

*‘ . . . Councillor Bowden **proposed**, Councillor Fitzsimmons **seconded** and Members **unanimously resolved** that the additional work to be undertaken at the same time, by the same specialist contractors, that they approve all the costs (total value of £58,615.89 plus VAT) and that progress can be formally moved forward for work to be commenced.’*

288/20-21 **POLICE FUND**

To note that the Police have advised that the proposal to pool grant applications from several local Parish Councils to purchase a Tru Cam to use in Warrington East, is unlikely to be accepted. The PCSOs and Beat Managers are now looking at potential separate community projects that grant funding could be applied for.

289/20-21 **BTC VEHICLES**

To note that options are being considered to replace one of the vans within the next six months. There is nothing specific to report yet. Ideally, we would like to purchase an electric vehicle, but we may need to consider interim arrangements before we can take that route. It is thought that the availability of suitable electric vehicles will improve over the next year, and that costs might start to come down as the market becomes more competitive.

290/20-21 **PRECEPT NOTIFICATION**

To note that the letter to WBC was sent on 7th January 2021, notifying them of the Town Council's precept requirement for the 2021/2022 financial year.

291/20-21 **MEMORIAL PROPOSAL / GRANT APPLICATION**

The BAFO asked Members to note and consider correspondence regarding a proposed memorial bench for Councillor Nelson. He informed Members that a grant application has now been made by the WBC Ranger Service, asking BTC to consider approving a grant award of £350 towards the purchase of a memorial bench to Councillor Pauline Nelson, to be placed in the Forest Park.

Councillor D. Ellis said that he has been informed that a new bench has already been installed at the Forest Park. He wondered if this is the Memorial bench that grant aid has been requested for.

Councillors discussed the application.

Unfortunately, Members felt that they could not approve the application, in its current format, as it does not meet items 3 or 4 in our terms and conditions:

- 3 *Grants will not be awarded, unless in exceptional circumstances, to those organisations that can raise income through the rating system (e.g. fire brigade) or national charitable organisations.*
- 4 *Grants will not be awarded to groups that come under an 'umbrella' organisation with sufficient funds which could be used to support the project.*

because WBC is a precepting organisation, the application, in this format, does not meet Condition 3. It also does not meet Condition 4, especially as on the grant aid form it has been stated: ‘ . . . if needed full funds have been identified within WBC.’

This was a difficult point for our Members to make, as Councillor Nelson was a good friend and dear colleague to the Officers, and many Members, who have known her for a long time.

A query was made as to whether an alternative application could be received from a different, suitable organisation, which might then allow the application to be reconsidered.

No decision was made about this suggestion, as Members wish to first clarify whether the bench has already been installed, without the need for grant funding from the Town Council.

Action Clerk’s office to make enquiries with Dave Hazlehurst, WBC Ranger, as to whether the bench has already been purchased and installed.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

292/20-21 BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

To receive the Town Council’s Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account periods 1st April 2020 – 31st December 2020.

The payroll figure was £12,679.74 for November 2020, and £12,878.97 for December 2020.

After consideration and approval by Members the schedules will be signed by the Clerk or BAFO, and the Chair, as soon as is practicable.

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor J. Ellis **seconded** and Members **unanimously resolved** to approve the bank reconciliations.

293/20-21 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT

To note that due to the Covid pandemic, our internal auditor is unable to attend our offices to undertake the interim internal audit for 2020/2021. This audit will now take place remotely. A significant batch of documents has been prepared and sent to the auditor, to satisfy a checklist sent to us. They have been acknowledged as received. Some additional invoice information has since been requested and sent.

294/20-21 INSURANCE

To note that the Clerk has been liaising with our insurance company, keeping them updated regarding the working arrangements during the latest Covid lockdown – including the temporary relocation of some work equipment as office staff are working mainly from home.

295/20-21 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING / NOTING

- (a) To note that we have requested quotes for PAT testing from two local companies. One company quoted £100 for 78 items. The other has quoted £59 for the first 50 items, plus 85p per additional item – this equates to £82.80 for 78 items.
- (b) To note that a new account card has been received for our B&Q Trade UK account.

- (c) To note that SAS Daniels has sent an email (on 5th January) regarding the Town Council's SAS Protect membership, which was up for renewal on 13th January 2021. The cost would remain at £1,377 +VAT for the year. Officers recommend renewing the contract with this specialist contractor.

It was **proposed** by Councillor J. Ellis, **seconded** by Councillor Bowden, and **unanimously resolved** that this contract be renewed.

Action Clerk's office to make the arrangements for the renewal of this contract for a year.

- (d) To note the Clerk attended a remote briefing session being put on by SAS Daniels regarding Employment Law, on 26th January.
- (e) To note that the annual Fire and Health & Safety Risk Assessment reviews will be taking place remotely, with Terrain, on 2nd February 2021.
- (f) To note that we have received our latest 'Anti-virus Health Report', 'Computer Health Standards' and 'Performance Review' from Yellowbus, relating to our two office pcs and the laptop.
- (g) To note that the Nationwide is launching digital banking for Business Savings customer, later in 2021.
- (h) To note the receipt, from WBC, of some links to websites of bus shelter suppliers.
Councillor Atkin commented that he believes the Council should not consider wooden shelters due to the potential risk of arson attacks.
- (i) To note the receipt of an update from our supplier of bin bags and paper hand towels, regarding some supply issues they have been experiencing due to the Coronavirus, and the likelihood that their costs will rise in the future. We believe they currently remain excellent value for money compared to other suppliers.
- (j) To note the receipt of information re: Be a Good Egg for NHS campaign. The campaign is to raise funds for a new Heart Telemetry Monitoring Unit for Warrington and Halton Hospital.
- (k) To note that a homeworking checklist has been received from our specialist Health & Safety Consultants, for completion by staff working from home.
- (l) To note that a specific risk assessment form 'Working During the Covid 19 Pandemic' has been prepared and has been circulated to all Members of staff. When safe to do so, they will be asked to sign a sheet to say that they have received, read, and understood the document.
- (m) To note that the Clerk has prepared an IT and Data Sharing Information document, which she has sent to our GDPR consultant for information.
- (n) To note the receipt of some information from E.on regarding changes in energy prices. The Town Council is currently on a fixed rate deal.

- (o) To inform Members that E.ON Next has told us that they made an error in taking our Direct Debit payment earlier than they should. This will be recredited to our account and then taken out again when it should be.
- (p) To note that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk attended a remote ChALC training course, 'Meetings and Procedures', to refresh and update their knowledge.

The meeting concluded at 7.30pm

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual November and part of the December 2020 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
18.11.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 108.61	£ 21.72	£ 130.33
19.11.2020	*	HMRC	Re:Oct. 2020 Tax £1,582.60 NI £2,314.03	£ 3,896.63		£ 3,896.63
19.11.2020	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Re: Oct. 2020 E'ee £828.43 E'er £2,968.00	£ 3,796.43		£ 3,796.43
20.11.2020	*	Office Depot	Stationery	£ 37.97	£ 7.59	£ 45.56
20.11.2020	*	Williams Garage Services	HK64NNM - new tyre	£ 74.75	£ 14.95	£ 89.70
25.11.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 202.55	£ 40.51	£ 243.06
26.11.2020	CHQ	Post Office Limited	Vehicle Tax ND09 VNL	£ 265.00		£ 265.00
26.11.2020	CHQ	Post Office Limited	Vehicle Tax ND58 BZR	£ 265.00		£ 265.00
27.11.2020	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	£ 57.83	£ 11.57	£ 69.40
27.11.2020	*	Arco	PPE - safety boots (IS)	£ 49.00	£ 9.80	£ 58.80
27.11.2020	*	ESI	Replace worn door contact and resistors (following alarm activa	£ 55.00	£ 11.00	£ 66.00
30.11.2020	DD	Copyrite Systems	Photocopier charges	£ 25.84	£ 5.17	£ 31.01
01.12.2020	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 22.83		£ 22.83
02.12.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 57.67	£ 11.53	£ 69.20
02.12.2020	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 46.02	£ 9.20	£ 55.22
03.12.2020	DD	Npower	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 195.15	£ 9.76	£ 204.91
04.12.2020	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 70.73		£ 70.73
04.12.2020	*	Cheshire Association of Local C	Training course (Budgeting - CC)	£ 30.00		£ 30.00
07.12.2020	*	December wages	Wages total this month (10 staff)	£12,878.97		£12,878.97

Payments of Account since 7th December 2020

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
11.12.2020	*	Infotone	Brother printer drum unit	£ 40.90	£ 8.18	£ 49.08
11.12.2020	*	Aqua Solutions	Annual gas service installation inspection and boiler service	£ 75.00		£ 75.00
11.12.2020	*	Arco	3 x safety helmets and pair safety boots (SJ)	£ 87.99	£ 17.60	£ 105.59
11.12.2020	*	ESI	Annual maintenance of intruder alarm and annual remote monitoring of intruder alarm system 1/1/2021 - 31/12/2021	£ 162.00	£ 32.40	£ 194.40
11.12.2020	*	Elite Industrial Supplies Ltd	Workwear and PPE	£ 162.69	£ 32.54	£ 195.23
11.12.2020	*	CJ Auto Service	HK64 NNM - replace gearbox, clutch & flywheel plus the towing charge to the garage	£ 1,731.04	£ 346.21	£ 2,077.25
14.12.2020	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 87.07		£ 87.07
15.12.2020	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 41.20		£ 41.20
16.12.2020	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support/backups/internet services - inc. for laptop (4 x inv.)	£ 134.70	£ 26.94	£ 161.64
16.12.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 241.11	£ 48.22	£ 289.33
16.12.2020	*	Cube Property Services Ltd	Interim fee 1 - project management Parkers Farm works	£ 1,500.00	£ 300.00	£ 1,800.00
16.12.2020	*	HMRC	Re:Nov 2020 Tax £1,399.60 NI £2,082.07	£ 3,481.67		£ 3,481.67
17.12.2020	*	JDH Business Services 2020/2021	Data Protection Services 2020/2021	£ 1,000.00	£ 200.00	£ 1,200.00
17.12.2020	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Re: Nov. 2020 E'ee £780.95 E'er £2,805.48	£ 3,586.43		£ 3,586.43
17.12.2020	*	Croughan Limited t/a Trinity Renovatio	Interim fee 1 - building works - Parkers Farm	£ 13,946.64	£ 2,789.33	£ 16,735.97
21.12.2020	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 10.74	£ 0.54	£ 11.28
23.12.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 50.25	£ 10.05	£ 60.30
24.12.2020	*	CJ Auto Service	ND09 VNL - renew side door roller bearings & check corrosion	£ 359.30	£ 71.86	£ 431.16
29.12.2020	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	£ 57.46	£ 11.49	£ 68.95
30.12.2020	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 83.13	£ 16.62	£ 99.75
30.12.2020	*	LexisNexis	Arnold Baker - Local Council Administration 12ED.	£ 149.99		£ 149.99
30.12.2020	*	Society of Local Council Clerks	Annual membership fees for the Clerk	£ 262.00		£ 262.00
31.12.2020	DD	Copyrite Systems	Photocopier charges	£ 20.03	£ 4.01	£ 24.04
31.12.2020	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 45.92	£ 9.18	£ 55.10
31.12.2020		NPower	Gas - Parkers Farm	£ 428.20	£ 21.41	£ 449.61
04.01.2021	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 22.83		£ 22.83
04.01.2021	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 162.66		£ 162.66
07.12.2021	*	January wages	Wages total this month (10 staff)	£ 12,887.24		£ 12,887.24
12.01.2021	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 87.07		£ 87.07
13.01.2021	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, and equipment)	£ 100.33	£ 20.07	£ 120.40
18.01.2021	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support/backups/internet services - inc. for laptop (4 x inv.)	£ 134.70	£ 26.94	£ 161.64
18.01.2021	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 10.43	£ 0.52	£ 10.95
18.01.2021	*	Trinity Renovations	Payment 2 re: Parkers Farm - roof and associated works	£ 14,887.97	£ 2,977.59	£ 17,865.56

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance (February 2021)	£ 162.66		£ 162.66
	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 22.83		£ 22.83
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 87.07		£ 87.07
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 41.00		£ 41.00
	DD	Yellowbus Solutions	IT support, backups, internet services (inc. for laptop) (4 x inv.)	£ 134.70	£ 26.94	£ 161.64
	DD	O2	Ref a/c 04760571 mobile phones	£ 45.72	£ 9.14	£ 54.86
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 10.74	£ 0.54	£ 11.28
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, mowers and equipment)	£ 52.44	£ 10.49	£ 62.93
	*	Office Depot	5 x reams A\$ white paper	£ 13.85	£ 2.77	£ 16.62
	*	Office Depot	Pk 20 AA batteries	£ 10.95	£ 2.19	£ 13.14
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 25.34	£ 5.07	£ 30.41
	*	HMRC	Re: Dec. 2020 Tax £1,401.40 NI £2,084.14	£ 3,485.54		£ 3,485.54
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	RE: Dec. 2020 E'ee £781.44 E'er £2,807.22	£ 3,588.66		£ 3,588.66
	*	Office Depot	Stationery (awaiting back order for blue paper)	tbc		tbc
	DD	E.on Next	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 103.22	£ 5.16	£ 108.38
	*	Cheshire Association of Local Councils	Training Course Fee (Budgeting - CC)	£ 30.00		£ 30.00
	*	Cheshire Association of Local Councils	Training Course Fee (Meetings & Procedures - FMc & CC)	£ 50.00		£ 50.00
	*	Trinity Renovations	Payment 3 re: Parkers Farm - roof and associated works	£ 14,552.51	£ 2,910.50	£ 17,463.01
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease - 10/02/2010 to 09/05/2021	£ 343.00	£ 68.60	£ 411.60
	*	Arco	3 x halfmask respirators lg.	£ 30.36	£ 6.07	£ 36.43
	*	James Todd	Payroll services (Oct./Nov./Dec. 2020	£ 180.00	£ 36.00	£ 216.00
	*	TBC (FMc, or CC, or GC)	Petty cash float reimbursement	£ 100.00		£ 100.00