

MINUTES OF THE PART I BUDGET AND PRECEPT MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,
ON TUESDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 2023

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

Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
RFO / Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C. Caddock
Administrative Assistant – Mrs. H. Thomas

Apologies: Councillors Ellis (Climate Change meeting) and Evans (health)

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.

248/23-24 **MEMBERS' RESOLUTIONS MADE AT THE OCTOBER 2023 MEETING RE:**
EARMARKED RESERVES

The RFO reminded Members that the following resolutions had been made at the October 2023 Meeting:

- (a) **BTC Vehicles / General Equipment** – That the BTC Vehicles and Vehicle Replacement Policy / General Equipment Reserves for 2024/2025 be in the region of £70,000.
- (b) **Community Development Fund Earmarked Reserves** - That the Community Development Fund Earmarked Reserves for 2024/2025 be in the region of £40,000.

Items such as new benches, additional speed indicator devices, any proposed new events, etc. would be covered by this fund.

- (c) **Elections** - That the Elections Fund Earmarked Reserves for 2024/2025 be in the region of £10,000.

The RFO explained that she has increased this amount by £2,000 to £12,000 – for Members' consideration / approval at tonight's meeting.

The RFO's reasoning for this is the unknown administrative costs that will be charged by WBC, specifically in relation to the relatively new requirement for checking voter ID prior to allowing people into Polling Stations, which may have an impact on fees charged to local Parish and Town Councils.

Members **unanimously approved** the £2,000 increase to this reserve.

- (d) **Contingency Fund** - That the Contingency Fund Earmarked Reserves for 2024/2025 be in the region of £30,000.

249/23-24 **CHAIR'S ALLOWANCE**

To note that the Chair's Allowance - Item 4A on Schedule A (see page 156 below) remains the same, at £1,000. This amount has not changed for over ten years.

The RFO reported that part of the interim internal audit checklist for 2023/2024 asks whether the Council has published the details of Members' Allowances paid in accordance with Regulation 15(3) of Members Allowance Regulations 2003 as follows: *"15(3) - As soon as reasonably practicable after the end of a year to which the scheme relates, an authority shall make arrangements for the publication within the authority's area of the total sum paid by it in the year under the scheme to each recipient in respect of each of the following— (a) basic allowance; (b) special responsibility allowance; (c) dependants' carers' allowance; (d) travelling and subsistence allowance; and (e) co-optees' allowance."*

The RFO reminded Members that no other Members receive allowances as a matter of course. Any exception, would have to be approved by Council and formally minuted. She added that the Chair's Allowance (which the Council 'classes' as a 'special responsibility allowance') is published on the Town Council's website, on the Annual Accounts page: <https://www.birchwoodtowncouncil.org.uk/finance/annual-accounts>.

In addition, the allowance, when paid, is documented in the accounts for payments, which are published monthly, as part of Part I Finance Minutes. It is paid in two parts through the payroll to ensure that any necessary statutory deductions are made.

The amount of the Chair's Allowance is also published in October and November Part I Finance Minutes when 'Schedule A' is presented as part of the budget/precept discussions (Item No. 4A 'Civic - Chairman's Allowance'). For example Schedule A and its contents is discussed in Finance Part I October 2023 minute 198/23/24(d)(xv). Schedule A can be found on page 124 of the October minutes. It can also be found on page 156 below.

Members **noted and approved** the arrangements for the publication of the Chair's Allowance.

250/23-24 **OCTOBER 2023 BUDGET AND PRECEPT DISCUSSIONS**

The RFO confirmed, and Members noted, that additional detailed budget and precept related discussions had been undertaken and resolutions made at the October 2023 Meeting regarding the following items:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| (a) Grass Cutting | (Minute 198/23-24 (b)) |
| (b) Staff Resources | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (i)) |
| (c) Utilities | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (vii)) |
| (d) Wildflowers | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (viii)) |
| (e) Birchwood Carnival | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (ix)) |
| (f) North Warrington Cavy Club Storage Fees | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (x)) |
| (g) Birchwood Youth & Community Centre Tenancy | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (xi)) |
| (h) Replacement of Lighting Units to LED Units | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (xii)) |
| (i) Proposed Schedule A (budget line items) | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (xv) (1)) |
| (j) Projected Year End March 2024 Balances/Precept Options | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (xv) (2)) |
| (k) Strategic Plan | (Minute 198/23-24 (d) (xvi)) |

251/23-24 **PARISH PRECEPT ARRANGEMENTS**

The RFO asked Members to receive the correspondence from WBC (see pages 158 and 159 below) regarding the arrangements for the parish precepts for 2024/2025, including updated Band D figures, a worked example, and to note that the amount required must be sent to WBC by no later than Friday, 12th January 2024.

252/23-24 **IMPACT OF UPDATED BAND D FIGURES**

Following the receipt of the Band D figures from Warrington Borough Council:

- (a) The RFO asked Members to note that the 2024/2025 tax base for Birchwood has been calculated as 3175. This compares to 3123 for 2023/2024 – an increase of 52 properties. She stated that if the Band D precept amount remains unchanged (£120.66) for 2024/2025, this would result in an increase in local tax income to the Council of £6,279.50. The resulting precept to be requested would be £383,095.50 (rounded). This increase equates to just over a 1.66% rise in the precept to be collected by WBC on BTC’s behalf, but a NIL increase in the amount to be collected from residents for a Band D property.
- (b) The RFO presented alternative estimated projections regarding the end of year balances for the 2023/2024 financial year and for 2024/2025 (Sheet 1 - below). These have been amended since the October 2023 meeting to take into account the additional 52 Band D properties and current usage of earmarked reserves for this financial year. This sheet shows options for an alternate NIL increase and a 1% increase, using the 2023 precept figure (£376,816) as the base figure to calculate the increase from.

The RFO emphasised that these figures remain estimations and are subject to change.

28th November 2023 - DRAFT PROJECTION YEAR END BALANCES 23-24 AND 24-25						SHEET 1	
Band D Precept in 2023/2024 = £120.66							
Birchwood Town Council		Projection - Year End March 2024 Balances (rounded)		Projection - Year End March 2025 Balances (rounded)		Projection - Year End March 2025 Balances (rounded)	
				0% Increase		1% increase	
Income							
Balances B/F March 2023 (audited)	£ 373,807.00	Balances B/F March 2024	£ 382,823.00	Balances B/F March 2024	£ 382,823.00	Balances B/F March 2024	£ 382,823.00
Precept 23-24	£ 376,816.00	Precept 24-25	£ 376,816.00	Precept 24-25	£ 380,584.00	Precept 24-25	£ 380,584.00
General Income approx. (bank interest & other)	£ 8,000.00		£ 6,000.00		£ 6,000.00		£ 6,000.00
(Bank interest higher than expected 23/24.)		from previous earmarked reserves brought back into general balances	£ 51,823.00	from previous earmarked reserves brought back into general balances	£ 51,823.00	from previous earmarked reserves brought back into general balances	£ 51,823.00
2024/2025 increase in Band D properties (+52)		Would be approx. £118.69 per Band D	£ 6,172.00	Would be approx. £119.87 per Band D	£ 6,233.00	Would be approx. £119.87 per Band D	£ 6,233.00
Total:	£ 758,623.00		£ 823,634.00		£ 827,463.00		£ 827,463.00
Expenditure							
See Budget Schedule A							
Projected Expenditure: 23-24	£ 375,800.00	Projected Expenditure: 24-25	£ 411,000.00	Projected Expenditure: 24-25	£ 411,000.00	Projected Expenditure: 24-25	£ 411,000.00
Projected March 2024 Balances C/F	£ 382,823.00	Projected March 2025 Balances C/F	£ 412,634.00	Projected March 2025 Balances C/F	£ 416,463.00	Projected March 2025 Balances C/F	£ 416,463.00
Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 195,000.00	Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 200,000.00	Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 200,000.00	Less 6 months Cash flow	£ 200,000.00
Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 187,823.00	Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 212,634.00	Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 216,463.00	Therefore projected Reserves / Earmarked funds available	£ 216,463.00
Elections	£ 10,000.00	Elections	£ 12,000.00	Elections	£ 12,000.00	Elections	£ 12,000.00
Vehicles/Equipment	£ 67,250.00	Vehicles/Equipment	£ 70,000.00	Vehicles/Equipment	£ 70,000.00	Vehicles/Equipment	£ 70,000.00
Community Development (inc. SIDs, benches, etc.)	£ 18,500.00	Community Development (inc. SIDs, benches, etc.)	£ 40,000.00	Community Development (inc. SIDs, benches, etc.)	£ 40,000.00	Community Development (inc. SIDs, benches, etc.)	£ 40,000.00
Contingency Fund	£ 40,250.00	Contingency Fund	£ 30,000.00	Contingency Fund	£ 30,000.00	Contingency Fund	£ 30,000.00
Potentially to put back into general balances for 2024/2025 from underspend	£ 51,823.00	Potentially to put back into general balances for 2025/2026 from underspend	£ 60,634.00	Potentially to put back into general balances for 2025/2026 from underspend	£ 64,463.00	Potentially to put back into general balances for 2025/2026 from underspend	£ 64,463.00
	£ 187,823.00		£ 212,634.00		£ 216,463.00		£ 216,463.00

- (c) The RFO requested that Members consider the slightly amended Schedule A – Year-End Projected Outturn 2023/2024 and Financial Projection for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026:

DRAFT Schedule A		28th November 2023					
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL							
YEAR-END PROJECTED OUTTURN 2023/2024							
AND FINANCIAL PROJECTION FOR 2024/2025 AND 2025/2026							
ITEM NO.	EXPENDITURE ITEM	BUDGET 2023/2024		PROJECTED EXPENDITURE OUTTURN 2023/2024	BUDGET ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2024/2025	BUDGET ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2025/2026	
1	General and Water Rates/Gas/Electric	£ 5,500		£ 4,500	£ 9,500	£ 10,500	
2	Insurance/Subs/Fees/Car Tax/Bank Charges	£ 18,500		£ 18,500	£ 19,000	£ 19,500	
3	Employment costs (inc employer NI & superannuation)	£ 275,000		£ 240,000	£ 290,000	£ 300,000	
4A	Civic - Chairman's Allowance	£ 1,000		£ 1,000	£ 1,000	£ 1,000	
4B	Civic - Newsletter	£ 1,000		£ 1,000	£ 1,000	£ 1,000	
4C	Councillors Allowances/Expenses	NIL		NIL	NIL	NIL	
5	Town Council Revenue Expenditure (inc. cleaning services)	£ 41,000	Δ	£ 56,000	£ 50,000	£ 55,000	
6	Community Developments/Projects	£ 5,000	*	£ 27,000	£ 7,000	£ 7,000	
7	Town Council Elections	£ 1,500		£ 2,000	£ 6,000	£ 5,000	
8	Grants	£ 5,000		£ 3,500	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	
9	Parkers Farm Estate/Maintenance/Equipment fund	£ 3,000		£ 3,000	£ 4,000	£ 4,000	
10	Loans inc. Mortgage Fund for Parkers Farm Estate	£ 19,300		£ 19,300	£ 18,500	£ 17,800	
	TOTALS	£ 375,800		£ 375,800	£ 411,000	£ 425,800	

The 2024/2025 Item 3 figure has been adjusted upward by £5,000, since the October 2023 meeting.

The RFO said that the reason for this increase is that there has now been time to further consider the potential impact of the higher than expected Living Wage Foundation increase.

In addition, information has been received regarding the very recently agreed Local Government Pay Award for 2023/2024. Discussions regarding this agreement will be formally considered by Council in Part II in relation to the Clerk's and RFO's salaries. These figures will also have an effect on the budget in 2024/2025.

The total budget estimated expenditure for 2024/2025 is therefore £411,000 (the figure used in Sheet 1 on page 155 above).

There has also been a small adjustment to the Elections earmarked reserve figure (which does not affect the projected 2024/2025 expenditure figure) up from £10,000 to £12,000.

This increase has been applied regarding the potential for the 2024 election costs to be higher than expected (see Minute 248/23-24 (c) above).

- (d) Following the resolution at the October 2023 Finance Part I Meeting (Minute 198/23-24 (d)(xv)(2)):

'To review the proposal for the NIL 2024/2025 precept increase at the November 2023 Budget and Precept Meeting, once the RFO has re-presented the figures.' and taking into account the Band D figures received from WBC, the RFO is now presenting the amended figures above to Council for consideration.

253/23-24 **PRECEPT CONSIDERATIONS/DECISION**

The RFO proposed three different precept options to the Council:

- (a) To keep the precept amount per Band D property at £120.66 (a NIL increase in this figure) which would, due to the +52 Band D properties, give a precept to be requested of approximately £383,095 (£6,279 more than the 2023/2024 precept).
- (b) To request the same precept as for 2023/2024 of £376,816.00. Due to the increased number of Band D properties, this would equate to a small decrease in the amount to be paid by Band D properties to approximately £118.69. This would equal £376,840.75 - £24.75 more than 2023/2024.
- (c) To apply a 1% precept increase for 2024/2025 – using the amount requested last year from WBC (£376,816.00). A 1% increase would equate to £380,584.00 being requested. This would also equate to a small decrease in the amount to be paid by Band D properties to approximately £119.87 (rounded). This would amount to £3,768 more than the 2023/2024 precept.
- (d) The RFO asked Members to consider the above options and either agree on one of the options proposed – or suggest an alternative, in order that figures can be further adjusted (if necessary) and the final options be presented to Council at the December 2023 meeting.

The precept requirement for BTC has to be sent to WBC by 12th January 2024.

The Council remains mindful of the continuing cost of living issues.

Following detailed discussions regarding the options, it was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Atkin, and **unanimously resolved** that the Council agreed on option (a).

This option will keep the amount being paid for a Band D property the same as in 2023/2024 – i.e. £120.66. Due to the calculated increase in the number of Band D properties in Birchwood (+52) this will equate to around an additional £6,279 amount of income coming to BTC for 2024/2025.

This will help to offset some of the expected increases on the Town Council's budget lines for the next financial year.

The RFO said that she will bring this resolution to the December 2023 meeting for confirmation, in order to comply with BTC's Budget and Precept Setting Timetable. Following that she will, in the new year, write to WBC, as necessary, detailing BTC's precept requirement for 2024/2025 and a breakdown of our expenditure which, as a Council with a precept of over £140,000, we are required to do.

Action RFO to prepare final precept documentation for submission to WBC in the new year.

The RFO asked Members to consider whether, as in previous years, they wish BTC services to close during the 2023/2024 Christmas and New Year period. This would be from 25th December 2023 to 1st January 2024 (inclusive). Staff would take time off (not Bank Holidays) from their annual leave allowance. If there is a crisis during this time, which cannot be dealt with solely by WBC, arrangements will be in place for there to be some Town Council emergency cover.

Office and maintenance operations would recommence on Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

Members **unanimously resolved** that the office and Maintenance Team Operations would close from Monday 25th December 2023 to Monday 1st January 2024 (inclusive).

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.30 pm

WARRINGTON
Borough Council 

Ms Fiona McDonald
Parkers Farm Community Centre
Delenty Drive
Birchwood
WA3 6AN

Professor Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

Lynton Green
Director of Corporate Services

1 Time Square
Warrington
WA1 2NT

08 November 2023

Dear Ms McDonald,

Birchwood (Town Council) Parish Precept 2024/25

I am writing to you regarding arrangements for parish precepts for 2024/25.

For funding purposes, the 2024/25 tax base for your parish has been calculated as 3175. This compares to 3123 for 2023/24, and you should consider this change when setting your precept.

Would you please send me the amount you require for your 2024/25 parish precept, based on this tax base, by no later than Friday 12th January 2024. Please note for parish councils with a precept over £140,000 we are required to send a breakdown of parish expenditure with our Council Tax bills. To enable us to do this would you please provide details of your budget and expenditure for 2024/25 with your letter confirming your precept, where applicable.

The specific amount payable in respect of your parish precept will be shown separately on the bill sent to each taxpayer. Please find enclosed a worked example that illustrates the council tax for each property band if the band D precept remains the same as last year, and what precept this would equate to.

Your precept payment will be paid by 30th April 2024 but if you have any further queries regarding your parish precept, please contact Mark Dennett on 01925 442274.

Yours sincerely,



Lynton Green CPFA
Director of Corporate Services



Worked example received from Warrington Borough Council:

Birchwood (Town Council)

Worked Example

	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2024/25</u>
a) Your Tax Base - Band D equivalents	3,123	3,175
b) Your Band D Charge (based on current year)	£120.66	£120.66
c) Your parish precept	£376,816	£383,090

The amounts relevant to the other bands are calculated as follows:-

Band A = b) multiplied by 6/9	£80.44	£80.44
Band B = b) multiplied by 7/9	£93.85	£93.85
Band C = b) multiplied by 8/9	£107.25	£107.25
Band D = b) multiplied by 9/9	£120.66	£120.66
Band E = b) multiplied by 11/9	£147.47	£147.47
Band F = b) multiplied by 13/9	£174.28	£174.28
Band G = b) multiplied by 15/9	£201.10	£201.10
Band H = b) multiplied by 18/9	£241.32	£241.32