

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING OF
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,
ON TUESDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2023**

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

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

Apologies: Councillor Evans (health) and Councillor Sheridan (work)

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.

272/23-24 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 174 and 175 below).

Councillor Reeves **proposed** the payment of accounts be approved; Councillor Brereton **seconded** the proposal. This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

273/23-24 **NOVEMBER 2023 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Allen **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 28th November 2023, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

274/23-24 **NOVEMBER 2023 PART I BUDGET AND PRECEPT MEETING MINUTES**

The RFO stated that although the November 2023 Budget and Precept Meeting had been incorporated into the November Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, for clarity, she had prepared the minutes of this part of the meeting as a separate document.

Councillor Scott **proposed**, Councillor Brereton **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Budget and Precept Meeting, held on Tuesday, 28th November 2023, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

PROGRESS REPORT

275/23-24 **LOCKING STUMPS – PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT**

We have not yet received a draft of a press release from WBC regarding the play area refurbishment that BTC contributed £20,000 towards.

276/23-24 **SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE (SID)**

The RFO confirmed that the Town Council's original mobile speed indicator device was delivered back to BTC this afternoon.

277/23-24 **BENCHES**

The RFO asked Members to consider a draft consultation document to be sent out to residents who live close by to the area in Gorse Covert where BTC has indicated they would like an additional bench to be located. A second document for a proposed location in Locking Stumps (proposed by Locking Stumps Primary School) will be based on this document, once approved.

The RFO stated that there are around 22 properties in Gorse Covert, close to the proposed location, and it is those properties that the consultation document will be hand-delivered to. She proposed that stamped addressed envelopes be included for return of responses. This would cost around £16.50, but would ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to respond, particularly if some residents do not have access to the internet.

Members **unanimously resolved** that they are happy with the draft consultation document, that it can be delivered to the properties, as proposed; and that stamped, addressed envelopes can be included for the return of the consultation.

Action Clerk's office to arrange for the consultation document to be sent out to the relevant addresses.

278/23-24 **REPLACEMENT OF FIVE LIGHTING UNITS**

- (a) To note that five of the fluorescent lighting units within the offices were replaced with new LED units on 11th December 2023 (£333.33 +VAT).
- (b) The RFO stated that a quote has been received for the replacement of the remaining 16 lights in the next financial year (£1,062.38 +VAT). This action has previously been resolved by Council (see the October Part I Finance Minutes - 198-23-24 (d)(xii)).

The RFO stated that work to replace these 16 light units has been booked in with the electrician, to be undertaken on 9th April 2024 (in the new financial year, as resolved).

279/23-24 **GDPR**

To note that Officers still need to confirm to our Data Controller whether the personal data categories processed by the Town Council have changed. The Clerk and RFO have started to review the categories.

280/23-24 **BUDGET AND PRECEPT TIMETABLE POLICY**

The RFO asked Members to consider, for approval, the draft Budget and Precept Timetable Policy, circulated to them in their papers.

Members **unanimously resolved** to approve the Budget and Precept Timetable Policy for adoption at tonight's meeting.

281/23-24 **GENERAL MATTERS FOR REPORTING / NOTING**

- (a) To note that we are still awaiting the second grant payment for the EV Chargers to be paid to us. This has been chased once more both by email and by speaking to one of the employees of the company. They said they would arrange for it to be paid to us as soon as possible.

- (b) To note that the paediatric defibrillator pads are still on back order. The RFO recently telephoned the company we ordered them from. She was informed that as soon as they come into stock we will be informed and the pads will be shipped out to us. This remains a nationwide supplier issue.
- (c) To note that the updated Pension Discretions Policy, adopted by the Council at the November 2023 meeting, has been sent to the Cheshire Pension Fund.

The Cheshire Pension Fund has acknowledged receipt of the updated document.

282/23-24 PRECEPT CONFIRMATION

- (a) The RFO confirmed that at the November 2023 meeting, Members resolved that the Birchwood Town Council Precept for 2024/2025 will keep the amount of local tax to be paid for a Band D property the same as in 2023/2024 – i.e. £120.66 (a NIL increase in this figure).
- (b) The RFO explained that due to the increase in the number of Band D properties in Birchwood, as calculated by WBC (+52) this will equal approximately £6,279 of additional income coming to BTC for the 2024/2025 financial year (see minute 253/23-24 (d)). The precept amount to be requested from WBC will therefore be: (£120.66 x 3,175) = £383,095 (rounded down).
- (c) The RFO asked Members to note that although the amount to be paid by residents will remain the same as in 2023/2024, the increase in properties equates to just over a 1.66 percentage rise in the overall precept to be collected by WBC on BTC's behalf. This will be paid by WBC to BTC by 30th April 2024.

This is likely to be reported by WBC as a precept increase, even though our residents will pay the same precept amount as in 2023/2024.

The additional income will help to offset some of the anticipated increases on the Town Council's budget lines for the next financial year.

- (d) The RFO asked Members to note that with a projected (estimated) budget of £411,000 required for the 2024/2025 financial year, the Town Council will use projected income of around £6,000 and an estimated £21,905 from any underspends in addition to some unused reserves from the 2023/2024 financial year to balance the difference between the estimated budget and the precept requirement.
- (e) The RFO asked Members if they are happy for her to write to WBC, as necessary (by their deadline of 12th January 2024) detailing BTC's precept requirement of £383,095 for 2024/2025, including a breakdown of projected expenditure for 2024/2025 (taken from Schedule A presented at the November meeting – minute 252/23-24 (c)) which, as a Council with a precept of over £140,000, we are required to do.

It was **proposed** by Councillor Brereton, **seconded** by Councillor Allen and **unanimously resolved** by Council that a precept of £383,095 be approved for the 2024/2025 financial year and that the RFO will write to WBC as required.

Action RFO to write to WBC by 12th January 2024 detailing BTC's precept requirement of £383,095 for 2024/2025, and send the supporting document (the relevant excerpt of Schedule A) as necessary.

NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS

283/23-24 BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account periods 1st April 2023 – 30th November 2023.

The payroll figure for October 2023 was £12,804.96 (9) staff. The payroll figure for November 2023 was £12,819.12 (9 staff).

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

Councillor Brereton **proposed**, Councillor Reeves **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that Members are happy with the schedules as presented. These will be signed by the RFO and the Chair, following the meeting.

284/23-24 HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSULTANTS

The RFO reported that we have received an invoice for the upcoming annual renewal of our specialist health and safety consultants, due for payment on 1st January 2024. The price has increased by 5% (£79.00) to £1,654.00 +VAT since last year. Officers recommend renewing this contract for one more year.

The RFO stated that during 2024, Officers intend to undertake a price and service comparison exercise, with a view to potentially contracting a company that offers both Health and Safety and Employment Law services. Currently we have separate specialist consultants for these two services.

The RFO said that by combining both services into one contract, we may be able to achieve a financial saving. She added that there are three companies that Officers have in mind to contact sometime in the late spring or early summer to discuss the options.

Members discussed the recommendation and **unanimously resolved** for the contact with our current specialist health and safety consultants to be renewed for an additional year.

Members also **approved** the suggestion that Officers should carry out a service comparison exercise, to be undertaken in the new financial year. Information gleaned from this exercise will be shared with the Council, which will make the final decision on future contracts regarding Health and Safety and Employment Law consultancy suppliers.

Action Clerk's office to arrange for the renewal of the contract as detailed above.

Action Clerk's office to undertake a service comparison exercise, as detailed above, in the new financial year.

285/23-24 GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING

The RFO reported that a reminder was received from E-on Next regarding our business plan for the supply of electricity at the Locking Stumps multi-use games area (MUGA) for lighting in the evenings. The plan ends on 10th February 2024.

If BTC does nothing by 9th February 2024, BTC will roll on to the 'Your Flexible Business tariff', which will be: Standing Charge - 100.00 pence per day and the Unit Rate – 68.30 pence per kWh (approximately £410.00 per year).

The RFO telephoned E-on regarding this matter and has received a quote from them for a one-year, two-year and three-year fixed price deal. The one- and two-year deals are the same: Standing Charge - 56.00 pence per day and the Unit Rate - 65.00 pence per kWh.

The three-year plan has the same standing charge, but a Unit Rate that is around 50% lower: Standing Charge - 56.00 pence per day and the Unit Rate – 33.10 pence per kWh. If a similar amount of electricity continues to be used, the annual cost is estimated to be around £228.00.

The quote is for the cost on the day the RFO spoke to E-on Next. If a decision is not made prior to the new year, the cost might go up.

As this is only a small contract, and previously we have obtained the best deal by speaking to E-on Next ourselves, rather than going through a broker, the RFO will continue to deal with E-on Next directly.

Members discussed the options.

In response to a question asking why BTC pays for this electricity, the Clerk explained that although the primary school has use of the facilities during the day, the MUGA is open for community use in the evenings, which is when the lighting is required. This ongoing payment formed part of the original agreement.

Councillor Atkin **proposed**, Councillor Ball **seconded**, and it was **unanimously resolved** that Members are happy for the RFO to arrange to fix a three-year deal with E-on Next for the electricity used at the Locking Stumps MUGA.

Action RFO to arrange for the implementation of the three-year fixed deal with E-on Next for electricity use at the Locking Stumps MUGA from the 10th February 2024.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.15 pm

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual October 2023 and part of the November 2023 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
12.10.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 92.81		£ 92.81
13.10.2023	*	HMRC	Tax £1,244.40 NI £ 2,174.71 (6 Sept 2023 to 5 Oct 2023)	£ 3,419.11		£ 3,419.11
13.10.2023	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Sept. 2023 Eee £967.63 Eer £3,555.23	£ 4,522.86		£ 4,522.86
16.10.2023	DD	Information Commissioner's Office	Data Protection Fee - annual renewal	£ 35.00		£ 35.00
16.10.2023	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
16.10.2023	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 61.02	£ 12.20	£ 73.22
17.10.2023	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Oct. 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
17.10.2023	*	Mrs F. McDonald	Reimburse - Petty cash float (£100) & coffee/sugar £14.38	£ 114.38		£ 114.38
18.10.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans)	£ 75.98	£ 15.20	£ 91.18
20.10.2023	DD	ASL (previously t/a CopyriteSystems)	Photocopying charges	£ 11.05	£ 2.21	£ 13.26
20.10.2023	*	Gallus Online Ltd	Office chair	£ 159.95	£ 31.99	£ 191.94
20.10.2023	*	Elan City	2 x Speed Indicator Devices, mounting packs, etc.	£ 4,948.80	£ 989.76	£ 5,938.56
24.10.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 9.63	£ 0.48	£ 10.11
24.10.2023	*	PREMIOClean	Office cleaning services October 2023	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
27.10.2023	*	Birchwood Lions	Grant - to support Annual Community Remembrance Service	£ 150.00		£ 150.00
30.10.2023	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (September 2023 fee)	£ 66.00	£ 13.20	£ 79.20
30.10.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges and maintenance charge (x2 invs)	£ 189.25	£ 37.85	£ 227.10
30.10.2023	DD	BNP Paribas	Copier Lease	£ 170.00	£ 34.00	£ 204.00
31.10.2023	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - November monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
01.11.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
01.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans)	£ 136.41	£ 27.29	£ 163.70
05.11.2023	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
07.11.2023	*	November 2023 Wages	9 staff	£ 12,819.12		£ 12,819.12
08.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel - equipment	£ 12.27	£ 2.45	£ 14.72
10.11.2023	*	E Smith and Son	Winter bedding plants and compost for planters	£ 211.00	£ 42.20	£ 253.20
10.11.2023	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Oct. 2023 Eee £965.03 Eer £3,545.34	£ 4,510.37		£ 4,510.37
10.11.2023	*	Warrington Borough Council	Part 1 payment - contribution to L/Stumps play area refurbishment	£ 15,000.00		£ 15,000.00
10.11.2023	*	Warrington Borough Council	Part 2 payment - contribution to L/Stumps play area refurbishment	£ 6,500.00		£ 6,500.00
10.11.2023	*	Families United (Warrington)	Grant - to support inclusive Xmas activities for a number of Birchwood families who have family members with disabilities	£ 400.00		£ 400.00
10.11.2023	*	HMRC	Tax £1,396.40 £ 2,163.15 (6 Oct 2023 to 5 Nov 2023)	£ 3,559.55		£ 3,559.55
13.11.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 92.81		£ 92.81
13.11.2023	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm 27/09/23 - 27/10/23	£ 48.26	£ 2.41	£ 50.67
13.11.2023	*	Screw fix	Items to repair bin store/fence and tarmac/concrete/gravel/sand and a hacksaw/w oodsaw and screw driver bits, rubble sacks, sealant and a toilet seat (2 x invoices)	£ 147.24	£ 29.45	£ 176.69
15.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 142.05	£ 28.40	£ 170.45

Payments of Account since 15th November 2023

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
15.11.2023	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges	£ 40.00		£ 40.00
16.11.2023	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) Nov. 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
16.11.2023	DD	ASL (previously t/a CopyriteSystems)	Photocopying charges	£ 28.37	£ 5.68	£ 34.05
21.11.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MJGA	£ 10.41	£ 0.52	£ 10.93
22.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 72.66	£ 14.52	£ 87.18
22.11.2023	*	Radmore & Tucker Ltd.	2 x Stihl BG86 petrol blow ers & 1 x Stihl long reach hedgetrimmer	£ 1,017.95	£ 203.59	£ 1,221.54
24.11.2023	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 95.94	£ 19.19	£ 115.13
24.11.2023	*	PREMIOClean	Office cleaning services November 2023	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
24.11.2023	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Data protection services 2023/24	£ 1,115.00	£ 223.00	£ 1,338.00
28.11.2023	*	Reimburse C Caddock	Heater for reception from Herschel Infrared Heaters	£ 165.83	£ 33.17	£ 199.00
28.11.2023	*	Reimburse C Caddock	PPE - socks from Amazon Seller	£ 20.82	£ 4.17	£ 24.99
29.11.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 56.15	£ 11.23	£ 67.38
29.11.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 161.87	£ 32.36	£ 194.23
30.11.2023	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (October 2023 fee)	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
01.12.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
01.12.2023	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - December monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
01.12.2023	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
01.12.2023	*	Black Box Security Alarm Systems Ltd	Callout to fire alarm fault	£ 112.50	£ 22.50	£ 135.00
01.12.2023	*	Viking	Stationery	£ 59.85	£ 11.97	£ 71.82
01.12.2023	*	Arco	PPE - Safety boots (SJ) and ear defenders	£ 84.38	£ 16.88	£ 101.26
06.12.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 14.31	£ 2.87	£ 17.18
07.12.2023	*	December 2023 Wages	9 staff - <i>Higher than usual as this includes the 2023/2024 wage increase and 8 month's back pay for 2 x staff members</i>	£ 14,438.53		£ 14,438.53
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	K-Mart UK - 200 x large nitrile gloves (PPE)	£ 7.07	£ 1.42	£ 8.49
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Farla Medical Health care - 200 x small nitrile gloves (PPE)	£ 8.33	£ 1.67	£ 10.00
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Hawk Merchandise - 11 x leather safety/driving gloves M&L (PPE)	£ 50.27	£ 10.12	£ 60.39
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Euglove - 1 x small leather working glove (PPE)	£ 8.33	£ 1.66	£ 9.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Ekon - 1 x pair XL leather safety driving gloves (PPE)	£ 4.99	£ 1.00	£ 5.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Amazon - 24 x antibacterial hand gel 250ml	£ 19.99	£ 4.00	£ 23.99
12.12.2023		Reimburse C Caddock	Hot UK deals - 600 x medium nitrile gloves **	£ 26.25	£ 5.25	£ 31.50
			** Note re med nitrile gloves purchase <i>Minus promotion amount</i>	-£ 1.56	-£ 0.31	-£ 1.87
12.12.2023	*	Risley Mot & Truck Ltd	HK64 NNM - investigate front suspension, lubricate upper ball joint (if fault returns may need new upper arm)	£ 60.00	£ 12.00	£ 72.00
12.12.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
13.12.2023	*	Hollis Electrical& Security Services Ltd	5 x fluorescent lighting units replaced with LED units.	£ 333.33	£ 66.67	£ 400.00

Payments of accounts for approval at the December 2023 meeting

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
	DD	Firstcom Europe	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and w astew ater services (4083868280)	£ 25.46		£ 25.46
	DD	Waterplus	Water/w astew ater services (4083867607)	£ 85.69		£ 85.69
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) November 2023	£ 232.11	£ 46.42	£ 278.53
	DD	James Todd	November payroll fee	£ 59.40	£ 11.88	£ 71.28
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	tbc		
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment, mow ers)	£ 141.48	£ 28.29	£ 169.77
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges (for November 2023)	£ 40.20		£ 40.20
	DD	British Gas	Gas - Parkers Farm	tbc		
	*	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 18.67	£ 3.74	£ 22.41
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,400.60 NI £ 2,168.92(6 Nov 2023 to 5 Dec 2023)	£ 3,569.52		£ 3,569.52
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: November 2023 Eee £966.33 E'er £3,550.28	£ 4,516.61		£ 4,516.61
	*	PREMIOClean	Office cleaning services December 2023	£ 343.84	£ 68.77	£ 412.61
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subs. - in advance) January 2024	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	*	Society of Local Council Clerks	Clerk's membership fee	£ 298.00		£ 298.00
	*	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease	£ 170.00	£ 34.00	£ 204.00
	*	Screw fix	Paint and miscellaneous to repair/repaint compound gates	£ 109.47	£ 21.89	£ 131.36
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension conts. re: Dec. 2023 Eee £1,146.41 E'er £4,119.06	£ 5,265.47		£ 5,265.47
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,879.40 £ 2,819.47 (6 Dec 2023 to 5 Jan 2024)	£ 4,698.87		£ 4,698.87
	*	Millhouse Training	Brushcutter and Hedgcutter training course (SM)	£ 300.00	£ 60.00	£ 360.00
	*	Terrain	Health and Safety Consultants	£ 1,654.00	£ 330.80	£ 1,984.80
	*	ASL	Photocopying charges	£ 27.89	£ 5.58	£ 33.47
	DD	SSE	Electricity - Parkers Farm - 01.08.20 to 14.11.23	£ 358.26	£ 17.91	£ 376.17