

**MINUTES OF THE PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING OF  
BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE,  
ON TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Ellis in the Chair  
Councillors Atkin, Ball, Bowden, Brereton, Dempsey, Evans, Sheridan,  
Simcock and Reeves

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

**Apologies:** Councillor Allen (away) Bowden (personal)

**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.

017/23-24 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

Members were asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts schedule – (see pages 14 to 15 below).

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

018/23-24 **MARCH 2023 PART I FINANCE, AUDIT & PERSONNEL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Evans **proposed**, Councillor Dempsey **seconded**, and it was unanimously **resolved** that: the Minutes of the Part I Finance, Audit & Personnel Meeting, held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023, be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

**PROGRESS REPORT**

019/23-24 **LOCKING STUMPS – PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT**

The RFO confirmed that the play area is now open. We do not yet have any update from WBC regarding a formal opening.

020/23-24 **SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE**

(a) The RFO informed Members that she had requested, and received, a new quotation for two solar powered speed awareness devices, with the more powerful 100w solar panels.

The quotation (with some discount) is £4,948.80 +VAT. There would also need to be a few small accessories purchased such as clamps. The quotation only includes one external battery charger (which is what we would require).

The original quotation for one speed awareness device, with the 80w solar panel was £2,497.40. It is therefore slightly less expensive per device to order the two 100w solar panel devices.

The RFO asked if Members are happy for the two 100w powered speed indicator devices (SIDs) to be purchased.

Councillor Atkin raised a query regarding the efficiency of the solar panels if they were to be installed in an area of low light.

The RFO stated that she would contact the supplier to confirm that the choice of device that we had been quoted for would be suitable in an area of low light, as there is an option to use an external battery charger if needed.

Members **unanimously resolved** that, if the query is answered to the satisfaction of Members, that they wish to progress with the purchase of two 100w devices.

**Action** RFO to contact the supplier regarding the above query and to notify Members of the answer, for their final decision regarding the purchase.

The RFO asked if Members could confirm their preferred two initial installation sites. She added that we will then need to liaise with WBC to verify that SIDs can be installed by them at these locations.

Members agreed that they would like one located on Warrington Road in Risley Village and one on Admirals Road in Oakwood.

There were some differing opinions as to where, exactly, on each road it might be best to locate them.

It was suggested that we ask for input from the local Police regarding the installation of the devices, as they may have data from speed enforcement operations to assist with a decision.

**Action** RFO to contact the local Police team to ask for their input regarding the above.

- (b) The RFO reported that our insurance company has quoted £29.03 per year to add the two devices (valued at £6,000) to our insurance policy, as specifically listed items. They would also have to be included on the asset register at the 2023/2024 end of year accounts.

#### 021/23-24 **MEMORIAL PLAQUE BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK**

The RFO stated that WBC is awaiting the formal delivery of the plaque. It is anticipated that the installation will take place sometime in May 2023.

#### 022/23-24 **END OF YEAR INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/2024**

The RFO is continuing with the production of the end of year documents. She stated that the documentation needs to be with our internal auditor by 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

These documents, once signed-off by the internal auditor, will be presented to the Council at the June meeting, along with the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) for approval prior to submission to the external auditor by 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 at the latest.

#### 023/23-24 **BENCHES**

- (a) Locking Stumps Primary School has proposed a site for their community bench that they were awarded a grant of £500 from NISA towards installing. This is located just outside Thomas Risley Church on the periphery of the car park.

The Town Council is expecting to make a donation of around £1,000 towards this project. (Power to provide roadside seats Highways Act 1980 ss 47, 116).

- (b) Officers have sent this proposed location to WBC for their consideration, along with a proposal for a new bench to be installed on the footpath that crosses the grassed area from Gorse Covert Road to Fisherfield Drive in Gorse Covert.

We have also suggested that a third new bench could be installed on the Brook Footpath, replacing one that is no longer fit for purpose.

We are awaiting a response from WBC regarding the above proposals.

#### 024/23-24 **TIPPER HIRE / PURCHASE**

The RFO said that we are continuing to look for suitable vehicles that might be available within the budget set by Councillors. Officers did locate some in Stoke-on-Trent, however, the team need to have the time to be able to go to view them.

#### 025/23-24 **2023/2024 WAGES**

The RFO confirmed that the wage rises for the maintenance team have been applied within the April 2023 wage cycle, as previously resolved (Minute 359/22-23 (a) and (b)).

The payroll provider was notified in the manner agreed with our internal auditor, with the Chair signing the schedule to authorise the changes on behalf of the Council.

This procedure was put in place to adhere to a recommendation made within our 2022/2023 interim internal audit report.

#### 026/23-24 **CHESHIRE PENSION FUND**

The RFO asked Members to note that our payroll provider has been notified of the updated employer contribution rate for 2023/2024, which has increased from 21.35% to 22.1%.

Employee contributions pensionable pay bands have all increased by approximately 10%.

As Birchwood Town Council has ill health insurance for those members of staff who are members of the pension scheme, the monthly amount BTC pays into the pension fund is reduced by 1.25% (to 20.85%).

The ill health insurance is paid each month to the company that provides the insurance cover.

#### 027/23-24 **SPECIALIST IT COMPANY**

The RFO reported that as resolved (Minute 362/22-23) the annual contract for our specialist IT company has been signed.

#### 028/23-24 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR NOTING/REPORTING**

- (a) To note that the Public Works Loan Board statement regarding the balance outstanding on BTC's loan ref: PW487017 has been received. This currently stands at £72,000. The final payment is due to be made in September 2027.

- (b) To note that the second EV charger grant (£350) has now been received from OZEV by our contractor.

The grant should be paid into our Co-operative Bank account within the next few weeks.

### **NEW FINANCE, AUDIT AND PERSONNEL ITEMS**

#### 029/23-24 **BANK ACCOUNT RECONCILIATION**

To receive the Town Council's Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account periods 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The payroll figure for February 2023 was £11,041.09 (8 staff). The payroll figure for March 2023 was £11,047.59 (8 staff).

Members **unanimously resolved** that they are happy with the schedules as presented. These will be signed by the RFO and the Chair, following the meeting.

#### 030/23-24 **GRANT AID REQUEST – TOMMY TOTS**

The RFO reported that we have received a request for a grant of £500.00 from Tommy Tots, a weekly parent and toddler group run at Thomas Risley Church in Locking Stumps.

The group is hoping to create a sensory area / room for the children, which will be open to all the children who attend the group, both with and without special needs.

A 'wish list' of items that the group would, ideally like to be able to purchase for this project was included in Members' papers.

The total project cost will be £1,500. The group has £200.00 from their own funds and has requested a grant of £500.00 from the Town Council to support the project.

Tommy Tots has also applied for additional funding from Mersey Synod URC.

The RFO asked Members to consider the application.

For information, Councillor Ball said that he had been approached by the applicant to enquire whether they could apply for grant funding. He said that, personally, he believed the project to be a wonderful idea.

The RFO said that if Members were minded to approve the application, she would suggest the Council stated that they wish to fund all, but four items on the 'wish list' – three of which relate to making the room safer (doors for cupboards, locks and a door curtain).

The remaining items on the list, which are all sensory toys/equipment would be funded by the Town Council and would cost a total of £500.00.

Following discussion, Members **unanimously resolved** to approved the grant aid request.

**Action** Clerk's office to contact the applicant and arrange for the grant to be sent to Tommy Tots.

031/23-24 **CHESHIRE PENSION FUND**

To note that the Clerk and RFO have booked three (free) online training sessions with the Cheshire Pension Fund. These are three two hour sessions taking place in April, June and July 2023.

The sessions cover leaver processes, final pay, APP and CARE pay and leave of absence and additional contributions.

032/23-24 **GENERAL ITEMS FOR REPORTING/NOTING**

- (a) To note that the two mowers that WBC loans to BTC for the grass cutting season have been received. They have been added to our insurance company policy to cover the period of time that we have them on loan for the grass cutting season.
- (b) Received – Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) Affiliation Fee renewal invoice for 2023/2024 - £1,510.87.

In response to a question from Members, Officers confirmed that they continue to find membership of ChALC enables them to access useful information and support, not just from ChALC, but also from NALC. ChALC also offers a number of relevant training courses for both Officers and Councillors.

Members **unanimously resolved** to renew the Council's membership to ChALC.

**Action** Clerk's office to arrange the renewal of the Council's membership to ChALC.

- (c) Received – from NALC, 'Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance – Practitioners' Guide' March 2023'. A hard copy of this 75-page document is available for Councillors to view in the office.
- (d) The RFO reported that we have received the annual renewal invoice for the contract we have with our current website provider. The cost is £858.95 for the year.

The RFO added that Officers have not yet had time to look into alternative options, and asked Members for their approval to renew the contract for another year.

Members **unanimously resolved** to renew the Council's contract with our current website provider for another year.

**Action** Clerk's office to arrange the renewal of the Council's contract with our website provider.

**This part of the meeting concluded at 7.35 pm**

Payment of Accounts:						
Resolved: that the following payments be approved as the residual February 2023 and part of the March 2023 accounts						
Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
17.02.2023	*	Society of Local Council Clerks	The Clerk's Manual 2023 + delivery (VAT on delivery only)	£ 51.50	£ 0.80	£ 52.30
21.02.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MUGA	£ 10.85	£ 0.54	£ 11.39
22.02.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans & equipment)	£ 68.83	£ 13.76	£ 82.59
24.02.2023	DD	SWALEC	Electricity - Parkers Farm	£ 396.99	£ 19.84	£ 416.83
24.02.2023	*	Reimburse F. McDonald	Petty cash float	£ 100.00		£ 100.00
24.02.2023	*	PREMI Clean	Office cleaning services	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
26.02.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
28.02.2023	*	ESI	6 monthly servicing of fire alarm system and equipment	£ 173.60	£ 34.72	£ 208.32
28.02.2023	*	ESI	6 monthly testing of the emergency lighting system	£ 75.95	£ 15.19	£ 91.14
28.02.2023	*	ESI	Replacement of 8 x fire extinguishers, commissioning the new extinguishers and disposal of the old extinguishers	£ 139.90	£ 27.98	£ 167.88
				£ -		
01.03.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans & equipment)	£ 41.79	£ 8.36	£ 50.15
02.03.2023	*	JDH Business Services Ltd	Data Protection Services 2022 to 2023	£ 1,062.00	£ 212.40	£ 1,274.40
02.03.2023	*	E Smith & Son	Winter plants for planters	£ 203.70	£ 40.74	£ 244.44
02.03.2023	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions re:Feb 2023 Eee £782.59 Eer £2,744.89	£ 3,527.48		£ 3,527.48
02.03.2023	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (January 2023)	£ 48.00	£ 9.60	£ 57.60
02.03.2023	*	HMRC	Tax £1,273.20 NI £1,797.80 (6 Feb 2023 to 5 March 2023)	£ 3,071.00		£ 3,071.00
03.03.2023	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - February monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
06.03.2023	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
07.03.2023	*	March 2023 Wages	8 staff	£ 11,047.59		£ 11,047.59
08.03.2023	*	Helping Hand	Litter Picking Sticks	£ 175.18	£ 35.04	£ 210.22
08.03.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 57.41	£ 11.48	£ 68.89
10.03.2023	DD	Public Works Loan Board	Loan Repayment (ref: PW487017)	£ 9,900.00		£ 9,900.00
12.03.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 92.81		£ 92.81
15.03.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 75.24	£ 15.05	£ 90.29
15.03.2023	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 12.93	£ 2.59	£ 15.52
15.03.2023	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) March 2023	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
15.03.2023	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges (re: February 2023 charges)	£ 39.80		£ 39.80
16.03.2023	*	ChALC	Chairmanship training (Clr JD)	£ 25.00		£ 25.00
16.03.2023	*	Viking	Stationery and Office Chair	£ 296.99	£ 59.40	£ 356.39

**Payments of Account since 17th March 2023**

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
21.03.2023	DD	E-on Next	Electricity - Locking Stumps MJGA	£ 9.51	£ 0.48	£ 9.99
22.03.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans & equipment)	£ 60.34	£ 12.07	£ 72.41
22.03.2023	*	Atlas (formerly Uniqw in)	Key holding services March 2023	£ 37.13	£ 7.43	£ 44.56
28.03.2023	*	PREM Clean	Cleaning services 2023	£ 446.98	£ 89.40	£ 536.38
29.03.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (vans & equipment)	£ 53.93	£ 10.79	£ 64.72
30.03.2023	DD	James Todd (Go Cardless)	Payroll services (February 2023)	£ 48.00	£ 9.60	£ 57.60
30.03.2023	DD	Firstcom Europe	Office phone charges	£ 71.51	£ 14.30	£ 85.81
30.03.2023	*	HMRC	Tax £1,275.20 NI £1,800.46 (6 March 2023 to 5 April 2023)	£ 3,075.66		£ 3,075.66
30.03.2023	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions re: March 2023 Eee £783.19 Eer £2,747.09	£ 3,530.28		£ 3,530.28
31.03.2023	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (in advance - April monthly subscription)	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
03.04.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.83		£ 25.83
03.04.2023	*	Zurich Municipal	Insurance Cover 1/4/23 to 31/3/24 (inc. £599.64 IPT)	£ 5,596.56		£ 5,596.56
03.04.2023	*	St John Ambulance	3 x First Aid requalification courses (ES, JW, SJ) booked for later in the 2023/2024 financial year	£ 795.00	£ 159.00	£ 954.00
04.04.2023	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
04.04.2023	*	JDW Services Ltd	Jetting/unblocking drains and small repair to soil pipe	£ 200.00	£ 40.00	£ 240.00
05.04.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 64.40	£ 12.88	£ 77.28
06.04.2023	*	April 2023 Wages	8 staff	£ 11,047.59		£ 11,047.59
12.04.2023	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans, equipment)	£ 48.87	£ 9.77	£ 58.64
13.04.2023	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 92.81		£ 92.81

**Payments of accounts for approval at the April 2023 meeting**

Date	Ref	Payee	Description	Net	VAT	Gross
all tbc	DD	Legal and General	Ill health insurance	£ 159.87		£ 159.87
	DD	Telesis	Phone/enhanced internet speed charges	tbc		
	DD	Waterplus	Water and wastewater services (4083868280)	£ 25.83		£ 25.83
	DD	Waterplus	Water/wastewater services (4083867607)	£ 92.81		£ 92.81
	DD	Avoira	IT support, backups, internet services (4 x inv.) March 2023	£ 234.68	£ 46.94	£ 281.62
	DD	James Todd	March payroll fee	£ 48.00	£ 9.60	£ 57.60
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 9.51	£ 0.48	£ 9.99
	DD	Allstar	Fuel (office vans and equipment)	£ 75.24	£ 15.05	£ 90.29
	DD	CopyriteSystems	Photocopying charges	£ 35.32	£ 7.06	£ 42.38
	*	Premiclean	Cleaning services 2023	tbc		
	DD	LEVL	Geotab Pro Plus (monthly subs. - in advance) January 2023	£ 30.00	£ 6.00	£ 36.00
	*	Matco	Mat cleaning service Oct 2022 to March 2023	£ 225.75	£ 45.15	£ 270.90
	DD	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease	£ 170.00	£ 34.00	£ 204.00
	*	Cheshire Pension Fund	Pension contributions re: April 2023 Eee £824.70 Eer £3002.53	£ 3,827.23		£ 3,827.23
	*	HMRC	Tax £1,478.00 NI £1,982.89 (6 April 2023 to 5 May 2023)	£ 3,460.80		£ 3,460.80
	*	Atlas Contractors Ltd	(Was Uniqw in) Keyholding services April 2023 to March 2024	£ 437.18	£ 87.44	£ 524.62
	*	Cheshire Association of Local Councils	ChALC affiliation fee 2023/2024	£ 1,510.87		£ 1,510.87
	DD	Financial Direct Fees	FD online charges (re: March 2023 charges)	£ 39.60		£ 39.60
	DD	E-on	Electricity - Locking Stumps multi-use games area	£ 10.19	£ 0.51	£ 10.70