

September 2021 Birchwood Town Council Meeting:

(1 to 3) Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Public Participation (including the Police Report)

(4) The approval of the July 2021 Council Meeting minutes.

Clerks Report to the Council / Part I Finance

(5) Progress Report - Copies of the main correspondence sent out/received since the Council Meeting in July 2021

(6) New Items for the consideration of the Council not otherwise raised in the Progress Report (7) Members' Referrals

(8) Planning Matters (9) Strategy & Action Plan Update (10) Accounts for Payment

(11 to 13) Part I Finance; including approval of Minutes, main correspondence sent / received (progress) and new items received since the July 2021 meeting

6 New Items

6.1 Warrington Borough Council (WBC) (majority not copied in papers as A/circ. and/or available in the office)

6.1.1 Sent/received – various emails / online reports following contact from residents re: flytipping, concerns regarding trees, height of shrubbery and sight line issues, overgrown footpaths, parking on grass verges, drainage matters, road surface issues, damaged safety railing, damaged road signs, ownership of shrubbery. Also chased issue of long stretch of street lights out on Admirals Road.

6.1.2 Sent/received – emails re: partnership working.

6.1.3 Sent/received – emails re: an ongoing enquiry first raised in June 2021.

6.1.4 Sent/received – various emails re: verge parking in a business area (following an enquiry from Councillor Atkin). The initial response received indicated that WBC could not assist – but they would ask Highways for their input. Between 14.26 pm and 14.32 pm we received four automatic emails from Highways – going through the whole process – culminating with 'Please be advised that the work has now been completed'. We assume this to mean that Highways cannot assist either.

6.1.5 Sent/received – various emails re: traveller encampments (shared with the local Police). Numerous emails, telephone calls and visits to the office from residents were received regarding the matter.

Councillor Balding telephoned the office re: enquiries he has received from residents asking if there are any plans for some form of barrier to be installed on the patch of land that the recent encampment in Gorse Covert was on, to prevent any unauthorised vehicles from accessing this land again.

6.1.6 To note that the Register of Interests form for Councillor Ball has been sent to the Monitoring Officer, and published online, as required.

6.1.7 Received – Draft Revised Gambling Policy for 2022-2025.

6.1.8 Received - Agenda for the Parish Liaison meeting (held on 16th September 2021).

6.1.9 Received – email informing BTC that the street supplies to the lighting columns on Gorse Covert Road are going to be renewed in the next couple of weeks.

6.1.10 Sent/received – emails re: overgrown footpath running on the Liverpool line side on the railway station. This is the responsibility of Network Rail. They have cut back to overgrowth.

6.2 Your Housing Group (YHG)

6.2.1 Sent/received – various emails regarding the traveller encampment on the Village Green. Also, numerous telephone complaints were received.

6.2.2 Sent/received – various emails / reports following contact from residents re: flytipping, overgrown shrubbery, etc.

6.3 Miscellaneous Correspondence (majority not copied in papers – already circulated / available in the office)

6.3.1 Received – various emails from Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA)

6.3.2 Received – update re: Manchester Airport Future Airspace project.

6.3.3 Received – Invitation to the Birchwood Service of Remembrance 2021. Saturday 13th November 2021, 10.30am. **RSVP required.**

6.3.4 Received – post re: Woodland Management Activity Day with the Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds.

6.4 Cheshire Police (Alerts already circulated - not copied in papers – available in the office)

6.4.1 Received - Stakeholder Bulletin – August 2021, and various Neighbourhood Alerts.

6.4.2 Sent/Received – emails re: the Town Council's mobile speed activated awareness sign.

6.4.3 Sent/received – various emails re: verge parking in a business area, and traveller encampments.

6.5 Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC), National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) (already circulated – not copied in papers – copies available in the office)

- 6.5.1 Received – NALC publications including the Chief Executive’s Bulletins, events information, etc.
- 6.5.2 Received – PC5-21 – NALC call for evidence – National Resilience Strategy
- 6.5.3 Received – ChALC weekly e-bulletins with various attachments, details of training sessions, etc.
- 6.5.4 Received – SLCC – various updates, briefings, news items, etc.

6.6 BTC Autumn / Winter Meetings

Members are asked to consider whether they wish to return to using the community meeting room within the main building for Town Council meetings, as the weather starts to turn colder.

6.7 Publications Received

Various LGC magazines & e-mail briefings. Clerk’s & Councils Direct (Sept. 2021). The Clerk (Sept. 2021).

7 Members’ Referrals made via the Clerk prior to the meeting for consideration at this Council Meeting

Several Councillors – Observation Tower update request – following contact from RIMAG

8 Current Planning Applications for Comment and Observation and Other Related Planning Issues

8.1 (a) Warrington Borough Council - Development Management Committee (DMC)

The next DMC is scheduled to be arranged for 22nd September 2021. There are no items specific to Birchwood on the main agenda for discussion.

- (b) To note that Councillor Allen was contacted by a resident after they were contacted by an Enforcement Officer regarding the moving of a fence line. WBC has advised that this constitutes a change of use of the land to residential garden. The resident is now required to apply for retrospective planning permission.

8.2 Planning Decisions

- (a) Application No. 2021/39361 19 Kinsale Drive, Birchwood, WA3 6LX. Proposed single storey front extension. **Approved with conditions.**
- (b) Application No. 2021/39614 17 Palliser Close, Birchwood, WA3 6RT. Proposed 2 storey side/rear and single storey extensions with re-location of boundary fences. **Application withdrawn.**
- (c) Application No. 2021/39661 Existing base station, Rutherford House, Birchwood, WA3 6ZH. Class A Prior Approval – proposed upgrade of an existing base station consisting of the removal of 3 antennas and the installation of 6 antennas (top height of masts 26.1m (3.0m support pole) and 22.2m (5.4m support pole partially screened behind parapet) together with internal works to the existing cabinet and ancillary development. **Application approved.**
- (d) Application No. 2021/39745 14 Mansfield close, Birchwood, WA3 6QN. Proposed single storey rear extension to extend beyond the rear wall by 3.7m, height of 3.7m and height of the eaves to be 2.6m. **Prior approval not required.**
- (e) Application No. 2021/39599 Admirals Road, Birchwood, WA3 6RN. Prior approval – Proposed 18.0m telecommunications monopole C/W wraparound cabinet at base an associated ancillary works. **Application approved.**

8.3 Planning Applications (Already circulated – not copied in papers) - all plans can be viewed via:

http://www.warrington.gov.uk/home/transport_planning_and_environment/Planning/Search_planning_applications/

Certain applications are not Planning Applications; therefore there is no statutory opportunity to allow 21 days for comments, e.g: Non material amendment applications, Lawful development certificates (S192) and 28 day prior approval/determination applications. These types of applications are received for information only.

- (a) Application No. 2021/39972 25 Ashmore Close, Birchwood, WA3 6QY. Proposed single storey side extension and front porch.
- (b) Application No. 2021/39086 3 Lords Lane, Birchwood, WA3 7AB. Proposed bedroom extension over existing garage to side elevation and extension to front of garage.
- (c) Application No. 2021/40072 1 Daniel close, Birchwood, WA3 6QL. Single storey front and side extension.
- (d) Application No. 2021/39835 704 Warrington Road, WA3 6AU. Proposed erection of two storey side extension, single storey front and rear extensions.
- (e) Application No. 2021/39954 Car parking areas adjacent to 2 Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Part retrospective alterations to the layout of the site to provide additional car parking, landscaping and associated works.

The Clerk’s office asked for a time extension for the Council to consider this application, at its September meeting, and send in any comments after that date. We have until 29th September in which to make any comments.

9. STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN UPDATE

To note that at the June meeting, it was resolved to hold a Policy, Strategy and Engagement working party or sub-committee meeting in September, to formally consider items to be included in a new Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2024. The 2016 - 2020 plan is still available on the front page of our website, for information.

A draft updated plan has been circulated to Members in their papers, to use as a ‘starting point’ for the creation of a new Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2024. Also included is BTC’s Climate Emergency Action Plan, parts of which might also feed into strategy discussions.

The RFO requires guidance on what the Council’s priorities will be for the next few years in order to prepare figures for the upcoming budget.

PART I FINANCE ITEMS

10. Payment of Accounts

Members are asked to consider and approve the payment of accounts.

11. To receive the Minutes and recommendations of the Part I Finance, Audit and Personnel Meeting held on 27th July 2021.

12 Progress Finance, Audit & Personnel Items

12.1 External Audit - End of Year 2020/2021

- (a) To note that the external auditor’s report for the year end 2020 – 2021 has been received. We have a clean report, with no other matters to draw to our attention. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit, has been published on our website and noticeboards (20th September 2021), as required, and Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the audited AGAR have been published (20th September 2021) on the website as required.
- (b) Received - invoice from the external auditor of £800.00 plus £160.00 VAT.
- (c) To note that the ‘public notice’ regarding electors’ rights to review the (unaudited by the external auditor) accounts for 2020/2021 was displayed as required up to 6th August 2021.

12.2 Birchwood Youth and Community Centre (BYCC) – Land Ownership Discussions - This remains ongoing.

12.3 Parkers Farm Estate

- (a) To note that the internal decoration, as agreed, has been completed.
The BTC team will undertake additional decorating work in the kitchen. The team replaced a strip of skirting board in the meeting room prior to the painting work being undertaken.
- (b) To note that we are awaiting the receipt of the final invoice from Trinity – regarding snagging and decorating works.
- (c) To note that the Clerk has asked Trinity to look at the soil pipe at the rear of the building, with a view to quoting to supply and replace it with a longer length that goes directly into the drain. We await a reply.

12.4 BTC Vehicles

- (a) To receive a verbal update re: HK64 NNM.
- (b) To note that we are still liaising with the garage re: welding work on tipper NH57 CZV.

12.5 Councillor Email Accounts

To note that ‘Cllr . . .’ email address has been set up by our specialist IT consultants for Councillor Ball. This will be an additional cost (£5.40 +VAT) to the monthly invoices from Yellowbus.

12.6 Locking Stumps – Proposed Play Area Refurbishment

To receive a verbal report from the Clerk re: a site meeting that took place to discuss the potential refurbishment of the small play area, on Borough Council land, behind the Turf & Feather public house in Locking Stumps.

12.7 General Items for Reporting/Noting

- (a) To note that a grant of £1,000 has been received from Your Housing Group. This will be used to purchase several pieces of equipment for landscaping work.
- (b) Received - various newsletters from SAS Daniels.
- (c) To note that the situation with the drains remains ongoing. The odour has not been noticeable over the last few weeks.

- (d) To note that we are now expecting delivery of the spare defibrillator pads and battery for the defibrillator on the wall of BYCC, sometime in November. We have been advised that *“there is an ongoing global microchip shortage causing mass delays on the manufacture of this product.”*

13 New Finance, Audit & Personnel Items / Budget & Precept Items

13.1 Bank Account Reconciliation

To receive the Town Council’s Income and Expenditure Statements and Bank Reconciliation Schedules for the account period 1st April 2021 – 1st July 2021 and 1st April 2021 – 31st August 2021.

The payroll figure for July 2021 (9 staff) was £12,203.07. This includes final contractual payments to a member of staff who is left on 31st July 2021. The figure for August 2021 (8 staff) was £10,665.26.

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

13.2 BTC Vehicles

To note that one of our vehicles, ND09 VNL had to have a quarterlight window repaired as it was accidentally broken when a stone flew up from a strimmer (£118.00 +VAT).

13.3 Birchwood Carnival

To advise Members that a Carnival Committee Meeting is due to take place on 5th October 2021.

The Town Council over many years, has awarded a grant towards this event, the amount of which has varied. Over the last few years, the Carnival Committee has made great strides in trying to make the carnival self-financing, which has included achieving sponsorship from a few local businesses.

Over more recent years, the Town Council has financially supported the event by funding the hire of the main marquee, some tables and chairs, and the portaloos (following the receipt of a grant aid application form from the Carnival Committee). These have previously cost £1,159.00 and £350.00 plus VAT (£1509.00 plus VAT total). It is expected that the costs might have increased since these items were last hired in 2019.

Members are asked to consider if they would be minded, in principal, to award a grant to the Carnival Committee to fund the main marquee, tables and chairs and portaloos, if a grant aid form is received from them. If so, we would be able to advise the committee so that it might have an indication that funding for these items, at least, is secure for 2022.

13.4 BTC Finance Meetings October/November/December 2021

To advise Members that the RFO proposes to bring some preliminary 2022/2023 budget figures to the October Finance meeting, with a view to the November meeting being mainly a budget & strategy, and precept meeting (with some flexibility for any urgent or time sensitive items of other business, to be included).

The RFO respectfully requests guidance from Councillors, as soon as possible, as to what the Council wishes to prioritise for the 2022/2023 budget, and, if possible, for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 going forward.

Members are also asked to consider bringing the December meeting forward by one week (to avoid clashing with the ‘Christmas week’) to Tuesday 21st December 2021.

13.5 Parish Council Election Charges May 2021

To note that we have received the invoice for the May 2021 elections. The Chatfield, Gorse Covert and Oakwood Wards were uncontested. The Locking Stumps Ward was contested. The total charges are £3,239.50 (details are copied to Members in their papers).

The Council has the option of paying this amount over a period of up to four years. Officers would suggest, in this instance, paying the amount in full in one payment. **Do Members concur?**

13.6 National Insurance Contributions

To note that from April 2022 both employer and employee National Insurance Contributions will increase by 1.25% for one year. From April 2023 a Health and Social Care Levy of 1.25% will be introduced, and National Insurance rates will revert back to current levels.

13.7 Poppy Wreaths

To ask whether the Council wishes to make a donation to The Royal British Legion for the supply of two poppy wreaths, as it has done in previous years; one to be laid (usually by the Chair) on behalf of the community of Birchwood, at the Shopping Centre Memorial Garden, the other to be laid at the Cross Lane South Memorial. In previous years BTC has donated £100 for two poppy wreaths (which cost £17 each to produce).

13.8 Office Equipment

To ask Members to consider approving, in principal, the purchase of some additional office equipment, once we have appointed an Administrative Assistant. This could be covered by earmarked reserves, if necessary.

The current quotation from YellowBus (which might change slightly) is £480 for the desktop machine, including the Windows 10 pro licence, £90 for the installation and set-up of all software and £56.80 monthly recurring items (details in Members' papers).

There would be an additional (approx.) £225 for a monitor, printer, keyboard and mouse.

13.9 Nationwide Bank Account

- (a) To ask Members to consider BTC signing up for digital banking for our business savings account with the Nationwide, if we are eligible. This would involve the Clerk, the RFO and Councillor Ellis being able to sign in digitally to access services using authorisations via 'docuSign'.
- (b) To ask Members whether they wish to give any consideration to opening/moving to an alternative Business savings account with the Nationwide. Some offer a better interest rate deal than our current rate which is 0.05%.

13.10 General Items for Reporting/Noting

- (a) To note that a payment to the Public Works Loan Board (ref: PW487017) in the amount of £10,470.00 was made by direct debit on 10th September 2021.
- (b) To note that a £100 contribution towards glasses has been made to the Clerk re: Display Screen Equipment (DSE) use – as per Financial Regulation 19.1.
- (c) To receive the monthly reports from Yellowbus re: the BTC IT 'health' for September 2021. There are no issues to report.
- (d) To note that spare defibrillator pads and battery have been ordered for the defibrillator on the wall of Birchwood Youth and Community Centre. These have to be replaced every two years. The infant pads have been received and replaced. However, we are awaiting receipt of the battery and adult pads, now expected to be delivered in November (they are delayed due to a shortage of microchips).
- (e) To note that the annual renewal payment of our Data Protection Fee to the Information Commissioner's Office will be made by direct debit in October 2021. This is £35 (£40 minus £5 for paying by direct debit.)
- (f) To note that now the BAFO has retired, the O2 telephone contract has been cancelled. Once the final monthly contractual payments have been made, this will 'save' the Council approximately £55 per month.
- (g) To note that, as part of BTC's Duty of Care to staff, all the members of the Maintenance Team have recently undergone on-site testing for HAVS, audiometry testing and full vision screening. We have received the invoice from Elas, the company that undertook the screening (£330.00 +VAT).
- (h) To note that the six-monthly fire alarm and emergency lighting servicing was undertaken on 14th July. We have asked for a remote meeting with ESI to talk through putting a formal Service Level Agreement together, which we hope to have sometime in the next few weeks.

13.11 Date for Strategy Meeting

To ask Members to set a firm date for the Policy, Strategy and Engagement working party or sub-committee meeting.