

Heading	Year				
	14-15 [actual]	15-16 [actual]	16-17 [predicted out- turn]	17-18 [planned budget]	18-19 [planned budget]
B/Fwd Opening Balance:					
Earmarked Funds	281596	303468	211468	348468	381536
Unallocated Funds	43695	62682	200287	42303	2976
Total	325291	366150	411755	390771	384512
Income:					
Precept	218220	218200	251000	256020	261140
Freemen of Berwick	90245	115929	94399	95000	95000
Allotment	328	599	205	205	205
Sundry [regular]	490	270	518	425	425
Sundry [one -off]	21433	4717	3221	4000	4000
Grants		84488	46001		
Total	330716	424203	395344	355650	360770
Expenditure:					
Staffing	68891	54480	57995	126672	133006
Other Administration	42036	97313	27825	39477	41451
Council Services	13810	44038	40471	81260	85323
Parks & Play Areas	15329	10995	172151	34950	36698
Promotion	24538	23372	53764	26900	28245
Grants	41179	34516	12333	34700	36435
Council Projects	26501	9394	24466	8000	8400
Civic Expenditure	14307	21624	18243	9950	10448
Portas	37170	40782	0	0	0
Barracks Revival Project		38721	3865		
Neighbourhood Plan		1476	3800		
Other	6096	1887	1415		
Total	289857	378598	416328	361909	380004
Earmarked Funds					
Total	303468	211468	348468	381536	355536
Unallocated Balance	62682	200287	42303	2976	9742

## Replacement Accounting Software

1. Background: Since formation, Berwick Town Council have used Scribe 2000 accounting software to record transactions and assist with preparing year-end figures for the Annual Return, as well as providing periodic reports on expenditure. While Scribe 2000 continues to function, even though BTC's turnover has grown substantially over the years, certain limitations are becoming increasingly apparent as requirements for additional reporting, in particular recording of committed funds, are introduced. To address these limitations, a review of accounting software used by other councils was carried out.

2. Review of accounting software: The starting point for the review was recommendations by the SLCC of well regarded larger town councils. The two contacted were Great Aycliffe and Falmouth. Both used standard accounting software rather than packages aimed directly at Town Councils, Pegasus Opera 3 at Great Aycliffe and Sage at Falmouth. Neither Council would recommend the software they were using to a new user.

The Finance Officer at Falmouth suggested to speaking to Newquay Town Council, who had recently adopted new software. This software, Omega Financial Solutions from RBS Rialtas, is designed specifically for Town and Parish councils. Officers at Newquay spoke highly of its functionality and ease of use compared to their previous Sage software. We are aware of other larger community councils who are contemplating changing to a system specifically designed for Town and Parish councils due to the difficulties of trying to use a business system for a local council. The need to identify committed funds, and the complexities of account for S.137 spending (see note below) are not always well managed within general commercial software.

An internet search for other software showed no other comparable systems other than Scribe 2000 and Omega Financial Solutions aimed specifically at Town and Parish Councils.

An overview and specimen reports from the Omega software are attached.

3. Costs: In light of the positive feedback on the Omega system, RBS Rialtas were asked for indicative costs. As the system is modular, costs vary with the modules chosen but for the functionality required, purchase costs are of the order of £1500 to £1800 plus installation and training cost of £750 plus travel. Annual licensing is around £700ps for a single user and £900pa for up to 5 users. This compares to the annual cost of Scribe of £300.

4. Ordinarily council's financial regulations would require three quotes to be obtained for a purchase of this size. In this case this is not practical since this is the only product of its kind, and it is only supplied via the manufacturer.

5. There is a need for the purchase to be made in financial year 2016-17, even though the cost has not been budgeted for, in order to enable the software to be in place and operational by the start of financial year 2017-18.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That council waive Financial regulation 7.8 because of the difficulties in obtaining three quotes for this type of software, and
2. That council authorize the spending of up to £000 from reserves for the purchase and installation of Omega accounting software, and
3. That council note the future spending of £900 per annum on multi user licences for the software.

### Note on S.137 of the Local Government Act (1972)

Councils can only spend money in relation to specific powers and duties. The two exceptions are the General Power of Competence, created by the Localism Act, which enables a qualifying council to do anything a person could lawfully do. Berwick TC is not a qualifying council for these purposes. The other exception is the power created by S.137 of the LGA 1972, which enables councils to spend money on any purpose, but to a limit per elector that is specified in regulations and adjusted in line with inflation. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has confirmed that the appropriate sum for the purpose of section 137(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the 1972 Act) for parish and town councils in England for 2016/17 is £7.42 per elector. In order to manage this lawfully council's should have accurate records of where and when they have spent money under S.137 as opposed to another power.



## **Omega Financial Software**

**Omega Financial Software is the complete accounting package for larger councils, providing a comprehensive double entry accounting system. Omega allows full budget reporting and has extensive features, allowing councils to comply with the Annual Return.**

### **Double Entry Accounting**

Omega features a full double entry accounting system, including the following functions:

- Accounting entries via cash book with the option of a purchase ledger and/or a sales ledger in any combination to suit your needs
- Either special or commercial VAT returns
- Integrated budget routines on either annual or monthly profiling basis

### **Additional Optional Modules**

- Purchase Ledger - giving control over supplier history and payment runs
- Sales Ledger - containing a full invoicing package that facilitates control and management of the council's debtors
- Purchase Order Processing - automating commitment against budget reporting

### **Full Budget Reporting**

Omega provides full budget reporting, including:

- Annual and Current month recording
- Year to date against projected
- Remaining funds available
- Committed expenditure
- Budget transfers & tracking
- Next year estimates can be produced in current year
- Up to five-year forward budget calculations

### **Annual Return**

Omega offers the following features for Annual Return Councils:

- Statutory Income and Expenditure - supporting the General Reserve
- Statutory Balance Sheet - giving the overall Reserve position of the council
- Cash and Investment Reconciliation - to provide a bank reconciliation for all accounts
- Reserve Reconciliation - to explain why the reserves and cash balances are different
- Annual Return:
  - Working Detail assisting with prior year variance analysis
  - Summary giving the figures ready for submission on the audit form

Budget Detail - By Centre

Note: (-) Net Expenditure means Income is greater than Expenditure

Note :

	<u>Last Year</u>		<u>Current Year</u>							<u>Next Year</u>	
	Budget	Actual	Agreed Budget	Fwd/Rev Budget	Net Virement	Revised Budget	Actual YTD	Committed Exp.	Projected Actual	Next Year Budget	C/Fwd Budget
<b>110 Civic and Democratic</b>											
4031 Training - Members	500	283	750	0	0	750	0	0	0	0	0
4032 Election Expenses	4,000	2,014	4,000	0	0	4,000	0	0	0	0	0
4040 Travel and Subsistence	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4060 Courses and Conferences	0	426	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4500 Mayor's Allowance	2,215	2,215	2,215	0	0	2,215	0	0	0	0	0
4501 Deputy Mayor's Allowance	340	340	340	0	0	340	0	0	0	0	0
4530 Hospitality	250	300	250	0	0	250	31	0	0	0	0
4535 Civic and Ceremonial	3,000	2,249	3,000	0	0	3,000	3,545	0	0	0	0
4850 Grants - Section 137	0	176	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>OverHead Expenditure</b>	<b>10,305</b>	<b>8,028</b>	<b>10,555</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,555</b>	<b>3,576</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
1000 Lettings	0	85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>110 Net Expenditure</b>	<b>10,305</b>	<b>7,943</b>	<b>10,555</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,555</b>	<b>3,576</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Budget Expenditure</b>	<b>286,565</b>	<b>359,636</b>	<b>296,615</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>296,615</b>	<b>60,910</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>530,100</b>	<b>548,648</b>	<b>519,088</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>519,088</b>	<b>513,338</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>-243,535</b>	<b>-189,012</b>	<b>-222,473</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-222,473</b>	<b>-452,428</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Month No : 3

## Cost Centre Report

		Actual Current Mth	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% of Budget
<u>206</u>	<u>The House Annexe</u>							
4110	Rates	0	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0 %
4115	Water Rates	0	0	300	300		300	0.0 %
4120	Heat and Light	0	-726	1,500	2,226		2,226	-48.4 %
4150	Cleaning Contract	0	0	800	800		800	0.0 %
4170	Repairs	0	8	1,000	992		992	0.8 %
	The House Annexe :- Expenditure	<b>0</b>	<b>-717</b>	<b>4,600</b>	<b>5,317</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,317</b>	<b>-15.6 %</b>
1000	Lettings	11	11	300	-290			3.5 %
	The House Annexe :- Income	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>-290</b>			<b>3.5 %</b>
	<b>Net Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-728</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>5,028</b>			
<u>210</u>	<u>Town Hall</u>							
4000	Salaries	0	332	0	-332		-332	0.0 %
4110	Rates	0	1,213	2,500	1,287		1,287	48.5 %
4115	Water Rates	0	0	350	350		350	0.0 %
4120	Heat and Light	0	264	2,000	1,736		1,736	13.2 %
4150	Cleaning Contract	0	91	3,200	3,109		3,109	2.9 %
4170	Repairs	0	250	20,000	19,750		19,750	1.3 %
4185	Equipment	0	134	0	-134		-134	0.0 %
4750	Refreshments and Merchandise	0	188	1,000	812		812	18.8 %
	Town Hall :- Expenditure	<b>0</b>	<b>2,472</b>	<b>29,050</b>	<b>26,578</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26,578</b>	<b>8.5 %</b>
1000	Lettings	0	22	100	-78			22.0 %
1415	Refreshments Income	0	297	5,000	-4,703			5.9 %
1460	Sales	0	82	1,000	-918			8.2 %
1701	Donations Received	0	78	250	-172			31.3 %
	Town Hall :- Income	<b>0</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>6,350</b>	<b>-5,871</b>			<b>7.5 %</b>
	<b>Net Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,993</b>	<b>22,700</b>	<b>20,707</b>			
<u>211</u>	<u>Market</u>							
4000	Salaries	0	0	2,300	2,300		2,300	0.0 %
4060	Courses and Conferences	0	0	500	500		500	0.0 %
4460	Subscriptions	0	0	300	300		300	0.0 %
	Market :- Expenditure	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,100</b>	<b>3,100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,100</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
1400	Market Fees	0	2,053	15,000	-12,947			13.7 %
	Market :- Income	<b>0</b>	<b>2,053</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>-12,947</b>			<b>13.7 %</b>
	<b>Net Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2,053</b>	<b>-11,900</b>	<b>-9,847</b>			

## CCTV extension and support

### CCTV Extension

1. Background: the existing CCTV system provides good coverage but excludes some important areas, such as parks and play areas, that can be places where anti-social behaviour occurs. These areas were not included in the recent CCTV refurbishment as they had not previously been covered and so were not part of the network being utilised.
2. Funding is available, from reserves, to extend the CCTV network, or develop it in other ways, should council see fit. CCTV remains an effective tool for deterring and investigating anti-social behaviour, and council will want to be mindful of the need to protect its recent investments in play areas from vandalism.
3. Proposed system: As extending the network to achieve the desired coverage, especially south of the river, would be expensive, an alternative system is desirable. One alternative, involving wireless connection to a near-by router, has been discounted because of the difficulties associated with locating routers and providing appropriate connections, although officers will keep a watching brief on the outcomes of trials of local free wi-fi being undertaken by Northumberland County Council in Blyth. Another options, based on mobile phone technology, seems more practical at present, and is not dependent on other infrastructure innovations. However, it would be appropriate, if possible, to seek cameras that can support either wi-fi or 3g data transfer to enable options to be re-appraised in future.
4. Costs: Suitable cameras are expected to cost of the order of £1200 each, with a 2-year SIM contract for data transfer costing about £180. The suggestion is to have four extra cameras, which can be either permanently fixed in one location or moved to give wider coverage of a number of play areas. The total cost for four cameras would be £4800 with running costs of £720 over two years.
5. CCTV Support - Laptop Loan: Northumbria police has requested the loan of a laptop computer to facilitate their monitoring of the CCTV system. BTC have a spare laptop that can be loaned.

### Recommendations

1. That council delegate to the RFO / Town Clerk to seek three quotes for the provision of four CCTV cameras, and, provided the total expenditure is less than £5,000, to purchase the devices.
2. That council delegate to the RFO / Town Clerk, authority to enter into data contracts to support the installation of the cameras, either on an annual basis or a monthly contract, depending on cost, and that
3. Council delegate to the RFO / Town Clerk authority to make appropriate virements from reserves to the 2016-17, and subsequent year's budgets, to cover the costs specified in recommendations 1&2.

## Heritage Lamp Stands

1. Background: As part of a countywide initiative, NCC are replacing lamp stands with new LED lighting. As part of this initiative, Town and Parish councils are being offered the opportunity to request the installation of heritage Victorian style lamp stands in specific locations at a cost of £2000 per lamp stand. It is proposed that BTC take advantage of this opportunity to improve the visual appearance of selected areas.

2. Proposed Locations:

Old Bridge x 8

Quayside Car Park x 1 [to complement existing lamp stand on Quay Walls]

Parade outside Barracks x 3 or x 5

Total number 13 or 15

Total Cost £26000 or £30000

3. Members are invited to note that this is another occasion where your financial regulations will need to be waived, since it is not possible to seek quotes from another contractor to provide or install these lamp stands.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members are recommended to approve the waiver of Financial regulation 7 for the purpose of this item, as set out in point 3 above.
2. Members are invited to decide on the location and number of Heritage Lamp Stands to be purchased, using money previously set aside in non-operational reserves, and
3. To delegate authority to the Interim Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer to negotiate the installations as specified with NCC.



## Play Area Maintenance and Management of Work Programme

### Background

1. A summary of findings from an inspection of play areas is attached to this report.
2. Members will remember being previously advised by the Town Clerk that he commissioned the inspections as a result of an accumulation of factors, including the need to provide stakeholders with reassurance that council has a clear understanding of the condition and maintenance needs of its play parks.
3. Works have already been undertaken in some cases to make safe very unsafe equipment by removing it from use and this was reported to council on 28 November 2016.
4. As will be reported elsewhere, your staff are already project managing the installation of new play equipment on three sites over the next three months. This is a substantial investment both of money and staff time.
5. Whilst your staff could simply go ahead and price all work described in the report, and bring a report to council, this would not be an effective use of staff time. In issues like this, where there are competing demands for repairs, scarce resources and a need to prioritize, councillors need to be consulted throughout the decision making process.
6. The history of council's antipathy towards committees is clear and self-evident. Nevertheless council urgently needs to develop and understand a maintenance programme for its play parks. This maintenance needs to be both reactive and planned, and to include not just play equipment maintenance but an assessment of the surrounding grounds and their maintenance.
7. It is therefore proposed that a Task and Finish Working Group be formed, to report back to council by the end of March 2017, on
  - a. The design and management of a reactive maintenance programme for play equipment, and the prioritization of existing faults
  - b. The creation of a grounds management strategy for each play area, and
  - c. The creation of a planned maintenance strategy for play area equipment.

### Recommendation

1. That a Play Area Maintenance Task and Finish Working Group be created to report back to council by the end of March 2017, on
  - a. The design and management of a reactive maintenance programme for play equipment, and the prioritization of existing faults
  - b. The creation of a grounds management strategy for each play area, and
  - c. The creation of a planned maintenance strategy for play area equipment,
2. That council make such appointments to the working group as it sees fit, including the appointment of a chair,
3. That council delegates to the Town Clerk, after consulting the Mayor and the chair, if any, of the Task and Finish group, the duty of setting a date for the first meeting of the working group, and
4. That council agrees to receive the Task and Flnsih Working Group's recommendations at a future meeting.

## Summary of findings from Play Area Annual Inspections 2016

- 1. Introduction:** BTC recently commissioned annual play area inspections for the ten play sites in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal for which it is responsible. These are listed in Table 1. An eleventh site, Flagstaff Park, is currently being redeveloped and will be inspected in due course. The inspections were carried out by Eric Anderson of Tyne & Wear Play Ltd, an inspector registered with the Register of Play Inspectors International, on 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
- 2. Methodology:** Inspections are based on visual examination and physical check for safe operation, including establishing that all parts are present, securely fixed and in good working order. The inspection does not include any internal or sub-surface examinations. Faults identified during the inspection are given a risk assessment score based on the probability of an accident happening and the likely severity of any resulting injury. The maximum risk assessment score is 25 and the minimum is 1.
- 3. Inspection Findings:** While not identifying any critical risks, the inspections did identify swings sets at four sites, Five Arches, Grove Gardens, Osbourne Road and Greens Haven, as being in need of immediate action to ensure they could not be used. This was due to the age and condition of the swing sets and associated safety surfaces meaning that safe use could not be assured. This action was reported to Council on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

Aside from the issues with these swing sets, the inspections identified a number of medium and low risk faults [risk scores between 12 and 6] requiring prompt attention. These are listed in Table 2. Most of the faults with actual play equipment identified are at Spittal Pavillion, all apart from one being scored as 'low risk'.

Otherwise, the faults identified relate to the safety surfaces and areas surrounding the play equipment, with fence damage, gate design and mud and standing water being among the issues identified. Several faults identified relate to places where grass mat safety surfacing is in need of attention. In some cases it is recommended that BTC consider replacing the grass mat surface with an alternative safety surfacing in areas of high use to provide greater safety and to reduce regular maintenance.

Table 1 List of Play Areas inspected

Eastcliffe
Five Arches
Greens Haven
Grove Gardens South
Highcliffe
Newfields
Osbourne Road
Spittal Pavillion
Spittal Splash Park
Springdale Gardens

Table 2 Medium and low risk faults identified in Annual Play Area inspections

Excludes Grove Gardens South & Osbourne Rd [redevelopment scheduled] and very low risk faults [risk score 4 and below]

Risk Score	Play Area	Fault Ref.	Fault Description	Recommended Action	Note
12	Spittal Pavilion	01/2	Loose posts within 'swing steps' equipment	Check to foundation level for possible rotting in posts	
9	Highcliffe	A1/3	Broken Gate	Replace Gate	1
		0	Damage to Fence	Repair	
		01/2	Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
		03-4/1	Lifting/ Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
		06/1	Lifting/ Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
	Newfields	02/1	Lifting/ Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
		02/3	Corrosion in key areas of equipment	Replace corroded parts; repaint. Dismantling inspection on universal joint required at same time	
		04/1	Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
	Spittal Pavilion	04/1	Ineffective safety surface	Top up with approved sand	
		05/2	Ineffective safety surface	Replace beach sand with approved sand	
		07/1	Obstacles in falling space	No action – monitor incidents to see if removal needed	
		07/2	Loose safety surface	Refix to remove trip hazard	
	Eastcliffe	03/2	Panels pulling off	Repair to remove sharp edges	3
8	Highcliffe	A1/1	Gates not correctly installed	Refit with correct 12mm spacing or replace	
	Newfields	A1/2	Gates not correctly installed	Refit with correct 12mm spacing or replace	
6	Greens Haven	4	Raised kerb between path and paving	Level surface	
		A1/1	Condition of bin	Replace and fix to ground	
		A2/1	Condition of bench	Repair or replace	

Risk Score	Play Area	Fault Ref.	Fault Description	Recommended Action	Note
6	Greens Haven	02/1	Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
		06/1	Ineffective safety surface	Reinstall	2
		06/2	Mixing parts/fixings	Repair and replace	
		07/1	Exposed concrete	Carry out ground works to cover	4
		07/3	Timber edging damaged	Repair or replace	4
	Highcliffe	A1/4	Worn entrance ways	Monitor and review need for surfacing	
		02/1	Missing parts [insert]	replace	
	Newfields	A1/1	Worn/muddy entrance	Reinstate surface and refix grass mat or consider alternative surface	5
		A2/1	Damaged fence/loose fence posts	Repair fence and refix posts	
	Spittal Pavilion	A1/1	Gate stoppers missing/damaged	replace	
		A1/2	Approach path uneven	repair	
		A4/1	Trip points around seats	Manage interface between different surfaces	
		01/3	Damaged/worn chains	Replace	
		01/4	Timber post rotting	Repair/replace damaged post & monitor for deterioration elsewhere	
		01/5	Worn grass surface	Repair/replace	
		01/6	Missing step	Replace	
		02/1	Wear on shackle pins	Check bearings and replace worn parts	
		05/1	Rusting parts	Clean off surface rust and repaint	
		06/1	Rusting parts	Clean off surface rust and repaint	
	08/1	Damaged edge of triangular [sandpit?] area	Repair		
	Spittal Splash Pk	A1/1	Gate stoppers missing/damaged	Replace	
		01/3	Missing equipment?	Replace or otherwise eliminate trip hazard	

Risk Score	Play Area	Fault Ref.	Fault Description	Recommended Action	Note
6	Springdale	A2/1	Damaged fencing	Repair	
		01/2	Damaged equipment base	Repair/replace	
		06/2	Damaged equipment – rotting post	Monitor, repairing/replacing as necessary	
		06/4	Surface wear under grass mats	Reinstall	2
	Eastcliffe	03/1	Riding surface contaminated by litter, grass and water	Clean	3

#### Notes

- 1 Entrance gates to play areas need fixing with appropriate spacing to avoid crush injuries
- 2 Grass mats may not be suitable for high use areas and an alternative surface may have to be considered
- 3 The need and siting of Eastcliffe should be considered before investing in repairs
- 4 The age and condition of the equipment should be considered before commissioning remedial work
- 5 Drainage may be an issue across site

## Freedom of Information

### Background

1. The council has a number of clearly understood duties relating to Freedom of Information, which are laid down by statute.
2. As ever, statute law has to be considered in conjunction with case law, which provides an aid to the interpretation of statutes.
3. For councils with a low capacity for request processing, like parish councils, even a small number of FoI requests can become onerous.
4. The law has been substantially clarified in recent years via the decisions in the *Dransfield* case and subsequent decisions; nevertheless, the type of behaviour seen in such cases is a substantial risk for the Council, and can result in significant consumption of resources and costs. Council is invited to note that, even where a requester is found to be liable for costs after a lengthy legal battle, those costs may not be recoverable.
5. Your issues, as a council, can be summarized as follows;
  - a. Do you have a system that enables you to process requests effectively,
  - b. Do you have an in house review process should members of the public request one, and
  - c. Do you have a publication scheme that enables you to minimize the number and type of requests you receive?
6. Broadly speaking, the answer to each point is, currently, no.
7. As ever, we have taken a proportionate approach to the drafting of this report. This report is intended to secure your assent to a broad set of principles which would enable a fuller and more complete policy to be drafted.
8. It is proposed that point 5 (a) be addressed by the maintenance and publication of a register of FoI requests, and the answers received, in order to demonstrate effective processing, and that such a register would contribute to addressing point 5(c).
9. It is proposed that council invite the Interim Town Clerk to consult all members on their preferences for a review body for the makers of FoI requests, and to come to a recommendation to future council as to whether that review body should be either an existing committee, or an ad hoc committee chaired by the mayor.
10. Council is invited to consider whether its current publication scheme enables access to council documents in such a way as to minimize the need for FoI requests.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That council indicate its preferences, with regard to points 8, 9&10, and
2. That council instruct the Interim Town Clerk to prepare a revised FoI process and publication scheme.

## Document Retention Policy

### Background

1. Council needs to codify its policy for retention of documents, so that it can demonstrate a robust approach to record keeping.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Council is invited to adopt the policy attached to this report.



## Scope

The scope of this Policy applies to all Berwick Town Council employees and, where relevant, elected members.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set guidelines which reduce the risk of breaching the Data Protection Act. This covers all data, however it is held, on paper or in electronic format

## Introduction

Records management is an essential part of enabling the council to function effectively.

Effective records management will help to ensure that we have the:

- Right information when we need it to make the right decisions
- Evidence we need to account for our actions and decisions allowing us to be open, transparent and accountable, as well as, providing evidence of compliance
- Records required to protect the interests of the Council, its staff, citizens and organisations who interact with the Council.

We will aim to create, receive and manage records efficiently, protect and store them securely, make them accessible where possible and dispose of them safely when they are no longer needed. Safe disposal of documents will include the shredding of documents on site where they contain personal or confidential data.

To support this policy we will:

- Provide a framework of supporting procedures and guidance
- Develop and implement a strategy to improve the way we manage records and information
- Provide appropriate staff training
- Monitor compliance

This Document Retention Policy sets out requirements and responsibilities for managing records retention and disposal. The Policy applies to all documents defined as records. Reference material, information and working documents that are not considered to be records should be disposed of as soon as they are no longer required. The Policy applies to all Council records irrespective of their media, format, the system in which they are held, or storage location.

Specific requirements for keeping and disposing of records will, where necessary, be added as an appendix to the Financial Procedures Manual.

Procedures should be developed to ensure records due for disposal are identified, are reviewed to confirm disposal, or establish whether or not there is a genuine requirement for further retention, disposal is approved by someone with authority to do so, and records are securely disposed of. Procedures should be implemented and considered part of the normal business process.

### Practice

Good records management practice relies on the following:

- Determining which records should be created or received and retained
- Determining appropriate related data (metadata)
- Determining corporate record systems for the storage and management of records
- Creation or receipt of required records and their capture into corporate record systems together with related metadata
- Development of appropriate locating aids such as classification schemes and indexes to facilitate the management and retrieval of records and information
- Appropriate maintenance of records in safe secure environment(s)
- Determining why and how long records should be kept and how they should be disposed
- Retaining records only for as long as they are needed to satisfy legal, regulatory requirements and operational needs and no longer
- Routine, timely and secure disposal of records in line with retention and disposal policies
- Routine disposal of ephemeral documents and information (non-records)

Paper records should be regularly reviewed and should be “Closed” when no longer required. Consideration should be given, at review, as to whether some of the documents within a file are no longer required because they have been superseded.

Electronic records e.g. in shared filing, in line of business systems, or personal systems such as folders or email accounts are all subject to records retention and disposal policy and should be managed appropriately.

## Office Move

### Background

1. Council decided in August 2016 to relocate to the Arch Workspace. The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record in September 2016.
2. The process of organizing the move was slowed by the loss of the Town Clerk and because the Interim Town Clerk believed there were issues with the calculation of the cost and benefits of the move, and because the apparent benefits were rooted in an assessment of the condition of the existing office.
3. The issues that had to be addressed concerned the apparent defects of the existing office. In short these are
  - a. The office is insecure, with no burglar alarm, no panic alarm, and no alternative means of egress for staff lone working in the event of an incident.
  - b. There are substantial issues with the non-inspection of major systems (like the mains electricity), which point up the council's lack of facilities management expertise to operate an unserviced office along with general maintenance issues like dampness.
  - c. The current office lacks an effective meeting space.
  - d. There are clear question marks over whether access to the office is DDA compliant, and it has no DDA compliant facilities within the building.
4. Your interim Town Clerk has now had the opportunity to consider the condition of the current offices, and we can confirm that all the issues in 3. a & b (above) would need to be addressed in order to continue occupying the current office, but the issues at 3. c & d (above) could not easily or economically be addressed. If steps were taken to make the office safer, for instance by fitting magnetic door releases or, preferably, an inner lobby and magnetic door releases, these changes would need to be removed if the lease were given up. The cost would certainly be in excess of £1000, but there is a contingent risk of actually making the access problems of the current office worse.
5. That being said, council needs to note that the calculations presented to council in August 2016 were inaccurate. Since the officer who undertook the calculations has now left the council we cannot ascertain why. The total additional cost of the new office, over the first two years, would be £7360.
6. Similarly, it is hard to tell from the original report, the extent to which council was advised of the potential risk arising if a new tenant cannot be found for the existing office, which might amount to the remaining rent due under the lease. This risk can be mitigated by re-letting the existing office, but that is by no means guaranteed.
7. In addition, the original report made no mention of removal and incidental costs, such as moving IT equipment, providing IT facilities in the meeting room, and any alterations or adjustments to office fixings. It would be prudent to make provision of £2500 to cover these costs, with the authority to incur this spending delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with The Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

## Recommendations

1. If council wishes to proceed it is recommended to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to, after consultation with the Mayor or Deputy Mayor
  - a. Negotiate the surrender of the existing lease, if possible,
  - b. Negotiate the new lease /licence with ARCH
  - c. Incur reasonable removal and re-locations costs, subject to the limits set out in the Financial Regulations up to £2500, and
  - d. To vire sufficient sums from the reserves, up to £10,000 to cover rent and removal costs.
2. Alternatively, if members wish to revisit the proposal to re-locate, members will have to agree to suspend standing order 7, in accordance with Standing Order 10(a)(xv) to allow the matter to be re-opened within six months of it being decided.

## Lone worker policy

### Background

1. Establishing a healthy and safe working environment for lone workers can be different from organising the health and safety of other employees. Lone workers should not be put at more risk than other people working for the council.
2. It is often safe to work alone, and lone working is not, by and of itself, any more dangerous than working with others. However, the law and best practice requires employers to think about and deal with any health and safety risks before workers are allowed to do so.
3. That risk assessment should include
  - a. assessing areas of risk including violence, manual handling, the medical suitability of the individual to work alone and whether the workplace itself presents a risk to them
  - b. requirements for training, levels of experience and
  - c. how best to monitor and supervise them making sure you know what is happening, including having systems in place to keep in touch with them.
4. Council is invited to note that its current staffing levels involve significant amounts of lone working in spaces to which the public have access (the town council office) and occasional lone working outside the office – at public sites, at site meetings and at committee meetings.
5. The risk of violence at the office or other working locations is impossible to quantify, but mitigation strategies are possible, and should be part of office specification and routine. Members are invited to note the reports elsewhere on the agenda concerning whether the risks of lone working can be adequately mitigated at the existing office.
6. Members are invited to note that all staff are required to take responsibility for their own health and safety, and this includes ensuring that when they are lone working, their whereabouts are known, and that they notify another person of their arrival and departure from their place of work. At first instance, since all staff have access to email, this can be as simple as sending an email to the admin email in box on arrival and departure. This fulfils the monitoring responsibilities of the council; however, staff are also required to be aware of their surroundings, especially when off site or attending late meetings. The policy may also consider whether council has adequately provided staff with equipment to mitigate the risks of lone working.
7. Council is invited to note that consultation is part of health and safety best practice, and that your staff will have a wealth of knowledge, as individuals, about their working practices and risk.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Council is invited to require the Interim Town Clerk to undertake a skills and safety audit in relation to lone working, and to submit that audit, and any policy or procedure changes arising from it, to the Staffing Committee, and
2. Council is invited to delegate to the Staffing Committee the power to approve the lone worker policy, and, subject to the financial limits set by the Financial regulations, to instruct the Interim Town Clerk to make any safety related purchases that might be required.

Resolution for Berwick Town Council

- 1) This Council welcomes the decision by the Scottish Government to increase its contribution to re-opening the East Lothian & Borders Railway by £2 Million, and the efforts by Scottish Borders and East Lothian Councils to support this development.
- 2) This Council re-affirms its support for the Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES).
- 3) The re-instatement of local rail services between Berwick and Edinburgh is a significant investment which will boost the prosperity of Berwick Upon Tweed, and enable the town to exploit the growing economic importance of the nearby Edinburgh and South East Regional City Deal.
- 4) This Council re-affirms its support for the Edinburgh and South East Regional City Deal, and its decision to add this Council's name as a registered supporter.
- 5) As Berwick Upon Tweed Railway Station is in England, none of the promised finance to re-open its rail service is likely to be invested in improving our station. We therefore request the following
  - i) That we write to our MP, and the Department of Transport requesting that the UK Government matches the investment made by the Scottish Government into this new rail service by awarding £2 Million to upgrade the facilities at Berwick Station and to convert it into a transport Hub fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> C.
  - ii) That we write to NCC and request that they reconsider their decision to reject our request that the Core Strategy should highlight the importance of re-opening local rail services in North Northumberland to connect with the new Edinburgh to Berwick rail service. Specifically we request that the Core Strategy should protect land around for the former Scremeston & Belford railway stations so that they can be brought back in to use in the future, and thus support the need for a sustainable transport plan for North Northumberland.
  - iii) That NCC prepare a bid for the Local Transport Programme to support investment in to Berwick Station in order to develop it in to a Transport Hub and Northern Gateway for the Town.
  - iv) That the Town Council writes to Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council, RAGES and the Scottish Government to congratulate them on their decision to invest a further £2 Million in rail services to Berwick Upon Tweed, and offering any assistance than we are able to support speedy implementation of the project.



Council  
Item 21  
Appendix M  
Monday, 19 December 2016

Date	What decision is requested	Why does this decision need to be made	Who requested it?	When does it need to be made?	Outcome
24/10/16	Whether to consider proposals to fund a music event in Berwick in 2017	Inquiry from Berwick residents and others	TC / NCC / Berwick residents	7/11/2016	Council to receive a presentation
2/11/2016	Whether to support the provision of yacht mooring facilities on the quayside – to fund scoping reports and to further fund construction	To support economic regeneration and tourism	Request from Cllr D Blackburn	29/11/2016	
30/10/2016	Approve MTFP	Financial regs	TC	November 2016	
2/11/2016	Tourism review – to review provision of management information, resources available for tourism promotion and support for social media activity.	In order to make better use of council resources and promote tourism as a driver of regeneration	TC	November 2016	
30/10/2016	As part of budget, to approve budget allocations for clerk and deputy town clerk as full time employees	Councillor proposal	E Goodyer	December 2016	
07/11/2016	Document retention policy and procedure note	As part of risk appraisal / management	TC	December 2016	
07/11/2016	Lone worker policy	As part of risk appraisal / management	TC	December 2016	
30/10/2016	Approve budget	Financial regs	TC	December 2016	
25/11/2016	Playground maintenance	To manage risk	TC	19 December 2016	
25/11/2016	Lions allotments	Negotiations Update (Confidential)	TC	19December 2016	
28/11/2016	FoI	Legal compliance	TC	19 December 2016	



30/11/2016	Whether the Town Council wishes to be used as a pilot.	Councillor proposal (Confidential)	E Goodyer	19 December 2016	
24/10/2016	Playground inspection regime 2017	Safety of playground users / risk management	TC	Jan 2017	
2/11/2016	To approve an investment strategy and list of counterparties	Financial regs	TC	Feb 2017	
25/11/2016	To review allotment provision	Legislative compliance	TC	Jan 2017	
24/10/2016	Approve Risk Management Register	To comply with Financial Regs	TC	Jan 2017	
24/10/2016	Approve Asset Register	To Comply with Financial Regs	TC	Jan 2017	
7/11/2016	Pensions policy	Legislative change	TC	Jan 2017	
25/11/2016	Reserves policy	Best practice to review reserve provision	TC	Jan 2017	
25/11/2016	Growths and savings 2018/19	Best practice	TC	Sept 2017	

## **Berwick upon Tweed Town Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY October 28th 2016**

#### **AT THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE, BERWICK**

#### **Present**

16/60 Cllr E Goodyer (Chairman); Cllr P Hodgson; Stephen Scott; Thomas Stewart; Brian Darling; Lady Zoreen Hill; Elaine Paterson.

#### **In Attendance**

16/61 Steve Cozens, Assistant to the Clerk.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

16/62 Cllr G Hill; Cllr C Seymour; Julien Lake; Maurice Ward.

#### **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 23rd September 2016**

16/63 It was noted that Cllr P Hodgson was present at the meeting. Agreed by all and duly signed.

#### **3. Reports from Working Groups**

- 16/64
- a. HOUSING – The draft Housing Assessment report will hopefully be ready for discussion at the November meeting of the Steering Group.
  - b. EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS – Countryside Foods have taken over most of the derelict former General Mills (Jus Rol) site. Both Northumberland College has expressed interest in expanding their presence in Berwick. Sunderland University are considering developing HE provision in Berwick.
  - c. TRANSPORT – The draft Sustainable Transport Report was circulated, and a further meeting would discuss it in more detail. The Transport Group would be asked if they could next consider wider transport issues.
  - d. TOURISM – Mike Greener of Spittal Improvement Trust has agreed to join the Working Group. Issues and opportunities around Spittal have been discussed and the need to turn this into evidence. Jo-Anne Garrick has taken notes from Working Group meetings and produced a report. Gaps can now be identified and tasks allocated.

Cllr E Goodyer to obtain clear guidance from Jo-Anne Garrick on how her time is managed including emails.

- e. YOUTH – The possibility of a new head of the group would be explored.
- f. BUILT ENVIRONMENT – Waiting for character appraisals from AECOM. Need to liaise with Thomas Stewart and Julien Lake about the impact on landscape character appraisals. Need to get on with character appraisals as could take 6 months. Still waiting for a list of draft public realm sites that we might tackle. Have contacted Northumberland County Council for an initial reaction as they may own the land. Cllr E Goodyer to contact Julien Lake regarding list of public realm sites.

- g. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT – The outcome of the natural environment group will be in map form. The Working Group has discussed information gathering and evidence gathering including all the statutory designations and playing field, other public open spaces, allotments and cemeteries etc that will be identified and mapped.

#### **4. Consultation Exercise and Film**

16/65 Cllr E Goodyer would contact Jen Manuel to find out what is happening.

#### **5. Date of next Meeting and items for consideration**

16/66 Friday, 25 November 2016 at the Town Council office at 5pm.