

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Council Minutes

Time and date

Monday 19 May 2025 at 18:00

Place

The Meeting Room, Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Office, Unit 1, 82 – 88 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Minutes

1.25. Apologies for Absence

None received.

2.25. Election of Town Mayor

The election of the Town Mayor for the year 2025-2026 was conducted. The current Mayor, Cllr John Robertson, was nominated by Cllr Hawken and seconded by Cllr Mackenzie. Another nomination was made for Cllr Bruce by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Turton. Ballot papers were handed out, and the voting took place. The results were 11 votes for Cllr John Robertson and 1 vote for Cllr Bruce. Cllr John Robertson was re-elected as Town Mayor for the year 2025-2026.

Decision: Cllr John Robertson was re-elected as Town Mayor for the year 2025-2026.

3.25. The Town Mayor End-of-Term Address

Councillor John Robertson, the retiring Town Mayor, was scheduled to present his end-of-term address. However, as he was re-elected as Mayor, he announced that there would be no need for an end-of-term address and proceeded to the next agenda item.

Decision: As Councillor John Robertson was re-elected as Mayor, there was no need for an end-of-term address.

4.25. Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Mayor, Cllr John Robertson, confirmed his acceptance of office by signing the declaration. This formal step ensures the Mayor's commitment to fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of the office for the upcoming term.

Decision: The Mayor, Cllr John Robertson, signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

5.25. Election of Deputy Town Mayor

The election of the Deputy Town Mayor for 2025-2026 was conducted. Nominations were received from Cllr Mackenzie, Cllr Turton, and Cllr Smith. The voting process involved two

rounds. In the first round, Cllr Mackenzie and Cllr Turton each received 6 votes, while Cllr Smith received 1 vote and was eliminated. In the second round, Cllr Mackenzie received 7 votes and Cllr Turton received 5 votes. Consequently, Cllr Mackenzie was elected as the Deputy Town Mayor.

Decision: Cllr Mackenzie was elected as the Deputy Town Mayor for 2025-2026.

6.25. Disclosure of Interests

The Mayor directed attendees to page 5 of their papers, highlighting the new disclosure form. No disclosures were received in advance. During the meeting, Cllr Mike Mackenzie declared a general interest in the Visitor Centre, which was already noted in his written disclosure.

7.25. Open session

During the open session, members of the public were given the opportunity to make representations, ask questions, and give evidence regarding the business on the agenda. Brian raised concerns about the state of the promenade, highlighting its poor condition. The Mayor acknowledged that this issue falls under the County Council's responsibility. Cllr Bruce suggested that the Chief Officer write to Northumberland County Council (NCC) for an update on the timescale for improvements. Stephen mentioned that a draft operations document from NCC had been received and approved, with work by young offenders and green spaces teams expected to begin within a month.

Decision: It was decided that the Chief Officer would write to Northumberland County Council for an update on the timescale for improvements to the promenade.

Task: Write to Northumberland County Council for an update on the timescale for improvements to the promenade. @Chief Officer

8.25. Minutes

The minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council extraordinary meeting held on 14th April 2025 were reviewed. Specific clarifications were noted, particularly regarding working groups as mentioned in an email sent by Cllr Hawken. No further comments were made on pages 10 and 11, and the minutes were approved. Concerns were raised by Cllr Bowden about the timing of the meeting, which was held two weeks before the election. Cllr Mackenzie clarified that the issue of purdah was addressed during that meeting, noting that council business can continue as long as it does not promote individual councillors. The Mayor confirmed that purdah does not prohibit meetings unless they promote individual councillors.

Decision: The minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council extraordinary meeting held on 14th April 2025 were approved.

9.25. Direct Debits, Subscriptions and Banking Arrangements

The council reviewed the current banking arrangements and discussed the authorisation of direct debits and subscriptions made on behalf of the Town Council. Cllr Smith raised the topic of ethical banking options, which had been discussed last year. The Mayor instructed the officers to investigate local bank options. Additionally, Cllr Hawken suggested that the subscription table should include frequency and subtotals, which the Mayor agreed to implement. Cllr Stewart requested clarification on who is authorised to sign, and the Mayor confirmed that updates would be made accordingly.

Decision: The council decided to investigate local bank options for ethical banking.

Decision: The subscription table will be updated to include frequency and subtotals.

Decision: Updates will be made to clarify authorised signatories.

Task: Investigate local bank options for ethical banking. @Officers

Task: Update the subscription table to include frequency and subtotals. @Officers

Task: Clarify authorised signatories. @Officers

10.25. Payments

Annual meeting of the Council - 19/05/2025

The council discussed the renewal of approval for the use of BACS or CHAPS to make payments on behalf of the Town Council. The Mayor confirmed that payments were approved.

Decision: The council decided to renew the approval for the use of BACS or CHAPS to make payments on behalf of the Town Council.

11.25. Payroll

The council discussed the authorization of the payroll provider Greaves, West & Ayre to continue making payments directly from the Town Council bank account. The Mayor noted a mistake which was corrected during the discussion. All councillors agreed to continue with the current payroll provider.

Decision: It was decided to authorise the payroll provider Greaves, West & Ayre to continue making payments directly from the Town Council bank account.

12.25. Municipal Calendar

The Municipal Calendar for the forthcoming year was reviewed. The calendar shows no meetings scheduled for July or August. A vote was held to determine if members wished to add any meetings during these months. The majority voted against adding any meetings.

Decision: It was decided not to add any meetings to the Municipal Calendar for July and August.

13.25. Appointment of Members to Committees

During the annual meeting, the council discussed the appointment of members to various committees and working groups for the forthcoming year. Councillors' preferences were considered, and the final list of committee members was presented. The chairs for each committee were elected, and it was noted that co-option might affect membership. The elected chairs are as follows:

- Staffing: Cllr Hawken
- Planning: Chair - Cllr Stewart, Vice Chair - Cllr Driver
- Environment: Chair - Cllr Driver
- Budget & Admin: Chair - Cllr Rowe

Decision: Councillors' preferences for committee memberships were considered and the final list was presented.

Decision: Chairs for each committee were elected.

Decision: Co-option may affect committee membership.

14.25. Terms of Reference

The council agreed that each Working Group will set its Terms of Reference at the first meeting. This decision ensures that each group has the autonomy to define its scope and objectives, tailored to its specific needs and functions. The Mayor emphasized the importance of having clear and defined terms to guide the operations and responsibilities of each Working Group.

Decision: It was decided that each Working Group will set its Terms of Reference at the first meeting.

15.25. Appointments to Outside Bodies

During the meeting, detailed appointments to various outside bodies were confirmed. These included roles in the Town Forum, Youth Project, Conservation Group, Friends groups, and liaison roles. The confirmed representatives are as follows:

- **Town Forum:** Cllrs Robertson and Mackenzie (Deputies: Cllrs Hawken and Rowe)
- **Youth Project:** Cllrs Rowe and Smith
- **Friends of Five Arches:** Cllrs Stewart and Robertson

- **Litter Champion Liaison:** Lesley (volunteer contact)

Other appointments were listed in an appended table, ensuring comprehensive representation across various external bodies.

Decision: Detailed appointments to various outside bodies were confirmed, including roles in the Town Forum, Youth Project, Conservation Group, Friends groups, and liaison roles.

16.25. Co-option onto the Council

The council discussed the need to proceed with the co-option process to fill vacant Town Council seats following the recent local election. It was agreed that there are four vacancies to be filled. The council decided to proceed with the co-option process. If more than four candidates apply, short presentations and a vote will follow to determine the successful candidates.

Decision: The council agreed to proceed with the co-option process to fill the four vacant Town Council seats.

17.25. General Power of Competency

The council discussed the recommendation in the report attached regarding the General Power of Competency. The resolution to adopt the General Power of Competency was put forward and agreed upon unanimously by all councillors.

Decision: The council unanimously agreed to adopt the General Power of Competency.

18.25. Barclays Bank Building

The council reviewed the enclosed report regarding the Barclays Bank Building. Stephen presented a proposal to consolidate offices and services into the former Barclays building, with potential for office and residential rental. A business plan is in place, and a survey will be commissioned before any decisions are made.

Cllr Hawken inquired about the funding source, which is likely from the Public Works Loan Board at an approximate rate of 2.8%. The discussion included planning, refurbishment costs, and accessibility considerations. The proposal was approved in principle.

Decision: The proposal to consolidate offices and services into the former Barclays building was approved in principle.

Task: Commission a survey for the Barclays Bank Building to assess feasibility.

@Stephen Robinson

19.25. Risk Management

The Financial Risk Management report was noted during the meeting. The Financial Risk Register has been reviewed and will be continually reviewed by all working groups throughout the year. Cllr Hawken expressed thanks to the Chief Officer for updating the report.

Decision: The Risk Register will be considered by all working groups in June.

20.25. Planning Committee

The minutes from the Planning Committee meeting held on 17th March were received and approved. The minutes were noted at the meeting of 14th April and were formally adopted during this session.

Decision: The minutes from the Planning Committee meeting held on 17th March were formally adopted.

21.25. Street Cleansing

The Council discussed options for enhancing street cleaning in the town centre, building on current NCC provision, in response to issues caused by seagulls. A proposal was made for a 1-month street washing trial using local contractors at an approximate cost of

£4,000. The Council supported the initiative, and officers were tasked with proceeding with planning.

Task: Proceed with planning for the 1-month street washing trial. @Stephen Robinson

22.25. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on 23rd June at 6:00pm.

Decision: The next meeting of the Council will be held on 23rd June at 6:00pm.

Meeting ended at 7:30pm