

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Council

Time and date

Monday 27 October 2025 at 18:00

Place

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council Unit 1, 82-88 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1BN

Minutes

Councillors present:

- Cllr John Robertson (Mayor, in the Chair)
- Cllr Janice Bowden
- Cllr Robert Bruce
- Cllr Rachel Driver
- Cllr Anne Forbes
- Cllr Ayrin Khan
- Cllr Rosemary McKenzie
- Cllr John Robertson
- Cllr Gary Smith
- Cllr Thomas Stewart
- Cllr Jane Turton
- Cllr Laura Hawkin
- Cllr Paul Hillier

Officers:

- Iain McCready (Chief Officer)
- Stephen Robinson (Operations Manager)

Also in attendance:

- Cllr Glen Sanderson (Leader, Northumberland County Council)
- Paul Jones (Director of Environment and Transport, NCC)
- Members of the public
- Representatives of the press

64.25 – Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brown, Smith and Seymour.

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Resolved: That the apologies for absence be accepted.

65.25 – Disclosure of Interests

No new disclosures of interest were declared in addition to those already registered.

Resolved: That the disclosures be noted.

66.25 – Presentation from Northumberland County Council

The Mayor welcomed Cllr Glen Sanderson, Leader of Northumberland County Council, and Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport, who attended to discuss current County Council work and its relationship with Berwick.

Cllr Sanderson outlined:

The County Council's 2025–26 budget preparations and £20m savings target.

Key priorities: maintaining free town centre car parking, investment in leisure facilities, and the £64m Berwick schools partnership programme.

Major developments including the reopening of the Northumberland rail line and the £10bn Blackstone/QTS data centre investment near Blyth, which will create jobs and fund a £110m Northumberland Investment Fund.

Environmental commitments including carbon offset measures, district heating potential, and renewable energy initiatives.

Questions from Councillors included:

Cllr Stewart raised concerns from parish and town councils about public transport and the loss of residential homes to holiday lets.

Cllr Sanderson confirmed these were recognised issues, with ongoing discussions with the North East Combined Authority and measures to support long-term rural bus services.

Cllr Forbes queried the allocation of new homes at the Five Arches site; only six had been let to local people.

Cllr Sanderson undertook to contact Bernicia and provide a written response via the Chief Officer.

Cllr Robertson highlighted issues around short-term lets and their effect on housing supply.

Cllr Sanderson and Mr Jones confirmed similar challenges existed across the county and were under review.

Cllr Khan asked about the breakdown of the £64m schools funding and timeframes for delivery.

Cllr Sanderson stated funding covered both the new high school and feeder schools, with planning approved and delivery to proceed as soon as possible.

The Mayor noted the importance of vocational training being included in the new campus, which Cllr Sanderson confirmed.

Cllr Driver queried environmental safeguards relating to the new data centre.

Mr Jones explained sustainable water recirculation and power connections, including renewable energy imports and potential for district heating schemes.

Cllr Khan raised local access to training in renewables and engineering.

Cllr Sanderson described investment in the Energy Central Learning Hub at Blyth and plans for similar vocational links in Berwick.

Cllr Mackenzie asked about regeneration support for Berwick's high street.

Cllr Sanderson invited the Town Council to work jointly with NCC on ideas for regeneration projects, with available funding from the £110m Investment Fund.

Cllr Turton queried future opportunities through the Borderlands Partnership.

Cllr Sanderson advised that while most funding was committed, the Council would continue to pursue suitable projects.

The Mayor raised two operational matters:

The Town Council's wish to progress the transfer of cemeteries once NCC costings were received.

Outstanding legal matters concerning the transfer of war memorials.

Mr Jones agreed to seek updates from NCC Legal Services within one week.

Members also discussed flooding in Spittal linked to a burst water main and historic mine workings. Mr Jones confirmed NCC were liaising with Northumbrian Water to investigate and that repairs and monitoring were ongoing.

67.25 – Open Session

One member of the public addressed Council.

Wendy Robertson questioned the transparency of Council decision-making, referring to closed discussions of the Tourism and Regeneration Task Group.

The Mayor assured her that a written response would be provided within three working days.

Cllr Robert Bruce queried a private meeting between the Operations Manager, Cllr Tom Stewart, and Mr Michael Heriot (Freemen of Berwick), and raised concerns about confidentiality and transparency.

The Mayor and Chief Officer confirmed the meeting was held to gather background information at councillors' request, with no decisions made.

The Mayor reiterated that related matters would be discussed in confidential session.

Cllr Bruce also raised several other issues:

Market operations and financial information, including staff payments.

Consultation on the Quayside pods project.

Removal of trees near the pump track.

Responses were provided by officers and the Mayor, who confirmed that:

Market operations were authorised by prior Full Council resolution.

Residents' concerns about the Quayside and pump track would be investigated.

Written responses would be provided within three working days.

Decision: That officers provide written responses to public questions within three working days.

68.25 – Minutes

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 22 September 2025 were considered.

Amendments and clarifications were noted:

Clarification of the abbreviation "Nem Con" as "no objection."

Confirmation that the pump track decision included both insurance and maintenance responsibilities.

Discussion regarding stonework beneath monoliths and potential vandalism; officers to review protective measures.

Decision: That the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 22 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

69.25 – Environment and Communities Working Group

Report presented by Cllr Jane Turton (Chair).

Key updates included:

- Lidl declined sponsorship for the bus stop bench.
- The burnt bin issue to be discussed at the next meeting.
- The play areas report due for completion by November.
- Winter planting ongoing, sponsorships running for a calendar year.
- Northumbrian Water repairing a leak near the Spittal War Memorial before Remembrance Sunday.
- A new bin to be installed at the top of Falloden Terrace with NCC permission.
- Consideration of missing trees on Riverside Walk deferred pending Northumbrian Water's engagement event on 4 November.

- Officers to bring Christmas tree location costings and budgets to the next meeting.

Decision: That the recommendation of the Working Group to install a litter bin at the top of Falloden Terrace, with NCC permission, be approved.

70.25 – Business and Administration Working Group

Report presented by Cllr Philip Rowe (Chair).

Key points included:

- The Working Group reviewed the Tourism and Regeneration Group's notes and supported the Quayside project.
- Officers to bring details of the Town Centre signage project to the November meeting.
- Discussion on potential future use of the Cows Building.
- The Market Task Group to invite an external market specialist to attend future meetings.
- Officers to gather festive light costings for November; planning for 2026 to start in January.
- Due diligence required on potential new premises before financial commitment.
- Expenditure versus budget reviewed; EMRs to be used as needed.
- Supported a £1,200 grant to Berwick Rotary Club for road closure costs at the Christmas Market.
- Budget planning for 2026–27 discussed to ensure obligations and community support.
- The AGAR inspection discrepancy of one extra day noted and accepted.
- New internal auditor David Newman appointed at £950 per year.
- Officers to explore more cost-effective accounting software.
- NCC Governance Review documents to be discussed at Full Council.

Decision: That Council approve continuation of the Quayside artisan units pilot as recommended.

Decision: That Council authorise officers to seek necessary landowner permissions for the Quayside units.

Decision: That Council approve a £1,200 grant to Berwick Rotary Club for the Christmas Market road closure.

Decision: That Council approve the appointment of David Newman as internal auditor at £950 per year.

Decision: That Council agree to complete and return the NCC Governance Review pre-consultation questionnaire.

71.25 – Community Governance Review

Following discussion, it was resolved:

That Berwick Town Council has the right number of councillors.

That the Council support the creation of three wards (Berwick, Tweedmouth, and Spittal) in place of the existing seven.

That the Council remain a single combined parish.

That officers seek clarification and adjustments to boundaries with East Ord to ensure properties are not divided.

Decision: That the Chief Officer be authorised to complete and return the questionnaire on behalf of the Council.

72.25 – Date of Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday 24 November 2025 at 6.00pm.

73.25 – Exclusion of the Public

Resolved: That in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of confidential items relating to staffing or commercially sensitive matters.

The meeting closed at approximately 7.30pm.