

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Full Council

Time and date

Monday 24 November 2025 at 18:00

Place

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

Notes

Councillors Present

- Cllr John Robertson (Mayor, in the Chair)
- Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie (Deputy Mayor)
- Cllr Janice Bowden
- Cllr Graham Brown
- Cllr Robert Bruce
- Cllr Rachel Driver
- Cllr Anne Forbes
- Cllr Mike Greener
- Cllr Laura Hawken
- Cllr Paul Hillier
- Cllr Philip Rowe
- Cllr Catherine Seymour
- Cllr Gary Smith
- Cllr Thomas Stewart
- Cllr Jane Turton

Officers Present

- Iain McCready, Chief Officer
- Stephen Robinson, Operations Manager

74.25 – Members of the Council

Noted.

75.25 – Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Ayrin Khan.

Resolved: That the apologies be accepted.

76.25 – Disclosure of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

77.25 – Open Session

No public speakers were present.

Council noted that NCC Cllr Brooke was delayed at a meeting with Bernicia and agreed to suspend standing orders to allow her to speak on arrival.

A minute's silence was held in memory of Kate Robson, former Mayor and Borough Councillor.

78.25 – Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2025

Council reviewed the minutes and agreed the following amendments:

1. Cllr Smith should have been recorded as having submitted apologies, not present.
2. Cllrs Greener, Hawken, and Rowe were omitted from attendance and should be added.
3. A data centre enquiry was wrongly attributed to Cllr Driver; this was raised by Cllr Hawken.
4. A statement regarding the Borderlands Partnership was incorrectly attributed to Cllr Turton; this was also made by Cllr Hawken.
5. Written responses from NCC officers (via Cllr Sanderson) remained outstanding and would be chased.
6. Cllr Bruce was awaiting a written response to his enquiries.

Resolved: With these corrections, the minutes were approved and signed.

79.25 – Part 1: Items for Decisions

This is a structural agenda break. No individual decisions were taken at this point.

Budget Preparation 2026–27

Council discussed the draft 2026–27 budget in detail, with the following topics considered individually.

80.25.1 – Budget Figures – Clarification Required

Cllr Bruce highlighted discrepancies in income and expenditure totals.

The Chief Officer agreed to review and circulate corrected figures within three working days.

80.25.2 – Schedule III Income – Variability and No Trend

Cllr Hawken requested a five-year view of Schedule III income.

Cllrs Driver and Stewart explained that Schedule III receipts fluctuate significantly from year to year due to investment performance and land rents. The pattern was described as “very up and down”, with no usable trend.

Council agreed no further analysis was required.

80.25.3 – Salmon Queen 80th Anniversary Event – £20,000

Council discussed extending the event to mark the 80th anniversary. Members noted:

- Potential to secure partnerships/sponsorship
- Desire for greater visibility and community involvement
- Additional operational costs

Approved unanimously for inclusion in the draft budget.

80.25.4 – Market Promotion & Marketing – £20,000

Council reviewed the need to support Berwick Market through:

- Mobile lighting rigs to improve winter trading
- Increased promotional activity
- Refurbishment of the Hyde Hill phone box area to improve the market approach

Approved in principle (1 abstention, Cllr Bruce)

80.25.5 – Play Equipment Replacement Programme – £50,000

Informed by the play audit and ongoing maintenance pressures, Council supported:

- A rolling programme of equipment replacement
- Prioritisation of high-risk or high-wear sites

Approved unanimously.

80.25.6 – Osborne Road Play Area Resurfacing – £15,000

Council noted the need for resurfacing for safety and compliance reasons.

Approved unanimously.

80.25.7 – Floral Displays – Increase to £15,000

Members supported increasing the floral displays budget due to:

- Rising costs
- Community expectations
- Opportunities for business sponsorships

Approved in principle (1 abstention, Cllr Seymour).

80.25.8 – Additional Planters – £10,000

The Council discussed options for planters at:

- High Hill
- Castlegate
- Other areas where planting in-ground is constrained

Concerns included potential street clutter and maintenance routes.

Approved in principle (2 abstentions, Cllr Seymour, Cllr Bruce).

80.25.9 – Festive Lights – £20,000

Pre-season testing revealed failures in multiple fittings.

Council supported a phased renewal programme.

Approved in principle (2 abstentions, Cllr Seymour, Cllr Bruce).

80.25.10 – Pump Track – £10,000 per year

Council noted this was part of a previously agreed three-year funding commitment.

80.25.11 – Tree Planters & Street Trees Programme – £15,000

Members discussed:

- Suitability of new locations
- Conflicts with utilities
- Whether trees should be planted in planters or in-ground
- Impacts on highways, parking and access

Supported in principle, subject to feasibility report.

Approved unanimously

80.25.12 – Website Upgrade – £25,000

Council discussed the need for:

- A modern, accessible website
- Improved resident communication
- Dedicated staff time for updates

A £25,000 allocation was supported, comprising:

- £10,000 for development
- £15,000 for staff time and content management

Approved in principle (2 abstentions, Cllr Seymour, Cllr Bruce).

80.25.13 – Projector Offer – Cllr Brooke

Upon arriving, NCC Cllr Brooke offered to secure a replacement projector for the Council through NCC.

Council expressed thanks and accepted the offer.

80.25.14 – Long-Term Budget Sustainability – Schedule III Phased Replacement

Council discussed reducing reliance on Schedule III income for core operations.

The following two-year phased approach was supported in principle:

- **Year 1 (2026–27):** Replace **£70,000** through the precept
- **Year 2 (2027–28):** Replace the remaining **£70,000**

This would allow *all* Schedule III funds to be directed to projects, grants, events, and improvements.

Full modelling will return to Council in January.

81.25 – Notes of the Environment & Communities Working Group

Council received the notes and endorsed the **following recommendations**:

1. Proceed with installation of new goal posts at Spittal.
2. Note the failure of Christmas light fittings during pre-testing and the emergency replacement actions taken under officer spending powers.
3. Continue evaluating alternative suitable sites for the Jimmy Strength statue with planning and H&S considerations.
4. Improve communication and practical action relating to the climate emergency declaration.
5. Work with NCC to explore improved accessibility at war memorials.
6. Raise concerns about the impact of Maltings works at the next Town Forum.

82.25 – Notes of the Business & Administration Working Group

Council received the notes and agreed the **following recommendations**:

1. Continue exploring relocation options, including investigation of the former Barclays Bank building.
2. Progress the town centre signage project.
3. Support ongoing development and improved operation of Berwick Market.
4. Approve recommended grant applications and implement improvements to the grants process.
5. Continue work on play park equipment planning and budgeting.
6. Note expenditure vs budget and EMR usage.

83.25 – Planning Committee

Council:

- **Noted** the minutes of the meeting held on 06/11/2025
- **Approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 04/09/2025

No discussion took place regarding the Berwick Infirmary pre-application.

84.25 – Freeman Trustees

Seven nominations were received:

- Cllr Thomas Stewart
- Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
- Cllr Robert Bruce
- Cllr Mike Greener
- Cllr Philip Rowe
- Cllr Laura Hawken
- Mrs Lesley Stephenson

A paper ballot was conducted.

The following five nominees were elected:

- Cllr Thomas Stewart
- Cllr Philip Rowe
- Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
- Cllr Mike Greener
- Cllr Laura Hawken

85.25 – Date of Next Meeting

Monday 15 December 2025 at 6.00pm.

86.25 – Part 2 – Exclusion of the Public

No items.

87.25 – Confidential Matters

No items.

The meeting closed at 20:40.