

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Council

Time and date

Monday 15 December 2025 at 18:00

Place

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

Minutes

88.25. Members of the Council

Members in attendance (15):

- Cllr John Robertson (Mayor, in the Chair)
- 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 Ayrin Khan
- Cllr Philip Rowe
- Cllr Catherine Seymour
- Cllr Gary Smith
- Cllr Thomas Stewart
- Cllr Jane Turton

Apologies for absence:

- Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie (Deputy Mayor)
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89.25. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie**.
All other members were present.

90.25. Disclosure of Interests

Members were invited to declare any interests.
No disclosures of interest were declared.

91.25. Open Session

The Chair invited members of the public to address the Council.

A representative from Berwick Arts Choir thanked the Council for consideration of grant support and outlined the positive impact the funding would have on forthcoming concerts.

Mr Kay, Deputy Director of the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival, addressed the Council regarding the festival's community engagement and outreach work, including school programmes and public events. He highlighted the importance of Council funding in sustaining this activity.

Members questioned representatives on funding sources, community engagement, and economic impact. It was explained that funding was received from Arts Council England, the British Film Institute, and other sources, and that the festival generated significant economic benefit for the town through visitor spend.

Members noted the Council's limited events budget and the need for careful prioritisation.

92.25. Minutes

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 24 November 2025 were considered.

Cllr Laura Hawken raised several corrections, including spelling errors and inaccuracies in recorded discussion. Members debated the accuracy of the minutes in relation to Schedule III income and the precept decision.

Cllr Catherine Seymour queried the recording of her abstention during a vote. It was confirmed that this had been checked against the meeting audio recording.

The minutes were approved, with agreement that greater care would be taken to ensure accuracy in future records.

93.25. Part I – Items for Decision

Items for decision were considered under the relevant agenda headings below.

94.25. Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group

The Chair summarised the outcomes of the recent meeting of the Budget and Administration Working Group.

Members reviewed expenditure against budget, considered variances, and discussed the value of local and national subscriptions. The Working Group recommended integrating the community volunteer database into the Town Council website to reduce hosting costs.

Grant Applications

Berwick Arts Choir

The Working Group recommended that the grant be split across two financial years.

Decision:

The Council agreed to award a total grant of £1,000 to Berwick Arts Choir, comprising:

- **£500 in the current financial year, and**
- **£500 in the next financial year.**

Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival

An application for funding of £2,500 was considered.

Following debate, the matter was put to a vote.

Decision:

The Council approved the award of a £2,500 grant to the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival.

Vote recorded: 8 votes in favour, 6 votes against.

Service Level Agreements

The Working Group recommended the introduction of **Service Level Agreements (SLAs)** for future funding arrangements.

Decision:

The Council approved the use of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for future funding to reduce administration and improve budget planning.

Use of Town Council Van and Materials – Three Fields Community Event

The Working Group recommended supporting the **Three Fields Community Event** through practical assistance.

Decision:

The Council agreed to:

- **approve the use of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council van to support the Three Fields Community Event, and**
 - **approve the purchase of wooden boarding to enable the creation of reindeer decorations for the event.**
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95.25. Budget (Projects)

The Council considered the budget report and discussed project priorities for the forthcoming year, including the impact of the precept on residents and the need to balance essential services with new initiatives.

Members noted that the **Pump Track (Youth Project)** had been **previously approved by Full Council** and was therefore not part of the prioritisation exercise, although it formed part of the overall budget context.

Members further noted that **Schedule III income fluctuates significantly from year to year and cannot be reliably predicted**. As a result, the Council agreed that Schedule III monies should be **directed towards projects and grants**, rather than used to fund **core or ongoing activities**, to ensure greater financial stability and more effective budget planning.

Project Prioritisation Exercise

Members considered a list of **ten potential budget proposals** set out in the agenda papers and were asked to **prioritise projects** within the available funding envelope.

The proposals presented were:

1. **Salmon Queen event** – £20,000
2. **Marketing and promotion / Market promotion** – £20,000
3. **Playground maintenance** – £10,000
4. **Equipment replacement programme** – £50,000
5. **Floral displays** – £7,500
6. **Additional planters** – £10,000
7. **Hyde Hill tree planters** – £15,000
8. **Christmas lights** – £20,000
9. **Website refurbishment** – £25,000
10. **Service Level Agreements (SLAs)** – £20,000

Members discussed each proposal, taking account of affordability, deliverability, impact on the precept, and alignment with the Council's Strategic Plan. Members were **polled on their priorities** in order to inform decision-making.

Agreed Priorities

Following the prioritisation exercise, the **four highest-ranked projects were agreed**:

- **Salmon Queen event** – £20,000
- **Marketing and promotion** – £20,000
- **Playground maintenance** – £10,000
- **Equipment replacement programme** – initially proposed at £50,000, with agreement to **commence at £10,000** and review funding subject to any surplus Schedule III income

Members voted on the agreed priorities. **Cllr Catherine Seymour** expressed opposition; however, the proposals were agreed.

Decisions:

- The Council agreed the prioritisation of the four projects listed above for the next financial year.
 - The Council agreed to a phased increase of the precept by £70,000 per year over two years, totalling £140,000, to replace Schedule III funding.
 - The Council agreed to prioritise projects within the £60,000 budget available for 2026/27 without further precept increase for grants or project spending.
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96.25. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on **Monday 19 January 2026 at 18:00.**

97.25. Part 2 – Confidential Items

No confidential items were raised.

98.25. Confidential Matters

None reported.