

# BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



## Council

---

### Time and date

Monday 19 January 2026 at 18:00

### Place

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

---

### Notes

#### 1.26. Members of the Council

This agenda item was not discussed in the provided transcript segment.

#### 2.26. Open Session

The meeting commenced with an open session where members of the public were invited to make representations, ask questions, and provide evidence related to the business on the agenda. The Deputy Mayor outlined the rules, stating that the session would last for 15 minutes in total, with each person limited to three minutes.

One member of the public raised a concern about graffiti under the bank mill, suggesting that wardens should address the issue again. The Deputy Mayor acknowledged the concern, and the session concluded without further questions.

**Task:** Operations Manager to consider / schedule graffiti removal at Bank Mill (as resources allow). @Operations Manager

#### 3.26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Robinson and Councillor Grain Brown. The Deputy Mayor confirmed the absences, and no further discussion was held on this item.

#### 4.26. Disclosure of Interests

Councillors were asked to disclose any interests they might have in the matters to be discussed. The Deputy Mayor mentioned that everyone had read the disclosures and detailed any relevant interests. There were no additional comments or corrections, and the item was concluded swiftly.

#### 5.26. Minutes

The minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council meeting held on 15th December 2025 were reviewed. Councillors discussed various updates and corrections. Councillor

Rachel Driver provided an update on the Santa collections, noting that Andy's Man Club raised £535. Councillor Laura Hawken commented on the service level agreements, suggesting that a note be added regarding criteria yet to be agreed. Councillor Catherine Seymour raised a query about project prioritisation and publicising sponsorship opportunities for floral displays. The Deputy Mayor confirmed that these updates would be included in the minutes, and the minutes were then agreed upon by those present.

**6.26. Part 1- Items for Decisions**

The Deputy Mayor introduced the review of notes from the Working Groups and discussed recommendations to the Full Council. The discussion moved swiftly to the budget item, highlighting the importance of making informed decisions based on the working group's input.

**7.26. Budget**

The budget discussion was extensive, focusing on two scenarios for the financial year 2026-2027. Scenario 1 proposed a precept uplift of £70,000, resulting in a precept set at £471,775, with a shortfall covered by a one-off excess Schedule 3 apportionment. Scenario 2 suggested a higher precept to balance the budget without relying on the Schedule 3 excess, setting the precept at £518,672. Councillors debated the merits of each scenario, considering the impact on residents and the importance of financial prudence. Councillor Tom Stewart advocated for Scenario 2, emphasising the benefit of using Schedule 3 funds for community projects. Ultimately, Scenario 2 was adopted, setting the precept at £518,672, with a vote of seven in favour, three against, and no abstentions.

**Task:** Officers to finalise the budget paperwork on the basis of Scenario 2 and proceed with the precept request at £518,672.

**8.26. Notes of the Business and Administration Working Group.**

Councillor Philip Rowe provided an update from the recent meeting of the Business and Administration Working Group. The group reviewed the budget and expenditure versus budget year to date, discussed grant applications, and scrutinised reports. The grant application from Friends of Castle Park was rejected due to budget constraints. The group also considered bank reconciliations and agreed they were in order. Future agenda items included meeting structure reviews, operational reserve levels, and partner organisation forums. Councillor Laura Hawken commented on the importance of prioritising projects and the change in grant application frequency.

**9.26. Notes of the Environment and Communities Group**

Councillor Jane Turton summarised the recent meeting of the Environment and Communities Group. Discussions included the cost of a bus shelter, securing land for community use, and positive feedback from traders regarding quayside units. The group recommended engaging Berwick Academy pupils to design and paint the units. The proposal for a memorial garden at Palace Green was debated, with the group agreeing to improve the area with a pocket park instead. The Five Archers management plan was discussed, emphasising litter concerns. Updates from the town forum were considered important, and the group discussed the complexity of adding names to memorials. The Woodland Walk Project was progressing, and the Salmon Queen Task Group had a positive meeting. Future agenda items included town centre gardens, additional trees, and public water fountains. Recommendations were made to engage with Berwick Academy, create a pocket park, and present the management plan to Northumberland County Council.

**Task:** Engage Berwick Academy pupils to design and paint the quayside units.

**Task:** Improve the area at Palace Green with a pocket park instead of a memorial garden.

**Task:** Present the Five Archers management plan to Northumberland County Council.

**10.26. UK Town of Culture**

The Deputy Mayor provided a briefing on the UK Town of Culture programme, explaining the opportunity for Berwick to bid in the small town category. The aim is to develop an ambitious programme for 2028 and build an enduring legacy. The council was asked to endorse pursuing an expression of interest (EOI) and support the formation of a bid working group. Councillor Tom Stewart highlighted the potential funding available for shortlisted towns. The council voted to support the EOI and the formation of the working group.

Further discussion focused on the structure of the bid, emphasising the need for an accountable body to oversee the finances, which would likely be the Northumberland County Council (NCC). The importance of having a consulting-based organisation to manage the bid was highlighted, as no single organisation in Berwick could handle it independently. Ross mentioned the involvement of volunteer organisations and the tight turnaround required, which led to the suggestion of forming a formally consulting residence group to advance the bid. The idea was to create a strong collective position to secure the £60,000 funding necessary for the bid. There was a mention of Create Berwick supporting planning days with consultant Matt Baker, who has experience in shaping cultural agendas.

Phil brought up the benefits observed from Bradford's City of Culture programme, which included long-term legacy investments, development of buildings, and various exhibitions and residencies that attracted world-class cultural figures. This programme had delivered multimillion-pound investments into Bradford, and Phil suggested that Berwick could leverage similar benefits.

Catherine expressed excitement about the bid and proposed that the council support it. The proposal was seconded, and the council members voted in favour of endorsing the bid. It was decided to nominate the Chief Officer and Councillor Rowe as liaison people for the initial working group.

**Task:** Establish the bid working group and progress the EOI work in partnership with NCC and local cultural partners.

#### **11.26. Tourist Tax**

The council discussed the government's plan to allow the regional mayor to raise a tourist tax. Concerns were raised about the funds being spent across the region rather than locally in Berwick. Phil argued that the funds raised from the tourist tax in Berwick should be spent in Berwick and not used for the mayor's personal projects or other areas. Laura supported the notion of controlling the funds raised locally. The council agreed to have the Chief Officer draft a letter, with the text being reviewed by the council members before it is sent. The proposal was put to a vote, and the council members unanimously agreed.

**Task:** Draft a letter expressing that if a tourist tax is raised, the spending decisions should be taken locally. @Chief Officer

#### **12.26. Date of Next Meeting**

The Deputy Mayor confirmed that the next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday 23rd February 2026 at 18:00. This item was noted without further discussion.

#### **13.26. Part 2 - Confidential Items**

This agenda item was not discussed in the provided transcript segment.

#### **14.26. Confidential Matters**

This agenda item was not discussed in the provided transcript segment.