

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Full Council [In-person]

Time and date

Monday 23 February 2026 at 18:00

Place

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

TO: **ALL MEMBERS OF THE Full Council [In-person]**

Dear Councillor

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

Iain McCready

Proper Officer

18 February 2026

Agendas and papers for all meetings can be accessed on <https://www.berwick-tc.gov.uk/meetings>

Members' Apologies

Members are requested to submit their apologies and any Declarations of Interest on the relevant form attached to this agenda to Chief.Officer@Berwick-tc.gov.uk by 5pm on the day before the meeting.

Recording of Council Meetings

This meeting is digitally recorded, broadcasted and retained until the minutes are signed.

Questions by the Public

At the discretion of the Town Mayor, those members of the public, residing or working within the Council's boundary, will be invited to make representations or ask questions in respect of the business on the agenda, or other matters not on the agenda, for a maximum of 3 minutes per person or 15 minutes overall.

Members of the Public are welcome and have a right to attend this Meeting.
Please note that there is a maximum capacity of 10 in the public gallery.

INDEX

	Page Nos.
15.26 - Members of the Council	4
16.26 - Apologies for Absence	4
17.26 - Disclosure of Interests	4
Disclosures of Interest	6
18.26 - Open Session	4
19.26 - Minutes	4
2026-01-19 - Full Council [In-person] - Minutes	7
20.26 - Proposed Purchase of Building.	4
Premises_REstructured_Full_Council_v1	10
21.26 - Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group.	4
2026-02-09 - Budget and Administration Working Group - Minutes	19
22.26 - Notes of the Environment and Communities Working Group	4
2026-02-02 - Environment and Communities Working Group [In-person] - Notes	25
23.26 - Stage One Community Governance Review Public Consultation	4
doc00026820260216130356	30
24.26 - Quayside Huts	4
Quayside Units Update	31
25.26 - Santander Closure	4

26.26 - Recycling	4
27.26 - Date of Next Meeting	4
28.26 - Part 2 - Confidential Items	4
29.26 - Confidential Matters	4
30.26 - Staffing Working Group	5
Appendices	5

AGENDA

15.26.Members of the Council

Members of the Council: Cllr John Robertson (Mayor), 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 Ayrin Khan, Cllr Philip Rowe, Cllr Catherine Seymour, Cllr Gary Smith, Cllr Thomas Stewart and Cllr Jane Turton

16.26.Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

17.26.Disclosure of Interests

See attached.

18.26.Open Session

Members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. This is for a period of 15 minutes overall and is limited to 3 minutes per person.

19.26.Minutes

To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council meeting held on 19th January 2026

20.26.Proposed Purchase of Building.

To review and discuss the report attached.

For Decision

21.26.Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group.

To receive an update from the Lead Member on the recent meeting of the Working Group and to consider any recommendations.

22.26.Notes of the Environment and Communities Working Group

To receive an update from the Lead Member on the recent meeting of the Working Group and to consider any recommendations.

23.26.Stage One Community Governance Review Public Consultation

To discuss the latest NCC Community Governance Review Public Consultation.

24.26.Quayside Huts

To discuss the report

25.26.Santander Closure

To discuss drafting a letter of opposition to Santander's proposed closure

26.26.Recycling

Councillors to discuss NCC's decision for residents to have a third recycling bin.

27.26.Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday 27 April 2026 at 18:00

28.26.Part 2 - Confidential Items

TO PASS A RESOLUTION to exclude members of the public and press from the meeting at Part 3 of the agenda (if required) in view of any confidential items under discussion. These will usually relate to exempt staffing matters or contractual matters which may be commercially sensitive.

29.26. Confidential Matters

Any confidential matters (if required) arising from discussions of the Working Group notes.

30.26. Staffing Working Group

To receive an update from the Lead Member of the Staffing Working Group and to consider any recommendations



Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council

Disclosure of Interests Form

(Localism Act 2011)

Notification by a Member of a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Interest in a Matter under Consideration at a Meeting

Please complete the form below to indicate any agenda items in which you have an interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary or other interest in an item, please also indicate whether you wish to speak (refer to the Council's Code of Conduct for details).

As required by the Localism Act 2011, I declare that I have a disclosable pecuniary or personal interest in the following matter(s):

MEETING: _____

DATE: _____

NAME OF COUNCILLOR: _____

Agenda Item No.	Type of Interest (Disclosable Pecuniary / Other)	Reason for Interest	Wish to Speak (Yes/No)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to the Chief Officer before the meeting begins.

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.



Proposed Acquisition of the Former Barclays Bank Building (Hide Hill) Revenue Generation, PWLB Borrowing Pathway and NCC Support

Report to Full Council

Author: Chief Officer

Date: 17 February 2026

Purpose: To seek Full Council's decision on whether to progress to public consultation and further detailed financial/survey work.



Executive summary

This report sets out an indicative financial case and a clear decision pathway for the potential purchase and refurbishment of the former Barclays Bank building on Hide Hill, to provide a long-term Council base with additional income-generating space and residential units. A key benefit is the opportunity to help create low-cost homes for people in Berwick by bringing unused upper floors back into use, likely delivered with a suitable housing partner (with Northumberland County Council support).

Decision requested

Full Council is asked to decide whether to progress the proposal to the next stage by: (i) undertaking a public consultation on the potential purchase/refurbishment and the option of borrowing, and (ii) instructing officers to complete the further due diligence needed to inform a later “proceed / do not proceed” decision (including survey information and updated financials).

What the proposal would deliver

- A permanent Town Council base (reducing reliance on leased accommodation and giving greater long-term stability).
- Income generation from residential units above (and/or other lettable space), helping to offset borrowing costs.
- Creation of low-cost housing in the town centre by converting currently under-used floors into homes, with a focus on local benefit (subject to partner arrangements and legal/operational advice).
- Potential to support wider town-centre regeneration by re-occupying a prominent building and increasing footfall.

Headline figures (indicative, for illustration)

The figures below are indicative and will be refined through a full building survey, professional costings and the consultation process. They are provided to show order of magnitude and the relationship between borrowing costs, avoided rent and potential rental income.

Item	Indicative figure / note
Indicative total project cost (purchase + works)	£1.34m (includes purchase price £322,500 plus indicative works; excludes any refinement from survey/professional costings).
Illustrative borrowing assumption	£1.3m PWLB loan, 6% fixed, 50 years (illustrative – to be updated at decision stage).
Illustrative loan repayment	~£82,478 per annum (c. £6,873 per month if averaged across 12 months).
Current leased premises cost (avoided if relocated)	~£13,000 per annum (expected to increase over time).
Indicative residential rental income (gross, before management)	c. £37,600–£66,800 per annum (depending on layout and final rental levels).



Net impact on the taxpayer (illustrative)

Assuming borrowing costs of ~£82,478 per annum and avoided leased premises costs of ~£13,000 per annum, the net annual funding requirement before residential income is ~£69,478. Indicative residential income then reduces that requirement. The table below uses a 12% management allowance (within the 8–15% typical range) and a tax base of 3,667.98 Band D equivalents.

Scenario (illustrative)	Net rental income p.a. (after 12% management)	Net annual cost to taxpayers	Approx. Band D impact p.a.
Conservative (lower income)	£33,088	£36,390	£9.92
Conservative (upper income)	£50,688	£18,790	£5.12
Prospective (lower income)	£40,480	£28,998	£7.91
Prospective (upper income)	£58,784	£10,694	£2.92

Low-cost housing: local benefit and delivery approach

The conversion of the upper floors into residential units provides a practical route to creating additional housing in Berwick without consuming new land. Subject to the final layout, the indicative capacity is six 2-bedroom apartments, with potential for one-bedroom units depending on the agreed balance of civic and commercial space.

How “low-cost” could be achieved in practice

- Rents can be set at affordable levels (for example aligned to Local Housing Allowance benchmarks or below open-market levels), subject to professional advice and Council policy.
- A partnership approach is likely to be required for day-to-day management and compliance (e.g., repairs, allocations, tenancy management), while retaining local benefit through nomination arrangements.
- Northumberland County Council has indicated it can support by sharing knowledge, advising on delivery routes and helping identify a suitable partner to manage the residential units.

This approach would allow the Town Council to use a town-centre asset to help meet local housing needs, while also generating revenue that reduces the net cost of borrowing to residents.



The building proposal at a glance

The current working assumption (to be validated through survey and design work) is:

- Ground floor: Council civic accommodation and/or income-generating commercial space.
- Upper floors: residential conversion (with layouts shown in Annex A for illustration).
- Approach: phased decision-making – consultation and due diligence first; final decision only after updated information is available.

Indicative costs (to be refined)

The indicative cost estimate in this report uses broad £/m² rates and simple area assumptions. These will be replaced with professional costings once survey and design information is available.

- Ground floor works (c. 350m², assuming ~1/4 refurbished for civic/office use): ~£131,500 (indicative).
- Upper floors (first and second floors combined c. 505m², residential conversion @ £1,750/m²): ~£883,750 (indicative).
- Indicative works subtotal: £1,015,250.
- Purchase price (negotiated): £322,500.
- Indicative total project cost: £1,337,750.

PWLB / borrowing pathway and decision points

Borrowing approval is a staged process. The Council is not being asked to commit to borrowing at this stage; rather, to authorise the next steps so that members and the public can make an informed decision later.

1. Full Council decision: whether to proceed to public consultation and further due diligence.
2. Public consultation: on the proposed purchase/refurbishment and the option of borrowing.
3. Due diligence: commission a full building survey, refine costs and income assumptions, develop delivery and management approach for residential units.
4. Updated report to Full Council: present consultation findings and updated financial/survey information.
5. Full Council decision: whether to proceed (including whether to apply for borrowing approval and borrow funds).

Legal considerations (high-level)

Any acquisition and borrowing would be progressed in accordance with the Council's standing orders, financial regulations and relevant statutory requirements. Legal advice will be obtained as appropriate, including on property acquisition, borrowing, consultation and the delivery/management model for any residential units.



Northumberland County Council engagement

Northumberland County Council officers have engaged with the Town Council on the proposal and have indicated willingness to support the work through sharing knowledge and assisting in identifying a suitable housing management partner, as well as providing reference points from similar schemes elsewhere.

Recommendations

That Council:

- **Notes the PWLB / DLUHC borrowing process;**
- **Agrees to progress the proposal to the next stage by undertaking a public consultation on the potential purchase/refurbishment and the option of borrowing;**
- **Instructs officers to prepare the supporting financial information required to inform that consultation and any future borrowing approval application; and**
- **Receives a further report to Full Council presenting the consultation findings and updated financial and survey information, at which point Full Council will determine whether to proceed (including whether to apply for borrowing approval and borrow funds).**



Annex A – Indicative layout diagrams (for illustration only)

The diagrams below are provided for indicative layout discussion only. They are not final designs and will be validated and refined through survey, design work and professional advice.

Original floor plan (as provided)





Option 1 – indicative layout





Option 2 – indicative layout





Annex B – Calculation notes (illustrative)

- Loan repayment (illustrative): annual payment for principal P over 50 years at 6% fixed is calculated using a standard annuity formula. For $P = £1,300,000$ the annual payment is approximately £82,478.
- Net annual funding requirement before residential income: £82,478 (loan) minus £13,000 (avoided rent) = £69,478.
- Net annual cost to taxpayers: £69,478 minus net residential income (after management).
- Band D impact: net annual cost divided by tax base of 3,667.98 Band D equivalents.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Budget and Administration Working Group

Budget and Administration Working Group – Notes of Meeting

Date: Monday 9 February 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Venue: Council Offices, Marygate

32.26 Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

Apologies were received from: Cllr Seymour.

33.26 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

34.26 Notes of Previous Meeting (Monday 12 January 2026)

The Working Group reviewed the notes of the previous meeting held on Monday 12 January 2026. **Officers informed the Group that there had been issues with the agenda software and that some errors were present within the notes. Officers confirmed the software was now working as it should.**

It was agreed that the notes would be amended to reflect an accurate record of attendance and, consequently, the voting numbers.

RESOLVED: That the notes be amended to reflect the true account of who was present (and the voting record where applicable),

35.26 Barclays Building

The Working Group considered the report circulated with the agenda regarding the Barclays Building, including options for purchasing the building. An Officer summarised the negotiation process and confirmed an agreed price of £322,500, reduced from the initial asking price of £345,000.

Members discussed the principle of proceeding to a formal offer, the need for further detail on renovation requirements and potential costs, and the implications of the short-term lease with Wilmot Dixon, including the benefit of early rental income. The Working Group also noted the process and indicative timescales for a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) application and the requirement for public consultation.

RESOLVED (by majority, 5–1): To recommend to Full Council that:

- 1. Officers begin the PWLB process, noting that public consultation will be required.**
 - 2. Officers arrange a full building survey as soon as possible.**
 - 3. A formal offer be made to the vendor for the Barclays Building at £322,500.**
(Please note that this is only possible if a public consultation has been conducted and a PWLB application is successful).
-

36.26 Council Meeting Structure 2026–27

The Working Group reviewed the report on the proposed Council meeting structure for 2026–27. The report outlined proposed meeting frequencies and invited consideration of daytime Working Groups, hybrid options, and revisions to the scheme of delegation.

Members discussed the need to balance accessibility for residents and working-age councillors with efficiency, officer capacity, and the effectiveness of the current trial arrangements. It was agreed that the current structure should be reviewed as part of the trial evaluation before any major changes are implemented.

RESOLVED: To recommend the proposed meeting structure to Full Council, with:

- **flexibility for each Working Group to determine its meeting times; and**
- **provision for hybrid meetings where appropriate.**

The proposed structure includes: 10 Full Council meetings, 10 Budget & Administration meetings, 6 Environment & Communities meetings, 4 Staffing meetings, and Planning meetings as currently scheduled.

Additional report will be tabled at Full Council.

37.26 Standing Orders

The Working Group considered proposed amendments to Standing Orders relating to Council meetings and public participation. The proposal included:

Budget and Administration Working Group - 2026-02-09

- amending Standing Order 3 so that public participation is **normally at the start** of the meeting; and
- adding an explicit **Chair's clarification exception** to permit brief questions and answers with members of the public during item discussion where the Chair considers it helpful, with appropriate safeguards and with the Chair retaining discretion to decline.

RESOLVED (unanimously): To recommend the amendments to Standing Order 3 to Full Council for approval.

38.26 Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

The Working Group reviewed the report and recommendations on SLAs and agreed the importance of a consistent and transparent approach.

RESOLVED (unanimously): To recommend to Full Council:

- 1. To adopt the SLA eligibility criteria and minimum SLA content as the standard framework for issuing and renewing SLAs; and**
 - 2. To recommend that a Task Group be established (maximum 8 members) to determine which organisations should be eligible to be included in an SLA.**
-

39.26 Grant Funding

The Working Group discussed the current position on grant funding and noted that no new grants had been awarded since the last meeting due to available funds. Members discussed the benefit of clearer processes and criteria to support future grant-making, and the importance of ensuring awards are justified and aligned to Council priorities.

NOTED: That grant funding arrangements will be reviewed further and brought back through the appropriate route as required.

40.26 Council Strategy

The Working Group reviewed the current Council Strategy document. Members noted that the existing action list had been requested previously by Full Council and agreed that the strategy review should now focus on ensuring the Council has a clear set of goals for this administration.

The Working Group agreed that reviewing and refreshing the Council Strategy will be particularly beneficial for new councillors, and will help determine the Council's priorities and goals across the remainder of the current administration.

RESOLVED (unanimously): To recommend to Full Council that the Council Strategy be reviewed and refreshed, including appropriate member involvement, to agree the Council's goals for this administration.

41.26 Town of Culture

Budget and Administration Working Group - 2026-02-09

The Working Group received an update on Berwick's entry into the Town of Culture competition, including the steering group meeting held on 29 January 2026. Members noted the developing workstreams, including work on a differentiation statement and bid writing, and the intention to undertake public consultation to inform the Expression of Interest.

The Working Group discussed the importance of having an accountable body to lead and facilitate the bid process and noted that external support had already been identified for marketing activity.

RESOLVED (unanimously): To recommend to Full Council that Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council lead and facilitate the Town of Culture 2028 bid and approve an appropriate budget to support the Expression of Interest consultation activity.

42.26 Canadian Pipes and Drums (August 2026)

The Working Group discussed the proposal to host the Canadian Pipes and Drums in August 2026, including the need to plan early and keep arrangements proportionate.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

1. To recommend to Full Council that the Canadian Pipes and Drums be hosted in August 2026; and
 2. To recommend an indicative budget of **£2,000**.
-

43.26 Tourism and Regeneration – Verbal Update

The Working Group received a verbal update from the latest meeting of the Tourism and Regeneration Working Group. Members welcomed progress on town centre mapping and wayfinding proposals and noted Northumberland County Council's commitment to replace/renew finger posts and wayfinding signage. Members supported a heritage design approach for the new signage.

RESOLVED (unanimously): That the heritage design option be supported for the new wayfinding signage.

44.26 Town Centre Improvements (Market Task Group update)

The Working Group considered the notes of the Market Task Group and proposals for **Town Centre improvements**.

RESOLVED (unanimously): To recommend to Full Council that **£20,000** be allocated for Town Centre improvements, to be funded from the **excess Schedule III monies** received this year.

45.26 Reserves

The Working Group considered the reserves position and agreed the principle of maintaining a defined General Reserve expressed as a number of months of Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE). The

target range for the General Reserve was set at **3–6 months NRE**, with the precise target to be confirmed through the 2026–27 budget and risk assessment.

The Working Group also agreed that earmarked reserves should only be held where each reserve has a clear purpose, indicative cost, and review/drawdown plan. The Working Group further agreed that proposals relating to reserves funded from the excess Schedule III monies should be included under this item.

RESOLVED:

1. **To maintain a defined General Reserve expressed as months of NRE, target range 3–6 months. FRO to bring a report to the next B&A Working Group.**
 2. **That earmarked reserves should be held only where each reserve has a clear purpose, indicative cost, and review/drawdown plan; and**
 3. **To recommend to Full Council the allocation of £39,000 to boost the operating/general reserve, funded from the excess Schedule III monies received this year.**
-

46.26 Notification of Receipts (December)

The receipts for December were noted.

47.26 Expenditure vs Budget – Year to Date

The Working Group reviewed the report on expenditure versus budget year to date. Members raised queries regarding the categorisation of certain items, including bus shelter works and market non-wage expenditure. Clarifications were provided, including the treatment of funding received to offset market-related costs.

NOTED: The report was received and noted.

48.26 Bank Reconciliations (December)

The Working Group reviewed the December bank reconciliations. Members discussed accounting software usability and the potential benefits of exploring a move from Rialtas to Scribe.

RESOLVED: To explore the feasibility of switching accounting software from Rialtas to Scribe and report back to the B&A working Group.

49.26 Items for Next Agenda and Actions Arising

The Working Group confirmed items and actions arising, including:

- RFO to progress the actions arising from the meeting as required (including follow-on financial and process items agreed); and

- A draft reserves/earmarked reserves policy to be brought to the next meeting for review (Minute 45.26).
-

50.26 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Budget and Administration Working Group will be held on:
Monday 13 April 2026 (time/venue as per agenda).

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Environment and Communities Working Group

Time and date

Monday 2 February 2026 at 18:00

Place

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

Group Members

Cllr Jane Turton – Chair
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie – Deputy Mayor
Cllr Janice Bowden
Cllr Robert Bruce
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In Attendance

Cllr Jane Turton – Chair
Cllr Janice Bowden
Cllr Robert Bruce
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart
Cllr Mike Greener

Notes

1. Apologies for Absence

The meeting commenced with apologies for absence. These were received from Cllr Mackenzie and Hawken. Cllr Robertson, although not a voting member gave his apologies as he had planned to attend. Cllr Hawken sent in a written contribution.

2. Disclosures of Interest.

None Received.

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The chair asked if everyone had reviewed the notes from the previous meeting. There was general agreement that the notes had been seen and were acceptable. A minor issue regarding spelling was noted but deemed insignificant. The group confirmed the notes without further amendments.

4. Decisions from Full Council

The chair provided an update on the decisions from Full Council log. All projects were progressing with many completed but there was a delay with some due to the length of time taken for the legal process.

The discussion included detailed deliberations about potential new allotment sites, particularly the expansion of Shielfield Park plot and new sites along the Five Arches. There was emphasis on the importance of allotments for community use.

The group noted the need to chase Northumberland County Council for a meeting to discuss the potential sites. It was noted that the work to bring water into the 5 Arches had begun. It was mentioned that the installation of a water metre on the adopted part of the road was agreed upon. Tenants who had not worked on their allotments were issued letters, resulting in two allotments being given up.

The pump track project has not gone into planning yet as due to the size of the site, there are a lot of costly statutory surveys. There are discussions with NCC into splitting the applications into individual elements of the project to reduce costs. A copy of the initial feasibility study was requested by Cllr Bruce.

The work with Berwick Academy's Artist in residence to paint the quayside huts has not yet begun but officers are in contact via the Maltings.

5. Town Forum Updates

Officers provided an update from the last Town Forum meeting held in December. The only ones relevant to Berwick Town Council were an update on the Conservation Area Management Plan, which had involved extensive survey work by volunteers. Despite the goodwill of the volunteers, the plan had stalled due to staffing issues at County Hall. Councillors expressed frustration over the lack of progress.

Other topics included the UK Town of Culture Competition and a very informal discussion on the potential closing of the Old Bridge to traffic and the potential impact that may have on traffic flow and businesses.

6. War Memorials

Legal transfers are ongoing and officers will request an update from NCC.

7. Woodland Walk

The community asset transfer is with the solicitors. Officers will contact for an update.

8. Salmon Queen 2026

The chair briefly mentioned the Salmon Queen task group's last meeting which had occurred that day and gave a brief update. Which included; an 85-year-old lady was discovered who may be the oldest surviving former Queen, who will hopefully be able to take part in the celebration by crowning the new Queen.

The group discussed the plans for three-day event and the ongoing efforts to secure grant funding. The meetings of the task group have been pulled forward to allow notes to be produced before the next meeting of the Environment and Communities working group.

9. 5 Arches

The management plan for the Five Arches had been agreed by full Council and sent to Northumberland County Council. Officers confirmed that they would chase NCC officers to arrange a meeting. There was a detailed discussion about the maintenance of the tarmac path, which had been installed several years ago and was now deteriorating due to tree roots.

The group agreed that any adoption of the site should include contingency plans for major infrastructure repairs.

10. Pocket Park Palace Green

The group discussed the creation of a Pocket Park Garden within Palace Green. The project had involved volunteers making a visible difference, and thanks were extended to them. There was a brief discussion about preserving historical paths as part of the project. Concerns were raised about digging up historic fabric, and it was agreed that these concerns should be formally documented and sent via email.

11. Northumberland College

The group discussed the proposal from Northumberland College to engage students in practical projects. The college would act as the principal contractor, ensuring health and safety compliance. The project involved building additional polytunnels at the nursery site, providing students with real-world experience. The group agreed that this was a worthwhile recommendation to the Council.

12. Grove Gardens South

The group discussed future uses of Grove Gardens South Park, considering options such as allotments, community gardens, and special educational needs play areas. Concerns about vandalism and engagement with local residents were raised. It was suggested that a survey be conducted to gather feedback from the immediate neighbours, though previous surveys had yielded low engagement. The group acknowledged the need for finding a use for the park.

Under the previous administration, officers had been tasked with contacting Bernicia to see if they had a potential use for the park. Cllr Turton asked if officers could see if this contact had been made.

13. Northumbria in Boom

The discussion centred around the Northumbria in Bloom report presented by the Chief Officer. It was noted that there had been a meeting with a fair turnout, and another meeting was scheduled for the following week. The conversation revealed that the current year is considered a building year, focusing on improving existing community outreach and green initiatives rather than aiming to win awards.

The importance of involving community groups and town council in these efforts was emphasised. The group suggested that officers should contact the groups directly to try and bolster volunteer numbers.

14. Items For Future Agendas

The discussion on future agenda items was extensive, covering several topics. Items already included are:

Town Centre Garden/Additional Trees

Assets of Community Value

Public Access Defibrillators

Spittal Promenade

Spa Well Issues,

+ more recently

Far East Campaign Memorial,

Public Water Fountain Reinstatement,

Public Access EpiPens,

Northumbria in Bloom,

Grove Gardens South and

Palace Green Pocket Park (the last two having already been discussed)

There was a detailed conversation about the reinstatement of public water fountains, including potential funding sources like the Heritage Revival Fund and discussion also covered the addition of new items such as the EpiPens and the need to address issues at Spittal Promenade, which has been affected by sand accumulation and weather conditions.

The idea of purchasing giant chess pieces for the promenade was mentioned as a potential community engagement activity.

The conversation concluded with a consensus to add EpiPens, and Public Water Fountain Refurbishment to the next agenda and to bring forward Spittal Promenade.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The chair confirmed the date of the next meeting to be Monday 9th March 2026.

Recommendations

Item 11, Northumberland College – Full Council to give officers permission to progress the community partnership with Northumberland College

Item 12, Grove Gardens South – Full Council to approve officers to conduct a survey of the houses surrounding Grove Gardens South about the parks future uses.

Item 13, Northumbria in Bloom – Full Council to approve continuing to progress Northumbria in bloom as laid out in the report.



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref: AH

Enquiries to: Annie Howliston

Email: CGR@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 624811

Date: February 2026

Dear Parish Clerk

Community Governance Review 2026 – Public Consultation – Stage 1

Stage 1 of the Community Governance Review public consultation went live on **1 February and will run to 30 April 2026.**

While your parish may have provided initial views during the pre-consultation stage, we now invite you to formally participate by completing the online questionnaire, available via our webpage **Nland.cc/CGR**. If you would prefer a paper copy, this can be provided.

The CGR webpage also provides supporting information, including FAQ's, current parish arrangements, parish five-year forecast, and maps.

During the first stage of consultation, we will be seeking the views of residents, community groups, voluntary organisations, and stakeholders. This will be supported by our Communications and Marketing Plan to raise awareness of the Community Governance Review across Northumberland.

To support publicity for Stage 1 of the public consultation, please find enclosed an A5 poster for display where appropriate.

A social media toolkit will be issued shortly, which can be used alongside existing media outlets utilised by your Parish Council. A5 leaflets are also available on request for display in parish offices or public community spaces, where appropriate.

If you have any queries at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Everyone's views matter and will help shape the future of parish community governance.

Annie Howliston
Elections Officer (AEA Cert.)



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BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Quayside Units.

Overview.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council, with the permission of Northumberland County Council installed 4 small, temporary sales units on Berwick Quayside to act as micro business incubators for the creative makers of Berwick and the surrounding areas.

Northumberland County Council issued a temporary licence until the end February 2026. Officers have requested that this be extended.

Despite the winter launch date, the scheme has been successful with over 40 enquires and 8 traders who have all had multiple visits to trade. There has also been a lot of positive feedback from members of the public via social media.

There are further traders who wish to book as the year progresses and the weather improves. As soon as the licence is extended, these bookings can be confirmed.

Cost to date.

The pilot was funded through a Destination North East grant of £10,000. The total spend to date is £6,162 for the purchase and installation of the units.

Proposal.

To install a further 2 units along with a temporary level surface to increase accessibility for all patrons using the remaining budget from the grant.

Wider Benefits.

The proposal creates further opportunities for local creatives/makers to sell their work directly to the public. The anticipated rise in footfall will drive the economy in the local area for the established shops and cafes.

Creatives/makers use the units as business incubators to build a customer base and then expand into empty retail units within the town.

Bring the quayside back into use as an economic driver as it was when built.

Recommendation

Full Council to approve officers to extend the quayside units to six with permission from NCC