

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Full Council

Time and date

Monday 27 April 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**

Dear Councillor

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

Iain McCready

Proper Officer

22 April 2026

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

The meeting is recorded for council use only.

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.

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AGENDA

1.26. 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.

2.26. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

3.26. Disclosure of Interests

See attached.

4.26. 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.

5.26. Minutes

To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council meeting held on 23 February 2026.

6.26. Part 1- Items for Decisions

Review the notes of the Working Groups and discuss any recommendations to Full Council.

7.26. Policies

To agree to adopt the updated Policies attached.

8.26. Notes of the Environment and Communities Group

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

9.26. 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 to Full Council.

10.26. Motions from Cllr Robert Bruce

To consider motions requesting reports on the income and expenditure of the Wednesday and Saturday Town Markets for 2025/26 and the costs associated with the production and distribution of the Council Bulletin.

11.26. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday 11th May 2026 at 18:00.

12.26. 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.

13.26. Confidential Matters

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



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



Full Council

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

Minutes

15.26. Members of the Council

Members in attendance (13):

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

16.26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllrs Anne Forbes, Ayrin Khan and Paul Hillier.

17.26. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures interests received from any of the councillors present.

18.26. Open Session

During the open session, members of the public were invited to make representations, ask questions, and provide evidence related to the business on the agenda. Stephen Scott, a resident, raised concerns about the proposed purchase of an office building, questioning the financial viability and potential disruption costs. He also challenged the notion that the move would increase footfall in the town and expressed doubts about relocating the visitor centre. The Mayor acknowledged these points and clarified that this isn't the only option for the visitor centre and that they had approached the council about the move.

Lizzie Middlemiss, another resident, expressed her support for the council maintaining a presence on Berwick High Street (Marygate), emphasising the importance of accessibility and respect for residents. She criticised the council's response to public concerns and highlighted the need for the council to remain central to the town. The Mayor responded by assuring that the council staff do their best to assist residents and that members of the public are directed to Northumberland County Council (NCC) only when it is an issue that they deal with. Also, the council will continue to have an office, potentially at Hide Hill.

A third resident questioned the timing and necessity of the proposed purchase, given the ongoing Community Governance Review (CGR) and suggested considering a commercial lease instead. The Mayor explained that the council had taken its time to carefully consider the proposal and negotiate the price, emphasised the potential benefits of the building, including local housing and regarding the CGR, highlighted the effort in creating Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council.

19.26. Minutes

Cllr Robert Bruce noted that his apology for absence was not recorded.

Cllr Catherine Seymour noted she had requested a named vote for item '7.26 Budget' which was not recorded.

The Mayor apologised for the late distribution of corrected documents, which caused some frustration among councillors.

After which, Councillors voted to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th January 2026 with the amendments.

20.26. Proposed Purchase of Building.

Points raised during the discussion included housing needs, conversations with housing partners, cost and time of repayments, projected impact on precept, risk assessments, spending requirements, inadequacies of the current premises against benefits of a new building and consistency of payments on a purchased building as opposed to those on a rented building.

Cllr R Bruce asked that it be included in the minutes that he is against the proposal.

Decisions

Council resolved to:

1. Note the Public Works Loan Board / Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities borrowing process;
2. Instructs officers to prepare the supporting financial information required to inform a public consultation and any future borrowing approval application;
3. Agrees to progress the proposal to the next stage by undertaking a public consultation on the potential purchase / refurbishment and the option of borrowing; and
4. A further report be brought 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).

21.26. Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group.

Cllr P Rowe presented the notes from the Budget and Administration Working Group meeting held on 9th February 2026 and during the discussion raised the following points.

- Recommendations regarding a meeting structure moved to next Full Council due to limited feedback.
- The next Budget and Administration Working Group meeting is scheduled for 13th April 2026.

Decisions

Council resolved to approve the following recommendations of the Working Group:

Standing Orders

1. Amendment to Standing Order 3 so that public participation is normally at the start of the meeting; and
2. 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.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

1. To adopt the SLA eligibility criteria and minimum SLA content as the standard framework for issuing and renewing SLAs,
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.
3. The Working Group to establish the eligibility criteria and bring back to a future meeting of Full Council.
4. That membership of the Task Group include Cllrs J Bowden, R Bruce, R Mackenzie, J Robertson and P Rowe

Council Strategy

1. That the Council Strategy be reviewed and refreshed, including appropriate member involvement, to agree the Council's goals for this administration.

Town of Culture

1. That Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council lead and facilitate the Town of Culture 2028 bid and approve an appropriate budget of £2,000 to support the Expression of Interest consultation activity.

Canadian Pipes and Drums (August 2026)

1. That the Canadian Pipes and Drums be hosted in August 2026; and
2. To approve a budget of £2,000.

Town Centre Improvements

1. That £20,000 be allocated for Town Centre improvements, to be funded from the excess Schedule III monies received this year. This funding will support various improvement projects, including market enhancements and infrastructure upgrades.

Reserves

1. To maintain a defined General Reserve expressed as months of NRE, target range 3 – 6 months. RFO 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. The allocation of £39,000 to boost the operating/general reserve, funded from the excess Schedule III monies received this year.

22.26. Notes of the Environment and Communities Working Group

Cllr J Turton presented the notes from the Environment and Communities Working Group meeting held on 2nd February 2026.

During which Cllr C Seymour raised concerns about the legal stipulations regarding the use of parks, noting that they must remain children's parks or revert back to NCC if closed. Officers provided an update regarding correspondence with Strategic Estates at NCC because legal copies of the documents that the Town Council holds states that the land may be used as public open space and no response or evidence has been provided to the contrary.

Decisions

Council resolved to approve the following recommendations of the Working Group:

Northumberland College

1. That officers progress the community partnership with Northumberland College with the college acting as principal contractor, ensuring health and safety compliance and the project involving students building additional polytunnels at the nursery site.

Grove Gardens South

1. That officers conduct a survey of the houses surrounding Grove Gardens South about the parks future uses.

Northumbria in Bloom

1. That officers continue to progress Northumbria in Bloom as laid out in the report which included:
 - a. Noting the progress to date and the planned partnership meeting.
 - b. Supporting the inclusion of community groups and partners.
 - c. Endorsing the proposed approach of starting in 2026 and refining over the next few years to build a stronger community

23.26. Stage One Community Governance Review Public Consultation

The council discussed the latest NCC Community Governance Review Public Consultation document. The discussion highlighted that this was an informational item to keep councillors informed about the consultation process. The mayor clarified that the removal of this tier of local government was not an option in this review. Councillors expressed their views, and it was noted that the consultation was intended to ask the community about their opinions on the matter. The council agreed to move on from this item, recognising it as an update for information purposes.

24.26. Quayside Huts

Cllr G Brown proposed that the meeting move straight to the recommendation.

Decision

Council resolved to approve that officers extend the quayside units to six with permission from NCC.

25.26. Santander Closure

The council discussed drafting a letter of opposition to Santander's proposed closure. It was agreed that sending the letter would record the council's opposition to the closure and support for the staff who would lose their jobs. Also agreed was the suggestion of asking Santander to consider a pop-up shop in the workspace, similar to that provided by Barclays and TSB.

Decision

Council resolved to approve that the Chief Officer, in conjunction with the Mayor, draft and send a letter of opposition to Santander's proposed closure with reference to the points raised during the discussion.

26.26. Recycling

Councillors discussed NCC's decision for residents to have a third recycling bin. It was noted that the idea was part of an expanded recycling strategy being rolled out by NCC, which might raise concerns among residents, particularly in areas with limited space.

Decision

Council resolved to inform residents about the new third recycling bin in the next newsletter, clarifying that it is a County Council initiative.

27.26. Date of Next Meeting

Decision

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Monday, 27th April 2026 at 18:00. This was confirmed without further discussion.

Decision

Council resolved to exclude members of the public and press from the meeting at Part 2 of the agenda in view of any confidential items under discussion. These will usually relate to exempt staffing matters or contractual matters which may be commercially sensitive.

28.26. Part 2 - Confidential Items

29.26. Confidential Matters

No confidential items were raised.

30.26. Staffing Working Group

Council resolved to agree the notes and approve the recommendations of the Working Group.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Vexatious, Persistent, Aggressive and Abusive Complaints and Correspondence Policy

Meeting date: 27 April 2026

Report author: Chief Officer / Responsible Financial Officer

Proposed Adoption of Revised Vexatious, Persistent, Aggressive and Abusive Complaints and Correspondence Policy

Council is asked to consider adopting the revised Vexatious, Persistent, Aggressive and Abusive Complaints and Correspondence Policy in place of the Council's existing Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy.

The current policy is limited in scope and is largely focused on repeated complaints. The revised policy provides a more up-to-date and comprehensive framework for dealing not only with vexatious and persistent complaints, but also aggressive, abusive and inappropriate behaviour directed at the Council, its officers and councillors.

The revised policy is better suited to the Council's current structure and working practices. It reflects the role of the Chief Officer, Mayor and councillors more clearly, broadens the policy to cover correspondence, information requests, behaviour at meetings and offices, and online or social media conduct connected to Council business, and introduces clearer safeguards around recording, review and appeal.

Adopting the revised policy would give the Council a clearer, more proportionate and more robust process for managing unreasonable behaviour, while still protecting the right of individuals to raise legitimate complaints or concerns.

Recommendation

Council is recommended to adopt the revised Vexatious, Persistent, Aggressive and Abusive Complaints and Correspondence Policy.

Vexatious, Persistent, Aggressive and Abusive Complaints and Correspondence Policy

Purpose: to provide a clear and proportionate framework for managing unreasonable, vexatious, persistent, aggressive or abusive behaviour directed at the Council, its officers and its councillors.

1. Introduction

Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council is committed to dealing with complaints, correspondence and requests for information in a fair, accessible and consistent way. The Council recognises, however, that in a small number of cases the behaviour of a complainant or correspondent may become unreasonable, vexatious, persistent, aggressive, abusive or otherwise unacceptable.

This policy sets out how the Council will identify and respond to such behaviour, while continuing to ensure that legitimate concerns may still be raised through the proper channels.

This policy applies to complaints, general correspondence, requests for information, Freedom of Information requests, contact with officers or councillors, and conduct at Council meetings, Council premises or in communications relating to Council business.

The Council remains committed to treating all persons fairly, proportionately and without discrimination, while also protecting councillors, staff and public resources from unacceptable conduct.

2. Purpose of the Policy

- to provide a clear framework for identifying and managing unreasonable, vexatious, persistent, aggressive or abusive behaviour;
- to protect officers, councillors and others acting on behalf of the Council from harassment, intimidation, abuse or disproportionate demands;
- to ensure that Council resources are used properly and efficiently;
- to maintain confidence in the Council's procedures by ensuring that they are not undermined by unacceptable behaviour; and
- to ensure that any restrictions imposed are proportionate, recorded, reviewed and subject to appropriate safeguards.

3. Scope

This policy applies to behaviour directed at the Council, its officers, its councillors acting in their official capacity, and others acting on behalf of the Council.

- complaints;
- repeated correspondence;
- Freedom of Information or other information requests;
- attendance at Council offices or meetings;
- telephone, written, email or online contact; and
- behaviour on social media where this relates to Council business or to officers/councillors in connection with their Council role.

This policy does not prevent any person from making a legitimate complaint, raising a concern with the appropriate authority, contacting the police, seeking legal advice, or using any statutory right of appeal or review.

4. Definitions

Unreasonable behaviour

Conduct which, because of its nature or frequency, places a disproportionate burden on the Council, its officers or councillors, or which impedes the proper consideration of a complaint or issue.

Vexatious behavior

Conduct or correspondence pursued without sufficient grounds, and primarily intended to cause annoyance, disruption, distress or inconvenience rather than to resolve a genuine issue.

Persistent behaviour

Repeated pursuit of the same matter, or repeated contact on closely related matters, after the Council has already responded fully and reasonably.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Language or actions, whether spoken, written or digital, which are threatening, intimidating, insulting, harassing or abusive.

Cyber harassment

Online abuse, trolling, malicious publication, targeted harassment, or other intimidating digital behaviour through email, websites, social media or similar channels.

5. Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour

5.1 Persistent or vexatious behaviour

- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance;
- refusing to accept that certain matters fall outside the Council's powers, remit or procedures;
- repeatedly raising the same issue after it has been fully answered;
- changing the substance of a complaint as it is being considered;
- raising numerous detailed but immaterial questions and insisting they are all answered;
- submitting repeat complaints with only minor variations;
- pursuing parallel complaints on the same matter through multiple channels without good reason;
- making excessive demands on officer or councillor time by frequent, lengthy or overlapping correspondence;
- seeking to reopen matters already concluded without significant new evidence; and
- making complaints with insufficient grounds and which appear designed to cause inconvenience or disruption.

5.2 Aggressive, abusive or intimidating behaviour

- threats of violence or actual violence;
- abusive, offensive or inflammatory language;
- derogatory or discriminatory remarks;
- intimidation, harassment or personal attacks;
- malicious or knowingly false allegations against officers or councillors;
- persistent unwanted contact after a clear request to stop;
- inappropriate contact with family members or associates of officers or councillors;
- unwanted photography, recording, surveillance or following of individuals; and
- cyber harassment, including targeted abuse on social media or other digital platforms.

6. Assessment and Decision-Making

The Chief Officer will normally be responsible for assessing whether conduct falls within this policy.

- the nature of the behaviour;
- whether it is a one-off incident or part of a pattern;
- the impact on officers, councillors and Council resources;
- whether the individual may have a vulnerability or require reasonable adjustments;
- whether the proposed response is proportionate; and
- whether any complaint concerning a councillor should more properly be referred under the relevant standards regime.

Where appropriate, the Chief Officer will consult the Mayor or Chair of Council before any significant restriction is imposed. If the behaviour is directed at the Chief Officer, the assessment will be undertaken by the Mayor, with appropriate officer or legal advice as necessary.

A written record will be kept of all decisions made under this policy.

7. Staged Response

Stage 1: Warning

- explaining why the behaviour is considered unacceptable;
- asking for a change in approach;
- enclosing or referring to this policy; and
- warning that restrictions may be imposed if the behaviour continues.

Stage 2: Formal Restrictions

- requiring all contact to be in writing only;
- requiring contact to be through a single named officer;
- limiting the frequency of contact;
- declining to respond to correspondence which repeats matters already answered;
- restricting telephone or in-person contact;
- requiring appointments for attendance at Council offices;
- requiring meetings to take place only in the presence of a witness;
- restricting direct contact with individual councillors or officers where appropriate; or
- treating a matter as closed where it has already been properly considered.

The restrictions imposed must be proportionate to the behaviour and clearly explained in writing.

Stage 3: Immediate Action

- ending contact immediately;
- requiring the individual to leave Council premises;
- reporting the matter to the police;
- referring the matter to legal advisers; and
- taking such other lawful action as is necessary and proportionate.

8. Safeguards, Review and Appeal

- be proportionate;
- be recorded with reasons;
- specify how long it is to remain in place; and
- be subject to review.

Restrictions will normally be imposed for an initial period of between three and six months, after which they will be reviewed.

An individual may appeal against restrictions by writing to the Mayor within 28 days of being notified of them. The appeal will be considered by the Mayor and two councillors not previously involved in the matter, with advice taken as required. Their decision will be final within the Council's internal procedures.

Where the Mayor has been directly involved in the matter, the Council may nominate another appropriate councillor to fulfil this role.

9. Complaints Concerning Councillors

Nothing in this policy replaces the proper standards process for complaints about councillors.

Where a complaint concerns the conduct of a councillor and appears to fall within the Members' Code of Conduct or standards arrangements, the complainant should be directed to the appropriate standards process and, where relevant, to the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority.

The Council may still apply this policy to behaviour which is vexatious, abusive or otherwise unacceptable, even where the underlying subject matter concerns a councillor.

10. Exceptions and Continued Rights

This policy does not prevent any person from:

- reporting a matter to the police;
- contacting their MP or other elected representatives;
- seeking legal advice;
- contacting the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman where appropriate;
- making a legitimate Freedom of Information request; or
- bringing a genuinely new complaint or concern for consideration.

New matters will be considered on their own merits, even where restrictions are already in place.

11. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Information recorded under this policy will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation and the Council's relevant policies.

Information will only be shared where necessary for the operation of this policy, the protection of staff or councillors, legal compliance, or the prevention and detection of crime.

12. Support for Officers and Councillors

The Council recognises the effect that unreasonable and abusive behaviour can have on officers and councillors.

Officers and councillors should report incidents promptly. The Council will provide appropriate support, record incidents where necessary, and take proportionate action to protect those acting on its behalf.

13. Monitoring and Review

The Chief Officer will maintain a record of cases dealt with under this policy.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, guidance or Council practice.

14. Legal and Procedural Context

This policy should be read alongside the Council's Complaints Procedure, Freedom of Information arrangements, Data Protection Policy, Equality Policy, Code of Conduct for Members, and any relevant Health and Safety or Lone Working procedures.

It operates within the framework of relevant legislation, including the Local Government Act 1972, Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Document Control

Adopted by Council on	[date]
Review date	[date]
Responsible officer	Chief Officer
Status	Draft for adoption

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Councillor – Officer Relations Protocol

Meeting date: 27 April 2026

Report author: Chief Officer / Responsible Financial Officer

This Protocol has been prepared with reference to recognised sector guidance, including material published through the Civility and Respect Project and guidance issued by the Local Government Association. It is intended to reflect good practice for a parish or town council setting, while being tailored to the governance structure of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council.

1. Purpose and status

This Protocol sets out the expected working relationship between councillors and officers of Berwick-upon-Tweed Town Council. Its purpose is to support lawful decision-making, effective administration, mutual respect and public confidence.

This Protocol should be read alongside the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by the relevant principal authority standards framework, the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, staff policies and the Council's complaints arrangements. It does not replace those documents; it complements them.

The Protocol applies to all councillors and all employees of the Council, whether permanent, temporary, part-time or agency staff acting on the Council's behalf.

2. Guiding principles

Councillors and officers are essential to the good governance of the Council, but they perform different roles. Councillors are elected to represent the community, set the Council's policy direction, approve the budget and take formal decisions. Officers are employed to advise the Council, implement its decisions, manage day-to-day operations and ensure that the Council acts lawfully and properly.

The relationship between councillors and officers must therefore be characterised by:

- mutual respect and courtesy;
- recognition of each other's distinct roles;
- professionalism and honesty;
- civility, including in disagreement;
- lawful and transparent decision-making;
- confidentiality where required; and
- a shared commitment to serving the people of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

3. The role of councillors

Councillors are responsible for:

- representing residents and bringing forward community concerns;
- developing and determining Council policy through the Council's formal decision-making structures;
- scrutinising reports, asking questions and holding the administration to account through proper channels;
- participating in meetings in a prepared, respectful and lawful manner;
- acting collectively where decisions are made by Council or committee; and
- maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles.

4. The role of officers

Officers are responsible for:

- providing impartial, professional and timely advice;
- implementing decisions taken by Full Council and any properly delegated body or officer;
- managing Council services, staff, property, contracts, records and finances;
- ensuring reports and recommendations are prepared to support lawful and informed decision-making;
- advising members on legal, procedural, financial and governance issues; and
- maintaining political neutrality and serving the Council as a corporate body.

5. Mutual expectations

Councillors and officers are expected to:

- treat one another with respect, including where views differ;
- avoid personal criticism, disparaging remarks and public undermining;
- communicate in a timely, reasonable and proportionate manner;
- recognise that challenge and scrutiny are legitimate, but bullying, intimidation and harassment are not;
- avoid behaviour which could damage staff welfare, member wellbeing or the reputation of the Council; and
- resolve concerns early and informally wherever possible before matters escalate.

Neither councillors nor officers should seek to use their position to secure personal advantage, preferential treatment or improper influence.

6. Decision-making and authority

The Council acts through formal resolutions of Full Council and through any lawful delegations contained in Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or specific resolutions.

Working Groups and Task Groups do not make binding decisions. Officers therefore take instruction from the Council's lawful decisions and delegated arrangements, not from the personal views of individual councillors acting alone.

Individual councillors, including the Mayor, do not have authority to direct officers unless such authority has been expressly delegated by the Council or arises from an approved policy, procedure or role description.

7. Member requests to officers

Requests for information or assistance should be reasonable, relevant to Council business and made through appropriate channels.

Councillors may seek factual information and professional advice from officers in order to discharge their role. However, councillors must not:

- require officers to undertake party-political work;
- seek to involve officers in political disputes or campaigning;
- insist on immediate responses except where there is genuine urgency;
- make excessive or repetitive demands on officer time; or
- bypass agreed reporting or management arrangements.

Where a request would involve significant work, conflict with legal duties or interfere with operational priorities, the officer may refer the matter to the Chief Officer for direction.

8. Officer management and line management

Officers are accountable through the Council's management structure. The Chief Officer is responsible for the management of staff unless the Council has expressly provided otherwise.

Councillors must not:

- give line-management instructions to officers below Chief Officer level;
- involve themselves in routine staff supervision;
- seek to allocate work directly to individual employees, except through agreed channels;
- criticise staff personally in public meetings, correspondence or social media; or
- attempt to influence appointments, disciplinary matters, grievance matters or pay outside the proper process.

Concerns about officer performance or conduct should be raised privately with the Chief Officer, or with the Mayor where the concern relates to the Chief Officer.

9. Advice, reports and professional disagreement

Councillors are entitled to challenge officer advice robustly but courteously. Officers are equally entitled, and professionally obliged, to give advice that members may not wish to hear where that advice is necessary for legality, financial prudence, good governance or reputational protection.

Where members disagree with officer advice, that disagreement should be addressed through reasoned discussion, requests for clarification, further report-writing or, where appropriate, the taking of alternative lawful decisions.

Councillors must not pressure officers to alter professional advice, suppress relevant information, omit material risks or present a misleading picture to the Council or the public.

10. Confidentiality and information

Councillors and officers will from time to time have access to confidential or exempt information. Such information must be handled lawfully and only used for the purpose for which it was provided.

Councillors must not disclose confidential information without lawful authority. Officers must ensure that information is shared in accordance with legal requirements, Council policy and the need for members to perform their role.

The existence of a disagreement does not justify unauthorised disclosure, selective leaking or public commentary on confidential matters.

11. Public meetings, media and social media

Council business should normally be conducted through formal meetings, agreed communications channels and authorised officer processes.

Councillors and officers must take care in public statements, including on social media, to avoid:

- personal attacks;
- comments which undermine staff or councillors unfairly;
- disclosure of confidential information;
- statements which imply authority where none exists; and
- conduct likely to bring the Council into disrepute.

Where a councillor or officer is acting as an authorised spokesperson, they should do so accurately, lawfully and in a way that reflects agreed Council positions.

Nothing in this Protocol prevents legitimate democratic debate or fair criticism. The distinction is between respectful scrutiny and conduct that becomes abusive, intimidating or improper.

12. Access to Council offices, staff and documents

Councillors are entitled to reasonable access to Council information necessary for the performance of their role, subject to legal restrictions, confidentiality and data protection requirements.

Any access to offices, staff or records must be proportionate and must not disrupt operations. Officers may make practical arrangements for access, timescales and the format in which information is provided.

Councillors do not have unrestricted rights to inspect every document held by the Council; rights of access depend on their role, the nature of the information and the legal basis for disclosure.

13. Equality, dignity and wellbeing

The Council is committed to a working environment in which councillors and officers are treated with dignity and respect.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, intimidation and abusive conduct are unacceptable. The Council expects high standards of behaviour in person, in writing, online and at meetings.

This Protocol should be read with the Council's relevant employment, dignity at work, grievance and complaints procedures, and with any separate policy on vexatious, aggressive or abusive correspondence.

14. Raising concerns and resolving difficulties

Where issues arise between councillors and officers, they should wherever possible be addressed promptly, calmly and informally in the first instance.

If an issue cannot be resolved informally:

- concerns about an officer should be raised with the Chief Officer;
- concerns about the Chief Officer should be raised with the Mayor;
- concerns about a councillor's conduct should be dealt with under the relevant Members' Code of Conduct and standards arrangements; and
- wider behavioural concerns may be managed under the Council's complaint, dignity at work or vexatious correspondence procedures, as appropriate.

The aim should always be to restore proper working relationships where possible, while protecting lawful process and individual wellbeing.

15. Review and publication

This Protocol should be adopted by Full Council, published on the Council's website and kept under regular review.

The Chief Officer should monitor its operation and bring back any recommended amendments where experience, legislation, guidance or Council practice indicate that changes are required.

Reference note

This Protocol should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, staff employment policies, complaints arrangements, dignity at work arrangements and the applicable Members' Code of Conduct and standards framework.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Environment and Communities Working Group

Time and date

Monday 09 March 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 Janice Bowden
Cllr Robert Bruce
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In Attendance

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

Notes

1. Apologies for Absence

None Received – All Members Present.

2. Disclosures of Interest

None Received. Cllr Mackenzie questioned if a declaration was needed but it was determined that it was not.

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. Officers were tasked to chase up some outstanding tasks.

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 need for the Festive Lights working group to meet was highlighted. Officers were awaiting a debrief with the electrical contractor and then a meeting will be called.

5. Salmon Queen 2026

The Chair updated the group on the plans for the 2026 event. Bookings for essential elements were being made and plans were coming together well.

6. Town Forum Updates

Officers updated the group on the discussions at the last Town Forum held in February. The group noted the updates. There was nothing of note that had a direct effect of BTC Plans.

7. Northumbria in Bloom

The group was updated on the progress with Northumbria in Bloom.

8. War Memorials

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

9. Woodland Walk

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

10. 5 Arches

Officers updated the group that the management plan had been received by NCC and a meeting was being arranged to discuss.

11. Allotments

Officers updated the group on the Allotment sites and the ongoing search for new or extended sites. The group discussed the need for signage on the 5 Arches and Blakewell Road plots. Officers tasked to get prices for signage.

12. Bus Fairs

The Chair highlighted disparities in the pricing structure for different services heading to the same destination from the local bus service provider. Officers updated the group that a meeting was being arranged to discuss RTPI and the issue could be raised there. The group agreed this was a sensible course of action.

13. Grove Gardens South

The group discussed the draft flyer and agreed amendments and a delivery area. Officers tasked to send to print and create maps so councillors could distribute. Officers were tasked with confirming legal standpoint with NCC.

14. Public Access Epi-Pens

The group discussed the report and due to public access Epi-Pens not currently being available agreed to not pursue the project at this time.

15. Spittal Promenade

The group discussed the content of the report. Members discussed the Quick Improvements and that they should be implemented as soon as possible, these were:

- Railings painted around play park
- Planting by beach wheelchair container
- Re-painting the hopscotch/snakes and ladders
- Improved signage

To lobby NCC for issues which fall under their responsibility. These were:

- Re-paint promenade railings
- Upgrade public toilets
- Clear access steps to beach
- Improved signage

The group also discussed wider improvement projects to potentially be added to future agendas. These were:

- Beach Huts
- Board Walk
- More picnicking areas
- Campervan Park
- Lobbying Pavillion Owners for improvements

The group decided to add Campervan Park to the next agenda.

16. Public Water Fountain Reinstatement

The group discussed the report. Officers were tasked to contact Northumbria Water to have an initial conversation on the work involved. Officers made contact and the required work would at this time not be within the council's capacity. Instead encouraging businesses to become part of the bottle refill scheme and new fountains in feasible areas would be pursued instead.

17. Items for Future Agendas

The group discussed items to be added to future agendas, Far East Campaign Memorial was added as well as Campervan Park and Public Water Access.

18. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 07 April 2026 at 18:00

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Environment and Communities Working Group

Time and date

Monday 07 April 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 Janice Bowden
Cllr Robert Bruce
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In Attendance

Cllr Jane Turton – Chair
Cllr Janice Bowden
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart
Cllr Mike Greener
Stephen Robinson – Operations Manager

Notes

1. Apologies for Absence

The meeting began with Apologies for Absence. Apologies were received from Cllr Mackenzie. Cllr Bruce had sent apologies to the Chief Officer, but he was on annual leave so they were received after the meeting.

2. Disclosures of Interest

The Chair asked if there were any disclosures of interest. None were received.

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes from the previous meeting were discussed. Cllrs highlighted the need to discuss Christmas Lights and followed up on some outstanding tasks such as the reduction of the three tier planters to two tiers at Spittal.

4. Decisions from Full Council

Environment and Communities Working Group [In-person] - 2026-04-07

The Chair provided an update on the decisions log from the Full Council. There was a detailed discussion about various sites and projects. The group noted the progress of the decisions and were happy that there was progress. The frustration with the length of time for the legal transfer for the Woodland Walk was discussed. Cllrs asked for a slight re format of the spread sheet.

5. Salmon Queen

The Chair discussed the notes of the previous Working Group meeting. There was discussion about drone flight law changes, the need for a local photographer, social media influencers. The group discussed the progress on the planning for the 2026 event and thanked the group for the progress being made. The RNLI and Coastguard escort was also discussed.

6. Town Forum Update

There had been no meeting of the Town Forum.

7. Northumbria in Bloom

The progress on Northumbria in Bloom was discussed, including work with the Community Trust and Greener Berwick to help improve the bed on Castlegate. The news of the arrival of the summer plants into the poly tunnels was welcomed. The positive comments on the winter/spring planting were noted and the staff thanked for their hard work.

8. Woodland Walk

The deed of transfer is with the legal team at NCC. BTC solicitors have sent over the necessary amendments and were awaiting comments from NCC. The slow progress was discussed but it was recognised that it was out of the control of BTC.

9. War Memorials

It was noted that the transfer was still with NCC and BTC were awaiting them sending over the necessary paperwork. Again, the length of time the process is taking was commented on.

10. 5 Arches Park

Officers updated the group that BTC is awaiting a meeting with NCC to discuss the ongoing projects. Officers were to chase NCC.

11. Allotments

The group noted that the work to reinstate the water to 5 Arches was underway. Officers updated the group on the situation with allotments being vacated and re-let. The waiting list is still sat at 14. Officers are chasing a meeting with NCC to discuss new/extending sites. The need for signage on all the allotment sites was discussed, and officers were tasked with bringing costings back to a future meeting.

After all the discussions on projects that are being held up with delays at NCC, the group discussed compiling a letter to Glen Sanderson and the three ward councillors to ask if they were able to aid BTC in the progression of outstanding projects.

12. Pocket Park Palace Green

Officers updated the group that permission from the Scouts had been received and a design would be drawn up for approval with the work to take place later in the year.

Several items were added.

13. Play Parks

The conditions report was discussed. The key maintenance issues were prioritised which included, the surface at Osbourne and Newfields and the out-of-date park signage. Officers were tasked with bringing costings back to a future meeting.

14. Grove Gardens South

The group were informed that the flyers were ready to distribute. Cllrs Stewart, Smith and Kahn were going to post them in the area surrounding the park.

15. Bus Fairs

The group discussed the discrepancies in fares on certain services. The reason for the difference is bus passes and reduced fares work on busses that are heading to the BGH even if you are only travelling to a destination on that route but do not cover cross border travel.

The group raised concerns that for those living in North Northumberland or the Borders this was not good and should be addressed at a national level by lobbying MPs and LGAs

16. Campervan Park

During the discussion the group commented on the issues caused by unauthorised campervans being parked and the lack of enforcement being undertaken by NCC. Issues included taking up needed parking space in residential areas, waste disposal and litter.

Several potential sites were discussed with pros and cons considered for all. The site members thought would be best placed was the land adjacent to Sandstell Road in Spittal. This land is owned by a local property developer but is a large site that will take many years to develop.

17. Public Toilet Issue

Members discussed the issue of the lack of public toilets within Berwick, exacerbated by the extended closure of the Woolmarket toilet and changing spaces.

The group highlighted the growing tourist economy and higher visitor numbers and the problems that increased footfall combined with a lack of public facilities will bring, especially on local hospitality businesses.

18. Items for Future Agendas

The existing list of Items for Future Agendas was

1. Town Centre Garden/Additional Trees
2. Assets for community value
3. Public Access Defibrillators
4. Spa Well Issues
5. Far Eat Campaign Memorial
6. Public Water Fountains (New)
7. Community Energy Project

Resolved

To recommend to Full Council that:

Items 8-10 – Full Council to approve officers to write a letter to Glen Sanderson and the three Berwick Ward Councillors requesting they help to expedite the outstanding projects.

Item 16 – Full Council to approve Officers to contact the landowner and arrange a meeting to discuss the potential benefits to both of them as a business but also the wider community and tourist economy by creating a semi-temporary campervan park on part of the site.

Support any following planning application for a campervan park through the council's role as a consultee for planning.

Item 17 – Write to NCC at Director level and to Nicole Brooke, to request an update on the time frame of the re-opening of the Woolmarket toilets and enquire into the feasibility of a set of temporary public Environment and Communities Working Group [In-person] - 2026-04-07

conveniences to be installed in the town either at Wool Market or on the site of the old toilet in the Eastern Lane Car Park, both of which have drainage and mains water.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Budget and Administration Working Group

Time and date

Monday 13 April 2026 at 18:00

Place

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

Group Members

Cllr Philip Rowe (Chair)
Cllr Rachel Driver
Cllr Mike Greener
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr John Robertson
Cllr Catherine Seymour
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In Attendance

Cllr Philip Rowe (Chair)
Cllr Rachel Driver
Cllr Mike Greener
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie
Cllr John Robertson
Cllr Catherine Seymour
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart
Cllr Jane Turton

Notes

1.26. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2.26. Disclosures of Interests

No disclosures of interests were declared.

3.26. Notes of previous Meeting

Budget and Administration Working Group - 2026-04-13

The Working Group considered the notes of the previous meeting. It was clarified that, as Working Group notes are not minutes and are not approved in the same way as Full Council minutes, the item was received as a record of the previous discussion. No amendments were proposed. Cllr Smith joined during consideration of this item.

4.26. Meetings and Schedules

The Working Group considered the report on the Council meeting structure for the 2026/27 municipal year. Members noted the consultation feedback, including that just under half of councillors had responded, that more than half of those respondents supported retaining the current Working Group structure, that only one respondent supported a return to committees, and that respondents did not support hybrid meetings. The Group discussed the need to balance member accessibility with officer capacity and the impact of evening meetings on staff time off in lieu. Members also discussed the need to agree a calendar in April's Council meeting so that arrangements could be confirmed for the new municipal year.

Resolved

To recommend to Full Council that:

- 1. the current Working Group structure be retained;**
- 2. the proposed meeting frequency for 2026/27 be 10 Full Council meetings, 10 Budget and Administration Working Group meetings, 8 Environment and Communities Working Group meetings, 4 Staffing Working Group meetings, and Planning Committee meetings as required;**
- 3. the existing Task Groups continue unless and until they are no longer required; and**
- 4. a Festive Lights Task Group be created in the new municipal year.**

It was further noted that final agreement of the calendar, including days and times of meetings, would remain a matter for Full Council.

5.26. 22 Hide Hill

The Working Group considered the report on the proposed acquisition and development of the former Barclays building on Hide Hill. Members discussed the strategic case for the proposal, including the limitations of the current Marygate premises, the potential to create a town-centre civic and service hub, and the possible inclusion of smaller locally priced homes within the scheme. Members also discussed whether further evidence could be obtained regarding local housing need and homelessness, together with the potential wider benefit of bringing additional services into the town centre.

The financial summary set out in the agenda report was considered in detail. Members noted the indicative comparison between the three main options, namely remaining at Marygate, securing other rented premises, or purchasing and developing the Hide Hill building. The Working Group noted that the report figures were stated as indicative only and would require formal verification through valuation, quantity surveying, design work, borrowing advice and business planning before any final decision could be taken. In particular, members noted the following financial assumptions from the report: Option 1 (remain at Marygate) indicative cost £1,757,790.00; Option 2 (purchase 24HH) indicative cost £3,430,342.50, indicative revenue £3,685,307, and asset value at year 50 of £800,000.00 to £1,000,000.00; and Option 3 (other rented premises) indicative cost £2,217,790.00. It was also noted that the Option 2 narrative in the report required correction, and that the indicative net position should be read as an indicative surplus of £254,964.50, plus asset value, rather than a cost. Members further noted the stated PWLB borrowing assumption of £1,300,000.00 over 50 years at 6.49% fixed, producing a stated total repayment cost of £3,430,342.50.

Members discussed the likely need for interim arrangements beyond May 2027 should any move not be capable of completion by that point. It was acknowledged that the report did not amount to a final business case and did not provide certainty on delivery timescales. Members also discussed business rates, utilities, access, parking, servicing, storage requirements and the practical implications of a mixed-use listed building.

There was broad agreement that, if the proposal were to proceed further, the Council would

require early professional input to establish what could realistically be accommodated within the building and what the likely capital costs would be.

The Working Group considered whether the project should move to a further stage of investigation. Members agreed that any recommendation to Full Council must be limited to further due diligence rather than any final commitment. Cllr Stewart suggested that the next stage should include quotations or tenders for the necessary professional work, including architect and quantity surveyor input, a dimensional survey, outline designs and outline costings. The Group agreed that this should form part of the recommendation taken forward.

Resolved (by majority)6-1

To recommend to Full Council that:

- 1. Option 2, namely the purchase and development of the former Barclays building on Hide Hill, be investigated further;**
- 2. no final commitment be made until a full business case, valuation, survey work, legal advice, affordability assessment and public consultation have been completed; and**
- 3. quotations be obtained for the next-stage professional work, including architect and quantity surveyor input, dimensional survey work, outline designs and outline costings, so that a fully developed report can be brought back to members.**

It was noted during discussion that the wider governance, delivery and project management arrangements would need to be considered further once the necessary professional information had been obtained.

6.26. General Reserves and Earmarked Reserves

The Working Group considered the report on General Reserves and Earmarked Reserves. Members noted that, on the basis set out in the report, the General Reserve currently stood at £144,415.35, which equated to approximately 3.9 months of core operating expenditure and was therefore broadly within the proposed target range of 3 to 6 months. Members also noted the recommendation that earmarked reserves should only be maintained where there is a clear purpose, indicative cost and review or drawdown plan.

Resolved

To recommend to Full Council that:

- 1. the Council confirms that its General Reserve should be maintained at a level equivalent to between 3 and 6 months of core operating expenditure;**
- 2. the current General Reserve position be noted as broadly consistent with that range when assessed against the 2026 operating-cost budget; and**
- 3. earmarked reserves should only be held where each reserve has a clear purpose, indicative cost and review or drawdown plan.**

7.26. SLA

The Working Group noted that no report had been provided under this item. Members discussed the need for a Task Group to develop the criteria for Service Level Agreements, in accordance with the previous Full Council resolution. It was agreed that the Task Group would be constituted in the new municipal year.

Resolved

That the SLA Task Group be constituted in May 2026 in order to begin work on SLA criteria.

8.26. Expenditure vs Budget Year to Date

The Working Group considered the year-to-date expenditure report. Members noted that pension expenditure remained affected by central government changes. Queries were raised regarding Public Realm Works and it was noted that some expenditure was expected to be recovered from Section 106 funding held by Northumberland County Council.

Members also discussed the use of paper purchase orders, with coding and sign-off arrangements

intended to strengthen financial control and oversight. In addition, the Group briefly discussed the Council newsletter and possible future options for its production and distribution.

Resolved

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. that officers pursue recovery of the relevant Section 106 monies from Northumberland County Council, including by tranche if appropriate; and**
- 3. that the future approach to the Council newsletter be brought back to a future meeting for further consideration.**

9.26. Notification of Receipts

The schedules of receipts for January, February and March were noted.

10.26. Bank Reconciliations

The bank reconciliation processes for January, February and March were noted.

11.26. Items for Next Agenda and Actions Arising

The Working Group discussed possible items for the next agenda. In particular, members received an initial verbal update regarding the possibility of Berwick-upon-Tweed being involved in a bid to host the National Armed Forces Day event in 2027, in partnership with Northumberland County Council and others. Members agreed that this should progress

Resolved

That officers work on a bid for the National Armed Forces Day 2027 along with Northumberland County Council.

12.26. Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.