

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL



Full Council

Time and date

Monday 27 July 2026 at 18:00

Place

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

Members of the Council:

Cllr Jane Turton (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 John Robertson
Cllr Catherine Seymour
Cllr Gary Smith
Cllr Thomas Stewart

Members present:

Cllr Jane Turton (Mayor)
Cllr Rosemary Mackenzie (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Graham Brown
Cllr Rachel Driver
Cllr Anne Forbes
Cllr Mike Greener
Cllr Laura Hawken
Cllr Paul Hillier
Cllr Ayrin Khan
Cllr John Robertson
Cllr Thomas Stewart

In attendance (Officers):

Iain McCready, Chief Officer / Proper Officer

Minutes

48.26. Members of the Council

The membership of the Council was noted as set out on the first page of these minutes.

49.26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bowden, Bruce, Seymour and Smith.

50.26. Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures of interest were received, either in advance of the meeting or at the meeting itself.

51.26. Open Session

The Mayor opened the public participation period and restated that the session allowed a total of 15 minutes, with contributions limited to 3 minutes per person.

Mark Dragon raised concerns that statements published about the proposed flagpole project gave the impression that it had already been rejected before Full Council had considered it. The Mayor clarified that no decision had yet been taken and that the recommendation would be considered later in the meeting.

Michael Stuart spoke in support of flying the national flag. He questioned the stated risks of vandalism, noting the durability of modern flagpoles and the ability to position fittings out of reach, and compared those risks with the potential for damage to other public assets. He also questioned references to political controversy and the use of officer or member time, asked what discussions had taken place with Northumberland County Council, and asked members to consider the significance of the proposal to serving and former members of the armed forces.

The Mayor thanked both speakers and confirmed that their representations would be taken into account when Council considered the flagpole recommendation.

52.26. Minutes

Council considered the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 29 June 2026. No amendments were raised.

Decision: The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 29 June 2026 were approved as a correct record.

53.26. Part I - Items for Decisions

The Council moved into Part I business and proceeded to the reports and recommendations from the Environment and Communities Working Group and the Budget and Administration Working Group.

54.26. Notes of the Environment and Communities Working Group

Councillor Brown presented the notes of the Environment and Communities Working Group and highlighted the principal matters arising. Members first queried wording in the budget-monitoring section which suggested that attention had been given to indirect expenditure headings rather than to a major spending variance. Members who had reviewed the figures said that variances had been considered but that no significant variance had been identified. It was agreed that the wording should be returned to the Working Group for clarification.

The biodiversity and sustainability report prompted discussion about Northumberland County Council's continued use of glyphosate through its twice-yearly spraying programme. Members noted the concerns associated with the chemical, including its risk to aquatic life, while recognising the practical difficulty of finding an effective alternative. Manual or mechanical weed control and more regular cleaning of streets and gullies were identified as possible alternatives, although these would create additional staffing and financial pressures.

Members agreed that the biodiversity and sustainability report should be broadened. Future consideration of composting and the better use of green waste was supported, although a larger and more permanent operating site would be required. Members also asked for greater attention to birds and mammals and for the document to have a clearer Berwick focus. Biodiversity net gain

was discussed, with support for seeking to ensure that gains arising from developments in Berwick were delivered locally wherever possible.

It was agreed that the report would be revised to reflect the points raised and returned in an updated form. Members also supported the development of a Council biodiversity and sustainability policy during the following year.

The Operations Manager's report confirmed that interviews for the warden team had taken place on 21 July. Complaints had been received about seating becoming difficult to use because of weeds, shrubs and hedges, but members recognised that the current workforce did not have capacity to maintain every location to a materially higher standard. This was treated as part of the wider weed-management issue.

Border Buses remained interested in extending digital passenger information, although progress with the relevant commercial decision-makers continued to be difficult. Ward members were asked to inspect bus stops in their own areas and report damage or problems with timetables and noticeboards. Members also noted that the town had approximately 250 litter bins and that QR codes could already be used to report overflows. A suggestion that the website function should help residents identify the nearest alternative bin would be considered through future website development.

On outstanding projects, the Grove Gardens consultation had produced 3 responses from 150 flyers and the Woodland Walk consultation had produced 10 responses from 400 flyers. Northumberland County Council officers remained supportive of transferring the whole of Five Arches Park rather than entering into a partial arrangement, subject to conditions relating to railings, tree works, footpath remediation, governance and costs. The Working Group had reaffirmed support for progressing on that basis. It was also agreed that a Land Registry search should be undertaken to confirm ownership of land near Riverside Road as a possible allotment site.

Council then considered proposals supported through Councillor Brooke's small-schemes funding. Members emphasised that any asset installed in the public realm would carry an ongoing maintenance and liability commitment. The proposed calisthenics-style outdoor warrior gym at Newfields Play Park was described as a robust galvanised-steel installation requiring little routine maintenance. The proposed outdoor chess tables, with integral seating, were intended for the Quayside at an estimated cost of approximately £5,000, with the Youth Hostel Association expected to retain the chess pieces.

Decision: The installation of an outdoor warrior gym at Newfields Play Park was supported unanimously, with the associated ongoing maintenance responsibility accepted.

Decision: The proposed outdoor chess tables on the Quayside were supported.

Members then considered the flagpole proposals as two separate locations. In relation to the War Memorial, concern was expressed that a flagpole might detract from the recently restored monument. It was clarified that the pole would be outside the memorial entrance, within the adjacent garden area where a socket was already present, and would form part of the wider remembrance-garden setting. Members agreed that only the Union Flag should be flown at that location. The retail-park proposal would provide a separate location from which a wider range of appropriate flags could be flown according to the occasion.

Decision: A flagpole adjacent to the War Memorial was supported unanimously, with the Union Flag to be flown at that location.

Decision: A second flagpole at the retail park was supported as a multi-flag location, with the flags to be determined according to the occasion.

The proposal for a tourist information kiosk at Castlegate car park was considered well intentioned, but no credible staffing or management arrangement had been provided.

A preliminary estimate suggested that approximately 12 volunteers and a person to coordinate them would be required, and the Council did not have the staffing capacity or budget to provide that support. Members agreed that the proposal could return if accompanied by a practical operating plan.

Decision: The Castlegate tourist information kiosk was not supported in its current form because no credible staffing and management arrangements had been provided. The proposer may return with a practical operating plan.

The Scouts had requested grass cutting at Palace Green in addition to the work already undertaken through the Council's contract. The additional cost was estimated at approximately £800 per year. Members considered that any support should be sought through the grants process or provided through a paid service arrangement rather than through an unfunded transfer of responsibility to the Town Council.

Decision: The Council would not take on responsibility for the additional grass cutting requested at Palace Green, either directly or through its existing contractor.

Finally, Council considered a request to support the Harbour of Memory research project being undertaken by Northumbria University.

Decision: The Council expressed its support for Northumbria University's Harbour of Memory research project.

55.26. Notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group

Councillor Stewart presented the notes of the Budget and Administration Working Group meeting held on 16 July 2026. Service level agreements remained under review, and the Working Group had agreed that the Chief Officer would prepare a report, including examples, for consideration at the September meeting. The annual review of the Council's Financial Regulations had also commenced, with a draft to be prepared by the Chief Officer and returned in September.

Council then considered 5 grant recommendations. Amped Berwick had applied for support connected with the launch of a new music festival and wider work to improve access to music tuition, including greater involvement by young people who might not otherwise have access to instruments and the development of an instrument library.

Decision: The grant application from Amped Berwick was approved in accordance with the Working Group's recommendation.

The proposed Berwick parkrun was described as a start-up project based around a 5 kilometre route. The application related to one-off establishment costs, with the expectation that the event would operate through the national parkrun structure without requiring continuing Council support.

Decision: The start-up grant application for a Berwick parkrun was approved in accordance with the Working Group's recommendation.

Berwick Literary Festival was a more established event. Members discussed the Council's previous emphasis on helping start-up activity while recognising that each application had to be considered on its own merits. Concern was expressed about Council funding being used simply to increase an organisation's reserves, and the proposed support was therefore directed specifically towards work with schools and young people.

Decision: A grant of £1,000 was awarded to Berwick Literary Festival specifically to support its work with schools and young people.

North Northumberland District Scouts and the Three Bridges Explorer Unit had applied for support towards delegates attending a European scouting event in Poland. Members noted that support had also been obtained from other organisations.

Decision: A grant of £300 was awarded to North Northumberland District Scouts and the Three Bridges Explorer Unit.

Berwick Rugby Club had applied for support towards replacing existing sodium or halogen floodlights with LED units. Members considered that the project would reduce future running and maintenance costs.

Decision: A grant of £1,000 was awarded to Berwick Rugby Club towards replacement LED floodlights.

Councillor Stewart concluded by noting that bulletin planning, including the possible number of editions and the level of Council involvement, would return to the September meeting. Members also agreed that future financial-monitoring reports should show the relevant reserve balances alongside expenditure figures.

56.26. Announcement of a Casual Vacancy

Council formally noted the resignation of Councillor Philip Rowe. Northumberland County Council Elections had been informed and would publish the statutory casual-vacancy notice for Castle Ward. No further action was required from the Town Council unless the matter returned through the formal election or co-option process.

Decision: The resignation of Councillor Philip Rowe and the statutory process for the Castle Ward vacancy were noted.

57.26. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council was confirmed for Monday 28 September 2026 at 18:00.

Decision: The next meeting of the Council was set for Monday 28 September 2026 at 18:00.

58.26. Part 2 - Confidential Items

At the close of the open agenda, members of the public and press, together with county councillors who were not members of the Town Council, were asked to leave before the confidential business was considered.

59.26. Confidential Matters

The confidential business is recorded in a separate confidential minute.